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A detailed oil painting of Henry James, showing him from the chest up. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt with a high collar, and a dark bow tie. The lighting is dramatic, coming from the upper left, casting shadows on the right side of his face and neck. The background is dark and indistinct.

**SHORT STORIES
VOLUME 1**

HENRY JAMES

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Short Stories, Volume 1 by Henry James.

This ebook edition was created and published by Global Grey on the 7th March 2023.

The artwork used for the cover is '*Henry James*'

painted by John Singer Sargent.

This book can be found on the site here:

globalgreyebooks.com/henry-james_short-stories_volume-1-ebook.html

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A Tragedy of Error

I.

A low English phaeton was drawn up before the door of the post office of a French seaport town. In it was seated a lady, with her veil down and her parasol held closely over her face. My story begins with a gentleman coming out of the office and handing her a letter.

He stood beside the carriage a moment before getting in. She gave him her parasol to hold, and then lifted her veil, showing a very pretty face. This couple seemed to be full of interest for the passers by, most of whom stared hard and exchanged significant glances. Such persons as were looking on at the moment saw the lady turn very pale as her eyes fell on the direction of the letter. Her companion saw it too, and instantly stepping into the place beside her, took up the reins, and drove rapidly along the main street of the town, past the harbor, to an open road skirting the sea. Here he slackened pace. The lady was leaning back, with her veil down again, and the letter lying open in her lap. Her attitude was almost that of unconsciousness, and he could see that her eyes were closed. Having satisfied himself of this, he hastily possessed himself of the letter, and read as follows:

Southampton, *July 16th*, 18—.

My dear Hortense: You will see by my postmark that I am a thousand leagues nearer home than when I last wrote, but I have hardly time to explain the change. M. P—— has given me a most unlooked-for *congé*. After so many months of separation, we shall be able to spend a few weeks together. God be praised! We got in here from New York this morning, and I have had the good luck to find a vessel, the *Armorique*, which sails straight for H——. The mail leaves directly, but we shall probably be detained a few hours by the tide; so this will reach you a day before I arrive: the master calculates we shall get in early Thursday morning. Ah, Hortense! how the time drags! Three whole days. If I did not write from New York, it is because I was unwilling to torment you with an expectancy which, as it is, I venture to hope, you will find long enough. Farewell. To a warmer greeting!

Your devoted C. B.

When the gentleman replaced the paper on his companion's lap, his face was almost as pale as hers. For a moment he gazed fixedly and vacantly before him, and a half-suppressed curse escaped his lips. Then his eyes reverted to his neighbor. After some hesitation, during which he allowed the reins to hang so loose that the horse lapsed into a walk, he touched her gently on the shoulder.

'Well, Hortense,' said he, in a very pleasant tone, 'what's the matter; have you fallen asleep?'

Hortense slowly opened her eyes, and, seeing that they had left the town behind them, raised her veil. Her features were stiffened with horror.

'Read that,' said she, holding out the open letter.

The gentleman took it, and pretended to read it again.

'Ah! M. Bernier returns. Delightful!' he exclaimed.

'How, delightful?' asked Hortense; 'we mustn't jest at so serious a crisis, my friend.'

'True,' said the other, 'it will be a solemn meeting. Two years of absence is a great deal.'

'O Heaven! I shall never dare to face him,' cried Hortense, bursting into tears.

Covering her face with one hand, she put out the other toward that of her friend. But he was plunged in so deep a reverie, that he did not perceive the movement. Suddenly he came to, aroused by her sobs.

'Come, come,' said he, in the tone of one who wishes to coax another into mistrust of a danger before which he does not himself feel so secure but that the sight of a companion's indifference will give him relief. 'What if he does come? He need learn nothing. He will stay but a short time, and sail away again as unsuspecting as he came.'

'Learn nothing! You surprise me. Every tongue that greets him, if only to say *bon jour*, will wag to the tune of a certain person's misconduct.'

'Bah! People don't think about us quite as much as you fancy. You and I, *n'est-ce-pas?* we have little time to concern ourselves about our neighbors' failings. Very well, other people are in the same box, better or worse. When a ship goes to pieces on those rocks out at sea, the poor devils who are pushing their way to land on a floating spar, don't bestow many glances on those who are battling with the waves beside them. Their eyes are fastened to the shore, and all their care is for their own safety. In life we are all afloat on a tumultuous sea; we are all struggling toward some *terra firma* of wealth or love or leisure. The roaring of the waves we kick up about us and the spray we dash into our eyes deafen and blind us to the sayings and doings of our fellows. Provided we climb high and dry, what do we care for them?'

'Ay, but if we don't? When we've lost hope ourselves, we want to make others sink. We hang weights about their necks, and dive down into the dirtiest pools for stones to cast at them. My friend, you don't feel the shots which are not aimed at you. It isn't of you the town talks, but of me: a poor woman throws herself off the pier yonder, and drowns before a kind hand has time to restrain her, and her corpse floats over the water for all the world to look at. When her husband comes up to see what the crowd means, is there any lack of kind friends to give him the good news of his wife's death?'

'As long as a woman is light enough to float, Hortense, she is not counted drowned. It's only when she sinks out of sight that they give her up.'

Hortense was silent a moment, looking at the sea with swollen eyes.

'Louis,' she said at last, 'we were speaking metaphorically: I have half a mind to drown myself literally.'

'Nonsense!' replied Louis; 'an accused pleads 'not guilty,' and hangs himself in prison. What do the papers say? People talk, do they? Can't you talk as well as they? A woman is in the wrong from the moment she holds her tongue and refuses battle. And that you do too often. That pocket handkerchief is always more or less of a flag of truce.'

'I'm sure I don't know,' said Hortense indifferently; 'perhaps it is.'

There are moments of grief in which certain aspects of the subject of our distress seems as irrelevant as matters entirely foreign to it. Her eyes were still fastened on the sea. There was another silence. 'O my poor Charles!' she murmured, at length, 'to what a hearth do you return!'

'Hortense,' said the gentleman, as if he had not heard her, although, to a third person, it would have appeared that it was because he had done so that he spoke: 'I do not need to tell you that it will never happen to me to betray our secret. But I will answer for it that so long as M. Bernier is at home no mortal shall breathe a syllable of it.'

'What of that?' sighed Hortense. 'He will not be with me ten minutes without guessing it.'

'Oh, as for that,' said her companion, dryly, 'that's your own affair.'

'Monsieur de Meyrau!' cried the lady.

'It seems to me,' continued the other, 'that in making such a guarantee, I have done my part of the business.'

'Your part of the business!' sobbed Hortense.

M. de Meyrau made no reply, but with a great cut of the whip sent the horse bounding along the road. Nothing more was said. Hortense lay back in the carriage with her face buried in her handkerchief, moaning. Her companion sat upright, with contracted brows and firmly set teeth, looking straight before him, and by an occasional heavy lash keeping the horse at a furious pace. A wayfarer might have taken him for a ravisher escaping with a victim worn out with resistance. Travellers to whom they were known would perhaps have seen a deep meaning in this accidental analogy. So, by a *détour*, they returned to the town.

When Hortense reached home, she went straight up to a little boudoir on the second floor, and shut herself in. This room was at the back of the house, and her maid, who was at that moment walking in the long garden which stretched down to the water, where there was a landing place for small boats, saw her draw in the window blind and darken the room, still in her bonnet and cloak. She remained alone for a couple of hours. At five o'clock, some time after the hour at which she was usually summoned to dress her mistress for the evening, the maid knocked at Hortense's door, and offered her services. Madame called out, from within, that she had a *migraine*, and would not be dressed.

'Can I get anything for madame?' asked Josephine; 'a *tisane*, a warm drink, something?'

'Nothing, nothing.'

'Will madame dine?'

'No.'

'Madame had better not go wholly without eating.'

'Bring me a bottle of wine—of brandy.'

Josephine obeyed. When she returned, Hortense was standing in the doorway, and as one of the shutters had meanwhile been thrown open, the woman could see that, although her mistress's hat had been tossed upon the sofa, her cloak had not been removed, and that her face was very pale. Josephine felt that she might not offer sympathy nor ask questions.

'Will madame have nothing more?' she ventured to say, as she handed her the tray.

Madame shook her head, and closed and locked the door.

Josephine stood a moment vexed, irresolute, listening. She heard no sound. At last she deliberately stooped down and applied her eye to the keyhole.

This is what she saw:

Her mistress had gone to the open window, and stood with her back to the door, looking out at the sea. She held the bottle by the neck in one hand, which hung listlessly by her side; the other was resting on a glass half filled with water, standing, together with an open letter, on a table beside her. She kept this position until Josephine began to grow tired of waiting. But just as she was about to arise in despair of gratifying her curiosity, madame raised the bottle

and glass, and filled the latter full. Josephine looked more eagerly. Hortense held it a moment against the light, and then drained it down.

Josephine could not restrain an involuntary whistle. But her surprise became amazement when she saw her mistress prepare to take a second glass. Hortense put it down, however, before its contents were half gone, as if struck by a sudden thought, and hurried across the room. She stooped down before a cabinet, and took out a small opera glass. With this she returned to the window, put it to her eyes, and again spent some moments in looking seaward. The purpose of this proceeding Josephine could not make out. The only result visible to her was that her mistress suddenly dropped the lorgnette on the table, and sank down on an armchair, covering her face with her hands.

Josephine could contain her wonderment no longer. She hurried down to the kitchen.

'Valentine,' said she to the cook, 'what on earth can be the matter with Madame? She will have no dinner, she is drinking brandy by the glassful, a moment ago she was looking out to sea with a lorgnette, and now she is crying dreadfully with an open letter in her lap.'

The cook looked up from her potato-peeling with a significant wink.

'What can it be,' said she, 'but that monsieur returns?'

II.

At six o'clock, Josephine and Valentine were still sitting together, discussing the probable causes and consequences of the event hinted at by the latter. Suddenly Madame Bernier's bell rang. Josephine was only too glad to answer it. She met her mistress descending the stairs, combed, cloaked, and veiled, with no traces of agitation, but a very pale face.

'I am going out,' said Madame Bernier; 'if M. le Vicomte comes, tell him I am at my mother-in-law's, and wish him to wait till I return.'

Josephine opened the door, and let her mistress pass; then stood watching her as she crossed the court.

'Her mother-in-law's,' muttered the maid; 'she has the face!'

When Hortense reached the street, she took her way, not through the town, to the ancient quarter where that ancient lady, her husband's mother, lived, but in a very different direction. She followed the course of the quay, beside the harbor, till she entered a crowded region, chiefly the residence of fishermen and boatmen. Here she raised her veil. Dusk was beginning to fall. She walked as if desirous to attract as little observation as possible, and yet to examine narrowly the population in the midst of which she found herself. Her dress was so plain that there was nothing in her appearance to solicit attention; yet, if for any reason a passer by had happened to notice her, he could not have helped being struck by the contained intensity with which she scrutinized every figure she met. Her manner was that of a person seeking to recognize a long-lost friend, or perhaps, rather, a long-lost enemy, in a crowd. At last she stopped before a flight of steps, at the foot of which was a landing place for half a dozen little boats, employed to carry passengers between the two sides of the port, at times when the drawbridge above was closed for the passage of vessels. While she stood she was witness of the following scene:

A man, in a red woollen fisherman's cap, was sitting on the top of the steps, smoking the short stump of a pipe, with his face to the water. Happening to turn about, his eye fell on a little child, hurrying along the quay toward a dingy tenement close at hand, with a jug in its arms.

'Hullo, youngster!' cried the man; 'what have you got there? Come here.'

The little child looked back, but, instead of obeying, only quickened its walk.

'The devil take you, come here!' repeated the man, angrily, 'or I'll wring your beggarly neck. You won't obey your own uncle, eh?'

The child stopped, and ruefully made its way to its relative, looking around several times toward the house, as if to appeal to some counter authority.

'Come, make haste!' pursued the man, 'or I shall go and fetch you. Move!'

The child advanced to within half a dozen paces of the steps, and then stood still, eyeing the man cautiously, and hugging the jug tight.

'Come on, you little beggar, come up close.'

The youngster kept a stolid silence, however, and did not budge. Suddenly its self-styled uncle leaned forward, swept out his arm, clutched hold of its little sunburnt wrist, and dragged it toward him.

'Why didn't you come when you were called?' he asked, running his disengaged hand into the infant's frowsy mop of hair, and shaking its head until it staggered. 'Why didn't you come, you unmannerly little brute, eh?—eh?—eh?' accompanying every interrogation with a renewed shake.

The child made no answer. It simply and vainly endeavored to twist its neck around under the man's gripe, and transmit some call for succor to the house.

'Come, keep your head straight. Look at me, and answer me. What's in that jug? Don't lie.'

'Milk.'

'Who for?'

'Granny.'

'Granny be hanged.'

The man disengaged his hands, lifted the jug from the child's feeble grasp, tilted it toward the light, surveyed its contents, put it to his lips, and exhausted them. The child, although liberated, did not retreat. It stood watching its uncle drink until he lowered the jug. Then, as he met its eyes, it said:

'It was for the baby.'

For a moment the man was irresolute. But the child seemed to have a foresight of the parental resentment, for it had hardly spoken when it darted backward and scampered off, just in time to elude a blow from the jug, which the man sent clattering at its heels. When it was out of sight, he faced about to the water again, and replaced the pipe between his teeth with a heavy scowl and a murmur that sounded to Madame Bernier very like—'I wish the baby'd choke.'

Hortense was a mute spectator of this little drama. When it was over, she turned around, and retraced her steps twenty yards with her hand to her head. Then she walked straight back, and addressed the man.

'My good man,' she said, in a very pleasant voice, 'are you the master of one of these boats?'

He looked up at her. In a moment the pipe was out of his mouth, and a broad grin in its place. He rose, with his hand to his cap.

'I am, madame, at your service.'

'Will you take me to the other side?'

'You don't need a boat; the bridge is closed,' said one of his comrades at the foot of the steps, looking that way.

'I know it,' said Madame Bernier; but I wish to go to the cemetery, and a boat will save me half a mile walking.'

'The cemetery is shut at this hour.'

'*Allons*, leave madame alone,' said the man first spoken to. 'This way, my lady.'

Hortense seated herself in the stern of the boat. The man took the sculls.

'Straight across?' he asked.

Hortense looked around her. 'It's a fine evening,' said she; 'suppose you row me out to the lighthouse, and leave me at the point nearest the cemetery on our way back.'

'Very well,' rejoined the boatman; 'fifteen sous,' and began to pull lustily.

'*Allez*, I'll pay you well,' said Madame.

'Fifteen sous is the fare,' insisted the man.

'Give me a pleasant row, and I'll give you a hundred,' said Hortense.

Her companion said nothing. He evidently wished to appear not to have heard her remark. Silence was probably the most dignified manner of receiving a promise too munificent to be anything but a jest.

For some time this silence was maintained, broken only by the trickling of the oars and the sounds from the neighboring shores and vessels. Madame Bernier was plunged in a sidelong scrutiny of her ferryman's countenance. He was a man of about thirty-five. His face was dogged, brutal, and sullen. These indications were perhaps exaggerated by the dull monotony of his exercise. The eyes lacked a certain rascally gleam which had appeared in them when he was so *empressé* with the offer of his services. The face was better then—that is, if vice is better than ignorance. We say a countenance is 'lit up' by a smile; and indeed that momentary flicker does the office of a candle in a dark room. It sheds a ray upon the dim upholstery of our souls. The visages of poor men, generally, know few alternations. There is a large class of human beings whom fortune restricts to a single change of expression, or, perhaps, rather to a single expression. Ah me! the faces which wear either nakedness or rags; whose repose is stagnation, whose activity vice; ingorant at their worst, infamous at their best!

'Don't pull too hard,' said Hortense at last. 'Hadn't you better take breath a moment?'

'Madame is very good,' said the man, leaning upon his oars. 'But if you had taken me by the hour,' he added, with a return of the vicious grin, 'you wouldn't catch me loitering.'

'I suppose you work very hard,' said Madame Bernier.

The man gave a little toss of his head, as if to intimate the inadequacy of any supposition to grasp the extent of his labors.

'I've been up since four o'clock this morning, wheeling bales and boxes on the quay, and plying my little boat. Sweating without five minutes' intermission. *C'est comme ça*. Sometimes I tell my mate I think I'll take a plunge in the basin to dry myself. Ha! ha! ha!'

'And of course you gain little,' said Madame Bernier.

'Worse than nothing. Just what will keep me fat enough for starvation to feed on.'

'How? you go without your necessary food?'

'Necessary is a very elastic word, madame. You can narrow it down, so that in the degree above nothing it means luxury. My necessary food is sometimes thin air. If I don't deprive myself of that, it's because I can't.'

'Is it possible to be so unfortunate?'

'Shall I tell you what I have eaten to-day?'

'Do,' said Madame Bernier.

'A piece of black bread and a salt herring are all that have passed my lips for twelve hours.'

'Why don't you get some better work?'

'If I should die to-night,' pursued the boatman, heedless of the question, in the manner of a man whose impetus on the track of self-pity drives him past the signal flags of relief, 'what would there be left to bury me? These clothes I have on might buy me a long box. For the cost of this shabby old suit, that hasn't lasted me a twelvemonth, I could get one that I wouldn't wear out in a thousand years. *La bonne idée!*'

'Why don't you get some work that pays better?' repeated Hortense.

The man dipped his oars again.

'Work that pays better? I must work for work. I must earn that too. Work is wages. I count the promise of the next week's employment the best part of my Saturday night's pocketings. Fifty casks rolled from the ship to the storehouse mean two things: thirty sous and fifty more to roll the next day. Just so a crushed hand, or a dislocated shoulder, mean twenty francs to the apothecary and *bon jour* to my business.'

'Are you married?' asked Hortense.

'No, I thank you. I'm not cursed with that blessing. But I've an old mother, a sister, and three nephews, who look to me for support. The old woman's too old to work; the lass is too lazy, and the little ones are too young. But they're none of them too old or young to be hungry, *allez*. I'll be hanged if I'm not a father to them all.'

There was a pause. The man had resumed rowing. Madame Bernier sat motionless, still examining her neighbor's physiognomy. The sinking sun, striking full upon his face, covered it with an almost lurid glare. Her own features being darkened against the western sky, the direction of them was quite indistinguishable to her companion.

'Why don't you leave the place?' she said at last.

'Leave it! how?' he replied, looking up with the rough avidity with which people of his class receive proposals touching their interests, extending to the most philanthropic suggestions that mistrustful eagerness with which experience has taught them to defend their own side of a bargain—the only form of proposal that she has made them acquainted with.

'Go somewhere else,' said Hortense.

'Where, for instance!'

'To some new country—America.'

The man burst into a loud laugh. Madame Bernier's face bore more evidence of interest in the play of his features than of that discomfiture which generally accompanies the consciousness of ridicule.

'There's a lady's scheme for you! If you'll write for furnished apartments, *là-bas*, I don't desire anything better. But no leaps in the dark for me. America and Algeria are very fine words to cram into an empty stomach when you're lounging in the sun, out of work, just as you stuff tobacco into your pipe and let the smoke curl around your head. But they fade away before a cutlet and a bottle of wine. When the earth grows so smooth and the air so pure that you can see the American coast from the pier yonder, then I'll make up my bundle. Not before.'

'You're afraid, then, to risk anything?'

'I'm afraid of nothing, *moi*. But I am not a fool either. I don't want to kick away my *sabots* till I am certain of a pair of shoes. I can go barefoot here. I don't want to find water where I counted on land. As for America, I've been there already.'

'Ah! you've been there?'

'I've been to Brazil and Mexico and California and the West Indies.'

'Ah!'

'I've been to Asia, too.'

'Ah!'

'*Pardio*, to China and India. Oh, I've seen the world! I've been three times around the Cape.'

'You've been a seaman then?'

'Yes, ma'am; fourteen years.'

'On what ship?'

'Bless your heart, on fifty ships.'

'French?'

'French and English and Spanish; mostly Spanish.'

'Ah?'

'Yes, and the more fool I was.'

'How so?'

'Oh, it was a dog's life. I'd drown any dog that would play half the mean tricks I used to see.'

'And you never had a hand in any yourself?'

'*Pardon*, I gave what I got. I was as good a Spaniard and as great a devil as any. I carried my knife with the best of them, and drew it as quickly, and plunged it as deep. I've got scars, if you weren't a lady. But I'd warrant to find you their mates on a dozen Spanish hides!'

He seemed to pull with renewed vigor at the recollection. There was a short silence.

'Do you suppose,' said Madame Bernier, in a few moments—'do you remember—that is, can you form any idea whether you ever killed a man?'

There was a momentary slackening of the boatman's oars. He gave a sharp glance at his passenger's countenance, which was still so shaded by her position, however, as to be indistinguishable. The tone of her interrogation had betrayed a simple, idle curiosity. He hesitated a moment, and then gave one of those conscious, cautious, dubious smiles, which may cover either a criminal assumption of more than the truth or a guilty repudiation of it.

'*Min Dieu!*' said he, with a great shrug, 'there's a question! I never killed one without a reason.'

'Of course not,' said Hortense.

'Though a reason in South America, *ma foi!*' added the boatman, 'wouldn't be a reason here.'

'I suppose not. What would be a reason there?'

'Well, if I killed a man in Valparaiso—I don't say I did, mind—it's because my knife went in farther than I intended.'

'But why did you use it at all?'

'I didn't. If I had, it would have been because he drew his against me.'

'And why should he have done so?'

'*Ventrebleu!* for as many reasons as there are craft in the harbor.'

'For example?'

'Well, that I should have got a place in a ship's company that he was trying for.'

'Such things as that? is it possible?'

'Oh, for smaller things. That a lass should have given me a dozen oranges she had promised him.'

'How odd!' said Madame Bernier, with a shrill kind of laugh. 'A man who owed you a grudge of this kind would just come up and stab you, I suppose, and think nothing of it?'

'Precisely. Drive a knife up to the hilt into your back, with an oath, and slice open a melon with it, with, a song, five minutes afterward.'

'And when a person is afraid, or ashamed, or in some way unable to take revenge himself, does he—or it may be a woman—does she, get some one else to do it for her?'

'*Parbleu!* Poor devils on the lookout for such work are as plentiful all along the South American coast as *commissionaires* on the street corners here.' The ferryman was evidently surprised at the fascination possessed by this infamous topic for so lady-like a person; but having, as you see, a very ready tongue, it is probable that his delight in being able to give her information and hear himself talk were still greater. 'And then down there,' he went on, 'they never forget a grudge. If a fellow doesn't serve you one day, he'll do it another. A Spaniard's hatred is like lost sleep—you can put it off for a time, but it will gripe you in the end. The rascals always keep their promises to themselves. An enemy on shipboard is jolly fun. It's like bulls tethered in the same field. You can't stand still half a minute except against a wall. Even when he makes friends with you, his favors never taste right. Messing with him is like drinking out of a pewter mug. And so it is everywhere. Let your shadow once flit across a Spaniard's path, and he'll always see it there. If you've never lived in any but these damned clockworky European towns, you can't imagine the state of things in a South American seaport—one half the population waiting round the corner for the other half. But I don't see that it's so much better here, where every man's a spy on every other. There you meet an assassin at every turn, here a *sergent de ville*. At all events, the life *là bas* used to remind me, more than anything else, of sailing in a shallow channel, where you don't know what infernal rock you may ground on. Every man has a standing account with his neighbor, just as madame has at her *fournisseur's*; and, *ma foi*, those are the only accounts they settle. The master of the *Santiago* may pay me one of these days for the pretty names I heaved after him when we parted company, but he'll never pay me my wages.'

A short pause followed this exposition of the virtues of the Spaniard.

'You yourself never put a man out of the world, then?' resumed Hortense.

'Oh, *que si!* Are you horrified?'

'Not at all. I know that the thing is often justifiable.'

The man was silent a moment, perhaps with surprise, for the next thing he said was:

'Madame is Spanish?'

'In that, perhaps, I am,' replied Hortense.

Again her companion was silent. The pause was prolonged. Madame Bernier broke it by a question which showed that she had been following the same train of thought.

'What is sufficient ground in this country for killing a man?'

The boatman sent a loud laugh over the water. Hortense drew her cloak closer about her.

'I'm afraid there is none.'

'Isn't there a right of self-defence?'

'To be sure there is—it's one I ought to know something about. But it's one that *ces messieurs* at the Palais make short work with.'

'In South America and those countries, when a man makes life insupportable to you, what do you do?'

'*Mon Dieu!* I suppose you kill him.'

'And in France?'

'I suppose you kill yourself. Ha! ha! ha!'

By this time they had reached the end of the great breakwater, terminating in a lighthouse, the limit, on one side, of the inner harbor. The sun had set.

'Here we are at the lighthouse,' said the man; 'it's growing dark. Shall we turn?'

Hortense rose in her place a few moments, and stood looking out to sea. 'Yes,' she said at last, 'you may go back—slowly.' When the boat had headed round she resumed her old position, and put one of her hands over the side, drawing it through the water as they moved, and gazing into the long ripples.

At last she looked up at her companion. Now that her face caught some of the lingering light of the west, he could see that it was deathly pale.

'You find it hard to get along in the world,' said she: 'I shall be very glad to help you.'

The man started, and stared a moment. Was it because this remark jarred upon the expression which he was able faintly to discern in her eyes? The next, he put his hand to his cap.

'Madame is very kind. What will you do?'

Madame Bernier returned his gaze.

'I will trust you.'

'Ah!'

'And reward you.'

'Ah? Madame has a piece of work for me?'

'A piece of work,' Hortense nodded.

The man said nothing, waiting apparently for an explanation. His face wore the look of lowering irritation which low natures feel at being puzzled.

'Are you a bold man?'

Light seemed to come in this question. The quick expansion of his features answered it. You cannot touch upon certain subjects with an inferior but by the sacrifice of the barrier which separates you from him. There are thoughts and feelings and glimpses and foreshadowings of thoughts which level all inequalities of station.

'I'm bold enough,' said the boatman, 'for anything *you* want me to do.'

'Are you bold enough to commit a crime?'

'Not for nothing.'

'If I ask you to endanger your peace of mind, to risk your personal safety for me, it is certainly not as a favor. I will give you ten times the weight in gold of every grain by which your conscience grows heavier in my service.'

The man gave her a long, hard look through the dim light.

'I know what you want me to do,' he said at last.

'Very well,' said Hortense; 'will you do it?'

He continued to gaze. She met his eyes like a woman who has nothing more to conceal.

'State your case.'

'Do you know a vessel named the *Armorique*, a steamer?'

'Yes; it runs from Southampton.'

'It will arrive to-morrow morning early. Will it be able to cross the bar?'

'No; not till noon.'

'I thought so. I expect a person by it—a man.'

Madame Bender appeared unable to continue, as if her voice had given way.

'Well, well?' said her companion.

'He's the person'—she stopped again.

'The person who—?'

'The person whom I wish to get rid of.'

For some moments nothing was said. The boatman was the first to speak again.

'Have you formed a plan?'

Hortense nodded.

'Let's hear it.'

'The person in question,' said Madame Bernier, 'will be impatient to land before noon. The house to which he returns will be in view of the vessel if, as you say, she lies at anchor. If he can get a boat, he will be sure to come ashore. *Eh bien!*—but you understand me.'

'Aha! you mean my boat—*this* boat?'

'O God!'

Madame Bernier sprang up in her seat, threw out her arms, and sank down again, burying her face in her knees. Her companion hastily shipped his oars, and laid his hands on her shoulders.

'*Allons donc*, in the devil's name, don't break down,' said he; 'we'll come to an understanding.'

Kneeling in the bottom of the boat, and supporting her by his grasp, he succeeded in making her raise herself, though her head still drooped.

'You want me to finish him in the boat?'

No answer.

'Is he an old man?'

Hortense shook her head faintly.

'My age?'

She nodded.

'*Sapristi!* it isn't so easy.'

'He can't swim,' said Hortense, without looking up; 'he—he is lame.'

'*Nom de Dieu!*' The boatman dropped his hands. Hortense looked up quickly. Do you read the pantomime?

'Never mind,' added the man at last, 'it will serve as a sign.'

'*Mais oui.* And besides that, he will ask to be taken to the Maison Bernier, the house with its back to the water, on the extension of the great quay. *Tenez*, you can almost see it from here.'

'I know the place,' said the boatman, and was silent, as if asking and answering himself a question.

Hortense was about to interrupt the train of thought which she apprehended he was following, when he forestalled her.

'How am I to be sure of my affair?' asked he.

'Of your reward? I've thought of that. This watch is a pledge of what I shall be able and glad to give you afterward. There are two thousand francs' worth of pearls in the case.'

'*Il faut fiver la somme*,' said the man, leaving the watch untouched.

'That lies with you.'

'Good. You know that I have the right to ask a high price.'

'Certainly. Name it.'

'It's only on the supposition of a large sum that I will so much as consider your proposal. *Songez donc*, that it's a murder you ask of me.'

'The price—the price?'

'*Tenez*,' continued the man, 'poached game is always high. The pearls in that watch are costly because it's worth a man's life to get at them. You want me to be your pearl diver. Be it so. You must guarantee me a safe descent,—it's a descent, you know—ha!—you must furnish me the armor of safety; a little gap to breathe through while I'm at my work—the thought of a capful of Napoleons!'

'My good man, I don't wish to talk to you or to listen to your sallies. I wish simply to know your price. I'm not bargaining for a pair of chickens. Propose a sum.'

The boatman had by this time resumed his seat and his oars. He stretched out for a long, slow pull, which brought him closely face to face with his temptress. This position, his body bent forward, his eyes fixed on Madame Bernier's face, he kept for some seconds. It was perhaps fortunate for Hortense's purpose at that moment—it had often aided her purposes before—that she was a pretty woman.¹ A plain face might have emphasized the utterly repulsive nature of the negotiation. Suddenly, with a quick, convulsive movement, the man completed the stroke.

'*Pas si hête!* propose one yourself.'

'Very well,' said Hortense, 'if you wish it. *Voyons!* I'll give you what I can. I have fifteen thousand francs' worth of jewels. I'll give you them, or, if they will get you into trouble, their value. At home, in a box I have a thousand francs in gold. You shall have those. I'll pay your passage and outfit to America. I have friends in New York. I'll write to them to get you work.'

'And you'll give your washing to my mother and sister, *hein?* Ha! ha! Jewels, fifteen thousand francs; one thousand more makes sixteen; passage to America—first class—five hundred francs; outfit—what does Madame understand by that?'

'Everything needful for your success *là bas!*'

'A written denial that I am an assassin? *Ma foi,* it were better not to remove the impression. It's served me a good turn, on this side of the water at least. Call it twenty-five thousand francs.'

'Very well; but not a sous more.'

'Shall I trust you?'

'Am I not trusting you? It is well for you that I do not allow myself to think of the venture I am making.'

'Perhaps we're even there. We neither of us can afford to make account of certain possibilities. Still, I'll trust you, too. *Tiens!*' added the boatman, 'here we are near the quay.' Then with a mock-solemn touch of his cap, 'Will Madame still visit the cemetery?'

'Come, quick, let me land,' said Madame Bernier, impatiently.

'*We have been among the dead, after a fashion,*' persisted the boatman, as he gave her his hand.

III.

It was more than eight o'clock when Madame Bernier reached her own house.

'Has M. de Meyrau been here?' she asked of Josephine.

'Yes, ma'am; and on learning that Madame was out, he left a note, *chez monsieur!*'

Hortense found a sealed letter on the table in her husband's old study. It ran as follows:

'I was desolated at finding you out. I had a word to tell you. I have accepted an invitation to sup and pass the night at C——, thinking it would look well. For the same reason I have

¹ I am told that there was no resisting her smile; and that she had at her command, in moments of grief, a certain look of despair which filled even the roughest hearts with sympathy, and won over the kindest to the cruel cause.

resolved to take the bull by the horns, and go aboard the steamer on my return, to welcome M. Bernier home—the privilege of an old friend. I am told the *Armorique* will anchor off the bar by daybreak. What do you think? But it's too late to let me know. Applaud my *savoir faire*—you will, at all events, in the end. You will see how it will smoothe matters.'

'Baffled! baffled!' hissed Madame, when she had read the note; 'God deliver me from my friends!' She paced up and down the room several times, and at last began to mutter to herself, as people often do in moments of strong emotion: 'Bah! but he'll never get up by daybreak. He'll oversleep himself, especially after to-night's supper. The other will be before him. Oh, my poor head, you've suffered too much to fail in the end!'

Josephine reappeared to offer to remove her mistress's things. The latter, in her desire to reassure herself, asked the first question that occurred to her. 'Was M. le Vicomte alone?'

'No, madame; another gentleman was with him—M. de Saulges, I think. They came in a hack, with two portmanteaus.'

Though I have judged best, hitherto, often from an exaggerated fear of trenching on the ground of fiction, to tell you what this poor lady did and said, rather than what she thought, I may disclose what passed in her mind now:

'Is he a coward? is he going to leave me? or is he simply going to pass these last hours in play and drink? He might have stayed with me. Ah! my friend, you do little for me, who do so much for you; who commit murder, and—Heaven help me!—suicide for you! But I suppose he knows best. At all events, he will make a night of it.'

When the cook came in late that evening, Josephine, who had sat up for her, said: 'You've no idea how Madame is looking. She's ten years older since this morning. Holy mother! what a day this has been for her!'

'Wait till to-morrow,' said the oracular Valentine.

Later, when the women went up to bed in the attic, they saw a light under Hortense's door, and during the night Josephine, whose chamber was above Madame's, and who couldn't sleep (for sympathy, let us say), heard movements beneath her, which told that her mistress was even more wakeful than she.

IV.

There was considerable bustle around the *Armorique* as she anchored outside the harbor of H——, in the early dawn of the following day. A gentleman, with an overcoat, walking stick, and small valise, came alongside in a little fishing boat, and got leave to go aboard.

'Is M. Bernier here?' he asked of one of the officers, the first man he met.

'I fancy he's gone ashore, sir. There was a boatman inquiring for him a few minutes ago, and I think he carried him off.'

M. de Meyrau reflected a moment. Then he crossed over to the other side of the vessel, looking landward. Leaning over the bulwarks he saw an empty boat moored to the ladder which ran up the vessel's side.

'That's a town boat, isn't it?' he said to one of the hands standing by.

'Yes, sir.'

'Where's the master?'

'I suppose he'll be here in a moment. I saw him speaking to one of the officers just now.'

De Meyrau descended the ladder, and seated himself at the stern of the boat. As the sailor he had just addressed was handing down his bag, a face with a red cap looked over the bulwarks.

'Hullo, my man!' cried De Meyrau, 'is this your boat?'

'Yes, sir, at your service,' answered the red cap, coming to the top of the ladder, and looking hard at the gentleman's stick and portmanteau.

'Can you take me to town, to Madame Bernier's, at the end of the new quay?'

'Certainly, sir,' said the boatman, scuttling down the ladder, 'you're just the gentleman I want.'

An hour later Hortense Bernier came out of the house, and began to walk slowly through the garden toward the terrace which overlooked the water. The servants, when they came down at an early hour, had found her up and dressed, or rather, apparently, not undressed, for she wore the same clothes as the evening before.

'*Tiens!*' exclaimed Josephine, after seeing her, 'Madame gained ten years yesterday; she has gained ten more during the night.'

When Madame Bernier reached the middle of the garden she halted, and stood for a moment motionless, listening. The next, she uttered a great cry. For she saw a figure emerge from below the terrace, and come limping toward her with outstretched arms.

The Story of a Year

I.

My story begins as a great many stories have begun within the last three years, and indeed as a great many have ended; for, when the hero is despatched, does not the romance come to a stop?

In early May, two years ago, a young couple I wot of strolled homeward from an evening walk, a long ramble among the peaceful hills which inclosed their rustic home. Into these peaceful hills the young man had brought, not the rumor, (which was an old inhabitant,) but some of the reality of war,—a little whiff of gunpowder, the clanking of a sword; for, although Mr. John Ford had his campaign still before him, he wore a certain comely air of camp-life which stamped him a very Hector to the steady-going villagers, and a very pretty fellow to Miss Elizabeth Crowe, his companion in this sentimental stroll. And was he not attired in the great brightness of blue and gold which befits a freshly made lieutenant? This was a strange sight for these happy Northern glades; for, although the first Revolution had boomed awhile in their midst, the honest yeomen who defended them were clad in sober homespun, and it is well known that His Majesty's troops wore red.

These young people, I say, had been roaming. It was plain that they had wandered into spots where the brambles were thick and the dews heavy,—nay, into swamps and puddles where the April rains were still undried. Ford's boots and trousers had imbibed a deep foretaste of the Virginia mud; his companion's skirts were fearfully bedraggled. What great enthusiasm had made our friends so unmindful of their steps? What blinding ardor had kindled these strange phenomena: a young lieutenant scornful of his first uniform, a well-bred young lady reckless of her stockings?

Good reader, this narrative is averse to retrospect.

Elizabeth (as I shall not scruple to call her outright) was leaning upon her companion's arm, half moving in concert with him, and half allowing herself to be led, with that instinctive acknowledgment of dependence natural to a young girl who has just received the assurance of lifelong protection. Ford was lounging along with that calm, swinging stride which often bespeaks, when you can read it aright, the answering consciousness of a sudden rush of manhood. A spectator might have thought him at this moment profoundly conceited. The young girl's blue veil was dangling from his pocket; he had shouldered her sun-umbrella after the fashion of a musket on a march: he might carry these trifles. Was there not a vague longing expressed in the strong expansion of his stalwart shoulders, in the fond accommodation of his pace to hers,—her pace so submissive and slow, that, when he tried to match it, they almost came to a delightful standstill,—a silent desire for the whole fair burden?

They made their way up a long swelling mound, whose top commanded the sunset. The dim landscape which had been brightening all day to the green of spring was now darkening to the gray of evening. The lesser hills, the farms, the brooks, the fields, orchards, and woods, made a dusky gulf before the great splendor of the west. As Ford looked at the clouds, it seemed to him that their imagery was all of war, their great uneven masses were marshalled into the semblance of a battle. There were columns charging and columns flying and standards floating,—tatters of the reflected purple; and great captains on colossal horses, and a rolling canopy of cannon-smoke and fire and blood. The background of the clouds, indeed, was like

a land on fire, or a battle-ground illumined by another sunset, a country of blackened villages and crimsoned pastures. The tumult of the clouds increased; it was hard to believe them inanimate. You might have fancied them an army of gigantic souls playing at football with the sun. They seemed to sway in confused splendor; the opposing squadrons bore each other down; and then suddenly they scattered, bowling with equal velocity towards north and south, and gradually fading into the pale evening sky. The purple pennons sailed away and sank out of sight, caught, doubtless, upon the brambles of the intervening plain. Day contracted itself into a fiery ball and vanished.

Ford and Elizabeth had quietly watched this great mystery of the heavens.

"That is an allegory," said the young man, as the sun went under, looking into his companion's face, where a pink flush seemed still to linger: "it means the end of the war. The forces on both sides are withdrawn. The blood that has been shed gathers itself into a vast globule and drops into the ocean."

"I'm afraid it means a shabby compromise," said Elizabeth. "Light disappears, too, and the land is in darkness."

"Only for a season," answered the other. "We mourn our dead. Then light comes again, stronger and brighter than ever. Perhaps you 'll be crying for me, Lizzie, at that distant day."

"Oh, Jack, didn't you promise not to talk about that?" says Lizzie, threatening to anticipate the performance in question.

Jack took this rebuke in silence, gazing soberly at the empty sky. Soon the young girl's eyes stole up to his face. If he had been looking at anything in particular, I think she would have followed the direction of his glance; but as it seemed to be a very vacant one, she let her eyes rest.

"Jack," said she, after a pause, "I wonder how you 'll look when you get back."

Ford's soberness gave way to a laugh.

"Uglier than ever. I shall be all incrusted with mud and gore. And then I shall be magnificently sun-burnt, and I shall have a beard."

"Oh, you dreadful!" and Lizzie gave a little shout. "Really, Jack, if you have a beard, you 'll not look like a gentleman."

"Shall I look like a lady, pray?" says Jack.

"Are you serious?" asked Lizzie.

"To be sure. I mean to alter my face as you do your misfitting garments,—take in on one side and let out on the other. Isn't that the process? I shall crop my head and cultivate my chin."

"You 've a very nice chin, my dear, and I think it 's a shame to hide it."

"Yes, I know my chin 's handsome; but wait till you see my beard."

"Oh, the vanity!" cried Lizzie, "the vanity of men in their faces! Talk of women!" and the silly creature looked up at her lover with most inconsistent satisfaction.

"Oh, the pride of women in their husbands!" said Jack, who of course knew what she was about.

"You 're not my husband, Sir. There 's many a slip"—— But the young girl stopped short.

"Twixt the cup and the lip," said Jack. "Go on. I can match your proverb with another. 'There 's many a true word,' and so forth. No, my darling: I 'm not your husband. Perhaps I never shall be. But if anything happens to me, you 'll take comfort, won't you? "

"Never!" said Lizzie, tremulously.

"Oh, but you must; otherwise, Lizzie, I should think our engagement inexcusable. Stuff! who am I that you should cry for me?"

"You are the best and wisest of men. I don't care; you *are*."

"Thank you for your great love, my dear. That 's a delightful illusion. But I hope Time will kill it, in his own good way, before it hurts any one. I know so many men who are worth infinitely more than I — men wise, generous, and brave — that I shall not feel as if I were leaving you in an empty world."

"Oh, my dear friend! " said Lizzie, after a pause, " I wish you could advise me all my life."

"Take care, take care," laughed Jack; "you don't know what you are bargaining for. But will you let me say a word now? If by chance I 'm taken out of the world, I want you to beware of that tawdry sentiment which enjoins you to be 'constant to my memory.' My memory be hanged! Remember me at my best, — that is, fullest of the desire of humility. Don't inflict me on people. There are some widows and bereaved sweethearts who remind me of the peddler in that horrible murder-story, who carried a corpse in his pack. Really, it 's their stock in trade. The only justification of a man's personality is his rights. What rights has a dead man? — Let 's go down."

They turned southward and went jolting down the hill.

"Do you mind this talk, Lizzie? " asked Ford.

"No," said Lizzie, swallowing a sob, unnoticed by her companion in the sublime egotism of protection; "I like it."

"Very well," said the young man, "I want my memory to help you. When I am down in Virginia, I expect to get a vast deal of good from thinking of you, — to do my work better, and to keep straighter altogether. Like all lovers, I 'm horribly selfish. I expect to see a vast deal of shabbiness and baseness and turmoil, and in the midst of it all I 'm sure the inspiration of patriotism will sometimes fail. Then I 'll think of you. I love you a thousand times better than my country, Liz. — Wicked? So much the worse. It 's the truth. But if I find your memory makes a milksop of me, I shall thrust you out of the way, without ceremony, — I shall clap you into my box or between the leaves of my Bible, and only look at you on Sunday."

"I shall be very glad, Sir, if that makes you open your Bible frequently," says Elizabeth, rather demurely.

"I shall put one of your photographs against every page," cried Ford; "and then I think I shall not lack a text for my meditations. Don't you know how Catholics keep little pictures of their adored Lady in their prayer-books?"

"Yes, indeed," said Lizzie; "I should think it would be a very soul-stirring picture, when you are marching to the front, the night before a battle, — a poor, stupid girl, knitting stupid socks, in a stupid Yankee village."

Oh, the craft of artless tongues! Jack strode along in silence a few moments, splashing straight through a puddle; then, ere he was quite clear of it, he stretched out his arm and gave his companion a long embrace.

"And pray what am I to do," resumed Lizzie, wondering, rather proudly perhaps, at Jack's averted face, "while you are marching and countermarching in Virginia?"

"Your duty, of course," said Jack, in a steady voice, which belied a certain little conjecture of Lizzie's. "I think you will find the sun will rise in the east, my dear, just as it did before you were engaged."

"I 'm sure I didn't suppose it wouldn't," says Lizzie.

"By duty I don't mean anything disagreeable, Liz," pursued the young man. "I hope you 'll take your pleasure, too. I wish you might go to Boston, or even to Leatherborough, for a month or two."

"What for, pray?"

"What for? Why, for the fun of it: to 'go out,' as they say."

"Jack, do you think me capable of going to parties while you are in danger?"

"Why not? Why should I have all the fun?"

"Fun? I 'm sure you 're welcome to it all. As for me, I mean to make a new beginning."

"Of what?"

"Oh, of everything. In the first place, I shall begin to improve my mind. But don't you think it 's horrid for women to be reasonable?"

"Hard, say you?"

"Horrid,—yes, and hard too. But I mean to become so. Oh, girls are such fools, Jack! I mean to learn to like boiled mutton and history and plain sewing, and all that. Yet, when a girl 's engaged, she 's not expected to do anything in particular."

Jack laughed, and said nothing; and Lizzie went on.

"I wonder what your mother will say to the news. I think I know."

"What?"

"She 'll say you 've been very unwise. No, she won't: she never speaks so to you. She 'll say I 've been very dishonest or indelicate, or something of that kind. No, she won't either: she doesn't say such things, though I 'm sure she thinks them. I don't know what she 'll say."

"No, I think not, Lizzie, if you indulge in such conjectures. My mother never speaks without thinking. Let us hope that she may think favorably of our plan. Even if she doesn't"——

Jack did not finish his sentence, nor did Lizzie urge him. She had a great respect for his hesitations. But in a moment he began again.

"I was going to say this, Lizzie: I think for the present our engagement had better be kept quiet."

Lizzie's heart sank with a sudden disappointment. Imagine the feelings of the damsel in the fairy-tale, whom the disguised enchantress had just empowered to utter diamonds and pearls, should the old beldame have straightway added that for the present mademoiselle had better hold her tongue. Yet the disappointment was brief. I think this enviable young lady would have tripped home talking very hard to herself, and have been not ill pleased to find her little mouth turning into a tightly clasped jewel-casket. Nay, would she not on this occasion have been thankful for a large mouth, a mouth huge and unnatural, stretching from ear to ear? Who wish to cast their pearls before swine? The young lady of the pearls was, after all, but a

barnyard miss. Lizzie was too proud of Jack to be vain. It 's well enough to wear our own hearts upon our sleeves; but for those of others, when intrusted to our keeping, I think we had better find a more secluded lodging.

"You see, I think secrecy would leave us much freer," said Jack,—"*leave you* much freer."

"Oh, Jack, how can you?" cried Lizzie. "Yes, of course; I shall be falling in love with some one else. Freer! Thank you, Sir!"

"Nay, Lizzie, what I 'm saying is really kinder than it sounds. Perhaps you *will* thank me one of these days."

"Doubtless! I 've already taken a great fancy to George Mackenzie."

"Will you let me enlarge on my suggestion?"

"Oh, certainly! You seem to have your mind quite made up."

"I confess I like to take account of possibilities. Don't you know mathematics are my hobby? Did you ever study algebra? I always have an eye on the unknown quantity."

"No, I never studied algebra. I agree with you, that we had better not speak of our engagement."

"That 's right, my dear. You 're always right. But mind, I don't want to bind you to secrecy. Hang it, do as you please! Do what comes easiest to you, and you 'll do the best thing. What made me speak is my dread of the horrible publicity which clings to all this business. Nowadays, when a girl 's engaged, it 's no longer, 'Ask mamma,' simply; but, 'Ask Mrs. Brown, and Mrs. Jones, and my large circle of acquaintance, — Mrs Grundy, in short.' I say nowadays, but I suppose it 's always been so."

"Very well, we 'll keep it all nice and quiet," said Lizzie, who would have been ready to celebrate her nuptials according to the rites of the Esquimaux, had Jack seen fit to suggest it.

"I know it doesn't look well for a lover to be so cautious," pursued Jack; "but you understand me, Lizzie, don't you?"

"I don't entirely understand you, but I quite trust you."

"God bless you! My prudence, you see, is my best strength. Now, if ever, I need my strength. When a man 's a-wooing, Lizzie, he is all feeling, or he ought to be; when he 's accepted, then he begins to think."

"And to repent, I suppose you mean."

"Nay, to devise means to keep his sweetheart from repenting. Let me be frank. Is it the greatest fools only that are the best lovers? There 's no telling what may happen, Lizzie. I want you to marry me with your eyes open. I don't want you to feel tied down or taken in. You 're very young, you know. You 're responsible to yourself of a year hence. You 're at an age when no girl can count safely from year's end to year's end."

"And you, Sir!" cries Lizzie; "one would think you were a grandfather."

"Well, I 'm on the way to it I 'm a pretty old boy. I mean what I say. I may not be entirely frank, but I think I 'm sincere. It seems to me as if I 'd been fibbing all my life before I told you that your affection was necessary to my happiness. I mean it out and out. I never loved any one before, and I never will again. If you had refused me half an hour ago, I should have died a bachelor. I have no fear for myself. But I have for you. You said a few minutes ago that you wanted me to be your adviser. Now you know the function of an adviser is to perfect his victim in the art of walking with his eyes shut. I shan't be so cruel."

Lizzie saw fit to view these remarks in a humorous light. "How disinterested!" quoth she: "how very self-sacrificing! Bachelor indeed! For my part, I think I shall become a Mormon!" — I verily believe the poor misinformed creature fancied that in Utah it is the ladies who are guilty of polygamy.

Before many minutes they drew near home. There stood Mrs. Ford at the garden-gate, looking up and down the road, with a letter in her hand.

"Something for you, John," said his mother, as they approached. "It looks as if it came from camp.—Why, Elizabeth, look at your skirts!"

"I know it," says Lizzie, giving the articles in question a shake. "What is it, Jack?"

"Marching orders!" cried the young man. "The regiment leaves day after to-morrow. I must leave by the early train in the morning. Hurray!" And he diverted a sudden gleeful kiss into a filial salute.

They went in. The two women were silent, after the manner of women who suffer. But Jack did little else than laugh and talk and circumnavigate the parlor, sitting first here and then there,—close beside Lizzie and on the opposite side of the room. After a while Miss Crowe joined in his laughter, but I think her mirth might have been resolved into articulate heart-beats. After tea she went to bed, to give Jack opportunity for his last filial *épanchements*. How generous a man's intervention makes women! But Lizzie promised to see her lover off in the morning.

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Ford. "You'll not be up. John will want to breakfast quietly."

"I shall see you off, Jack," repeated the young lady, from the threshold.

Elizabeth went up stairs buoyant with her young love. It had dawned upon her like a new life, — a life positively worth the living. Hereby she would subsist and cost nobody anything. In it she was boundlessly rich. She would make it the hidden spring of a hundred praiseworthy deeds. She would begin the career of duty: she would enjoy boundless equanimity: she would raise her whole being to the level of her sublime passion. She would practise charity, humility, piety, — in fine, all the virtues: together with certain *morceaux* of Beethoven and Chopin. She would walk the earth like one glorified. She would do homage to the best of men by inviolate secrecy. Here, by I know not what gentle transition, as she lay in the quiet darkness, Elizabeth covered her pillow with a flood of tears.

Meanwhile Ford, down-stairs, began in this fashion. He was lounging at his manly length on the sofa, in his slippers.

"May I light a pipe, mother?"

"Yes, my love. But please be careful of your ashes. There 's a newspaper."

"Pipes don't make ashes. — Mother, what do you think?" he continued, between the puffs of his smoking; "I 've got a piece of news."

"Ah?" said Mrs. Ford, fumbling for her scissors; "I hope it 's good news."

"I hope you 'll think it so. I 've been engaging myself" — puff, — puff — "to Lizzie Crowe." A cloud of puffs between his mother's face and his own. When they cleared away, Jack felt his mother's eyes. Her work was in her lap. "To be married, you know," he added.

In Mrs. Ford's view, like the king in that of the British Constitution, her only son could do no wrong. Prejudice is a stout bulwark against surprise. Moreover, Mrs. Ford's motherly instinct had not been entirely at fault. Still, it had by no means kept pace with fact. She had been silent, partly from doubt, partly out of respect for her son. As long as John did not doubt of

himself, he was right. Should he come to do so, she was sure he would speak. And now, when he told her the matter was settled, she persuaded herself that he was asking her advice.

"I 've been expecting it," she said, at last.

"You have? why didn't you speak?"

"Well, John, I can't say I 've been hoping it."

"Why not?"

"I am not sure of Lizzie's heart," said Mrs. Ford, who, it may be well to add, was very sure of her own. Jack began to laugh. "What 's the matter with her heart?"

"I think Lizzie 's shallow," said Mrs. Ford; and there was that in her tone which betokened some satisfaction with this adjective.

"Hang it! she is shallow," said Jack. "But when a thing 's shallow, you can see to the bottom. Lizzie doesn't pretend to be deep. I want a wife, mother, that I can understand. That 's the only wife I can love. Lizzie 's the only girl I ever understood, and the first I ever loved. I love her very much, — more than I can explain to you."

"Yes, I confess it 's inexplicable. It seems to me," she added, with a bad smile, "like infatuation."

Jack did not like the smile; he liked it even less than the remark. He smoked steadily for a few moments, and then he said, "Well, mother, love is notoriously obstinate, you know. We shall not be able to take the same view of this subject: suppose we drop it."

"Remember that this is your last evening at home, my son," said Mrs. Ford.

"I do remember. Therefore I wish to avoid disagreement."

There was a pause. The young man smoked, and his mother sewed, in silence.

"I think my position, as Lizzie's guardian," resumed Mrs. Ford, "entitles me to an interest in the matter."

'Certainly, I acknowledged your interest by telling you of our engagement."

Further pause.

"Will you allow me to say," said Mrs. Ford, after a while, "that I think this a little selfish?"

"Allow you? Certainly, if you particularly desire it. Though I confess it isn't very pleasant for a man to sit and hear his future wife pitched into, — by his own mother, too."

"John, I am surprised at your language."

"I beg your pardon," and John spoke more gently. "You mustn't be surprised at anything from an accepted lover. — I 'm sure you misconceive her. In fact, mother, I don't believe you know her."

Mrs. Ford nodded, with an infinite depth of meaning; and from the grimness with which she bit off the end of her thread it might have seemed that she fancied herself to be executing a human vengeance.

"Ah, I know her only too well!"

"And you don't like her?"

Mrs. Ford performed another decapitation of her thread.

"Well, I 'm glad Lizzie has one friend in the world," said Jack.

"Her best friend," said Mrs. Ford, "is the one who flatters her least. I see it all, John. Her pretty face has done the business."

The young man flushed impatiently.

"Mother," said he, "you are very much mistaken. I 'm not a boy nor a fool. You trust me in a great many things; why not trust me in this?"

"My dear son, you are throwing yourself away. You deserve for your companion in life a higher character than that girl."

I think Mrs. Ford, who had been an excellent mother, would have liked to give her son a wife fashioned on her own model.

"Oh, come, mother," said he, "that 's twaddle. I should be thankful, if I were half as good as Lizzie."

"It 's the truth, John, and your conduct — not only the step you 've taken, but your talk about it — is a great disappointment to me. If I have cherished any wish of late, it is that my darling boy should get a wife worthy of him. The household governed by Elizabeth Crowe is not the home I should desire for any one I love."

"It's one to which you should always be welcome, Ma'am," said Jack.

"It's not a place I should feel at home in," replied his mother.

"I 'm sorry," said Jack. And he got up and began to walk about the room.

"Well, well, mother," he said at last, stopping in front of Mrs. Ford, "we don't understand each other. One of these days we shall. For the present let us have done with discussion. I 'm half sorry I told you."

"I 'm glad of such a proof of your confidence. But if you hadn't, of course Elizabeth would have done so."

"No, Ma'am, I think not."

"Then she is even more reckless of her obligations than I thought her."

"I advised her to say nothing about it."

Mrs. Ford made no answer. She began slowly to fold up her work.

"I think we had better let the matter stand," continued her son. "I 'm not afraid of time. But I wish to make a request of you: you won't mention this conversation to Lizzie, will you? nor allow her to suppose that you know of our engagement? I have a particular reason."

Mrs. Ford went on smoothing out her work. Then she suddenly looked up.

"No, my dear, I 'll keep your secret. Give me a kiss."

II.

I Have no intention of following Lieutenant Ford to the seat of war. The exploits of his campaign are recorded in the public journals of the day, where the curious may still peruse them. My own taste has always been for unwritten history, and my present business is with the reverse of the picture.

After Jack went off, the two ladies resumed their old homely life. But the homeliest life had now ceased to be repulsive to Elizabeth. Her common duties were no longer wearisome: for the first time, she experienced the delicious companionship of thought. Her chief task was still to sit by the window knitting soldiers' socks; but even Mrs. Ford could not help owning

that she worked with a much greater diligence, yawned, rubbed her eyes, gazed up and down the road less, and indeed produced a much more comely article. Ah, me! if half the lovesome fancies that flitted through Lizzie's spirit in those busy hours could have found their way into the texture of the dingy yarn, as it was slowly wrought into shape, the eventual wearer of the socks would have been as light-footed as Mercury. I am afraid I should make the reader sneer, were I to rehearse some of this little fool's diversions. She passed several hours daily in Jack's old chamber: it was in this sanctuary, indeed, at the sunny south window, overlooking the long road, the wood-crowned heights, the gleaming river, that she worked with most pleasure and profit. Here she was removed from the untiring glance of the elder lady, from her jarring questions and commonplaces; here she was alone with her love, — that greatest commonplace in life. Lizzie felt in Jack's room a certain impress of his personality. The idle fancies of her mood were bodied forth in a dozen sacred relics. Some of these articles Elizabeth carefully cherished. It was rather late in the day for her to assert a literary taste, — her reading having begun and ended (naturally enough) with the ancient fiction of the "Scottish Chiefs." So she could hardly help smiling, herself, sometimes, at her interest in Jack's old college tomes. She carried several of them to her own apartment, and placed them at the foot of her little bed, on a book-shelf adorned, besides, with a pot of spring violets, a portrait of General McClellan, and a likeness of Lieutenant Ford. She had a vague belief that a loving study of their well-thumbed verses would remedy, in some degree, her sad intellectual deficiencies. She was sorry she knew so little: as sorry, that is, as she might be, for we know that she was shallow. Jack's omniscience was one of his most awful attributes. And yet she comforted herself with the thought, that, as he had forgiven her ignorance, she herself might surely forget it. Happy Lizzie, I envy you this easy path to knowledge! The volume she most frequently consulted was an old German "Faust," over which she used to fumble with a battered lexicon. The secret of this preference was in certain marginal notes in pencil, signed "J." I hope they were really of Jack's making.

Lizzie was always a small walker. Until she knew Jack, this had been quite an unsuspected pleasure. She was afraid, too, of the cows, geese, and sheep, — all the agricultural *spectra* of the feminine imagination. But now her terrors were over. Might she not play the soldier, too, in her own humble way? Often with a beating heart, I fear, but still with resolute, elastic steps, she revisited Jack's old haunts; she tried to love Nature as he had seemed to love it; she gazed at his old sunsets; she fathomed his old pools with bright plummet glances, as if seeking some lingering trace of his features in their brown depths, stamped there as on a fond human heart; she sought out his dear name, scratched on the rocks and trees, — and when night came on, she studied, in her simple way, the great starlit canopy, under which, perhaps, her warrior lay sleeping; she wandered through the green glades, singing snatches of his old ballads in a clear voice, made tuneful with love, — and as she sang, there mingled with the everlasting murmur of the trees the faint sound of a muffled bass, borne upon the south wind like a distant drum-beat, responsive to a bugle. So she led for some months a very pleasant idyllic life, face to face with a strong, vivid memory, which gave everything and asked nothing. These were doubtless to be (and she half knew it) the happiest days of her life. Has life any bliss so great as this pensive ecstasy? To know that the golden sands are dropping one by one makes servitude freedom, and poverty riches.

In spite of a certain sense of loss, Lizzie passed a very blissful summer. She enjoyed the deep repose which, it is to be hoped, sanctifies all honest betrothals. Possible calamity weighed lightly upon her. We know that when the columns of battle-smoke leave the field, they journey through the heavy air to a thousand quiet homes, and play about the crackling blaze of as many firesides. But Lizzie's vision was never clouded. Mrs. Ford might gaze into the thickening summer dusk and wipe her spectacles; but her companion hummed her old ballad-

ends with an unbroken voice. She no more ceased to smile under evil tidings than the brooklet ceases to ripple beneath the projected shadow of the roadside willow. The self-given promises of that tearful night of parting were forgotten. Vigilance had no place in Lizzie's scheme of heavenly idleness. The idea of moralizing in Elysium!

It must not be supposed that Mrs. Ford was indifferent to Lizzie's mood. She studied it watchfully, and kept note of all its variations. And among the things she learned was, that her companion knew of her scrutiny, and was, on the whole, indifferent to it. Of the full extent of Mrs. Ford's observation, however, I think Lizzie was hardly aware. She was like a reveller in a brilliantly lighted room, with a curtainless window, conscious, and yet heedless, of passers-by. And Mrs. Ford may not inaptly be compared to the chilly spectator on the dark side of the pane. Very few words passed on the topic of their common thoughts. From the first, as we have seen, Lizzie guessed at her guardian's probable view of her engagement: an abasement incurred by John. Lizzie lacked what is called a sense of duty; and, unlike the majority of such temperaments, which contrive to be buoyant on the glistening bubble of Dignity, she had likewise a modest estimate of her dues. Alack, my poor heroine had no pride! Mrs. Ford's silent censure awakened no resentment. It sounded in her ears like a dull, soporific hum. Lizzie was deeply enamored of what a French book terms her *aïses intellectuelles*. Her mental comfort lay in the ignoring of problems. She possessed a certain native insight which revealed many of the horrent inequalities of her pathway; but she found it so cruel and disenchanting a faculty, that blindness was infinitely preferable. She preferred repose to order, and mercy to justice. She was speculative, without being critical. She was continually wondering, but she never inquired. This world was the riddle; the next alone would be the answer.

So she never felt any desire to have an "understanding" with Mrs. Ford. Did the old lady misconceive her? it was her own business. Mrs. Ford apparently felt no desire to set herself right. You see, Lizzie was ignorant of her friend's promise. There were moments when Mrs. Ford's tongue itched to speak. There were others, it is true, when she dreaded any explanation which would compel her to forfeit her displeasure. Lizzie's happy self-sufficiency was most irritating. She grudged the young girl the dignity of her secret; her own actual knowledge of it rather increased her jealousy, by showing her the importance of the scheme from which she was excluded. Lizzie, being in perfect good-humor with the world and with herself, abated no jot of her personal deference to Mrs. Ford. Of Jack, as a good friend and her guardian's son, she spoke very freely. But Mrs. Ford was mistrustful of this semi-confidence. She would not, she often said to herself, be wheedled against her principles. Her principles! Oh for some shining blade of purpose to hew down such stubborn stakes! Lizzie had no thought of flattering her companion. She never deceived any one but herself. She could not bring herself to value Mrs. Ford's good-will. She knew that Jack often suffered from his mother's obstinacy. So her unbroken humility shielded no unavowed purpose. She was patient and kindly from nature, from habit. Yet I think, that, if Mrs. Ford could have measured her benignity, she would have preferred, on the whole, the most open defiance. "Of all things," she would sometimes mutter, "to be patronized by that little piece!" It was very disagreeable, for instance, to have to listen to *portions* of her own son's letters.

These letters came week by week, flying out of the South like white-winged carrier-doves. Many and many a time, for very pride, Lizzie would have liked a larger audience. Portions of them certainly deserved publicity. They were far too good for her. Were they not better than that stupid war-correspondence in the "Times," which she so often tried in vain to read? They contained long details of movements, plans of campaigns, military opinions and conjectures, expressed with the emphasis habitual to young sub-lieutenants. I doubt whether General Halleck's despatches laid down the law more absolutely than Lieutenant Ford's. Lizzie

answered in her own fashion. It must be owned that hers was a dull pen. She told her dearest, dearest Jack how much she loved and honored him, and how much she missed him, and how delightful his last letter was, (with those beautifully drawn diagrams,) and the village gossip, and how stout and strong his mother continued to be, — and again, how she loved, etc., etc., and that she remained his loving L. Jack read these effusions as became one so beloved. I should not wonder if he thought them very brilliant.

The summer waned to its close, and through myriad silent stages began to darken into autumn. Who can tell the story of those red months? I have to chronicle another silent transition. But as I can find no words delicate and fine enough to describe the multifold changes of Nature, so, too, I must be content to give you the spiritual facts in gross.

John Ford became a veteran down by the Potomac. And, to tell the truth, Lizzie became a veteran at home. That is, her love and hope grew to be an old story. She gave way, as the strongest must, as the wisest will, to time. The passion which, in her simple, shallow way, she had confided to the woods and waters reflected their outward variations; she thought of her lover less, and with less positive pleasure. The golden sands had run out. Perfect rest was over. Mrs. Ford's tacit protest began to be annoying. In a rather resentful spirit, Lizzie forbore to read any more letters aloud. These were as regular as ever. One of them contained a rough camp-photograph of Jack's newly bearded visage. Lizzie declared it was "too ugly for anything," and thrust it out of sight. She found herself skipping his military dissertations, which were still as long and written in as handsome a hand as ever. The "too good," which used to be uttered rather proudly, was now rather a wearisome truth. When Lizzie in certain critical moods tried to qualify Jack's temperament, she said to herself that he was too literal. Once he gave her a little scolding for not writing oftener. "Jack can make no allowances," murmured Lizzie. "He can understand no feelings but his own. I remember he used to say that moods were diseases. His mind is too healthy for such things; his heart is too stout for ache or pain. The night before he went off he told me that Reason, as he calls it, was the rule of life. I suppose he thinks it the rule of love, too. But his heart is younger than mine, — younger and better. He has lived through awful scenes of danger and bloodshed and cruelty, yet his heart is purer." Lizzie had a horrible feeling of being *blasée* of this one affection. "Oh, God bless him!" she cried. She felt much better for the tears in which this soliloquy ended. I fear she had begun to doubt her ability to cry about Jack.

III.

Christmas came. The Army of the Potomac had stacked its muskets and gone into winter-quarters. Miss Crowe received an invitation to pass the second fortnight in February at the great manufacturing town of Leatherborough. Leatherborough is on the railroad, two hours south of Glenham, at the mouth of the great river Tan, where this noble stream expands into its broadest smile, or gapes in too huge a fashion to be disguised by a bridge.

"Mrs. Littlefield kindly invites you for the last of the month," said Mrs. Ford, reading a letter behind the tea-urn. It suited Mrs. Ford's purpose — a purpose which I have not space to elaborate — that her young charge should now go forth into society and pick up acquaintances.

Two sparks of pleasure gleamed in Elizabeth's eyes. But, as she had taught herself to do of late with her protectress, she mused before answering.

"It is my desire that you should go," said Mrs. Ford, taking silence for dissent.

The sparks went out.

"I intend to go," said Lizzie, rather grimly. "I am much obliged to Mrs. Littlefield."

Her companion looked up.

"I intend you shall. You will please to write this morning."

For the rest of the week the two stitched together over muslins and silks, and were very good friends. Lizzie could scarcely help wondering at Mrs. Ford's zeal on her behalf. Might she not have referred it to her guardian's principles? Her wardrobe, hitherto fashioned on the Glenham notion of elegance, was gradually raised to the Leatherborough standard of fitness. As she took up her bedroom candle the night before she left home, she said, "I thank you very much, Mrs. Ford, for having worked so hard for me, for having taken so much interest in my outfit. If they ask me at Leatherborough who made my things, I shall certainly say it was you."

Mrs. Littlefield treated her young friend with great kindness. She was a good-natured, childless matron. She found Lizzie very ignorant and very pretty. She was glad to have so great a beauty and so many lions to show.

One evening Lizzie went to her room with one of the maids, carrying half a dozen candles between them. Heaven forbid that I should cross that virgin threshold — for the present! But we will wait. We will allow them two hours. At the end of that time, having gently knocked, we will enter the sanctuary. Glory of glories! The faithful attendant has done her work. Our lady is robed, crowned, ready for worshippers.

I trust I shall not be held to a minute description of our dear Lizzie's person and costume. Who is so great a recluse as never to have beheld young ladyhood in full dress? Many of us have sisters and daughters. Not a few of us, I hope, have female connections of another degree, yet no less dear. Others have looking-glasses. I give you my word for it that Elizabeth made as pretty a show as it is possible to see. She was of course well-dressed. Her skirt was of voluminous white, puffed and trimmed in wondrous sort. Her hair was profusely ornamented with curls and braids of its own rich substance. From her waist depended a ribbon, broad and blue. White with coral ornaments, as she wrote to Jack in the course of the week. Coral ornaments, forsooth! And pray, Miss, what of the other jewels with which your person was decorated, — the rubies, pearls, and sapphires? One by one Lizzie assumes her modest gimcracks: her bracelet, her gloves, her handkerchief, her fan, and then her smile. Ah, that strange crowning smile!

An hour later, in Mrs. Littlefield's pretty drawing-room, amid music, lights, and talk, Miss Crowe was sweeping a grand curtsy before a tall, sallow man, whose name she caught from her hostess's redundant murmur as Bruce. Five minutes later, when the honest matron gave a glance at her newly started enterprise from the other side of the room, she said to herself that really, for a plain country-girl, Miss Crowe did this kind of thing very well. Her next glimpse of the couple showed them whirling round the room to the crashing thrum of the piano. At eleven o'clock she beheld them linked by their finger-tips in the dazzling mazes of the reel. At half-past eleven she discerned them charging shoulder to shoulder in the serried columns of the Lancers. At midnight she tapped her young friend gently with her fan.

"Your sash is unpinned, my dear. — I think you have danced often enough with Mr. Bruce. If he asks you again, you had better refuse. It's not quite the thing. — Yes, my dear, I know. — Mr. Simpson, will you be so good as to take Miss Crowe down to supper?"

I'm afraid young Simpson had rather a snappish partner.

After the proper interval, Mr. Bruce called to pay his respects to Mrs. Littlefield. He found Miss Crowe also in the drawing-room. Lizzie and he met like old friends. Mrs. Littlefield was a willing listener; but it seemed to her that she had come in at the second act of the play.

Bruce went off with Miss Crowe's promise to drive with him in the afternoon. In the afternoon he swept up to the door in a prancing, tinkling sleigh. After some minutes of hoarse jesting and silvery laughter in the keen wintry air, he swept away again with Lizzie curled up in the buffalo-robe beside him, like a kitten in a rug. It was dark when they returned. When Lizzie came in to the sitting-room fire, she was congratulated by her hostess upon having made a "conquest."

"I think he 's a most gentlemanly man," says Lizzie.

"So he is, my dear," said Mrs. Littlefield; "Mr. Bruce is a perfect gentleman. He 's one of the finest young men I know. He 's not so young either. He 's a little too yellow for my taste; but he 's beautifully educated. I wish you could hear his French accent. He has been abroad I don't know how many years. The firm of Bruce and Robertson does an immense business."

"And I 'm so glad," cries Lizzie, "he 's coming to Glenham in March! He 's going to take his sister to the water-cure."

"Really? — poor thing! She has very good manners."

"What do you think of his looks?" asked Lizzie, smoothing her feather.

"I was speaking of Jane Bruce. I think Mr. Bruce has fine eyes."

"I must say I like tall men," says Miss Crowe.

"Then Robert Bruce is your man," laughs Mr. Littlefield. "He 's as tall as a bell-tower. And he 's got a bell-clapper in his head, too."

"I believe I will go and take off my things," remarks Miss Crowe, flinging up her curls.

Of course it behooved Mr. Bruce to call the next day and see how Miss Crowe had stood her drive. He set a veto upon her intended departure, and presented an invitation from his sister for the following week. At Mrs. Littlefield's instance, Lizzie accepted the invitation, despatched a laconic note to Mrs. Ford, and stayed over for Miss Bruce's party. It was a grand affair. Miss Bruce was a very great lady: she treated Miss Crowe with every attention. Lizzie was thought by some persons to look prettier than ever. The vaporous gauze, the sunny hair, the coral, the sapphires, the smile, were displayed with renewed success. The master of the house was unable to dance; he was summoned to sterner duties. Nor could Miss Crowe be induced to perform, having hurt her foot on the ice. This was of course a disappointment; let us hope that her entertainers made it up to her.

On the second day after the party, Lizzie returned to Glenham. Good Mr. Littlefield took her to the station, stealing a moment from his precious business-hours.

"There are your checks," said he; "be sure you don't lose them. Put them in your glove."

Lizzie gave a little scream of merriment.

"Mr. Littlefield, how can you? I 've a reticule, Sir. But I really don't want you to stay."

"Well, I confess," said her companion.—"Hullo! there 's your Scottish chief! I 'll get him to stay with you till the train leaves. He may be going. Bruce!"

"Oh, Mr. Littlefield, don't!" cries Lizzie. "Perhaps Mr. Bruce is engaged."

Bruce's tall figure came striding towards them. He was astounded to find that Miss Crowe was going by this train. Delightful! He had come to meet a friend who had not arrived.

"Littlefield," said he, "you can't be spared from your business. I will see Miss Crowe off."

When the elder gentleman had departed, Mr. Bruce conducted his companion into the car, and found her a comfortable seat, equidistant from the torrid stove and the frigid door. Then he stowed away her shawls, umbrella, and reticule. She would keep her muff? She did well. What a pretty fur!

"It 's just like your collar," said Lizzie. "I wish I had a muff for my feet," she pursued, tapping on the floor.

"Why not use some of those shawls?" said Bruce; "let 's see what we can make of them."

And he stooped down and arranged them as a rug, very neatly and kindly. And then he called himself a fool for not having used the next seat, which was empty; and the wrapping was done over again.

"I 'm so afraid you 'll be carried off!" said Lizzie. "What would you do?"

"I think I should make the best of it. And you?"

"I would tell you to sit down *there*"; and she indicated the seat facing her. He took it. "Now you 'll be sure to," said Elizabeth.

"I 'm afraid I shall, unless I put the newspaper between us." And he took it out of his pocket. "Have you seen the news?"

"No," says Lizzie, elongating her bonnet-ribbons. "What is it? Just look at that party."

"There 's not much news. There 's been a scrimmage on the Rappahannock. Two of our regiments engaged, — the Fifteenth and the Twenty-Eighth. Didn't you tell me you had a cousin or something in the Fifteenth?"

"Not a cousin, no relation, but an intimate friend, — my guardian's son. What does the paper say, please?" inquires Lizzie, very pale.

Bruce cast his eye over the report. "It doesn't seem to have amounted to much; we drove back the enemy, and recrossed the river at our ease. Our loss only fifty. There are no names," he added, catching a glimpse of Lizzie's pallor, — "none in this paper at least."

In a few moments appeared a newsboy crying the New York journals.

"Do you think the New York papers would have any names?" asked Lizzie.

"We can try," said Bruce. And he bought a "Herald," and unfolded it. "Yes, there *is* a list," he continued, some time after he had opened out the sheet. "What 's your friend's name?" he asked, from behind the paper.

"Ford, — John Ford, second lieutenant," said Lizzie. There was a long pause. At last Bruce lowered the sheet, and showed a face in which Lizzie's pallor seemed faintly reflected.

"There *is* such a name among the wounded," he said; and, folding the paper down, he held it out, and gently crossed to the seat beside her.

Lizzie took the paper, and held it close to her eyes. But Bruce could not help seeing that her temples had turned from white to crimson.

"Do you see it?" he asked; "I sincerely hope it 's nothing very bad."

"*Severely*," whispered Lizzie.

"Yes, but that proves nothing. Those things are most unreliable. *Do* hope for the best."

Lizzie made no answer. Meanwhile passengers had been brushing in, and the car was full. The engine began to puff, and the conductor to shout. The train gave a jog.

"You 'd better go, Sir, or you 'll be carried off," said Lizzie, holding out her hand, with her face still hidden.

"May I go on to the next station with you?" said Bruce.

Lizzie gave him a rapid look, with a deepened flush. He had fancied that she was shedding tears. But those eyes were dry; they held fire rather than water.

"No, no, Sir; you must not. I insist. Good bye."

Bruce's offer had cost him a blush, too. He had been prepared to back it with the assurance that he had business ahead, and, indeed, to make a little business in order to satisfy his conscience. But Lizzie's answer was final.

"Very well," said he, "*good* bye. You have my real sympathy, Miss Crowe. Don't despair. We shall meet again."

The train rattled away. Lizzie caught a glimpse of a tall figure with lifted hat on the platform. But she sat motionless, with her head against the windowframe, her veil down, and her hands idle.

She had enough to do to think, or rather to feel. It is fortunate that the utmost shock of evil tidings often comes first. After that everything is for the better. Jack's name stood printed in that fatal column like a stern signal for despair. Lizzie felt conscious of a crisis which almost arrested her breath. Night had fallen at midday: what was the hour? A tragedy had stepped into her life: was she spectator or actor? She found herself face to face with death: was it not her own soul masquerading in a shroud? She sat in a half-stupor. She had been aroused from a dream into a waking nightmare. It was like hearing a murder-shriek while you turn the page of your novel. But I cannot describe these things. In time the crushing sense of calamity loosened its grasp. Feeling lashed her pinions. Thought struggled to rise. Passion was still, stunned, floored. She had recoiled like a receding wave for a stronger onset. A hundred ghastly fears and fancies strutted a moment, pecking at the young girl's naked heart, like sandpipers on the weltering beach. Then, as with a great murmurous rush, came the meaning of her grief. The flood-gates of emotion were opened.

At last passion exhausted itself, and Lizzie thought. Bruce's parting words rang in her ears. She did her best to hope. She reflected that wounds, even severe wounds, did not necessarily mean death. Death might easily be warded off. She would go to Jack; she would nurse him; she would watch by him; she would cure him. Even if Death had already beckoned, she would strike down his hand: if Life had already obeyed, she would issue the stronger mandate of Love. She would stanch his wounds; she would unseal his eyes with her kisses; she would call till he answered her.

Lizzie reached home and walked up the garden path. Mrs. Ford stood in the parlor as she entered, upright, pale, and rigid. Each read the other's countenance. Lizzie went towards her slowly and giddily. She must of course kiss her patroness. She took her listless hand and bent towards her stern lips. Habitually Mrs. Ford was the most undemonstrative of women. But as Lizzie looked closer into her face, she read the signs of a grief infinitely more potent than her own. The formal kiss gave way: the young girl leaned her head on the old woman's shoulder and burst into sobs. Mrs. Ford acknowledged those tears with a slow inclination of the head, full of a certain grim pathos: she put out her arms and pressed them closer to her heart.

At last Lizzie disengaged herself and sat down.

"I am going to him," said Mrs. Ford.

Lizzie's dizziness returned. Mrs. Ford was going, — and she, she?

"I am going to nurse him, and with God's help to save him."

"How did you hear?"

"I have a telegram from the surgeon of the regiment"; and Mrs. Ford held out a paper.

Lizzie took it and read: "Lieutenant Ford dangerously wounded in the action of yesterday. You had better come on."

"I should like to go myself," said Lizzie: "I think Jack would like to have me."

"Nonsense! A pretty place for a young girl! I am not going for sentiment; I am going for use."

Lizzie leaned her head back in her chair, and closed her eyes. From the moment they had fallen upon Mrs. Ford, she had felt a certain quiescence. And now it was a relief to have responsibility denied her. Like most weak persons, she was glad to step out of the current of life, now that it had begun to quicken into action. In emergencies, such persons are tacitly counted out; and they as tacitly consent to the arrangement. Even to the sensitive spirit there is a certain meditative rapture in standing on the quiet shore, (beside the ruminating cattle,) and watching the hurrying, eddying flood, which makes up for the loss of dignity. Lizzie's heart resumed its peaceful throbs. She sat, almost dreamily, with her eyes shut.

"I leave in an hour," said Mrs. Ford. "I am going to get ready. — Do you hear?"

The young girl's silence was a deeper consent than her companion supposed.

IV.

It was a week before Lizzie heard from Mrs. Ford. The letter, when it came, was very brief. Jack still lived. The wounds were three in number, and very serious; he was unconscious; he had not recognized her; but still the chances either way were thought equal. They would be much greater for his recovery nearer home; but it was impossible to move him. "I write from the midst of horrible scenes," said the poor lady. Subjoined was a list of necessary medicines, comforts, and delicacies, to be boxed up and sent.

For a while Lizzie found occupation in writing a letter to Jack, to be read in his first lucid moment, as she told Mrs. Ford. This lady's man-of-business came up from the village to superintend the packing of the boxes. Her directions were strictly followed; and in no point were they found wanting. Mr. Mackenzie bespoke Lizzie's admiration for their friend's wonderful clearness of memory and judgment. "I wish we had that woman at the head of affairs," said he. "Gad, I'd apply for a Brigadier-Generalship." — "I'd apply to be sent South," thought Lizzie. When the boxes and letter were despatched, she sat down to await more news. Sat down, say I? Sat down, and rose, and wondered, and sat down again. These were lonely, weary days. Very different are the idleness of love and the idleness of grief. Very different is it to be alone with your hope and alone with your despair. Lizzie failed to rally her musings. I do not mean to say that her sorrow was very poignant, although she fancied it was. Habit was a great force in her simple nature; and her chief trouble now was that habit refused to work. Lizzie had to grapple with the stern tribulation of a decision to make, a problem to solve. She felt that there was some spiritual barrier between herself and repose. So she began in her usual fashion to build up a false repose on the hither side of belief. She might as well have tried to float on the Dead Sea. Peace eluding her, she tried to resign herself to tumult. She drank deep at the well of self-pity, but found its waters brackish. People are apt to think that they may temper the penalties of misconduct by self-commiseration, just as they season the long aftertaste of beneficence by a little spice of self-applause. But the Power of Good is a more grateful master than the Devil. What bliss to gaze into the smooth gurgling wake of a good deed, while the comely bark sails on with floating

pennon! What horror to look into the muddy sediment which floats round the piratic keel! Go, sinner, and dissolve it with your tears! And you, scoffing friend, there is the way out! Or would you prefer the window? I'm an honest man forevermore.

One night Lizzie had a dream, a rather disagreeable one, which haunted her during many waking hours. It seemed to her that she was walking in a lonely place, with a tall, dark-eyed man who called her wife. Suddenly, in the shadow of a tree, they came upon an unburied corpse. Lizzie proposed to dig him a grave. They dug a great hole and took hold of the corpse to lift him in; when suddenly he opened his eyes. Then they saw that he was covered with wounds. He looked at them intently for some time, turning his eyes from one to the other. At last he solemnly said, "Amen!" and closed his eyes. Then she and her companion placed him in the grave, and shovelled the earth over him, and stamped it down with their feet.

He of the dark eyes and he of the wounds were the two constantly recurring figures of Lizzie's reveries. She could never think of John without thinking of the courteous Leatherborough gentleman, too. These were the *data* of her problem. These two figures stood like opposing knights, (the black and the white,) foremost on the great chess-board of fate. Lizzie was the wearied, puzzled player. She would idly finger the other pieces, and shift them carelessly hither and thither; but it was of no avail: the game lay between the two knights. She would shut her eyes and long for some kind hand to come and tamper with the board; she would open them and see the two knights standing immovable, face to face. It was nothing new. A fancy had come in and offered defiance to a fact; they must fight it out. Lizzie generously inclined to the fancy, the unknown champion, with a reputation to make. Call her *blasée*, if you like, this little girl, whose record told of a couple of dances and a single lover, heartless, old before her time. Perhaps she deserves your scorn. I confess she thought herself ill-used. By whom? by what? wherein? These were questions Miss Crowe was not prepared to answer. Her intellect was unequal to the stern logic of human events. She expected two and two to make five: as why should they not for the nonce? She was like an actor who finds himself on the stage with a half-learned part and without sufficient wit to extemporize. Pray, where is the prompter? Alas, Elizabeth, that you had no mother! Young girls are prone to fancy that when once they have a lover, they have everything they need: a conclusion inconsistent with the belief entertained by many persons, that life begins with love. Lizzie's fortunes became old stories to her before she had half read them through. Jack's wounds and danger were an old story. Do not suppose that she had exhausted the lessons, the suggestions of these awful events, their inspirations, exhortations, that she had wept as became the horror of the tragedy. No: the curtain had not yet fallen, yet our young lady had begun to yawn. To yawn? Ay, and to long for the afterpiece. Since the tragedy dragged, might she not divert herself with that well-bred man beside her?

Elizabeth was far from owing to herself that she had fallen away from her love. For my own part, I need no better proof of the fact than the dull persistency with which she denied it. What accusing voice broke out of the stillness? Jack's nobleness and magnanimity were the hourly theme of her clogged fancy. Again and again she declared to herself that she was unworthy of them, but that, if he would only recover and come home, she would be his eternal bond-slave. So she passed a very miserable month. Let us hope that her childish spirit was being tempered to some useful purpose. Let us hope so.

She roamed about the empty house with her footsteps tracked by an unlaid ghost. She cried aloud and said that she was very unhappy; she groaned and called herself wicked. Then, sometimes, appalled at her moral perplexities, she declared that she was neither wicked nor unhappy; she was contented, patient, and wise. Other girls had lost their lovers: it was the present way of life. Was she weaker than most women? Nay, but Jack was the best of men. If

he would only come back directly, without delay, as he was, senseless, dying even, that she might look at him, touch him, speak to him! Then she would say that she could no longer answer for herself, and wonder (or pretend to wonder) whether she were not going mad. Suppose Mrs. Ford should come back and find her in an unswept room, pallid and insane? or suppose she should die of her troubles? What if she should kill herself? — dismiss the servants, and close the house, and lock herself up with a knife? Then she would cut her arm to escape from dismay at what she had already done; and then her courage would ebb away with her blood, and, having so far pledged herself to despair, her life would ebb away with her courage; and then, alone, in darkness, with none to help her, she would vainly scream, and thrust the knife into her temple, and swoon to death. And Jack would come back, and burst into the house, and wander through the empty rooms, calling her name, and for all answer get a death-scent! These imaginings were the more creditable or discreditable to Lizzie, that she had never read "Romeo and Juliet." At any rate, they served to dissipate time, — heavy, weary time, — the more heavy and weary as it bore dark foreshadowings of some momentous event. If that event would only come, whatever it was, and sever this Gordian knot of doubt!

The days passed slowly: the leaden sands dropped one by one. The roads were too bad for walking; so Lizzie was obliged to confine her restlessness to the narrow bounds of the empty house, or to an occasional journey to the village, where people sickened her by their dull indifference to her spiritual agony. Still they could not fail to remark how poorly Miss Crowe was looking. This was true, and Lizzie knew it. I think she even took a certain comfort in her pallor and in her failing interest in her dress. There was some satisfaction in displaying her white roses amid the apple-cheeked prosperity of Main Street. At last Miss Cooper, the Doctor's sister, spoke to her:—

"How is it, Elizabeth, you look so pale, and thin, and worn out? What you been doing with yourself? Falling in love, eh? It isn't right to be so much alone. Come down and stay with us awhile, — till Mrs. Ford and John come back," added Miss Cooper, who wished to put a cheerful face on the matter.

For Miss Cooper, indeed, any other face would have been difficult. Lizzie agreed to come. Her hostess was a busy, unbeautiful old maid, sister and housekeeper of the village physician. Her occupation here below was to perform the forgotten tasks of her fellow-men, — to pick up their dropped stitches, as she herself declared. She was never idle, for her general cleverness was commensurate with mortal needs. Her own story was, that she kept moving, so that folks couldn't see how ugly she was. And, in fact, her existence was manifest through her long train of good deeds, — just as the presence of a comet is shown by its tail. It was doubtless on the above principle that her visage was agitated by a perpetual laugh.

Meanwhile more news had been coming from Virginia. "What an absurdly long letter you sent John," wrote Mrs. Ford, in acknowledging the receipt of the boxes. "His first lucid moment would be very short, if he were to take upon himself to read your effusions. Pray keep your long stories till he gets well." For a fortnight the young soldier remained the same, — feverish, conscious only at intervals. Then came a change for the worse, which, for many weary days, however, resulted in nothing decisive. "If he could only be moved to Glenham, home, and old sights," said his mother, "I should have hope. But think of the journey!" By this time Lizzie had stayed out ten days of her visit.

One day Miss Cooper came in from a walk, radiant with tidings. Her face, as I have observed, wore a continual smile, being dimpled and punctured all over with merriment, — so that, when an unusual cheerfulness was super-diffused, it resembled a tempestuous little pool into which a great stone has been cast.

"Guess who 's come," said she, going up to the piano, which Lizzie was carelessly fingering, and putting her hands on the young girl's shoulders. "Just guess!"

Lizzie looked up.

"Jack," she half gasped.

"Oh, dear, no, not that! How stupid of me! I mean Mr. Bruce, your Leatherborough admirer."

"Mr. Bruce! Mr. Bruce!" said Lizzie. "Really?"

"True as I live. He 's come to bring his sister to the Water-Cure. I met them at the post-office."

Lizzie felt a strange sensation of good news. Her finger-tips were on fire. She was deaf to her companion's rattling chronicle. She broke into the midst of it with a fragment of some triumphant, jubilant melody. The keys rang beneath her flashing hands. And then she suddenly stopped, and Miss Cooper, who was taking off her bonnet at the mirror, saw that her face was covered with a burning flush.

That evening, Mr. Bruce presented himself at Doctor Cooper's, with whom he had a slight acquaintance. To Lizzie he was infinitely courteous and tender. He assured her, in very pretty terms, of his profound sympathy with her in her cousin's danger, — her cousin he still called him, — and it seemed to Lizzie that until that moment no one had begun to be kind. And then he began to rebuke her, playfully and in excellent taste, for her pale cheeks.

"Isn't it dreadful?" said Miss Cooper. "She looks like a ghost. I guess she 's in love."

"He must be a good-for-nothing lover to make his mistress look so sad. If I were you, I 'd give him up, Miss Crowe."

"I didn't know I looked sad," said Lizzie.

"You don't now," said Miss Cooper.

"You 're smiling and blushing. Ain't she blushing, Mr. Bruce?"

"I think Miss Crowe has no more than her natural color," said Bruce, dropping his eye-glass. "What have you been doing all this while since we parted?"

"All this while? It 's only six weeks. I don't know. Nothing. What have you?"

"I 've been doing nothing, too. It 's hard work."

"Have you been to any more parties?"

"Not one."

"Any more sleigh-rides?"

"Yes. I took one more dreary drive all alone, — over that same road, you know. And I stopped at the farm-house again, and saw the old woman we had the talk with. She remembered us, and asked me what had become of the young lady who was with me before. I told her you were gone home, but that I hoped soon to go and see you. So she sent you her love" —

"Oh, how nice!" exclaimed Lizzie.

"Wasn't it? And then she made a certain little speech; I won't repeat it, or we shall have Miss Cooper talking about your blushes again."

"I know," cried the lady in question: "she said she was very" —

"Very what?" said Lizzie.

"Very h-a-n-d — what every one says."

"Very handy?" asked Lizzie. "I 'm sure no one ever said that."

"Of course," said Bruce; "and I answered what every one answers."

"Have you seen Mrs. Littlefield lately?"

"Several times. I called on her the day before I left town, to see if she had any messages for you."

"Oh, thank you! I hope she 's well."

"Oh, she 's as jolly as ever. She sent you her love, and hoped you would come back to Leatherborough very soon again. I told her, that, however it might be with the first message, the second should be a joint one from both of us."

"You 're very kind. I should like very much to go again. — Do you like Mrs. Littlefield? "

"Like her? Yes. Don't you? She's thought a very pleasing woman."

"Oh, she 's very nice. — I don't think she has much conversation."

"Ah, I 'm afraid you mean she doesn't backbite. We 've always found plenty to talk about."

"That 's a very significant tone. What, for instance? "

"Well, we *have* talked about Miss Crowe."

"Oh, you have? Do you call that having plenty to talk about?"

"We *have* talked about Mr. Bruce, — haven't we, Elizabeth?" said Miss Cooper, who had her own notion of being agreeable.

It was not an altogether bad notion, perhaps; but Bruce found her interruptions rather annoying, and insensibly allowed them to shorten his visit. Yet, as it was, he sat till eleven o'clock, — a stay quite unprecedented at Glenham.

When he left the house, he went splashing down the road with a very elastic tread, springing over the starlit puddles, and trolling out some sentimental ditty. He reached the inn, and went up to his sister's sitting-room.

"Why, Robert, where have you been all this while?" said Miss Bruce.

"At Dr. Cooper's."

"Dr. Cooper's? I should think you had! Who 's Dr. Cooper?"

"Where Miss Crowe 's staying."

"Miss Crowe? Ah, Mrs. Littlefield's friend! Is she as pretty as ever?"

"Prettier, — prettier, — prettier. *Ta-ra-ta! tara-ta!*"

"Oh, Robert, do stop that singing! You 'll rouse the whole house."

V.

Late one afternoon, at dusk, about three weeks after Mr. Bruce's arrival, Lizzie was sitting alone by the fire, in Miss Cooper's parlor, musing, as became the place and hour. The Doctor and his sister came in, dressed for a lecture.

"I 'm sorry you won't go, my dear," said Miss Cooper. "It 's a most interesting subject: 'A Year of the War.' All the battles and things described, you know."

"I 'm tired of war," said Lizzie.

"Well, well, if you 're tired of the war, we 'll leave you in peace. Kiss me good-bye. What 's the matter? You look sick. You are homesick, a'n't you?"

"No, no, — I 'm very well."

"Would you like me to stay at home with you?"

"Oh, no! pray, don't!"

"Well, we 'll tell you all about it. Will they have programmes, James? I 'll bring her a programme. But you really feel as if you were going to be ill. Feel of her skin, James."

"No, you needn't, Sir," said Lizzie. "How queer of you, Miss Cooper! I 'm perfectly well."

And at last her friends departed. Before long the servant came with the lamp, ushering Mr. Mackenzie.

"Good evening, Miss," said he. "Bad news from Mrs. Ford."

"Bad news?"

"Yes, Miss. I 've just got a letter stating that Mr. John is growing worse and worse, and that they look for his death from hour to hour. — It 's very sad," he added, as Elizabeth was silent.

"Yes, it 's very sad," said Lizzie.

"I thought you 'd like to hear it."

"Thank you."

"He was a very noble young fellow," pursued Mr. Mackenzie.

Lizzie made no response.

"There 's the letter," said Mr. Mackenzie, handing it over to her.

Lizzie opened it.

"How long she is reading it!" thought her visitor. "You can't see so far from the light, can you, Miss?"

"Yes," said Lizzie. — "His poor mother! Poor woman!"

"Ay, indeed, Miss, — she 's the one to be pitied."

"Yes, she 's the one to be pitied," said Lizzie. "Well!" and she gave him back the letter.

"I thought you 'd like to see it," said Mackenzie, drawing on his gloves; and then, after a pause, — "I 'll call again, Miss, if I hear anything more. Good night!"

Lizzie got up and lowered the light, and then went back to her sofa by the fire.

Half an hour passed; it went slowly; but it passed. Still lying there in the dark room on the sofa, Lizzie heard a ring at the door-bell, a man's voice and a man's tread in the hall. She rose and went to the lamp. As she turned it up, the parlor-door opened. Bruce came in.

"I was sitting in the dark," said Lizzie; "but when I heard you coming, I raised the light."

"Are you afraid of me?" said Bruce.

"Oh, no! I 'll put it down again. Sit down."

"I saw your friends going out," pursued Bruce; "so I knew I should find you alone. — What are you doing here in the dark?"

"I 've just received very bad news from Mrs. Ford about her son. He 's much worse, and will probably not live."

"Is it possible?"

"I was thinking about that."

"Dear me! Well that 's a sad subject. I 'm told he was a very fine young man."

"He was, — very," said Lizzie.

Bruce was silent awhile. He was a stranger to the young officer, and felt that he had nothing to offer beyond the commonplace expressions of sympathy and surprise. Nor had he exactly the measure of his companion's interest in him.

"If he dies," said Lizzie, "it will be. under great injustice."

"Ah! what do you mean?"

"There wasn't a braver man in the army."

"I suppose not."

"And, oh, Mr. Bruce," continued Lizzie, "he was so clever and good and generous! I wish you had known him."

"I wish I had. But what do you mean by injustice? Were these qualities denied him?"

"No indeed! Every one that looked at him could see that he was perfect."

"Where 's the injustice, then? It ought to be enough for him that you should think so highly of him."

"Oh, he knew that," said Lizzie.

Bruce was a little puzzled by his companion's manner. He watched her, as she sat with her cheek on her hand, looking at the fire. There was a long pause. Either they were too friendly or too thoughtful for the silence to be embarrassing. Bruce broke it at last.

"Miss Crowe," said he, "on a certain occasion, some time ago, when you first heard of Mr. Ford's wounds, I offered you my company, with the wish to console you as far as I might for what seemed a considerable shock. It was, perhaps, a bold offer for so new a friend; but, nevertheless, in it even then my heart spoke. You turned me off. Will you let me repeat it? Now, with a better right, will you let me speak out all my heart?"

Lizzie heard this speech, which was delivered in a slow and hesitating tone, without looking up or moving her head, except, perhaps, at the words "turned me off." After Bruce had ceased, she still kept her position.

"You 'll not turn me off now? " added her companion.

She dropped her hand, raised her head, and looked at him a moment: he thought he saw the glow of tears in her eyes. Then she sank back upon the sofa with her face in the shadow of the mantel-piece.

"I don't understand you, Mr. Bruce," said she.

"Ah, Elizabeth! am I such a poor speaker. How shall I make it plain? When I saw your friends leave home half an hour ago, and reflected that you would probably be alone, I determined to go right in and have a talk with you that I 've long been wanting to have. But

first I walked half a mile up the road, thinking hard, — thinking how I should say what I had to say. I made up my mind to nothing, but that somehow or other I should say it. I would trust, — I *do* trust to your frankness, kindness, and sympathy, to a feeling corresponding to my own. Do you understand that feeling? Do you know that I love you? I do, I do, I do! You *must* know it. If you don't, I solemnly swear it. I solemnly ask you, Elizabeth, to take me for your husband."

While Bruce said these words, he rose, with their rising passion, and came and stood before Lizzie. Again she was motionless.

"Does it take you so long to think?" said he, trying to read her indistinct features; and he sat down on the sofa beside her and took her hand.

At last Lizzie spoke.

"Are you sure," said she, "that you love me? "

"As sure as that I breathe. Now, Elizabeth, make me as sure that I am loved in return."

"It seems very strange, Mr. Bruce," said Lizzie.

"What seems strange? Why should it? For a month I've been trying, in a hundred dumb ways, to make it plain; and now, when I swear it, it only seems strange!"

"What do you love me for?"

"For? For yourself, Elizabeth."

"Myself? I am nothing."

"I love you for what you are, — for your deep, kind heart, — for being so perfectly a woman."

Lizzie drew away her hand, and her lover rose and stood before her again. But now she looked up into his face, questioning when she should have answered, drinking strength from his entreaties for her replies. There he stood before her, in the glow of the firelight, in all his gentlemanhood, for her to accept or reject. She slowly rose and gave him the hand she had withdrawn.

"Mr. Bruce, I shall be very proud to love you," she said.

And then, as if this effort was beyond her strength, she half staggered back to the sofa again. And still holding her hand, he sat down beside her. And there they were still sitting when they heard the Doctor and his sister come in.

For three days Elizabeth saw nothing of Mr. Mackenzie. At last, on the fourth day, passing his office in the village, she went in and asked for him. He came out of his little back parlor with his mouth full and a beaming face.

"Good-day, Miss Crowe, and good news!"

"*Good* news?" cried Lizzie.

"Capital!" said he, looking hard at her, while he put on his spectacles. "She writes that Mr. John — won't you take a seat? — has taken a sudden and unexpected turn for the better. Now 's the moment to save him; it 's an equal risk. They were to start for the North the second day after date. The surgeon comes with them. So they 'll be home — of course they 'll travel slowly — in four or five days. Yes, Miss, it 's a remarkable Providence. And that noble young man will be spared to the country, and to those who love him, as I do."

"I had better go back to the house and have it got ready," said Lizzie, for an answer.

"Yes, Miss, I think you had. In fact, Mrs. Ford made that request."

The request was obeyed. That same day Lizzie went home. For two days she found it her interest to overlook, assiduously, a general sweeping, scrubbing, and provisioning. She allowed herself no idle moment until bed-time. Then — But I would rather not be the chamberlain of her agony. It was the easier to work, as Mr. Bruce had gone to Leatherborough on business.

On the fourth evening, at twilight, John Ford was borne up to the door on his stretcher, with his mother stalking beside him in rigid grief, and kind, silent friends pressing about with helping hands.

"Home they brought her warrior dead,
She nor swooned nor uttered cry."

It was, indeed, almost a question, whether Jack was not dead. Death is not thinner, paler, stiller. Lizzie moved about like one in a dream. Of course, when there are so many sympathetic friends, a man's family has nothing to do, — except exercise a little self-control. The women huddled Mrs. Ford to bed; rest was imperative; she was killing herself. And it was significant of her weakness that she did not resent this advice. In greeting her, Lizzie felt as if she were embracing the stone image on the top of a sepulchre. She, too, had her cares anticipated. Good Doctor Cooper and his sister stationed themselves at the young man's couch.

The Doctor prophesied wondrous things of the change of climate; he was certain of a recovery. Lizzie found herself very shortly dealt with as an obstacle to this consummation. Access to John was prohibited. "Perfect stillness, you know, my dear," whispered Miss Cooper, opening his chamber-door on a crack, in a pair of very creaking shoes. So for the first evening that her old friend was at home Lizzie caught but a glimpse of his pale, senseless face, as she hovered outside the long train of his attendants. If we may suppose any of these kind people to have had eyes for aught but the sufferer, we may be sure that they saw another visage equally sad and white. The sufferer? It was hardly Jack, after all.

When Lizzie was turned from Jack's door, she took a covering from a heap of draperies that had been hurriedly tossed down in the hall: it was an old army-blanket. She wrapped it round her, and went out on the verandah. It was nine o'clock; but the darkness was filled with light. A great wanton wind — the ghost of the raw blast which travels by day — had arisen, bearing long, soft gusts of inland spring. Scattered clouds were hurrying across the white sky. The bright moon, careering in their midst, seemed to have wandered forth in frantic quest of the hidden stars.

Lizzie nestled her head in the blanket, and sat down on the steps. A strange earthy smell lingered in that faded old rug, and with it a faint perfume of tobacco. Instantly the young girl's senses were transported as they had never been before to those far-off Southern battle-fields. She saw men lying in swamps, puffing their kindly pipes, drawing their blankets closer, canopied with the same luminous dusk that shone down upon her comfortable weakness. Her mind wandered amid these scenes till recalled to the present by the swinging of the garden-gate. She heard a firm, well-known tread crunching the gravel. Mr. Bruce came up the path. As he drew near the steps, Lizzie arose. The blanket fell back from her head, and Bruce started at recognizing her.

"Hullo! You, Elizabeth? What 's the matter?"

Lizzie made no answer.

"Are you one of Mr. Ford's watchers?" he continued, coming up the steps; "how is he?"

Still she was silent. Bruce put out his hands to take hers, and bent forward as if to kiss her. She half shook him off, and retreated toward the door.

"Good heavens!" cried Bruce; "what 's the matter? Are you moonstruck? Can't you speak?"

"No, — no, — not to-night," said Lizzie, in a choking voice. "Go away, — go away!"

She stood holding the door-handle, and motioning him off. He hesitated a moment, and then advanced. She opened the door rapidly, and went in. He heard her lock it. He stood looking at it stupidly for some time, and then slowly turned round and walked down the steps.

The next morning Lizzie arose with the early dawn, and came down stairs. She went into the room where Jack lay, and gently opened the door. Miss Cooper was dozing in her chair. Lizzie crossed the threshold, and stole up to the bed. Poor Ford lay peacefully sleeping. There was his old face, after all, — his strong, honest features refined, but not weakened, by pain. Lizzie softly drew up a low chair, and sat down beside him. She gazed into his face, — the dear and honored face into which she had so often gazed in health. It was strangely handsomer: body stood for less. It seemed to Lizzie, that, as the fabric of her lover's soul was more clearly revealed, — the veil of the temple rent wellnigh in twain, — she could read the justification of all her old worship. One of Jack's hands lay outside the sheets, — those strong, supple fingers, once so cunning in workmanship, so frank in friendship, now thinner and whiter than her own. After looking at it for some time, Lizzie gently grasped it. Jack slowly opened his eyes. Lizzie's heart began to throb; it was as if the stillness of the sanctuary had given a sign. At first there was no recognition in the young man's gaze. Then the dull pupils began visibly to brighten. There came to his lips the commencement of that strange moribund smile which seems so ineffably satirical of the things of this world. O imposing spectacle of death! O blessed soul, marked for promotion! What earthly favor is like thine? Lizzie sank down on her knees, and, still clasping John's hand, bent closer over him.

"Jack, — dear, dear Jack," she whispered, "do you know me?"

The smile grew more intense. The poor fellow drew out his other hand, and slowly, feebly placed it on Lizzie's head, stroking down her hair with his fingers.

"Yes, yes," she murmured; "you know me, don't you? I am Lizzie, Jack. Don't you remember Lizzie?"

Ford moved his lips inaudibly, and went on patting her head.

"This is home, you know," said Lizzie; "this is Glenham. You haven't forgotten Glenham? You are with your mother and me and your friends. Dear, darling Jack!"

Still he went on, stroking her head; and his feeble lips tried to emit some sound. Lizzie laid her head down on the pillow beside his own, and still his hand lingered caressingly on her hair.

"Yes, you know me," she pursued; "you are with your friends now forever, with those who will love and take care of you, oh, forever!"

"I 'm very badly wounded," murmured Jack, close to her ear.

"Yes, yes, my dear boy, but your wounds are healing. I will love you and nurse you forever."

"Yes, Lizzie, our old promise," said Jack: and his hand fell upon her neck, and with its feeble pressure he drew her closer, and she wet his face with her tears.

Then Miss Cooper, awakening, rose and drew Lizzie away.

"I am sure you excite him, my dear. It is best he should have none of his family near him, — persons with whom he has associations, you know."

Here the Doctor was heard gently tapping on the window, and Lizzie went round to the door to admit him.

She did not see Jack again all day. Two or three times she ventured into the room, but she was banished by a frown, or a finger raised to the lips. She waylaid the Doctor frequently. He was blithe and cheerful, certain of Jack's recovery. This good man used to exhibit as much moral elation at the prospect of a cure as an orthodox believer at that of a new convert: it was one more body gained from the Devil. He assured Lizzie that the change of scene and climate had already begun to tell: the fever was lessening, the worst symptoms disappearing. He answered Lizzie's reiterated desire to do something by directions to keep the house quiet and the sick-room empty.

Soon after breakfast, Miss Dawes, a neighbor, came in to relieve Miss Cooper, and this indefatigable lady transferred her attention to Mrs. Ford. Action was forbidden her. Miss Cooper was delighted for once to be able to lay down the law to her vigorous neighbor, of whose fine judgment she had always stood in awe. Having bullied Mrs. Ford into taking her breakfast in the little sitting-room, she closed the doors, and prepared for "a good long talk." Lizzie was careful not to break in upon this interview. She had bidden her patroness good morning, asked after her health, and received one of her temperate osculations. As she passed the invalid's door, Doctor Cooper came out and asked her to go and look for a certain roll of bandages, in Mr. John's trunk, which had been carried into another room. Lizzie hastened to perform this task. In fumbling through the contents of the trunk, she came across a packet of letters in a well-known feminine hand-writing. She pocketed it, and, after disposing of the bandages, went to her own room, locked the door, and sat down to examine the letters. Between reading and thinking and sighing and (in spite of herself) smiling, this process took the whole morning. As she came down to dinner, she encountered Mrs. Ford and Miss Cooper, emerging from the sitting-room, the good long talk being only just concluded.

"How do you feel, Ma'am?" she asked of the elder lady, — "rested?"

For all answer Mrs. Ford gave a look — I had almost said a scowl — so hard, so cold, so reproachful, that Lizzie was transfixed. But suddenly its sickening meaning was revealed to her. She turned to Miss Cooper, who stood pale and fluttering beside the mistress, her everlasting smile glazed over with a piteous, deprecating glance; and I fear her eyes flashed out the same message of angry scorn they had just received. These telegraphic operations are very rapid. The ladies hardly halted: the next moment found them seated at the dinner-table with Miss Cooper scrutinizing her napkin-mark and Mrs. Ford saying grace.

Dinner was eaten in silence. When it was over, Lizzie returned to her own room. Miss Cooper went home, and Mrs. Ford went to her son. Lizzie heard the firm low click of the lock as she closed the door. Why did she lock it? There was something fatal in the silence that followed. The plot of her little tragedy thickened. Be it so: she would act her part with the rest. For the second time in her experience, her mind was lightened by the intervention of Mrs. Ford. Before the scorn of her own conscience, (which never came,) before Jack's deepest reproach, she was ready to bow down, — but not before that long-faced Nemesis in black silk. The leaven of resentment began to work. She leaned back in her chair, and folded her arms, brave to await results. But before long she fell asleep. She was aroused by a knock at her chamber-door. The afternoon was far gone. Miss Dawes stood without.

"Elizabeth, Mr. John wants very much to see you, with his love. Come down very gently: his mother is lying down. Will you sit with him while I take my dinner? — Better? Yes, ever so much."

Lizzie betook herself with trembling haste to Jack's bedside.

He was propped up with pillows. His pale cheeks were slightly flushed. His eyes were bright. He raised himself, and, for such feeble arms, gave Lizzie a long, strong embrace.

"I 've not seen you all day, Lizzie," said he. "Where have you been?"

"Dear Jack, they wouldn't let me come near you. I begged and prayed. And I wanted so to go to you in the army; but I couldn't. I wish, I wish I had!"

"You wouldn't have liked it, Lizzie. I 'm glad you didn't. It 's a bad, bad place."

He lay quietly, holding her hands and gazing at her.

"Can I do anything for you, dear?" asked the young girl. "I would work my life out. I 'm so glad you 're better!"

It was some time before Jack answered, —

"Lizzie," said he, at last, "I sent for you to look at you. — You are more wondrously beautiful than ever. Your hair is brown, — like — like nothing; your eyes are blue; your neck is white. Well, well!"

He lay perfectly motionless, but for his eyes. They wandered over her with a kind of peaceful glee, like sunbeams playing on a statue. Poor Ford lay, indeed, not unlike an old wounded Greek, who at falling dusk has crawled into a temple to die, steeping the last dull interval in idle admiration of sculptured Artemis.

"Ah, Lizzie, this is already heaven!" he murmured.

"It will be heaven when you get well," whispered Lizzie.

He smiled into her eyes: —

"You say more than you mean. There should be perfect truth between us. Dear Lizzie, I am not going to get well. They are all very much mistaken. I am going to die. I 've done my work. Death makes up for everything. My great pain is in leaving you. But you, too, will die one of these days; remember that. In all pain and sorrow, remember that."

Lizzie was able to reply only by the tightening grasp of her hands.

"But there is something more," pursued Jack. "Life *is* as good as death. Your heart has found its true keeper; so we shall all three be happy. Tell him I bless him and honor him. Tell him God, too, blesses him. Shake hands with him for me," said Jack, feebly moving his pale fingers. "My mother," he went on, — "be very kind to her. She will have great grief, but she will not die of it. She 'll live to great age. Now, Lizzie, I can't talk any more; I wanted to say farewell. You 'll keep me farewell, — you 'll stay with me awhile, — won't you? I 'll look at you till the last. For a little while you 'll be mine, holding my hands so until death parts us."

Jack kept his promise. His eyes were fixed in a firm gaze long after the sense had left them.

In the early dawn of the next day, Elizabeth left her sleepless bed, opened the window, and looked out on the wide prospect, still cool and dim with departing night. It offered freshness and peace to her hot head and restless heart. She dressed herself hastily, crept down stairs, passed the death-chamber, and stole out of the quiet house. She turned away from the still sleeping village and walked towards the open country. She went a long way without knowing

it. The sun had risen high when she bethought herself to turn. As she came back along the brightening highway, and drew near home, she saw a tall figure standing beneath the budding trees of the garden, hesitating, apparently, whether to open the gate. Lizzie came upon him almost before he had seen her. Bruce's first movement was to put out his hands, as any lover might; but as Lizzie raised her veil, he dropped them.

"Yes, Mr. Bruce," said Lizzie, "I'll give you my hand once more, — in farewell."

"Elizabeth!" cried Bruce, half stupefied, "in God's name, what do you mean by these crazy speeches?"

"I mean well. I mean kindly and humanely to you. And I mean justice to my old — old love."

She went to him, took his listless hand, without looking into his wild, smitten face, shook it passionately, and then, wrenching her own from his grasp, opened the gate and let it swing behind her.

"No! no! no!" she almost shrieked, turning about in the path. "I forbid you to follow me!"

But for all that, he went in.

A Landscape Painter

Do you remember how, a dozen years ago, a number of our friends were startled by the report of the rupture of young Locksley's engagement with Miss Leary? This event made some noise in its day. Both parties possessed certain claims to distinction: Locksley in his wealth, which was believed to be enormous, and the young lady in her beauty, which was in truth very great. I used to hear that her lover was fond of comparing her to the Venus of Milo; and, indeed, if you can imagine the mutilated goddess with her full complement of limbs, dressed out by Madame de Crinoline, and engaged in small talk beneath the drawing-room chandelier, you may obtain a vague notion of Miss Josephine Leary. Locksley, you remember, was rather a short man, dark, and not particularly good-looking; and when he walked about with his betrothed, it was half a matter of surprise that he should have ventured to propose to a young lady of such heroic proportions. Miss Leary had the gray eyes and auburn hair which I have always assigned to the famous statue. The one defect in her face, in spite of an expression of great candor and sweetness, was a certain lack of animation. What it was besides her beauty that attracted Locksley I never discovered: perhaps, since his attachment was so short-lived, it was her beauty alone. I say that his attachment was of brief duration, because the rupture was understood to have come from him. Both he and Miss Leary very wisely held their tongues on the matter; but among their friends and enemies it of course received a hundred explanations. That most popular with Locksley's well-wishers was that he had backed out (these events are discussed, you know, in fashionable circles very much as an expected prizefight which has miscarried is canvassed in reunions of another kind) only on flagrant evidence of the lady's—what, faithlessness?—on overwhelming proof of the most *mercenary* spirit on the part of Miss Leary. You see, our friend was held capable of doing battle for an "idea." It must be owned that this was a novel charge; but, for myself, having long known Mrs. Leary, the mother, who was a widow with four daughters, to be an inveterate old screw, I took the liberty of accrediting the existence of a similar propensity in her eldest born. I suppose that the young lady's family had, on their own side, a very plausible version of their disappointment. It was, however, soon made up to them by Josephine's marriage with a gentleman of expectations very nearly as brilliant as those of her old suitor. And what was *his* compensation? That is precisely my story.

Locksley disappeared, as you will remember, from public view. The events above alluded to happened in March. On calling at his lodgings in April, I was told he had gone to the "country." But towards the last of May I met him. He told me that he was on the look-out for a quiet, unfrequented place on the seashore, where he might rusticate and sketch. He was looking very poorly. I suggested Newport, and I remember he hardly had the energy to smile at the simple joke. We parted without my having been able to satisfy him, and for a very long time I quite lost sight of him. He died seven years ago, at the age of thirty-five. For five years, accordingly, he managed to shield his life from the eyes of men. Through circumstances which I need not detail, a large portion of his personal property has come into my hands. You will remember that he was a man of what are called elegant tastes: that is, he was seriously interested in arts and letters. He wrote some very bad poetry, but he produced a number of remarkable paintings. He left a mass of papers on all subjects, few of which are adapted to be generally interesting. A portion of them, however, I highly prize,—that which constitutes his private diary. It extends from his twenty-fifth to his thirtieth year, at which period it breaks off suddenly. If you will come to my house, I will show you such of his pictures and sketches as I possess, and, I trust, convert you to my opinion that he had in him the stuff of a great painter. Meanwhile I will place before you the last hundred pages of his

diary, as an answer to your inquiry regarding the ultimate view taken by the great Nemesis of his treatment of Miss Leary,—his scorn of the magnificent Venus Victrix. The recent decease of the one person who had a voice paramount to mine in the disposal of Locksley's effects enables me to act without reserve.

Cragthroe, June 9th.—I have been sitting some minutes, pen in hand, pondering whether on the new earth, beneath this new sky, I had better resume these occasional records of my idleness. I think I will at all events make the experiment. If we fail, as Lady Macbeth remarks, we fail. I find my entries have been longest when my life has been dullest. I doubt not, therefore, that, once launched into the monotony of village life, I shall sit scribbling from morning till night. If nothing happens—— But my prophetic soul tells me that something *will* happen. I am determined that something shall,—if it be nothing else than that I paint a picture.

When I came up to bed half an hour ago, I was deadly sleepy. Now, after looking out of the window a little while, my brain is strong and clear, and I feel as if I could write till morning. But, unfortunately, I have nothing to write about. And then, if I expect to rise early, I must turn in betimes. The whole village is asleep, godless metropolitan that I am! The lamps on the square without flicker in the wind; there is nothing abroad but the blue darkness and the smell of the rising tide. I have spent the whole day on my legs, trudging from one side of the peninsula to the other. What a trump is old Mrs. M——, to have thought of this place! I must write her a letter of passionate thanks. Never before, it seems to me, have I known pure coast-scenery. Never before have I relished the beauties of wave, rock, and cloud. I am filled with a sensuous ecstasy at the unparalleled life, light, and transparency of the air. I am stricken mute with reverent admiration at the stupendous resources possessed by the ocean in the way of color and sound; and as yet, I suppose, I have not seen half of them I came in to supper hungry, weary, footsore, sun-burnt, dirty,—happier, in short, than I have been for a twelvemonth. And now for the victories of the brush!

June 11th.—Another day afoot and also afloat. I resolved this morning to leave this abominable little tavern. I can't stand my feather-bed another night. I determined to find some other prospect than the town-pump and the "drug-store." I questioned my host, after breakfast, as to the possibility of getting lodgings in any of the outlying farms and cottages. But my host either did not or would not know anything about the matter. So I resolved to wander forth and seek my fortune,—to roam inquisitive through the neighborhood, and appeal to the indigenous sentiment of hospitality. But never did I see a folk so devoid of this amiable quality. By dinner-time I had given up in despair. After dinner I strolled down to the harbor, which is close at hand. The brightness and breeziness of the water tempted me to hire a boat and resume my explorations. I procured an old tub, with a short stump of a mast, which, being planted quite in the centre, gave the craft much the appearance of an inverted mushroom. I made for what I took to be, and what is, an island, lying long and low, some three or four miles, over against the town. I sailed for half an hour directly before the wind, and at last found myself aground on the shelving beach of a quiet little cove. *Such* a little cove! So bright, so still, so warm, so remote from the town, which lay off in the distance, white and semicircular! I leaped ashore, and dropped my anchor. Before me rose a steep cliff, crowned with an old ruined fort or tower. I made my way up, and about to the landward entrance. The fort is a hollow old shell. Looking upward from the beach, you see the harmless blue sky through the gaping loopholes. Its interior is choked with rocks and brambles, and masses of fallen masonry. I scrambled up to the parapet, and obtained a noble sea-view. Beyond the broad bay I saw miniature town and country mapped out before me; and on the other hand, I saw the infinite Atlantic,—over which, by the by, all the pretty things are brought from Paris. I spent the whole afternoon in wandering hither and thither over the

hills that encircle the little cove in which I had landed, heedless of the minutes and my steps, watching the sailing clouds and the cloudy sails on the horizon, listening to the musical attrition of the tidal pebbles, killing innocuous suckers. The only particular sensation I remember was that of being ten years old again, together with a general impression of Saturday afternoon, of the liberty to go in wading or even swimming, and of the prospect of limping home in the dusk with a wondrous story of having *almost* caught a turtle. When I returned, I found—but I know very well what I found, and I need hardly repeat it here for my mortification. Heaven knows I never was a practical character. What thought I about the tide? There lay the old tub, high and dry, with the rusty anchor protruding from the flat green stones and the shallow puddles left by the receding wave. Moving the boat an inch, much more a dozen yards, was quite beyond my strength. I slowly reascended the cliff, to see if from its summit any help was discernible. None was within sight; and I was about to go down again in profound dejection, when I saw a trim little sailboat shoot out from behind a neighboring bluff, and advance along the shore. I quickened pace. On reaching the beach, I found the newcomer standing out about a hundred yards. The man at the helm appeared to regard me with some interest. With a mute prayer that his feeling might be akin to compassion, I invited him by voice and gesture to make for a little point of rocks a short distance above us, where I proceeded to join him. I told him my story, and he readily took me aboard. He was a civil old gentleman, of the seafaring sort, who appeared to be cruising about in the evening breeze for his pleasure. On landing, I visited the proprietor of my old tub, related my misadventure, and offered to pay damages, if the boat should turn out in the morning to have sustained any. Meanwhile, I suppose, it is held secure against the next tidal revolution, however insidious.—But for my old gentleman. I have decidedly picked up an acquaintance, if not made a friend. I gave him a very good cigar; and before we reached home, we had become thoroughly intimate. In exchange for my cigar, he gave me his name; and there was that in his tone which seemed to imply that I had by no means the worst of the bargain. His name is Richard Blunt, "though most people," he added, "call me Captain, for short." He then proceeded to inquire my own titles and pretensions. I told him no lies, but I told him only half the truth; and if he chooses to indulge mentally in any romantic understatement, why, he is welcome, and bless his simple heart! The fact is, that I have broken with the past. I have decided, coolly and calmly, as I believe, that it is necessary to my success, or, at any rate, to my happiness, to abjure for a while my conventional self, and to assume a simple, natural character. How can a man be simple and natural who is known to have a hundred thousand a year? That is the supreme curse. It's bad enough to have it: to be known to have it, to be known only because you have it, is most damnable. I suppose I am too proud to be successfully rich. Let me see how poverty will serve my turn. I have taken a fresh start. I have determined to stand upon my own merits. If they fail me, I shall fall back upon my millions; but with God's help I will test them, and see what kind of stuff I am made of. To be young, to be strong, to be poor,—such, in this blessed nineteenth century, is the great basis of solid success. I have resolved to take at least one brief draught from the pure founts of inspiration of my time. I replied to the Captain with such reservations as a brief survey of these principles dictated. What a luxury to pass in a poor man's mind for his brother! I begin to respect myself. Thus much the Captain knows: that I am an educated man, with a taste for painting; that I have come hither for the purpose of cultivating this taste by the study of coast scenery, and for my health. I have reason to believe, moreover, that he suspects me of limited means and of being a good deal of an economist. Amen! *Vogue la galère!* But the point of my story is in his very hospitable offer of lodgings. I had been telling him of my ill success of the morning in the pursuit of the same. He is an odd union of the gentleman of the old school and the old-fashioned, hot-headed merchant-captain. I suppose that certain traits in these characters are readily convertible.

"Young man," said he, after taking several meditative puffs of his cigar, "I don't see the point of your living in a tavern, when there are folks about you with more house-room than they know what to do with. A tavern is only half a house, just as one of these new-fashioned screw-propellers is only half a ship. Suppose you walk round and take a look at my place. I own quite a respectable house over yonder to the left of the town. Do you see that old wharf with the tumble-down warehouses, and the long row of elms behind it? I live right in the midst of the elms. We have the dearest little garden in the world, stretching down to the water's edge. It's all as quiet as anything can be, short of a graveyard. The back windows, you know, overlook the harbor; and you can see twenty miles up the bay, and fifty miles out to sea. You can paint to yourself there the livelong day, with no more fear of intrusion than if you were out yonder at the light-ship. There's no one but myself and my daughter, who's a perfect lady, Sir. She teaches music in a young ladies' school. You see, money's an object, as they say. We have never taken boarders yet, because none came in our track; but I guess we can learn the ways. I suppose you've boarded before; you can put us up to a thing or two."

There was something so kindly and honest in the old man's weather-beaten face, something so friendly in his address, that I forthwith struck a bargain with him, subject to his daughter's approval. I am to have her answer to-morrow. This same daughter strikes me as rather a dark spot in the picture. Teacher in a young ladies' school,—probably the establishment of which Mrs. M—— spoke to me. I suppose she's over thirty. I think I know the species.

June 12th, A.M.—I have really nothing to do but to scribble. "Barkis is willing." Captain Blunt brought me word this morning that his daughter smiles propitious. I am to report this evening; but I shall send my slender baggage in an hour or two.

P.M.—Here I am, housed. The house is less than a mile from the inn, and reached by a very pleasant road, skirting the harbor. At about six o'clock I presented myself. Captain Blunt had described the place. A very civil old negress admitted me, and ushered me into the garden, where I found my friends watering their flowers. The old man was in his house-coat and slippers. He gave me a cordial welcome. There is something delightfully easy in his manners,—and in Miss Blunt's, too, for that matter. She received me very nicely. The late Mrs. Blunt was probably a well-bred woman. As for Miss Blunt's being thirty, she is about twenty-four. She wore a fresh white dress, with a violet ribbon at her neck, and a rosebud in her button-hole,—or whatever corresponds thereto on the feminine bosom. I thought I discerned in this costume a vague intention of courtesy, of deference, of celebrating my arrival. I don't believe Miss Blunt wears white muslin every day. She shook hands with me, and made me a very frank little speech about her hospitality. "We have never had any inmates before," said she; "and we are, consequently, new to the business. I don't know what you expect. I hope you don't expect a great deal. You must ask for anything you want. If we can give it, we shall be very glad to do so; if we can't, I give you warning that we shall refuse outright." Bravo, Miss Blunt! The best of it is, that she is decidedly beautiful,—and in the grand manner: tall, and rather plump. What is the orthodox description of a pretty girl?—white and red? Miss Blunt is not a pretty girl, she is a handsome woman. She leaves an impression of black and red; that is, she is a florid brunette. She has a great deal of wavy black hair, which encircles her head like a dusky glory, a smoky halo. Her eyebrows, too, are black, but her eyes themselves are of a rich blue gray, the color of those slate-cliffs which I saw yesterday, weltering under the tide. Her mouth, however, is her strong point. It is very large, and contains the finest row of teeth in all this weary world. Her smile is eminently intelligent. Her chin is full, and somewhat heavy. All this is a tolerable catalogue, but no picture. I have been tormenting my brain to discover whether it was her coloring or her form that impressed me most. Fruitless speculation! Seriously, I think it was neither; it was her movement. She walks a queen. It was the conscious poise of her head, the unconscious

"hang" of her arms, the careless grace and dignity with which she lingered along the garden-path, smelling a red red rose! She has very little to say, apparently; but when she speaks, it is to the point, and if the point suggests it, with a very sweet smile. Indeed, if she is not talkative, it is not from timidity. Is it from indifference? Time will elucidate this, as well as other matters. I cling to the hypothesis that she is amiable. She is, moreover, intelligent; she is probably quite reserved; and she is possibly very proud. She is, in short, a woman of character. There you are, Miss Blunt, at full length,—emphatically the portrait of a lady. After tea, she gave us some music in the parlor. I confess that I was more taken with the picture of the dusky little room, lighted by the single candle on the piano, and by the *effect* of Miss Blunt's performance, than with its meaning. She appears to possess a very brilliant touch.

June 18th.—I have now been here almost a week. I occupy two very pleasant rooms. My painting-room is a vast and rather bare apartment, with a very good southern light. I have decked it out with a few old prints and sketches, and have already grown very fond of it. When I had disposed my artistic odds and ends in as picturesque a fashion as possible, I called in my hosts. The Captain looked about silently for some moments, and then inquired hopefully if I had ever tried my hand at a ship. On learning that I had not yet got to ships, he relapsed into a deferential silence. His daughter smiled and questioned very graciously, and called everything beautiful and delightful; which rather disappointed me, as I had taken her to be a woman of some originality. She is rather a puzzle;—or is she, indeed, a very commonplace person, and the fault in me, who am forever taking women to mean a great deal more than their Maker intended? Regarding Miss Blunt I have collected a few facts. She is not twenty-four, but twenty-seven years old. She has taught music ever since she was twenty, in a large boarding-school just out of the town, where she originally got her education. Her salary in this establishment, which is, I believe, a tolerably flourishing one, and the proceeds of a few additional lessons, constitute the chief revenues of the household. But Blunt fortunately owns his house, and his needs and habits are of the simplest kind. What does he or his daughter know of the great worldly theory of necessities, the great worldly scale of pleasures? Miss Blunt's only luxuries are a subscription to the circulating library, and an occasional walk on the beach, which, like one of Miss Brontë's heroines, she paces in company with an old Newfoundland dog. I am afraid she is sadly ignorant. She reads nothing but novels. I am bound to believe, however, that she has derived from the perusal of these works a certain practical science of her own. "I read all the novels I can get," she said yesterday; "but I only like the good ones. I do so like *Zanoni*, which I have just finished." I must set her to work at some of the masters. I should like some of those fretful New-York heiresses to see how this woman lives. I wish, too, that half a dozen of *ces messieurs* of the clubs might take a peep at the present way of life of their humble servant. We breakfast at eight o'clock. Immediately afterwards, Miss Blunt, in a shabby old bonnet and shawl, starts off to school. If the weather is fine, the Captain goes out a-fishing, and I am left to my own devices. Twice I have accompanied the old man. The second time I was lucky enough to catch a big bluefish, which we had for dinner. The Captain is an excellent specimen of the sturdy navigator, with his loose blue clothes, his ultra-divergent legs, his crisp white hair, and his jolly thick-skinned visage. He comes of a sea-faring English race. There is more or less of the ship's cabin in the general aspect of this antiquated house. I have heard the winds whistle about its walls, on two or three occasions, in true mid-ocean style. And then the illusion is heightened, somehow or other, by the extraordinary intensity of the light. My painting-room is a grand observatory of the clouds. I sit by the half-hour, watching them sail past my high, uncurtained windows. At the back part of the room, something tells you that they belong to an ocean sky; and there, in truth, as you draw nearer, you behold the vast, gray complement of sea. This quarter of the town is perfectly quiet. Human activity seems to have passed over

it, never again to return, and to have left a kind of deposit of melancholy resignation. The streets are clean, bright, and airy; but this fact seems only to add to the intense sobriety. It implies that the unobstructed heavens are in the secret of their decline. There is something ghostly in the perpetual stillness. We frequently hear the rattling of the yards and the issuing of orders on the barks and schooners anchored out in the harbor.

June 28th.—My experiment works far better than I had hoped. I am thoroughly at my ease; my peace of mind quite passeth understanding. I work diligently; I have none but pleasant thoughts. The past has almost lost its terrors. For a week now I have been out sketching daily. The Captain carries me to a certain point on the shore of the harbor, I disembark and strike across the fields to a spot where I have established a kind of *rendezvous* with a particular effect of rock and shadow, which has been tolerably faithful to its appointment. Here I set up my easel, and paint till sunset. Then I retrace my steps and meet the boat. I am in every way much encouraged. The horizon of my work grows perceptibly wider. And then I am inexpressibly happy in the conviction that I am not wholly unfit for a life of (moderate) labor and (comparative) privation. I am quite in love with my poverty, if I may call it so. As why should I not? At this rate I don't spend eight hundred a year.

July 12th.—We have been having a week of bad weather: constant rain, night and day. This is certainly at once the brightest and the blackest spot in New England. The skies can smile, assuredly; but how they can frown! I have been painting rather languidly, and at a great disadvantage, at my window.... Through all this pouring and pattering, Miss Blunt sallies forth to her pupils. She envelops her beautiful head in a great woollen hood, her beautiful figure in a kind of feminine mackintosh; her feet she puts into heavy clogs, and over the whole she balances a cotton umbrella. When she comes home, with the rain-drops glistening on her red cheeks and her dark lashes, her cloak bespattered with mud, and her hands red with the cool damp, she is a profoundly wholesome spectacle. I never fail to make her a very low bow, for which she repays me with an extraordinary smile. This working-day side of her character is what especially pleases me in Miss Blunt. This holy working-dress of loveliness and dignity sits upon her with the simplicity of an antique drapery. Little use has she for whalebones and furbelows. What a poetry there is, after all, in red hands! I kiss yours, Mademoiselle. I do so because you are self-helpful; because you earn your living; because you are honest, simple, and ignorant (for a sensible woman, that is); because you speak and act to the point; because, in short, you are so unlike—certain of your sisters.

July 16th.—On Monday it cleared up generously. When I went to my window, on rising, I found sky and sea looking, for their brightness and freshness, like a clever English water-color. The ocean is of a deep purple blue; above it, the pure, bright sky looks pale, though it bends with an infinite depth over the inland horizon. Here and there on the dark breezy water gleams the white cap of a wave, or flaps the white cloak of a fishing-boat. I have been sketching sedulously; I have discovered, within a couple of miles, walk, a large, lonely pond, set in quite a grand landscape of barren rocks and grassy slopes. At one extremity is a broad outlook on the open sea; at the other, deep buried in the foliage of an apple-orchard, stands an old haunted-looking farmhouse. To the west of the pond is a wide expanse of rock and grass, of beach and marsh. The sheep browse over it as upon a Highland moor. Except a few stunted firs and cedars, there is not a tree in sight. When I want shade, I seek it in the shelter of one of the great mossy boulders which upheave their scintillating shoulders to the sun, or of the long shallow dells where a tangle of blackberry-bushes hedges about a sky-reflecting pool. I have encamped over against a plain, brown hillside, which, with laborious patience, I am transferring to canvas; and as we have now had the same clear sky for several days, I have almost finished quite a satisfactory little study. I go forth immediately after breakfast. Miss Blunt furnishes me with a napkin full of bread and cold meat, which at the noonday hour, in

my sunny solitude, within sight of the slumbering ocean, I voraciously convey to my lips with my discolored fingers. At seven o'clock I return to tea, at which repast we each tell the story of our day's work. For poor Miss Blunt, it is day after day the same story: a wearisome round of visits to the school, and to the houses of the mayor, the parson, the butcher, the baker, whose young ladies, of course, all receive instruction on the piano. But she doesn't complain, nor, indeed, does she look very weary. When she has put on a fresh calico dress for tea, and arranged her hair anew, and with these improvements flits about with that quiet hither and thither of her gentle footsteps, preparing our evening meal, peeping into the teapot, cutting the solid loaf,—or when, sitting down on the low door-step, she reads out select scraps from the evening paper,—or else, when, tea being over, she folds her arms, (an attitude which becomes her mightily,) and, still sitting on the door-step, gossips away the evening in comfortable idleness, while her father and I indulge in the fragrant pipe, and watch the lights shining out, one by one, in different quarters of the darkling bay: at these moments she is as pretty, as cheerful, as careless as it becomes a sensible woman to be. What a pride the Captain takes in his daughter! And she, in return, how perfect is her devotion to the old man! He is proud of her grace, of her tact, of her good sense, of her wit, such as it is. He thinks her to be the most accomplished of women. He waits upon her as if, instead of his old familiar Esther, she were a newly inducted daughter-in-law. And indeed, if I were his own son, he could not be kinder to me. They are certainly—nay, why should I not say it?—we are certainly a very happy little household. Will it last forever? I say *we*, because both father and daughter have given me a hundred assurances—he direct, and she, if I don't flatter myself, after the manner of her sex, indirect—that I am already a valued friend. It is natural enough that I should have gained their good-will. They have received at my hands inveterate courtesy. The way to the old man's heart is through a studied consideration of his daughter. He knows, I imagine, that I admire Miss Blunt. But if I should at any time fall below the mark of ceremony, I should have an account to settle with him. All this is as it should be. When people have to economize with the dollars and cents, they have a right to be splendid in their feelings. I have prided myself not a little on my good manners towards my hostess. That my bearing has been without reproach is, however, a fact which I do not, in any degree, set down here to my credit; for I would defy the most impertinent of men (whoever he is) to forget himself with this young lady, without leave unmistakably given. Those deep, dark eyes have a strong prohibitory force. I record the circumstance simply because in future years, when my charming friend shall have become a distant shadow, it will be pleasant, in turning over these pages, to find written testimony to a number of points which I shall be apt to charge solely upon my imagination. I wonder whether Miss Blunt, in days to come, referring to the tables of her memory for some trivial matter-of-fact, some prosaic date or half-buried landmark, will also encounter this little secret of ours, as I may call it,—will decipher an old faint note to this effect, overlaid with the memoranda of intervening years. Of course she will. Sentiment aside, she is a woman of an excellent memory. Whether she forgives or not I know not; but she certainly doesn't forget. Doubtless, virtue is its own reward; but there is a double satisfaction in being polite to a person on whom it *tells*. Another reason for my pleasant relations with the Captain is, that I afford him a chance to rub up his rusty old cosmopolitanism, and trot out his little scraps of old-fashioned reading, some of which are very curious. It is a great treat for him to spin his threadbare yarns over again to a sympathetic listener. These warm July evenings, in the sweet-smelling garden, are just the proper setting for his amiable garrulities. An odd enough relation subsists between us on this point. Like many gentlemen of his calling, the Captain is harassed by an irresistible desire to romance, even on the least promising themes; and it is vastly amusing to observe how he will auscultate, as it were, his auditor's inmost mood, to ascertain whether it is prepared for the absorption of his insidious fibs. Sometimes they perish utterly in the transition: they are very

pretty, I conceive, in the deep and briny well of the Captain's fancy; but they won't bear being transplanted into the shallow inland lakes of my land-bred apprehension. At other times, the auditor being in a dreamy, sentimental, and altogether unprincipled mood, he will drink the old man's salt-water by the bucketful and feel none the worse for it. Which is the worse, wilfully to tell, or wilfully to believe, a pretty little falsehood which will not hurt any one? I suppose you can't believe wilfully; you only pretend to believe. My part of the game, therefore, is certainly as bad as the Captain's. Perhaps I take kindly to his beautiful perversions of fact, because I am myself engaged in one, because I am sailing under false colors of the deepest dye. I wonder whether my friends have any suspicion of the real state of the case. How should they? I fancy, that, on the whole, I play my part pretty well. I am delighted to find it come so easy. I do not mean that I experience little difficulty in foregoing my hundred petty elegancies and luxuries,—for to these, thank Heaven, I was not so indissolubly wedded that one wholesome shock could not loosen my bonds,—but that I manage more cleverly than I expected to stifle those innumerable tacit illusions which might serve effectually to belie my character.

Sunday, July 20th.—This has been a very pleasant day for me; although in it, of course, I have done no manner of work. I had this morning a delightful *tête-à-tête* with my hostess. She had sprained her ankle, coming downstairs; and so, instead of going forth to Sunday school and to meeting, she was obliged to remain at home on the sofa. The Captain, who is of a very punctilious piety, went off alone. When I came into the parlor, as the church-bells were ringing, Miss Blunt asked me if I never went to meeting. "Never when there is anything better to do at home," said I.

"What is better than going to church?" she asked, with charming simplicity.

She was reclining on the sofa, with her foot on a pillow, and her Bible in her lap. She looked by no means afflicted at having to be absent from divine service; and, instead of answering her question, I took the liberty of telling her so.

"I *am* sorry to be absent," said she. "You know it's my only festival in the week."

"So you look upon it as a festival," said I.

"Isn't it a pleasure to meet one's acquaintance? I confess I am never deeply interested in the sermon, and I very much dislike teaching the children; but I like wearing my best bonnet, and singing in the choir, and walking part of the way home with——"

"With whom?"

"With any one who offers to walk with me."

"With Mr. Johnson, for instance," said I.

Mr. Johnson is a young lawyer in the village, who calls here once a week, and whose attentions to Miss Blunt have been remarked.

"Yes," she answered, "Mr. Johnson will do as an instance."

"How he will miss you!"

"I suppose he will. We sing off the same book. What are you laughing at? He kindly permits me to hold the book, while he stands with his hands in his pockets. Last Sunday I quite lost patience. 'Mr. Johnson,' said I, 'do hold the book! Where are your manners?' He burst out laughing in the midst of the reading. He will certainly have to hold the book to-day."

"What a 'masterful soul' he is! I suppose he will call after meeting."

"Perhaps he will. I hope so."

"I hope he won't," said I, roundly. "I am going to sit down here and talk to you, and I wish our *tête-à-tête* not to be interrupted."

"Have you anything particular to say?"

"Nothing so particular as Mr. Johnson, perhaps."

Miss Blunt has a very pretty affectation of being more matter-of-fact than she really is.

"His rights, then," said she, "are paramount to yours."

"Ah, you admit that he has rights?"

"Not at all. I simply assert that you have none."

"I beg your pardon. I have claims which I mean to enforce. I have a claim upon your undivided attention, when I pay you a morning call."

"Your claim is certainly answered. Have I been uncivil, pray?"

"Not uncivil, perhaps, but inconsiderate. You have been sighing for the company of a third person, which you can't expect me to relish."

"Why not, pray? If I, a lady, can put up with Mr. Johnson's society, why shouldn't you, one of his own sex?"

"Because he is so outrageously conceited. You, as a lady, or at any rate as a woman, like conceited men."

"Ah, yes; I have no doubt that I, as a woman, have all kinds of improper tastes. That's an old story."

"Admit, at any rate, that our friend is conceited."

"Admit it? Why, I have said so a hundred times. I have told him so."

"Indeed! It has come to that, then?"

"To what, pray?"

"To that critical point in the friendship of a lady and gentleman, when they bring against each other all kinds of delightful charges of moral obliquity. Take care, Miss Blunt! A couple of intelligent New-Englanders, of opposite sex, young, unmarried, are pretty far gone, when they begin morally to reprobate each other. So you told Mr. Johnson that he is conceited? And I suppose you added, that he was also dreadfully satirical and skeptical? What was his rejoinder? Let me see. Did he ever tell you that you were a little bit affected?"

"No: he left that for you to say, in this very ingenious manner. Thank you, sir."

"He left it for me to deny, which is a great deal prettier. Do you think the manner ingenious?"

"I think the matter, considering the day and hour, very profane, Mr. Locksley. Suppose you go away and let me read my Bible."

"Meanwhile," I asked, "what shall I do?"

"Go and read yours, if you have one."

"I haven't."

I was, nevertheless, compelled to retire, with the promise of a second audience in half an hour. Poor Miss Blunt owes it to her conscience to read a certain number of chapters. What a pure and upright soul she is! And what an edifying spectacle is much of our feminine piety! Women find a place for everything in their commodious little minds, just as they do in their

wonderfully subdivided trunks, when they go on a journey. I have no doubt that this young lady stows away her religion in a corner, just as she does her Sunday bonnet,—and, when the proper moment comes, draws it forth, and reflects while she assumes it before the glass, and blows away the strictly imaginary dust: for what worldly impurity can penetrate through half a dozen layers of cambric and tissue-paper? Dear me, what a comfort it is to have a nice, fresh, holiday faith!—When I returned to the parlor, Miss Blunt was still sitting with her Bible in her lap. Somehow or other, I no longer felt in the mood for jesting. So I asked her soberly what she had been reading. Soberly she answered me. She inquired how I had spent my half-hour.

"In thinking good Sabbath thoughts," I said. "I have been walking in the garden." And then I spoke my mind. "I have been thanking Heaven that it has led me, a poor, friendless wanderer, into so peaceful an anchorage."

"Are you, then, so poor and friendless?" asked Miss Blunt, quite abruptly.

"Did you ever hear of an art-student under thirty who wasn't poor?" I answered. "Upon my word, I have yet to sell my first picture. Then, as for being friendless, there are not five people in the world who really care for me."

"*Really* care? I am afraid you look too close. And then I think five good friends is a very large number. I think myself very well off with a couple. But if you are friendless, it's probably your own fault."

"Perhaps it is," said I, sitting down in the rocking-chair; "and yet, perhaps, it isn't. Have you found me so very repulsive? Haven't you, on the contrary, found me rather sociable?"

She folded her arms, and quietly looked at me for a moment, before answering. I shouldn't wonder if I blushed a little.

"You want a compliment, Mr. Locksley; that's the long and short of it. I have not paid you a compliment since you have been here. How you must have suffered! But it's a pity you couldn't have waited awhile longer, instead of beginning to angle with that very clumsy bait. For an artist, you are very inartistic. Men never know how to wait. 'Have I found you repulsive? haven't I found you sociable?' Perhaps, after all, considering what I have in my mind, it is as well that you asked for your compliment. I have found you charming. I say it freely; and yet I say, with equal sincerity, that I fancy very few others would find you so. I can say decidedly that you are not sociable. You are entirely too particular. You are considerate of me, because you know that I know that you are so. There's the rub, you see: I know that you know that I know it. Don't interrupt me; I am going to be eloquent. I want you to understand why I don't consider you sociable. You call Mr. Johnson conceited; but, really, I don't believe he's nearly as conceited as yourself. You are too conceited to be sociable; he is not. I am an obscure, weak-minded woman,—weak-minded, you know, compared with men. I can be patronized,—yes, that's the word. Would you be equally amiable with a person as strong, as clear-sighted as yourself, with a person equally averse with yourself to being under an obligation? I think not. Of course it's delightful to charm people. Who wouldn't? There is no harm in it, as long as the charmer does not set up for a public benefactor. If I were a man, a clever man like yourself, who had seen the world, who was not to be charmed and encouraged, but to be convinced and refuted, would you be equally amiable? It will perhaps seem absurd to you, and it will certainly seem egotistical, but I consider myself sociable, for all that I have only a couple of friends,—my father and the principal of the school. That is, I mingle with women without any second thought. Not that I wish you to do so: on the contrary, if the contrary is natural to you. But I don't believe you mingle in the same way with men. You may ask me what I know about it. Of course I know nothing: I simply guess.

When I have done, indeed, I mean to beg your pardon for all I have said; but until then, give me a chance. You are incapable of listening deferentially to stupid, bigoted persons. I am not, I do it every day. Ah, you have no idea what nice manners I have in the exercise of my profession! Every day I have occasion to pocket my pride and to stifle my precious sense of the ridiculous,—of which, of course, you think I haven't a bit. It is, for instance, a constant vexation to me to be poor. It makes me frequently hate rich women; it makes me despise poor ones. I don't know whether you suffer acutely from the narrowness of your own means; but if you do, I dare say you shun rich men. I don't. I like to go into rich people's houses, and to be very polite to the ladies of the house, especially if they are very well-dressed and ignorant and vulgar. All women are like me in this respect; and all men more or less like you. That is, after all, the text of my sermon. Compared with us, it has always seemed to me that you are arrant cowards,—that we alone are brave. To be sociable, you must have a great deal of pluck. You are too fine a gentleman. Go and teach school, or open a corner grocery, or sit in a law-office all day, waiting for clients: then you will be sociable. As yet, you are only agreeable. It is your own fault, if people don't care for you. You don't care for them. That you should be indifferent to their applause is all very well; but you don't care for their indifference. You are amiable, you are very kind, and you are also very lazy. You consider that you are working now, don't you? Many persons would not call it work."

It was now certainly my turn to fold my arms.

"And now," added my companion, as I did so, "I beg your pardon."

"This was certainly worth waiting for," said I. "I don't know what answer to make. My head swims. I don't know whether you have been attacking me or praising me. So you advise me to open a corner grocery, do you?"

"I advise you to do something that will make you a little less satirical. You had better marry, for instance."

"*Je ne demande pas mieux*. Will you have me? I can't afford it."

"Marry a rich woman."

I shook my head.

"Why not?" asked Miss Blunt. "Because people would accuse you of being mercenary? What of that? I mean to marry the first rich man who offers. Do you know that I am tired of living alone in this weary old way, teaching little girls their gamut, and turning and patching my dresses? I mean to marry the first man who offers."

"Even if he is poor?"

"Even if he is poor, ugly, and stupid."

"I am your man, then. Would you take me, if I were to offer?"

"Try and see."

"Must I get upon my knees?"

"No, you need not even do that. Am I not on mine? It would be too fine an irony. Remain as you are, lounging back in your chair, with your thumbs in your waistcoat."

If I were writing a romance now, instead of transcribing facts, I would say that I knew not what might have happened at this juncture, had not the door opened and admitted the Captain and Mr. Johnson. The latter was in the highest spirits.

"How are you, Miss Esther? So you have been breaking your leg, eh? How are you, Mr. Locksley? I wish I were a doctor now. Which is it, right or left?"

In this simple fashion he made himself agreeable to Miss Blunt. He stopped to dinner and talked without ceasing. Whether our hostess had talked herself out in her very animated address to myself an hour before, or whether she preferred to oppose no obstacle to Mr. Johnson's fluency, or whether she was indifferent to him, I know not; but she held her tongue with that easy grace, that charming tacit intimation of "We could, and we would," of which she is so perfect a mistress. This very interesting woman has a number of pretty traits in common with her town-bred sisters; only, whereas in these they are laboriously acquired, in her they are severely natural. I am sure, that, if I were to plant her in Madison Square tomorrow, she would, after one quick, all-compassing glance, assume the *nil admirari* in a manner to drive the greatest lady of them all to despair. Johnson is a man of excellent intentions, but no taste. Two or three times I looked at Miss Blunt to see what impression his sallies were making upon her. They seemed to produce none whatever. But I know better, *moi*. Not one of them escaped her. But I suppose she said to herself that her impressions on this point were no business of mine. Perhaps she was right. It is a disagreeable word to use of a woman you admire; but I can't help fancying that she has been a little *soured*. By what? Who shall say? By some old love affair, perhaps.

July 24th.—This evening the Captain and I took a half-hour's turn about the harbor. I asked him frankly, as a friend, whether Johnson wants to marry his daughter.

"I guess he does," said the old man; "and yet I hope he don't. You know what he is: he's smart, promising, and already sufficiently well off. But somehow he isn't for a man what my Esther is for a woman."

"That he isn't!" said I; "and honestly, Captain Blunt, I don't know who is——"

"Unless it's yourself," said the Captain.

"Thank you. I know a great many ways in which Mr. Johnson is more worthy of her than I."

"And I know one in which you are more worthy of her than he,—that is, in being what we used to call a gentleman."

"Miss Esther made him sufficiently welcome in her quiet way, on Sunday," I rejoined.

"Oh, she respects him," said Blunt. "As she's situated, she might marry him on that. You see, she's weary of hearing little girls drum on the piano. With her ear for music," added the Captain, "I wonder she has borne it so long."

"She is certainly meant for better things," said I.

"Well," answered the Captain, who has an honest habit of deprecating your agreement, when it occurs to him that he has obtained it for sentiments which fall somewhat short of the stoical,—"well," said he, with a very dry expression of mouth, "she's born to do her duty. We are all of us born for that."

"Sometimes our duty is rather dreary," said I.

"So it be; but what's the help for it? I don't want to die without seeing my daughter provided for. What she makes by teaching is a pretty slim subsistence. There was a time when I thought she was going to be fixed for life, but it all blew over. There was a young fellow here from down Boston way, who came about as near to it as you can come, when you actually don't. He and Esther were excellent friends. One day Esther came up to me, and looked me in the face, and told me she was engaged.

"Who to?' says I, though, of course, I knew, and Esther told me as much. 'When do you expect to marry?' I asked.

"When John grows rich enough,' says she.

"When will that be?'

"It may not be for years,' said poor Esther.

"A whole year passed, and, as far as I could see, the young man came no nearer to his fortune. He was forever running to and fro between this place and Boston. I asked no questions, because I knew that my poor girl wished it so. But at last, one day, I began to think it was time to take an observation, and see whereabouts we stood.

"Has John made his fortune yet?' I asked.

"I don't know, father,' said Esther.

"When are you to be married?'

"Never!' said my poor little girl, and burst into 'tears. 'Please ask me no questions,' said she. 'Our engagement is over. Ask me no questions.'

"Tell me one thing,' said I: 'where is that d—d scoundrel who has broken my daughter's heart?'

"You should have seen the look she gave me.

"Broken my heart, sir? You are very much mistaken. I don't know who you mean.'

"I mean John Banister,' said I. That was his name.

"I believe Mr. Banister is in China,' says Esther, as grand as the Queen of Sheba. And there was an end of it. I never learnt the ins and outs of it. I have been told that Banister is accumulating money very fast in the China trade."

August 7th.—I have made no entry for more than a fortnight. They tell me I have been very ill; and I find no difficulty in believing them. I suppose I took cold, sitting out so late, sketching. At all events, I have had a mild intermittent fever. I have slept so much, however, that the time has seemed rather short. I have been tenderly nursed by this kind old gentleman, his daughter, and his maid-servant. God bless them, one and all! I say his daughter, because old Dorothy informs me that for half an hour one morning, at dawn, after a night during which I had been very feeble, Miss Blunt relieved guard at my bedside, while I lay wrapt in brutal slumber. It is very jolly to see sky and ocean once again. I have got myself into my easy-chair by the open window, with my shutters closed and the lattice open; and here I sit with my book on my knee, scratching away feebly enough. Now and then I peep from my cool, dark sick-chamber out into the world of light. High noon at midsummer! What a spectacle! There are no clouds in the sky, no waves on the ocean. The sun has it all to himself. To look long at the garden makes the eyes water. And we—"Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes, and Nokes"—propose to paint that kingdom of light. *Allons, donc!*

The loveliest of women has just tapped, and come in with a plate of early peaches. The peaches are of a gorgeous color and plumpness; but Miss Blunt looks pale and thin. The hot weather doesn't agree with her. She is overworked. Confound it! Of course I thanked her warmly for her attentions during my illness. She disclaims all gratitude, and refers me to her father and Mrs. Dorothy.

"I allude more especially," said I, "to that little hour at the end of a weary night, when you stole in like a kind of moral Aurora, and drove away the shadows from my brain. That morning, you know, I began to get better."

"It was, indeed, a very little hour," said Miss Blunt. "It was about ten minutes." And then she began to scold me for presuming to touch a pen during my convalescence. She laughs at me, indeed, for keeping a diary at all. "Of all things," cried she, "a sentimental man is the most despicable."

I confess I was somewhat nettled. The thrust seemed gratuitous.

"Of all things," I answered, "a woman without sentiment is the most unlovely."

"Sentiment and loveliness are all very well, when you have time for them," said Miss Blunt. "I haven't. I'm not rich enough. Good morning."

Speaking of another woman, I would say that she flounced out of the room. But such was the gait of Juno, when she moved stiffly over the grass from where Paris stood with Venus holding the apple, gathering up her divine vestment, and leaving the others to guess at her face——

Juno has just come back to say that she forgot what she came for half an hour ago. What will I be pleased to like for dinner?

"I have just been writing in my diary that you flounced out of the room," said I.

"Have you, indeed? Now you can write that I have bounced in. There's a nice cold chicken downstairs," etc., etc.

August 14th.—This afternoon I sent for a light wagon, and treated Miss Blunt to a drive. We went successively over the three beaches. What a time we had, coming home! I shall never forget that hard trot over Weston's Beach. The tide was very low; and we had the whole glittering, weltering strand to ourselves. There was a heavy blow yesterday, which had not yet subsided; and the waves had been lashed into a magnificent fury. Trot, trot, trot, trot, we trundled over the hard sand. The sound of the horse's hoofs rang out sharp against the monotone of the thunderous surf, as we drew nearer and nearer to the long line of the cliffs. At our left, almost from the lofty zenith of the pale evening sky to the high western horizon of the tumultuous dark-green sea, was suspended, so to speak, one of those gorgeous vertical sunsets that Turner loved so well. It was a splendid confusion of purple and green and gold,—the clouds flying and flowing in the wind like the folds of a mighty banner borne by some triumphal fleet whose prows were not visible above the long chain of mountainous waves. As we reached the point where the cliffs plunge down upon the beach, I pulled up, and we remained for some moments looking out along the low, brown, obstinate barrier at whose feet the impetuous waters were rolling themselves into powder.

August 17th.—This evening, as I lighted my bedroom candle, I saw that the Captain had something to say to me. So I waited below until the old man and his daughter had performed their usual picturesque embrace, and the latter had given me that hand-shake and that smile which I never failed to exact.

"Johnson has got his discharge," said the old man, when he had heard his daughter's door close upstairs.

"What do you mean?"

He pointed with his thumb to the room above, where we heard, through the thin partition, the movement of Miss Blunt's light step.

"You mean that he has proposed to Miss Esther?"

The Captain nodded.

"And has been refused?"

"Flat."

"Poor fellow!" said I, very honestly. "Did he tell you himself?"

"Yes, with tears in his eyes. He wanted me to speak for him. I told him it was no use. Then he began to say hard things of my poor girl."

"What kind of things?"

"A pack of falsehoods. He says she has no heart. She has promised always to regard him as a friend: it's more than I will, hang him!"

"Poor fellow!" said I; and now, as I write, I can only repeat, considering what a hope was here broken, Poor fellow!

August 23d.—I have been lounging about all day, thinking of it, dreaming of it, spooning over it, as they say. This is a decided waste of time. I think, accordingly, the best thing for me to do is, to sit down and lay the ghost by writing out my story.

On Thursday evening Miss Blunt happened to intimate that she had a holiday on the morrow, it being the birthday of the lady in whose establishment she teaches.

"There is to be a tea-party at four o'clock in the afternoon for the resident pupils and teachers," said Miss Esther. "Tea at four! what do you think of that? And then there is to be a speech-making by the smartest young lady. As my services are not required, I propose to be absent. Suppose, father, you take us out in your boat. Will you come, Mr. Locksley? We shall have a nice little picnic. Let us go over to old Fort Pudding, across the bay. We will take our dinner with us, and send Dorothy to spend the day with her sister, and put the house-key in our pocket, and not come home till we please."

I warmly espoused the project, and it was accordingly carried into execution the next morning, when, at about ten o'clock, we pushed off from our little wharf at the garden-foot. It was a perfect summer's day: I can say no more for it. We made a quiet run over to the point of our destination. I shall never forget the wondrous stillness which brooded over earth and water, as we weighed anchor in the lee of my old friend,—or old enemy,—the ruined fort. The deep, translucent water reposed at the base of the warm sunlit cliff like a great basin of glass, which I half expected to hear shiver and crack as our keel ploughed through it. And how color and sound stood out in the transparent air! How audibly the little ripples on the beach whispered to the open sky! How our irreverent voices seemed to jar upon the privacy of the little cove! The mossy rocks doubled themselves without a flaw in the clear, dark water. The gleaming white beach lay fringed with its deep deposits of odorous sea-weed, gleaming black. The steep, straggling sides of the cliffs raised aloft their rugged angles against the burning blue of the sky. I remember, when Miss Blunt stepped ashore and stood upon the beach, relieved against the heavy shadow of a recess in the cliff, while her father and I busied ourselves with gathering up our baskets and fastening the anchor—I remember, I say, what a figure she made. There is a certain purity in this Cragthrope air which I have never seen approached,—a lightness, a brilliancy, a *crudity*, which allows perfect liberty of self-assertion to each individual object in the landscape. The prospect is ever more or less like a picture which lacks its final process, its reduction to unity. Miss Blunt's figure, as she stood there on the beach, was almost *criarde*; but how lovely it was! Her light muslin dress, gathered up over her short white skirt, her little black mantilla, the blue veil which she had

knotted about her neck, the crimson shawl which she had thrown over her arm, the little silken dome which she poised over her head in one gloved hand, while the other retained her crisp draperies, and which cast down upon her face a sharp circle of shade, out of which her cheerful eyes shone darkly and her happy mouth smiled whitely,—these are some of the hastily noted points of the picture.

"Young woman," I cried out, over the water, "I do wish you might know how pretty you look!"

"How do you know I don't?" she answered. "I should think I might. You don't look so badly, yourself. But it's not I; it's the accessories."

"Hang it! I am going to become profane," I called out again.

"Swear ahead," said the Captain.

"I am going to say you are devilish pretty."

"Dear me! is that all?" cried Miss Blunt, with a little light laugh, which must have made the tutelar sirens of the cove ready to die with jealousy down in their submarine bowers.

By the time the Captain and I had landed our effects, our companion had tripped lightly up the forehead of the cliff—in one place it is very retreating—and disappeared over its crown. She soon reappeared with an intensely white handkerchief added to her other provocations, which she waved to us, as we trudged upward, carrying our baskets. When we stopped to take breath on the summit, and wipe our foreheads, we, of course, rebuked her who was roaming about idly with her parasol and gloves.

"Do you think I am going to take any trouble or do any work?" cried Miss Esther, in the greatest good-humor. "Is not this my holiday? I am not going to raise a finger, nor soil these beautiful gloves, for which I paid a dollar at Mr. Dawson's in Cragthrope. After you have found a shady place for your provisions, I would like you to look for a spring. I am very thirsty."

"Find the spring yourself, Miss," said her father. "Mr. Locksley and I have a spring in this basket. Take a pull, sir."

And the Captain drew forth a stout black bottle.

"Give me a cup, and I will look for some water," said Miss Blunt. "Only I'm so afraid of the snakes! If you hear a scream, you may know it's a snake."

"Screaming snakes!" said I; "that's a new species."

What nonsense it all sounds like now! As we looked about us, shade seemed scarce, as it generally is, in this region. But Miss Blunt, like the very adroit and practical young person she is, for all that she would have me believe the contrary, soon discovered a capital cool spring in the shelter of a pleasant little dell, beneath a clump of firs. Hither, as one of the young gentlemen who imitate Tennyson would say, we brought our basket, Blunt and I; while Esther dipped the cup, and held it dripping to our thirsty lips, and laid the cloth, and on the grass disposed the platters round. I should have to be a poet, indeed, to describe half the happiness and the silly poetry and purity and beauty of this bright long summer's day. We ate, drank, and talked; we ate occasionally with our fingers, we drank out of the necks of our bottles, and we talked with our mouths full, as befits (and excuses) those who talk wild nonsense. We told stories without the least point. Blunt and I made atrocious puns. I believe, indeed, that Miss Blunt herself made one little punkin, as I called it. If there had been any superfluous representative of humanity present, to register the fact, I should say that we made

fools of ourselves. But as there was no fool on hand, I need say nothing about it. I am conscious myself of having said several witty things, which Miss Blunt understood: *in vino veritas*. The dear old Captain twanged the long bow indefatigably. The bright high sun lingered above us the livelong day, and drowned the prospect with light and warmth. One of these days I mean to paint a picture which in future ages, when my dear native land shall boast a national school of art, will hang in the *Salon Carré* of the great central museum, (located, let us say, in Chicago,) and remind folks—or rather make them forget—Giorgione, Bordone, and Veronese: A Rural Festival; three persons feasting under some trees; scene, nowhere in particular; time and hour, problematical. Female figure, a big *brune*; young man reclining on his elbow; old man drinking. An empty sky, with no end of expression. The whole stupendous in color, drawing, feeling. Artist uncertain; supposed to be Robinson, 1900. That's about the programme.

After dinner the Captain began to look out across the bay, and, noticing the uprising of a little breeze, expressed a wish to cruise about for an hour or two. He proposed to us to walk along the shore to a point a couple of miles northward, and there meet the boat. His daughter having agreed to this proposition, he set off with the lightened pannier, and in less than half an hour we saw him standing out from shore. Miss Blunt and I did not begin our walk for a long, long time. We sat and talked beneath the trees. At our feet, a wide cleft in the hills—almost a glen—stretched down to the silent beach. Beyond lay the familiar ocean-line. But, as many philosophers have observed, there is an end to all things. At last we got up. Miss Blunt said, that, as the air was freshening, she believed she would put on her shawl. I helped her to fold it into the proper shape, and then I placed it on her shoulders, her crimson shawl over her black silk sack. And then she tied her veil once more about her neck, and gave me her hat to hold, while she effected a partial redistribution of her hair-pins. By way of being humorous, I placed her hat on my own head; at which she was kind enough to smile, as with downcast face and uplifted elbows she fumbled among her braids. And then she shook out the creases of her dress, and drew on her gloves; and finally she said, "Well!"—that inevitable tribute to time and morality which follows upon even the mildest form of dissipation. Very slowly it was that we wandered down the little glen. Slowly, too, we followed the course of the narrow and sinuous beach, as it keeps to the foot of the low cliffs. We encountered no sign of human interest. Our conversation I need hardly repeat. I think I may trust it to the keeping of my memory; I think I shall be likely to remember it. It was all very sober and sensible,—such talk as it is both easy and pleasant to remember; it was even prosaic,—or, at least, if there was a vein of poetry in it, I should have defied a listener to put his finger on it. There was no exaltation of feeling or utterance on either side; on one side, indeed, there was very little utterance. Am I wrong in conjecturing, however, that there was considerable feeling of a certain quiet kind? Miss Blunt maintained a rich, golden silence. I, on the other hand, was very voluble. What a sweet, womanly listener she is!

September 1st.—I have been working steadily for a week. This is the first day of autumn. Read aloud to Miss Blunt a little Wordsworth.

September 10th. Midnight.—Worked without interruption,—until yesterday, inclusive, that is. But with the day now closing—or opening—begins a new era. My poor vapid old diary, at last you shall hold a *fact*.

For three days past we have been having damp, chilly weather. Dusk has fallen early. This evening, after tea, the Captain went into town,—on business, as he said: I believe, to attend some Poorhouse or Hospital Board. Esther and I went into the parlor. The room seemed cold. She brought in the lamp from the dining-room, and proposed we should have a little fire. I went into the kitchen, procured an armful of wood, and while she drew the curtains and

wheeled up the table, I kindled a lively, crackling blaze. A fortnight ago she would not have allowed me to do this without a protest. She would not have offered to do it herself,—not she!—but she would have said that I was not here to serve, but to be served, and would have pretended to call Dorothy. Of course I should have had my own way. But we have changed all that. Esther went to her piano, and I sat down to a book. I read not a word. I sat looking at my mistress, and thinking with a very uneasy heart. For the first time in our friendship, she had put on a dark, warm dress: I think it was of the material called alpaca. The first time I saw her she wore a white dress with a purple neck-ribbon; now she wore a black dress with the same ribbon. That is, I remember wondering, as I sat there eyeing her, whether it was the same ribbon, or merely another like it. My heart was in my throat; and yet I thought of a number of trivialities of the same kind. At last I spoke.

"Miss Blunt," I said, "do you remember the first evening I passed beneath your roof, last June?"

"Perfectly," she replied, without stopping.

"You played this same piece."

"Yes; I played it very badly, too. I only half knew it. But it is a showy piece, and I wished to produce an effect. I didn't know then how indifferent you are to music."

"I paid no particular attention to the piece. I was intent upon the performer."

"So the performer supposed."

"What reason had you to suppose so?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Did you ever know a woman to be able to give a reason, when she has guessed aright?"

"I think they generally contrive to make up a reason, afterwards. Come, what was yours?"

"Well, you *stared* so hard."

"Fie! I don't believe it. That's unkind."

"You said you wished me to invent a reason. If I really had one, I don't remember it."

"You told me you remembered the occasion in question perfectly."

"I meant the circumstances. I remember what we had for tea; I remember what dress I wore. But I don't remember my feelings. They were naturally not very memorable."

"What did you say, when your father proposed my coming?"

"I asked how much you would be willing to pay."

"And then?"

"And then, if you looked 'respectable'."

"And then?"

"That was all. I told father that he could do as he pleased."

She continued to play. Leaning back in my chair, I continued to look at her. There was a considerable pause.

"Miss Esther," said I, at last.

"Yes."

"Excuse me for interrupting you so often. But,"—and I got up and went to the piano,— "but I thank Heaven that it has brought you and me together."

She looked up at me and bowed her head with a little smile, as her hands still wandered over the keys.

"Heaven has certainly been very good to us," said she.

"How much longer are you going to play?" I asked.

"I'm sure I don't know. As long as you like."

"If you want to do as I like, you will stop immediately."

She let her hands rest on the keys a moment, and gave me a rapid, questioning look. Whether she found a sufficient answer in my face I know not; but she slowly rose, and, with a very pretty affectation of obedience, began to close the instrument. I helped her to do so.

"Perhaps you would like to be quite alone," she said. "I suppose your own room is too cold."

"Yes," I answered, "you've hit it exactly. I wish to be alone. I wish to monopolize this cheerful blaze. Hadn't you better go into the kitchen and sit with the cook? It takes you women to make such cruel speeches."

"When we women are cruel, Mr. Locksley, it is without knowing it. We are not wilfully so. When we learn that we have been unkind, we very humbly ask pardon, without even knowing what our crime has been." And she made me a very low curtsy.

"I will tell you what your crime has been," said I. "Come and sit by the fire. It's rather a long story."

"A long story? Then let me get my work."

"Confound your work! Excuse me, but I mean it. I want you to listen to me. Believe me, you will need all your thoughts."

She looked at me steadily a moment, and I returned her glance. During that moment I was reflecting whether I might silently emphasize my request by laying a lover's hand upon her shoulder. I decided that I might not. She walked over and quietly seated herself in a low chair by the fire. Here she patiently folded her arms. I sat down before her.

"With you, Miss Blunt," said I, "one must be very explicit. You are not in the habit of taking things for granted. You have a great deal of imagination, but you rarely exercise it on the behalf of other people." I stopped a moment.

"Is that my crime?" asked my companion.

"It's not so much a crime as a vice," said I; "and perhaps not so much a vice as a virtue. Your crime is, that you are so stone-cold to a poor devil who loves you."

She burst into a rather shrill laugh. I wonder whether she thought I meant Johnson.

"Who are you speaking for, Mr. Locksley?" she asked.

"Are there so many? For myself."

"Honestly?"

"Honestly doesn't begin to express it."

"What is that French phrase that you are forever using? I think I may say, '*Allons, donc!*'"

"Let us speak plain English, Miss Blunt."

"Stone-cold' is certainly very plain English. I don't see the relative importance of the two branches of your proposition. Which is the principal, and which the subordinate clause,—that I am stone-cold, as you call it, or that you love me, as you call it?"

"As I call it? What would you have me call it? For God's sake, Miss Blunt, be serious, or I shall call it something else. Yes, I love you. Don't you believe it?"

"I am open to conviction."

"Thank God!" said I.

And I attempted to take her hand.

"No, no, Mr. Locksley," said she,—"not just yet, if you please."

"Action speaks louder than words," said I.

"There is no need of speaking loud. I hear you perfectly."

"I certainly sha'n't whisper," said I; "although it is the custom, I believe, for lovers to do so. Will you be my wife?"

"I sha'n't whisper, either, Mr. Locksley. Yes, I will."

And now she put out her hand.—That's my fact.

September 12th.—We are to be married within three weeks.

September 19th.—I have been in New York a week, transacting business. I got back yesterday. I find every one here talking about our engagement. Esther tells me that it was talked about a month ago, and that there is a very general feeling of disappointment that I am not rich.

"Really, if you don't mind it," said I, "I don't see why others should."

"I don't know whether you are rich or not," says Esther; "but I know that I am."

"Indeed! I was not aware that you had a private fortune," etc., etc.

This little farce is repeated in some shape every day. I am very idle. I smoke a great deal, and lounge about all day, with my hands in my pockets. I am free from that ineffable weariness of ceaseless *giving* which I experienced six months ago. I was shorn of my hereditary trinkets at that period; and I have resolved that *this* engagement, at all events, shall have no connection with the shops. I was balked of my poetry once; I sha'n't be a second time. I don't think there is much danger of this. Esther deals it out with full hands. She takes a very pretty interest in her simple outfit,—showing me triumphantly certain of her purchases, and making a great mystery about others, which she is pleased to denominate table-cloths and napkins. Last evening I found her sewing buttons on a table-cloth. I had heard a great deal of a certain gray silk dress; and this morning, accordingly, she marched up to me, arrayed in this garment. It is trimmed with velvet, and hath flounces, a train, and all the modern improvements generally.

"There is only one objection to it," said Esther, parading before the glass in my painting-room: "I am afraid it is above our station."

"By Jove! I'll paint your portrait in it," said I, "and make our fortune. All the other men who have handsome wives will bring them to be painted."

"You mean all the women who have handsome dresses," said Esther, with great humility.

Our wedding is fixed for next Thursday. I tell Esther that it will be as little of a wedding, and as much of a marriage, as possible. Her father and her good friend the schoolmistress alone

are to be present.—My secret oppresses me considerably; but I have resolved to keep it for the honeymoon, when it may take care of itself. I am harassed with a dismal apprehension, that, if Esther were to discover it now, the whole thing would be *à refaire*. I have taken rooms at a romantic little watering-place called Clifton, ten miles off. The hotel is already quite free of city-people, and we shall be almost alone.

September 28th.—We have been here two days. The little transaction in the church went off smoothly. I am truly sorry for the Captain. We drove directly over here, and reached the place at dusk. It was a raw, black day. We have a couple of good rooms, close to the savage sea. I am nevertheless afraid I have made a mistake. It would perhaps have been wiser to go inland. These things are not immaterial: we make our own heaven, but we scarcely make our own earth. I am writing at a little table by the window, looking out on the rocks, the gathering dusk, and the rising fog. My wife has wandered down to the rocky platform in front of the house. I can see her from here, bareheaded, in that old crimson shawl, talking to one of the landlord's little boys. She has just given the little fellow a kiss, bless her heart! I remember her telling me once that she was very fond of little boys; and, indeed, I have noticed that they are seldom too dirty for her to take on her knee. I have been reading over these pages for the first time in—I don't know when. They are filled with her,—even more in thought than in word. I believe I will show them to her, when she comes in. I will give her the book to read, and sit by her, watching her face,—watching the great secret dawn upon her.

Later.—Somehow or other, I can write this quietly enough; but I hardly think I shall ever write any more. When Esther came in, I handed her this book.

"I want you to read it," said I.

She turned very pale, and laid it on the table, shaking her head.

"I know it," she said.

"What do you know?"

"That you have a hundred thousand a year. But, believe me, Mr. Locksley, I am none the worse for the knowledge. You intimated in one place in your book that I am born for wealth and splendor. I believe I am. You pretend to hate your money; but you would not have had me without it. If you really love me,—and I think you do,—you will not let this make any difference. I am not such a fool as to attempt to talk here about my sensations. But I remember what I said."

"What do you expect me to do?" I asked. "Shall I call you some horrible name and cast you off?"

"I expect you to show the same courage that I am showing. I never said I loved you. I never deceived you in that. I said I would be your wife. So I will, faithfully. I haven't so much heart as you think; and yet, too, I have a great deal more. I am incapable of more than one deception.—Mercy! didn't you see it? didn't you know it? see that I saw it? know that I knew it? It was diamond cut diamond. You deceived me; I deceived you. Now that your deception ceases, mine ceases. Now we are free, with our hundred thousand a year! Excuse me, but it sometimes comes across me! Now we can be good and honest and true. It was all a make-believe virtue before."

"So you read that thing?" I asked: actually—strange as it may seem—for something to say.

"Yes, while you were ill. It was lying with your pen in it, on the table. I read it because I suspected. Otherwise I shouldn't have done so."

"It was the act of a false woman," said I.

"A false woman? No,—simply of a woman. I am a woman, sir." And she began to smile.
"Come, *you* be a man!"

A Day of Days

Mr. Herbert Moore, a gentleman of some note in the scientific world, and a childless widower, finding himself at last unable to reconcile his sedentary habits with the management of a household, had invited his only sister to come and superintend his domestic affairs. Miss Adela Moore had assented the more willingly to his proposal, as by her mother's death she had recently been left without a formal protector. She was twenty-five years of age, and was a very active member of what she and her friends called society. She was almost equally at home in the very best company of three great cities, and she had encountered most of the adventures which await a young girl on the threshold of life. She had become rather hastily and imprudently engaged, but she had eventually succeeded in disengaging herself. She had spent a summer in Europe, and she had made a voyage to Cuba with a dear friend in the last stage of consumption, who had died at the hotel in Havana. Although by no means beautiful in person, she was yet thoroughly pleasing, rejoicing in what young ladies are fond of calling an *air*. That is, she was tall and slender, with a long neck, a low forehead and a handsome nose. Even after six years of "society," too, she still had excellent manners. She was, moreover, mistress of a very pretty little fortune, and was accounted clever without detriment to her amiability, and amiable without detriment to her wit. These facts, as the reader will allow, might have ensured her the very best prospects; but he has seen that she had found herself willing to forfeit her prospects and bury herself in the country. It seemed to her that she had seen enough of the world and of human nature, and that a couple of years of seclusion might not be unprofitable. She had begun to suspect that for a girl of her age she was unduly old and wise—and, what is more, to suspect that others suspected as much. A great observer of life and manners, so far as her opportunities went, she conceived that it behooved her to organize the results of her observation into principles of conduct and of belief. She was becoming—so she argued—too impersonal, too critical, too intelligent, too contemplative, too just. A woman had no business to be so just. The society of nature, of the great expansive skies and the primeval woods, would prove severely unpropitious to her excessive intellectual growth. She would spend her time in the fields and live in her feelings, her simple sense, and the perusal of profitable books from Herbert's library.

She found her brother very prettily housed at about a mile's distance from the nearest town, and at about six miles' distance from another town, the seat of a small college, before which he delivered a weekly lecture. She had seen so little of him of late years that his acquaintance was almost to make; but it was very soon made. Herbert Moore was one of the simplest and least aggressive of men, and one of the most patient and delicate of students. He had a vague notion that Adela was a young woman of extravagant pleasures, and that, somehow, on her arrival, his house would be overrun with the train of her attendant revellers. It was not until after they had been six months together that he discovered that his sister was a model of diligence and temperance. By the time six months more had passed, Adela had bought back a delightful sense of youth and *naïveté*. She learned, under her brother's tuition, to walk—nay, to climb, for there were great hills in the neighborhood—to ride and to botanize. At the end of a year, in the month of August, she received a visit from an old friend, a girl of her own age, who had been spending July at a watering-place, and who was about to be married. Adela had begun to fear that she had lapsed into an almost irreclaimable rusticity, and had suffered a permanent diminution of the social facility for which she had formerly been distinguished; but a week spent in *tête-à-tête* with her friend convinced her not only that she had not forgotten much that she had feared, but also that she had not forgotten much that she had hoped. For this, and other reasons, her friend's departure left her slightly depressed. She

felt lonely and even a little elderly. She had lost another illusion. Laura B., for whom a year ago she had entertained a serious regard, now impressed her as a very flimsy little person, who talked about her lover with almost indecent flippancy.

Meanwhile, September was slowly running its course. One morning Mr. Moore took a hasty breakfast and started to catch the train for S., whither a scientific conference called him, which might, he said, release him that afternoon in time for dinner at home, and might, on the other hand, detain him until the evening. It was almost the first time during Adela's rustication that she had been left alone for several hours. Her brother's quiet presence was inappreciable enough; yet now that he was at a distance she nevertheless felt a singular sense of freedom; a sort of return of those days of early childhood, when, through some domestic catastrophe, she had for an infinite morning been left to her own devices. What should she do? she asked herself, half laughing. It was a fair day for work: but it was a still better one for play. Should she drive into town and pay a long-standing debt of morning calls? Should she go into the kitchen and try her hand at a pudding for dinner? She felt a delicious longing to do something illicit, to play with fire, to discover some Bluebeard's closet. But poor Herbert was no Bluebeard. If she were to burn down his house he would exact no amends. Adela went out to the veranda, and, sitting down on the steps, gazed across the country. It was apparently the last day of Summer. The sky was faintly blue; the woody hills were putting on the morbid colors of Autumn; the great pine grove behind the house seemed to have caught and imprisoned the protesting breezes. Looking down the road toward the village, it occurred to Adela that she might have a visit, and so kindly was her mood that she felt herself competent to a chat with one of her rustic neighbors. As the sun rose higher, she went in and established herself with a piece of embroidery in a deep, bow window in the second story, which, betwixt its muslin curtains and its external frame-work of vines, commanded most insidiously the principal approach to the house. While she drew her threads, she surveyed the road with a deepening conviction that she was destined to have a caller. The air was warm, yet not hot; the dust had been laid during the night by a gentle rain. It had been from the first a source of complaint among Adela's new friends that her courtesies were so thoroughly indiscriminating. Not only had she lent herself to no friendships, but she had committed herself to no preferences. Nevertheless, it was with a by no means impartial fancy that she sat thus expectant at her casement. She had very soon made up her mind that, to answer the exactions of the hour, her visitor should perforce be of the other sex, and as, thanks to the somewhat uncompromising indifference which, during her residence, she had exhibited to the *jeunesse dorée* of the county, her roll-call, in this her hour of need, was limited to a single name, so her thoughts were now centered upon the bearer of that name, Mr. Madison Perkins, the Unitarian minister. If, instead of being Miss Moore's story, this were Mr. Perkins's, it might easily be condensed into the one pregnant fact that he was very far gone in love for our heroine. Although of a different faith from his, she had been so well pleased with one of his sermons, to which she had allowed herself to lend a tolerant ear, that, meeting him some time afterward, she had received him with what she considered a rather knotty doctrinal question; whereupon, gracefully waiving the question, he had asked permission to call upon her and talk over her "difficulties." This short interview had enshrined her in the young minister's heart; and the half-dozen occasions on which he had subsequently contrived to see her had each contributed an additional taper to her shrine. It is but fair to add, however, that, although a captive, Mr. Perkins was as yet no captor. He was simply an honorable young man, who happened at this moment to be the most sympathetic companion within reach. Adela, at twenty-five years of age, had both a past and a future. Mr. Perkins reëchoed the one, and foreshadowed the other.

So, at last, when, as the morning waned toward noon, Adela descried in the distance a man's figure treading the grassy margin of the road, and swinging his stick as she came, she smiled to herself with some complacency. But even while she smiled she became conscious of a most foolish acceleration of the process of her heart. She rose, and resenting her gratuitous emotion, stood for a moment half resolved to have herself denied. As she did so, she glanced along the road again. Her friend had drawn nearer, and, as the distance lessened, lo! it seemed to her that he was not her friend. Before many moments her doubts were removed. The gentleman was a stranger. In front of the house three roads diverged from a great spreading elm. The stranger came along the opposite side of the highway, and when he reached the elm stopped and looked about him as if to verify a direction. Then he deliberately crossed over. Adela had time to see, unseen, that he was a shapely young man, with a bearded chin and a straw hat. After the due interval, Becky, the maid, came up with a card somewhat rudely superscribed in pencil:

THOMAS LUDLOW,

New York.

Turning it over in her fingers, Adela saw that the reverse of a card had been used, abstracted from the basket on her own drawing-room table. The printed name on the other side was dashed out; it ran: *Mr. Madison Perkins.*

"He asked me to give you this, ma'am," said Becky. "He helped himself to it out of the tray."

"Did he ask for me by name?"

"No, ma'am, he asked for Mr. Moore. When I told him Mr. Moore was away, he asked for some of the family. I told him you were all the family, ma'am."

"Very well," said Adela, "I will go down." But, begging her pardon, we will precede her by a few steps.

Tom Ludlow, as his friends called him, was a young man of twenty-eight, concerning whom you might have heard the most various opinions; for, as far as he was known (which, indeed, was not very far), he was at once one of the best liked and one of the best hated of men. Born in one of the lower *strata* of New York society, he was still slightly incrustated, if we may so express it, with his native soil. A certain crudity of manners and of aspect proved him to be one of the great majority of the ungloved. On this basis, however, he was a sufficiently good-looking fellow: a middle-sized, agile figure; a head so well shaped as to be handsome; a pair of inquisitive, responsive eyes, and a large, manly mouth, constituting his heritage of beauty. Turned upon the world at an early age, he had, in the pursuit of a subsistence, tried his head at everything in succession, and had generally found it to be quite as hard as the opposing substance; and his figure may have been thought to reflect this sweet assurance in a look of somewhat aggressive satisfaction with things in general, himself included. He was a man of strong faculties and a strong will, but it is doubtful whether his feelings were stronger than he. He was liked for his directness, his good humor, his general soundness and serviceableness; he was disliked for the same qualities under different names; that is, for his impudence, his offensive optimism, and his inhuman avidity for facts. When his friends insisted upon his noble disinterestedness, his enemies were wont to reply it was all very well to ignore, to nullify oneself in the pursuit of science, but that to suppress the rest of mankind coincidentally betrayed an excess of zeal. Fortunately for Ludlow, on the whole, he was no great listener; and even if he had been, a certain plebeian thick-skinnedness would have been the guaranty of his equanimity; although it must be added that, if, like a genuine democrat, he was very insensitive, like a genuine democrat, too, he was amazingly proud. His tastes, which had always been for the natural sciences, had recently led him to paleontology, that branch of

them cultivated by Herbert Moore; and it was upon business connected with this pursuit that, after a short correspondence, he had now come to see him.

As Adela went in to him, he came out with a bow from the window, whence he had been contemplating the lawn. She acknowledged his greeting.

"Miss Moore, I believe," said Ludlow.

"Miss Moore," said Adela.

"I beg your pardon for this intrusion, but as I had come from a distance to see Mr. Moore on business, I thought I might venture either to ask at headquarters how he may most easily be reached, or even to charge you with a message." These words were accompanied with a smile before which it was Adela's destiny to succumb—if this is not too forcible a term for the movement of feeling with which she answered them.

"Pray make no apologies," she said. "We hardly recognize such a thing as intrusion in the country. Won't you sit down? My brother went away only this morning, and I expect him back this afternoon."

"This afternoon? indeed. In that case I believe I'll wait. It was very stupid of me not to have dropped a word beforehand. But I have been in the city all Summer long, and I shall not be sorry to screw a little vacation out of this business. I'm prodigiously fond of the country, and I very seldom get a glimpse of it."

"It's possible," said Adela, "that my brother may not come home until the evening. He was uncertain. You might go to him at S."

Ludlow reflected a moment, with his eyes on his hostess. "If he does return in the afternoon, at what hour will he arrive?"

"At three."

"And my own train leaves at four. Allow him a quarter of an hour to come from town and myself a quarter of an hour to get there (if he would give me his vehicle, back), I should have half an hour to see him. We couldn't do much talk, but I could ask him the essential questions. I wish chiefly to ask him for some letters. It seems a pity to take two superfluous—that is, possibly superfluous—railway journeys of an hour apiece, for I should probably come back with him. Don't you think so?" he asked, very frankly.

"You know best," said Adela. "I'm not particularly fond of the journey to S., even when it's absolutely necessary."

"Yes; and then this is such a lovely day for a good long ramble in the fields. That's a thing I haven't done since I don't know when. I'll stay." And he placed his hat on the floor beside him.

"I'm afraid, now that I think of it," said Adela, "that there is no train until so late an hour that you would have very little time left on your arrival to talk with my brother before the hour at which he himself might have determined to start for home. It's true that you might induce him to remain till the evening."

"Dear me! I shouldn't like to do that. It might be very inconvenient for him. Besides I shouldn't have time. And then I always like to see a man in his own home—or in my own home; a man, that is, whom I have any regard for—and I have a very great regard for your brother, Miss Moore. When men meet at a half-way house, neither feels at his ease. And then this is such an uncommonly pretty place of yours," pursued Ludlow, looking about him.

"Yes, it's a very pretty place," said Adela.

Ludlow got up and walked to the window. "I want to look at your view," said he. "A lovely view it is. You're a happy woman, Miss Moore, to live before such a prospect."

"Yes, if pretty scenery can make one happy, I ought to be happy." And Adela was glad to regain her feet and stand on the other side of the table, before the window.

"Don't you think it can?" asked Ludlow turning around. "I don't know, though, perhaps it can't. Ugly sights can't make you unhappy, necessarily. I've been working for a year in one of the narrowest, darkest, dirtiest, and busiest streets in New York, with rusty bricks and muddy gutters for scenery. But I think I can hardly set up to be miserable. I wish I could. It might be a claim on your favor." As he said these words, he stood leaning against the window shutter, without the curtain, with folded arms. The morning light covered his face, and, mingled with that of his broad laugh, showed Adela that it was a very pleasant face.

"Whatever else he may be," she said to herself as she stood within the shade of the other curtain, playing with the paper-knife which she had plucked from the table. "I think he is honest. I am afraid he isn't a gentleman—but he is not a simpleton." She met his eye frankly for a moment. "What do you want of my favor?" she asked, with an abruptness of which she was acutely conscious. "Does he wish to make friends," she pursued, "or does he merely wish to pay me a vulgar compliment? There is bad taste, perhaps, in either case, but especially in the latter." Meanwhile her visitor had already answered her.

"What do I want of your favor? Why, I want to make the most of it." And Ludlow blushed at his own audacity.

Adela, however, kept her color. "I'm afraid it will need all your pulling and stretching," she said, with a little laugh.

"All right. I'm great at pulling and stretching," said Ludlow, with a deepening of his great masculine blush, and a broad laugh to match it.

Adela glanced toward the clock on the mantle. She was curious to measure the duration of her acquaintance with this breezy invader of her privacy, with whom she so suddenly found herself bandying florid personalities. She had known him some eight minutes.

Ludlow observed her movement. "I'm interrupting you and detaining you from your own affairs," he said; and he moved toward his hat. "I suppose I must bid you good-morning." And he picked it up.

Adela stood at the table and watched him cross the room. To express a very delicate feeling in terms comparatively broad, she was loth to have him go. She divined, too, that he was loth to go. The knowledge of this feeling on his part, however, affected her composure but slightly. The truth is—we say it with all respect—Adela was an old hand. She was modest, honest and wise; but, as we have said, she had a past—a past of which importunate swains in the guise of morning-callers had been no inconsiderable part; and a great dexterity in what may be called outflanking these gentlemen, was one of her registered accomplishments. Her liveliest emotion at present, therefore, was less one of annoyance at her companion than of surprise at her own gracious impulses, which were yet undeniable. "Am I dreaming?" she asked herself. She looked out of the window, and then back at Ludlow, who stood grasping his hat and stick, contemplating her face. Should she bid him remain? "He is honest," she repeated; "why should not I be honest for once?" "I'm sorry you are in a hurry," she said aloud.

"I am in no hurry," he answered.

Adela turned her face to the window again, and toward the opposite hills. There was a moment's pause.

"I thought you were in a hurry," said Ludlow.

Adela gave him her eyes. "My brother would be very glad to have you remain as long as you like. He would expect me to offer you what little hospitality is in my power."

"Pray, offer it then."

"That's easily done. This is the parlor, and there, beyond the hall, is my brother's study. Perhaps you would like to look at his books and his collections. I know nothing about them, and I should be a very poor guide. But you are welcome to go in and use your discretion in examining what may interest you."

"This, I take it, would be but another way of bidding you good-morning."

"For the present, yes."

"But I hesitate to take such liberties with your brother's treasures as you prescribe."

"Prescribe, sir? I prescribe nothing."

"But if I decline to penetrate into Mr. Moore's *sanctum*, what alternative remains?"

"Really—you must make your own alternative." "I think you mentioned the parlor. Suppose I choose that."

"Just as you please. Here are some books, and, if you like, I will bring you some magazines. Can I serve you in any other way? Are you tired by your walk? Would you like a glass of wine?"

"Tired by my walk?—not exactly. You are very kind, but I feel no immediate desire for a glass of wine. I think you needn't trouble yourself about the magazines, either. I am in no mood to read." And Ludlow pulled out his watch and compared it with the clock. "I'm afraid your clock is fast."

"Yes;" said Adela, "very likely."

"Some ten minutes. Well, I suppose I had better be walking;" and, coming toward Adela, he extended his hand.

She gave him hers. "It's a day of days for a long, slow ramble," she said.

Ludlow's only rejoinder was his hand-shake. He moved slowly toward the door, half accompanied by Adela. "Poor fellow!" she said to herself. The lattice summer-door admitted into the entry a cool, dusky light, in which Adela looked pale. Ludlow divided its wings with his stick, and disclosed a landscape, long, deep and bright, framed by the pillars of the veranda. He stopped on the threshold, swinging his stick. "I hope I shan't lose my way," he said.

"I hope not. My brother will not forgive me if you do."

Ludlow's brows were slightly contracted by a frown, but he contrived to smile with his lips. "When shall I come back?" he asked abruptly.

Adela found but a low tone—almost a whisper—at her command, to answer. "Whenever you please," she said.

The young man turned about, with his back to the bright doorway, and looked into Adela's face, which was now covered with light. "Miss Moore," said he, "it's very much against my will that I leave you at all."

Adela stood debating within herself. What if her companion should stay? It would, under the circumstances, be an adventure; but was an adventure necessarily unadvisable? It lay wholly with herself to decide. She was her own mistress, and she had hitherto been a just mistress. Might she not for once be a generous one? The reader will observe in Adela's meditation the recurrence of this saving clause "for once." It rests upon the simple fact that she had begun the day in a romantic mood. She was prepared to be interested; and now that an interesting phenomenon had presented itself, that it stood before her in vivid human—nay, manly—shape, instinct with reciprocity, was she to close her hand to the liberality of fate? To do so would be to court mischance; for it would involve, moreover, a petty insult to human nature. Was not the man before her fairly redolent of honesty, and was that not enough? He was not what Adela had been used to call a gentleman. To this conviction she had made a swallow's flight; but from this assurance she would start. "I have seen" (she thus concluded) "all the gentlemen can show me; let us try something new."

"I see no reason why you should run away so fast, Mr. Ludlow," she said, aloud.

"I think," cried Ludlow, "it would be the greatest piece of folly I ever committed."

"I think it would be a pity," said Adela, with a smile.

"And you invite me into your parlor again? I come as your visitor, you know. I was your brother's before. It's a simple enough matter. We are old friends. We have a broad, common ground in your brother. Isn't that about it?"

"You may adopt whatever theory you please. To my mind, it is, indeed, a very simple matter."

"Oh, but I wouldn't have it too simple," said Ludlow, with a mighty smile.

"Have it as you please."

Ludlow leaned back against the doorway. "Your kindness is too much for me, Miss Moore," said he. "I am passive; I am in your hands; do with me what you please. I can't help contrasting my fate with what it might have been but for you. A quarter of an hour ago I was ignorant of your existence; you weren't in my programme. I had no idea your brother had a sister. When your servant spoke of 'Miss Moore,' upon my word I expected something rather elderly—something venerable—some rigid old lady, who would say, 'exactly,' and 'very well, sir,' and leave me to spend the rest of the morning tilting back in a chair on the hotel piazza. It shows what fools we are to attempt to forecast the future.

"We must not let our imagination run away with us in any direction," said Adela.

"Imagination? I don't believe I have any. No, madam," and Ludlow straightened himself up, "I live in the present. I write my programme from hour to hour—or, at any rate, I will in the future."

"I think you are very wise," said Adela. "Suppose you write a programme for the present hour. What shall we do? It seems to me a pity to spend so lovely a morning in-doors. I fancy this is the last day of Summer. We ought to celebrate it. How would you like a walk?" Adela had decided that, to reconcile her favors with the proper maintenance of her dignity, her only course was to play the perfect hostess. This decision made, very naturally and gracefully she played her part. It was the one possible part. And yet it did not preclude those delicate

sensations with which her novel episode seemed charged: it simply legitimated them. A romantic adventure on so classical a basis would assuredly hurt no one.

"I should like a walk very much," said Ludlow; "a walk with a halt at the end of it."

"Well, if you will consent to a short halt at the beginning of it," said Adela, "I will be with you in a very few minutes." When she returned in her little hat and shawl, she found her friend seated on the veranda steps. He arose and gave her a card.

"I have been requested, in your absence, to hand you this," he said.

Adela read with some compunction the name of Mr. Madison Perkins.

"Has he been here?" she asked. "Why didn't he come in?"

"I told him you were not at home. If it wasn't true then, it was going to be true so soon that the interval was hardly worth taking account of. He addressed himself to me, as I seemed from my position to be quite at home here; but I confess he looked at me as if he doubted my word. He hesitated as to whether he should confide his name to me, or whether he should confide it in that shape to the entry table. I think he wished to show me that he suspected my veracity, for he was making rather grimly for the table when I, fearing that once inside the house he might encounter the living truth, informed him in the most good-humored tone possible that I would take charge of his little tribute.

"I think, Mr. Ludlow, that you are a strangely unscrupulous man. How did you know that Mr. Perkins's business was not urgent?"

"I didn't know it. But I knew it could be no more urgent than mine. Depend upon it, Miss Moore, you have no case against me. I only pretend to be a man; to have admitted that charming young gentleman would have been heroic."

Adela was familiar with a sequestered spot, in the very heart of the fields, as it seemed to her, to which she now proposed to conduct her friend. The point was to select a goal neither too distant nor too near, and to adopt a pace neither too rapid nor too slow. But although Adela's happy valley was a good two miles away, and they had measured the interval with the very *minimum* of speed, yet most sudden seemed their arrival at the stile over which Adela was used to strike into the meadows. Once on the road, she felt a precipitate conviction that there could be no evil in an adventure so essentially wholesome as that to which she had lent herself, and that there could be no guile in a spirit so deeply sensitive to the sacred influences of Nature, and to the melancholy aspect of incipient Autumn as that of her companion. A man with an unaffected relish for small children is a man to inspire young women with a generous confidence; and so, in a lesser degree, a man with a genuine feeling for the simple beauties of a common New England landscape may not unreasonably be accepted by the daughters of the scene as a person worthy of their esteem. Adela was a great observer of the clouds, the trees and the streams, the sounds and colors, the echoes and reflections native to her adopted home; and she experienced an honest joy at the sight of Ludlow's keen appreciation of these modest facts. His enjoyment of them, deep as it was, however, had to struggle against that sensuous depression natural to a man who has spent the Summer in a close and fetid laboratory in the heart of a great city, and against a sensation of a less material color—the feeling that Adela was a delightful girl. Still, naturally a great talker, he celebrated his impressions in a generous flow of good-humored eloquence. Adela resolved within herself that he was decidedly a companion for the open air. He was a man to make use, even to abuse, of the wide horizon and the high ceiling of Nature. The freedom of his gestures, the sonority of his voice, the keenness of his vision, the general vivacity of his manners, seemed to necessitate and to justify a universal absence of barriers. They crossed the stile, and waded

through the long grass of several successive meadows, until the ground began to rise, the stony surfaces to crop through the turf, when, after a short ascent, they reached a broad plateau, covered with boulders and shrubs, which lost itself on one side in a short, steep cliff, whence fields and marshes stretched down to the opposite river; and on the other, in scattered clumps of pine and maple, which gradually thickened and multiplied, until the horizon in that quarter was blue with a long line of woods. Here was both sun and shade—the unobstructed sky, or the whispering dome of a circle of pines. Adela led the way to a sunny seat among the rocks, which commanded the course of the river, and where a cluster of trees would lend an admonitory undertone to their conversation.

Before long, however, its muffled eloquence became rather importunate, and Adela remarked upon the essential melancholy of the phenomenon.

"It has always seemed to me," rejoined Ludlow, "that the wind in the pines expresses tolerably well man's sense of a coming change, simply as a change."

"Perhaps it does," said Adela. "The pines are forever rustling, and men are forever changing."

"Yes, but they can only be said to express it when there is some one there to hear them; and more especially some one in whose life a change is, to his own knowledge, going to take place. Then they are quite prophetic. Don't you know Longfellow says so?"

"Yes, I know Longfellow says so. But you seem to speak from your own feeling."

"I do."

"Is there a change pending in your life?"

"Yes, rather an important one."

"I believe that's what men say when they are going to be married," said Adela.

"I'm going to be divorced, rather. I'm going to Europe."

"Indeed! soon?"

"To-morrow," said Ludlow, after an instant's pause.

"Oh!" said Adela. "How I envy you!"

Ludlow, who sat looking over the cliff and tossing stones down into the plain, observed a certain inequality in the tone of his companion's two exclamations. The first was nature, the second art. He turned his eyes upon her, but she had turned hers away upon the distance. Then, for a moment, he retreated within himself and thought. He rapidly surveyed his position. Here was he, Tom Ludlow, a hard-headed son of toil, without fortune, without credit, without antecedents, whose lot was cast exclusively with vulgar males, and who had never had a mother, a sister nor a well-bred sweetheart to pitch his voice for the feminine tympanum; who had seldom come nearer an indubitable young lady than, in a favoring crowd, to receive a mechanical "thank you" (as if he were a policeman), for some ingeniously provoked service; here he found himself up to his neck in a sudden pastoral with the most ladyish young woman in the land. That it was in him to enjoy the society of such a woman (provided, of course, she were not a fool), he very well knew; but he had not yet suspected that it was possible for him (in the midst of more serious cares) to obtain it. Was he now to infer that this final gift was his—the gift of pleasing women who were worth the pleasing? The inference was at least logical. He had made a good impression. Why else should a modest and discerning girl have so speedily granted him her favor? It was with a little thrill of satisfaction that Ludlow reflected upon the directness of his course. "It all comes back," he said to himself, "to my old theory, that a process can't be too simple. I used no arts. In such an

enterprise I shouldn't have known where to begin. It was my ignorance of the regulation method that served me. Women like a gentleman, of course; but they like a man better." It was the little touch of nature he had discerned in Adela's tone that had set him thinking; but as compared with the frankness of his own attitude it betrayed after all no undue emotion. Ludlow had accepted the fact of his adaptability to the idle mood of a cultivated woman in a thoroughly rational spirit, and he was not now tempted to exaggerate its bearings. He was not the man to be intoxicated by success—this or any other. "If Miss Moore," he pursued, "is so wise—or so foolish—as to like me half an hour for what I am, she is welcome. Assuredly," he added, as he gazed at her intelligent profile, "she will not like me for what I am not." It needs a woman, however, far more intelligent than (thank heaven!) most women are—more intelligent, certainly, than Adela was—to guard her happiness against a strong man's consistent assumption of her intelligence; and doubtless it was from a sense of this general truth, as Ludlow still gazed, he felt an emotion of manly tenderness. "I wouldn't offend her for the world," he thought. Just then, Adela, conscious of his gaze, looked about; and before he knew it, Ludlow had repeated aloud, "Miss Moore, I wouldn't offend you for the world."

Adela glanced at him for a moment with a little flush that subsided into a smile. "To what dreadful injury is that the prelude?" she asked.

"It's the prelude to nothing. It refers to the past—to any possible displeasure I may have caused you."

"Your scruples are unnecessary, Mr. Ludlow. If you had given me offence, I should not have left you to apologize for it. I should not have left the matter to occur to you as you sat dreaming charitably in the sun."

"What would you have done?"

"Done? nothing. You don't imagine I would have rebuked you—or snubbed you—or answered you back, I take it. I would have left undone—what, I can't tell you. Ask yourself what I have done. I'm sure I hardly know myself," said Adela, with some intensity. "At all events, here I am sitting with you in the fields, as if you were a friend of years. Why do you speak of offence?" And Adela (an uncommon accident with her) lost command of her voice, which trembled ever so slightly. "What an odd thought! why should you offend me? Do I invite it?" Her color had deepened again, and her eyes brightened. She had forgotten herself, and before speaking had not, as was her wont, sought counsel of that staunch conservative, her taste. She had spoken from a full heart—a heart which had been filling rapidly since the outset of their walk with a feeling almost passionate in its quality, and which that little blast of prose which had brought her Ludlow's announcement of his departure, had caused to overflow. The reader may give this feeling such a name as he pleases. We will content ourselves with saying that Adela had played with fire so effectually that she had been scorched. The slight vehemence of the speech just quoted had covered her sensation of pain.

"You pull one up rather short, Miss Moore," said Ludlow. "A man says the best he can."

Adela made no reply. For a moment she hung her head. Was she to cry out because she was hurt? Was she to introduce her injured soul as an impertinent third into the company? No! Here our reserved and contemplative heroine is herself again. Her part was still to be the perfect young lady. For our own part, we can imagine no figure more bewitching than that of the perfect young lady under these circumstances; and if Adela had been the most accomplished coquette in the world she could not have assumed a more becoming expression than the air of languid equanimity which now covered her features. But having paid this generous homage to propriety, she felt free to suffer. Raising her eyes from the ground, she abruptly addressed her companion with this injunction:

"Mr. Ludlow," said she, "tell me something about yourself."

Ludlow burst into a laugh. "What shall I tell you?"

"Everything."

"Everything? Excuse me, I'm not such a fool. But do you know that's a delicious request you make? I suppose I ought to blush and hesitate; but I never yet blushed or hesitated in the right place."

"Very good. There is one fact. Continue. Begin at the beginning."

"Well, let me see. My name you know. I'm twenty-eight years old."

"That's the end," said Adela.

"But you don't want the history of my babyhood, I take it. I imagine that I was a very big, noisy and ugly baby: what's called a 'splendid infant.' My parents were poor, and, of course, honest. They belonged to a very different set—or 'sphere', I suppose you call it—from any you probably know. They were working people. My father was a chemist in a small way, and I fancy my mother was not above using her hands to turn a penny. But although I don't remember her, I am sure she was a good, sound woman; I feel her occasionally in my own sinews. I myself have been at work all my life, and a very good worker I am, let me tell you. I'm not patient, as I imagine your brother to be—although I have more patience than you might suppose—but I'm plucky. If you think I'm over-egotistical, remember 'twas you began it. I don't know whether I'm clever, and I don't much care; that word is used only by unpractical people. But I'm clear-headed, and inquisitive, and enthusiastic. That's as far as I can describe myself. I don't know anything about my character. I simply suspect I'm a pretty good fellow. I don't know whether I'm grave or gay, lively or severe. I don't know whether I'm high-tempered or low-tempered. I don't believe I'm 'high-toned.' I fancy I'm good-natured enough, inasmuch as I'm not nervous. I should not be at all surprised to discover I was prodigiously conceited; but I'm afraid the discovery wouldn't cut me down, much. I'm desperately hard to snub, I know. Oh, you would think me a great brute if you knew me. I should hesitate to say whether I am of a loving turn. I know I'm desperately tired of a number of persons who are very fond of me; I'm afraid I'm ungrateful. Of course as a man speaking to a woman, there's nothing for it but to say I'm selfish; but I hate to talk about such windy abstractions. In the way of positive facts: I'm not educated. I know no Greek and very little Latin. But I can honestly say that first and last I have read a great many books—and, thank God, I have a memory! And I have some tastes, too. I'm very fond of music. I have a good old voice of my own: that I can't help knowing; and I'm not one to be bullied about pictures. Is that enough? I'm conscious of an utter inability to say anything to the point. To put myself in a nutshell, I suppose I'm simply a working man; I have his virtues and I have his defects. I'm a very common fellow."

"Do you call yourself a very common fellow because you really believe yourself to be one, or because you are weakly tempted to disfigure your rather flattering catalogue with a great final blot?"

"I'm sure I don't know. You show more subtlety in that one question than I have shown in my whole string of affirmations. You women are strong on asking witty questions. Seriously, I believe I *am* a common fellow. I wouldn't make the admission to every one though. But to you, Miss Moore, who sit there under your parasol as impartial as the Muse of History, to you I own the truth. I'm no man of genius. There is something I miss; some final distinction I lack; you may call it what you please. Perhaps it's humility. Perhaps you can find it in Ruskin, somewhere. Perhaps it's patience—perhaps it's imagination. I'm vulgar, Miss Moore.

I'm the vulgar son of vulgar people. I use the word, of course, in its strictest sense. So much I grant you at the outset, and then I walk ahead."

"Have you any sisters?"

"Not a sister; and no brothers, nor cousins, nor uncles, nor aunts."

"And you sail for Europe to-morrow?"

"To-morrow, at ten o'clock."

"To be away how long?"

"As long as I possibly can. Five years if possible."

"What do you expect to do in those five years?"

"Study."

"Nothing but study?"

"It will all come back to that, I fancy. I hope to enjoy myself reasonably, and to look at the world as I go. But I must not waste time; I'm growing old."

"Where are you going?"

"To Berlin. I wanted to get letters from your brother."

"Have you money? Are you well off?"

"Well off? Not I, no. I'm poor. I travel on a little money that has just come to me from an unexpected quarter: an old debt owing my father. It will take me to Germany and keep me for six months. After that I shall work my way."

"Are you happy? Are you contented?"

"Just now I'm pretty comfortable, thank you."

"But will you be so when you get to Berlin?"

"I don't promise to be contented; but I'm pretty sure to be happy."

"Well!" said Adela, "I sincerely hope you may be."

"Amen!" said Ludlow.

Of what more was said at this moment, no record may be given. The reader has been put into possession of the key of our friends' conversation; it is only needful to say that substantially upon this key, it was prolonged for half an hour more. As the minutes elapsed, Adela found herself drifting further and further away from her anchorage. When at last she compelled herself to consult her watch, and remind her companion that there remained but just time enough for them to reach home, in anticipation of her brother's arrival, she knew that she was rapidly floating seaward. As she descended the hill at her companion's side, she felt herself suddenly thrilled by an acute temptation. Her first instinct was to close her eyes upon it, in the trust that when she opened them again it would have vanished; but she found that it was not to be so uncompromisingly dismissed. It importuned her so effectually, that before she had walked a mile homeward, she had succumbed to it, or had at least given it the pledge of that quickening of the heart which accompanies a bold resolution. This little sacrifice allowed her no breath for idle words, and she accordingly advanced with a bent and listening head. Ludlow marched along, with no apparent diminution of his habitual buoyancy of mien, talking as fast and as loud as at the outset. He adventured a prophecy that Mr. Moore would not have returned, and charged Adela with a humorous message of regrets. Adela had begun

by wondering whether the approach of their separation had wrought within him any sentimental depression at all commensurate with her own, with that which sealed her lips and weighed upon her heart; and now she was debating as to whether his express declaration that he felt "awfully blue" ought necessarily to remove her doubts. Ludlow followed up this declaration with a very pretty review of the morning, and a sober valedictory which, whether intensely felt or not, struck Adela as at least nobly bare of flimsy compliments. He might be a common fellow—but he was certainly a very uncommon one. When they reached the garden gate, it was with a fluttering heart that Adela scanned the premises for some accidental sign of her brother's presence. She felt that there would be an especial fitness in his not having returned. She led the way in. The hall table was bare of his hat and overcoat. The only object it displayed was Mr. Perkins's card, which Adela had deposited there on her exit. All that was represented by that little white ticket seemed a thousand miles away. Finally, Mr. Moore's absence from his study was conclusive against his return.

As Adela went back thence into the drawing-room, she simply shook her head at Ludlow, who was standing before the fire-place; and as she did so, she caught her reflection in the mantel-glass. "Verily," she said to herself, "I have travelled far." She had pretty well unlearned the repose of the Veres of Vere. But she was to break with it still more completely. It was with a singular hardihood that she prepared to redeem the little pledge which had been extorted from her on her way home. She felt that there was no trial to which her generosity might now be called which she would not hail with enthusiasm. Unfortunately, her generosity was not likely to be challenged; although she nevertheless had the satisfaction of assuring herself at this moment that, like the mercy of the Lord, it was infinite. Should she satisfy herself of her friend's? or should she leave it delightfully uncertain? These had been the terms of what has been called her temptation, at the foot of the hill. But inasmuch as Adela was by no means strictly engaged in the pursuit of pleasure, and as the notion of a grain of suffering was by no means repugnant to her, she had resolved to obtain possession of the one essential fact of her case, even though she should be at heavy costs to maintain it.

"Well, I have very little time," said Ludlow; "I must get my dinner and pay my bill and drive to the train." And he put out his hand.

Adela gave him her own, and looked him full in the eyes. "You are in a great hurry," said she.

"It's not I who am in a hurry. It's my confounded destiny. It's the train and the steamer."

"If you really wished to stay you wouldn't be bullied by the train and the steamer."

"Very true—very true. But *do* I really wish to stay?"

"That's the question. That's what I want to know."

"You ask difficult questions, Miss Moore."

"I mean they shall be difficult."

"Then, of course, you are prepared to answer difficult ones."

"I don't know that that's of course, but I am."

"Well, then, do you wish me to stay? All I have to do is to throw down my hat, sit down and fold my arms for twenty minutes. I lose my train and my ship. I stay in America, instead of going to Europe."

"I have thought of all that."

"I don't mean to say it's a great deal. There are pleasures and pleasures."

"Yes, and especially the former. It is a great deal."

"And you invite me to accept it?"

"No; I ought not to say that. What I ask of you is whether, if I should so invite you, you would say 'yes.'"

"That makes the matter very easy for you, Miss Moore. What attractions do you hold out?"

"I hold out nothing whatever, sir."

"I suppose that means a great deal."

"It means what it seems to mean."

"Well, you are certainly a most interesting woman, Miss Moore—a charming woman."

"Why don't you call me 'fascinating' at once, and bid me good morning?"

"I don't know but that I shall have to come to that. But I will give you no answer that leaves you at an advantage. Ask me to stay—command me to stay, if that suits you better—and I will see how it sounds. Come, you must not trifle with a man." He still held Adela's hand, and they had been looking frankly into each other's eyes. He paused, waiting for an answer.

"Good-by, Mr. Ludlow," said Adela. "God bless you!" And she was about to withdraw her hand; but he held it.

"Are we friends?" said he.

Adela gave a little shrug of her shoulders. "Friends of three hours."

Ludlow looked at her with some sternness. "Our parting could at best hardly have been sweet," said he; "but why should you make it bitter, Miss Moore?"

"If it's bitter, why should you try to change it?"

"Because I don't like bitter things."

Ludlow had caught a glimpse of the truth—that truth of which the reader has had a glimpse—and he stood there at once thrilled and annoyed. He had both a heart and a conscience. "It's not my fault," he cried to the latter; but he was unable to add, in all consistency, that it was his misfortune. It would be very heroic, very poetic, very chivalric, to lose his steamer, and he felt that he could do so for sufficient cause—at the suggestion of a fact. But the motive here was less than a fact—an idea; less than an idea—a fancy. "It's a very pretty little romance as it is," he said to himself. "Why spoil it? She is an admirable girl: to have learned that is enough for me." He raised her hand to his lips, pressed them to it, dropped it, reached the door and bounded out of the garden gate.

The day was ended.

Poor Richard

PART I

Miss Whittaker's garden covered a couple of acres, behind and beside her house, and at its farther extremity was bounded by a narrow meadow, which in turn was bordered by the old, disused towing-path beside the river, at this point a slow and shallow stream. Its low, flat banks were unadorned with rocks or trees, and a towing-path is not in itself a romantic promenade. Nevertheless, here sauntered bareheaded, on a certain spring evening, the mistress of the acres just mentioned and many more beside, in sentimental converse with an impassioned and beautiful youth.

She herself had been positively plain, but for the frequent recurrence of a magnificent broad smile,—which imparted loveliness to her somewhat plebeian features,—and (in another degree) for the elegance of her dress, which expressed one of the later stages of mourning, and was of that voluminous abundance proper to women who are massive in person, and rich besides. Her companion's good looks, for very good they were, in spite of several defects, were set off by a shabby suit, as carelessly worn as it was inartistically cut. His manner, as he walked and talked, was that of a nervous, passionate man, wrought almost to desperation; while her own was that of a person self-composed to generous attention. A brief silence, however, had at last fallen upon them. Miss Whittaker strolled along quietly, looking at the slow-mounting moon, and the young man gazed on the ground, swinging his stick. Finally, with a heavy blow, he brought it to earth.

"O Gertrude!" he cried, "I despise myself."

"That's very foolish," said Gertrude.

"And, Gertrude, I adore you."

"That's more foolish still," said Gertrude, with her eyes still on the moon. And then, suddenly and somewhat impatiently transferring them to her companion's face, "Richard," she asked, "what do you mean when you say you adore me?"

"Mean? I mean that I love you."

"Then, why don't you say what you mean?"

The young man looked at her a moment. "Will you give me leave," he asked, "to say *all* that I mean?"

"Of course." Then, as he remained silent, "I listen," added Gertrude.

Yet he still said nothing, but went striking vehemently at the weeds by the water's edge, like one who may easily burst into tears of rage.

"Gertrude!" he suddenly exclaimed, "what more do you want than the assurance that I love you?"

"I want nothing more. That assurance is by itself delightful enough. You yourself seemed to wish to add something more."

"Either you won't understand me," cried Richard, "or"—flagrantly vicious for twenty seconds—"you can't!"

Miss Whittaker stopped and looked thoughtfully into his face. "In our position," she said, "if it becomes you to sacrifice reflection to feeling, it becomes me to do the reverse. Listen to me, Richard. I *do* understand you, and better, I fancy, than you understand yourself."

"O, of course!"

But she continued, heedless of his interruption. "I thought that, by leaving you to yourself awhile, your feelings might become clearer to you. But they seem to be growing only more confused. I have been so fortunate, or so unfortunate, I hardly know which,"—and she smiled faintly,— "as to please you. That's all very well, but you must not make too much of it. Nothing can make me happier than to please you, or to please any one. But here it must stop with you, as it stops with others."

"It does not stop here with others."

"I beg your pardon. You have no right to say that. It is partly out of justice to others that I speak to you as I am doing. I shall always be one of your best friends, but I shall never be more. It is best I should tell you this at once. I might trifle with you awhile and make you happy (since upon such a thing you are tempted to set your happiness) by allowing you to suppose that I had given you my heart; but the end would soon come, and then where should we be? You may in your disappointment call me heartless now,—I freely give you leave to call me anything that may ease your mind,—but what would you call me then? Friendship, Richard, is a heavenly cure for love. Here is mine," and she held out her hand.

"No, I thank you," said Richard, gloomily folding his arms. "I know my own feelings," and he raised his voice. "Haven't I lived with them night and day for weeks and weeks? Great Heaven, Gertrude, this is no fancy. I'm not of that sort. My whole life has gone into my love. God has let me idle it away hitherto, only that I might begin it with you. Dear Gertrude, hear me. I have the heart of a man. I know I'm not respectable, but I devoutly believe I'm lovable. It's true that I've neither worked, nor thought, nor studied, nor turned a penny. But, on the other hand, I've never cared for a woman before. I've waited for you. And now—now, after all, I'm to sit down and be *pleased*! The Devil! Please other men, madam! Me you delight, you intoxicate."

An honest flush rose to Gertrude's cheek. "So much the worse for you!" she cried with a bitter laugh. "So much the worse for both of us! But what is your point? Do you wish to marry me?"

Richard flinched a moment under this tacit proposition suddenly grown vocal; but not from want of heart. "Of course I do," he said.

"Well, then, I only pity you the more for your consistency. I can only entreat you again to rest contented with my friendship. It's not such a bad substitute, Richard, as I understand it. What my love might be I don't know,—I couldn't answer for that; but of my friendship I'm sure. We both have our duties in this matter, and I have resolved to take a liberal view of mine. I might lose patience with you, you know, and dismiss you,—leave you alone with your dreams, and let you break your heart. But it's rather by seeing more of me than by seeing less, that your feelings will change."

"Indeed! And yours?"

"I have no doubt they will change, too; not in kind, but in degree. The better I know you, I am sure, the better I shall like you. The better, too, you will like me. Don't turn your back upon me. I speak the truth. You will get to entertain a serious opinion of me,—which I'm sure you haven't now, or you wouldn't talk of my intoxicating you. But you must be patient. It's a singular fact that it takes longer to like a woman than to love her. A sense of intoxication is a

very poor feeling to marry upon. You wish, of course, to break with your idleness, and your bad habits,—you see I am so thoroughly your friend that I'm not afraid of touching upon disagreeable facts, as I should be if I were your mistress. But you are so indolent, so irresolute, so undisciplined, so uneducated,"—Gertrude spoke deliberately, and watched the effect of her words,—"that you find a change of life very difficult. I propose, with your consent, to appoint myself your counsellor. Henceforth my house will be open to you as to my dearest friend. Come as often and stay as long as you please. Not in a few weeks, perhaps, nor even in a few months, but in God's good time, you will be a noble young man in working order,—which I don't consider you now, and which I know you don't consider yourself. But I have a great opinion of your talents," (this was very shrewd of Gertrude,) "and of your heart. If I turn out to have done you a service, you'll not want to marry me then."

Richard had silently listened, with a deepening frown. "That's all very pretty," he said; "but"—and the reader will see that, in his earnestness, he was inclined to dispense with courtesy—"it's rotten,—rotten from beginning to end. What's the meaning of all that rigmarole about the inconsistency of friendship and love? Such talk is enough to drive one mad. Refuse me outright, and send me to the Devil if you must; but don't bemuddle your own brains at the same time. But one little word knocks it all to pieces: I want you for my wife. You make an awful mistake in treating me as a boy,—an awful mistake. I am in working order. I have begun life in loving you. I have broken with drinking as effectually as if I hadn't touched a drop of liquor for twenty years. I hate it, I loathe it. I've drunk my last. No, Gertrude, I'm no longer a boy,—you've cured me of that. Hang it, that's why I love you! Don't you see? Ah, Gertrude!"—and his voice fell,—"you're a great enchantress! You have no arts, you have no beauty even, (can't a lover deal with facts now?), but you are an enchantress without them. It's your nature. You are so divinely, damnably honest! That excellent speech just now was meant to smother my passion; but it has only inflamed it. You will say it was nothing but common sense. Very likely; but that is the very point. Your common sense captivates me. It's for that that I love you."

He spoke with so relentless a calmness that Gertrude was sickened. Here she found herself weaker than he, while the happiness of both of them demanded that she should be stronger.

"Richard Clare," she said, "you are unkind!" There was a tremor in her voice as she spoke; and as she ceased speaking, she burst into tears. A selfish sense of victory invaded the young man's breast. He threw his arm about her; but she shook it off. "You are a coward, sir!" she cried.

"Oho!" said Richard, flushing angrily.

"You go too far; you persist beyond decency."

"You hate me now, I suppose," said Richard, brutally, like one at bay.

Gertrude brushed away her tears. "No, indeed," she answered, sending him a dry, clear glance. "To hate you, I should have to have loved you. I pity you still."

Richard looked at her a moment. "I don't feel tempted to return the feeling, Gertrude," said he. "A woman with so much head as you needs no pity."

"I have not head enough to read your sarcasm, sir; but I have heart enough to excuse it, and I mean to keep a good heart to the end. I mean to keep my temper, I mean to be just, I mean to be conclusive, and not to have to return to this matter. It's not for my pleasure, I would have you know, that I am so explicit. I have nerves as well as you. Listen, then. If I don't love you, Richard, in your way, I don't; and if I can't, I can't. We can't love by will. But with friendship, when it is once established, I believe the will and the reason may have a great deal to do. I

will, therefore, put the whole of my mind into my friendship for you, and in that way we shall perhaps be even. Such a feeling—as I shall naturally show it—will, after all, not be very different from that other feeling you ask—as I should naturally show it. Bravely to reconcile himself to such difference as there is, is no more than a man of honor ought to do. Do you understand me?"

"You have an admirable way of putting things. 'After all,' and 'such difference as there is!' The difference is the difference of marriage and no-marriage. I suppose you don't mean that you are willing to live with me without that ceremony?"

"You suppose correctly."

"Then why do you falsify matters? A woman is either a man's wife, or she isn't."

"Yes; and a woman is either a man's friend, or she isn't."

"And you are mine, and I'm an ungrateful brute not to rest satisfied! That's what you mean. Heaven knows you're right,"—and he paused a moment, with his eyes on the ground. "Don't despise me, Gertrude," he resumed. "I'm not so ungrateful as I seem. I'm very much obliged to you for the pains you have taken. Of course, I understand your not loving me. You'd be a grand fool if you did; and you're no fool, Gertrude."

"No, I'm no fool, Richard. It's a great responsibility,—it's dreadfully vulgar; but, on the whole, I'm rather glad."

"So am I. I could hate you for it; but there is no doubt it's why I love you. If you were a fool, you might love me; but I shouldn't love you, and if I must choose, I prefer that."

"Heaven has chosen for us. Ah, Richard," pursued Gertrude, with admirable simplicity, "let us be good and obey Heaven, and we shall be sure to be happy,"—and she held out her hand once more.

Richard took it and raised it to his lips. She felt their pressure and withdrew it.

"Now you must leave me," she said. "Did you ride?"

"My horse is at the village."

"You can go by the river, then. Good night."

"Good night."

The young man moved away in the gathering dusk, and Miss Whittaker stood for a moment looking after him.

To appreciate the importance of this conversation, the reader must know that Miss Gertrude Whittaker was a young woman of four-and-twenty, whose father, recently deceased, had left her alone in the world, with a great fortune, accumulated by various enterprises in that part of the State. He had appointed a distant and elderly kinswoman, by name Miss Pendexter, as his daughter's household companion; and an old friend of his own, known to combine shrewdness with integrity, as her financial adviser. Motherless, country-bred, and homely-featured, Gertrude, on arriving at maturity, had neither the tastes nor the manners of a fine lady. Of a robust and active make, with a warm heart, a cool head, and a very pretty talent for affairs, she was, in virtue both of her wealth and of her tact, one of the chief figures of the neighborhood. These facts had forced her into a prominence which she made no attempt to elude, and in which she now felt thoroughly at home. She knew herself to be a power in the land; she knew that, present and absent, she was continually talked about as the rich Miss Whittaker; and although as modest as a woman need be, she was neither so timid nor so nervous as to wish to compromise with her inevitable distinctions. Her feelings were, indeed,

throughout, strong, rather than delicate; and yet there was in her whole nature, as the world had learned to look at it, a moderation, a temperance, a benevolence, an orderly freedom, which bespoke universal respect. She was impulsive, and yet discreet; economical, and yet generous; humorous, and yet serious; keenly discerning of human distinctions, and yet almost indiscriminately hospitable; with a prodigious fund of common sense beneath all; and yet beyond this,—like the priest behind the king,—and despite her broadly prosaic, and as it were secular tone, a certain latent suggestion of heroic possibilities, which he who had once become sensible of it (supposing him to be young and enthusiastic) would linger about her hoping to detect, as you might stand watchful of a florid and vigorous dahlia, which for an instant, in your passage, should have proved deliciously fragrant. It is upon the actual existence, in more minds than one, of a mystifying sense of this sweet and remote perfume, that our story is based.

Richard Clare and Miss Whittaker were old friends. They had in the first place gone democratically to the town school together as children; and then their divergent growth, as boy and girl, had acknowledged an elastic bond in a continued intimacy between Gertrude and Fanny Clare, Richard's sister, who, however, in the fulness of time had married, and had followed her husband to California. With her departure the old relations of habit between her brother and her friend had slackened, and gradually ceased. Richard had grown up a rebellious and troublesome boy, with a disposition combining stolid apathy and hot-headed impatience in equal proportions. Losing both of his parents before he was well out of his boyhood, he had found himself at the age of sixteen in possession actual, and as he supposed uncontested, of the paternal farm. It was not long, however, before those turned up who were disposed to question his immediate ability to manage it; the result of which was, that the farm was leased for five years, and that Richard was almost forcibly abducted by a maternal uncle, living on a farm of his own some three hundred miles away. Here our young man spent the remainder of his minority, ostensibly learning agriculture with his cousins, but actually learning nothing. He had very soon established, and had subsequently enjoyed without a day's interval, the reputation of an ill-natured fool. He was dull, disobliging, brooding, lowering. Reading and shooting he liked a little, because they were solitary pastimes; but to common duties and pleasures he proved himself as incompetent as he was averse. It was possible to live with him only because he was at once too selfish and too simple for mischief. As soon as he came of age he resumed possession of the acres on which his boyhood had been passed, and toward which he gravitated under an instinct of mere local affection, rather than from any intelligent purpose. He avoided his neighbors, his father's former associates; he rejected, nay, he violated, their counsel; he informed them that he wanted no help but what he paid for, and that he expected to work his farm for himself and by himself. In short, he proved himself to their satisfaction egregiously ungrateful, conceited, and arrogant. They were not slow to discover that his incapacity was as great as his conceit. In two years he had more than undone the work of the late lessee, which had been an improvement on that of the original owner. In the third year, it seemed to those who observed him that there was something so wanton in his errors as almost to impugn his sanity. He appeared to have accepted them himself, and to have given up all pretence of work. He went about silent and sullen, like a man who feels that he has a quarrel with fate. About this time it became generally known that he was often the worse for liquor; and he hereupon acquired the deplorable reputation of a man worse than unsociable,—a man who drinks alone,—although it was still doubtful whether this practice was the cause or the effect of his poor crops. About this time, too, he resumed acquaintance with Gertrude Whittaker. For many months after his return he had been held at his distance, together with most of his rural compeers, by the knowledge of her father's bitter hostility to all possible suitors and fortune-hunters; and then, subsequently, by the illness preceding the old man's death; but when at last, on the expiration of her term of mourning, Miss Whittaker

had opened to society her long blockaded ports, Richard had, to all the world's amazement, been among the first to profit by this extension of the general privilege, and to cast anchor in the wide and peaceful waters of her friendship. He found himself at this moment, considerably to his surprise, in his twenty-fourth year, that is, a few months Gertrude's junior.

It was impossible that she should not have gathered from mere juxtaposition a vague impression of his evil repute and of his peculiar relation to his neighbors, and to his own affairs. Thanks to this impression, Richard found a very warm welcome,—the welcome of compassion. Gertrude gave him a heavy arrear of news from his sister Fanny, with whom he had dropped correspondence, and, impelled by Fanny's complaints of his long silence, ventured upon a friendly admonition that he should go straight home and write a letter to California. Richard sat before her, gazing at her out of his dark eyes, and not only attempting no defence of his conduct, but rejoicing dumbly in the utter absence of any possible defence, as of an interruption to his companion's virtue. He wished that he might incontinently lay bare all his shortcomings to her delicious reproof. He carried away an extraordinary sense of general alleviation; and forthwith began a series of visits, which in the space of some ten weeks culminated in the interview with which our narrative opens. Painfully diffident in the company of most women, Richard had not from the first known what it was to be shy with Gertrude. As a man of the world finds it useful to refresh his social energies by an occasional *tête-à-tête* of an hour with himself, so Richard, with whom solitude was the rule, derived a certain austere satisfaction from an hour's contact with Miss Whittaker's consoling good sense, her abundance, her decent duties and comforts. Gradually, however, from a salutary process, this became almost an æsthetic one. It was now pleasant to go to Gertrude, because he enjoyed the contagion of her own repose,—because he witnessed her happiness without a sensation of envy,—because he forgot his own entanglements and errors,—because, finally, his soul slept away its troubles beneath her varying glance, very much as his body had often slept away its weariness in the shade of a changing willow. But the soul, like the body, will not sleep long without dreaming; and it will not dream often without wishing at last to tell its dreams. Richard had one day ventured to impart his visions to Gertrude, and the revelation had apparently given her serious pain. The fact that Richard Clare (of all men in the world!) had somehow worked himself into an intimacy with Miss Whittaker very soon became public property among their neighbors; and in the hands of these good people, naturally enough, received an important addition in the inference that he was going to marry her. He was, of course, esteemed a very lucky fellow, and the prevalence of this impression was doubtless not without its effect on the forbearance of certain long-suffering creditors. And even if she was not to marry him, it was further argued, she yet might lend him money; for it was assumed without question that the necessity of raising money was the mainspring of Richard's suit. It is needless to inform the reader that this assumption was—to use a homely metaphor—without a leg to stand upon. Our hero had faults enough, but to be mercenary was not one of them; nor was an excessive concern on the subject of his debts one of his virtues. As for Gertrude, wherever else her perception of her friend's feelings may have been at fault, it was not at fault on this point. That he loved her as desperately as he declared, she indeed doubted; but it never occurred to her to question the purity of his affection. And so, on the other hand, it was strictly out of her heart's indifference that she rejected him, and not for the disparity of their fortunes. In accepting his very simple and natural overtures to friendship, in calling him "Richard" in remembrance of old days, and in submitting generally to the terms of their old relations, she had foreseen no sentimental catastrophe. She had viewed her friend from the first as an object of lively material concern. She had espoused his interests (like all good women, Gertrude was ever more or less of a partisan) because she loved his sister, and because she pitied himself. She would stand to him *in loco sororis*. The reader has seen that she had given herself a long day's work.

It is not to be supposed that Richard's sober retreat at the close of the walk by the river implied any instinct of resignation to the prospects which Gertrude had opened to him. It is explained rather by an intensity of purpose so deep as to fancy that it can dispense with bravado. This was not the end of his suit, but the beginning. He would not give in until he was positively beaten. It was all very well, he reflected, that Gertrude should reject him. Such a woman as she ought properly to be striven for, and there was something ridiculous in the idea that she should be easily won, whether by himself or by another. Richard was a slow thinker, but he thought more wisely than he talked; and he now took back all his angry boasts of accomplished self-mastery, and humbly surveyed the facts of the case. He was on the way to recovery, but he was by no means cured, and yet his very humility assured him that he was curable. He was no hero, but he was better than his life; he was no scholar, but in his own view at least he was no fool. He was good enough to be better; he was good enough not to sit by the hour soaking his slender brains in whiskey. And at the very least, if he was not worthy to possess Gertrude, he was yet worthy to strive to obtain her, and to live forevermore upon the glory of having been formally refused by the great Miss Whittaker. He would raise himself then to that level from which he could address her as an equal, from which he could borrow that authority of which he was now so shamefully bare. How he would do this, he was at a loss to determine. He was conscious of an immense fund of brute volition, but he cursed his barbarous ignorance, as he searched in vain for those high opposing forces the defeat of which might lend dignity to his struggle. He longed vaguely for some continuous muscular effort, at the end of which he should find himself face to face with his mistress. But as, instead of being a Pagan hero, with an enticing task-list of impossibilities, he was a plain New England farmer, with a bad conscience, and nature with him and not against him,—as, after slaying his dragon, after breaking with liquor, his work was a simple operation in common sense,—in view of these facts he found but little inspiration in his prospect. Nevertheless he fronted it bravely. He was not to obtain Gertrude by making a fortune, but by making himself a man, by learning to think. But as to learn to think is to learn to work, he would find some use for his muscle. He would keep sober and clear-headed; he would retrieve his land and pay his debts. Then let her refuse him if she could,—or if she dared, he was wont occasionally to add.

Meanwhile Gertrude on her side sat quietly at home, revolving in her own fashion a dozen ideal schemes for her friend's redemption and for the diversion of his enthusiasm. Not but what she meant rigorously to fulfil her part of the engagement to which she had invited him in that painful scene by the river. Yet whatever of that firmness, patience, and courtesy of which she possessed so large a stock she might still oppose to his importunities, she could not feel secure against repeated intrusion (for it was by this term that she was disposed to qualify all unsanctioned transgression of those final and immovable limits which she had set to her immense hospitality) without the knowledge of a partial change at least in Richard's own attitude. Such a change could only be effected through some preparatory change in his life; and a change in his life could be brought about only by the introduction of some new influence. This influence, however, was very hard to find. However positively Gertrude had dwelt upon the practical virtue of her own friendship, she was now on further reflection led sadly to distrust the exclusive use of this instrument. He was welcome enough to that, but he needed something more. It suddenly occurred to her, one morning after Richard's image had been crossing and recrossing her mental vision for a couple of hours with wearisome pertinacity, that a world of good might accrue to him through the friendship of a person so unexceptionable as Captain Severn. There was no one, she declared within herself, who would not be better for knowing such a man. She would recommend Richard to his kindness, and him she would recommend to Richard's—what? Here was the rub! Where was there common ground between Richard and such a one as he? To request him to like Richard was

easy; to ask Richard to like him was ridiculous. If Richard could only know him, the work were done; he couldn't choose but love him as a brother. But to bespeak Richard's respect for an object was to fill him straightway with aversion for it. Her young friend was so pitiable a creature himself, that it had never occurred to her to appeal to his sentiments of compassion. All the world seemed above him, and he was consequently at odds with all the world. If some worthy being could be found, even less favored of nature and of fortune than himself, to such a one he might become attached by a useful sympathy. There was indeed nothing particularly enviable in Captain Severn's lot, and herein Richard might properly experience a fellow-feeling for him; but nevertheless he was apparently quite contented with it, and thus he was raised several degrees above Richard, who would be certain to find something aggressive in his equanimity. Still, for all this, Gertrude would bring them together. She had a high estimate of the Captain's generosity, and if Richard should wantonly fail to conform to the situation, the loss would be his own. It may be thought that in this enterprise Captain Severn was somewhat inconsiderately handled. But a generous woman will freely make a missionary of the man she loves. These words suggest the propriety of a short description of the person to whom they refer.

Edmund Severn was a man of eight-and-twenty, who, having for some time combated fortune and his own inclinations as a mathematical tutor in a second-rate country college, had, on the opening of the war, transferred his valor to a more heroic field. His regiment of volunteers, now at work before Richmond, had been raised in Miss Whittaker's district, and beneath her substantial encouragement. His soldiership, like his scholarship, was solid rather than brilliant. He was not destined to be heard of at home, nor to leave his regiment; but on many an important occasion in Virginia he had proved himself in a modest way an excellently useful man. Coming up early in the war with a severe wound, to be nursed by a married sister domiciled in Gertrude's neighborhood, he was, like all his fellow-sufferers within a wide circuit, very soon honored with a visit of anxious inquiry from Miss Whittaker, who was as yet known to him only by report, and who transmitted to him the warmest assurances of sympathy and interest, together with the liveliest offers of assistance; and, incidentally as it were to these, a copious selection from the products of her hot-house and store-room. Severn had taken the air for the first time in Gertrude's own great cushioned barouche, which she had sent to his door at an early stage of his convalescence, and which of course he had immediately made use of to pay his respects to his benefactress. He was confounded by the real humility with which, on this occasion, betwixt smiles and tears, she assured him that to be of service to such as him was for her a sacred privilege. Never, thought the Captain as he drove away, had he seen so much rustic breadth combined with so much womanly grace. Half a dozen visits during the ensuing month more than sufficed to convert him into what is called an admirer; but, as the weeks passed by, he felt that there were great obstacles to his ever ripening into a lover. Captain Severn was a serious man; he was conscientious, discreet, deliberate, unused to act without a definite purpose. Whatever might be the intermediate steps, it was necessary that the goal of an enterprise should have become an old story to him before he took the first steps. And, moreover, if the goal seemed a profitable or an honorable station, he was proof against the perils or the discomforts of the journey; while if, on the other hand, it offered no permanent repose, he generally found but little difficulty in resisting the incidental allurements. In pursuance of this habit, or rather in obedience to this principle, of carefully fixing his programme, he had asked himself whether he was prepared to face the logical results of a series of personal attentions to our heroine. Since he had determined a twelvemonth before not to marry until, by some means or another, he should have evoked a sufficient income, no great change had taken place in his fortunes. He was still a poor man and an unsettled one; he was still awaiting his real vocation. Moreover, while subject to the chances of war, he doubted his right to engage a woman's affections: he shrank in horror from

the thought of making a widow. Miss Whittaker was one in five thousand. Before the luminous fact of her existence, his dim ideal of the desirable wife had faded into vapor. But should he allow this fact to invalidate all the stern precepts of his reason? He could no more afford to marry a rich woman than a poor one. When he should have earned a subsistence for two, then he would be free to marry whomsoever he might fancy,—a beggar or an heiress. The truth is, that the Captain was a great deal too proud. It was his fault that he could not bring himself to forget the difference between his poverty and Gertrude's wealth. He would of course have resented the insinuation that the superior fortune of the woman he loved should really have force to prevent him from declaring his love; but there is no doubt that in the case before us this fact arrested his passion in its origin. Severn had a most stoical aversion to being in debt. It is certain that, after all, he would have made a very graceful debtor to his mistress or his wife; but while a woman was as yet neither his mistress nor his wife, the idea of being beholden to her was essentially distasteful to him. It would have been a question with one who knew him, whether at this juncture this frigid instinct was destined to resist the warmth of Gertrude's charms, or whether it was destined gradually to melt away. There would have been no question, however, but that it could maintain itself only at the cost of great suffering to its possessor. At this moment, then, Severn had made up his mind that Gertrude was not for him, and that it behooved him to be sternly vigilant both of his impulses and his impressions. That Miss Whittaker, with a hundred rational cares, was anything less than supremely oblivious of him, individually, it never occurred to him to suspect. The truth is, that Gertrude's private and personal emotions were entertained in a chamber of her heart so remote from the portals of speech that no sound of their revelry found its way into the world. She constantly thought of her modest, soldierly, scholarly friend as of one whom a wise woman might find it very natural to love. But what was she to him? A local roadside figure,—at the very most a sort of millionaire Maud Muller,—with whom it was pleasant for a lonely wayfarer to exchange a friendly "good-morning." Her duty was to fold her arms resignedly, to sit quietly on the sofa, and watch a great happiness sink below the horizon. With this impression on Gertrude's part it is not surprising that Severn was not wrenched out of himself. The prodigy was apparently to be wrought—if wrought at all—by her common, unbought sweetness. It is true that this was of a potency sufficient almost to work prodigies; but as yet its effect upon Severn had been none other than its effect upon all the world. It kept him in his kindest humor. It kept him even in the humor of talking sentiment; but although, in the broad sunshine of her listening, his talk bloomed thick with field-flowers, he never invited her to pluck the least little daisy. It was with perfect honesty, therefore, that she had rebutted Richard's insinuation that the Captain enjoyed any especial favor. He was as yet but another of the pensioners of her good-nature.

The result of Gertrude's meditations was, that she despatched a note to each of her two friends, requesting them to take tea with her on the following day. A couple of hours before tea-time she received a visit from one Major Luttrell, who was recruiting for a United States regiment at a large town, some ten miles away, and who had ridden over in the afternoon, in accordance with a general invitation conveyed to him through an old lady who had bespoken Miss Whittaker's courtesy for him as a man of delightful manners and wonderful talents. Gertrude, on her venerable friend's representations, had replied, with her wonted alacrity, that she would be very glad to see Major Luttrell, should he ever come that way, and then had thought no more about him until his card was brought to her as she was dressing for the evening. He found so much to say to her, that the interval passed very rapidly for both of them before the simultaneous entrance of Miss Pendexter and of Gertrude's guests. The two officers were already slightly known to each other, and Richard was accordingly presented to each of them. They eyed the distracted-looking young farmer with some curiosity. Richard's was at all times a figure to attract attention; but now he was almost picturesque (so Severn

thought at least) with his careless garments, his pale face, his dark mistrustful eyes, and his nervous movements. Major Luttrell, who struck Gertrude as at once very agreeable and the least bit in the world disagreeable, was, of course, invited to remain,—which he straightway consented to do; and it soon became evident to Miss Whittaker that her little scheme was destined to miscarry. Richard practised a certain defiant silence, which, as she feared, gave him eventually a decidedly ridiculous air. His companions displayed toward their hostess that half-avowed effort to shine and to outshine natural to clever men who find themselves concurring to the entertainment of a young and agreeable woman. Richard sat by, wondering, in sullen amazement, whether he was an ignorant boor, or whether they were only a brace of inflated snobs. He decided, correctly enough, in substance, for the former hypothesis. For it seemed to him that Gertrude's consummate accommodation (for as such he viewed it) of her tone and her manner to theirs added prodigiously (so his lover's instinct taught him) to her loveliness and dignity. How magnanimous an impulse on Richard's part was this submission for his sweetheart's sake to a fact damning to his own vanity, could have been determined only by one who knew the proportions of that vanity. He writhed and chafed under the polish of tone and the variety of allusion by which the two officers consigned him to insignificance; but he was soon lost in wonder at the mettlesome grace and vivacity with which Gertrude sustained her share of the conversation. For a moment it seemed to him that her tenderness for his equanimity (for should she not know his mind,—she who had made it?) might reasonably have caused her to forego such an exhibition of her social accomplishments as would but remind him afresh of his own deficiencies; but the next moment he asked himself, with a great revulsion of feeling, whether he, a conscious suitor, should fear to know his mistress in her integrity. As he gulped down the sickening fact of his comparative, nay, his absolute ignorance of the great world represented by his rivals, he felt like anticipating its consequences by a desperate sally into the very field of their conversation. To some such movement Gertrude was continually inviting him by her glances, her smiles, her questions, and her appealing silence. But poor Richard knew that, if he should attempt to talk, he would choke; and this assurance he imparted to his friend in a look piteously eloquent. He was conscious of a sensation of rage under which his heart was fast turning into a fiery furnace, destined to consume all his good resolutions. He could not answer for the future now. Suddenly, as tea was drawing to a close, he became aware that Captain Severn had lapsed into a silence very nearly as profound as his own, and that he was covertly watching the progress of a lively dialogue between Miss Whittaker and Major Luttrell. He had the singular experience of seeing his own feelings reflected in the Captain's face; that is, he discerned there an incipient jealousy. Severn too was in love!

On rising from table, Gertrude proposed an adjournment to the garden, where she was very fond of entertaining her friends at this hour. The sun had sunk behind a long line of hills, far beyond the opposite bank of the river, a portion of which was discernible through a gap in the intervening wood. The high-piled roof and chimney-stacks, the picturesquely crowded surface, of the old patched and renovated farm-house which served Gertrude as a villa, were ruddy with the declining rays. Our friends' long shadows were thrown over the short grass. Gertrude, having graciously anticipated the gentlemen's longing for their cigars, suggested a stroll toward the river. Before she knew it, she had accepted Major Luttrell's arm; and as Miss Pendexter preferred remaining at home, Severn and Richard found themselves lounging side by side at a short distance behind their hostess. Gertrude, who had marked the reserve which had suddenly fallen upon Captain Severn, and in her simplicity had referred it to some unwitting failure of attention on her own part, had hoped to repair her neglect by having him at her own side. She was in some degree consoled, however, by the sight of his happy juxtaposition with Richard. As for Richard, now that he was on his feet and in the open air, he found it easier to speak.

"Who is that man?" he asked, nodding toward the Major.

"Major Luttrell, of the —th Artillery."

"I don't like his face much," said Richard.

"Don't you?" rejoined Severn, amused at his companion's bluntness. "He's not handsome, but he looks like a soldier."

"He looks like a rascal, I think," said Richard.

Severn laughed outright, so that Gertrude glanced back at him. "Dear me! I think you put it rather strongly. I should call it a very intelligent face."

Richard was sorely perplexed. He had expected to find acceptance for his bitterest animadversions, and lo! here was the Captain fighting for his enemy. Such a man as that was no rival. So poor a hater could be but a poor lover. Nevertheless, a certain new-born mistrust of his old fashion of measuring human motives prevented him from adopting this conclusion as final. He would try another question.

"Do you know Miss Whittaker well?" he asked.

"Tolerably well. She was very kind to me when I was ill. Since then I've seen her some dozen times."

"That's a way she has, being kind," said Richard, with what he deemed considerable shrewdness. But as the Captain merely puffed his cigar responsively, he pursued, "What do you think of her face?"

"I like it very much," said the Captain.

"She isn't beautiful," said Richard, cunningly.

Severn was silent a moment, and then, just as Richard was about to dismiss him from his thoughts, as neither formidable nor satisfactory, he replied, with some emphasis, "You mean she isn't pretty. She is beautiful, I think, in spite of the irregularity of her face. It's a face not to be forgotten. She has no features, no color, no lilies or roses, no attitudes; but she has *looks*, expression. Her face has *character*; and so has her figure. It has no 'style,' as they call it; but that only belongs properly to a work of art, which Miss Whittaker's figure isn't, thank Heaven! She's as unconscious of it as Nature herself."

Severn spoke Richard's mind as well as his own. That "She isn't beautiful" had been an extempore version of the young man's most sacred dogma, namely, She is beautiful. The reader will remember that he had so translated it on a former occasion. Now, all that he felt was a sense of gratitude to the Captain for having put it so much more finely than he, the above being his choicest public expression of it. But the Captain's eyes, somewhat brightened by his short but fervid speech, were following Gertrude's slow steps. Richard saw that he could learn more from them than from any further oral declaration; for something in the mouth beneath them seemed to indicate that it had judged itself to have said enough, and it was obviously not the mouth of a simpleton. As he thus deferred with an unwonted courtesy to the Captain's silence, and transferred his gaze sympathetically to Gertrude's shapely shoulders and to her listening ear, he gave utterance to a telltale sigh,—a sigh which there was no mistaking. Severn looked about; it was now his turn to scrutinize. "Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, "that boy is in love with her!"

After the first shock of surprise, he accepted this fact with rational calmness. Why shouldn't he be in love with her? "*Je le suis bien*," said the Captain; "or, rather, I'm not." Could it be, Severn pursued, that he was a favorite? He was a mannerless young farmer; but it was plain

that he had a soul of his own. He almost wished, indeed, that Richard might prove to be in Gertrude's good graces. "But if he is," he reflected, "why should he sigh? It is true that there is no arguing for lovers. I, who am out in the cold, take my comfort in whistling most impertinently. It may be that my friend here groans for very bliss. I confess, however, that he scarcely looks like a favored swain."

And forthwith this faint-hearted gentleman felt a twinge of pity for Richard's obvious infelicity; and as he compared it with the elaborately defensive condition of his own affections, he felt a further pang of self-contempt. But it was easier to restore the equilibrium of his self-respect by an immediate cession of the field, than by contesting it against this woefully wounded knight. "Whether he wins her or not, he'll fight for her," the Captain declared; and as he glanced at Major Luttrell, he felt that this was a sweet assurance. He had conceived a singular distrust of the Major.

They had now reached the water's edge, where Gertrude, having arrested her companion, had turned about, expectant of her other guests. As they came up, Severn saw, or thought that he saw (which is a very different thing), that her first look was at Richard. The "admirer" in his breast rose fratricidal for a moment against the quiet observer; but the next, it was pinioned again. "Amen," said the Captain; "it's none of my business."

At this moment, Richard was soaring most heroically. The end of his anguish had been a sudden intoxication. He surveyed the scene before him with a kindling fancy. Why should he stand tongue-tied in sullen mistrust of fortune, when all nature beckoned him into the field? There was the river-path where, a fortnight before, he had found an eloquence attested by Gertrude's tears. There was sweet Gertrude herself, whose hand he had kissed and whose waist he had clasped. Surely, he was master here! Before he knew it, he had begun to talk,—rapidly, nervously, and almost defiantly. Major Luttrell, having made an observation about the prettiness of the river, Richard entered upon a description of its general course and its superior beauty upon his own place, together with an enumeration of the fish which were to be found in it, and a story about a great overflow ten years before. He spoke in fair, coherent terms, but with singular intensity and vehemence, and with his head thrown back and his eyes on the opposite bank. At last he stopped, feeling that he had given proof of his manhood, and looked towards Gertrude, whose eyes he had been afraid to meet until he had seen his adventure to a close. But she was looking at Captain Severn, under the impression that Richard had secured his auditor. Severn was looking at Luttrell, and Luttrell at Miss Whittaker; and all were apparently so deep in observation that they had marked neither his speech nor his silence. "Truly," thought the young man, "I'm well out of the circle!" But he was resolved to be patient still, which was assuredly, all things considered, a very brave resolve. Yet there was always something spasmodic and unnatural in Richard's magnanimity. A touch in the wrong place would cause it to collapse. It was Gertrude's evil fortune to administer this touch at present. As the party turned about toward the house, Richard stepped to her side and offered her his arm, hoping in his heart—so implicitly did he count upon her sympathy, so almost boyishly, filially, did he depend upon it—for some covert token that his heroism, such as it was, had not been lost upon her.

But Gertrude, intensely preoccupied by the desire to repair her fancied injustice to the Captain, shook her head at him without even meeting his eye. "Thank you," she said; "I want Captain Severn," who forthwith approached.

Poor Richard felt his feet touch the ground again. He felt that he could have flung the Captain into the stream. Major Luttrell placed himself at Gertrude's other elbow, and Richard stood behind them, almost livid with spite, and half resolved to turn upon his heel and make his way home by the river. But it occurred to him that a more elaborate vengeance would be to

follow the trio before him back to the lawn, and there make it a silent and scathing bow. Accordingly, when they reached the house, he stood aloof and bade Gertrude a grim good-night. He trembled with eagerness to see whether she would make an attempt to detain him. But Miss Whittaker, reading in his voice—it had grown too dark to see his face at the distance at which he stood—the story of some fancied affront, and unconsciously contrasting it, perhaps, with Severn's clear and unwarped accents, obeyed what she deemed a prompting of self-respect, and gave him, without her hand, a farewell as cold as his own. It is but fair to add, that, a couple of hours later, as she reviewed the incidents of the evening, she repented most generously of this little act of justice.

PART II

Richard got through the following week he hardly knew how. He found occupation, to a much greater extent than he was actually aware of, in a sordid and yet heroic struggle with himself. For several months now, he had been leading, under Gertrude's inspiration, a strictly decent and sober life. So long as he was at comparative peace with Gertrude and with himself, such a life was more than easy; it was delightful. It produced a moral buoyancy infinitely more delicate and more constant than the gross exhilaration of his old habits. There was a kind of fascination in adding hour to hour, and day to day, in this record of his new-born austerity. Having abjured excesses, he practised temperance after the fashion of a novice: he raised it (or reduced it) to abstinence. He was like an unclean man who, having washed himself clean, remains in the water for the love of it. He wished to be religiously, superstitiously pure. This was easy, as we have said, so long as his goddess smiled, even though it were as a goddess indeed,—as a creature unattainable. But when she frowned, and the heavens grew dark, Richard's sole dependence was in his own will,—as flimsy a trust for an upward scramble, one would have premised, as a tuft of grass on the face of a perpendicular cliff. Flimsy as it looked, however, it served him. It started and crumbled, but it held, if only by a single fibre. When Richard had cantered fifty yards away from Gertrude's gate in a fit of stupid rage, he suddenly pulled up his horse and gulped down his passion, and swore an oath, that, suffer what torments of feeling he might, he would not at least break the continuity of his gross physical soberness. It was enough to be drunk in mind; he would not be drunk in body. A singular, almost ridiculous feeling of antagonism to Gertrude lent force to this resolution. "No, madam," he cried within himself, "I shall *not* fall back. Do your best! I shall keep straight." We often outweather great offences and afflictions through a certain healthy instinct of egotism. Richard went to bed that night as grim and sober as a Trappist monk; and his foremost impulse the next day was to plunge headlong into some physical labor which should not allow him a moment's interval of idleness. He found no labor to his taste; but he spent the day so actively, in the mechanical annihilation of the successive hours, that Gertrude's image found no chance squarely to face him. He was engaged in the work of self-preservation,—the most serious and absorbing work possible to man. Compared to the results here at stake, his passion for Gertrude seemed but a fiction. It is perhaps difficult to give a more lively impression of the vigor of this passion, of its maturity and its strength, than by simply stating that it discreetly held itself in abeyance until Richard had set at rest his doubts of that which lies nearer than all else to the heart of man,—his doubts of the strength of his will. He answered these doubts by subjecting his resolution to a course of such cruel temptations as were likely either to shiver it to a myriad of pieces, or to season it perfectly to all the possible requirements of life. He took long rides over the country, passing within a stone's throw of as many of the scattered wayside taverns as could be combined in a single circuit. As he drew near them he sometimes slackened his pace, as if he were about to dismount, pulled up his horse, gazed a moment, then, thrusting in his spurs, galloped away again like one pursued. At other times, in the late evening, when the window-panes were

aglow with the ruddy light within, he would walk slowly by, looking at the stars, and, after maintaining this stoical pace for a couple of miles, would hurry home to his own lonely and black-windowed dwelling. Having successfully performed this feat a certain number of times, he found his love coming back to him, bereft in the interval of its attendant jealousy. In obedience to it, he one morning leaped upon his horse and repaired to Gertrude's abode, with no definite notion of the terms in which he should introduce himself.

He had made himself comparatively sure of his will; but he was yet to acquire the mastery of his impulses. As he gave up his horse, according to his wont, to one of the men at the stable, he saw another steed stalled there which he recognized as Captain Severn's. "Steady, my boy," he murmured to himself, as he would have done to a frightened horse. On his way across the broad court-yard toward the house, he encountered the Captain, who had just taken his leave. Richard gave him a generous salute (he could not trust himself to more), and Severn answered with what was at least a strictly just one. Richard observed, however, that he was very pale, and that he was pulling a rosebud to pieces as he walked; whereupon our young man quickened his step. Finding the parlor empty, he instinctively crossed over to a small room adjoining it, which Gertrude had converted into a modest conservatory; and as he did so, hardly knowing it, he lightened his heavy-shod tread. The glass door was open and Richard looked in. There stood Gertrude with her back to him, bending apart with her hands a couple of tall flowering plants, and looking through the glazed partition behind them. Advancing a step, and glancing over the young girl's shoulder, Richard had just time to see Severn mounting his horse at the stable door, before Gertrude, startled by his approach, turned hastily round. Her face was flushed hot, and her eyes brimming with tears.

"You!" she exclaimed, sharply.

Richard's head swam. That single word was so charged with cordial impatience that it seemed the death-knell of his hope. He stepped inside the room and closed the door, keeping his hand on the knob.

"Gertrude," he said, "you love that man!"

"Well, sir?"

"Do you confess it?" cried Richard.

"Confess it? Richard Clare, how dare you use such language? I'm in no humor for a scene. Let me pass."

Gertrude was angry; but as for Richard, it may almost be said that he was mad. "One scene a day is enough, I suppose," he cried. "What are these tears about? Wouldn't he have you? Did he refuse you, as you refused me? Poor Gertrude!"

Gertrude looked at him a moment with concentrated scorn. "You fool!" she said, for all answer. She pushed his hand from the latch, flung open the door, and moved rapidly away.

Left alone, Richard sank down on a sofa and covered his face with his hands. It burned them, but he sat motionless, repeating to himself, mechanically, as if to avert thought, "You fool! you fool!" At last he got up and made his way out.

It seemed to Gertrude, for several hours after this scene, that she had at this juncture a strong case against Fortune. It is not our purpose to repeat the words which she had exchanged with Captain Severn. They had come within a single step of an *éclaircissement*, and when but another movement would have flooded their souls with light, some malignant influence had seized them by the throats. Had they too much pride?—too little imagination? We must content ourselves with this hypothesis. Severn, then, had walked mechanically across the

yard, saying to himself, "She belongs to another"; and adding, as he saw Richard, "and such another." Gertrude had stood at her window, repeating, under her breath, "He belongs to himself, himself alone." And as if this was not enough, when misconceived, slighted, wounded, she had faced about to her old, passionless, dutiful past, there on the path of retreat to this asylum Richard Clare had arisen to forewarn her that she should find no peace even at home. There was something in the violent impertinence of his appearance at this moment which gave her a dreadful feeling that fate was against her. More than this. There entered into her emotions a certain minute particle of awe of the man whose passion was so uncompromising. She felt that it was out of place any longer to pity him. He was the slave of his passion; but his passion was strong. In her reaction against the splendid civility of Severn's silence, (the real antithesis of which would have been simply the perfect courtesy of explicit devotion,) she found herself touching with pleasure on the fact of Richard's brutality. He at least had ventured to insult her. He had loved her enough to forget himself. He had dared to make himself odious in her eyes, because he had cast away his sanity. What cared he for the impression he made? He cared only for the impression he received. The violence of this reaction, however, was the measure of its duration. It was impossible that she should walk backward so fast without stumbling. Brought to her senses by this accident, she became aware that her judgment was missing. She smiled to herself as she reflected that it had been taking holiday for a whole afternoon. "Richard was right," she said to herself. "I am no fool. I can't be a fool if I try. I'm too thoroughly my father's daughter for that. I love that man, but I love myself better. Of course, then, I don't deserve to have him. If I loved him in a way to merit his love, I would sit down this moment and write him a note telling him that if he does not come back to me, I shall die. But I shall neither write the note nor die. I shall live and grow stout, and look after my chickens and my flowers and my colts, and thank the Lord in my old age that I have never done anything unwomanly. Well! I'm as He made me. Whether I can deceive others, I know not; but I certainly can't deceive myself. I'm quite as sharp as Gertrude Whittaker; and this it is that has kept me from making a fool of myself and writing to poor Richard the note that I wouldn't write to Captain Severn. I needed to fancy myself wronged. I suffer so little! I needed a sensation! So, shrewd Yankee that I am, I thought I would get one cheaply by taking up that unhappy boy! Heaven preserve me from the heroics, especially the economical heroics! The one heroic course possible, I decline. What, then, have I to complain of? Must I tear my hair because a man of taste has resisted my unspeakable charms? To be charming, you must be charmed yourself, or at least you must be able to be charmed; and that apparently I'm not. I didn't love him, or he would have known it. Love gets love, and no-love gets none."

But at this point of her meditations Gertrude almost broke down. She felt that she was assigning herself but a dreary future. Never to be loved but by such a one as Richard Clare was a cheerless prospect; for it was identical with an eternal spinsterhood. "Am I, then," she exclaimed, quite as passionately as a woman need do,— "am I, then, cut off from a woman's dearest joys? What blasphemous nonsense! One thing is plain: I am made to be a mother; the wife may take care of herself. I am made to be a wife; the mistress may take care of *herself*. I am in the Lord's hands," added the poor girl, who, whether or no she could forget herself in an earthly love, had at all events this mark of a spontaneous nature, that she could forget herself in a heavenly one. But in the midst of her pious emotion, she was unable to subdue her conscience. It smote her heavily for her meditated falsity to Richard, for her miserable readiness to succumb to the strong temptation to seek a momentary resting-place in his gaping heart. She recoiled from this thought as from an act cruel and immoral. Was Richard's heart the place for her now, any more than it had been a month before? Was she to apply for comfort where she would not apply for counsel? Was she to drown her decent sorrows and regrets in a base, a dishonest, an extemporized passion? Having done the young man so bitter

a wrong in intention, nothing would appease her magnanimous remorse (as time went on) but to repair it in fact. She went so far as keenly to regret the harsh words she had cast upon him in the conservatory. He had been insolent and unmannerly; but he had an excuse. Much should be forgiven him, for he loved much. Even now that Gertrude had imposed upon her feelings a sterner regimen than ever, she could not defend herself from a sweet and sentimental thrill—a thrill in which, as we have intimated, there was something of a tremor—at the recollection of his strident accents and his angry eyes. It was yet far from her heart to desire a renewal, however brief, of this exhibition. She wished simply to efface from the young man's morbid soul the impression of a real contempt; for she knew—or she thought that she knew—that against such an impression he was capable of taking the most fatal and inconsiderate comfort.

Before many mornings had passed, accordingly, she had a horse saddled, and, dispensing with attendance, she rode rapidly over to his farm. The house door and half the windows stood open; but no answer came to her repeated summons. She made her way to the rear of the house, to the barn-yard, thinly tenanted by a few common fowl, and across the yard to a road which skirted its lower extremity and was accessible by an open gate. No human figure was in sight; nothing was visible in the hot stillness but the scattered and ripening crops, over which, in spite of her nervous solicitude, Miss Whittaker cast the glance of a connoisseur. A great uneasiness filled her mind as she measured the rich domain apparently deserted of its young master, and reflected that she perhaps was the cause of its abandonment. Ah, where was Richard? As she looked and listened in vain, her heart rose to her throat, and she felt herself on the point of calling all too wistfully upon his name. But her voice was stayed by the sound of a heavy rumble, as of cart-wheels, beyond a turn in the road. She touched up her horse and cantered along until she reached the turn. A great four-wheeled cart, laden with masses of newly broken stone, and drawn by four oxen, was slowly advancing towards her. Beside it, patiently cracking his whip and shouting monotonously, walked a young man in a slouched hat and a red shirt, with his trousers thrust into his dusty boots. It was Richard. As he saw Gertrude, he halted a moment, amazed, and then advanced, flicking the air with his whip. Gertrude's heart went out towards him in a silent Thank God! Her next reflection was that he had never looked so well. The truth is, that, in this rough adjustment, the native barbarian was duly represented. His face and neck were browned by a week in the fields, his eye was clear, his step seemed to have learned a certain manly dignity from its attendance on the heavy bestial tramp. Gertrude, as he reached her side, pulled up her horse and held out her gloved fingers to his brown dusty hand. He took them, looked for a moment into her face, and for the second time raised them to his lips.

"Excuse my glove," she said, with a little smile.

"Excuse mine," he answered, exhibiting his sun-burnt, work-stained hand.

"Richard," said Gertrude, "you never had less need of excuse in your life. You never looked half so well."

He fixed his eyes upon her a moment. "Why, you have forgiven me!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Gertrude, "I have forgiven you,—both you and myself. We both of us behaved very absurdly, but we both of us had reason. I wish you had come back."

Richard looked about him, apparently at loss for a rejoinder. "I have been very busy," he said, at last, with a simplicity of tone slightly studied. An odd sense of dramatic effect prompted him to say neither more nor less.

An equally delicate instinct forbade Gertrude to express all the joy which this assurance gave her. Excessive joy would have implied undue surprise; and it was a part of her plan frankly to

expect the best things of her companion. "If you have been busy," she said, "I congratulate you. What have you been doing?"

"O, a hundred things. I have been quarrying, and draining, and clearing, and I don't know what all. I thought the best thing was just to put my own hands to it. I am going to make a stone fence along the great lot on the hill there. Wallace is forever grumbling about his boundaries. I'll fix them once for all. What are you laughing at?"

"I am laughing at certain foolish apprehensions that I have been indulging in for a week past. You are wiser than I, Richard. I have no imagination."

"Do you mean that *I* have? I haven't enough to guess what you *do* mean."

"Why, do you suppose, have I come over this morning?"

"Because you thought I was sulking on account of your having called me a fool."

"Sulking, or worse. What do I deserve for the wrong I have done you?"

"You have done me no wrong. You reasoned fairly enough. You are not obliged to know me better than I know myself. It's just like you to be ready to take back that bad word, and try to make yourself believe that it was unjust. But it was perfectly just, and therefore I have managed to bear it. I was a fool at that moment,—a stupid, impudent fool. I don't know whether that man had been making to love to you or not. But you had, I think, been feeling love for him,—you looked it; I should have been less than a man, I should be unworthy of your—your affection, if I had failed to see it. I did see it,—I saw it as clearly as I see those oxen now; and yet I bounced in with my own ill-timed claims. To do so was to be a fool. To have been other than a fool would have been to have waited, to have backed out, to have bitten my tongue off before I spoke, to have done anything but what I did. I have no right to claim you, Gertrude, until I can woo you better than that. It was the most fortunate thing in the world that you spoke as you did; it was even kind. It saved me all the misery of groping about for a starting-point. Not to have spoken as you did would have been to fail of justice; and then, probably, I should have sulked, or, as you very considerately say, done worse. I had made a false move in the game, and the only thing to do was to repair it. But you were not obliged to know that I would so readily admit my move to have been false. Whenever I have made a fool of myself before, I have been for sticking it out, and trying to turn all mankind—that is, *you*—into a fool too, so that I shouldn't be an exception. But this time, I think, I had a kind of inspiration. I felt that my case was desperate. I felt that if I adopted my folly now I adopted it forever. The other day I met a man who had just come home from Europe, and who spent last summer in Switzerland. He was telling me about the mountain-climbing over there,—how they get over the glaciers, and all that. He said that you sometimes came upon great slippery, steep, snow-covered slopes that end short off in a precipice, and that if you stumble or lose your footing as you cross them horizontally, why you go shooting down, and you're gone; that is, but for one little dodge. You have a long walking-pole with a sharp end, you know, and as you feel yourself sliding,—it's as likely as not to be in a sitting posture,—you just take this and ram it into the snow before you, and there you are, stopped. The thing is, of course, to drive it in far enough, so that it won't yield or break; and in any case it hurts infernally to come whizzing down upon this upright pole. But the interruption gives you time to pick yourself up. Well, so it was with me the other day. I stumbled and fell; I slipped, and was whizzing downward; but I just drove in my pole and pulled up short. It nearly tore me in two; but it saved my life." Richard made this speech with one hand leaning on the neck of Gertrude's horse, and the other on his own side, and with his head slightly thrown back and his eyes on hers. She had sat quietly in her saddle, returning his gaze. He had spoken slowly and deliberately; but without hesitation and without heat. "This is not romance," thought

Gertrude, "it's reality." And this feeling it was that dictated her reply, divesting it of romance so effectually as almost to make it sound trivial.

"It was fortunate you had a walking-pole," she said.

"I shall never travel without one again."

"Never, at least," smiled Gertrude, "with a companion who has the bad habit of pushing you off the path."

"Oh, you may push all you like," said Richard. "I give you leave. But isn't this enough about myself?"

"That's as you think."

"Well, it's all I have to say for the present, except that I am prodigiously glad to see you, and that of course you will stay awhile."

"But you have your work to do."

"Dear me, never you mind my work. I've earned my dinner this morning, if you have no objection: and I propose to share it with you. So we will go back to the house." He turned her horse's head about, started up his oxen with his voice, and walked along beside her on the grassy roadside, with one hand in the horse's mane, and the other swinging his whip.

Before they reached the yard-gate, Gertrude had revolved his speech. "Enough about himself," she said, silently echoing his words. "Yes, Heaven be praised, it is about himself. I am but a means in this matter,—he himself, his own character, his own happiness, is the end." Under this conviction it seemed to her that her part was appreciably simplified. Richard was learning wisdom and self-control, and to exercise his reason. Such was the suit that he was destined to gain. Her duty was as far as possible to remain passive, and not to interfere with the working of the gods who had selected her as the instrument of their prodigy. As they reached the gate, Richard made a trumpet of his hands, and sent a ringing summons into the fields; whereupon a farm-boy approached, and, with an undisguised stare of amazement at Gertrude, took charge of his master's team. Gertrude rode up to the door-step, where her host assisted her to dismount, and bade her go in and make herself at home, while he busied himself with the bestowal of her horse. She found that, in her absence, the old woman who administered her friend's household had reappeared, and had laid out the preparations for his mid-day meal. By the time he returned, with his face and head shining from a fresh ablution, and his shirt-sleeves decently concealed by a coat, Gertrude had apparently won the complete confidence of the good wife.

Gertrude doffed her hat, and tucked up her riding-skirt, and sat down to a *tête-à-tête* over Richard's crumpled table-cloth. The young man played the host very soberly and naturally; and Gertrude hardly knew whether to augur from his perfect self-possession that her star was already on the wane, or that it had waxed into a steadfast and eternal sun. The solution of her doubts was not far to seek; Richard was absolutely at his ease in her presence. He had told her, indeed, that she intoxicated him; and truly, in those moments when she was compelled to oppose her dewy eloquence to his fervid importunities, her whole presence seemed to him to exhale a singularly potent sweetness. He had told her that she was an enchantress, and this assertion, too, had its measure of truth. But her spell was a steady one; it sprang not from her beauty, her wit, her figure,—it sprang from her character. When she found herself aroused to appeal or to resistance, Richard's pulses were quickened to what he had called intoxication, not by her smiles, her gestures, her glances, or any accession of that material beauty which she did not possess, but by a generous sense of her virtues in action. In other words, Gertrude exercised the magnificent power of making her lover forget her face. Agreeably to this fact,

his habitual feeling in her presence was one of deep repose,—a sensation not unlike that which in the early afternoon, as he lounged in his orchard with a pipe, he derived from the sight of the hot and vaporous hills. He was innocent, then, of that delicious trouble which Gertrude's thoughts had touched upon as a not unnatural result of her visit, and which another woman's fancy would perhaps have dwelt upon as an indispensable proof of its success. "Porphyro grew faint," the poet assures us, as he stood in Madeline's chamber on Saint Agnes' eve. But Richard did not in the least grow faint now that his mistress was actually filling his musty old room with her voice, her touch, her looks; that she was sitting in his unfrequented chairs, trailing her skirt over his faded carpet, casting her perverted image upon his mirror, and breaking his daily bread. He was not fluttered when he sat at her well-served table, and trod her muffled floors. Why, then, should he be fluttered now? Gertrude was herself in all places, and (once granted that she was at peace) to be at her side was to drink peace as fully in one place as in another.

Richard accordingly ate a great working-day dinner in Gertrude's despite, and she ate a small one for his sake. She asked questions moreover, and offered counsel with most sisterly freedom. She deplored the rents in his table-cloth, and the dismemberments of his furniture; and, although by no means absurdly fastidious in the matter of household elegance, she could not but think that Richard would be a happier and a better man if he were a little more comfortable. She forbore, however, to criticise the poverty of his *entourage*, for she felt that the obvious answer was, that such a state of things was the penalty of his living alone; and it was desirable, under the circumstances, that this idea should remain implied.

When at last Gertrude began to bethink herself of going, Richard broke a long silence by the following question: "Gertrude, *do* you love that man?"

"Richard," she answered, "I refused to tell you before, because you asked the question as a right. Of course you do so no longer. No. I do not love him. I have been near it,—but I have missed it. And now good-by."

For a week after her visit, Richard worked as bravely and steadily as he had done before it. But one morning he woke up lifeless, morally speaking. His strength had suddenly left him. He had been straining his faith in himself to a prodigious tension, and the chord had suddenly snapped. In the hope that Gertrude's tender fingers might repair it, he rode over to her towards evening. On his way through the village, he found people gathered in knots, reading fresh copies of the Boston newspapers over each other's shoulders, and learned that tidings had just come of a great battle in Virginia, which was also a great defeat. He procured a copy of the paper from a man who had read it out, and made haste to Gertrude's dwelling.

Gertrude received his story with those passionate imprecations and regrets which were then in fashion. Before long, Major Luttrell presented himself, and for half an hour there was no talk but about the battle. The talk, however, was chiefly between Gertrude and the Major, who found considerable ground for difference, she being a great radical and he a decided conservative. Richard sat by, listening apparently, but with the appearance of one to whom the matter of the discourse was of much less interest than the manner of those engaged in it. At last, when tea was announced, Gertrude told her friends, very frankly, that she would not invite them to remain,—that her heart was too heavy with her country's woes, and with the thought of so great a butchery, to allow her to play the hostess,—and that, in short, she was in the humor to be alone. Of course there was nothing for the gentlemen but to obey; but Richard went out cursing the law, under which, in the hour of his mistress' sorrow, his company was a burden and not a relief. He watched in vain, as he bade her farewell, for some little sign that she would fain have him stay, but that as she wished to get rid of his companion civility demanded that she should dismiss them both. No such sign was

forthcoming, for the simple reason that Gertrude was sensible of no conflict between her desires. The men mounted their horses in silence, and rode slowly along the lane which led from Miss Whittaker's stables to the high-road. As they approached the top of the lane, they perceived in the twilight a mounted figure coming towards them. Richard's heart began to beat with an angry foreboding, which was confirmed as the rider drew near and disclosed Captain Severn's features. Major Luttrell and he, being bound in courtesy to a brief greeting, pulled up their horses; and as an attempt to pass them in narrow quarters would have been a greater incivility than even Richard was prepared to commit, he likewise halted.

"This is ugly news, isn't it?" said Severn. "It has determined me to go back to-morrow."

"Go back where?" asked Richard.

"To my regiment."

"Are you well enough?" asked Major Luttrell. "How is that wound?"

"It's so much better that I believe it can finish getting well down there as easily as here. Good-by, Major. I hope we shall meet again." And he shook hands with Major Luttrell. "Good by, Mr. Clare." And, somewhat to Richard's surprise, he stretched over and held out his hand to him.

Richard felt that it was tremulous, and, looking hard into his face, he thought it wore a certain unwonted look of excitement. And then his fancy coursed back to Gertrude, sitting where he had left her, in the sentimental twilight, alone with her heavy heart. With a word, he reflected, a single little word, a look, a motion, this happy man whose hand I hold can heal her sorrows. "Oh!" cried Richard, "that by this hand I might hold him fast forever!"

It seemed to the Captain that Richard's grasp was needlessly protracted and severe. "What a grip the poor fellow has!" he thought. "Good-by," he repeated aloud, disengaging himself.

"Good-by," said Richard. And then he added, he hardly knew why, "Are you going to bid good-by to Miss Whittaker?"

"Yes. Isn't she at home?"

Whether Richard really paused or not before he answered, he never knew. There suddenly arose such a tumult in his bosom that it seemed to him several moments before he became conscious of his reply. But it is probable that to Severn it came only too soon.

"No," said Richard; "she's not at home. We have just been calling." As he spoke, he shot a glance at his companion, armed with defiance of his impending denial. But the Major just met his glance and then dropped his eyes. This slight motion was a horrible revelation. He had served the Major, too.

"Ah? I'm sorry," said Severn, slacking his rein,— "I'm sorry." And from his saddle he looked down toward the house more longingly and regretfully than he knew.

Richard felt himself turning from pale to consuming crimson. There was a simple sincerity in Severn's words which was almost irresistible. For a moment he felt like shouting out a loud denial of his falsehood: "She is there! she's alone and in tears, awaiting you. Go to her—and be damned!" But before he could gather his words into his throat, they were arrested by Major Luttrell's cool, clear voice, which, in its calmness, seemed to cast scorn upon his weakness.

"Captain," said the Major, "I shall be very happy to take charge of your farewell."

"Thank you, Major. Pray do. Say how extremely sorry I was. Good by again." And Captain Severn hastily turned his horse about, gave him his spurs, and galloped away, leaving his

friends standing alone in the middle of the road. As the sound of his retreat expired, Richard, in spite of himself, drew a long breath. He sat motionless in the saddle, hanging his head.

"Mr. Clare," said the Major, at last, "that was very cleverly done."

Richard looked up. "I never told a lie before," said he.

"Upon my soul, then, you did it uncommonly well. You did it so well I almost believed you. No wonder that Severn did."

Richard was silent. Then suddenly he broke out, "In God's name, sir, why don't you call me a blackguard? I've done a beastly act!"

"O, come," said the Major, "you needn't mind that, with me. We'll consider that said. I feel bound to let you know that I'm very, very much obliged to you. If you hadn't spoken, how do you know but that I might?"

"If you had, I would have given you the lie, square in your teeth."

"Would you, indeed? It's very fortunate, then, I held my tongue. If you will have it so, I won't deny that your little improvisation sounded very ugly. I'm devilish glad I didn't make it."

Richard felt his wit sharpened by a most unholy scorn,—a scorn far greater for his companion than for himself. "I am glad to hear that it did sound ugly," he said. "To me, it seemed beautiful, holy, and just. For the space of a moment, it seemed absolutely right that I should say what I did. But you saw the lie in its horrid nakedness, and yet you let it pass. You have no excuse."

"I beg your pardon. You are immensely ingenious, but you are immensely wrong. Are you going to make out that I am the guilty party? Upon my word, you're a cool hand. I *have* an excuse. I have the excuse of being interested in Miss Whittaker's remaining unengaged."

"So I suppose. But you don't love her. Otherwise——"

Major Luttrell laid his hand on Richard's bridle. "Mr. Clare," said he, "I have no wish to talk metaphysics over this matter. You had better say no more. I know that your feelings are not of an enviable kind, and I am therefore prepared to be good-natured with you. But you must be civil yourself. You have done a shabby deed; you are ashamed of it, and you wish to shift the responsibility upon me, which is more shabby still. My advice is, that you behave like a man of spirit, and swallow your apprehensions. I trust that you are not going to make a fool of yourself by any apology or retraction in any quarter. As for its having seemed holy and just to do what you did, that is mere bosh. A lie is a lie, and as such is often excusable. As anything else,—as a thing beautiful, holy, or just,—it's quite inexcusable. Yours was a lie to you, and a lie to me. It serves me, and I accept it. I suppose you understand me. I adopt it. You don't suppose it was because I was frightened by those big black eyes of yours that I held my tongue. As for my loving or not loving Miss Whittaker, I have no report to make to you about it. I will simply say that I intend, if possible to marry her."

"She'll not have you. She'll never marry a cold-blooded rascal."

"I think she'll prefer him to a hot-blooded one. Do you want to pick a quarrel with me? Do you want to make me lose my temper? I shall refuse you that satisfaction. You have been a coward, and you want to frighten some one before you go to bed to make up for it. Strike me, and I'll strike you in self-defence, but I'm not going to mind your talk. Have you anything to say? No? Well, then, good evening." And Major Luttrell started away.

It was with rage that Richard was dumb. Had he been but a cat's-paw after all? Heaven forbid! He sat irresolute for an instant, and then turned suddenly and cantered back to

Gertrude's gate. Here he stopped again; but after a short pause he went in over the gravel with a fast-beating heart. O, if Luttrell were but there to see him! For a moment he fancied he heard the sound of the Major's returning steps. If he would only come and find him at confession! It would be so easy to confess before him! He went along beside the house to the front, and stopped beneath the open drawing-room window.

"Gertrude!" he cried softly, from his saddle.

Gertrude immediately appeared. "You, Richard!" she exclaimed.

Her voice was neither harsh nor sweet; but her words and her intonation recalled vividly to Richard's mind the scene in the conservatory. He fancied them keenly expressive of disappointment. He was invaded by a mischievous conviction that she had been expecting Captain Severn, or that at the least she had mistaken his voice for the Captain's. The truth is that she had half fancied it might be,—Richard's call having been little more than a loud whisper. The young man sat looking up at her, silent.

"What do you want?" she asked. "Can I do anything for you?"

Richard was not destined to do his duty that evening. A certain infinitesimal dryness of tone on Gertrude's part was the inevitable result of her finding that that whispered summons came only from Richard. She was preoccupied. Captain Severn had told her a fortnight before, that, in case of news of a defeat, he should not await the expiration of his leave of absence to return. Such news had now come, and her inference was that her friend would immediately take his departure. She could not but suppose that he would come and bid her farewell, and what might not be the incidents, the results, of such a visit? To tell the whole truth, it was under the pressure of these reflections that, twenty minutes before, Gertrude had dismissed our two gentlemen. That this long story should be told in the dozen words with which she greeted Richard, will seem unnatural to the disinterested reader. But in those words, poor Richard, with a lover's clairvoyance, read it at a single glance. The same resentful impulse, the same sickening of the heart, that he had felt in the conservatory, took possession of him once more. To be witness of Severn's passion for Gertrude,—that he could endure. To be witness of Gertrude's passion for Severn,—against that obligation his reason rebelled.

"What is it you wish, Richard?" Gertrude repeated. "Have you forgotten anything?"

"Nothing! nothing!" cried the young man. "It's no matter!"

He gave a great pull at his bridle, and almost brought his horse back on his haunches, and then, wheeling him about on himself, he thrust in his spurs and galloped out of the gate.

On the highway he came upon Major Luttrell, who stood looking down the lane.

"I'm going to the Devil, sir!" cried Richard. "Give me your hand on it."

Luttrell held out his hand. "My poor young man," said he, "you're out of your head. I'm sorry for you. You haven't been making a fool of yourself?"

"Yes, a damnable fool of myself!"

Luttrell breathed freely. "You'd better go home and go to bed," he said. "You'll make yourself ill by going on at this rate."

"I—I'm afraid to go home," said Richard, in a broken voice. "For God's sake, come with me!"—and the wretched fellow burst into tears. "I'm too bad for any company but yours," he cried, in his sobs.

The Major winced, but he took pity. "Come, come," said he, "we'll pull through. I'll go home with you."

They rode off together. That night Richard went to bed miserably drunk; although Major Luttrell had left him at ten o'clock, adjuring him to drink no more. He awoke the next morning in a violent fever; and before evening the doctor, whom one of his hired men had brought to his bedside, had come and looked grave and pronounced him very ill.

PART III

In country districts, where life is quiet, incidents do duty as events; and accordingly Captain Severn's sudden departure for his regiment became very rapidly known among Gertrude's neighbors. She herself heard it from her coachman, who had heard it in the village, where the Captain had been seen to take the early train. She received the news calmly enough to outward appearance, but a great tumult rose and died in her breast. He had gone without a word of farewell! Perhaps he had not had time to call upon her. But bare civility would have dictated his dropping her a line of writing,—he who must have read in her eyes the feeling which her lips refused to utter, and who had been the object of her tenderest courtesy. It was not often that Gertrude threw back into her friends' teeth their acceptance of the hospitality which it had been placed in her power to offer them; but if she now mutely reproached Captain Severn with ingratitude, it was because he had done more than slight her material gifts: he had slighted that constant moral force with which these gifts were accompanied, and of which they were but the rude and vulgar token. It is but natural to expect that our dearest friends will accredit us with our deepest feelings; and Gertrude had constituted Edmund Severn her dearest friend. She had not, indeed, asked his assent to this arrangement, but she had borne it out by a subtle devotion which she felt that she had a right to exact of him that he should repay,—repay by letting her know that, whether it was lost on his heart or not, it was at least not lost to his senses,—that, if he could not return it, he could at least remember it. She had given him the flower of her womanly tenderness, and when his moment came, he had turned from her without a look. Gertrude shed no tears. It seemed to her that she had given her friend tears enough, and that to expend her soul in weeping would be to wrong herself. She would think no more of Edmund Severn. He should be as little to her for the future as she was to him.

It was very easy to make this resolution: to keep it, Gertrude found another matter. She could not think of the war, she could not talk with her neighbors of current events, she could not take up a newspaper, without reverting to her absent friend. She found herself constantly harassed with the apprehension that he had not allowed himself time really to recover, and that a fortnight's exposure would send him back to the hospital. At last it occurred to her that civility required that she should make a call upon Mrs. Martin, the Captain's sister; and a vague impression that this lady might be the depository of some farewell message—perhaps of a letter—which she was awaiting her convenience to present, led her at once to undertake this social duty.

The carriage which had been ordered for her projected visit was at the door, when, within a week after Severn's departure, Major Luttrell was announced. Gertrude received him in her bonnet. His first care was to present Captain Severn's adieus, together with his regrets that he had not had time to discharge them in person. As Luttrell made his speech, he watched his companion narrowly, and was considerably reassured by the unflinching composure with which she listened to it. The turn he had given to Severn's message had been the fruit of much mischievous cogitation. It had seemed to him that, for his purposes, the assumption of a hasty, and as it were mechanical, allusion to Miss Whittaker, was more serviceable than the assumption of no allusion at all, which would have left a boundless void for the exercise of Gertrude's fancy. And he had reasoned well; for although he was tempted to infer from her calmness that his shot had fallen short of the mark, yet, in spite of her silent and almost

smiling assent to his words, it had made but one bound to her heart. Before many minutes, she felt that those words had done her a world of good. "He had not had time!" Indeed, as she took to herself their full expression of perfect indifference, she felt that her hard, forced smile was broadening into the sign of a lively gratitude to the Major.

Major Luttrell had still another task to perform. He had spent half an hour on the preceding day at Richards bedside, having ridden over to the farm, in ignorance of his illness, to see how matters stood with him. The reader will already have surmised that the Major was not pre-eminently a man of conscience: he will, therefore, be the less surprised and shocked to hear that the sight of the poor young man, prostrate, fevered, and delirious, and to all appearance rapidly growing worse, filled him with an emotion the reverse of creditable. In plain terms, he was very glad to find Richard a prisoner in bed. He had been racking his brains for a scheme to keep his young friend out of the way, and now, to his exceeding satisfaction, Nature had relieved him of this troublesome care. If Richard was condemned to typhoid fever, which his symptoms seemed to indicate, he would not, granting his recovery, be able to leave his room within a month. In a month, much might be done; nay, with energy, all might be done. The reader has been all but directly informed that the Major's present purpose was to secure Miss Whittaker's hand. He was poor, and he was ambitious, and he was, moreover, so well advanced in life—being thirty-six years of age—that he had no heart to think of building up his fortune by slow degrees. A man of good breeding, too, he had become sensible, as he approached middle age of the many advantages of a luxurious home. He had accordingly decided that a wealthy marriage would most easily unlock the gate to prosperity. A girl of a somewhat lighter calibre than Gertrude would have been the woman—we cannot say of his heart; but, as he very generously argued, beggars can't be choosers. Gertrude was a woman with a mind of her own; but, on the whole, he was not afraid of her. He was abundantly prepared to do his duty. He had, of course, as became a man of sense, duly weighed his obstacles against his advantages; but an impartial scrutiny had found the latter heavier in the balance. The only serious difficulty in his path was the possibility that, on hearing of Richard's illness, Gertrude, with her confounded benevolence, would take a fancy to nurse him in person, and that, in the course of her ministrations, his delirious ramblings would force upon her mind the damning story of the deception practised upon Captain Severn. There was nothing for it but bravely to face this risk. As for that other fact, which many men of a feebler spirit would have deemed an invincible obstacle, Luttrell's masterly understanding had immediately converted it into the prime agent of success,—the fact, namely, that Gertrude's heart was preoccupied. Such knowledge as he possessed of the relations between Miss Whittaker and his brother officer he had gained by his unaided observations and his silent deductions. These had been logical; for, on the whole, his knowledge was accurate. It was at least what he might have termed a good working knowledge. He had calculated on a passionate reactionary impulse on Gertrude's part, consequent on Severn's simulated offence. He knew that, in a generous woman, such an impulse, if left to itself, would not go very far. But on this point it was that his policy bore. He would not leave it to itself: he would take it gently into his hands, attenuate it, prolong it, economize it, and mould it into the clew to his own good-fortune. He thus counted much upon his skill and his tact; but he likewise placed a becoming degree of reliance upon his solid personal qualities,—qualities too sober and too solid, perhaps, to be called *charms*, but thoroughly adapted to inspire confidence. The Major was not handsome in feature; he left that to younger men and to lighter women; but his ugliness was of a masculine, aristocratic, intelligent stamp. His figure, moreover, was good enough to compensate for the absence of a straight nose and a fine mouth; and his general bearing offered a most pleasing combination of the gravity of the man of affairs and the versatility of the man of society.

In her sudden anxiety on Richard's behalf, Gertrude soon forgot her own immaterial woes. The carriage which was to have conveyed her to Mrs. Martin's was used for a more disinterested purpose. The Major, prompted by a strong faith in the salutary force of his own presence, having obtained her permission to accompany her, they set out for the farm, and soon found themselves in Richard's chamber. The young man was wrapped in a heavy sleep, from which it was judged imprudent to arouse him. Gertrude, sighing as she compared his thinly furnished room with her own elaborate apartments, drew up a mental list of essential luxuries which she would immediately send him. Not but that he had received, however, a sufficiency of homely care. The doctor was assiduous, and the old woman who nursed him was full of rough good-sense.

"He asks very often after you, Miss," she said, addressing Gertrude, but with a sly glance at the Major. "But I think you'd better not come too often. I'm afraid you'd excite him more than you'd quiet him."

"I'm afraid you would, Miss Whittaker," said the Major, who could have hugged the goodwife.

"Why should I excite him?" asked Gertrude, "I'm used to sick-rooms. I nursed my father for a year and a half."

"O, it's very well for an old woman like me, but it's no place for a fine young lady like you," said the nurse, looking at Gertrude's muslins and laces.

"I'm not so fine as to desert a friend in distress," said Gertrude. "I shall come again, and if it makes the poor fellow worse to see me, I shall stay away. I am ready to do anything that will help him to get well."

It had already occurred to her that, in his unnatural state, Richard might find her presence a source of irritation, and she was prepared to remain in the background. As she returned to her carriage, she caught herself reflecting with so much pleasure upon Major Luttrell's kindness in expending a couple of hours of his valuable time on so unprofitable an object as poor Richard, that, by way of intimating her satisfaction, she invited him to come home and dine with her.

After a short interval she paid Richard a second visit, in company with Miss Pendexter. He was a great deal worse; he lay emaciated, exhausted, and stupid. The issue was doubtful. Gertrude immediately pushed forward to M——, a larger town than her own, sought out a professional nurse, and arranged with him to relieve the old woman from the farm, who was worn out with her vigilance. For a fortnight, moreover, she received constant tidings from the young man's physician. During this fortnight, Major Luttrell was assiduous, and proportionately successful.

It may be said, to his credit, that he had by no means conducted his suit upon that narrow programme which he had drawn up at the outset. He very soon discovered that Gertrude's resentment—if resentment there was—was a substance utterly impalpable even to his most delicate tact, and he had accordingly set to work to woo her like an honest man, from day to day, from hour to hour, trusting so devoutly for success to momentary inspiration, that he felt his suit dignified by a certain flattering *faux air* of genuine passion. He occasionally reminded himself, however, that he might really be owing more to the subtle force of accidental contrast than Gertrude's life-long reserve—for it was certain she would not depart from it—would ever allow him to measure.

It was as an honest man, then, a man of impulse and of action, that Gertrude had begun to like him. She was not slow to perceive whither his operations tended; and she was almost tempted

at times to tell him frankly that she would spare him the intermediate steps, and meet him at the goal without further delay. It was not that she was prepared to love him, but she would make him an obedient wife. An immense weariness had somehow come upon her, and a sudden sense of loneliness. A vague suspicion that her money had done her an incurable wrong inspired her with a profound distaste for the care of it. She felt cruelly hedged out from human sympathy by her bristling possessions. "If I had had five hundred dollars a year," she said in a frequent parenthesis, "I might have pleased him." Hating her wealth, accordingly, and chilled by her isolation, the temptation was strong upon her to give herself up to that wise, brave gentleman who seemed to have adopted such a happy medium betwixt loving her for her money and fearing her for it. Would she not always stand between men who would represent the two extremes? She would anticipate security by an alliance with Major Luttrell.

One evening, on presenting himself, Luttrell read these thoughts so clearly in her eyes, that he made up his mind to speak. But his mind was burdened with a couple of facts, of which it was necessary that he should discharge it before it could enjoy the freedom of action which the occasion required. In the first place, then, he had been to see Richard Clare, and had found him suddenly and decidedly better. It was unbecoming, however,—it was impossible,—that he should allow Gertrude to linger over this pleasant announcement.

"I tell the good news first," he said, gravely. "I have some very bad news, too, Miss Whittaker."

Gertrude sent him a rapid glance. "Some one has been killed," she said.

"Captain Severn has been shot," said the Major,—"shot by a guerilla."

Gertrude was silent. No answer seemed possible to that uncompromising fact. She sat with her head on her hand, and her elbow on the table beside her, looking at the figures on the carpet. She uttered no words of commonplace regret; but she felt as little like giving way to serious grief. She had lost nothing, and, to the best of her knowledge, *he* had lost nothing. She had an old loss to mourn,—a loss a month old, which she had mourned as she might. To give way to passion would have been but to impugn the solemnity of her past regrets. When she looked up at her companion, she was pale, but she was calm, yet with a calmness upon which a single glance of her eye directed him not inconsiderately to presume. She was aware that this glance betrayed her secret; but in view both of Severn's death and of the Major's attitude, such betrayal mattered less. Luttrell had prepared to act upon her hint, and to avert himself gently from the topic, when Gertrude, who had dropped her eyes again, raised them with a slight shudder. "I'm cold," she said. "Will you shut that window beside you, Major? Or stay, suppose you give me my shawl from the sofa."

Luttrell brought the shawl, placed it on her shoulders, and sat down beside her. "These are cruel times," he said, with studied simplicity. "I'm sure I hardly know what's to come of it all."

"Yes, they are cruel times," said Gertrude. "They make one feel cruel. They make one doubt of all he has learnt from his pastors and masters."

"Yes, but they teach us something new also."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Gertrude, whose heart was so full of bitterness that she felt almost malignant. "They teach us how mean we are. War is an infamy, Major, though it is your trade. It's very well for you, who look at it professionally, and for those who go and fight; but it's a miserable business for those who stay at home, and do the thinking and the sentimentalizing. It's a miserable business for women; it makes us more spiteful than ever."

"Well, a little spite isn't a bad thing, in practice," said the Major. "War is certainly an abomination, both at home and in the field. But as wars go, Miss Whittaker, our own is a very satisfactory one. It involves something. It won't leave us as it found us. We're in the midst of a revolution, and what's a revolution but a turning upside down? It makes sad work with our habits and theories and our traditions and convictions. But, on the other hand," Luttrell pursued, warming to his task, "it leaves something untouched, which is better than these,—I mean our feelings, Miss Whittaker." And the Major paused until he had caught Gertrude's eyes, when, having engaged them with his own, he proceeded. "I think they are the stronger for the downfall of so much else, and, upon my soul, I think it's in them we ought to take refuge. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, if I understand you."

"I mean our serious feelings, you know,—not our tastes nor our passions. I don't advocate fiddling while Rome is burning. In fact it's only poor, unsatisfied devils that are tempted to fiddle. There is one feeling which is respectable and honorable, and even sacred, at all times and in all places, whatever they may be. It doesn't depend upon circumstances, but they upon it; and with its help, I think, we are a match for any circumstances. I don't mean religion, Miss Whittaker," added the Major, with a sober smile.

"If you don't mean religion," said Gertrude, "I suppose you mean love. That's a very different thing."

"Yes, a very different thing; so I've always thought, and so I'm glad to hear you say. Some people, you know, mix them up in the most extraordinary fashion. I don't fancy myself an especially religious man; in fact, I believe I'm rather otherwise. It's my nature. Half mankind are born so, or I suppose the affairs of this world wouldn't move. But I believe I'm a good lover, Miss Whittaker."

"I hope for your own sake you are, Major Luttrell."

"Thank you. Do you think now you could entertain the idea for the sake of any one else?"

Gertrude neither dropped her eyes, nor shrugged her shoulders, nor blushed. If anything, indeed, she turned somewhat paler than before, as she sustained her companion's gaze, and prepared to answer him as directly as she might.

"If I loved you, Major Luttrell," she said, "I should value the idea for my own sake."

The Major, too, blanched a little. "I put my question conditionally," he answered, "and I have got, as I deserved, a conditional reply. I will speak plainly, then, Miss Whittaker. *Do* you value the fact for your own sake? It would be plainer still to say, Do you love me? but I confess I'm not brave enough for that. I will say, Can you? or I will even content myself with putting it in the conditional again, and asking you if you could; although, after all, I hardly know what the *if* understood can reasonably refer to. I'm not such a fool as to ask of any woman—least of all of you—to love me contingently. You can only answer for the present, and say yes or no. I shouldn't trouble you to say either, if I didn't conceive that I had given you time to make up your mind. It doesn't take forever to know James Luttrell. I'm not one of the great unfathomable ones. We've seen each other more or less intimately for a good many weeks; and as I'm conscious, Miss Whittaker, of having shown you my best, I take it for granted that if you don't fancy me now, you won't a month hence, when you shall have seen my faults. Yes, Miss Whittaker, I can solemnly say," continued the Major, with genuine feeling, "I have shown you my best, as every man is in honor bound to do who approaches a woman with those predispositions with which I have approached you. I have striven hard to please you,"—and he paused. "I can only say, I hope I have succeeded."

"I should be very insensible," said Gertrude, "if all your kindness and your courtesy had been lost upon me."

"In Heaven's name, don't talk about courtesy," cried the Major.

"I am deeply conscious of your devotion, and I am very much obliged to you for urging your claims so respectfully and considerately. I speak seriously, Major Luttrell," pursued Gertrude. "There is a happy medium of expression, and you have taken it. Now it seems to me that there is a happy medium of affection, with which you might be content. Strictly, I don't love you. I question my heart, and it gives me that answer. The feeling that I have is not a feeling to work prodigies."

"May it at least work the prodigy of allowing you to be my wife?"

"I don't think I shall over-estimate its strength, if I say that it may. If you can respect a woman who gives you her hand in cold blood, you are welcome to mine."

Luttrell moved his chair and took her hand. "Beggars can't be choosers," said he, raising it to his mustache.

"O Major Luttrell, don't say that," she answered. "I give you a great deal; but I keep a little,—a little," said Gertrude, hesitating, "which I suppose I shall give to God."

"Well, I shall not be jealous," said Luttrell.

"The rest I give to you, and in return I ask a great deal."

"I shall give you all. You know I told you I'm not religious."

"No, I don't want more than I give," said Gertrude.

"But, pray," asked Luttrell, with a delicate smile, "what am I to do with the difference?"

"You had better keep it for yourself. What I want is your protection, sir, and your advice, and your care. I want you to take me away from this place, even if you have to take me down to the army. I want to see the world under the shelter of your name. I shall give you a great deal of trouble. I'm a mere mass of possessions: what I am, is nothing to what I have. But ever since I began to grow up, what I am has been the slave of what I have. I am weary of my chains, and you must help me to carry them,"—and Gertrude rose to her feet as if to inform the Major that his audience was at an end.

He still held her right hand; she gave him the other. He stood looking down at her, an image of manly humility, while from his silent breast went out a brief thanksgiving to favoring fortune.

At the pressure of his hands, Gertrude felt her bosom heave. She burst into tears. "O, you must be very kind to me!" she cried, as he put his arm about her, and she dropped her head upon his shoulder.

When once Richard's health had taken a turn for the better, it began very rapidly to improve. "Until he is quite well," Gertrude said, one day, to her accepted suitor, "I had rather he heard nothing of our engagement. He was once in love with me himself," she added, very frankly. "Did you ever suspect it? But I hope he will have got better of that sad malady, too. Nevertheless, I shall expect nothing of his good judgment until he is quite strong; and as he may hear of my new intentions from other people, I propose that, for the present, we confide them to no one."

"But if he asks me point-blank," said the Major, "what shall I answer?"

"It's not likely he'll ask you. How should he suspect anything?"

"O," said Luttrell, "Clare is one that suspects everything."

"Tell him we're not engaged, then. A woman in my position may say what she pleases."

It was agreed, however, that certain preparations for the marriage should meanwhile go forward in secret; and that the marriage itself should take place in August, as Luttrell expected to be ordered back into service in the autumn. At about this moment Gertrude was surprised to receive a short note from Richard, so feebly scrawled in pencil as to be barely legible. "Dear Gertrude," it ran, "don't come to see me just yet. I'm not fit. You would hurt me, and *vice versa*. God bless you! R. CLARE." Miss Whittaker explained his request, by the supposition that a report had come to him of Major Luttrell's late assiduities (which it was impossible should go unobserved); that, leaping at the worst, he had taken her engagement for granted; and that, under this impression, he could not trust himself to see her. She despatched him an answer, telling him that she would await his pleasure, and that, if the doctor would consent to his having letters, she would meanwhile occasionally write to him. "She will give me good advice," thought Richard impatiently; and on this point, accordingly, she received no account of his wishes. Expecting to leave her house and close it on her marriage, she spent many hours in wandering sadly over the meadow-paths and through the woodlands which she had known from her childhood. She had thrown aside the last ensigns of filial regret, and now walked sad and splendid in the uncompromising colors of an affianced bride. It would have seemed to a stranger that, for a woman who had freely chosen a companion for life, she was amazingly spiritless and sombre. As she looked at her pale cheeks and heavy eyes in the mirror, she felt ashamed that she had no fairer countenance to offer to her destined lord. She had lost her single beauty, her smile; and she would make but a ghastly figure at the altar. "I ought to wear a calico dress and an apron," she said to herself, "and not this glaring finery." But she continued to wear her finery, and to lay out her money, and to perform all her old duties to the letter. After the lapse of what she deemed a sufficient interval, she went to see Mrs. Martin, and to listen dumbly to her narration of her brother's death, and to her simple eulogies.

Major Luttrell performed his part quite as bravely, and much more successfully. He observed neither too many things nor too few; he neither presumed upon his success, nor mistrusted it. Having on his side received no prohibition from Richard, he resumed his visits at the farm, trusting that, with the return of reason, his young friend might feel disposed to renew that anomalous alliance in which, on the hapless evening of Captain Severn's farewell, he had taken refuge against his despair. In the long, languid hours of his early convalescence, Richard had found time to survey his position, to summon back piece by piece the immediate past, and to frame a general scheme for the future. But more vividly than anything else, there had finally disengaged itself from his meditations a profound aversion to James Luttrell.

It was in this humor that the Major found him; and as he looked at the young man's gaunt shoulders, supported by pillows, at his face, so livid and aquiline, at his great dark eyes, luminous with triumphant life, it seemed to him that an invincible spirit had been sent from a better world to breathe confusion upon his hopes. If Richard hated the Major, the reader may guess whether the Major loved Richard. Luttrell was amazed at his first remark.

"I suppose you're engaged by this time," Richard said, calmly enough.

"Not quite," answered the Major. "There's a chance for you yet."

To this Richard made no rejoinder. Then, suddenly, "Have you had any news of Captain Severn?" he asked.

For a moment the Major was perplexed at his question. He had assumed that the news of Severn's death had come to Richard's ears, and he had been half curious, half apprehensive as to its effect. But an instant's reflection now assured him that the young man's estrangement from his neighbors had kept him hitherto and might still keep him in ignorance of the truth. Hastily, therefore, and inconsiderately, the Major determined to confirm this ignorance. "No," said he; "I've had no news. Severn and I are not on such terms as to correspond."

The next time Luttrell came to the farm, he found the master sitting up in a great, cushioned, chintz-covered arm-chair which Gertrude had sent him the day before out of her own dressing-room.

"Are you engaged yet?" asked Richard.

There was a strain as if of defiance in his tone. The Major was irritated. "Yes," said he, "we are engaged now."

The young man's face betrayed no emotion.

"Are you reconciled to it?" asked Luttrell.

"Yes, practically I am."

"What do you mean by practically? Explain yourself."

"A man in my state can't explain himself. I mean that, however I feel about it, I shall accept Gertrude's marriage."

"You're a wise man, my boy," said the Major, kindly.

"I'm growing wise. I feel like Solomon on his throne in this chair. But I confess, sir, I don't see how she could have you."

"Well, there's no accounting for tastes," said the Major, good-humoredly.

"Ah, if it's been a matter of taste with her," said Richard, "I have nothing to say."

They came to no more express understanding than this with regard to the future. Richard continued to grow stronger daily, and to defer the renewal of his intercourse with Gertrude. A month before, he would have resented as a bitter insult the intimation that he would ever be so resigned to lose her as he now found himself. He would not see her for two reasons: first, because he felt that it would be—or that at least in reason it ought to be—a painful experience to look upon his old mistress with a coldly critical eye; and secondly, because, justify to himself as he would his new-born indifference, he could not entirely cast away the suspicion that it was a last remnant of disease, and that, when he stood on his legs again in the presence of those exuberant landscapes with which he had long since established a sort of sensuous communion, he would feel, as with a great tumultuous rush, the return of his impetuous manhood and of his old capacity. When he had smoked a pipe in the outer sunshine, when he had settled himself once more to the long elastic bound of his mare, then he would see Gertrude. The reason of the change which had come upon him was that she had disappointed him,—she, whose magnanimity it had once seemed that his fancy was impotent to measure. She had accepted Major Luttrell, a man whom he despised; she had so mutilated her magnificent heart as to match it with his. The validity of his dislike to the Major, Richard did not trouble himself to examine. He accepted it as an unerring instinct; and, indeed, he might have asked himself, had he not sufficient proof? Moreover he labored under the sense of a gratuitous wrong. He had suffered an immense torment of remorse to drive him into brutishness, and thence to the very gate of death, for an offence which he had deemed mortal, and which was after all but a phantasm of his impassioned conscience. What a fool he had

been! a fool for his nervous fears, and a fool for his penitence. Marriage with Major Luttrell,—such was the end of Gertrude's fancied anguish. Such, too, we hardly need add, was the end of that idea of reparation which had been so formidable to Luttrell. Richard had been generous; he would now be just.

Far from impeding his recovery, these reflections hastened it. One morning in the beginning of August, Gertrude received notice of Richard's presence. It was a still, sultry day, and Miss Whittaker, her habitual pallor deepened by the oppressive heat, was sitting alone in a white morning-dress, languidly fanning aside at once the droning flies and her equally importunate thoughts. She found Richard standing in the middle of the drawing-room, booted and spurred.

"Well, Richard," she exclaimed, with some feeling, "you're at last willing to see me!"

As his eyes fell upon her, he started and stood almost paralyzed, heeding neither her words nor her extended hand. It was not Gertrude he saw, but her ghost.

"In Heaven's name what has happened to you?" he cried. "Have you been ill?"

Gertrude tried to smile in feigned surprise at his surprise; but her muscles relaxed. Richard's words and looks reflected more vividly than any mirror the dejection of her person; and this, the misery of her soul. She felt herself growing faint. She staggered back to a sofa and sank down.

Then Richard felt as if the room were revolving about him, and as if his throat were choked with imprecations,—as if his old erratic passion had again taken possession of him, like a mingled legion of devils and angels. It was through pity that his love returned. He went forward and dropped on his knees at Gertrude's feet. "Speak to me!" he cried, seizing her hands. "Are you unhappy? Is your heart broken? O Gertrude! what have you come to?"

Gertrude drew her hands from his grasp and rose to her feet. "Get up, Richard," she said. "Don't talk so wildly. I'm not well. I'm very glad to see you. *You* look well."

"I've got my strength again,—and meanwhile you've been failing. You're unhappy, you're wretched! Don't say you're not, Gertrude: it's as plain as day. You're breaking your heart."

"The same old Richard!" said Gertrude, trying to smile again.

"Would that you were the same old Gertrude! Don't try to smile; you can't!"

"I *shall*!" said Gertrude, desperately. "I'm going to be married, you know."

"Yes, I know. I don't congratulate you."

"I have not counted upon that honor, Richard. I shall have to do without it."

"You'll have to do without a great many things!" cried Richard, horrified by what seemed to him her blind self-immolation.

"I have all I ask," said Gertrude.

"You haven't all *I* ask then! You haven't all your friends ask."

"My friends are very kind, but I marry to suit myself."

"You've not suited yourself!" retorted the young man. "You've suited—God knows what!—your pride, your despair, your resentment." As he looked at her, the secret history of her weakness seemed to become plain to him, and he felt a mighty rage against the man who had taken a base advantage of it. "Gertrude!" he cried, "I entreat you to go back. It's not for my sake,—I'll give you up,—I'll go a thousand miles away, and never look at you again. It's for

your own. In the name of your happiness, break with that man! Don't fling yourself away. Buy him off, if you consider yourself bound. Give him your money. That's all he wants."

As Gertrude listened, the blood came back to her face, and two flames into her eyes. She looked at Richard from head to foot. "You are not weak," she said, "you are in your senses, you are well and strong; you shall tell me what you mean. You insult the best friend I have. Explain yourself! you insinuate foul things,—speak them out!" Her eyes glanced toward the door, and Richard's followed them. Major Luttrell stood on the threshold.

"Come in, sir!" cried Richard. "Gertrude swears she'll believe no harm of you. Come and tell her that she's wrong! How can you keep on harassing a woman whom you've brought to this state? Think of what she was three months ago, and look at her now!"

Luttrell received this broadside without flinching. He had overheard Richard's voice from the entry, and he had steeled his heart for the encounter. He assumed the air of having been so amazed by the young man's first words as only to have heard his last; and he glanced at Gertrude mechanically as if to comply with them. "What's the matter?" he asked, going over to her, and taking her hand; "are you ill?" Gertrude let him have her hand, but she forbore to meet his eyes.

"Ill! of course she's ill!" cried Richard, passionately. "She's dying,—she's consuming herself! I know I seem to be playing an odious part here, Gertrude, but, upon my soul, I can't help it. I look like a betrayer, an informer, a sneak, but I don't feel like one! Still, I'll leave you, if you say so."

"Shall he go, Gertrude?" asked Luttrell, without looking at Richard.

"No. Let him stay and explain himself. He has accused you,—let him prove his case."

"I know what he is going to say," said Luttrell. "It will place me in a bad light. Do you still wish to hear it?"

Gertrude drew her hand hastily out of Luttrell's. "Speak, Richard!" she cried, with a passionate gesture.

"I will speak," said Richard. "I've done you a dreadful wrong, Gertrude. How great a wrong, I never knew until I saw you to-day so miserably altered. When I heard that you were to be married, I fancied that it was no wrong, and that my remorse had been wasted. But I understand it now; and he understands it, too. You once told me that you had ceased to love Captain Severn. It wasn't true. You never ceased to love him. You love him at this moment. If he were to get another wound in the next battle, how would you feel? How would you bear it?" And Richard paused for an instant with the force of his interrogation.

"For God's sake," cried Gertrude, "respect the dead!"

"The dead! Is he dead?"

Gertrude covered her face with her hands.

"You beast!" cried Luttrell.

Richard turned upon him savagely. "Shut your infernal mouth!" he roared. "You told me he was alive and well!"

Gertrude made a movement of speechless distress.

"You would have it, my dear," said Luttrell, with a little bow.

Richard had turned pale, and began to tremble. "Excuse me, Gertrude," he said hoarsely, "I've been deceived. Poor, unhappy woman! Gertrude," he continued, going nearer to her, and speaking in a whisper, "*I* killed him."

Gertrude fell back from him, as he approached her, with a look of unutterable horror. "I and *he*," said Richard, pointing at Luttrell.

Gertrude's eyes followed the direction of his gesture, and transferred their scorching disgust to her suitor. This was too much for Luttrell's courage. "You idiot!" she shouted at Richard, "speak out!"

"He loved you, though you believed he didn't," said Richard. "I saw it the first time I looked at him. To every one but you it was as plain as day. Luttrell saw it, too. But he was too modest, and he never fancied you cared for him. The night before he went back to the army, he came to bid you good-by. If he had seen you, it would have been better for every one. You remember that evening, of course. We met him, Luttrell and I. He was all on fire,—he meant to speak. I knew it; you knew it, Luttrell: it was in his fingers' ends. I intercepted him. I turned him off,—I lied to him and told him you were away. I was a coward, and I did neither more nor less than that. I knew you were waiting for him. It was stronger than my will,—I believe I should do it again. Fate was against him, and he went off. I came back to tell you, but my damnable jealousy strangled me. I went home and drank myself into a fever. I've done you a wrong that I can never repair. I'd go hang myself if I thought it would help you." Richard spoke slowly, softly, and explicitly, as if irresistible Justice in person had her hand upon his neck, and were forcing him down upon his knees. In the presence of Gertrude's dismay nothing seemed possible but perfect self-conviction. In Luttrell's attitude, as he stood with his head erect, his arms folded, and his cold, gray eyes fixed upon the distance, it struck him that there was something atrociously insolent; not insolent to him,—for that he cared little enough,—but insolent to Gertrude and to the dreadful solemnity of the hour. Richard sent the Major a look of the most aggressive contempt. "As for Major Luttrell," he said, "*he* was but a passive spectator. No, Gertrude, by Heaven!" he burst out, "he was worse than I! I loved you, and he didn't!"

"Our friend is correct in his facts, Gertrude," said Luttrell, quietly. "He is incorrect in his opinions. I *was* a passive spectator of his deception. He appeared to enjoy a certain authority with regard to your wishes,—the source of which I respected both of you sufficiently never to question,—and I accepted the act which he has described as an exercise of it. You will remember that you had sent us away on the ground that you were in no humor for company. To deny you, therefore, to another visitor, seemed to me rather officious, but still pardonable. You will consider that I was wholly ignorant of your relations to that visitor; that whatever you may have done for others, Gertrude, to me you never vouchsafed a word of information on the subject, and that Mr. Clare's words are a revelation to me. But I am bound to believe nothing that he says. I am bound to believe that I have injured you only when I hear it from your own lips."

Richard made a movement as if to break out upon the Major; but Gertrude, who had been standing motionless with her eyes upon the ground, quickly raised them, and gave him a look of imperious prohibition. She had listened, and she had chosen. She turned to Luttrell. "Major Luttrell," she said, "you *have* been an accessory in what has been for me a serious grief. It is my duty to tell you so. I mean, of course, a profoundly unwilling accessory. I pity you more than I can tell you. I think your position more pitiable than mine. It is true that I never made a confidant of you. I never made one of Richard. I had a secret, and he surprised it. You were less fortunate." It might have seemed to a thoroughly dispassionate observer that in these last four words there was an infinitesimal touch of tragic irony. Gertrude paused a moment while

Luttrel eyed her intently, and Richard, from a somewhat tardy instinct of delicacy, walked over to the bow-window. "This is the most painful moment of my life," she resumed. "I hardly know where my duty lies. The only thing that is plain to me is, that I must ask you to release me from my engagement. I ask it most humbly, Major Luttrel," Gertrude continued, with warmth in her words, and a chilling coldness in her voice,—a coldness which it sickened her to feel there, but which she was unable to dispel. "I can't expect that you should give me up easily; I know that it's a great deal to ask, and"—she forced the chosen words out of her mouth—"I should thank you more than I can say if you would put some condition upon my release. You have done honorably by me, and I repay you with ingratitude. But I can't marry you." Her voice began to melt. "I have been false from the beginning. I have no heart to give you. I should make you a despicable wife."

The Major, too, had listened and chosen, and in this trying conjecture he set the seal to his character as an accomplished man. He saw that Gertrude's movement was final, and he determined to respect the inscrutable mystery of her heart. He read in the glance of her eye and the tone of her voice that the perfect dignity had fallen from his character,—that his integrity had lost its bloom; but he also read her firm resolve never to admit this fact to her own mind, nor to declare it to the world, and he honored her forbearance. His hopes, his ambitions, his visions, lay before him like a colossal heap of broken glass; but he would be as graceful as she was. She had divined him; but she had spared him. The Major was inspired.

"You have at least spoken to the point," he said. "You leave no room for doubt or for hope. With the little light I have, I can't say I understand your feelings, but I yield to them religiously. I believe so thoroughly that you suffer from the thought of what you ask of me, that I will not increase your suffering by assuring you of my own. I care for nothing but your happiness. You have lost it, and I give you mine to replace it. And although it's a simple thing to say," he added, "I must say simply that I thank you for your implicit faith in my integrity,"—and he held out his hand. As she gave him hers, Gertrude felt utterly in the wrong; and she looked into his eyes with an expression so humble, so appealing, so grateful, that, after all, his exit may be called triumphant.

When he had gone, Richard turned from the window with an enormous sense of relief. He had heard Gertrude's speech, and he knew that perfect justice had not been done; but still there was enough to be thankful for. Yet now that his duty was accomplished, he was conscious of a sudden lassitude. Mechanically he looked at Gertrude, and almost mechanically he came towards her. She, on her side, looking at him as he walked slowly down the long room, his face indistinct against the deadened light of the white-draped windows behind him, marked the expression of his figure with another pang. "He has rescued me," she said to herself; "but his passion has perished in the tumult. Richard," she said aloud, uttering the first words of vague kindness that came into her mind, "I forgive you."

Richard stopped. The idea had lost its charm. "You're very kind," he said, wearily. "You're far too kind. How do you know you forgive me? Wait and see."

Gertrude looked at him as she had never looked before; but he saw nothing of it. He saw a sad, plain girl in a white dress, nervously handling her fan. He was thinking of himself. If he had been thinking of her, he would have read in her lingering, upward gaze, that he had won her; and if, so reading, he had opened his arms, Gertrude would have come to them. We trust the reader is not shocked. She neither hated him nor despised him, as she ought doubtless in consistency to have done. She felt that he was abundantly a man, and she loved him. Richard, on his side, felt humbly the same truth, and he began to respect himself. The past had closed abruptly behind him, and tardy Gertrude had been shut in. The future was dimly shaping itself without her image. So he did not open his arms.

"Good-by," he said, holding out his hand. "I may not see you again for a long time."

Gertrude felt as if the world were deserting her. "Are you going away?" she asked, tremulously.

"I mean to sell out and pay my debts, and go to the war."

She gave him her hand, and he silently shook it. There was no contending with the war, and she gave him up.

With their separation our story properly ends, and to say more would be to begin a new story. It is, perhaps, our duty, however, expressly to add, that Major Luttrell, in obedience to a logic of his own, abstained from revenge; and that, if time has not avenged him, it has at least rewarded him. General Luttrell, who lost an arm before the war was over, recently married Miss Van Winkel of Philadelphia, and seventy thousand a year. Richard engaged in the defence of his country, on a captain's commission, obtained with some difficulty. He saw a great deal of fighting, but he has no scars to show. The return of peace found him in his native place, without a home, and without resources. One of his first acts was to call dutifully and respectfully upon Miss Whittaker, whose circle of acquaintance had apparently become very much enlarged, and now included a vast number of gentlemen. Gertrude's manner was kindness itself, but a more studied kindness than before. She had lost much of her youth and her simplicity. Richard wondered whether she had pledged herself to spinsterhood, but, of course, he didn't ask her. She inquired very particularly into his material prospects and intentions, and offered most urgently to lend him money, which he declined to borrow. When he left her, he took a long walk through her place and beside the river, and, wandering back to the days when he had yearned for her love, assured himself that no woman would ever again be to him what she had been. During his stay in this neighborhood he found himself impelled to a species of submission to one of the old agricultural magnates whom he had insulted in his unregenerate days, and through whom he was glad to obtain some momentary employment. But his present position is very distasteful to him, and he is eager to try his fortunes in the West. As yet, however, he has lacked even the means to get as far as St. Louis. He drinks no more than is good for him. To speak of Gertrude's impressions of Richard would lead us quite too far. Shortly after his return she broke up her household, and came to the bold resolution (bold, that is, for a woman young, unmarried, and ignorant of manners in her own country) to spend some time in Europe. At our last accounts she was living in the ancient city of Florence. Her great wealth, of which she was wont to complain that it excluded her from human sympathy, now affords her a most efficient protection. She passes among her fellow-countrymen abroad for a very independent, but a very happy woman; although, as she is by this time twenty-seven years of age, a little romance is occasionally invoked to account for her continued celibacy.

A Most Extraordinary Case

Late in the spring of the year 1865, just as the war had come to a close, a young invalid officer lay in bed in one of the uppermost chambers of one of the great New York hotels. His meditations were interrupted by the entrance of a waiter, who handed him a card superscribed *Mrs. Samuel Mason*, and bearing on its reverse the following words in pencil: "Dear Colonel Mason, I have only just heard of your being here, ill and alone. It's too dreadful. Do you remember me? Will you see me? If you do, I think you *will* remember me. I insist on coming up. M. M."

Mason was undressed, unshaven, weak, and feverish. His ugly little hotel chamber was in a state of confusion which had not even the merit of being picturesque. Mrs. Mason's card was at once a puzzle and a heavenly intimation of comfort. But all that it represented was so dim to the young man's enfeebled perception that it took him some moments to collect his thoughts.

"It's a lady, sir," said the waiter, by way of assisting him.

"Is she young or old?" asked Mason.

"Well, sir, she's a little of both."

"I can't ask a lady to come up here," groaned the invalid.

"Upon my word, sir, you look beautiful," said the waiter. "They like a sick man. And I see she's of your own name," continued Michael, in whom constant service had bred great frankness of speech; "the more shame to her for not coming before."

Colonel Mason concluded that, as the visit had been of Mrs. Mason's own seeking, he would receive her without more ado. "If she doesn't mind it, I'm sure I needn't," said the poor fellow, who hadn't the strength to be over-punctilious. So in a very few moments his visitor was ushered up to his bedside. He saw before him a handsome, middle-aged blonde woman, stout of figure, and dressed in the height of the fashion, who displayed no other embarrassment than such as was easily explained by the loss of breath consequent on the ascent of six flights of stairs.

"Do you remember me?" she asked, taking the young man's hand.

He lay back on his pillow, and looked at her. "You used to be my aunt,—my aunt Maria," he said.

"I'm your aunt Maria still," she answered. "It's very good of you not to have forgotten me."

"It's very good of you not to have forgotten *me*," said Mason, in a tone which betrayed a deeper feeling than the wish to return a civil speech.

"Dear me, you've had the war and a hundred dreadful things. I've been living in Europe, you know. Since my return I've been living in the country, in your uncle's old house on the river, of which the lease had just expired when I came home. I came to town yesterday on business, and accidentally heard of your condition and your whereabouts. I knew you'd gone into the army, and I had been wondering a dozen times what had become of you, and whether you wouldn't turn up now that the war's at last over. Of course I didn't lose a moment in coming to you. I'm *so* sorry for you." Mrs. Mason looked about her for a seat. The chairs were encumbered with odds and ends belonging to her nephew's wardrobe and to his equipment,

and with the remnants of his last repast. The good lady surveyed the scene with the beautiful mute irony of compassion.

The young man lay watching her comely face in delicious submission to whatever form of utterance this feeling might take. "You're the first woman—to call a woman—I've seen in I don't know how many months," he said, contrasting her appearance with that of his room, and reading her thoughts.

"I should suppose so. I mean to be as good as a dozen." She disembarrassed one of the chairs, and brought it to the bed. Then, seating herself, she ungloved one of her hands, and laid it softly on the young man's wrist. "What a great full-grown young fellow you've become!" she pursued. "Now, tell me, are you very ill?"

"You must ask the doctor," said Mason. "I actually don't know. I'm extremely uncomfortable, but I suppose it's partly my circumstances."

"I've no doubt it's more than half your circumstances. I've seen the doctor. Mrs. Van Zandt is an old friend of mine; and when I come to town, I always go to see her. It was from her I learned this morning that you were here in this state. We had begun by rejoicing over the new prospects of peace; and from that, of course, we had got to lamenting the numbers of young men who are to enter upon it with lost limbs and shattered health. It happened that Mrs. Van Zandt mentioned several of her husband's patients as examples, and yourself among the number. You were an excellent young man, miserably sick, without family or friends, and with no asylum but a suffocating little closet in a noisy hotel. You may imagine that I pricked up my ears, and asked your baptismal name. Dr. Van Zandt came in, and told me. Your name is luckily an uncommon one; it's absurd to suppose that there could be two Ferdinand Masons. In short, I felt that you were my husband's brother's child, and that at last I too might have my little turn at hero-nursing. The little that the Doctor knew of your history agreed with the little that I knew, though I confess I was sorry to hear that you had never spoken of our relationship. But why should you? At all events you've got to acknowledge it now. I regret your not having said something about it before, only because the Doctor might have brought us together a month ago, and you would now have been well."

"It will take me more than a month to get well," said Mason, feeling that, if Mrs. Mason was meaning to exert herself on his behalf, she should know the real state of the case. "I never spoke of you, because I had quite lost sight of you. I fancied you were still in Europe; and indeed," he added, after a moment's hesitation, "I heard that you had married again."

"Of course you did," said Mrs. Mason, placidly. "I used to hear it once a month myself. But I had a much better right to fancy you married. Thank Heaven, however, there's nothing of that sort between us. We can each do as we please. I promise to cure you in a month, in spite of yourself."

"What's your remedy?" asked the young man, with a smile very courteous, considering how sceptical it was.

"My first remedy is to take you out of this horrible hole. I talked it all over with Dr. Van Zandt. He says you must get into the country. Why, my dear boy, this is enough to kill you outright,—one Broadway outside of your window and another outside of your door! Listen to me. My house is directly on the river, and only two hours' journey by rail. You know I've no children. My only companion is my niece, Caroline Hofmann. You shall come and stay with us until you are as strong as you need be,—if it takes a dozen years. You shall have sweet, cool air, and proper food, and decent attendance, and the devotion of a sensible woman. I shall not listen to a word of objection. You shall do as you please, get up when you please, dine when you please, go to bed when you please, and say what you please. I shall ask

nothing of you but to let yourself be very dearly cared for. Do you remember how, when you were a boy at school, after your father's death, you were taken with measles, and your uncle had you brought to our own house? I helped to nurse you myself, and I remember what nice manners you had in the very midst of your measles. Your uncle was very fond of you; and if he had had any considerable property of his own, I know he would have remembered you in his will. But, of course, he couldn't leave away his wife's money. What I wish to do for you is a very small part of what he would have done, if he had only lived, and heard of your gallantry and your sufferings. So it's settled. I shall go home this afternoon. To-morrow morning I shall despatch my man-servant to you with instructions. He's an Englishman. He thoroughly knows his business, and he will put up your things, and save you every particle of trouble. You've only to let yourself be dressed, and driven to the train. I shall, of course, meet you at your journey's end. Now don't tell me you're not strong enough."

"I feel stronger at this moment than I've felt in a dozen weeks," said Mason. "It's useless for me to attempt to thank you."

"Quite useless. I shouldn't listen to you. And I suppose," added Mrs. Mason, looking over the bare walls and scanty furniture of the room, "you pay a fabulous price for this bower of bliss. Do you need money?"

The young man shook his head.

"Very well then," resumed Mrs. Mason, conclusively, "from this moment you're in my hands."

The young man lay speechless from the very fulness of his heart; but he strove by the pressure of his fingers to give her some assurance of his gratitude. His companion rose, and lingered beside him, drawing on her glove, and smiling quietly with the look of a long-baffled philanthropist who has at last discovered a subject of infinite capacity. Poor Ferdinand's weary visage reflected her smile. Finally, after the lapse of years, he too was being cared for. He let his head sink into the pillow, and silently inhaled the perfume of her sober elegance and her cordial good-nature. He felt like taking her dress in his hand, and asking her not to leave him,—now that solitude would be bitter. His eyes, I suppose, betrayed this touching apprehension,—doubly touching in a war-wasted young officer. As she prepared to bid him farewell, Mrs. Mason stooped, and kissed his forehead. He listened to the rustle of her dress across the carpet, to the gentle closing of the door, and to her retreating footsteps. And then, giving way to his weakness, he put his hands to his face, and cried like a homesick schoolboy. He had been reminded of the exquisite side of life.

Matters went forward as Mrs. Mason had arranged them. At six o'clock on the following evening Ferdinand found himself deposited at one of the way stations of the Hudson River Railroad, exhausted by his journey, and yet excited at the prospect of its drawing to a close. Mrs. Mason was in waiting in a low basket-phaeton, with a magazine of cushions and wrappings. Ferdinand transferred himself to her side, and they drove rapidly homeward. Mrs. Mason's house was a cottage of liberal make, with a circular lawn, a sinuous avenue, and a well-grown plantation of shrubbery. As the phaeton drew up before the porch, a young lady appeared in the doorway. Mason will be forgiven if he considered himself presented *ex officio*, as I may say, to this young lady. Before he really knew it, and in the absence of the servant, who, under Mrs. Mason's directions, was busy in the background with his trunk, he had availed himself of her proffered arm, and had allowed her to assist him through the porch, across the hall, and into the parlor, where she graciously consigned him to a sofa which, for his especial use, she had caused to be wheeled up before a fire kindled for his

especial comfort. He was unable, however, to take advantage of her good offices. Prudence dictated that without further delay he should betake himself to his room.

On the morning after his arrival he got up early, and made an attempt to be present at breakfast; but his strength failed him, and he was obliged to dress at his leisure, and content himself with a simple transition from his bed to his arm-chair. The chamber assigned him was designedly on the ground-floor, so that he was spared the trouble of measuring his strength with the staircase,—a charming room, brightly carpeted and upholstered, and marked by a certain fastidious freshness which betrayed the uncontested dominion of women. It had a broad high window, draped in chintz and crisp muslin and opening upon the greensward of the lawn. At this window, wrapped in his dressing-gown, and lost in the embrace of the most unresisting of arm-chairs, he slowly discussed his simple repast. Before long his hostess made her appearance on the lawn outside the window. As this quarter of the house was covered with warm sunshine, Mason ventured to open the window and talk to her, while she stood out on the grass beneath her parasol.

"It's time to think of your physician," she said. "You shall choose for yourself. The great physician here is Dr. Gregory, a gentleman of the old school. We have had him but once, for my niece and I have the health of a couple of dairy-maids. On that one occasion he—well, he made a fool of himself. His practice is among the 'old families,' and he only knows how to treat certain old-fashioned, obsolete complaints. Anything brought about by the war would be quite out of his range. And then he vacillates, and talks about his own maladies *à lui*. And, to tell the truth, we had a little repartee which makes our relations somewhat ambiguous."

"I see he would never do," said Mason, laughing. "But he's not your only physician?"

"No: there is a young man, a newcomer, a Dr. Knight, whom I don't know, but of whom I've heard very good things. I confess that I have a prejudice in favor of the young men. Dr. Knight has a position to establish, and I suppose he's likely to be especially attentive and careful. I believe, moreover, that he's been an army surgeon."

"I knew a man of his name," said Mason. "I wonder if this is he. His name was Horace Knight,—a light-haired, near-sighted man."

"I don't know," said Mrs. Mason; "perhaps Caroline knows." She retreated a few steps, and called to an upper window: "Caroline, what's Dr. Knight's first name?"

Mason listened to Miss Hofmann's answer,—"I haven't the least idea."

"Is it Horace?"

"I don't know."

"Is he light or dark?"

"I've never seen him."

"Is he near-sighted?"

"How in the world should I know?"

"I fancy he's as good as any one," said Ferdinand. "With you, my dear aunt, what does the doctor matter?"

Mrs. Mason accordingly sent for Dr. Knight, who, on arrival, turned out to be her nephew's old acquaintance. Although the young men had been united by no greater intimacy than the superficial comradeship resulting from a winter in neighboring quarters, they were very well pleased to come together again. Horace Knight was a young man of good birth, good looks, good faculties, and good intentions, who, after a three years' practice of surgery in the army,

had undertaken to push his fortune in Mrs. Mason's neighborhood. His mother, a widow with a small income, had recently removed to the country for economy, and her son had been unwilling to leave her to live alone. The adjacent country, moreover, offered a promising field for a man of energy,—a field well stocked with large families of easy income and of those conservative habits which lead people to make much of the cares of a physician. The local practitioner had survived the glory of his prime, and was not, perhaps, entirely guiltless of Mrs. Mason's charge, that he had not kept up with the progress of the "new diseases." The world, in fact, was getting too new for him, as well as for his old patients. He had had money invested in the South,—precious sources of revenue, which the war had swallowed up at a gulp; he had grown frightened and nervous and querulous; he had lost his presence of mind and his spectacles in several important conjunctures; he had been repeatedly and distinctly fallible; a vague dissatisfaction pervaded the breasts of his patrons; he was without competitors: in short, fortune was propitious to Dr. Knight. Mason remembered the young physician only as a good-humored, intelligent companion; but he soon had reason to believe that his medical skill would leave nothing to be desired. He arrived rapidly at a clear understanding of Ferdinand's case; he asked intelligent questions, and gave simple and definite instructions. The disorder was deeply seated and virulent, but there was no apparent reason why unflinching care and prudence should not subdue it.

"Your strength is very much reduced," he said, as he took his hat and gloves to go; "but I should say you had an excellent constitution. It seems to me, however,—if you will pardon me for saying so,—to be partly your own fault that you have fallen so low. You have opposed no resistance; you haven't cared to get well."

"I confess that I haven't,—particularly. But I don't see how you should know it."

"Why it's obvious."

"Well, it was natural enough. Until Mrs. Mason discovered me, I hadn't a friend in the world. I had become demoralized by solitude. I had almost forgotten the difference between sickness and health. I had nothing before my eyes to remind me in tangible form of that great mass of common human interests for the sake of which—under whatever name he may disguise the impulse—a man continues in health and recovers from disease. I had forgotten that I ever cared for books or ideas, or anything but the preservation of my miserable carcass. My carcass had become quite too miserable to be an object worth living for. I was losing time and money at an appalling rate; I was getting worse rather than better; and I therefore gave up resistance. It seemed better to die easy than to die hard. I put it all in the past tense, because within these three days I've become quite another man."

"I wish to Heaven I could have heard of you," said Knight. "I would have made you come home with me, if I could have done nothing else. It was certainly not a rose-colored prospect; but what do you say now?" he continued, looking around the room. "I should say that at the present moment rose-color was the prevailing hue."

Mason assented with an eloquent smile.

"I congratulate you from my heart. Mrs. Mason—if you don't mind my speaking of her—is so thoroughly (and, I should suppose, incorrigibly) good-natured, that it's quite a surprise to find her extremely sensible."

"Yes; and so resolute and sensible in her better moments," said Ferdinand, "that it's quite a surprise to find her good-natured. She's a fine woman."

"But I should say that your especial blessing was your servant. He looks as if he had come out of an English novel."

"My especial blessing! You haven't seen Miss Hofmann, then?"

"Yes: I met her in the hall. She looks as if she had come out of an American novel. I don't know that that's great praise; but, at all events, I make her come out of it."

"You're bound in honor, then," said Mason, laughing, "to put her into another."

Mason's conviction of his newly made happiness needed no enforcement at the Doctor's hands. He felt that it would be his own fault if these were not among the most delightful days of his life. He resolved to give himself up without stint to his impressions,—utterly to vegetate. His illness alone would have been a sufficient excuse for a long term of intellectual laxity; but Mason had other good reasons besides. For the past three years he had been stretched without intermission on the rack of duty. Although constantly exposed to hard service, it had been his fortune never to receive a serious wound; and, until his health broke down, he had taken fewer holidays than any officer I ever heard of. With an abundance of a certain kind of equanimity and self-control,—a faculty of ready self-adaptation to the accomplished fact, in any direction,—he was yet in his innermost soul a singularly nervous, over-scrupulous person. On the few occasions when he had been absent from the scene of his military duties, although duly authorized and warranted in the act, he had suffered so acutely from the apprehension that something was happening, or was about to happen, which not to have witnessed or to have had a hand in would be matter of eternal mortification, that he can be barely said to have enjoyed his recreation. The sense of lost time was, moreover, his perpetual bugbear,—the feeling that precious hours were now fleeting uncounted, which in more congenial labors would suffice almost for the building of a monument more lasting than brass. This feeling he strove to propitiate as much as possible by assiduous reading and study in the interval of his actual occupations. I cite the fact merely as an evidence of the uninterrupted austerity of his life for a long time before he fell sick. I might triple this period, indeed, by a glance at his college years, and at certain busy months which intervened between this close of his youth and the opening of the war. Mason had always worked. He was fond of work to begin with; and, in addition, the complete absence of family ties had allowed him to follow his tastes without obstruction or diversion. This circumstance had been at once a great gain to him and a serious loss. He reached his twenty-seventh year a very accomplished scholar, as scholars go, but a great dunce in certain social matters. He was quite ignorant of all those lighter, more evanescent forms of conviviality attached to being somebody's son, brother, or cousin. At last, however, as he reminded himself, he was to discover what it was to be the nephew of somebody's husband. Mrs. Mason was to teach him the meaning of the adjective *domestic*. It would have been hard to learn it in a pleasanter way. Mason felt that he was to learn something from his very idleness, and that he would leave the house a wiser as well as a better man. It became probable, thanks to that quickening of the faculties which accompanies the dawning of a sincere and rational attachment, that in this last respect he would not be disappointed. Very few days sufficed to reveal to him the many excellent qualities of his hostess,—her warm capacious heart, her fairness of mind, her good temper, her good taste, her vast fund of experience and of reminiscence, and, indeed, more than all, a certain passionate devotedness, to which fortune, in leaving her a childless widow, had done but scant justice. The two accordingly established a friendship,—a friendship that promised as well for the happiness of each as any that ever undertook to meddle with happiness. If I were telling my story from Mrs. Mason's point of view, I take it that I might make a very good thing of the statement that this lady had deliberately and solemnly conferred her affection upon my hero; but I am compelled to let it stand in this simple shape. Excellent, charming person that she was, she had every right to the rich satisfaction which belonged to a liberal—yet not too liberal—estimate of her guest. She had divined him,—so much the better for her. That it was very much the better for him is obviously one of the elementary facts of

my narrative; a fact of which Mason became so rapidly and profoundly sensible, that he was soon able to dismiss it from his thoughts to his life,—its proper sphere.

In the space of ten days, then, most of the nebulous impressions evoked by change of scene had gathered into substantial form. Others, however, were still in the nebulous state,—diffusing a gentle light upon Ferdinand's path. Chief among these was the mild radiance of which Miss Hofmann was the centre. For three days after his arrival Mason had been confined to his room by the aggravation of his condition consequent upon his journey. It was not till the fourth day, therefore, that he was able to renew the acquaintance so auspiciously commenced. When at last, at dinner-time, he reappeared in the drawing-room, Miss Hofmann greeted him almost as an old friend. Mason had already discovered that she was young and gracious; he now rapidly advanced to the conclusion that she was uncommonly pretty. Before dinner was over, he had made up his mind that she was neither more nor less than beautiful. Mrs. Mason had found time to give him a full account of her life. She had lost her mother in infancy, and had been adopted by her aunt in the early years of this lady's widowhood. Her father was a man of evil habits,—a drunkard, a gambler, and a rake, outlawed from decent society. His only dealings with his daughter were to write her every month or two a begging letter, she being in possession of her mother's property. Mrs. Mason had taken her niece to Europe, and given her every advantage. She had had an expensive education; she had travelled; she had gone into the world; she had been presented, like a good republican, to no less than three European sovereigns; she had been admired; she had had half a dozen offers of marriage to her aunt's knowledge, and others, perhaps, of which she was ignorant, and had refused them all. She was now twenty-six years of age, beautiful, accomplished, and *au mieux* with her bankers. She was an excellent girl, with a will of her own. "I'm very fond of her," Mrs. Mason declared, with her habitual frankness; "and I suppose she's equally fond of me; but we long ago gave up all idea of playing at mother and daughter. We have never had a disagreement since she was fifteen years old; but we have never had an agreement either. Caroline is no sentimentalist. She's honest, good-tempered, and perfectly discerning. She foresaw that we were still to spend a number of years together, and she wisely declined at the outset to affect a range of feelings that wouldn't stand the wear and tear of time. She knew that she would make a poor daughter, and she contented herself with being a good niece. A capital niece she is. In fact we're almost sisters. There are moments when I feel as if she were ten years older than I, and as if it were absurd in me to attempt to interfere with her life. I never do. She has it quite in her own hands. My attitude is little more than a state of affectionate curiosity as to what she will do with it. Of course she'll marry, sooner or later; but I'm curious to see the man of her choice. In Europe, you know, girls have no acquaintances but such as they share with their parents and guardians; and in that way I know most of the gentlemen who have tried to make themselves acceptable to my niece. There were some excellent young men in the number; but there was not one—or, rather, there was but one—for whom Caroline cared a straw. That one she loved, I believe; but they had a quarrel, and she lost him. She's very discreet and conciliating. I'm sure no girl ever before got rid of half a dozen suitors with so little offence. Ah, she's a dear, good girl!" Mrs. Mason pursued. "She's saved me a world of trouble in my day. And when I think what she might have been, with her beauty, and what not! She has kept all her suitors as friends. There are two of them who write to her still. She doesn't answer their letters; but once in a while she meets them, and thanks them for writing, and that contents them. The others are married, and Caroline remains single. I take for granted it won't last forever. Still, although she's *not* a sentimentalist, she'll not marry a man she doesn't care for, merely because she's growing old. Indeed, it's only the sentimental girls, to my belief, that do that. They covet a man for his money or his looks, and then give the feeling some fine name. But there's one thing, Mr. Ferdinand," added Mrs. Mason, at the close of these remarks, "you will be so good as not to

fall in love with my niece. I can assure you that she'll not fall in love with you, and a hopeless passion will not hasten your recovery. Caroline is a charming girl. You can live with her very well without that. She's good for common daylight, and you'll have no need of wax-candles and ecstasies."

"Be reassured," said Ferdinand, laughing. "I'm quite too attentive to myself at present to think of any one else. Miss Hofmann might be dying for a glance of my eye, and I shouldn't hesitate to sacrifice her. It takes more than half a man to fall in love."

At the end of ten days summer had fairly set in; and Mason found it possible, and indeed profitable, to spend a large portion of his time in the open air. He was unable either to ride or to walk; and the only form of exercise which he found practicable was an occasional drive in Mrs. Mason's phaeton. On these occasions Mrs. Mason was his habitual companion. The neighborhood offered an interminable succession of beautiful drives; and poor Ferdinand took a truly exquisite pleasure in reclining idly upon a pile of cushions, warmly clad, empty-handed, silent, with only his eyes in motion, and rolling rapidly between fragrant hedges and springing crops, and beside the outskirts of woods, and along the heights which overlooked the river. Detested war was over, and all nature had ratified the peace. Mason used to gaze up into the cloudless sky until his eyes began to water, and you would have actually supposed he was shedding sentimental tears. Besides these comfortable drives with his hostess, Mason had adopted another method of inhaling the sunshine. He used frequently to spend several hours at a time on a veranda beside the house, sheltered from the observation of visitors. Here, with an arm-chair and a footstool, a cigar and half a dozen volumes of novels, to say nothing of the society of either of the ladies, and sometimes of both, he suffered the mornings to pass unmeasured and uncounted. The chief incident of these mornings was the Doctor's visit, in which, of course, there was a strong element of prose,—and very good prose, as I may add, for the Doctor was turning out an excellent fellow. But, for the rest, time unrolled itself like a gentle strain of music. Mason knew so little, from direct observation, of the *vie intime* of elegant, intelligent women, that their habits, their manners, their household motions, their principles, possessed in his view all the charm of a spectacle,—a spectacle which he contemplated with the indolence of an invalid, the sympathy of a man of taste, and a little of the awkwardness which women gladly allow, and indeed provoke, in a soldier, for the pleasure of forgiving it. It was a very simple matter to Miss Hofmann that she should be dressed in fresh crisp muslin, that her hands should be white and her attitudes felicitous; she had long since made her peace with these things. But to Mason, who was familiar only with books and men, they were objects of constant, half-dreamy contemplation. He would sit for half an hour at once, with a book on his knees and the pages unturned, scrutinizing with ingenious indirectness the simple mass of colors and contours which made up the physical personality of Miss Hofmann. There was no question as to her beauty, or as to its being a warm, sympathetic beauty, and not the cold perfection of poetry. She was the least bit taller than most women, and neither stout nor the reverse. Her hair was of a dark and lustrous brown, turning almost to black, and lending itself readily to those multitudinous ringlets which were then in fashion. Her forehead was broad, open, and serene; and her eyes of that deep and clear sea-green that you may observe of a summer's afternoon, when the declining sun shines through the rising of a wave. Her complexion was the color of perfect health. These, with her full, mild lips, her generous and flexible figure, her magnificent hands, were charms enough to occupy Mason's attention, and it was but seldom that he allowed it to be diverted. Mrs. Mason was frequently called away by her household cares, but Miss Hofmann's time was apparently quite her own. Nevertheless, it came into Ferdinand's head one day, that she gave him her company only from a sense of duty, and when, according to his wont, he had allowed this impression to ripen in his mind, he ventured to assure her that,

much as he valued her society, he should be sorry to believe that her gracious bestowal of it interfered with more profitable occupations. "I'm no companion," he said. "I don't pretend to be one. I sit here deaf and dumb, and blind and halt, patiently waiting to be healed,—waiting till this vagabond Nature of ours strolls my way, and brushes me with the hem of her garment."

"I find you very good company," Miss Hofmann replied on this occasion. "What do you take me for? The hero of a hundred fights, a young man who has been reduced to a shadow in the service of his country,—I should be very fastidious if I asked for anything better."

"O, if it's on theory!" said Mason. And, in spite of Miss Hofmann's protest, he continued to assume that it was on theory that he was not intolerable. But she remained true to her post, and with a sort of placid inveteracy which seemed to the young man to betray either a great deal of indifference or a great deal of self-command. "She thinks I'm stupid," he said to himself. "Of course she thinks I'm stupid. How should she think otherwise? She and her aunt have talked me over. Mrs. Mason has enumerated my virtues, and Miss Hofmann has added them up: total, a well-meaning bore. She has armed herself with patience. I must say it becomes her very well." Nothing was more natural, however, than that Mason should exaggerate the effect of his social incapacity. His remarks were desultory, but not infrequent; often trivial, but always good-humored and informal. The intervals of silence, indeed, which enlivened his conversation with Miss Hofmann, might easily have been taken for the confident pauses in the talk of old friends.

Once in a while Miss Hofmann would sit down at the piano and play to him. The veranda communicated with the little sitting-room by means of a long window, one side of which stood open. Mason would move his chair to this aperture, so that he might see the music as well as hear it. Seated at the instrument, at the farther end of the half-darkened room, with her figure in half-profile, and her features, her movements, the color of her dress, but half defined in the cool obscurity, Miss Hofmann would discourse infinite melody. Mason's eyes rested awhile on the vague white folds of her dress, on the heavy convolutions of her hair, and the gentle movement of her head in sympathy with the music. Then a single glance in the other direction revealed another picture,—the dazzling midday sky, the close-cropped lawn, lying almost black in its light, and the patient, round-backed gardener, in white shirt-sleeves, clipping the hedge or rolling the gravel. One morning, what with the music, the light, the heat, and the fragrance of the flowers,—from the perfect equilibrium of his senses, as it were,—Mason manfully went to sleep. On waking he found that he had slept an hour, and that the sun had invaded the veranda. The music had ceased; but on looking into the parlor he saw Miss Hofmann still at the piano. A gentleman was leaning on the instrument with his back toward the window, intercepting her face. Mason sat for some moments, hardly sensible, at first, of his transition to consciousness, languidly guessing at her companion's identity. In a short time his observation was quickened by the fact that the picture before him was animated by no sound of voices. The silence was unnatural, or, at the least, disagreeable. Mason moved his chair, and the gentleman looked round. The gentleman was Horace Knight. The Doctor called out, "Good morning!" from his place, and finished his conversation with Miss Hofmann before coming out to his patient. When he moved away from the piano, Mason saw the reason of his friends' silence. Miss Hofmann had been trying to decipher a difficult piece of music, the Doctor had been trying to assist her, and they had both been brought to a stop.

"What a clever fellow he is!" thought Mason. "There he stands, rattling off musical terms as if he had never thought of anything else. And yet, when he talks medicine, it's impossible to talk more to the point." Mason continued to be very well satisfied with Knight's intelligence

of his case, and with his treatment of it. He had been in the country now for three weeks, and he would hesitate, indeed, to affirm that he felt materially better; but he felt more comfortable. There were moments when he feared to push the inquiry as to his real improvement, because he had a sickening apprehension that he would discover that in one or two important particulars he was worse. In the course of time he imparted these fears to his physician. "But I may be mistaken," he added, "and for this reason. During the last fortnight I have become much more sensible of my condition than while I was in town. I then accepted each additional symptom as a matter of course. The more the better, I thought. But now I expect them to give an account of themselves. Now I have a positive wish to recover."

Dr. Knight looked at his patient for a moment curiously. "You are right," he said; "a little impatience is a very good thing."

"O, I'm not impatient. I'm patient to a most ridiculous extent. I allow myself a good six months, at the very least."

"That is certainly not unreasonable," said Knight. "And will you allow me a question? Do you intend to spend those six months in this place?"

"I'm unable to answer you. I suppose I shall finish the summer here, unless the summer finishes me. Mrs. Mason will hear of nothing else. In September I hope to be well enough to go back to town, even if I'm not well enough to think of work. What do you advise?"

"I advise you to put away all thoughts of work. That is imperative. Haven't you been at work all your life long? Can't you spare a pitiful little twelve-month to health and idleness and pleasure?"

"Ah, pleasure, pleasure!" said Mason, ironically.

"Yes, pleasure," said the Doctor. "What has she done to you that you should speak of her in that manner?"

"O, she bothers me," said Mason.

"You are very fastidious. It's better to be bothered by pleasure than by pain."

"I don't deny it. But there is a way of being indifferent to pain. I don't mean to say that I have found it out, but in the course of my illness I have caught a glimpse of it. But it's beyond my strength to be indifferent to pleasure. In two words, I'm afraid of dying of kindness."

"O, nonsense!"

"Yes, it's nonsense; and yet it's not. There would be nothing miraculous in my not getting well."

"It will be your fault if you don't. It will prove that you're fonder of sickness than health, and that you're not fit company for sensible mortals. Shall I tell you?" continued the Doctor, after a moment's hesitation. "When I knew you in the army, I always found you a step beyond my comprehension. You took things too hard. You had scruples and doubts about everything. And on top of it all you were devoured with the mania of appearing to take things easily and to be perfectly indifferent. You played your part very well, but you must do me the justice to confess that it *was* a part."

"I hardly know whether that's a compliment or an impertinence. I hope, at least, that you don't mean to accuse me of playing a part at the present moment."

"On the contrary. I'm your physician; you're frank."

"It's not because you're my physician that I'm frank," said Mason. "I shouldn't think of burdening you in that capacity with my miserable caprices and fancies;" and Ferdinand paused a moment. "You're a man!" he pursued, laying his hand on his companion's arm. "There's nothing here but women, Heaven reward them! I'm saturated with whispers and perfumes and smiles, and the rustling of dresses. It takes a man to understand a man."

"It takes more than a man to understand you, my dear Mason," said Knight, with a kindly smile. "But I listen."

Mason remained silent, leaning back in his chair, with his eyes wandering slowly over the wide patch of sky disclosed by the window, and his hands languidly folded on his knees. The Doctor examined him with a look half amused, half perplexed. But at last his face grew quite sober, and he contracted his brow. He placed his hand on Mason's arm and shook it gently, while Ferdinand met his gaze. The Doctor frowned, and, as he did so, his companion's mouth expanded into a placid smile. "If you don't get well," said Knight,— "if you don't get well—" and he paused.

"What will be the consequences?" asked Ferdinand, still smiling.

"I shall hate you," said Knight, half smiling, too.

Mason broke into a laugh. "What shall I care for that?"

"I shall tell people that you were a poor, spiritless fellow,—that you are no loss."

"I give you leave," said Ferdinand.

The Doctor got up. "I don't like obstinate patients," he said.

Ferdinand burst into a long, loud laugh, which ended in a fit of coughing.

"I'm getting too amusing," said Knight; "I must go."

"Nay, laugh and grow fat," cried Ferdinand. "I promise to get well." But that evening, at least, he was no better, as it turned out, for his momentary exhilaration. Before turning in for the night, he went into the drawing-room to spend half an hour with the ladies. The room was empty, but the lamp was lighted, and he sat down by the table and read a chapter in a novel. He felt excited, light-headed, light-hearted, half-intoxicated, as if he had been drinking strong coffee. He put down his book, and went over to the mantelpiece, above which hung a mirror, and looked at the reflection of his face. For almost the first time in his life he examined his features, and wondered if he were good-looking. He was able to conclude only that he looked very thin and pale, and utterly unfit for the business of life. At last he heard an opening of doors overhead, and a rustling of voluminous skirts on the stairs. Mrs. Mason came in, fresh from the hands of her maid, and dressed for a party.

"And is Miss Hofmann going?" asked Mason. He felt that his heart was beating, and that he hoped Mrs. Mason would say no. His momentary sense of strength, the mellow lamp-light, the open piano, and the absence, of the excellent woman before him, struck him as so many reasons for her remaining at home. But the sound of the young lady's descent upon the stairs was an affirmative to his question. She forthwith appeared upon the threshold, dressed in crape of a kind of violent blue, with desultory clusters of white roses. For some ten minutes Mason had the pleasure of being witness of that series of pretty movements and preparations with which women in full dress beguile the interval before their carriage is announced; their glances at the mirror, their slow assumption of their gloves, their mutual revisions and felicitations.

"Isn't she lovely?" said Miss Hofmann to the young man, nodding at her aunt, who looked every inch the handsome woman that she was.

"Lovely, lovely, lovely!" said Ferdinand, so emphatically, that Miss Hofmann transferred her glance to him; while Mrs. Mason good-humoredly turned her back, and Caroline saw that Mason was engaged in a survey of her own person.

Miss Hofmann smiled discreetly. "I wish very much you might come," she said.

"I shall go to bed," answered Ferdinand, simply.

"Well, that's much better. We shall go to bed at two o'clock. Meanwhile I shall caper about the rooms to the sound of a piano and fiddle, and Aunt Maria will sit against the wall with her toes tucked under a chair. Such is life!"

"You'll dance then," said Mason.

"I shall dance. Dr. Knight has invited me."

"Does he dance well, Caroline?" asked Mrs. Mason.

"That remains to be seen. I have a strong impression that he does not."

"Why?" asked Ferdinand.

"He does so many other things well."

"That's no reason," said Mrs. Mason. "Do you dance, Ferdinand?"

Ferdinand shook his head.

"I like a man to dance," said Caroline, "and yet I like him not to dance."

"That's a very womanish speech, my dear," said Mrs. Mason.

"I suppose it is. It's inspired by my white gloves and my low dress, and my roses. When once a woman gets on such things, Colonel Mason, expect nothing but nonsense.—Aunt Maria," the young lady continued, "will you button my glove?"

"Let me do it," said Ferdinand. "Your aunt has her gloves on."

"Thank you." And Miss Hofmann extended a long, white arm, and drew back with her other hand the bracelet from her wrist. Her glove had three buttons, and Mason performed the operation with great deliberation and neatness.

"And now," said he, gravely, "I hear the carriage. You want me to put on your shawl."

"If you please,"—Miss Hofmann passed her full white drapery into his hands, and then turned about her fair shoulders. Mason solemnly covered them, while the waiting-maid, who had come in, performed the same service for the elder lady.

"Good by," said the latter, giving him her hand. "You're not to come out into the air." And Mrs. Mason, attended by her maid, transferred herself to the carriage. Miss Hofmann gathered up her loveliness, and prepared to follow. Ferdinand stood leaning against the parlor door, watching her; and as she rustled past him she nodded farewell with a silent smile. A characteristic smile, Mason thought it,—a smile in which there was no expectation of triumph and no affectation of reluctance, but just the faintest suggestion of perfectly good-humored resignation. Mason went to the window and saw the carriage roll away with its lighted lamps, and then stood looking out into the darkness. The sky was cloudy. As he turned away the maid-servant came in, and took from the table a pair of rejected gloves. "I hope you're feeling better, sir," she said, politely.

"Thank you, I think I am."

"It's a pity you couldn't have gone with the ladies."

"I'm not well enough yet to think of such things," said Mason, trying to smile. But as he walked across the floor he felt himself attacked by a sudden sensation, which cannot be better described than as a general collapse. He felt dizzy, faint, and sick. His head swam and his knees trembled. "I'm ill," he said, sitting down on the sofa; "you must call William."

William speedily arrived, and conducted the young man to his room. "What on earth had you been doing, sir?" asked this most irreproachable of serving-men, as he helped him to undress.

Ferdinand was silent a moment. "I had been putting on Miss Hofmann's shawl," he said.

"Is that all, sir?"

"And I had been buttoning her glove."

"Well, sir, you must be very prudent."

"So it appears," said Ferdinand.

He slept soundly, however, and the next morning was the better for it. "I'm certainly better," he said to himself, as he slowly proceeded to his toilet. "A month ago such an attack as that of last evening would have effectually banished sleep. Courage, then. The Devil isn't dead, but he's dying."

In the afternoon he received a visit from Horace Knight. "So you danced last evening at Mrs. Bradshaw's," he said to his friend.

"Yes, I danced. It's a great piece of frivolity for a man in my position; but I thought there would be no harm in doing it just once, to show them I know how. My abstinence in future will tell the better. Your ladies were there. I danced with Miss Hofmann. She was dressed in blue, and she was the most beautiful woman in the room. Every one was talking about it."

"I saw her," said Mason, "before she went off."

"You should have seen her there," said Knight. "The music, the excitement, the spectators, and all that, bring out a woman's beauty."

"So I suppose," said Ferdinand.

"What strikes me," pursued the Doctor, "is her—what shall I call it?—her vitality, her quiet buoyancy. Of course, you didn't see her when she came home? If you had, you would have noticed, unless I'm very much mistaken, that she was as fresh and elastic at two o'clock as she had been at ten. While all the other women looked tired and jaded and used up, she alone showed no signs of exhaustion. She was neither pale nor flushed, but still light-footed, rosy, and erect. She's solid. You see I can't help looking at such things as a physician. She has a magnificent organization. Among all those other poor girls she seemed to have something of the inviolable strength of a goddess;" and Knight smiled frankly as he entered the region of eloquence. "She wears her artificial roses and dew-drops as if she had gathered them on the mountain-tops, instead of buying them in Broadway. She moves with long steps, her dress rustles, and to a man of fancy it's the sound of Diana on the forest-leaves."

Ferdinand nodded assent. "So you're a man of fancy," he said.

"Of course I am," said the Doctor.

Ferdinand was not inclined to question his friend's estimate of Miss Hofmann, nor to weigh his words. They only served to confirm an impression which was already strong in his own

mind. Day by day he had felt the growth of this impression. "He must be a strong man who would approach her," he said to himself. "He must be as vigorous and elastic as she herself, or in the progress of courtship she will leave him far behind. He must be able to forget his lungs and his liver and his digestion. To have broken down in his country's defence, even, will avail him nothing. What is that to her? She needs a man who has defended his country without breaking down,—a being complete, intact, well seasoned, invulnerable. Then,—then," thought Ferdinand, "perhaps she will consider him. Perhaps it will be to refuse him. Perhaps, like Diana, to whom Knight compares her, she is meant to live alone. It's certain, at least, that she is able to wait. She will be young at forty-five. Women who are young at forty-five are perhaps not the most interesting women. They are likely to have felt for nobody and for nothing. But it's often less their own fault than that of the men and women about them. This one at least can feel; the thing is to move her. Her soul is an instrument of a hundred strings, only it takes a strong hand to draw sound. Once really touched, they will reverberate for ever and ever."

In fine, Mason was in love. It will be seen that his passion was not arrogant nor uncompromising; but, on the contrary, patient, discreet, and modest,—almost timid. For ten long days, the most memorable days of his life,—days which, if he had kept a journal, would have been left blank,—he held his tongue. He would have suffered anything rather than reveal his emotions, or allow them to come accidentally to Miss Hofmann's knowledge. He would cherish them in silence until he should feel in all his sinews that he was himself again, and then he would open his heart. Meanwhile he would be patient; he would be the most irreproachable, the most austere, the most insignificant of convalescents. He was as yet unfit to touch her, to look at her, to speak to her. A man was not to go a wooing in his dressing-gown and slippers.

There came a day, however, when, in spite of his high resolves, Ferdinand came near losing his balance. Mrs. Mason had arranged with him to drive in the phaeton after dinner. But it befell that, an hour before the appointed time, she was sent for by a neighbor who had been taken ill.

"But it's out of the question that you should lose your drive," said Miss Hofmann, who brought him her aunt's apologies. "If you are still disposed to go, I shall be happy to take the reins. I shall not be as good company as Aunt Maria, but perhaps I shall be as good company as Thomas." It was settled, accordingly, that Miss Hofmann should act as her aunt's substitute, and at five o'clock the phaeton left the door. The first half of their drive was passed in silence; and almost the first words they exchanged were as they finally drew near to a space of enclosed ground, beyond which, through the trees at its farther extremity, they caught a glimpse of a turn in the river. Miss Hofmann involuntarily pulled up. The sun had sunk low, and the cloudless western sky glowed with rosy yellow. The trees which concealed the view flung over the grass a great screen of shadow, which reached out into the road. Between their scattered stems gleamed the broad, white current of the Hudson. Our friends both knew the spot. Mason had seen it from a boat, when one morning a gentleman in the neighborhood, thinking to do him a kindness, had invited him to take a short sail; and with Miss Hofmann it had long been a frequent resort.

"How beautiful!" she said, as the phaeton stopped.

"Yes, if it wasn't for those trees," said Ferdinand. "They conceal the best part of the view."

"I should rather say they indicate it," answered his companion. "From here they conceal it; but they suggest to you to make your way in, and lose yourself behind them, and enjoy the prospect in privacy."

"But you can't take a vehicle in."

"No: there is only a footpath, although I have ridden in. One of these days, when you're stronger, you must drive to this point, and get out, and walk over to the bank."

Mason was silent a moment,—a moment during which he felt in his limbs the tremor of a bold resolution. "I noticed the place the day I went out on the water with Mr. McCarthy. I immediately marked it as my own. The bank is quite high, and the trees make a little amphitheatre on its summit. I think there's a bench."

"Yes, there are two benches," said Caroline.

"Suppose, then, we try it now," said Mason, with an effort.

"But you can never walk over that meadow. You see it's broken ground. And, at all events, I can't consent to your going alone."

"That, madam," said Ferdinand, rising to his feet in the phaeton, "is a piece of folly I should never think of proposing. Yonder is a house, and in it there are people. Can't we drive thither, and place the horse in their custody?"

"Nothing is more easy, if you insist upon it. The house is occupied by a German family with a couple of children, who are old friends of mine. When I come here on horseback they always clamor for 'coppers.' From their little garden the walk is shorter."

So Miss Hofmann turned the horse toward the cottage, which stood at the head of a lane, a few yards from the road. A little boy and girl, with bare heads and bare feet,—the former members very white and the latter very black,—came out to meet her. Caroline greeted them good-humoredly in German. The girl, who was the elder, consented to watch the horse, while the boy volunteered to show the visitors the shortest way to the river. Mason reached the point in question without great fatigue, and found a prospect which would have repaid even greater trouble. To the right and to the left, a hundred feet below them, stretched the broad channel of the seaward-shifting waters. In the distance rose the gentle masses of the Catskills with all the intervening region vague and neutral in the gathering twilight. A faint odor of coolness came up to their faces from the stream below.

"You can sit down," said the little boy, doing the honors.

"Yes, Colonel, sit down," said Caroline. "You've already been on your feet too much."

Ferdinand obediently seated himself, unable to deny that he was glad to do so. Miss Hofmann released from her grasp the skirts which she had gathered up in her passage from the phaeton, and strolled to the edge of the cliff, where she stood for some moments talking with her little guide. Mason could only hear that she was speaking German. After the lapse of a few moments Miss Hofmann turned back, still talking—or rather listening—to the child.

"He's very pretty," she said in French, as she stopped before Ferdinand.

Mason broke into a laugh. "To think," said he, "that that little youngster should forbid us the use of two languages! Do you speak French, my child?"

"No," said the boy, sturdily, "I speak German."

"Ah, there I can't follow you!"

The child stared a moment, and then replied, with pardonable irrelevancy, "I'll show you the way down to the water."

"There I can't follow you either. I hope you'll not go, Miss Hofmann," added the young man, observing a movement on Caroline's part.

"Is it hard?" she asked of the child.

"No, it's easy."

"Will I tear my dress?"

The child shook his head; and Caroline descended the bank under his guidance.

As some moments elapsed before she reappeared, Ferdinand ventured to the edge of the cliff, and looked down. She was sitting on a rock on the narrow margin of sand, with her hat in her lap, twisting the feather in her fingers. In a few moments it seemed to Ferdinand that he caught the tones of her voice, wafted upward as if she were gently singing. He listened intently, and at last succeeded in distinguishing several words; they were German. "Confound her German!" thought the young man. Suddenly Miss Hofmann rose from her seat, and, after a short interval, reappeared on the platform. "What did you find down there?" asked Ferdinand, almost savagely.

"Nothing,—a little strip of a beach and a pile of stones."

"You *have* torn your dress," said Mason.

Miss Hofmann surveyed her drapery. "Where, if you please?"

"There, in front." And Mason extended his walking-stick, and inserted it into the injured fold of muslin. There was a certain graceless *brusquerie* in the movement which attracted Miss Hofmann's attention. She looked at her companion, and, seeing that his face was discomposed, fancied that he was annoyed at having been compelled to wait.

"Thank you," she said; "it's easily mended. And now suppose we go back."

"No, not yet," said Ferdinand. "We have plenty of time."

"Plenty of time to catch cold," said Miss Hofmann, kindly.

Mason had planted his stick where he had let it fall on withdrawing it from contact with his companion's skirts, and stood leaning against it, with his eyes on the young girl's face. "What if I do catch cold?" he asked abruptly.

"Come, don't talk nonsense," said Miss Hofmann.

"I never was more serious in my life." And, pausing a moment, he drew a couple of steps nearer. She had gathered her shawl closely about her, and stood with her arms lost in it, holding her elbows. "I don't mean that quite literally," Mason continued. "I wish to get well, on the whole. But there are moments when this perpetual self-coddling seems beneath the dignity of man, and I'm tempted to purchase one short hour of enjoyment, of happiness, at the cost—well, at the cost of my life if necessary!"

This was a franker speech than Ferdinand had yet made; the reader may estimate his habitual reserve. Miss Hofmann must have been somewhat surprised, and even slightly puzzled. But it was plain that he expected a rejoinder.

"I don't know what temptation you may have had," she answered, smiling; "but I confess that I can think of none in your present circumstances likely to involve the great sacrifice you speak of. What you say, Colonel Mason, is half——"

"Half what?"

"Half ungrateful. Aunt Maria flatters herself that she has made existence as easy and as peaceful for you—as stupid, if you like—as it can possibly be for a—*a* clever man. And now, after all, to accuse her of introducing temptations."

"Your aunt Maria is the best of women, Miss Hofmann," said Mason. "But I'm not a clever man. I'm deplorably weak-minded. Very little things excite me. Very small pleasures are gigantic temptations. I would give a great deal, for instance, to stay here with you for half an hour."

It is a delicate question whether Miss Hofmann now ceased to be perplexed; whether she discerned in the young man's accents—it was his tone, his attitude, his eyes that were fully significant, rather than his words—an intimation of that sublime and simple truth in the presence of which a wise woman puts off coquetry and prudery, and stands invested with perfect charity. But charity is nothing if not discreet; and Miss Hofmann may very well have effected the little transaction I speak of, and yet have remained, as she did remain, gracefully wrapped in her shawl, with the same serious smile on her face. Ferdinand's heart was thumping under his waistcoat; the words in which he might tell her that he loved her were fluttering there like frightened birds in a storm-shaken cage. Whether his lips would form them or not depended on the next words she uttered. On the faintest sign of defiance or of impatience he would really give her something to coquet withal. I repeat that I do not undertake to follow Miss Hofmann's feelings; I only know that her words were those of a woman of great instincts. "My dear Colonel Mason," she said, "I wish we might remain here the whole evening. The moments are quite too pleasant to be wantonly sacrificed. I simply put you on your conscience. If you believe that you can safely do so,—that you'll not have some dreadful chill in consequence,—let us by all means stay awhile. If you do not so believe, let us go back to the carriage. There is no good reason, that I see, for our behaving like children."

If Miss Hofmann apprehended a scene,—I do not assert that she did,—she was saved. Mason extracted from her words a delicate assurance that he could afford to wait. "You're an angel, Miss Hofmann," he said, as a sign that this kindly assurance had been taken. "I think we had better go back."

Miss Hofmann accordingly led the way along: the path, and Ferdinand slowly followed. A man who has submitted to a woman's wisdom generally feels bound to persuade himself that he has surrendered at discretion. I suppose it was in this spirit that Mason said to himself as he walked along, "Well, I got what I wanted."

The next morning he was again an invalid. He woke up with symptoms which as yet he had scarcely felt at all; and he was obliged to acknowledge the bitter truth that, small as it was, his adventure had exceeded his strength. The walk, the evening air, the dampness of the spot, had combined to produce a violent attack of fever. As soon as it became plain that, in vulgar terms, he was "in for it," he took his heart in his hands and succumbed. As his condition grew worse, he was fortunately relieved from the custody of this valuable organ, with all it contained of hopes delayed and broken projects, by several intervals of prolonged unconsciousness.

For three weeks he was a very sick man. For a couple of days his recovery was doubted of. Mrs. Mason attended him with inexhaustible patience and with the solicitude of real affection. She was resolved that greedy Death should not possess himself, through any fault of hers, of a career so full of bright possibilities and of that active gratitude which a good-natured elderly woman would relish, as she felt that of her *protégé* to be. Her vigils were finally rewarded. One fine morning poor, long-silent Ferdinand found words to tell her that he was better. His recovery was very slow, however, and it ceased several degrees below the level from which he had originally fallen. He was thus twice a convalescent,—a sufficiently miserable fellow. He professed to be very much surprised to find himself still among the living. He remained silent and grave, with a newly contracted fold in his forehead, like a man

honestly perplexed at the vagaries of destiny. "It must be," he said to Mrs. Mason,— "it must be that I am reserved for great things."

In order to insure absolute quiet in the house, Ferdinand learned Miss Hofmann had removed herself to the house of a friend, at a distance of some five miles. On the first day that the young man was well enough to sit in his arm-chair Mrs. Mason spoke of her niece's return, which was fixed for the morrow. "She will want very much to see you," she said. "When she comes, may I bring her into your room?"

"Good heavens, no!" said Ferdinand, to whom the idea was very disagreeable. He met her accordingly at dinner, three days later. He left his room at the dinner hour, in company with Dr. Knight, who was taking his departure. In the hall they encountered Mrs. Mason, who invited the Doctor to remain, in honor of his patient's reappearance in society. The Doctor hesitated a moment, and, as he did so, Ferdinand heard Miss Hofmann's step descending the stair. He turned towards her just in time to catch on her face the vanishing of a glance of intelligence. As Mrs. Mason's back was against the staircase, her glance was evidently meant for Knight. He excused himself on the plea of an engagement, to Mason's regret, while the latter greeted the younger lady. Mrs. Mason proposed another day,—the following Sunday; the Doctor assented, and it was not till some time later that Ferdinand found himself wondering why Miss Hofmann should have forbidden him to remain. He rapidly perceived that during the period of their separation this young lady had lost none of her charms; on the contrary, they were more irresistible than ever. It seemed to Mason, moreover, that they were bound together by a certain pensive gentleness, a tender, submissive look, which he had hitherto failed to observe. Mrs. Mason's own remarks assured him that he was not the victim of an illusion.

"I wonder what is the matter with Caroline," she said. "If it were not that she tells me that she never was better, I should believe she is feeling unwell. I've never seen her so simple and gentle. She looks like a person who has a great fright,—a fright not altogether unpleasant."

"She has been staying in a house full of people," said Mason. "She has been excited, and amused, and preoccupied; she returns to you and me (excuse the juxtaposition,—it exists)—a kind of reaction asserts itself." Ferdinand's explanation was ingenious rather than plausible.

Mrs. Mason had a better one. "I have an impression," she said, "George Stapleton, the second of the sons, is an old admirer of Caroline's. It's hard to believe that he could have been in the house with her for a fortnight without renewing his suit, in some form or other."

Ferdinand was not made uneasy, for he had seen and talked with Mr. George Stapleton,—a young man, very good-looking, very good-natured, very clever, very rich, and very unworthy, as he conceived, of Miss Hofmann. "You don't mean to say that your niece has listened to him," he answered, calmly enough.

"Listened, yes. He has made himself agreeable, and he has succeeded in making an impression,—a temporary impression," added Mrs. Mason with a business-like air.

"I can't believe it," said Ferdinand.

"Why not? He's a very nice fellow."

"Yes,—yes," said Mason, "very nice, indeed. He's very rich, too." And here the talk was interrupted by Caroline's entrance.

On Sunday the two ladies went to church. It was not till after they had gone that Ferdinand left his room. He came into the little parlor, took up a book, and felt something of the stir of his old intellectual life. Would he ever again know what it was to work? In the course of an

hour the ladies came in, radiant with devotional millinery. Mrs. Mason soon went out again, leaving the others together. Miss Hofmann asked Ferdinand what he had been reading; and he was thus led to declare that he really believed he should, after all, get the use of his head again. She listened with all the respect which an intelligent woman who leads an idle life necessarily feels for a clever man when he consents to make her in some degree the confidant of his intellectual purposes. Quickened by her delicious sympathy, her grave attention, and her intelligent questions, he was led to unbosom himself of several of his dearest convictions and projects. It was easy that from this point the conversation should advance to matters of belief and hope in general. Before he knew it, it had done so; and he had thus the great satisfaction of discussing with the woman on whom of all others his selfish and personal happiness was most dependent those great themes in whose expansive magnitude persons and pleasures and passions are absorbed and extinguished, and in whose austere effulgence the brightest divinities of earth remit their shining. Serious passions are a good preparation for the highest kinds of speculation. Although Ferdinand was urging no suit whatever upon his companion, and consciously, at least, making use in no degree of the emotion which accompanied her presence, it is certain that, as they formed themselves, his conceptions were the clearer for being the conceptions of a man in love. And, as for Miss Hofmann, her attention could not, to all appearances, have been more lively, nor her perception more delicate, if the atmosphere of her own intellect had been purified by the sacred fires of a responsive passion.

Knight duly made his appearance at dinner, and proved himself once more the entertaining gentleman whom our friends had long since learned to appreciate. But Mason, fresh from his contest with morals and metaphysics, was forcibly struck with the fact that he was one of those men from whom these sturdy beggars receive more kicks than half-pence. He was nevertheless obliged to admit, that, if he was not a man of principles, he was thoroughly a man of honor. After dinner the company adjourned to the piazza, where, in the course of half an hour, the Doctor proposed to Miss Hofmann to take a turn in the grounds. All around the lawn there wound a narrow footpath, concealed from view in spots by clusters of shrubbery. Ferdinand and his hostess sat watching their retreating figures as they slowly measured the sinuous strip of gravel; Miss Hofmann's light dress and the Doctor's white waistcoat gleaming at intervals through the dark verdure. At the end of twenty minutes they returned to the house. The doctor came back only to make his bow and to take his departure; and, when he had gone, Miss Hofmann retired to her own room. The next morning she mounted her horse, and rode over to see the friend with whom she had stayed during Mason's fever. Ferdinand saw her pass his window, erect in the saddle, with her horse scattering the gravel with his nervous steps. Shortly afterwards Mrs. Mason came into the room, sat down by the young man, made her habitual inquiries as to his condition, and then paused in such a way as that he instantly felt that she had something to tell him. "You've something to tell me," he said; "what is it?"

Mrs. Mason blushed a little, and laughed. "I was first made to promise to keep it a secret," she said. "If I'm so transparent now that I have leave to tell it, what should I be if I hadn't? Guess." Ferdinand shook his head peremptorily. "I give it up."

"Caroline is engaged."

"To whom?"

"Not to Mr. Stapleton,—to Dr. Knight."

Ferdinand was silent a moment; but he neither changed color nor dropped his eyes. Then, at last, "Did she wish you not to tell me?" he asked.

"She wished me to tell no one. But I prevailed upon her to let me tell *you*."

"Thank you," said Ferdinand with a little bow—and an immense irony.

"It's a great surprise," continued Mrs. Mason. "I never suspected it. And there I was talking about Mr. Stapleton! I don't see how they have managed it. Well, I suppose it's for the best. But it seems odd that Caroline should have refused so many superior offers, to put up at last with Dr. Knight."

Ferdinand had felt for an instant as if the power of speech was deserting him; but volition nailed it down with a great muffled hammer-blow.

"She might do worse," he said mechanically.

Mrs. Mason glanced at him as if struck by the sound of his voice. "You're not surprised, then?"

"I hardly know. I never fancied there was anything between them, and yet, now that I look back, there has been nothing against it. They have talked of each other neither too much nor too little. Upon my soul, they're an accomplished couple!" Glancing back at his friend's constant reserve and self-possession, Ferdinand—strange as it may seem—could not repress a certain impulse of sympathetic admiration. He had had no vulgar rival. "Yes," he repeated gravely, "she might do worse."

"I suppose she might. He's poor, but he's clever; and I'm sure I hope to Heaven he loves her!"

Ferdinand said nothing.

"May I ask," he resumed at length, "whether they became engaged yesterday, on that walk around the lawn?"

"No; it would be fine if they had, under our very noses! It was all done while Caroline was at the Stapletons'. It was agreed between them yesterday that she should tell me at once."

"And when are they to be married?"

"In September, if possible. Caroline told me to tell you that she counts upon your staying for the wedding."

"Staying where?" asked Mason, with a little nervous laugh.

"Staying here, of course,—in the house."

Ferdinand looked his hostess full in the eyes, taking her hand as he did so. "The funeral baked meats did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables."

"Ah, hold your tongue!" cried Mrs. Mason, pressing his hand. "How can you be so horrible? When Caroline leaves me, Ferdinand, I shall be quite alone. The tie which binds us together will be very much slackened by her marriage. I can't help thinking that it was never very close, when I consider that I've had no part in the most important step of her life. I don't complain. I suppose it's natural enough. Perhaps it's the fashion,—come in with striped petticoats and pea-jackets. Only it makes me feel like an old woman. It removes me twenty years at a bound from my own engagement, and the day I burst out crying on my mother's neck because your uncle had told a young girl I knew, that he thought I had beautiful eyes. Now-a-days I suppose they tell the young ladies themselves, and have them cry on their own necks. It's a great saving of time. But I shall miss Caroline all the same; and then, Ferdinand, I shall make a great deal of you."

"The more the better," said Ferdinand, with the same laugh; and at this moment Mrs. Mason was called away.

Ferdinand had not been a soldier for nothing. He had received a heavy blow, and he resolved to bear it like a man. He refused to allow himself a single moment of self-compassion. On the contrary, he spared himself none of the hard names offered by his passionate vocabulary. For not guessing Caroline's secret, he was perhaps excusable. Women were all inscrutable, and this one especially so. But Knight was a man like himself,—a man whom he esteemed, but whom he was loath to credit with a deeper and more noiseless current of feeling than his own, for his own was no babbling brook, betraying its course through green leaves. Knight had loved modestly and decently, but frankly and heartily, like a man who was not ashamed of what he was doing, and if he had not found it out it was his own fault. What else had he to do? He had been a besotted day-dreamer, while his friend had simply been a genuine lover. He deserved his injury, and he would bear it in silence. He had been unable to get well on an illusion; he would now try getting well on a truth. This was stern treatment, the reader will admit, likely to kill if it didn't cure.

Miss Hofmann was absent for several hours. At dinner-time she had not returned, and Mrs. Mason and the young man accordingly sat down without her. After dinner Ferdinand went into the little parlor, quite indifferent as to how soon he met her. Seeing or not seeing her, time hung equally heavy. Shortly after her companions had risen from table, she rode up to the door, dismounted, tired and hungry, passed directly into the dining-room, and sat down to eat in her habit. In half an hour she came out, and, crossing the hall on her way upstairs, saw Mason in the parlor. She turned round, and, gathering up her long skirts with one hand, while she held a little sweet-cake to her lips with the other, stopped at the door to bid him good day. He left his chair, and went towards her. Her face wore a somewhat weary smile.

"So you're going to be married," he began abruptly.

Miss Hofmann assented with a slight movement of her head.

"I congratulate you. Excuse me if I don't do it with the best grace. I feel all I dare to feel."

"Don't be afraid," said Caroline, smiling, and taking a bite from her cake.

"I'm not sure that it's not more unexpected than even such things have a right to be. There's no doubt about it."

"None whatever."

"Well, Knight's a very good fellow. I haven't seen him yet," he pursued, as Caroline was silent. "I don't know that I'm in any hurry to see him. But I mean to talk to him. I mean to tell him that if he doesn't do his duty by you, I shall——"

"Well?"

"I shall remind him of it."

"O, I shall do that," said Miss Hofmann.

Ferdinand looked at her gravely. "By Heaven! you know," he cried with intensity, "it must be either one thing or the other."

"I don't understand you."

"O, I understand myself. You're not a woman to be thrown away, Miss Hofmann."

Caroline made a gesture of impatience. "I don't understand you," she repeated. "You must excuse me. I'm very tired." And she went rapidly upstairs.

On the following day Ferdinand had an opportunity to make his compliments to the Doctor. "I don't congratulate you on doing it," he said, "so much as on the way you've done it."

"What do you know about the way?" asked Knight.

"Nothing whatever. That's just it. You took good care of that. And you're to be married in the autumn?"

"I hope so. Very quietly, I suppose. The Parson to do it, and Mrs. Mason and my mother and you to see it's done properly." And the Doctor put his hand on Ferdinand's shoulder.

"O, I'm the last person to choose," said Mason. "If he were to omit anything, I should take good care not to cry out." It is often said, that, next to great joy, no state of mind is so frolicsome as great distress. It was in virtue of this truth, I suppose, that Ferdinand was able to be facetious. He kept his spirits. He talked and smiled and lounged about with the same deferential languor as before. During the interval before the time appointed for the wedding it was agreed between the parties interested that Miss Hofmann should go over and spend a few days with her future mother-in-law, where she might partake more freely and privately than at home of the pleasure of her lover's company. She was absent a week; a week during which Ferdinand was thrown entirely upon his hostess for entertainment and diversion,—things he had a very keen sense of needing. There were moments when it seemed to him that he was living by mere force of will, and that, if he loosened the screws for a single instant, he would sink back upon his bed again, and never leave it. He had forbidden himself to think of Caroline, and had prescribed a course of meditation upon that other mistress, his first love, with whom he had long since exchanged pledges,—she of a hundred names,—work, letters, philosophy, fame. But, after Caroline had gone, it was supremely difficult not to think of her. Even in absence she was supremely conspicuous. The most that Ferdinand could do was to take refuge in books,—an immense number of which he now read, fiercely, passionately, voraciously,—in conversation with Mrs. Mason, and in such society as he found in his path. Mrs. Mason was a great gossip,—a gossip on a scale so magnificent as to transform the foible into a virtue. A gossip, moreover, of imagination, dealing with the future as well as the present and the past,—with a host of delightful half-possibilities, as well as with stale hyper-verities. With her, then, Ferdinand talked of his own future, into which she entered with the most outspoken and intelligent sympathy. "A man," he declared, "couldn't do better; and a man certainly would do worse." Mrs. Mason arranged a European tour and residence for her nephew, in the manner of one who knew her ground. Caroline once married, she herself would go abroad, and fix herself in one of the several capitals in which an American widow with an easy income may contrive to support existence. She would make her dwelling a base of supplies—a *pied à terre*—for Ferdinand, who should take his time to it, and visit every accessible spot in Europe and the East. She would leave him free to go and come as he pleased, and to live as he listed; and I may say that, thanks to Mrs. Mason's observation of Continental manners, this broad allowance covered in her view quite as much as it did in poor Ferdinand's, who had never been out of his own country. All that she would ask of him would be to show himself say twice a year in her drawing-room, and to tell her stories of what he had seen; that drawing-room which she already saw in her mind's eye,—a compact little *entresol* with tapestry hangings in the doorways and a coach-house in the court attached. Mrs. Mason was not a severe moralist; but she was quite too sensible a woman to wish to demoralize her nephew, and to persuade him to trifle with his future,—that future of which the war had already made light, in its own grim fashion. Nay, she loved him; she thought him the cleverest, the most promising, of young men. She looked to the day when his name would be on men's lips, and it would be a great piece of good fortune to have very innocently married his uncle. Herself a great observer of men and manners, she wished to give him advantages which had been sterile in her own case.

In the way of society, Ferdinand made calls with his hostess, went out twice to dine, and caused Mrs. Mason herself to entertain company at dinner. He presided on these occasions with distinguished good grace. It happened, moreover, that invitations had been out some days for a party at the Stapletons',—Miss Hofmann's friends,—and that, as there was to be no dancing, Ferdinand boldly announced his intention of going thither. "Who knows?" he said; "it may do me more good than harm. We can go late, and come away early." Mrs. Mason doubted of the wisdom of the act; but she finally assented, and prepared herself. It was late when they left home, and when they arrived the rooms—rooms of exceptional vastness—were at their fullest. Mason received on this his first appearance in society a most flattering welcome, and in a very few moments found himself in exclusive possession of Miss Edith Stapleton, Caroline's particular friend. This young lady has had no part in our story, because our story is perforce short, and condemned to pick and choose its constituent elements. With the least bit wider compass we might long since have whispered to the reader, that Miss Stapleton—who was a charming girl—had conceived a decided preference for our Ferdinand over all other men whomsoever. That Ferdinand was utterly ignorant of the circumstance is our excuse for passing it by; and we linger upon it, therefore, only long enough to suggest that the young girl must have been very happy at this particular moment.

"Is Miss Hofmann here?" Mason asked as he accompanied her into an adjoining room.

"Do you call that being here?" said Miss Stapleton, looking across the apartment. Mason, too, looked across.

There he beheld Miss Hofmann, full-robed in white, standing fronted by a semicircle of no less than five gentlemen,—all good-looking and splendid. Her head and shoulders rose serene from the *bouillonnement* of her beautiful dress, and she looked and listened with that half-abstracted air which is pardonable in a woman beset by half a dozen admirers. When Caroline's eyes fell upon her friend, she stared a moment, surprised, and then made him the most gracious bow in the world,—a bow so gracious that her little circle half divided itself to let it pass, and looked around to see where the deuce it was going. Taking advantage of this circumstance, Miss Hofmann advanced several steps. Ferdinand went towards her, and there, in sight of a hundred men and as many women, she gave him her hand, and smiled upon him with extraordinary sweetness. They went back together to Miss Stapleton, and Caroline made him sit down, she and her friend placing themselves on either side. For half an hour Ferdinand had the honor of engrossing the attention of the two most charming girls present,—and, thanks to this distinction, indeed the attention of the whole company. After which the two young ladies had him introduced successively to every maiden and matron in the assembly in the least remarkable for loveliness or wit. Ferdinand rose to the level of the occasion, and conducted himself with unprecedented gallantry. Upon others he made, of course, the best impression, but to himself he was an object almost of awe. I am compelled to add, however, that he was obliged to fortify himself with repeated draughts of wine; and that even with the aid of this artificial stimulant he was unable to conceal from Mrs. Mason and his physician that he was looking far too much like an invalid to be properly where he was.

"Was there ever anything like the avidity of these dreadful girls?" said Mrs. Mason to the Doctor. "They'll let a man swoon at their feet sooner than abridge a *tête-à-tête* that amuses them. Then they'll have up another. Look at little Miss McCarthy, yonder, with Ferdinand and George Stapleton before her. She's got them contradicting each other, and she looks like a Roman fast lady at the circus. What does she care so long as she makes her evening? They like a man to look as if he were going to die,—it's interesting."

Knight went over to his friend, and told him sternly that it was high time he should be at home and in bed. "You're looking horribly," he added shrewdly, as Ferdinand resisted.

"You're *not* looking horribly, Colonel Mason," said Miss McCarthy, a very audacious little person, overhearing this speech.

"It isn't a matter of taste, madam," said the Doctor, angrily; "it's a fact." And he led away his patient.

Ferdinand insisted that he had not hurt himself, that, on the contrary, he was feeling uncommonly well; but his face contradicted him. He continued for two or three days more to play at "feeling well," with a courage worthy of a better cause. Then at last he let disease have its way. He settled himself on his pillows, and fingered his watch, and began to wonder how many revolutions he would still witness of those exquisite little needles. The Doctor came, and gave him a sound rating for what he called his imprudence. Ferdinand heard him out patiently; and then assured him that prudence or imprudence had nothing to do with it; that death had taken fast hold of him, and that now his only concern was to make easy terms with his captor. In the course of the same day he sent for a lawyer and altered his will. He had no known relatives, and his modest patrimony stood bequeathed to a gentleman of his acquaintance who had no real need of it. He now divided it into two unequal portions, the smaller of which he devised to William Bowles, Mrs. Mason's man-servant and his personal attendant; and the larger—which represented a considerable sum—to Horace Knight. He informed Mrs. Mason of these arrangements, and was pleased to have her approval.

From this moment his strength began rapidly to ebb, and the shattered fragments of his long-resisting will floated down its shallow current into dissolution. It was useless to attempt to talk, to beguile the interval, to watch the signs, or to count the hours. A constant attendant was established at his side, and Mrs. Mason appeared only at infrequent moments. The poor woman felt that her heart was broken, and spent a great deal of time in weeping. Miss Hofmann remained, naturally, at Mrs. Knight's. "As far as I can judge," Horace had said, "it will be a matter of a week. But it's the most extraordinary case I ever heard of. The man was steadily getting well." On the fifth day he had driven Miss Hofmann home, at her suggestion that it was no more than decent that she should give the young man some little sign of sympathy. Horace went up to Ferdinand's bedside, and found the poor fellow in the languid middle condition between sleeping and waking in which he had passed the last forty-eight hours. "Colonel," he asked gently, "do you think you could see Caroline?"

For all answer, Ferdinand opened his eyes. Horace went out, and led his companion back into the darkened room. She came softly up to the bedside, stood looking down for a moment at the sick man, and then stooped over him.

"I thought I'd come and make you a little visit," she said. "Does it disturb you?"

"Not in the least," said Mason, looking her steadily in the eyes. "Not half as much as it would have done a week ago. Sit down."

"Thank you. Horace won't let me. I'll come again."

"You'll not have another chance," said Ferdinand. "I'm not good for more than two days yet. Tell them to go out. I wish to see you alone. I wouldn't have sent for you, but, now that you're here, I might as well take advantage of it."

"Have you anything particular to say?" asked Knight, kindly.

"O, come," said Mason, with a smile which he meant to be good-natured, but which was only ghastly; "you're not going to be jealous of me at this time of day."

Knight looked at Miss Hofmann for permission, and then left the room with the nurse. But a minute had hardly elapsed before Miss Hofmann hurried into the adjoining apartment, with her face pale and discomposed.

"Go to him!" she exclaimed. "He's dying!"

When they reached him he was dead.

In the course of a few days his will was opened, and Knight came to the knowledge of his legacy. "He was a good, generous fellow," he said to Mrs. Mason and Miss Hofmann, "and I shall never be satisfied that he mightn't have recovered. It was a most extraordinary case." He was considerate enough of his audience to abstain from adding that he would give a great deal to have been able to make an autopsy. Miss Hofmann's wedding was, of course, not deferred. She was married in September, "very quietly." It seemed to her lover, in the interval, that she was very silent and thoughtful. But this was natural under the circumstances.

The Romance of Certain Old Clothes

Toward the middle of the eighteenth century there lived in the Province of Massachusetts a widowed gentlewoman, the mother of three children. Her name is of little account: I shall take the liberty of calling her Mrs. Willoughby, a name, like her own, of a highly respectable sound. She had been left a widow after some six years of marriage, and had devoted herself to the care of her progeny. These young persons grew up in a manner to reward her zeal and to gratify her fondest hopes. The first born was a son, whom she had called Bernard, after his father. The others were daughters,—born at an interval of three years apart. Good looks were traditional in the family, and this youthful trio were not likely to allow the tradition to perish. The boy was of that fair and ruddy complexion and of that athletic mould which in those days (as in these) were the sign of genuine English blood,—a frank, affectionate young fellow, a deferential son, a patronizing brother, and a steadfast friend. Clever, however, he was not; the wit of the family had been apportioned chiefly to his sisters. Mr. Willoughby had been a great reader of Shakespeare, at a time when this pursuit implied more liberality of taste than at the present day, and in a community where it required much courage to patronize the drama even in the closet; and he had wished to record his admiration of the great poet by calling his daughters out of his favorite plays. Upon the elder he had bestowed the romantic name of Viola; and upon the younger, the more serious one of Perdita, in memory of a little girl born between them, who had lived but a few weeks.

When Bernard Willoughby came to his sixteenth year, his mother put a brave face upon it, and prepared to execute her husband's last request. This had been an earnest entreaty that, at the proper age, his son should be sent out to England, to complete his education at the University of Oxford, which had been the seat of his own studies. Mrs. Willoughby fancied that the lad's equal was not to be found in the two hemispheres, but she had the antique wifely submissiveness. She swallowed her sobs, and made up her boy's trunk and his simple provincial outfit, and sent him on his way across the seas. Bernard was entered at his father's college, and spent five years in England, without great honor, indeed, but with a vast deal of pleasure and no discredit. On leaving the University he made the journey to France. In his twenty-third year he took ship for home, prepared to find poor little New England (New England was very small in those days) an utterly intolerable place of abode. But there had been changes at home, as well as in Mr. Bernard's opinions. He found his mother's house quite habitable, and his sisters grown into two very charming young ladies, with all the accomplishments and graces of the young women of Britain, and a certain native-grown gentle *brusquerie* and wildness, which, if it was not an accomplishment, was certainly a grace the more. Bernard privately assured his mother that his sisters were fully a match for the most genteel young women in England; where upon poor Mrs. Willoughby, you may be sure, bade them hold up their heads. Such was Bernard's opinion, and such, in a tenfold higher degree, was the opinion of Mr. Arthur Lloyd. This gentleman, I hasten to add, was a college-mate of Mr. Bernard, a young man of reputable family, of a good person and a handsome inheritance; which latter appurtenance he proposed to invest in trade in this country. He and Bernard were warm friends; they had crossed the ocean together, and the young American had lost no time in presenting him at his mother's house, where he had made quite as good an impression as that which he had received, and of which I have just given a hint.

The two sisters were at this time in all the freshness of their youthful bloom; each wearing, of course, this natural brilliancy in the manner that became her best. They were equally dissimilar in appearance and character. Viola, the elder,—now in her twenty-second year,—

was tall and fair, with calm gray eyes and auburn tresses; a very faint likeness to the Viola of Shakespeare's comedy, whom I imagine as a brunette (if you will), but a slender, airy creature, full of the softest and finest emotions. Miss Willoughby, with her candid complexion, her fine arms, her majestic height, and her slow utterance, was not cut out for adventures. She would never have put on a man's jacket and hose; and, indeed, being a very plump beauty, it is perhaps as well that she would not. Perdita, too, might very well have exchanged the sweet melancholy of her name against something more in consonance with her aspect and disposition. She was a positive brunette, short of stature, light of foot, with a vivid dark brown eye. She had been from her childhood a creature of smiles and gayety; and so far from making you wait for an answer to your speech, as her handsome sister was wont to do (while she gazed at you with her somewhat cold gray eyes), she had given you the choice of half a dozen, suggested by the successive clauses of your proposition, before you had got to the end of it.

The young girls were very glad to see their brother once more; but they found themselves quite able to maintain a reserve of good-will for their brother's friend. Among the young men their friends and neighbors, the *belle jeunesse* of the Colony, there were many excellent fellows, several devoted swains, and some two or three who enjoyed the reputation of universal charmers and conquerors. But the home-bred arts and the somewhat boisterous gallantry of those honest young colonists were completely eclipsed by the good looks, the fine clothes, the punctilious courtesy, the perfect elegance, the immense information, of Mr. Arthur Lloyd. He was in reality no paragon; he was an honest, resolute, intelligent young man, rich in pounds sterling, in his health and comfortable hopes, and his little capital of uninvested affections. But he was a gentleman; he had a handsome face; he had studied and travelled; he spoke French, he played on the flute, and he read verses aloud with very great taste. There were a dozen reasons why Miss Willoughby and her sister should forthwith have been rendered fastidious in the choice of their male acquaintance. The imagination of woman is especially adapted to the various small conventions and mysteries of polite society. Mr. Lloyd's talk told our little New England maidens a vast deal more of the ways and means of people of fashion in European capitals than he had any idea of doing. It was delightful to sit by and hear him and Bernard discourse upon the fine people and fine things they had seen. They would all gather round the fire after tea, in the little wainscoted parlor,—quite innocent then of any intention of being picturesque or of being anything else, indeed, than economical, and saving an outlay in stamped papers and tapestries,—and the two young men would remind each other, across the rug, of this, that, and the other adventure. Viola and Perdita would often have given their ears to know exactly what adventure it was, and where it happened, and who was there, and what the ladies had on; but in those days a well-bred young woman was not expected to break into the conversation of her own movement or to ask too many questions; and the poor girls used therefore to sit fluttering behind the more languid—or more discreet—curiosity of their mother.

That they were both very fine girls Arthur Lloyd was not slow to discover; but it took him some time to satisfy himself as to the apportionment of their charms. He had a strong presentiment—an emotion of a nature entirely too cheerful to be called a foreboding—that he was destined to marry one of them; yet he was unable to arrive at a preference, and for such a consummation a preference was certainly indispensable, inasmuch as Lloyd was quite too gallant a fellow to make a choice by lot and be cheated of the heavenly delight of falling in love. He resolved to take things easily, and to let his heart speak. Meanwhile, he was on a very pleasant footing. Mrs. Willoughby showed a dignified indifference to his "intentions," equally remote from a carelessness of her daughters' honor and from that odious alacrity to make him commit himself, which, in his quality of a young man of property, he had but too

often encountered in the venerable dames of his native islands. As for Bernard, all that he asked was that his friend should take his sisters as his own; and as for the poor girls themselves, however each may have secretly longed for the monopoly of Mr. Lloyd's attentions, they observed a very decent and modest and contented demeanor.

Towards each other, however, they were somewhat more on the offensive. They were good sisterly friends, betwixt whom it would take more than a day for the seeds of jealousy to sprout and bear fruit; but the young girls felt that the seeds had been sown on the day that Mr. Lloyd came into the house. Each made up her mind that, if she should be slighted, she would bear her grief in silence, and that no one should be any the wiser; for if they had a great deal of love, they had also a great deal of pride. But each prayed in secret, nevertheless, that upon *her* the glory might fall. They had need of a vast deal of patience, of self-control, and of dissimulation. In those days a young girl of decent breeding could make no advances whatever, and barely respond, indeed, to those that were made. She was expected to sit still in her chair with her eyes on the carpet, watching the spot where the mystic handkerchief should fall. Poor Arthur Lloyd was obliged to undertake his wooing in the little wainscoted parlor, before the eyes of Mrs. Willoughby, her son, and his prospective sister-in-law. But youth and love are so cunning that a hundred signs and tokens might travel to and fro, and not one of these three pair of eyes detect them in their passage. The young girls had but one chamber and one bed between them, and for long hours together they were under each other's direct inspection. That each knew that she was being watched, however, made not a grain of difference in those little offices which they mutually rendered, or in the various household tasks which they performed in common. Neither flinched nor fluttered beneath the silent batteries of her sister's eyes. The only apparent change in their habits was that they had less to say to each other. It was impossible to talk about Mr. Lloyd, and it was ridiculous to talk about anything else. By tacit agreement they began to wear all their choice finery, and to devise such little implements of coquetry, in the way of ribbons and topknots and furbelows as were sanctioned by indubitable modesty. They executed in the same inarticulate fashion an agreement of sincerity on these delicate matters. "Is it better so?" Viola would ask, tying a bunch of ribbons on her bosom, and turning about from her glass to her sister. Perdita would look up gravely from her work and examine the decoration. "I think you had better give it another loop," she would say, with great solemnity, looking hard at her sister with eyes that added, "upon my honor!" So they were forever stitching and trimming their petticoats, and pressing out their muslins, and contriving washes and ointments and cosmetics, like the ladies in the household of the Vicar of Wakefield. Some three or four months went by; it grew to be midwinter, and as yet Viola knew that if Perdita had nothing more to boast of than she, there was not much to be feared from her rivalry. But Perdita by this time, the charming Perdita, felt that her secret had grown to be tenfold more precious than her sister's.

One afternoon Miss Willoughby sat alone before her toilet-glass combing out her long hair. It was getting too dark to see; she lit the two candles in their sockets on the frame of her mirror, and then went to the window to draw her curtains. It was a gray December evening; the landscape was bare and bleak, and the sky heavy with snow-clouds. At the end of the long garden into which her window looked was a wall with a little postern door, opening into a lane. The door stood ajar, as she could vaguely see in the gathering darkness, and moved slowly to and fro, as if some one were swaying it from the lane without. It was doubtless a servant-maid. But as she was about to drop her curtain, Viola saw her sister step within the garden, and hurry along the path toward the house. She dropped the curtain, all save a little crevice for her eyes. As Perdita came up the path, she seemed to be examining something in her hand, holding it close to her eyes. When she reached the house she stopped a moment, looked intently at the object, and pressed it to her lips.

Poor Viola slowly came back to her chair, and sat down before her glass, where, if she had looked at it less abstractedly, she would have seen her handsome features sadly disfigured by jealousy. A moment afterwards the door opened behind her, and her sister came into the room, out of breath, and her cheeks aglow with the chilly air.

Perdita started. "Ah," said she, "I thought you were with our mother." The ladies were to go to a tea-party, and on such occasions it was the habit of one of the young girls to help their mother to dress. Instead of coming in, Perdita lingered at the door.

"Come in, come in," said Viola. "We've more than an hour yet. I should like you very much to give a few strokes to my hair." She knew that her sister wished to retreat, and that she could see in the glass all her movements in the room. "Nay, just help me with my hair," she said, "and I'll go to mamma."

Perdita came reluctantly, and took the brush. She saw her sister's eyes, in the glass, fastened hard upon her hands. She had not made three passes, when Viola clapped her own right hand upon her sister's left, and started out of her chair. "Whose ring is that?" she cried passionately, drawing her towards the light.

On the young girl's third finger glistened a little gold ring, adorned with a couple of small rubies. Perdita felt that she need no longer keep her secret, yet that she must put a bold face on her avowal. "It's mine," she said proudly.

"Who gave it to you?" cried the other.

Perdita hesitated a moment. "Mr. Lloyd."

"Mr. Lloyd is generous, all of a sudden."

"Ah no," cried Perdita, with spirit, "not all of a sudden. He offered it to me a month ago."

"And you needed a month's begging to take it?" said Viola, looking at the little trinket; which indeed was not especially elegant, although it was the best that the jeweller of the Province could furnish. "I shouldn't have taken it in less than two."

"It isn't the ring," said Perdita, "it's what it means!"

"It means that you 're not a modest girl," cried Viola. "Pray does your mother know of your conduct? does Bernard?"

"My mother has approved my 'conduct', as you call it. Mr. Lloyd has asked my hand, and mamma has given it. Would you have had him apply to you, sister?"

Viola gave her sister a long look, full of passionate envy and sorrow. Then she dropped her lashes on her pale cheeks and turned away. Perdita felt that it had not been a pretty scene; but it was her sister's fault. But the elder girl rapidly called back her pride, and turned herself about again. "You have my very best wishes," she said, with a low curtsy. "I wish you every happiness, and a very long life."

Perdita gave a bitter laugh. "Don't speak in that tone," she cried. "I'd rather you cursed me outright. Come, sister," she added, "he couldn't marry both of us."

"I wish you very great joy," Viola repeated mechanically, sitting down to her glass again, "and a very long life, and plenty of children."

There was something in the sound of these words not at all to Perdita's taste. "Will you give me a year, at least?" she said. "In a year I can have one little boy, or one little girl at least. If you'll give me your brush again I'll do your hair."

"Thank you," said Viola. "You had better go to mamma. It isn't becoming that a young lady with a promised husband should wait on a girl with none."

"Nay," said Perdita, good-humoredly, "I have Arthur to wait upon me. You need my service more than I need yours."

But her sister motioned her away, and she left the room. When she had gone poor Viola fell on her knees before her dressing-table, buried her head in her arms, and poured out a flood of tears and sobs. She felt very much the better for this effusion of sorrow. When her sister came back, she insisted upon helping her to dress, and upon her wearing her prettiest things. She forced upon her acceptance a bit of lace of her own, and declared that now that she was to be married she should do her best to appear worthy of her lover's choice. She discharged these offices in stern silence; but, such as they were, they had to do duty as an apology and an atonement; she never made any other. Now that Lloyd was received by the family as an accepted suitor, nothing remained but to fix the wedding-day. It was appointed for the following April, and in the interval preparations were diligently made for the marriage. Lloyd, on his side, was busy with his commercial arrangements, and with establishing a correspondence with the great mercantile house to which he had attached himself in England. He was therefore not so frequent a visitor at Mrs. Willoughby's as during the months of his diffidence and irresolution, and poor Viola had less to suffer than she had feared from the sight of the mutual endearments of the young lovers. Touching his future sister-in-law, Lloyd had a perfectly clear conscience. There had not been a particle of sentiment uttered between them, and he had not the slightest suspicion that she coveted anything more than his fraternal regard. He was quite at his ease; life promised so well, both domestically and financially. The lurid clouds of revolution were as yet twenty years beneath the horizon, and that his connubial felicity should take a tragic turn it was absurd, it was blasphemous, to apprehend. Meanwhile at Mrs. Willoughby's there was a greater rustling of silks, a more rapid clicking of scissors and flying of needles, than ever. Mrs. Willoughby had determined that her daughter should carry from home the most elegant outfit that her money could buy, or that the country could furnish. All the sage women in the county were convened, and their united taste was brought to bear on Perdita's wardrobe. Viola's situation, at this moment, was assuredly not to be envied. The poor girl had an inordinate love of dress, and the very best taste in the world, as her sister perfectly well knew. Viola was tall, she was stately and sweeping, she was made to carry stiff brocade and masses of heavy lace, such as belong to the toilet of a rich man's wife. But Viola sat aloof, with her beautiful arms folded and her head averted, while her mother and sister and the venerable women aforesaid worried and wondered over their materials, oppressed by the multitude of their resources. One day there came in a beautiful piece of white silk, brocaded with celestial blue and silver, sent by the bridegroom himself,—it not being thought amiss in those days that the husband elect should contribute to the bride's trousseau. Perdita was quite at loss to imagine a fashion which should do sufficient honor to the splendor of the material.

"Blue's your color, sister, more than mine," she said, with appealing eyes. "It's a pity it's not for you. You'd know what to do with it."

Viola got up from her place and looked at the great shining fabric as it lay spread over the back of a chair. Then she took it up in her hands and felt it,—lovingly, as Perdita could see,—and turned about toward the mirror with it. She let it roll down to her feet, and flung the other end over her shoulder, gathering it in about her waist with her white arm bare to the elbow. She threw back her head, and looked at her image, and a hanging tress of her auburn hair fell upon the gorgeous surface of the silk. It made a dazzling picture. The women standing about uttered a little "Ah!" of admiration. "Yes, indeed," said Viola, quietly, "blue is my color." But

Perdita could see that her fancy had been stirred, and that she would now fall to work and solve all their silken riddles. And indeed she behaved very well, as Perdita, knowing her insatiable love of millinery, was quite ready to declare. Innumerable yards of lustrous silk and satin, of muslin, velvet, and lace, passed through her cunning hands, without a word of envy coming from her lips. Thanks to her industry, when the wedding-day came Perdita was prepared to espouse more of the vanities of life than any fluttering young bride who had yet challenged the sacramental blessing of a New England divine.

It had been arranged that the young couple should go out and spend the first days of their wedded life at the country house of an English gentleman,—a man of rank and a very kind friend to Lloyd. He was an unmarried man; he professed himself delighted to withdraw and leave them for a week to their billing and cooing. After the ceremony at church,—it had been performed by an English parson,—young Mrs. Lloyd hastened back to her mother's house to change her wedding gear for a riding-dress. Viola helped her to effect the change, in the little old room in which they had been fond sisters together. Perdita then hurried off to bid farewell to her mother, leaving Viola to follow. The parting was short; the horses were at the door and Arthur impatient to start. But Viola had not followed, and Perdita hastened back to her room, opening the door abruptly. Viola, as usual, was before the glass, but in a position which caused the other to stand still, amazed. She had dressed herself in Perdita's cast-off wedding veil and wreath, and on her neck she had hung the heavy string of pearls which the young girl had received from her husband as a wedding-gift. These things had been hastily laid aside, to await their possessor's disposal on her return from the country. Bedizened in this unnatural garb, Viola stood at the mirror, plunging a long look into its depths, and reading Heaven knows what audacious visions. Perdita was horrified. It was a hideous image of their old rivalry come to life again. She made a step toward her sister, as if to pull off the veil and the flowers. But catching her eyes in the glass, she stopped.

"Farewell, Viola," she said. "You might at least have waited till I had got out of the house." And she hurried away from the room.

Mr. Lloyd had purchased in Boston a house which, in the taste of those days, was considered a marvel of elegance and comfort; and here he very soon established himself with his young wife. He was thus separated by a distance of twenty miles from the residence of his mother-in-law. Twenty miles, in that primitive era of roads and conveyances, were as serious a matter as a hundred at the present day, and Mrs. Willoughby saw but little of her daughter during the first twelvemonth of her marriage. She suffered in no small degree from her absence; and her affliction was not diminished by the fact that Viola had fallen into terribly low spirits and was not to be roused or cheered but by change of air and circumstances. The real cause of the young girl's dejection the reader will not be slow to suspect. Mrs. Willoughby and her gossips, however, deemed her complaint a purely physical one, and doubted not that she would obtain relief from the remedy just mentioned. Her mother accordingly proposed on her behalf a visit to certain relatives on the paternal side, established in New York, who had long complained that they were able to see so little of their New England cousins. Viola was despatched to these good people, under a suitable escort, and remained with them for several months. In the interval her brother Bernard, who had begun the practice of the law, made up his mind to take a wife. Viola came home to the wedding, apparently cured of her heartache, with honest roses and lilies in her face, and a proud smile on her lips. Arthur Lloyd came over from Boston to see his brother-in-law married, but without his wife, who was expecting shortly to present him with an heir. It was nearly a year since Viola had seen him. She was glad—she hardly knew why—that Perdita had stayed at home. Arthur looked happy, but he was more grave and solemn than before his marriage. She thought he looked "interesting,"—for although the word in its modern sense was not then invented, we may be sure that the idea

was. The truth is, he was simply preoccupied with his wife's condition. Nevertheless, he by no means failed to observe Viola's beauty and splendor, and how she quite effaced the poor little bride. The allowance that Perdita had enjoyed for her dress had now been transferred to her sister, who turned it to prodigious account. On the morning after the wedding, he had a lady's saddle put on the horse of the servant who had come with him from town, and went out with the young girl for a ride. It was a keen, clear morning in January; the ground was bare and hard, and the horses in good condition,—to say nothing of Viola, who was charming in her hat and plume, and her dark blue riding-coat, trimmed with fur. They rode all the morning, they lost their way, and were obliged to stop for dinner at a farm-house. The early winter dusk had fallen when they got home. Mrs. Willoughby met them with a long face. A messenger had arrived at noon from Mrs. Lloyd; she was beginning to be ill, and desired her husband's immediate return. The young man, at the thought that he had lost several hours, and that by hard riding he might already have been with his wife, uttered a passionate oath. He barely consented to stop for a mouthful of supper, but mounted the messenger's horse and started off at a gallop.

He reached home at midnight. His wife had been delivered of a little girl. "Ah, why weren't you with me?" she said, as he came to her bedside.

"I was out of the house when the man came. I was with Viola," said Lloyd, innocently.

Mrs. Lloyd made a little moan, and turned about. But she continued to do very well, and for a week her improvement was uninterrupted. Finally, however, through some indiscretion in the way of diet or of exposure, it was checked, and the poor lady grew rapidly worse. Lloyd was in despair. It very soon became evident that she was breathing her last. Mrs. Lloyd came to a sense of her approaching end, and declared that she was reconciled with death. On the third evening after the change took place she told her husband that she felt she would not outlast the night. She dismissed her servants, and also requested her mother to withdraw,—Mrs. Willoughby having arrived on the preceding day. She had had her infant placed on the bed beside her, and she lay on her side, with the child against her breast, holding her husband's hands. The night-lamp was hidden behind the heavy curtains of the bed, but the room was illumined with a red glow from the immense fire of logs on the hearth.

"It seems strange to die by such a fire as that," the young woman said, feebly trying to smile. "If I had but a little of such fire in my veins! But I've given it all to this little spark of mortality." And she dropped her eyes on her child. Then raising them she looked at her husband with a long penetrating gaze. The last feeling which lingered in her heart was one of mistrust. She had not recovered from the shock which Arthur had given her by telling her that in the hour of her agony he had been with Viola. She trusted her husband very nearly as well as she loved him; but now that she was called away forever, she felt a cold horror of her sister. She felt in her soul that Viola had never ceased to envy her good fortune; and a year of happy security had not effaced the young girl's image, dressed in her wedding garments, and smiling with coveted triumph. Now that Arthur was to be alone, what might not Viola do? She was beautiful, she was engaging; what arts might she not use, what impression might she not make upon the young man's melancholy heart? Mrs. Lloyd looked at her husband in silence. It seemed hard, after all, to doubt of his constancy. His fine eyes were filled with tears; his face was convulsed with weeping; the clasp of his hands was warm and passionate. How noble he looked, how tender, how faithful and devoted! "Nay," thought Perdita, "he's not for such as Viola. He'll never forget me. Nor does Viola truly care for him; she cares only for vanities and finery and jewels." And she dropped her eyes on her white hands, which her husband's liberality had covered with rings, and on the lace ruffles which trimmed the edge of her night dress. "She covets my rings and my laces more than she covets my husband."

At this moment the thought of her sister's rapacity seemed to cast a dark shadow between her and the helpless figure of her little girl. "Arthur," she said, "you must take off my rings. I shall not be buried in them. One of these days my daughter shall wear them,—my rings and my laces and silks. I had them all brought out and shown me to-day. It's a great wardrobe,—there's not such another in the Province; I can say it without vanity now that I've done with it. It will be a great inheritance for my daughter, when she grows into a young woman. There are things there that a man never buys twice, and if they're lost you'll never again see the like. So you'll watch them well. Some dozen things I've left to Viola; I've named them to my mother. I've given her that blue and silver; it was meant for her; I wore it only once, I looked ill in it. But the rest are to be sacredly kept for this little innocent. It's such a providence that she should be my color; she can wear my gowns; she has her mother's eyes. You know the same fashions come back every twenty years. She can wear my gowns as they are. They 'll lie there quietly waiting till she grows into them,—wrapped in camphor and rose-leaves, and keeping their colors in the sweet-scented darkness. She shall have black hair, she shall wear my carnation satin. Do you promise me, Arthur?"

"Promise you what, dearest?"

"Promise me to keep your poor little wife's old gowns."

"Are you afraid I'll sell them?"

"No, but that they may get scattered. My mother will have them properly wrapped up, and you shall lay them away under a double-lock. Do you know the great chest in the attic, with the iron bands? There's no end to what it will hold. You can lay them all there. My mother and the housekeeper will do it, and give you the key. And you'll keep the key in your secretary, and never give it to any one but your child. Do you promise me?"

"Ah, yes, I promise you," said Lloyd, puzzled at the intensity with which his wife appeared to cling to this idea.

"Will you swear?" repeated Perdita.

"Yes, I swear."

"Well—I trust you—I trust you," said the poor lady, looking into his eyes with eyes in which, if he had suspected her vague apprehensions, he might have read an appeal quite as much as an assurance.

Lloyd bore his bereavement soberly and manfully. A month after his wife's death, in the course of commerce, circumstances arose which offered him an opportunity of going to England. He embraced it as a diversion from gloomy thoughts. He was absent nearly a year, during which his little girl was tenderly nursed and cherished by her grandmother. On his return he had his house again thrown open, and announced his intention of keeping the same state as during his wife's lifetime. It very soon came to be predicted that he would marry again, and there were at least a dozen young women of whom one may say that it was by no fault of theirs that, for six months after his return, the prediction did not come true. During this interval he still left his little daughter in Mrs. Willoughby's hands, the latter assuring him that a change of residence at so tender an age was perilous to her health. Finally, however, he declared that his heart longed for his daughter's presence, and that she must be brought up to town. He sent his coach and his housekeeper to fetch her home. Mrs. Willoughby was in terror lest something should befall her on the road; and, in accordance with this feeling, Viola offered to ride along with her. She could return the next day. So she went up to town with her little niece, and Mr. Lloyd met her on the threshold of his house, overcome with her kindness and with gratitude. Instead of returning the next day, Viola stayed out the week; and when at

last she reappeared, she had only come for her clothes. Arthur would not hear of her coming home, nor would the baby. She cried and moaned if Viola left her; and at the sight of her grief Arthur lost his wits, and swore that she was going to die. In fine, nothing would suit them but that Viola should remain until the poor child had grown used to strange faces.

It took two months to bring this consummation about; for it was not until this period had elapsed that Viola took leave of her brother-in-law. Mrs. Willoughby had shaken her head over her daughter's absence; she had declared that it was not becoming, and that it was the talk of the town. She had reconciled herself to it only because, during the young girl's visit, the household enjoyed an unwonted term of peace. Bernard Willoughby had brought his wife home to live, between whom and her sister-in-law there existed a bitter hostility. Viola was perhaps no angel; but in the daily practice of life she was a sufficiently good-natured girl, and if she quarrelled with Mrs. Bernard, it was not without provocation. Quarrel, however, she did, to the great annoyance not only of her antagonist, but of the two spectators of these constant altercations. Her stay in the household of her brother-in-law, therefore, would have been delightful, if only because it removed her from contact with the object of her antipathy at home. It was doubly—it was ten times—delightful, in that it kept her near the object of her old passion. Mrs. Lloyd's poignant mistrust had fallen very far short of the truth. Viola's sentiment had been a passion at first, and a passion it remained,—a passion of whose radiant heat, tempered to the delicate state of his feelings, Mr. Lloyd very soon felt the influence. Lloyd, as I have hinted, was not a modern Petrarch; it was not in his nature to practise an ideal constancy. He had not been many days in the house with his sister-in-law before he began to assure himself that she was, in the language of that day, a devilish fine woman. Whether Viola really practised those insidious arts that her sister had been tempted to impute to her it is needless to inquire. It is enough to say that she found means to appear to the very best advantage. She used to seat herself every morning before the great fireplace in the dining-room, at work upon a piece of tapestry, with her little niece disporting herself on the carpet at her feet, or on the train of her dress, and playing with her woollen balls. Lloyd would have been a very stupid fellow if he had remained insensible to the rich suggestions of this charming picture. He was prodigiously fond of his little girl, and was never weary of taking her in his arms and tossing her up and down, and making her crow with delight. Very often, however, he would venture upon greater liberties than the young lady was yet prepared to allow, and she would suddenly vociferate her displeasure. Viola would then drop her tapestry, and put out her handsome hands with the serious smile of the young girl whose virgin fancy has revealed to her all a mother's healing arts. Lloyd would give up the child, their eyes would meet, their hands would touch, and Viola would extinguish the little girl's sobs upon the snowy folds of the kerchief that crossed her bosom. Her dignity was perfect, and nothing could be more discreet than the manner in which she accepted her brother-in-law's hospitality. It may be almost said, perhaps, that there was something harsh in her reserve. Lloyd had a provoking feeling that she was in the house, and yet that she was unapproachable. Half an hour after supper, at the very outset of the long winter evenings, she would light her candle, and make the young man a most respectful curtsy, and march off to bed. If these were arts, Viola was a great artist. But their effect was so gentle, so gradual, they were calculated to work upon the young widower's fancy with such a finely shaded crescendo, that, as the reader has seen, several weeks elapsed before Viola began to feel sure that her return would cover her outlay. When this became morally certain, she packed up her trunk, and returned to her mother's house. For three days she waited; on the fourth Mr. Lloyd made his appearance,—a respectful but ardent suitor. Viola heard him out with great humility, and accepted him with infinite modesty. It is hard to imagine that Mrs. Lloyd should have forgiven her husband; but if anything might have disarmed her resentment, it would have been the ceremonious continence of this interview. Viola imposed upon her lover

but a short probation. They were married, as was becoming, with great privacy,—almost with secrecy,—in the hope perhaps, as was waggishly remarked at the time, that the late Mrs. Lloyd wouldn't hear of it.

The marriage was to all appearance a happy one, and each party obtained what each had desired—Lloyd "a devilish fine woman," and Viola—but Viola's desires, as the reader will have observed, have remained a good deal of a mystery. There were, indeed, two blots upon their felicity; but time would, perhaps, efface them. During the first three years of her marriage Mrs. Lloyd failed to become a mother, and her husband on his side suffered heavy losses of money. This latter circumstance compelled a material retrenchment in his expenditure, and Viola was perforce less of a great lady than her sister had been. She contrived, however, to sustain with unbroken consistency the part of an elegant woman, although it must be confessed that it required the exercise of more ingenuity than belongs to your real aristocratic repose. She had long since ascertained that her sister's immense wardrobe had been sequestered for the benefit of her daughter, and that it lay languishing in thankless gloom in the dusty attic. It was a revolting thought that these exquisite fabrics should await the commands of a little girl who sat in a high chair and ate bread-and-milk with a wooden spoon. Viola had the good taste, however, to say nothing about the matter until several months had expired. Then, at last, she timidly broached it to her husband. Was it not a pity that so much finery should be lost?—for lost it would be, what with colors fading, and moths eating it up, and the change of fashions. But Lloyd gave so abrupt and peremptory a negative to her inquiry, that she saw that for the present her attempt was vain. Six months went by, however, and brought with them new needs and new fancies. Viola's thoughts hovered lovingly about her sister's relics. She went up and looked at the chest in which they lay imprisoned. There was a sullen defiance in its three great padlocks and its iron bands, which only quickened her desires. There was something exasperating in its incorruptible immobility. It was like a grim and grizzled old household servant, who locks his jaws over a family secret. And then there was a look of capacity in its vast extent, and a sound as of dense fulness, when Viola knocked its side with the toe of her little slipper, which caused her to flush with baffled longing. "It 's absurd," she cried; "it 's improper, it 's wicked"; and she forthwith resolved upon another attack upon her husband. On the following day, after dinner, when he had had his wine, she bravely began it. But he cut her short with great sternness.

"Once for all, Viola," said he, "it 's out of the question. I shall be gravely displeased if you return to the matter."

"Very good," said Viola. "I 'm glad to learn the value at which I 'm held. Great Heaven!" she cried, "I 'm a happy woman. It 's an agreeable thing to feel one's self sacrificed to a caprice!" And her eyes filled with tears of anger and disappointment.

Lloyd had a good-natured man's horror of a woman's sobs, and he attempted—I may say he condescended—to explain. "It 's not a caprice, dear, it 's a promise," he said,—"an oath."

"An oath? It 's a pretty matter for oaths! and to whom, pray?"

"To Perdita," said the young man, raising his eyes for an instant, but immediately dropping them.

"Perdita,—ah, Perdita!" and Viola's tears broke forth. Her bosom heaved with stormy sobs,—sobs which were the long-deferred counterpart of the violent fit of weeping in which she had indulged herself on the night when she discovered her sister's betrothal. She had hoped, in her better moments, that she had done with her jealousy; but her temper, on that occasion, had taken an ineffaceable fold. "And pray, what right," she cried, "had Perdita to dispose of my future? What right had she to bind you to meanness and cruelty? Ah, I occupy a dignified

place, and I make a very fine figure! I'm welcome to what Perdita has left! And what has she left? I never knew till now how little! Nothing, nothing, nothing."

This was very poor logic, but it was very good passion. Lloyd put his arm around his wife's waist and tried to kiss her, but she shook him off with magnificent scorn. Poor fellow! he had coveted a "devilish fine woman," and he had got one. Her scorn was intolerable. He walked away with his ears tingling,—irresolute, distracted. Before him was his secretary, and in it the sacred key which with his own hand he had turned in the triple lock. He marched up and opened it, and took the key from a secret drawer, wrapped in a little packet which he had sealed with his own honest bit of blazonry. *Teneo*, said the motto,—"I hold." But he was ashamed to put it back. He flung it upon the table beside his wife.

"Keep it!" she cried. "I want it not. I hate it!"

"I wash my hands of it," cried her husband. "God forgive me!"

Mrs. Lloyd gave an indignant shrug of her shoulders, and swept out of the room, while the young man retreated by another door. Ten minutes later Mrs. Lloyd returned, and found the room occupied by her little step-daughter and the nursery-maid. The key was not on the table. She glanced at the child. The child was perched on a chair with the packet in her hands. She had broken the seal with her own little fingers. Mrs. Lloyd hastily took possession of the key.

At the habitual supper-hour Arthur Lloyd came back from his counting-room. It was the month of June, and supper was served by daylight. The meal was placed on the table, but Mrs. Lloyd failed to make her appearance. The servant whom his master sent to call her came back with the assurance that her room was empty, and that the women informed him that she had not been seen since dinner. They had in truth observed her to have been in tears, and, supposing her to be shut up in her chamber, had not disturbed her. Her husband called her name in various parts of the house, but without response. At last it occurred to him that he might find her by taking the way to the attic. The thought gave him a strange feeling of discomfort, and he bade his servants remain behind, wishing no witness in his quest. He reached the foot of the staircase leading to the topmost flat, and stood with his hand on the banisters, pronouncing his wife's name. His voice trembled. He called again, louder and more firmly. The only sound which disturbed the absolute silence was a faint echo of his own tones, repeating his question under the great eaves. He nevertheless felt irresistibly moved to ascend the staircase. It opened upon a wide hall, lined with wooden closets, and terminating in a window which looked westward, and admitted the last rays of the sun. Before the window stood the great chest. Before the chest, on her knees, the young man saw with amazement and horror the figure of his wife. In an instant he crossed the interval between them, bereft of utterance. The lid of the chest stood open, exposing, amid their perfumed napkins, its treasure of stuffs and jewels. Viola had fallen backward from a kneeling posture, with one hand supporting her on the floor and the other pressed to her heart. On her limbs was the stiffness of death, and on her face, in the fading light of the sun, the terror of something more than death. Her lips were parted in entreaty, in dismay, in agony; and on her bloodless brow and cheeks there glowed the marks of ten hideous wounds from two vengeful ghostly hands.

A Light Man

"And I—what I seem to my friend, you see—
 What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess.
 What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?
 No hero, I confess."

A Light Woman.—Browning's Men and Women.

April 4, 1857.—I have changed my sky without changing my mind. I resume these old notes in a new world. I hardly know of what use they are; but it's easier to stick to the habit than to drop it. I have been at home now a week—at home, forsooth! And yet, after all, it is home. I am dejected, I am bored, I am blue. How can a man be more at home than that? Nevertheless, I am the citizen of a great country, and for that matter, of a great city. I walked to-day some ten miles or so along Broadway, and on the whole I don't blush for my native land. We are a capable race and a good-looking withal; and I don't see why we shouldn't prosper as well as another. This, by the way, ought to be a very encouraging reflection. A capable fellow and a good-looking withal; I don't see why he shouldn't die a millionaire. At all events he must do something. When a man has, at thirty-two, a net income of considerably less than nothing, he can scarcely hope to overtake a fortune before he himself is overtaken by age and philosophy—two deplorable obstructions. I am afraid that one of them has already planted itself in my path. What am I? What do I wish? Whither do I tend? What do I believe? I am constantly beset by these impertinent whisperings. Formerly it was enough that I was Maximus Austin; that I was endowed with a cheerful mind and a good digestion; that one day or another, when I had come to the end, I should return to America and begin at the beginning; that, meanwhile, existence was sweet in—in the Rue Tronchet. But now! Has the sweetness really passed out of life? Have I eaten the plums and left nothing but the bread and milk and corn-starch, or whatever the horrible concoction is?—I had it to-day for dinner. Pleasure, at least, I imagine—pleasure pure and simple, pleasure crude, brutal and vulgar—this poor flimsy delusion has lost all its charm. I shall never again care for certain things—and indeed for certain persons. Of such things, of such persons, I firmly maintain, however, that I was never an enthusiastic votary. It would be more to my credit, I suppose, if I had been. More would be forgiven me if I had loved a little more, if into all my folly and egotism I had put a little more *naïveté* and sincerity. Well, I did the best I could, I was at once too bad and too good for it all. At present, it's far enough off; I have put the sea between us; I am stranded. I sit high and dry, scanning the horizon for a friendly sail, or waiting for a high tide to set me afloat. The wave of pleasure has deposited me here in the sand. Shall I owe my rescue to the wave of pain? At moments I feel a kind of longing to expiate my stupid little sins. I see, as through a glass, darkly, the beauty of labor and love. Decidedly, I am willing to work. It's written.

7th.—My sail is in sight; it's at hand; I have all but boarded the vessel. I received this morning a letter from the best man in the world. Here it is:

DEAR MAX: I see this very moment, in an old newspaper which had already passed through my hands without yielding up its most precious item, the announcement of your arrival in New York. To think of your having perhaps missed the welcome you had a right to expect from me! Here it is, dear Max—as cordial as you please. When I say I have just read of your arrival, I mean that twenty minutes have elapsed by the clock. These have been spent in conversation with my excellent friend Mr. Sloane—we having taken the liberty of making

you the topic. I haven't time to say more about Frederick Sloane than that he is very anxious to make your acquaintance, and that, if your time is not otherwise engaged, he would like you very much to spend a month with him. He is an excellent host, or I shouldn't be here myself. It appears that he knew your mother very intimately, and he has a taste for visiting the amenities of the parents upon the children; the original ground of my own connection with him was that he had been a particular friend of my father. You may have heard your mother speak of him. He is a very strange old fellow, but you will like him. Whether or no you come for his sake, come for mine.

Yours always, THEODORE LISLE.

Theodore's letter is of course very kind, but it's remarkably obscure. My mother may have had the highest regard for Mr. Sloane, but she never mentioned his name in my hearing. Who is he, what is he, and what is the nature of his relations with Theodore? I shall learn betimes. I have written to Theodore that I gladly accept (I believe I suppressed the "gladly" though) his friend's invitation, and that I shall immediately present myself. What can I do that is better? Speaking sordidly, I shall obtain food and lodging while I look about me. I shall have a base of operations. D., it appears, is a long day's journey, but enchanting when you reach it. I am curious to see an enchanting American town. And to stay a month! Mr. Frederick Sloane, whoever you are, *vous faites bien les choses*, and the little that I know of you is very much to your credit. You enjoyed the friendship of my dear mother, you possess the esteem of the virtuous Theodore, you commend yourself to my own affection. At this rate, I shall not grudge it.

D—, 14th.—I have been here since Thursday evening—three days. As we rattled up to the tavern in the village, I perceived from the top of the coach, in the twilight, Theodore beneath the porch, scanning the vehicle, with all his amiable disposition in his eyes. He has grown older, of course, in these five years, but less so than I had expected. His is one of those smooth, un wrinkled souls that keep their bodies fair and fresh. As tall as ever, moreover, and as lean and clean. How short and fat and dark and debauched he makes one feel! By nothing he says or means, of course, but merely by his old unconscious purity and simplicity—that slender straightness which makes him remind you of the spire of an English abbey. He greeted me with smiles, and stares, and alarming blushes. He assures me that he never would have known me, and that five years have altered me—*sehr!* I asked him if it were for the better? He looked at me hard for a moment, with his eyes of blue, and then, for an answer, he blushed again.

On my arrival we agreed to walk over from the village. He dismissed his wagon with my luggage, and we went arm-in-arm through the dusk. The town is seated at the foot of certain mountains, whose names I have yet to learn, and at the head of a big sheet of water, which, as yet, too, I know only as "the Lake." The road hitherward soon leaves the village and wanders in rural loveliness by the margin of this expanse. Sometimes the water is hidden by clumps of trees, behind which we heard it lapping and gurgling in the darkness: sometimes it stretches out from your feet in shining vagueness, as if it were tired of making, all day, a million little eyes at the great stupid hills. The walk from the tavern takes some half an hour, and in this interval Theodore made his position a little more clear. Mr. Sloane is a rich old widower; his age is seventy-two, and as his health is thoroughly broken, is practically even greater; and his fortune—Theodore, characteristically, doesn't know anything definite about that. It's probably about a million. He has lived much in Europe, and in the "great world;" he has had adventures and passions and all that sort of thing; and now, in the evening of his days, like an old French diplomatist, he takes it into his head to write his memoirs. To this end he has lured poor Theodore to his gruesome side, to mend his pens for him. He has been a great scribbler,

says Theodore, all his days, and he proposes to incorporate a large amount of promiscuous literary matter into these *souvenirs intimes*. Theodore's principal function seems to be to get him to leave things out. In fact, the poor youth seems troubled in conscience. His patron's lucubrations have taken the turn of many other memoirs, and have ceased to address themselves *virginibus puerisque*. On the whole, he declares they are a very odd mixture—a medley of gold and tinsel, of bad taste and good sense. I can readily understand it. The old man bores me, puzzles me, and amuses me.

He was in waiting to receive me. We found him in his library—which, by the way, is simply the most delightful apartment that I ever smoked a cigar in—a room arranged for a lifetime. At one end stands a great fireplace, with a florid, fantastic mantelpiece in carved white marble—an importation, of course, and, as one may say, an interpolation; the groundwork of the house, the "fixtures," being throughout plain, solid and domestic. Over the mantel-shelf is a large landscape, a fine Gainsborough, full of the complicated harmonies of an English summer. Beneath it stands a row of bronzes of the Renaissance and potteries of the Orient. Facing the door, as you enter, is an immense window set in a recess, with cushioned seats and large clear panes, stationed as it were at the very apex of the lake (which forms an almost perfect oval) and commanding a view of its whole extent. At the other end, opposite the fireplace, the wall is studded, from floor to ceiling, with choice foreign paintings, placed in relief against the orthodox crimson screen. Elsewhere the walls are covered with books, arranged neither in formal regularity nor quite helter-skelter, but in a sort of genial incongruity, which tells that sooner or later each volume feels sure of leaving the ranks and returning into different company. Mr. Sloane makes use of his books. His two passions, according to Theodore, are reading and talking; but to talk he must have a book in his hand. The charm of the room lies in the absence of certain pedantic tones—the browns, blacks and grays—which distinguish most libraries. The apartment is of the feminine gender. There are half a dozen light colors scattered about—pink in the carpet, tender blue in the curtains, yellow in the chairs. The result is a general look of brightness and lightness; it expresses even a certain cynicism. You perceive the place to be the home, not of a man of learning, but of a man of fancy.

He rose from his chair—the man of fancy, to greet me—the man of fact. As I looked at him, in the lamplight, it seemed to me, for the first five minutes, that I had seldom seen an uglier little person. It took me five minutes to get the point of view; then I began to admire. He is diminutive, or at best of my own moderate stature, and bent and contracted with his seventy years; lean and delicate, moreover, and very highly finished. He is curiously pale, with a kind of opaque yellow pallor. Literally, it's a magnificent yellow. His skin is of just the hue and apparent texture of some old crumpled Oriental scroll. I know a dozen painters who would give more than they have to arrive at the exact "tone" of his thick-veined, bloodless hands, his polished ivory knuckles. His eyes are circled with red, but in the battered little setting of their orbits they have the lustre of old sapphires. His nose, owing to the falling away of other portions of his face, has assumed a grotesque, unnatural prominence; it describes an immense arch, gleaming like a piece of parchment stretched on ivory. He has, apparently, all his teeth, but has muffled his cranium in a dead black wig; of course he's clean shaven. In his dress he has a muffled, wadded look and an apparent aversion to linen, inasmuch as none is visible on his person. He seems neat enough, but not fastidious. At first, as I say, I fancied him monstrously ugly; but on further acquaintance I perceived that what I had taken for ugliness is nothing but the incomplete remains of remarkable good looks. The line of his features is pure; his nose, *caeteris paribus*, would be extremely handsome; his eyes are the oldest eyes I ever saw, and yet they are wonderfully living. He has something remarkably insinuating.

He offered his two hands, as Theodore introduced me; I gave him my own, and he stood smiling at me like some quaint old image in ivory and ebony, scanning my face with a curiosity which he took no pains to conceal. "God bless me," he said, at last, "how much you look like your father!" I sat down, and for half an hour we talked of many things—of my journey, of my impressions of America, of my reminiscences of Europe, and, by implication, of my prospects. His voice is weak and cracked, but he makes it express everything. Mr. Sloane is not yet in his dotage—oh no! He nevertheless makes himself out a poor creature. In reply to an inquiry of mine about his health, he favored me with a long list of his infirmities (some of which are very trying, certainly) and assured me that he was quite finished.

"I live out of mere curiosity," he said.

"I have heard of people dying from the same motive."

He looked at me a moment, as if to ascertain whether I were laughing at him. And then, after a pause, "Perhaps you don't know that I disbelieve in a future life," he remarked, blandly.

At these words Theodore got up and walked to the fire.

"Well, we shan't quarrel about that," said I. Theodore turned round, staring.

"Do you mean that you agree with me?" the old man asked.

"I certainly haven't come here to talk theology! Don't ask me to disbelieve, and I'll never ask you to believe."

"Come," cried Mr. Sloane, rubbing his hands, "you'll not persuade me you are a Christian—like your friend Theodore there."

"Like Theodore—assuredly not." And then, somehow, I don't know why, at the thought of Theodore's Christianity I burst into a laugh. "Excuse me, my dear fellow," I said, "you know, for the last ten years I have lived in pagan lands."

"What do you call pagan?" asked Theodore, smiling.

I saw the old man, with his hands locked, eying me shrewdly, and waiting for my answer. I hesitated a moment, and then I said, "Everything that makes life tolerable!"

Hereupon Mr. Sloane began to laugh till he coughed. Verily, I thought, if he lives for curiosity, he's easily satisfied.

We went into dinner, and this repast showed me that some of his curiosity is culinary. I observed, by the way, that for a victim of neuralgia, dyspepsia, and a thousand other ills, Mr. Sloane plies a most inconsequential knife and fork. Sauces and spices and condiments seem to be the chief of his diet. After dinner he dismissed us, in consideration of my natural desire to see my friend in private. Theodore has capital quarters—a downy bedroom and a snug little *salon*. We talked till near midnight—of ourselves, of each other, and of the author of the memoirs, down stairs. That is, I spoke of myself, and Theodore listened; and then Theodore descanted upon Mr. Sloane, and I listened. His commerce with the old man has sharpened his wits. Sloane has taught him to observe and judge, and Theodore turns round, observes, judges—him! He has become quite the critic and analyst. There is something very pleasant in the discriminations of a conscientious mind, in which criticism is tempered by an angelic charity. Only, it may easily end by acting on one's nerves. At midnight we repaired to the library, to take leave of our host till the morrow—an attention which, under all circumstances, he rigidly exacts. As I gave him my hand he held it again and looked at me as he had done on my arrival. "Bless my soul," he said, at last, "how much you look like your mother!"

To-night, at the end of my third day, I begin to feel decidedly at home. The fact is, I am remarkably comfortable. The house is pervaded by an indefinable, irresistible love of luxury and privacy. Mr. Frederick Sloane is a horribly corrupt old mortal. Already in his relaxing presence I have become heartily reconciled to doing nothing. But with Theodore on one side—standing there like a tall interrogation-point—I honestly believe I can defy Mr. Sloane on the other. The former asked me this morning, with visible solicitude, in allusion to the bit of dialogue I have quoted above on matters of faith, whether I am really a materialist—whether I don't believe something? I told him I would believe anything he liked. He looked at me a while, in friendly sadness. "I hardly know whether you are not worse than Mr. Sloane," he said.

But Theodore is, after all, in duty bound to give a man a long rope in these matters. His own rope is one of the longest. He reads Voltaire with Mr. Sloane, and Emerson in his own room. He is the stronger man of the two; he has the larger stomach. Mr. Sloane delights, of course, in Voltaire, but he can't read a line of Emerson. Theodore delights in Emerson, and enjoys Voltaire, though he thinks him superficial. It appears that since we parted in Paris, five years ago, his conscience has dwelt in many lands. *C'est tout une histoire*—which he tells very prettily. He left college determined to enter the church, and came abroad with his mind full of theology and Tübingen. He appears to have studied, not wisely but too well. Instead of faith full-armed and serene, there sprang from the labor of his brain a myriad sickly questions, piping for answers. He went for a winter to Italy, where, I take it, he was not quite so much afflicted as he ought to have been at the sight of the beautiful spiritual repose that he had missed. It was after this that we spent those three months together in Brittany—the best-spent months of my long residence in Europe. Theodore inoculated me, I think, with some of his seriousness, and I just touched him with my profanity; and we agreed together that there were a few good things left—health, friendship, a summer sky, and the lovely byways of an old French province. He came home, searched the Scriptures once more, accepted a "call," and made an attempt to respond to it. But the inner voice failed him. His outlook was cheerless enough. During his absence his married sister, the elder one, had taken the other to live with her, relieving Theodore of the charge of contribution to her support. But suddenly, behold the husband, the brother-in-law, dies, leaving a mere figment of property; and the two ladies, with their two little girls, are afloat in the wide world. Theodore finds himself at twenty-six without an income, without a profession, and with a family of four females to support. Well, in his quiet way he draws on his courage. The history of the two years that passed before he came to Mr. Sloane is really absolutely edifying. He rescued his sisters and nieces from the deep waters, placed them high and dry, established them somewhere in decent gentility—and then found at last that his strength had left him—had dropped dead like an over-ridden horse. In short, he had worked himself to the bone. It was now his sisters' turn. They nursed him with all the added tenderness of gratitude for the past and terror of the future, and brought him safely through a grievous malady. Meanwhile Mr. Sloane, having decided to treat himself to a private secretary and suffered dreadful mischance in three successive experiments, had heard of Theodore's situation and his merits; had furthermore recognized in him the son of an early and intimate friend, and had finally offered him the very comfortable position he now occupies. There is a decided incongruity between Theodore as a man—as Theodore, in fine—and the dear fellow as the intellectual agent, confidant, complaisant, purveyor, pander—what you will—of a battered old cynic and dilettante—a worldling if there ever was one. There seems at first sight a perfect want of agreement between his character and his function. One is gold and the other brass, or something very like it. But on reflection I can enter into it—his having, under the circumstances, accepted Mr. Sloane's offer and been content to do his duties. *Ce que c'est de nous!* Theodore's contentment in such a case is a theme for the moralist—a better moralist than I. The best and purest mortals are an

odd mixture, and in none of us does honesty exist on its own terms. Ideally, Theodore hasn't the smallest business *dans cette galère*. It offends my sense of propriety to find him here. I feel that I ought to notify him as a friend that he has knocked at the wrong door, and that he had better retreat before he is brought to the blush. However, I suppose he might as well be here as reading Emerson "evenings" in the back parlor, to those two very plain sisters—judging from their photographs. Practically it hurts no one not to be too much of a prig. Poor Theodore was weak, depressed, out of work. Mr. Sloane offers him a lodging and a salary in return for—after all, merely a little tact. All he has to do is to read to the old man, lay down the book a while, with his finger in the place, and let him talk; take it up again, read another dozen pages and submit to another commentary. Then to write a dozen pages under his dictation—to suggest a word, polish off a period, or help him out with a complicated idea or a half-remembered fact. This is all, I say; and yet this is much. Theodore's apparent success proves it to be much, as well as the old man's satisfaction. It is a part; he has to simulate. He has to "make believe" a little—a good deal; he has to put his pride in his pocket and send his conscience to the wash. He has to be accommodating—to listen and pretend and flatter; and he does it as well as many a worse man—does it far better than I. I might bully the old man, but I don't think I could humor him. After all, however, it is not a matter of comparative merit. In every son of woman there are two men—the practical man and the dreamer. We live for our dreams—but, meanwhile, we live by our wits. When the dreamer is a poet, the other fellow is an artist. Theodore, at bottom, is only a man of taste. If he were not destined to become a high priest among moralists, he might be a prince among connoisseurs. He plays his part, therefore, artistically, with spirit, with originality, with all his native refinement. How can Mr. Sloane fail to believe that he possesses a paragon? He is no such fool as not to appreciate a *nature distinguée* when it comes in his way. He confidentially assured me this morning that Theodore has the most charming mind in the world, but that it's a pity he's so simple as not to suspect it. If he only doesn't ruin him with his flattery!

19th.—I am certainly fortunate among men. This morning when, tentatively, I spoke of going away, Mr. Sloane rose from his seat in horror and declared that for the present I must regard his house as my home. "Come, come," he said, "when you leave this place where do you intend to go?" Where, indeed? I graciously allowed Mr. Sloane to have the best of the argument. Theodore assures me that he appreciates these and other affabilities, and that I have made what he calls a "conquest" of his venerable heart. Poor, battered, bamboozled old organ! he would have one believe that it has a most tragical record of capture and recapture. At all events, it appears that I am master of the citadel. For the present I have no wish to evacuate. I feel, nevertheless, in some far-off corner of my soul, that I ought to shoulder my victorious banner and advance to more fruitful triumphs.

I blush for my beastly laziness. It isn't that I am willing to stay here a month, but that I am willing to stay here six. Such is the charming, disgusting truth. Have I really outlived the age of energy? Have I survived my ambition, my integrity, my self-respect? Verily, I ought to have survived the habit of asking myself silly questions. I made up my mind long ago to go in for nothing but present success; and I don't care for that sufficiently to secure it at the cost of temporary suffering. I have a passion for nothing—not even for life. I know very well the appearance I make in the world. I pass for a clever, accomplished, capable, good-natured fellow, who can do anything if he would only try. I am supposed to be rather cultivated, to have latent talents. When I was younger I used to find a certain entertainment in the spectacle of human affairs. I liked to see men and women hurrying on each other's heels across the stage. But I am sick and tired of them now; not that I am a misanthrope, God forbid! They are not worth hating. I never knew but one creature who was, and her I went and loved. To be consistent, I ought to have hated my mother, and now I ought to detest Theodore. But I

don't—truly, on the whole, I don't—any more than I dote on him. I firmly believe that it makes a difference to him, his idea that I *am* fond of him. He believes in that, as he believes in all the rest of it—in my culture, my latent talents, my underlying "earnestness," my sense of beauty and love of truth. Oh, for a *man* among them all—a fellow with eyes in his head—eyes that would know me for what I am and let me see they had guessed it. Possibly such a fellow as that might get a "rise" out of me.

In the name of bread and butter, what am I to do? (I was obliged this morning to borrow fifty dollars from Theodore, who remembered gleefully that he has been owing me a trifling sum for the past four years, and in fact has preserved a note to this effect.) Within the last week I have hatched a desperate plan: I have made up my mind to take a wife—a rich one, *bien entendu*. Why not accept the goods of the gods? It is not my fault, after all, if I pass for a good fellow. Why not admit that practically, mechanically—as I may say—maritally, I *may* be a good fellow? I warrant myself kind. I should never beat my wife; I don't think I should even contradict her. Assume that her fortune has the proper number of zeros and that she herself is one of them, and I can even imagine her adoring me. I really think this is my only way. Curiously, as I look back upon my brief career, it all seems to tend to this consummation. It has its graceful curves and crooks, indeed, and here and there a passionate tangent; but on the whole, if I were to unfold it here *à la* Hogarth, what better legend could I scrawl beneath the series of pictures than So-and-So's Progress to a Mercenary Marriage?

Coming events do what we all know with their shadows. My noble fate is, perhaps, not far off. I already feel throughout my person a magnificent languor—as from the possession of many dollars. Or is it simply my sense of well-being in this perfectly appointed house? Is it simply the contact of the highest civilization I have known? At all events, the place is of velvet, and my only complaint of Mr. Sloane is that, instead of an old widower, he's not an old widow (or a young maid), so that I might marry him, survive him, and dwell forever in this rich and mellow home. As I write here, at my bedroom table, I have only to stretch out an arm and raise the window-curtain to see the thick-planted garden budding and breathing and growing in the silvery silence. Far above in the liquid darkness rolls the brilliant ball of the moon; beneath, in its light, lies the lake, in murmuring, troubled sleep; round about, the mountains, looking strange and blanched, seem to bare their heads and undrape their shoulders. So much for midnight. To-morrow the scene will be lovely with the beauty of day. Under one aspect or another I have it always before me. At the end of the garden is moored a boat, in which Theodore and I have indulged in an immense deal of irregular navigation. What lovely landward coves and bays—what alder-smothered creeks—what lily-sheeted pools—what sheer steep hillsides, making the water dark and quiet where they hang. I confess that in these excursions Theodore looks after the boat and I after the scenery. Mr. Sloane avoids the water—on account of the dampness, he says; because he's afraid of drowning, I suspect.

22d.—Theodore is right. The *bonhomme* has taken me into his favor. I protest I don't see how he was to escape it. *Je l'ai bien soigné*, as they say in Paris. I don't blush for it. In one coin or another I must repay his hospitality—which is certainly very liberal. Theodore dots his *i*'s, crosses his *t*'s, verifies his quotations; while I set traps for that famous "curiosity." This speaks vastly well for my powers. He pretends to be surprised at nothing, and to possess in perfection—poor, pitiable old fop—the art of keeping his countenance; but repeatedly, I know, I have made him stare. As for his corruption, which I spoke of above, it's a very pretty piece of wickedness, but it strikes me as a purely intellectual matter. I imagine him never to have had any real senses. He may have been unclean; morally, he's not very tidy now; but he never can have been what the French call a *viveur*. He's too delicate, he's of a feminine turn; and what woman was ever a *viveur*? He likes to sit in his chair and read scandal, talk scandal,

make scandal, so far as he may without catching a cold or bringing on a headache. I already feel as if I had known him a lifetime. I read him as clearly as if I had. I know the type to which he belongs; I have encountered, first and last, a good many specimens of it. He's neither more nor less than a gossip—a gossip flanked by a coxcomb and an egotist. He's shallow, vain, cold, superstitious, timid, pretentious, capricious: a pretty list of foibles! And yet, for all this, he has his good points. His caprices are sometimes generous, and his rebellion against the ugliness of life frequently makes him do kind things. His memory (for trifles) is remarkable, and (where his own performances are not involved) his taste is excellent. He has no courage for evil more than for good. He is the victim, however, of more illusions with regard to himself than I ever knew a single brain to shelter. At the age of twenty, poor, ignorant and remarkably handsome, he married a woman of immense wealth, many years his senior. At the end of three years she very considerably took herself off and left him to the enjoyment of his freedom and riches. If he had remained poor he might from time to time have rubbed at random against the truth, and would be able to recognize the touch of it. But he wraps himself in his money as in a wadded dressing-gown, and goes trundling through life on his little gold wheels. The greater part of his career, from the time of his marriage till about ten years ago, was spent in Europe, which, superficially, he knows very well. He has lived in fifty places, known thousands of people, and spent a very large fortune. At one time, I believe, he spent considerably too much, trembled for an instant on the verge of a pecuniary crash, but recovered himself, and found himself more frightened than hurt, yet audibly recommended to lower his pitch. He passed five years in a species of penitent seclusion on the lake of—I forget what (his genius seems to be partial to lakes), and laid the basis of his present magnificent taste for literature. I can't call him anything but magnificent in this respect, so long as he must have his punctuation done by a *nature distinguée*. At the close of this period, by economy, he had made up his losses. His turning the screw during those relatively impecunious years represents, I am pretty sure, the only act of resolution of his life. It was rendered possible by his morbid, his actually pusillanimous dread of poverty; he doesn't feel safe without half a million between him and starvation. Meanwhile he had turned from a young man into an old man; his health was broken, his spirit was jaded, and I imagine, to do him justice, that he began to feel certain natural, filial longings for this dear American mother of us all. They say the most hopeless truants and triflers have come to it. He came to it, at all events; he packed up his books and pictures and gimcracks, and bade farewell to Europe. This house which he now occupies belonged to his wife's estate. She had, for sentimental reasons of her own, commended it to his particular care. On his return he came to see it, liked it, turned a parcel of carpenters and upholsterers into it, and by inhabiting it for nine years transformed it into the perfect dwelling which I find it. Here he has spent all his time, with the exception of a usual winter's visit to New York—a practice recently discontinued, owing to the increase of his ailments and the projection of these famous memoirs. His life has finally come to be passed in comparative solitude. He tells of various distant relatives, as well as intimate friends of both sexes, who used formerly to be entertained at his cost; but with each of them, in the course of time, he seems to have succeeded in quarrelling. Throughout life, evidently, he has had capital fingers for plucking off parasites. Rich, lonely, and vain, he must have been fair game for the race of social sycophants and cormorants; and it's much to the credit of his sharpness and that instinct of self-defence which nature bestows even on the weak, that he has not been despoiled and *exploité*. Apparently they have all been bunglers. I maintain that something is to be done with him still. But one must work in obedience to certain definite laws. Doctor Jones, his physician, tells me that in point of fact he has had for the past ten years an unbroken series of favorites, *protégés*, heirs presumptive; but that each, in turn, by some fatally false movement, has spilled his pottage. The doctor declares, moreover, that they were mostly very common

people. Gradually the old man seems to have developed a preference for two or three strictly exquisite intimates, over a throng of your vulgar pensioners. His tardy literary schemes, too—fruit of his all but sapless senility—have absorbed more and more of his time and attention. The end of it all is, therefore, that Theodore and I have him quite to ourselves, and that it behooves us to hold our porringers straight.

Poor, pretentious old simpleton! It's not his fault, after all, that he fancies himself a great little man. How are you to judge of the stature of mankind when men have forever addressed you on their knees? Peace and joy to his innocent fatuity! He believes himself the most rational of men; in fact, he's the most superstitious. He fancies himself a philosopher, an inquirer, a discoverer. He has not yet discovered that he is a humbug, that Theodore is a prig, and that I am an adventurer. He prides himself on his good manners, his urbanity, his knowing a rule of conduct for every occasion in life. My private impression is that his skinny old bosom contains unsuspected treasures of impertinence. He takes his stand on his speculative audacity—his direct, undaunted gaze at the universe; in truth, his mind is haunted by a hundred dingy old-world spectres and theological phantasms. He imagines himself one of the most solid of men; he is essentially one of the hollowest. He thinks himself ardent, impulsive, passionate, magnanimous—capable of boundless enthusiasm for an idea or a sentiment. It is clear to me that on no occasion of disinterested action can he ever have done anything in time. He believes, finally, that he has drained the cup of life to the dregs; that he has known, in its bitterest intensity, every emotion of which the human spirit is capable; that he has loved, struggled, suffered. Mere vanity, all of it. He has never loved any one but himself; he has never suffered from anything but an undigested supper or an exploded pretension; he has never touched with the end of his lips the vulgar bowl from which the mass of mankind quaffs its floods of joy and sorrow. Well, the long and short of it all is, that I honestly pity him. He may have given sly knocks in his life, but he can't hurt any one now. I pity his ignorance, his weakness, his pusillanimity. He has tasted the real sweetness of life no more than its bitterness; he has never dreamed, nor experimented, nor dared; he has never known any but mercenary affection; neither men nor women have risked aught for *him*—for his good spirits, his good looks, his empty pockets. How I should like to give him, for once, a real sensation!

26th.—I took a row this morning with Theodore a couple of miles along the lake, to a point where we went ashore and lounged away an hour in the sunshine, which is still very comfortable. Poor Theodore seems troubled about many things. For one, he is troubled about me: he is actually more anxious about my future than I myself; he thinks better of me than I do of myself; he is so deucedly conscientious, so scrupulous, so averse to giving offence or to *brusquer* any situation before it has played itself out, that he shrinks from betraying his apprehensions or asking direct questions. But I know that he would like very much to extract from me some intimation that there is something under the sun I should like to do. I catch myself in the act of taking—heaven forgive me!—a half-malignant joy in confounding his expectations—leading his generous sympathies off the scent by giving him momentary glimpses of my latent wickedness. But in Theodore I have so firm a friend that I shall have a considerable job if I ever find it needful to make him change his mind about me. He admires me—that's absolute; he takes my low moral tone for an eccentricity of genius, and it only imparts an extra flavor—a *haut goût*—to the charm of my intercourse. Nevertheless, I can see that he is disappointed. I have even less to show, after all these years, than he had hoped. Heaven help us! little enough it must strike him as being. What a contradiction there is in our being friends at all! I believe we shall end with hating each other. It's all very well now—our agreeing to differ, for we haven't opposed interests. But if we should *really* clash, the situation would be warm! I wonder, as it is, that Theodore keeps his patience with me. His

education since we parted should tend logically to make him despise me. He has studied, thought, suffered, loved—loved those very plain sisters and nieces. Poor me! how should I be virtuous? I have no sisters, plain or pretty!—nothing to love, work for, live for. My dear Theodore, if you are going one of these days to despise me and drop me—in the name of comfort, come to the point at once, and make an end of our state of tension.

He is troubled, too, about Mr. Sloane. His attitude toward the *bonhomme* quite passes my comprehension. It's the queerest jumble of contraries. He penetrates him, disapproves of him—yet respects and admires him. It all comes of the poor boy's shrinking New England conscience. He's afraid to give his perceptions a fair chance, lest, forsooth, they should look over his neighbor's wall. He'll not understand that he may as well sacrifice the old reprobate for a lamb as for a sheep. His view of the gentleman, therefore, is a perfect tissue of cobwebs—a jumble of half-way sorrows, and wire-drawn charities, and hair-breadth 'scapes from utter damnation, and sudden platitudes of generosity—fit, all of it, to make an angel curse!

"The man's a perfect egotist and fool," say I, "but I like him." Now Theodore likes him—or rather wants to like him; but he can't reconcile it to his self-respect—fastidious deity!—to like a fool. Why the deuce can't he leave it alone altogether? It's a purely practical matter. He ought to do the duties of his place all the better for having his head clear of officious sentiment. I don't believe in disinterested service; and Theodore is too desperately bent on preserving his disinterestedness. With me it's different. I am perfectly free to love the *bonhomme*—for a fool. I'm neither a scribe nor a Pharisee; I am simply a student of the art of life.

And then, Theodore is troubled about his sisters. He's afraid he's not doing his duty by them. He thinks he ought to be with them—to be getting a larger salary—to be teaching his nieces. I am not versed in such questions. Perhaps he ought.

May 3d.—This morning Theodore sent me word that he was ill and unable to get up; upon which I immediately went in to see him. He had caught cold, was sick and a little feverish. I urged him to make no attempt to leave his room, and assured him that I would do what I could to reconcile Mr. Sloane to his absence. This I found an easy matter. I read to him for a couple of hours, wrote four letters—one in French—and then talked for a while—a good while. I have done more talking, by the way, in the last fortnight, than in any previous twelve months—much of it, too, none of the wisest, nor, I may add, of the most superstitiously veracious. In a little discussion, two or three days ago, with Theodore, I came to the point and let him know that in gossiping with Mr. Sloane I made no scruple, for our common satisfaction, of "coloring" more or less. My confession gave him "that turn," as Mrs. Gamp would say, that his present illness may be the result of it. Nevertheless, poor dear fellow, I trust he will be on his legs to-morrow. This afternoon, somehow, I found myself really in the humor of talking. There was something propitious in the circumstances; a hard, cold rain without, a wood-fire in the library, the *bonhomme* puffing cigarettes in his arm-chair, beside him a portfolio of newly imported prints and photographs, and—Theodore tucked safely away in bed. Finally, when I brought our *tête-à-tête* to a close (taking good care not to overstay my welcome) Mr. Sloane seized me by both hands and honored me with one of his venerable grins. "Max," he said—"you must let me call you Max—you are the most delightful man I ever knew."

Verily, there's some virtue left in me yet. I believe I almost blushed.

"Why didn't I know you ten years ago?" the old man went on. "There are ten years lost."

"Ten years ago I was not worth your knowing," Max remarked.

"But I did know you!" cried the *bonhomme*. "I knew you in knowing your mother."

Ah! my mother again. When the old man begins that chapter I feel like telling him to blow out his candle and go to bed.

"At all events," he continued, "we must make the most of the years that remain. I am a rotten old carcass, but I have no intention of dying. You won't get tired of me and want to go away?"

"I am devoted to you, sir," I said. "But I must be looking for some occupation, you know."

"Occupation? bother! I'll give you occupation. I'll give you wages."

"I am afraid that you will want to give me the wages without the work."

And then I declared that I must go up and look at poor Theodore.

The *bonhomme* still kept my hands. "I wish very much that I could get you to be as fond of me as you are of poor Theodore."

"Ah, don't talk about fondness, Mr. Sloane. I don't deal much in that article."

"Don't you like my secretary?"

"Not as he deserves."

"Nor as he likes you, perhaps?"

"He likes me more than I deserve."

"Well, Max," my host pursued, "we can be good friends all the same. We don't need a hocus-pocus of false sentiment. We are *men*, aren't we?—men of sublime good sense." And just here, as the old man looked at me, the pressure of his hands deepened to a convulsive grasp, and the bloodless mask of his countenance was suddenly distorted with a nameless fear. "Ah, my dear young man!" he cried, "come and be a son to me—the son of my age and desolation! For God's sake, don't leave me to pine and die alone!"

I was greatly surprised—and I may add I was moved. Is it true, then, that this dilapidated organism contains such measureless depths of horror and longing? He has evidently a mortal fear of death. I assured him on my honor that he may henceforth call upon me for any service.

8th.—Theodore's little turn proved more serious than I expected. He has been confined to his room till to-day. This evening he came down to the library in his dressing-gown. Decidedly, Mr. Sloane is an eccentric, but hardly, as Theodore thinks, a "charming" one. There is something extremely curious in his humors and fancies—the incongruous fits and starts, as it were, of his taste. For some reason, best known to himself, he took it into his head to regard it as a want of delicacy, of respect, of *savoir-vivre*—of heaven knows what—that poor Theodore, who is still weak and languid, should enter the sacred precinct of his study in the vulgar drapery of a dressing-gown. The sovereign trouble with the *bonhomme* is an absolute lack of the instinct of justice. He's of the real feminine turn—I believe I have written it before—without the redeeming fidelity of the sex. I honestly believe that I might come into his study in my night-shirt and he would smile at it as a picturesque *déshabillé*. But for poor Theodore to-night there was nothing but scowls and frowns, and barely a civil inquiry about his health. But poor Theodore is not such a fool, either; he will not die of a snubbing; I never said he was a weakling. Once he fairly saw from what quarter the wind blew, he bore the master's brutality with the utmost coolness and gallantry. Can it be that Mr. Sloane really wishes to drop him? The delicious old brute! He understands favor and friendship only as a selfish rapture—a reaction, an infatuation, an act of aggressive, exclusive patronage. It's not a bestowal, with him, but a transfer, and half his pleasure in causing his sun to shine is that—

being woefully near its setting—it will produce certain long fantastic shadows. He wants to cast my shadow, I suppose, over Theodore; but fortunately I am not altogether an opaque body. Since Theodore was taken ill he has been into his room but once, and has sent him none but a dry little message or two. I, too, have been much less attentive than I should have wished to be; but my time has not been my own. It has been, every moment of it, at the disposal of my host. He actually runs after me; he devours me; he makes a fool of himself, and is trying hard to make one of me. I find that he will bear—that, in fact, he actually enjoys—a sort of unexpected contradiction. He likes anything that will tickle his fancy, give an unusual tone to our relations, remind him of certain historical characters whom he thinks he resembles. I have stepped into Theodore's shoes, and done—with what I feel in my bones to be very inferior skill and taste—all the reading, writing, condensing, transcribing and advising that he has been accustomed to do. I have driven with the *bonhomme*; played chess and cribbage with him; beaten him, bullied him, contradicted him; forced him into going out on the water under my charge. Who shall say, after this, that I haven't done my best to discourage his advances, put myself in a bad light? As yet, my efforts are vain; in fact they quite turn to my own confusion. Mr. Sloane is so thankful at having escaped from the lake with his life that he looks upon me as a preserver and protector. Confound it all; it's a bore! But one thing is certain, it can't last forever. Admit that he *has* cast Theodore out and taken me in. He will speedily discover that he has made a pretty mess of it, and that he had much better have left well enough alone. He likes my reading and writing now, but in a month he will begin to hate them. He will miss Theodore's better temper and better knowledge—his healthy impersonal judgment. What an advantage that well-regulated youth has over me, after all! I am for days, he is for years; he for the long run, I for the short. I, perhaps, am intended for success, but he is adapted for happiness. He has in his heart a tiny sacred particle which leavens his whole being and keeps it pure and sound—a faculty of admiration and respect. For him human nature is still a wonder and a mystery; it bears a divine stamp—Mr. Sloane's tawdry composition as well as the rest.

13th.—I have refused, of course, to supplant Theodore further, in the exercise of his functions, and he has resumed his morning labors with Mr. Sloane. I, on my side, have spent these morning hours in scouring the country on that capital black mare, the use of which is one of the perquisites of Theodore's place. The days have been magnificent—the heat of the sun tempered by a murmuring, wandering wind, the whole north a mighty ecstasy of sound and verdure, the sky a far-away vault of bended blue. Not far from the mill at M., the other end of the lake, I met, for the third time, that very pretty young girl who reminds me so forcibly of A.L. She makes so lavish a use of her eyes that I ventured to stop and bid her good-morning. She seems nothing loath to an acquaintance. She's a pure barbarian in speech, but her eyes are quite articulate. These rides do me good; I was growing too pensive.

There is something the matter with Theodore; his illness seems to have left him strangely affected. He has fits of silent stiffness, alternating with spasms of extravagant gayety. He avoids me at times for hours together, and then he comes and looks at me with an inscrutable smile, as if he were on the verge of a burst of confidence—which again is swallowed up in the immensity of his dumbness. Is he hatching some astounding benefit to his species? Is he working to bring about my removal to a higher sphere of action? *Nous verrons bien*.

18th.—Theodore threatens departure. He received this morning a letter from one of his sisters—the young widow—announcing her engagement to a clergyman whose acquaintance she has recently made, and intimating her expectation of an immediate union with the gentleman—a ceremony which would require Theodore's attendance. Theodore, in high good humor, read the letter aloud at breakfast—and, to tell the truth, it was a charming epistle. He then spoke of his having to go on to the wedding, a proposition to which Mr. Sloane

graciously assented—much more than assented. "I shall be sorry to lose you, after so happy a connection," said the old man. Theodore turned pale, stared a moment, and then, recovering his color and his composure, declared that he should have no objection in life to coming back.

"Bless your soul!" cried the *bonhomme*, "you don't mean to say you will leave your other sister all alone?"

To which Theodore replied that he would arrange for her and her little girl to live with the married pair. "It's the only proper thing," he remarked, as if it were quite settled. Has it come to this, then, that Mr. Sloane actually wants to turn him out of the house? The shameless old villain! He keeps smiling an uncanny smile, which means, as I read it, that if the poor young man once departs he shall never return on the old footing—for all his impudence!

20th.—This morning, at breakfast, we had a terrific scene. A letter arrives for Theodore; he opens it, turns white and red, frowns, falters, and then informs us that the clever widow has broken off her engagement. No wedding, therefore, and no departure for Theodore. The *bonhomme* was furious. In his fury he took the liberty of calling poor Mrs. Parker (the sister) a very uncivil name. Theodore rebuked him, with perfect good taste, and kept his temper.

"If my opinions don't suit you, Mr. Lisle," the old man broke out, "and my mode of expressing them displeases you, you know you can easily protect yourself."

"My dear Mr. Sloane," said Theodore, "your opinions, as a general thing, interest me deeply, and have never ceased to act beneficially upon the formation of my own. Your mode of expressing them is always brilliant, and I wouldn't for the world, after all our pleasant intercourse, separate from you in bitterness. Only, I repeat, your qualification of my sister's conduct is perfectly uncalled for. If you knew her, you would be the first to admit it."

There was something in Theodore's look and manner, as he said these words, which puzzled me all the morning. After dinner, finding myself alone with him, I told him I was glad he was not obliged to go away. He looked at me with the mysterious smile I have mentioned, thanked me, and fell into meditation. As this bescribbled chronicle is the record of my follies as well of my *hauts faits*, I needn't hesitate to say that for a moment I was a good deal vexed. What business has this angel of candor to deal in signs and portents, to look unutterable things? What right has he to do so with me especially, in whom he has always professed an absolute confidence? Just as I was about to cry out, "Come, my dear fellow, this affectation of mystery has lasted quite long enough—favor me at last with the result of your cogitations!"—as I was on the point of thus expressing my impatience of his ominous behavior, the oracle at last addressed itself to utterance.

"You see, my dear Max," he said, "I can't, in justice to myself, go away in obedience to the sort of notice that was served on me this morning. What do you think of my actual footing here?"

Theodore's actual footing here seems to me impossible; of course I said so.

"No, I assure you it's not," he answered. "I should, on the contrary, feel very uncomfortable to think that I had come away, except by my own choice. You see a man can't afford to cheapen himself. What are you laughing at?"

"I am laughing, in the first place, my dear fellow, to hear on your lips the language of cold calculation; and in the second place, at your odd notion of the process by which a man keeps himself up in the market."

"I assure you it's the correct notion. I came here as a particular favor to Mr. Sloane; it was expressly understood so. The sort of work was odious to me; I had regularly to break myself in. I had to trample on my convictions, preferences, prejudices. I don't take such things easily; I take them hard; and when once the effort has been made, I can't consent to have it wasted. If Mr. Sloane needed me then, he needs me still. I am ignorant of any change having taken place in his intentions, or in his means of satisfying them. I came, not to amuse him, but to do a certain work; I hope to remain until the work is completed. To go away sooner is to make a confession of incapacity which, I protest, costs me too much. I am too conceited, if you like."

Theodore spoke these words with a face which I have never seen him wear—a fixed, mechanical smile; a hard, dry glitter in his eyes; a harsh, strident tone in his voice—in his whole physiognomy a gleam, as it were, a note of defiance. Now I confess that for defiance I have never been conscious of an especial relish. When I am defied I am beastly. "My dear man," I replied, "your sentiments do you prodigious credit. Your very ingenious theory of your present situation, as well as your extremely pronounced sense of your personal value, are calculated to insure you a degree of practical success which can very well dispense with the furtherance of my poor good wishes." Oh, the grimness of his visage as he listened to this, and, I suppose I may add, the grimness of mine! But I have ceased to be puzzled. Theodore's conduct for the past ten days is suddenly illumined with a backward, lurid ray. I will note down here a few plain truths which it behooves me to take to heart—commit to memory. Theodore is jealous of Maximus Austin. Theodore hates the said Maximus. Theodore has been seeking for the past three months to see his name written, last but not least, in a certain testamentary document: "Finally, I bequeath to my dear young friend, Theodore Lisle, in return for invaluable services and unflinching devotion, the bulk of my property, real and personal, consisting of—" (hereupon follows an exhaustive enumeration of houses, lands, public securities, books, pictures, horses, and dogs). It is for this that he has toiled, and watched, and prayed; submitted to intellectual weariness and spiritual torture; accommodated himself to levity, blasphemy, and insult. For this he sets his teeth and tightens his grasp; for this he'll fight. Dear me, it's an immense weight off one's mind! There are nothing, then, but vulgar, common laws; no sublime exceptions, no transcendent anomalies. Theodore's a knave, a hypo—nay, nay; stay, irreverent hand!—Theodore's a *man*! Well, that's all I want. *He* wants fight—he shall have it. Have I got, at last, my simple, natural emotion?

21st.—I have lost no time. This evening, late, after I had heard Theodore go to his room (I had left the library early, on the pretext of having letters to write), I repaired to Mr. Sloane, who had not yet gone to bed, and informed him I should be obliged to leave him at once, and pick up a subsistence somehow in New York. He felt the blow; it brought him straight down on his marrow-bones. He went through the whole gamut of his arts and graces; he blustered, whimpered, entreated, flattered. He tried to drag in Theodore's name; but this I, of course, prevented. But, finally, why, *why*, WHY, after all my promises of fidelity, must I thus cruelly desert him? Then came my trump card: I have spent my last penny; while I stay, I'm a beggar. The remainder of this extraordinary scene I have no power to describe: how the *bonhomme*, touched, inflamed, inspired, by the thought of my destitution, and at the same time annoyed, perplexed, bewildered at having to commit himself to doing anything for me, worked himself into a nervous frenzy which deprived him of a clear sense of the value of his words and his actions; how I, prompted by the irresistible spirit of my desire to leap astride of his weakness and ride it hard to the goal of my dreams, cunningly contrived to keep his spirit at the fever-point, so that strength and reason and resistance should burn themselves out. I shall probably never again have such a sensation as I enjoyed to-night—actually feel a heated human heart throbbing and turning and struggling in my grasp; know its pants, its spasms, its convulsions, and its final senseless quiescence. At half-past one o'clock Mr. Sloane got out of his chair,

went to his secretary, opened a private drawer, and took out a folded paper. "This is my will," he said, "made some seven weeks ago. If you will stay with me I will destroy it."

"Really, Mr. Sloane," I said, "if you think my purpose is to exert any pressure upon your testamentary inclinations—"

"I will tear it in pieces," he cried; "I will burn it up! I shall be as sick as a dog to-morrow; but I will do it. A-a-h!"

He clapped his hand to his side, as if in sudden, overwhelming pain, and sank back fainting into his chair. A single glance assured me that he was unconscious. I possessed myself of the paper, opened it, and perceived that he had left everything to his saintly secretary. For an instant a savage, puerile feeling of hate popped up in my bosom, and I came within a hair's-breadth of obeying my foremost impulse—that of stuffing the document into the fire.

Fortunately, my reason overtook my passion, though for a moment it was an even race. I put the paper back into the bureau, closed it, and rang the bell for Robert (the old man's servant). Before he came I stood watching the poor, pale remnant of mortality before me, and wondering whether those feeble life-gasps were numbered. He was as white as a sheet, grimacing with pain—horribly ugly. Suddenly he opened his eyes; they met my own; I fell on my knees and took his hands. They closed on mine with a grasp strangely akin to the rigidity of death. Nevertheless, since then he has revived, and has relapsed again into a comparatively healthy sleep. Robert seems to know how to deal with him.

22d.—Mr. Sloane is seriously ill—out of his mind and unconscious of people's identity. The doctor has been here, off and on, all day, but this evening reports improvement. I have kept out of the old man's room, and confined myself to my own, reflecting largely upon the chance of his immediate death. Does Theodore know of the will? Would it occur to him to divide the property? Would it occur to me, in his place? We met at dinner, and talked in a grave, desultory, friendly fashion. After all, he's an excellent fellow. I don't hate him. I don't even dislike him. He jars on me, *il m'agace*; but that's no reason why I should do him an evil turn. Nor shall I. The property is a fixed idea, that's all. I shall get it if I can. We are fairly matched. Before heaven, no, we are not fairly matched! Theodore has a conscience.

23d.—I am restless and nervous—and for good reasons. Scribbling here keeps me quiet. This morning Mr. Sloane is better; feeble and uncertain in mind, but unmistakably on the rise. I may confess now that I feel relieved of a horrid burden. Last night I hardly slept a wink. I lay awake listening to the pendulum of my clock. It seemed to say, "He lives—he dies." I fully expected to hear it stop suddenly at *dies*. But it kept going all the morning, and to a decidedly more lively tune. In the afternoon the old man sent for me. I found him in his great muffled bed, with his face the color of damp chalk, and his eyes glowing faintly, like torches half stamped out. I was forcibly struck with the utter loneliness of his lot. For all human attendance, my villainous self grinning at his bedside and old Robert without, listening, doubtless, at the keyhole. The *bonhomme* stared at me stupidly; then seemed to know me, and greeted me with a sickly smile. It was some moments before he was able to speak. At last he faintly bade me to descend into the library, open the secret drawer of the secretary (which he contrived to direct me how to do), possess myself of his will, and burn it up. He appears to have forgotten his having taken it out night before last. I told him that I had an insurmountable aversion to any personal dealings with the document. He smiled, patted the back of my hand, and requested me, in that case, to get it, at least, and bring it to him. I couldn't deny him that favor? No, I couldn't, indeed. I went down to the library, therefore, and on entering the room found Theodore standing by the fireplace with a bundle of papers. The secretary was open. I stood still, looking from the violated cabinet to the documents in his hand. Among them I recognized, by its shape and size, the paper of which I had intended to

possess myself. Without delay I walked straight up to him. He looked surprised, but not confused. "I am afraid I shall have to trouble you to surrender one of those papers," I said.

"Surrender, Maximus? To anything of your own you are perfectly welcome. I didn't know that you made use of Mr. Sloane's secretary. I was looking for some pages of notes which I have made myself and in which I conceive I have a property."

"This is what I want, Theodore," I said; and I drew the will, unfolded, from between his hands. As I did so his eyes fell upon the superscription, "Last Will and Testament, March. F.S." He flushed an extraordinary crimson. Our eyes met. Somehow—I don't know how or why, or for that matter why not—I burst into a violent peal of laughter. Theodore stood staring, with two hot, bitter tears in his eyes.

"Of course you think I came to ferret out that thing," he said.

I shrugged my shoulders—those of my body only. I confess, morally, I was on my knees with contrition, but there was a fascination in it—a fatality. I remembered that in the hurry of my movements the other evening I had slipped the will simply into one of the outer drawers of the cabinet, among Theodore's own papers. "Mr. Sloane sent me for it," I remarked.

"Very good; I am glad to hear he's well enough to think of such things."

"He means to destroy it."

"I hope, then, he has another made."

"Mentally, I suppose he has."

"Unfortunately, his weakness isn't mental—or exclusively so."

"Oh, he will live to make a dozen more," I said. "Do you know the purport of this one?"

Theodore's color, by this time, had died away into plain white. He shook his head. The doggedness of the movement provoked me, and I wished to arouse his curiosity. "I have his commission to destroy it."

Theodore smiled very grandly. "It's not a task I envy you," he said.

"I should think not—especially if you knew the import of the will." He stood with folded arms, regarding me with his cold, detached eyes. I couldn't stand it. "Come, it's your property! You are sole legatee. I give it up to you." And I thrust the paper into his hand.

He received it mechanically; but after a pause, bethinking himself, he unfolded it and cast his eyes over the contents. Then he slowly smoothed it together and held it a moment with a tremulous hand. "You say that Mr. Sloane directed you to destroy it?" he finally inquired.

"I say so."

"And that you know the contents?"

"Exactly."

"And that you were about to do what he asked you?"

"On the contrary, I declined."

Theodore fixed his eyes for a moment on the superscription and then raised them again to my face. "Thank you, Max," he said. "You have left me a real satisfaction." He tore the sheet across and threw the bits into the fire. We stood watching them burn. "Now he can make another," said Theodore.

"Twenty others," I replied.

"No," said Theodore, "you will take care of that."

"You are very bitter," I said, sharply enough.

"No, I am perfectly indifferent. Farewell." And he put out his hand.

"Are you going away?"

"Of course I am. Good-by."

"Good-by, then. But isn't your departure rather sudden?"

"I ought to have gone three weeks ago—three weeks ago." I had taken his hand, he pulled it away; his voice was trembling—there were tears in it.

"Is *that* indifference?" I asked.

"It's something you will never know!" he cried. "It's shame! I am not sorry you should see what I feel. It will suggest to you, perhaps, that my heart has never been in this filthy contest. Let me assure you, at any rate, that it hasn't; that it has had nothing but scorn for the base perversion of my pride and my ambition. I could easily shed tears of joy at their return—the return of the prodigals! Tears of sorrow—sorrow—"

He was unable to go on. He sank into a chair, covering his face with his hands.

"For God's sake, stick to the joy!" I exclaimed.

He rose to his feet again. "Well," he said, "it was for your sake that I parted with my self-respect; with your assistance I recover it."

"How for my sake?"

"For whom but you would I have gone as far as I did? For what other purpose than that of keeping our friendship whole would I have borne you company into this narrow pass? A man whom I cared for less I would long since have parted with. You were needed—you and something you have about you that always takes me so—to bring me to this. You ennobled, exalted, enchanted the struggle. I *did* value my prospect of coming into Mr. Sloane's property. I valued it for my poor sister's sake as well as for my own, so long as it was the natural reward of conscientious service, and not the prize of hypocrisy and cunning. With another man than you I never would have contested such a prize. But you fascinated me, even as my rival. You played with me, deceived me, betrayed me. I held my ground, hoping you would see that what you were doing was not fair. But if you have seen it, it has made no difference with you. For Mr. Sloane, from the moment that, under your magical influence, he revealed his nasty little nature, I had nothing but contempt."

"And for me now?"

"Don't ask me. I don't trust myself."

"Hate, I suppose."

"Is that the best you can imagine? Farewell."

"Is it a serious farewell—farewell forever?"

"How can there be any other?"

"I am sorry this should be your point of view. It's characteristic. All the more reason then that I should say a word in self-defence. You accuse me of having 'played with you, deceived you, betrayed you.' It seems to me that you are quite beside the mark. You say you were such a

friend of mine; if so, you ought to be one still. It was not to my fine sentiments you attached yourself, for I never had any or pretended to any. In anything I have done recently, therefore, there has been no inconsistency. I never pretended to take one's friendships so seriously. I don't understand the word in the sense you attach to it. I don't understand the feeling of affection between men. To me it means quite another thing. You give it a meaning of your own; you enjoy the profit of your invention; it's no more than just that you should pay the penalty. Only it seems to me rather hard that *I* should pay it." Theodore remained silent, but he looked quite sick. "Is it still a 'serious farewell'?" I went on. "It seems a pity. After this clearing up, it appears to me that I shall be on better terms with you. No man can have a deeper appreciation of your excellent parts, a keener enjoyment of your society. I should very much regret the loss of it."

"Have we, then, all this while understood each other so little?" said Theodore.

"Don't say 'we' and 'each other.' I think I have understood you."

"Very likely. It's not for my having kept anything back."

"Well, I do you justice. To me you have always been over-generous. Try now and be just."

Still he stood silent, with his cold, hard frown; it was plain that, if he was to come back to me, it would be from the other world—if there be one! What he was going to answer I know not. The door opened, and Robert appeared, pale, trembling, his eyes starting in his head.

"I verily believe that poor Mr. Sloane is dead in his bed!" he cried.

There was a moment's perfect silence. "Amen," said I. "Yes, old boy, try and be just." Mr. Sloane had quietly died in my absence.

24th.—Theodore went up to town this morning, having shaken hands with me in silence before he started. Doctor Jones, and Brooks the attorney, have been very officious, and, by their advice, I have telegraphed to a certain Miss Meredith, a maiden lady, by their account the nearest of kin; or, in other words, simply a discarded niece of the defunct. She telegraphs back that she will arrive in person for the funeral. I shall remain till she comes. I have lost a fortune, but have I irretrievably lost a friend? I am sure I can't say. Yes, I shall wait for Miss Meredith.

Gabrielle De Bergerac

PART I

My good old friend, in his white flannel dressing-gown, with his wig "removed," as they say of the dinner-service, by a crimson nightcap, sat for some moments gazing into the fire. At last he looked up. I knew what was coming. "Apropos, that little debt of mine—"

Not that the debt was really very little. But M. de Bergerac was a man of honor, and I knew I should receive my dues. He told me frankly that he saw no way, either in the present or the future, to reimburse me in cash. His only treasures were his paintings; would I choose one of them? Now I had not spent an hour in M. de Bergerac's little parlor twice a week for three winters, without learning that the Baron's paintings were, with a single exception, of very indifferent merit. On the other hand, I had taken a great fancy to the picture thus excepted. Yet, as I knew it was a family portrait, I hesitated to claim it. I refused to make a choice. M. de Bergerac, however, insisted, and I finally laid my finger on the charming image of my friend's aunt. I of course insisted, on my side, that M. de Bergerac should retain it during the remainder of his life, and so it was only after his decease that I came into possession of it. It hangs above my table as I write, and I have only to glance up at the face of my heroine to feel how vain it is to attempt to describe it. The portrait represents, in dimensions several degrees below those of nature, the head and shoulders of a young girl of two-and-twenty. The execution of the work is not especially strong, but it is thoroughly respectable and one may easily see that the painter deeply appreciated the character of the face. The countenance is interesting rather than beautiful,—the forehead broad and open, the eyes slightly prominent, all the features full and firm and yet replete with gentleness. The head is slightly thrown back, as if in movement, and the lips are parted in a half-smile. And yet, in spite of this tender smile, I always fancy that the eyes are sad. The hair, dressed without powder, is rolled back over a high cushion (as I suppose), and adorned just above the left ear with a single white rose; while, on the other side, a heavy tress from behind hangs upon the neck with a sort of pastoral freedom. The neck is long and full, and the shoulders rather broad. The whole face has a look of mingled softness and decision, and seems to reveal a nature inclined to revery, affection, and repose, but capable of action and even of heroism. Mlle. de Bergerac died under the axe of the Terrorists. Now that I had acquired a certain property in this sole memento of her life, I felt a natural curiosity as to her character and history. Had M. de Bergerac known his aunt? Did he remember her? Would it be a tax on his good-nature to suggest that he should favor me with a few reminiscences? The old man fixed his eyes on the fire, and laid his hand on mine, as if his memory were fain to draw from both sources—from the ruddy glow and from my fresh young blood—a certain vital, quickening warmth. A mild, rich smile ran to his lips, and he pressed my hand. Somehow,—I hardly know why,—I felt touched almost to tears. Mlle. de Bergerac had been a familiar figure in her nephew's boyhood, and an important event in her life had formed a sort of episode in his younger days. It was a simple enough story; but such as it was, then and there, settling back into his chair, with the fingers of the clock wandering on to the small hours of the night, he told it with a tender, lingering garrulity. Such as it is, I repeat it. I shall give, as far as possible, my friend's words, or the English of them; but the reader will have to do without his inimitable accents. For them there is no English.

My father's household at Bergerac (said the Baron) consisted, exclusive of the servants, of five persons,—himself, my mother, my aunt (Mlle. de Bergerac), M. Coquelin (my preceptor), and M. Coquelin's pupil, the heir of the house. Perhaps, indeed, I should have

numbered M. Coquelin among the servants. It is certain that my mother did. Poor little woman! she was a great stickler for the rights of birth. Her own birth was all she had, for she was without health, beauty, or fortune. My father, on his side, had very little of the last; his property of Bergerac yielded only enough to keep us without discredit. We gave no entertainments, and passed the whole year in the country; and as my mother was resolved that her weak health should do her a kindness as well as an injury, it was put forward as an apology for everything. We led at best a simple, somnolent sort of life. There was a terrible amount of leisure for rural gentlefolks in those good old days. We slept a great deal; we slept, you will say, on a volcano. It was a very different world from this patent new world of yours, and I may say that I was born on a different planet. Yes, in 1789, there came a great convulsion; the earth cracked and opened and broke, and this poor old *pays de France* went whirling through space. When I look back at my childhood, I look over a gulf. Three years ago, I spent a week at a country house in the neighborhood of Bergerac, and my hostess drove me over to the site of the château. The house has disappeared, and there's a homœopathic—hydropathic—what do you call it?—establishment erected in its place. But the little town is there, and the bridge on the river, and the church where I was christened, and the double row of lime-trees on the market-place, and the fountain in the middle. There's only one striking difference: the sky is changed. I was born under the old sky. It was black enough, of course, if we had only had eyes to see it; but to me, I confess, it looked divinely blue. And in fact it was very bright,—the little patch under which I cast my juvenile shadow. An odd enough little shadow you would have thought it. I was promiscuously cuddled and fondled. I was M. le Chevalier, and prospective master of Bergerac; and when I walked to church on Sunday, I had a dozen yards of lace on my coat and a little sword at my side. My poor mother did her best to make me good for nothing. She had her maid to curl my hair with the tongs, and she used with her own fingers to stick little black patches on my face. And yet I was a good deal neglected too, and I would go for days with black patches of another sort. I'm afraid I should have got very little education if a kind Providence hadn't given me poor M. Coquelin. A kind Providence, that is, and my father; for with my mother my tutor was no favorite. She thought him—and, indeed, she called him—a bumpkin, a clown. There was a very pretty abbé among her friends, M. Tiblaud by name, whom she wished to install at the château as my intellectual, and her spiritual, adviser; but my father, who, without being anything of an *esprit fort*, had an incurable aversion to a priest out of church, very soon routed this pious scheme. My poor father was an odd figure of a man. He belonged to a type as completely obsolete as the biggest of those big-boned, pre-historic monsters discovered by M. Cuvier. He was not overburdened with opinions or principles. The only truth that was absolute to his perception was that the house of Bergerac was *de bonne noblesse*. His tastes were not delicate. He was fond of the open air, of long rides, of the smell of the game-stocked woods in autumn, of playing at bowls, of a drinking-cup, of a dirty pack of cards, and a free-spoken tavern Hebe. I have nothing of him but his name. I strike you as an old fossil, a relic, a mummy. Good heavens! you should have seen him,—his good, his bad manners, his arrogance, his *bonhomie*, his stupidity and pluck.

My early years had promised ill for my health; I was listless and languid, and my father had been content to leave me to the women, who, on the whole, as I have said, left me a good deal to myself. But one morning he seemed suddenly to remember that he had a little son and heir running wild. It was, I remember, in my ninth year, a morning early in June, after breakfast, at eleven o'clock. He took me by the hand and led me out on the terrace, and sat down and made me stand between his knees. I was engaged upon a great piece of bread and butter, which I had brought away from the table. He put his hand into my hair, and, for the first time that I could remember, looked me straight in the face. I had seen him take the forelock of a young colt in the same way, when he wished to look at its teeth. What did he want? Was he

going to send me for sale? His eyes seemed prodigiously black and his eyebrows terribly thick. They were very much the eyebrows of that portrait. My father passed his other hand over the muscles of my arms and the sinews of my poor little legs.

"Chevalier," said he, "you're dreadfully puny. What's one to do with you?"

I dropped my eyes and said nothing. Heaven knows I felt puny.

"It's time you knew how to read and write. What are you blushing at?"

"I *do* know how to read," said I.

My father stared. "Pray, who taught you?"

"I learned in a book."

"What book?"

I looked up at my father before I answered. His eyes were bright, and there was a little flush in his face,—I hardly knew whether of pleasure or anger. I disengaged myself and went into the drawing-room, where I took from a cupboard in the wall an odd volume of Scarron's *Roman comique*. As I had to go through the house, I was absent some minutes. When I came back I found a stranger on the terrace. A young man in poor clothes, with a walking-stick, had come up from the avenue, and stood before my father, with his hat in his hand. At the farther end of the terrace was my aunt. She was sitting on the parapet, playing with a great black crow, which we kept in a cage in the dining-room window. I betook myself to my father's side with my book, and stood staring at our visitor. He was a dark-eyed, sunburnt young man, of about twenty-eight, of middle height, broad in the shoulders and short in the neck, with a slight lameness in one of his legs. He looked travel-stained and weary and pale. I remember there was something prepossessing in his being pale. I didn't know that the paleness came simply from his being horribly hungry.

"In view of these facts," he said, as I came up, "I have ventured to presume upon the goodwill of M. le Baron."

My father sat back in his chair, with his legs apart and a hand on each knee and his waistcoat unbuttoned, as was usual after a meal. "Upon my word," he said, "I don't know what I can do for you. There's no place for you in my own household."

The young man was silent a moment. "Has M. le Baron any children?" he asked, after a pause.

"I have my son whom you see here."

"May I inquire if M. le Chevalier is supplied with a preceptor?"

My father glanced down at me. "Indeed, he seems to be," he cried. "What have you got there?" And he took my book. "The little rascal has M. Scarron for a teacher. This is his preceptor!"

I blushed very hard, and the young man smiled. "Is that your only teacher?" he asked.

"My aunt taught me to read," I said, looking round at her.

"And did your aunt recommend this book?" asked my father.

"My aunt gave me M. Plutarque," I said.

My father burst out laughing, and the young man put his hat up to his mouth. But I could see that above it his eyes had a very good-natured look. My aunt, seeing that her name had been mentioned, walked slowly over to where we stood, still holding her crow on her hand. You

have her there before you; judge how she looked. I remember that she frequently dressed in blue, my poor aunt, and I know that she must have dressed simply. Fancy her in a light stuff gown, covered with big blue flowers, with a blue ribbon in her dark hair, and the points of her high-heeled blue slippers peeping out under her stiff white petticoat. Imagine her strolling along the terrace of the château with a villainous black crow perched on her wrist. You'll admit it's a picture.

"Is all this true, sister?" said my father. "Is the Chevalier such a scholar?"

"He's a clever boy," said my aunt, putting her hand on my head.

"It seems to me that at a pinch he could do without a preceptor," said my father. "He has such a learned aunt."

"I've taught him all I know. He had begun to ask me questions that I was quite unable to answer."

"I should think he might," cried my father, with a broad laugh, "when once he had got into M. Scarron!"

"Questions out of Plutarch," said Mlle. de Bergerac, "which you must know Latin to answer."

"Would you like to know Latin, M. le Chevalier?" said the young man, looking at me with a smile.

"Do you know Latin,—you?" I asked.

"Perfectly," said the young man, with the same smile.

"Do you want to learn Latin, Chevalier?" said my aunt.

"Every gentleman learns Latin," said the young man.

I looked at the poor fellow, his dusty shoes and his rusty clothes. "But you're not a gentleman," said I.

He blushed up to his eyes. "Ah, I only teach it," he said.

In this way it was that Pierre Coquelin came to be my governor. My father, who had a mortal dislike to all kinds of cogitation and inquiry, engaged him on the simple testimony of his face and of his own account of his talents. His history, as he told it, was in three words as follows: He was of our province, and neither more nor less than the son of a village tailor. He is my hero: *tirez-vous de là*. Showing a lively taste for books, instead of being promoted to the paternal bench, he had been put to study with the Jesuits. After a residence of some three years with these gentlemen, he had incurred their displeasure by a foolish breach of discipline, and had been turned out into the world. Here he had endeavored to make capital out of his excellent education, and had gone up to Paris with the hope of earning his bread as a scribbler. But in Paris he scribbled himself hungry and nothing more, and was in fact in a fair way to die of starvation. At last he encountered an agent of the Marquis de Rochambeau, who was collecting young men for the little army which the latter was prepared to conduct to the aid of the American insurgents. He had engaged himself among Rochambeau's troops, taken part in several battles, and finally received a wound in his leg of which the effect was still perceptible. At the end of three years he had returned to France, and repaired on foot, with what speed he might, to his native town; but only to find that in his absence his father had died, after a tedious illness, in which he had vainly lavished his small earnings upon the physicians, and that his mother had married again, very little to his taste. Poor Coquelin was friendless, penniless, and homeless. But once back on his native soil, he found himself possessed again by his old passion for letters, and, like: all starving members of his craft, he

had turned his face to Paris. He longed to make up for his three years in the wilderness. He trudged along, lonely, hungry, and weary, till he came to the gates of Bergerac. Here, sitting down to rest on a stone, he saw us come out on the terrace to digest our breakfast in the sun. Poor Coquelin! he had the stomach of a gentleman. He was filled with an irresistible longing to rest awhile from his struggle with destiny, and it seemed to him that for a mess of smoking pottage he would gladly exchange his vague and dubious future. In obedience to this simple impulse,—an impulse touching in its humility, when you knew the man,—he made his way up the avenue. We looked affable enough,—an honest country gentleman, a young girl playing with a crow, and a little boy eating bread and butter; and it turned out, we were as kindly as we looked.

For me, I soon grew extremely fond of him, and I was glad to think in later days that he had found me a thoroughly docile child. In those days, you know, thanks to Jean Jacques Rousseau, there was a vast stir in men's notions of education, and a hundred theories afloat about the perfect teacher and the perfect pupil. Coquelin was a firm devotee of Jean Jacques, and very possibly applied some of his precepts to my own little person. But of his own nature Coquelin was incapable of anything that was not wise and gentle, and he had no need to learn humanity in books. He was, nevertheless, a great reader, and when he had not a volume in his hand he was sure to have two in his pockets. He had half a dozen little copies of the Greek and Latin poets, bound in yellow parchment, which, as he said, with a second shirt and a pair of white stockings, constituted his whole library. He had carried these books to America, and read them in the wilderness, and by the light of camp-fires, and in crowded, steaming barracks in winter-quarters. He had a passion for Virgil. M. Scarron was very soon dismissed to the cupboard, among the dice-boxes and the old packs of cards, and I was confined for the time to Virgil and Ovid and Plutarch, all of which, with the stimulus of Coquelin's own delight, I found very good reading. But better than any of the stories I read were those stories of his wanderings, and his odd companions and encounters, and charming tales of pure fantasy, which, with the best grace in the world, he would recite by the hour. We took long walks, and he told me the names of the flowers and the various styles of the stars, and I remember that I often had no small trouble to keep them distinct. He wrote a very bad hand, but he made very pretty drawings of the subjects then in vogue,—nymphs and heroes and shepherds and pastoral scenes. I used to fancy that his knowledge and skill were inexhaustible, and I pestered him so for entertainment that I certainly proved that there were no limits to his patience.

When he first came to us he looked haggard and thin and weary; but before the month was out, he had acquired a comfortable rotundity of person, and something of the sleek and polished look which befits the governor of a gentleman's son. And yet he never lost a certain gravity and reserve of demeanor which was nearly akin to a mild melancholy. With me, half the time, he was of course intolerably bored, and he must have had hard work to keep from yawning in my face,—which, as he knew I knew, would have been an unwarrantable liberty. At table, with my parents, he seemed to be constantly observing himself and inwardly regulating his words and gestures. The simple truth, I take it, was that he had never sat at a gentleman's table, and although he must have known himself incapable of a real breach of civility,—essentially delicate as he was in his feelings,—he was too proud to run the risk of violating etiquette. My poor mother was a great stickler for ceremony, and she would have had her majordomo to lift the covers, even if she had had nothing to put into the dishes. I remember a cruel rebuke she bestowed upon Coquelin, shortly after his arrival. She could never be brought to forget that he had been picked up, as she said, on the roads. At dinner one day, in the absence of Mlle. de Bergerac, who was indisposed, he inadvertently occupied her seat, taking me as a *vis-à-vis* instead of a neighbor. Shortly afterwards, coming to offer wine

to my mother, he received for all response a stare so blank, cold, and insolent as to leave no doubt of her estimate of his presumption. In my mother's simple philosophy, Mlle. de Bergerac's seat could be decently occupied only herself, and in default of her presence should remain conspicuously and sacredly vacant. Dinner at Bergerac was at best, indeed, a cold and dismal ceremony. I see it now,—the great dining-room, with its high windows and their faded curtains, and the tiles upon the floor, and the immense wainscots, and the great white marble chimney-piece, reaching to the ceiling,—a triumph of delicate carving,—and the panels above the doors, with their *galant* mythological paintings. All this had been the work of my grandfather, during the Regency, who had undertaken to renovate and beautify the château; but his funds had suddenly given out, and we could boast but a desultory elegance. Such talk as passed at table was between my mother and the Baron, and consisted for the most part of a series of insidious attempts on my mother's part to extort information which the latter had no desire, or at least no faculty, to impart. My father was constitutionally taciturn and apathetic, and he invariably made an end of my mother's interrogation by proclaiming that he hated gossip. He liked to take his pleasure and have done with it, or at best, to ruminate his substantial joys within the conservative recesses of his capacious breast. The Baronne's inquisitive tongue was like a lambent flame, flickering over the sides of a rock. She had a passion for the world, and seclusion had only sharpened the edge of her curiosity. She lived on old memories—shabby, tarnished bits of intellectual finery—and vagrant rumors, anecdotes, and scandals.

Once in a while, however, her curiosity held high revel; for once a week we had the Vicomte de Treuil to dine with us. This gentleman was, although several years my father's junior, his most intimate friend and the only constant visitor at Bergerac. He brought with him a sort of intoxicating perfume of the great world, which I myself was not too young to feel. He had a marvellous fluency of talk; he was polite and elegant; and he was constantly getting letters from Paris, books, newspapers, and prints, and copies of the new songs. When he dined at Bergerac, my mother used to rustle away from table, kissing her hand to him, and actually light-headed from her deep potations of gossip. His conversation was a constant popping of corks. My father and the Vicomte, as I have said, were firm friends,—the firmer for the great diversity of their characters. M. de Bergerac was dark, grave, and taciturn, with a deep, sonorous voice. He had in his nature a touch of melancholy, and, in default of piety, a broad vein of superstition. The foundations of his soul, moreover, I am satisfied, in spite of the somewhat ponderous superstructure, were laid in a soil of rich tenderness and pity. Gaston de Treuil was of a wholly different temper. He was short and slight, without any color, and with eyes as blue and lustrous as sapphires. He was so careless and gracious and mirthful, that to an unenlightened fancy he seemed the model of a joyous, reckless, gallant, impenitent *veneur*. But it sometimes struck me that, as he revolved an idea in his mind, it produced a certain flinty ring, which suggested that his nature was built, as it were, on rock, and that the bottom of his heart was hard. Young as he was, besides, he had a tired, jaded, exhausted look, which told of his having played high at the game of life, and, very possibly, lost. In fact, it was notorious that M. de Treuil had run through his property, and that his actual business in our neighborhood was to repair the breach in his fortunes by constant attendance on a wealthy kinsman, who occupied an adjacent château, and who was dying of age and his infirmities. But while I thus hint at the existence in his composition of these few base particles, I should be sorry to represent him as substantially less fair and clear and lustrous than he appeared to be. He possessed an irresistible charm, and that of itself is a virtue. I feel sure, moreover, that my father would never have reconciled himself to a real scantiness of masculine worth. The Vicomte enjoyed, I fancy, the generous energy of my father's good-fellowship, and the Baron's healthy senses were flattered by the exquisite perfume of the other's infallible *savoir-vivre*. I offer a hundred apologies, at any rate, to the

Vicomte's luminous shade, that I should have ventured to cast a dingy slur upon his name. History has commemorated it. He perished on the scaffold, and showed that he knew how to die as well as to live. He was the last relic of the lily-handed youth of the *bon temps*; and as he looks at me out of the poignant sadness of the past, with a reproachful glitter in his cold blue eyes, and a scornful smile on his fine lips, I feel that, elegant and silent as he is, he has the last word in our dispute. I shall think of him henceforth as he appeared one night, or rather one morning, when he came home from a ball with my father, who had brought him to Bergerac to sleep. I had my bed in a closet out of my mother's room, where I lay in a most unwholesome fashion among her old gowns and hoops and cosmetics. My mother slept little; she passed the night in her dressing-gown, bolstered up in her bed, reading novels. The two gentlemen came in at four o'clock in the morning and made their way up to the Baronne's little sitting-room, next to her chamber. I suppose they were highly exhilarated, for they made a great noise of talking and laughing, and my father began to knock at the chamber door. He called out that he had M. de Treuil, and that they were cold and hungry. The Baronne said that she had a fire and they might come in. She was glad enough, poor lady, to get news of the ball, and to catch their impressions before they had been dulled by sleep. So they came in and sat by the fire, and M. de Treuil looked for some wine and some little cakes where my mother told him. I was wide awake and heard it all. I heard my mother protesting and crying out, and the Vicomte laughing, when he looked into the wrong place; and I am afraid that in my mother's room there were a great many wrong places. Before long, in my little stuffy, dark closet, I began to feel hungry too; whereupon I got out of bed and ventured forth into the room. I remember the whole picture, as one remembers isolated scenes of childhood: my mother's bed, with its great curtains half drawn back at the side, and her little eager face and dark eyes peeping out of the recess; then the two men at the fire,—my father with his hat on, sitting and looking drowsily into the flames, and the Vicomte standing before the hearth, talking, laughing, and gesticulating, with the candlestick in one hand and a glass of wine in the other,—dropping the wax on one side and the wine on the other. He was dressed from head to foot in white velvet and white silk, with embroideries of silver, and an immense *jabot*. He was very pale, and he looked lighter and slighter and wittier and more elegant than ever. He had a weak voice, and when he laughed, after one feeble little spasm, it went off into nothing, and you only knew he was laughing by his nodding his head and lifting his eyebrows and showing his handsome teeth. My father was in crimson velvet, with tarnished gold facings. My mother bade me get back into bed, but my father took me on his knees and held out my bare feet to the fire. In a little while, from the influence of the heat, he fell asleep in his chair, and I sat in my place and watched M. de Treuil as he stood in the firelight drinking his wine and telling stories to my mother, until at last I too relapsed into the innocence of slumber. They were very good friends, the Vicomte and my mother. He admired the turn of her mind. I remember his telling me several years later, at the time of her death, when I was old enough to understand him, that she was a very brave, keen little woman, and that in her musty solitude of Bergerac she said a great many more good things than the world ever heard of.

During the winter which preceded Coquelin's arrival, M. de Treuil used to show himself at Bergerac in a friendly manner; but about a month before this event, his visits became more frequent and assumed a special import and motive. In a word, my father and his friend between them had conceived it to be a fine thing that the latter should marry Mlle. de Bergerac. Neither from his own nor from his friend's point of view was Gaston de Treuil a marrying man or a desirable *parti*. He was too fond of pleasure to conciliate a rich wife, and too poor to support a penniless one. But I fancy that my father was of the opinion that if the Vicomte came into his kinsman's property, the best way to insure the preservation of it, and to attach him to his duties and responsibilities, would be to unite him to an amiable girl, who

might remind him of the beauty of a domestic life and lend him courage to mend his ways. As far as the Vicomte was concerned, this was assuredly a benevolent scheme, but it seems to me that it made small account of the young girl's own happiness. M. de Treuil was supposed, in the matter of women, to have known everything that can be known, and to be as *blasé* with regard to their charms as he was proof against their influence. And, in fact, his manner of dealing with women, and of discussing them, indicated a profound disenchantment,—no bravado of contempt, no affectation of cynicism, but a cold, civil, absolute lassitude. A simply charming woman, therefore, would never have served the purpose of my father's theory. A very sound and liberal instinct led him to direct his thoughts to his sister. There were, of course, various auxiliary reasons for such disposal of Mlle. de Bergerac's hand. She was now a woman grown, and she had as yet received no decent proposals. She had no marriage portion of her own, and my father had no means to endow her. Her beauty, moreover, could hardly be called a dowry. It was without those vulgar allurements which, for many a poor girl, replace the glitter of cash. If within a very few years more she had not succeeded in establishing herself creditably in the world, nothing would be left for her but to withdraw from it, and to pledge her virgin faith to the chilly sanctity of a cloister. I was destined in the course of time to assume the lordship and the slender revenues of Bergerac, and it was not to be expected that I should be burdened on the very threshold of life with the maintenance of a dowerless maiden aunt. A marriage with M. de Treuil would be in all senses a creditable match, and, in the event of his becoming his kinsman's legatee, a thoroughly comfortable one.

It was some time before the color of my father's intentions, and the milder hue of the Vicomte's acquiescence, began to show in our common daylight. It is not the custom, as you know, in our excellent France, to admit a lover on probation. He is expected to make up his mind on a view of the young lady's endowments, and to content himself before marriage with the bare cognition of her face. It is not thought decent (and there is certainly reason in it) that he should dally with his draught, and hold it to the light, and let the sun play through it, before carrying it to his lips. It was only on the ground of my father's warm good-will to Gaston de Treuil, and the latter's affectionate respect for the Baron, that the Vicomte was allowed to appear as a lover, before making his proposals in form. M. de Treuil, in fact, proceeded gradually, and made his approaches from a great distance. It was not for several weeks, therefore, that Mlle. de Bergerac became aware of them. And now, as this dear young girl steps into my story, where, I ask you, shall I find words to describe the broad loveliness of her person, to hint at the perfect beauty of her mind, to suggest the sweet mystery of her first suspicion of being sought, from afar, in marriage? Not in my fancy, surely; for there I should disinter the flimsy elements and tarnished properties of a superannuated comic opera. My taste, my son, was formed once for all fifty years ago. But if I wish to call up Mlle. de Bergerac, I must turn to my earliest memories, and delve in the sweet-smelling virgin soil of my heart. For Mlle. de Bergerac is no misty sylphid nor romantic moonlit nymph. She rises before me now, glowing with life, with the sound of her voice just dying in the air,—the more living for the mark of her crimson death-stain.

There was every good reason why her dawning consciousness of M. de Treuil's attentions—although these were little more than projected as yet—should have produced a serious tremor in her heart. It was not that she was aught of a coquette; I honestly believe that there was no latent coquetry in her nature. At all events, whatever she might have become after knowing M. de Treuil, she was no coquette to speak of in her ignorance. Her ignorance of men, in truth, was great. For the Vicomte himself, she had as yet known him only distantly, formally, as a gentleman of rank and fashion; and for others of his quality, she had seen but a small number, and not seen them intimately. These few words suffice to indicate that my aunt led a

life of unbroken monotony. Once a year she spent six weeks with certain ladies of the Visitation, in whose convent she had received her education, and of whom she continued to be very fond. Half a dozen times in the twelvemonth she went to a hall, under convoy of some haply ungrudging *châtelaine*. Two or three times a month, she received a visit at Bergerac. The rest of the time she paced, with the grace of an angel and the patience of a woman, the dreary corridors and unclipt garden walks of Bergerac. The discovery, then, that the brilliant Vicomte de Treuil was likely to make a proposal for her hand was an event of no small importance. With precisely what feelings she awaited its coming, I am unable to tell; but I have no hesitation in saying that even at this moment (that is, in less than a month after my tutor's arrival) her feelings were strongly modified by her acquaintance with Pierre Coquelin.

The word "acquaintance" perhaps exaggerates Mlle. de Bergerac's relation to this excellent young man. Twice a day she sat facing him at table, and half a dozen times a week she met him on the staircase, in the saloon, or in the park. Coquelin had been accommodated with an apartment in a small untenanted pavilion, within the enclosure of our domain, and except at meals, and when his presence was especially requested at the château, he confined himself to his own precinct. It was there, morning and evening, that I took my lesson. It was impossible, therefore, that an intimacy should have arisen between these two young persons, equally separated as they were by material and conventional barriers. Nevertheless, as the sequel proved, Coquelin must, by his mere presence, have begun very soon to exert a subtle action on Mlle. de Bergerac's thoughts. As for the young girl's influence on Coquelin, it is my belief that he fell in love with her the very first moment he beheld her,—that morning when he trudged wearily up our avenue. I need certainly make no apology for the poor fellow's audacity. You tell me that you fell in love at first sight with my aunt's portrait; you will readily excuse the poor youth for having been smitten with the original. It is less logical perhaps, but it is certainly no less natural, that Mlle. de Bergerac should have ventured to think of my governor as a decidedly interesting fellow. She saw so few men that one the more or the less made a very great difference. Coquelin's importance, moreover, was increased rather than diminished by the fact that, as I may say, he was a son of the soil. Marked as he was, in aspect and utterance, with the genuine plebeian stamp, he opened a way for the girl's fancy into a vague, unknown world. He stirred her imagination, I conceive, in very much the same way as such a man as Gaston de Treuil would have stirred—actually had stirred, of course—the grosser sensibilities of many a little *bourgeoise*. Mlle. de Bergerac was so thoroughly at peace with the consequences of her social position, so little inclined to derogate in act or in thought from the perfect dignity of her birth, that with the best conscience in the world, she entertained, as they came, the feelings provoked by Coquelin's manly virtues and graces. She had been educated in the faith that *noblesse oblige*, and she had seen none but gentlefolks and peasants. I think that she felt a vague, unavowed curiosity to see what sort of a figure you might make when you were under no obligations to nobleness. I think, finally, that unconsciously and in the interest simply of her unsubstantial dreams, (for in those long summer days at Bergerac, without finery, without visits, music, or books, or anything that a well-to-do grocer's daughter enjoys at the present day, she must, unless she was a far greater simpleton than I wish you to suppose, have spun a thousand airy, idle visions,) she contrasted Pierre Coquelin with the Vicomte de Treuil. I protest that I don't see how Coquelin bore the contrast. I frankly admit that, in her place, I would have given all my admiration to the Vicomte. At all events, the chief result of any such comparison must have been to show how, in spite of real trials and troubles, Coquelin had retained a certain masculine freshness and elasticity, and how, without any sorrows but those of his own wanton making, the Vicomte had utterly rubbed off his primal bloom of manhood. There was that about Gaston de Treuil that reminded you of an actor by daylight. His little row of foot-lights had burned itself out.

But this is assuredly a more pedantic view of the case than any that Mlle. de Bergerac was capable of taking. The Vicomte had but to learn his part and declaim it, and the illusion was complete.

Mlle. de Bergerac may really have been a great simpleton, and my theory of her feelings—vague and imperfect as it is—may be put together quite after the fact. But I see you protest; you glance at the picture; you frown. *C'est bon*; give me your hand. She received the Vicomte's gallantries, then, with a modest, conscious dignity, and courtesied to exactly the proper depth when he made her one of his inimitable bows.

One evening—it was, I think, about ten days after Coquelin's arrival—she was sitting reading to my mother, who was ill in bed. The Vicomte had been dining with us, and after dinner we had gone into the drawing-room. At the drawing-room door Coquelin had made his bow to my father, and carried me off to his own apartment. Mlle. de Bergerac and the two gentlemen had gone into the drawing-room together. At dusk I had come back to the château, and, going up to my mother, had found her in company with her sister-in-law. In a few moments my father came in, looking stern and black.

"Sister," he cried, "why did you leave us alone in the drawing-room? Didn't you see I wanted you to stay?"

Mlle. de Bergerac laid down her book and looked at her brother before answering. "I had to come to my sister," she said: "I couldn't leave her alone."

My mother, I'm sorry to say, was not always just to my aunt. She used to lose patience with her sister's want of coquetry, of ambition, of desire to make much of herself. She divined wherein my aunt had offended. "You're very devoted to your sister, suddenly," she said. "There are duties and duties, mademoiselle. I'm very much obliged to you for reading to me. You can put down the book."

"The Vicomte swore very hard when you went out," my father went on.

Mlle. de Bergerac laid aside her book. "Dear me!" she said, "if he was going to swear, it's very well I went."

"Are you afraid of the Vicomte?" said my mother. "You're twenty-two years old. You're not a little girl."

"Is she twenty-two?" cried my father. "I told him she was twenty-one."

"Frankly, brother," said Mlle. de Bergerac, "what does he want? Does he want to marry me?"

My father stared a moment. "*Pardieu!*" he cried.

"She looks as if she didn't believe it," said my mother. "Pray, did you ever ask him?"

"No, madam; did you? You are very kind." Mlle. de Bergerac was excited; her cheeks flushed.

"In the course of time," said my father, gravely, "the Vicomte proposes to demand your hand."

"What is he waiting for?" asked Mlle. de Bergerac, simply.

"*Fi donc, mademoiselle!*" cried my mother.

"He is waiting for M. de Sorbières to die," said I, who had got this bit of news from my mother's waiting-woman.

My father stared at me, half angrily; and then,—“He expects to inherit,” he said, boldly. “It’s a very fine property.”

“He would have done better, it seems to me,” rejoined Mlle. de Bergerac, after a pause, “to wait till he had actually come into possession of it.”

“M. de Sorbières,” cried my father, “has given him his word a dozen times over. Besides, the Vicomte loves you.”

Mlle. de Bergerac blushed, with a little smile, and as she did so her eyes fell on mine. I was standing gazing at her as a child gazes at a familiar friend who is presented to him in a new light. She put out her hand and drew me towards her. “The truth comes out of the mouths of children,” she said. “Chevalier, does he love me?”

“Stuff!” cried the Baronne; “one doesn’t speak to children of such things. A young girl should believe what she’s told. I believed my mother when she told me that your brother loved me. He didn’t, but I believed it, and as far as I know I’m none the worse for it.”

For ten days after this I heard nothing more of Mlle. de Bergerac’s marriage, and I suppose that, childlike, I ceased to think of what I had already heard. One evening, about midsummer, M. de Treuil came over to supper, and announced that he was about to set out in company with poor M. de Sorbières for some mineral springs in the South, by the use of which the latter hoped to prolong his life.

I remember that, while we sat at table, Coquelin was appealed to as an authority upon some topic broached by the Vicomte, on which he found himself at variance with my father. It was the first time, I fancy, that he had been so honored and that his opinions had been deemed worth hearing. The point under discussion must have related to the history of the American War, for Coquelin spoke with the firmness and fulness warranted by personal knowledge. I fancy that he was a little frightened by the sound of his own voice, but he acquitted himself with perfect good grace and success. We all sat attentive; my mother even staring a little, surprised to find in a beggarly pedagogue a perfect beau diseur. My father, as became so great a gentleman, knew by a certain rough instinct when a man had something amusing to say. He leaned back, with his hands in his pockets, listening and paying the poor fellow the tribute of a half-puzzled frown. The Vicomte, like a man of taste, was charmed. He told stories himself, he was a good judge.

After supper we went out on the terrace. It was a perfect summer night, neither too warm nor too cool. There was no moon, but the stars flung down their languid light, and the earth, with its great dark masses of vegetation and the gently swaying tree-tops, seemed to answer back in a thousand vague perfumes. Somewhere, close at hand, out of an enchanted tree, a nightingale raved and carolled in delirious music. We had the good taste to listen in silence. My mother sat down on a bench against the house, and put out her hand and made my father sit beside her. Mlle. de Bergerac strolled to the edge of the terrace, and leaned against the balustrade, whither M. de Treuil soon followed her. She stood motionless, with her head raised, intent upon the music. The Vicomte seated himself upon the parapet, with his face towards her and his arms folded. He may perhaps have been talking, under cover of the nightingale. Coquelin seated himself near the other end of the terrace, and drew me between his knees. At last the nightingale ceased. Coquelin got up, and bade good night to the company, and made his way across the park to his lodge. I went over to my aunt and the Vicomte.

“M. Coquelin is a clever man,” said the Vicomte, as he disappeared down the avenue. “He spoke very well this evening.”

"He never spoke so much before," said I. "He's very shy."

"I think," said my aunt, "he's a little proud."

"I don't understand," said the Vicomte, "how a man with any pride can put up with the place of a tutor. I had rather dig in the fields."

"The Chevalier is much obliged to you," said my aunt, laughing. "In fact, M. Coquelin has to dig a little, hasn't he, Chevalier?"

"Not at all," said I. "But he keeps some plants in pots."

At this my aunt and the Vicomte began to laugh. "He keeps one precious plant," cried my aunt, tapping my face with her fan.

At this moment my mother called me away. "He makes them laugh," I heard her say to my father, as I went to her.

"She had better laugh about it than cry," said my father.

Before long, Mlle. de Bergerac and her companion came back toward the house.

"M. le Vicomte, brother," said my aunt, "invites me to go down and walk in the park. May I accept?"

"By all means," said my father. "You may go with the Vicomte as you would go with me."

"Ah!" said the Vicomte.

"Come then, Chevalier," said my aunt. "In my turn, I invite you."

"My son," said the Baronne, "I forbid you."

"But my brother says," rejoined Mlle. de Bergerac, "that I may go with M. de Treuil as I would go with himself. He would not object to my taking my nephew." And she put out her hand.

"One would think," said my mother, "that you were setting out for Siberia."

"For Siberia!" cried the Vicomte, laughing; "O no!"

I paused, undecided. But my father gave me a push. "After all," he said, "it's better."

When I overtook my aunt and her lover, the latter, losing no time, appeared to have come quite to the point.

"Your brother tells me, mademoiselle," he had begun, "that he has spoken to you."

The young girl was silent.

"You may be indifferent," pursued the Vicomte, "but I can't believe you're ignorant."

"My brother has spoken to me," said Mlle. de Bergerac at last, with an apparent effort,— "my brother has spoken to me of his project."

"I'm very glad he seemed to you to have espoused my cause so warmly that you call it his own. I did my best to convince him that I possess what a person of your merit is entitled to exact of the man who asks her hand. In doing so, I almost convinced myself. The point is now to convince you."

"I listen."

"You admit, then, that your mind is not made up in advance against me."

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried my aunt, with some emphasis, "a poor girl like me doesn't make up her mind. You frighten me, Vicomte. This is a serious question. I have the misfortune to have no mother. I can only pray God. But prayer helps me not to choose, but only to be resigned."

"Pray often, then, mademoiselle. I'm not an arrogant lover, and since I have known you a little better, I have lost all my vanity. I'm not a good man nor a wise one. I have no doubt you think me very light and foolish, but you can't begin to know how light and foolish I am. Marry me and you'll never know. If you don't marry me, I'm afraid you'll never marry."

"You're very frank. Vicomte. If you think I'm afraid of never marrying, you're mistaken. One can be very happy as an old maid. I spend six weeks every year with the ladies of the Visitation. Several of them are excellent women, charming women. They read, they educate young girls, they visit the poor—"

The Vicomte broke into a laugh. "They get up at five o'clock in the morning; they breakfast on boiled cabbage; they make flannel waistcoats, and very good sweetmeats! Why do you talk so, mademoiselle? Why do you say that you would like to lead such a life? One might almost believe it is coquetry. *Tenez*, I believe it's ignorance,—ignorance of your own feelings, your own nature, and your own needs." M. de Treuil paused a moment, and, although I had a very imperfect notion of the meaning of his words, I remember being struck with the vehement look of his pale face, which seemed fairly to glow in the darkness. Plainly, he was in love. "You are not made for solitude," he went on; "you are not made to be buried in a dingy old château, in the depths of a ridiculous province. You are made for the world, for the court, for pleasure, to be loved, admired, and envied. No, you don't know yourself, nor does Bergerac know you, nor his wife! I, at least, appreciate you. I blow that you are supremely beautiful—"

"Vicomte," said Mlle. de Bergerac, "you forget—the child."

"Hang the child! Why did you bring him along? You are no child. You can understand me. You are a woman, full of intelligence and goodness and beauty. They don't know you here, they think you a little demoiselle in pinafores. Before Heaven, mademoiselle, there is that about you,—I see it, I feel it here at your side, in this rustling darkness—there is that about you that a man would gladly die for."

Mlle. de Bergerac interrupted him with energy. "You talk extravagantly. I don't understand you; you frighten me."

"I talk as I feel. I frighten you? So much the better. I wish to stir your heart and get some answer to the passion of my own."

Mlle. de Bergerac was silent a moment, as if collecting her thoughts. "If I talk with you on this subject, I must do it with my wits about me," she said at last. "I must know exactly what we each mean."

"It's plain then that I can't hope to inspire you with any degree of affection."

"One doesn't promise to love, Vicomte; I can only answer for the present. My heart is so full of good wishes toward you that it costs me comparatively little to say I don't love you."

"And anything I may say of my own feelings will make no difference to you?"

"You have said you love me. Let it rest there."

"But you look as if you doubted my word."

"You can't see how I look; Vicomte, I believe you."

"Well then, there is one point gained. Let us pass to the others. I'm thirty years old. I have a very good name and a very bad reputation. I honestly believe that, though I've fallen below my birth, I've kept above my fame. I believe that I have no vices of temper; I'm neither brutal, nor jealous, nor miserly. As for my fortune, I'm obliged to admit that it consists chiefly in my expectations. My actual property is about equal to your brother's and you know how your sister-in-law is obliged to live. My expectations are thought particularly good. My great-uncle, M. de Sorbières, possesses, chiefly in landed estates, a fortune of some three millions of livres. I have no important competitors, either in blood or devotion. He is eighty-seven years old and paralytic, and within the past year I have been laying siege to his favor with such constancy that his surrender, like his extinction, is only a question of time. I received yesterday a summons to go with him to the Pyrenees, to drink certain medicinal waters. The least he can do, on my return, is to make me a handsome allowance, which with my own revenues will make—*en attendant* better things—a sufficient income for a reasonable couple."

There was a pause of some moments, during which we slowly walked along in the obstructed starlight, the silence broken only by the train of my aunt's dress brushing against the twigs and pebbles.

"What a pity," she said, at last, "that you are not able to speak of all this good fortune as in the present rather than in the future."

"There it is! Until I came to know you, I had no thoughts of marriage. What did I want of wealth? If five years ago I had foreseen this moment, I should stand here with something better than promises."

"Well, Vicomte," pursued the young girl, with singular composure, "you do me the honor to think very well of me: I hope you will not be vexed to find that prudence is one of my virtues. If I marry, I wish to marry well. It's not only the husband, but the marriage that counts. In accepting you as you stand, I should make neither a sentimental match nor a brilliant one."

"Excellent. I love you, prudence and all. Say, then, that I present myself here three months hence with the titles and tokens of property amounting to a million and a half of livres, will you consider that I am a *parti* sufficiently brilliant to make you forget that you don't love me?"

"I should never forget that."

"Well, nor I either. It makes a sort of sorrowful harmony! If three months hence, I repeat, I offer you a fortune instead of this poor empty hand, will you accept the one for the sake of the other?"

My aunt stopped short in the path. "I hope, Vicomte," she said, with much apparent simplicity, "that you are going to do nothing indelicate."

"God forbid, mademoiselle! It shall be a clean hand and a clean fortune."

"If you ask then a promise, a pledge—"

"You'll not give it. I ask then only for a little hope. Give it in what form you will."

We walked a few steps farther and came out from among the shadows, beneath the open sky. The voice of M. de Treuil, as he uttered these words, was low and deep and tender and full of entreaty. Mlle. de Bergerac cannot but have been deeply moved. I think she was somewhat awe-struck at having called up such a force of devotion in a nature deemed cold and inconstant. She put out her hand. "I wish success to any honorable efforts. In any case you

will be happier for your wealth. In one case it will get you a wife, and in the other it will console you."

"Console me! I shall hate it, despise it, and throw it into the sea!"

Mlle. de Bergerac had no intention, of course, of leaving her companion under an illusion. "Ah, but understand. Vicomte," she said, "I make no promise. My brother claims the right to bestow my hand. If he wishes our marriage now, of course he will wish it three months hence. I have never gainsaid him."

"From now to three months a great deal may happen."

"To you, perhaps, but not to me."

"Are you going to your friends of the Visitation?"

"No, indeed. I have no wish to spend the summer in a cloister. I prefer the green fields."

"Well, then *va* for the green fields! They're the next best thing. I recommend you to the Chevalier's protection."

We had made half the circuit of the park, and turned into an alley which stretched away towards the house, and about midway in its course separated into two paths, one leading to the main avenue, and the other to the little pavilion inhabited by Coquelin. At the point where the alley was divided stood an enormous oak of great circumference, with a circular bench surrounding its trunk. It occupied, I believe, the central point of the whole domain. As we reached the oak, I looked down along the footpath towards the pavilion, and saw Coquelin's light shining in one of the windows. I immediately proposed that we should pay him a visit. My aunt objected, on the ground that he was doubtless busy and would not thank us for interrupting him. And then, when I insisted, she said it was not proper.

"How not proper?"

"It's not proper for me. A lady doesn't visit young men in their own apartments."

At this the Vicomte cried out. He was partly amused, I think, at my aunt's attaching any compromising power to poor little Coquelin, and partly annoyed at her not considering his own company, in view of his pretensions, a sufficient guaranty.

"I should think," he said, "that with the Chevalier and me you might venture—"

"As you please, then," said my aunt. And I accordingly led the way to my governor's abode.

It was a small edifice of a single floor, standing prettily enough among the trees, and still habitable, although very much in disrepair. It had been built by that same ancestor to whom Bergerac was indebted, in the absence of several of the necessities of life, for many of its elegant superfluities, and had been designed, I suppose, as a scene of pleasure,—such pleasure as he preferred to celebrate elsewhere than beneath the roof of his domicile. Whether it had ever been used I know not; but it certainly had very little of the look of a pleasure-house. Such furniture as it had once possessed had long since been transferred to the needy saloons of the château, and it now looked dark and bare and cold. In front, the shrubbery had been left to grow thick and wild and almost totally to exclude the light from the windows; but behind, outside of the two rooms which he occupied, and which had been provided from the château with the articles necessary for comfort, Coquelin had obtained my father's permission to effect a great clearance in the foliage, and he now enjoyed plenty of sunlight and a charming view of the neighboring country. It was in the larger of these two rooms, arranged as a sort of study, that we found him.

He seemed surprised and somewhat confused by our visit, but he very soon recovered himself sufficiently to do the honors of his little establishment.

"It was an idea of my nephew," said Mlle. de Bergerac. "We were walking in the park, and he saw your light. Now that we are here, Chevalier, what would you have us do?"

"M. Coquelin has some very pretty things to show you," said I.

Coquelin turned very red. "Pretty things, Chevalier? Pray, what do you mean? I have some of your nephew's copy-books," he said, turning to my aunt.

"Nay, you have some of your own," I cried. "He has books full of drawings, made by himself."

"Ah, you draw?" said the Vicomte.

"M. le Chevalier does me the honor to think so. My drawings are meant for no critics but children."

"In the way of criticism," said my aunt, gently, "we too are children." Her beautiful eyes, as she uttered these words, must have been quite as gentle as her voice. Coquelin looked at her, thinking very modestly of his little pictures, but loth to refuse the first request she had ever made him.

"Show them, at any rate," said the Vicomte, in a somewhat peremptory tone. In those days, you see, a man occupying Coquelin's place was expected to hold all his faculties and talents at the disposal of his patron, and it was thought an unwarrantable piece of assumption that he should cultivate any of the arts for his own peculiar delectation. In withholding his drawings, therefore, it may have seemed to the Vicomte that Coquelin was unfaithful to the service to which he was held,—that, namely, of instructing, diverting, and edifying the household of Bergerac. Coquelin went to a little cupboard in the wall, and took out three small albums and a couple of portfolios. Mlle. de Bergerac sat down at the table, and Coquelin drew up the lamp and placed his drawings before her. He turned them over, and gave such explanations as seemed necessary. I have only my childish impressions of the character of these sketches, which, in my eyes, of course, seemed prodigiously clever. What the judgment of my companions was worth I know not, but they appeared very well pleased. The Vicomte probably knew a good sketch from a poor one, and he very good-naturedly pronounced my tutor an extremely knowing fellow. Coquelin had drawn anything and everything,—peasants and dumb brutes, landscapes and Parisian types and figures, taken indifferently from high and low life. But the best pieces in the collection were a series of illustrations and reminiscences of his adventures with the American army, and of the figures and episodes he had observed in the Colonies. They were for the most part rudely enough executed, owing to his want of time and materials, but they were full of *finesse* and character. M. de Treuil was very much amused at the rude equipments of your ancestors. There were sketches of the enemy too, whom Coquelin had apparently not been afraid to look in the face. While he was turning over these designs for Mlle. de Bergerac, the Vicomte took up one of his portfolios, and, after a short inspection, drew from it, with a cry of surprise, a large portrait in pen and ink.

"*Tiens!*" said I; "it's my aunt!"

Coquelin turned pale. Mlle. de Bergerac looked at him, and turned the least bit red. As for the Vicomte, he never changed color. There was no eluding the fact that it was a likeness, and Coquelin had to pay the penalty of his skill.

"I didn't know," he said, at random, "that it was in that portfolio. Do you recognize it, mademoiselle?"

"Ah," said the Vicomte, dryly, "M. Coquelin meant to hide it."

"It's too pretty to hide," said my aunt; "and yet it's too pretty to show. It's flattered."

"Why should I have flattered you, mademoiselle?" asked Coquelin. "You were never to see it."

"That's what it is, mademoiselle," said the Vicomte, "to have such dazzling beauty. It penetrates the world. Who knows where you'll find it reflected next?"

However pretty a compliment this may have been to Mlle. de Bergerac, it was decidedly a back-handed blow to Coquelin. The young girl perceived that he felt it.

She rose to her feet. "My beauty," she said, with a slight tremor in her voice, "would be a small thing without M. Coquelin's talent. We are much obliged to you. I hope that you'll bring your pictures to the château, so that we may look at the rest."

"Are you going to leave him this?" asked M. de Treuil, holding up the portrait.

"If M. Coquelin will give it to me, I shall be very glad to have it."

"One doesn't keep one's own portrait," said the Vicomte. "It ought to belong to me." In those days, before the invention of our sublime machinery for the reproduction of the human face, a young fellow was very glad to have his mistress's likeness in pen and ink.

But Coquelin had no idea of contributing to the Vicomte's gallery. "Excuse me," he said, gently, but looking the nobleman in the face. "The picture isn't good enough for Mlle. de Bergerac, but it's too good for any one else"; and he drew it out of the other's hands, tore it across, and applied it to the flame of the lamp.

We went back to the château in silence. The drawing-room was empty; but as we went in, the Vicomte took a lighted candle from a table and raised it to the young girl's face. "*Parbleu!*" he exclaimed, "the vagabond had looked at you to good purpose!"

Mlle. de Bergerac gave a half-confused laugh. "At any rate," she said, "he didn't hold a candle to me as if I were my old smoke-stained grandame, yonder!" and she blew out the light. "I'll call my brother," she said, preparing to retire.

"A moment," said her lover; "I shall not see you for some weeks. I shall start to-morrow with my uncle. I shall think of you by day, and dream of you by night. And meanwhile I shall very much doubt whether you think of me."

Mlle. de Bergerac smiled. "Doubt, doubt. It will help you to pass the time. With faith alone it would hang very heavy."

"It seems hard," pursued M. de Treuil, "that I should give you so many pledges, and that you should give me none."

"I give all I ask."

"Then, for Heaven's sake, ask for something!"

"Your kind words are all I want."

"Then give me some kind word yourself."

"What shall I say, Vicomte?"

"Say,—say that you'll wait for me."

They were standing in the centre of the great saloon, their figures reflected by the light of a couple of candles in the shining inlaid floor. Mlle. de Bergerac walked away a few steps with

a look of agitation. Then turning about, "Vicomte," she asked, in a deep, full voice, "do you truly love me?"

"Ah, Gabrielle!" cried the young man.

I take it that no woman can hear her baptismal name uttered for the first time as that of Mlle. de Bergerac then came from her suitor's lips without being thrilled with joy and pride.

"Well, M. de Treuil," she said, "I will wait for you."

PART II

I remember distinctly the incidents of that summer at Bergerac; or at least its general character, its tone. It was a hot, dry season; we lived with doors and windows open. M. Coquelin suffered very much from the heat, and sometimes, for days together, my lessons were suspended. We put our books away and rambled out for a long day in the fields. My tutor was perfectly faithful; he never allowed me to wander beyond call. I was very fond of fishing, and I used to sit for hours, like a little old man, with my legs dangling over the bank of our slender river, patiently awaiting the bite that so seldom came. Near at hand, in the shade, stretched at his length on the grass, Coquelin read and re-read one of his half dozen Greek and Latin poets. If we had walked far from home, we used to go and ask for some dinner at the hut of a neighboring peasant. For a very small coin we got enough bread and cheese and small fruit to keep us over till supper. The peasants, stupid and squalid as they were, always received us civilly enough, though on Coquelin's account quite as much as on my own. He addressed them with an easy familiarity, which made them feel, I suppose, that he was, if not quite one of themselves, at least by birth and sympathies much nearer to them than to the future Baron de Bergerac. He gave me in the course of these walks a great deal of good advice; and without perverting my signorial morals or instilling any notions that were treason to my rank and position, he kindled in my childish breast a little democratic flame which has never quite become extinct. He taught me the beauty of humanity, justice, and tolerance; and whenever he detected me in a precocious attempt to assert my baronial rights over the wretched little *manants* who crossed my path, he gave me morally a very hard drubbing. He had none of the base complaisance and cynical nonchalance of the traditional tutor of our old novels and comedies. Later in life I might have found him too rigorous a moralist; but in those days I liked him all the better for letting me sometimes feel the curb. It gave me a highly agreeable sense of importance and a maturity. It was a tribute to half-divined possibilities of naughtiness. In the afternoon, when I was tired of fishing, he would lie with his thumb in his book and his eyes half closed and tell me fairy-tales till the eyes of both of us closed together. Do the instructors of youth nowadays condescend to the fairy-tale pure and simple? Coquelin's stories belonged to the old, old world: no political economy, no physics, no application to anything in life. Do you remember in Doré's illustrations to Perrault's tales, the picture of the enchanted castle of the Sleeping Beauty? Back in the distance, in the bosom of an ancient park and surrounded by thick baronial woods which blacken all the gloomy horizon, on the farther side of a great abysmal hollow of tangled forest verdure, rise the long façade, the moss-grown terraces, the towers, the purple roofs, of a château of the time of Henry IV. Its massive foundations plunge far down into the wild chasm of the woodland, and its cold pinnacles of slate tower upwards, close to the rolling autumn clouds. The afternoon is closing in and a chill October wind is beginning to set the forest a-howling. In the foreground, on an elevation beneath a mighty oak, stand a couple of old woodcutters pointing across into the enchanted distance and answering the questions of the young prince. They are the bent and blackened woodcutters of old France, of La Fontaine's Fables and the *Médecin malgré lui*. What does the castle contain? What secret is locked in its stately walls? What revel is enacted in its long saloons? What strange figures

stand aloof from its vacant windows? You ask the question, and the answer is a long revery. I never look at the picture without thinking of those summer afternoons in the woods and of Coquelin's long stories. His fairies were the fairies of the *Grand Siècle*, and his princes and shepherds the godsons of Perrault and Madame d'Aulnay. They lived in such palaces and they hunted in such woods.

Mlle. de Bergerac, to all appearance, was not likely to break her promise to M. de Treuil,—for lack of the opportunity, quite as much as of the will. Those bright summer days must have seemed very long to her, and I can't for my life imagine what she did with her time. But she, too, as she had told the Vicomte, was very fond of the green fields; and although she never wandered very far from the house, she spent many an hour in the open air. Neither here nor within doors was she likely to encounter the happy man of whom the Vicomte might be jealous. Mlle. de Bergerac had a friend, a single intimate friend, who came sometimes to pass the day with her, and whose visits she occasionally returned. Marie de Chalais, the granddaughter of the Marquis de Chalais, who lived some ten miles away, was in all respects the exact counterpart and foil of my aunt. She was extremely plain, but with that sprightly, highly seasoned ugliness which is often so agreeable to men. Short, spare, swarthy, light, with an immense mouth, a most impertinent little nose, an imperceptible foot, a charming hand, and a delightful voice, she was, in spite of her great name and her fine clothes, the very ideal of the old stage soubrette. Frequently, indeed, in her dress and manner, she used to provoke a comparison with this incomparable type. A cap, an apron, and a short petticoat were all sufficient; with these and her bold, dark eyes she could impersonate the very genius of impertinence and intrigue. She was a thoroughly light creature, and later in life, after her marriage, she became famous for her ugliness, her witticisms, and her adventures; but that she had a good heart is shown by her real attachment to my aunt. They were forever at cross-purposes, and yet they were excellent friends. When my aunt wished to walk, Mlle. de Chalais wished to sit still; when Mlle. de Chalais wished to laugh, my aunt wished to meditate; when my aunt wished to talk piety, Mlle. de Chalais wished to talk scandal. Mlle. de Bergerac, however, usually carried the day and set the tune. There was nothing on earth that Marie de Chalais so despised as the green fields; and yet you might have seen her a dozen times that summer wandering over the domain of Bergerac, in a short muslin dress and a straw hat, with her arm entwined about the waist of her more stately friend. We used often to meet them, and as we drew near Mlle. de Chalais would always stop and offer to kiss the Chevalier. By this pretty trick Coquelin was subjected for a few moments to the influence of her innocent *agaçeries*; for rather than have no man at all to prick with the little darts of her coquetry, the poor girl would have gone off and made eyes at the scare-crow in the wheat-field. Coquelin was not at all abashed by her harmless advances; for although, in addressing my aunt, he was apt to lose his voice or his countenance, he often showed a very pretty wit in answering Mlle. de Chalais.

On one occasion she spent several days at Bergerac, and during her stay she proffered an urgent entreaty that my aunt should go back with her to her grandfather's house, where, having no parents, she lived with her governess. Mlle. de Bergerac declined, on the ground of having no gowns fit to visit in; whereupon Mlle. de Chalais went to my mother, begged the gift of an old blue silk dress, and with her own cunning little hands made it over for my aunt's figure. That evening Mlle. de Bergerac appeared at supper in this renovated garment,—the first silk gown she had ever worn. Mlle. de Chalais had also dressed her hair, and decked her out with a number of trinkets and furbelows; and when the two came into the room together, they reminded me of the beautiful Duchess in Don Quixote, followed by a little dark-visaged Spanish waiting-maid. The next morning Coquelin and I rambled off as usual in search of adventures, and the day after that they were to leave the château. Whether we met with any

adventures or not I forget; but we found ourselves at dinner-time at some distance from home, very hungry after a long tramp. We directed our steps to a little roadside hovel, where we had already purchased hospitality, and made our way in unannounced. We were somewhat surprised at the scene that met our eyes.

On a wretched bed at the farther end of the hut lay the master of the household, a young peasant whom we had seen a fortnight before in full health and vigor. At the head of the bed stood his wife, moaning, crying, and wringing her hands. Hanging about her, clinging to her skirts, and adding their piping cries to her own lamentations, were four little children, unwashed, unfed, and half clad. At the foot, facing the dying man, knelt his old mother—a horrible hag, so bent and brown and wrinkled with labor and age that there was nothing womanly left of her but her coarse, rude dress and cap, nothing of maternity but her sobs. Beside the pillow stood the priest, who had apparently just discharged the last offices of the Church. On the other side, on her knees, with the poor fellow's hand in her own, knelt Mlle. de Bergerac, like a consoling angel. On a stool near the door, looking on from a distance, sat Mlle. de Chalais, holding a little bleating kid in her arms. When she saw us, she started up. "Ah, M. Coquelin!" she cried, "do persuade Mlle. de Bergerac to leave this horrible place."

I saw Mlle. de Bergerac look at the curé and shake her head, as if to say that it was all over. She rose from her knees and went round to the wife, telling the same tale with her face. The poor, squalid *paysanne* gave a sort of savage, stupid cry, and threw herself and her rags on the young girl's neck. Mlle. de Bergerac caressed her, and whispered heaven knows what divinely simple words of comfort. Then, for the first time, she saw Coquelin and me, and beckoned us to approach.

"Chevalier," she said, still holding the woman on her breast, "have you got any money?"

At these words the woman raised her head. I signified that I was penniless.

My aunt frowned impatiently. "M. Coquelin, have you?"

Coquelin drew forth a single small piece, all that he possessed; for it was the end of his month. Mlle. de Bergerac took it, and pursued her inquiry.

"Curé, have you any money?"

"Not a sou," said the curé, smiling sweetly.

"Bah!" said Mlle. de Bergerac, with a sort of tragic petulance. "What can I do with twelve sous?"

"Give it all the same," said the woman, doggedly, putting out her hand.

"They want money," said Mlle. de Bergerac, lowering her voice to Coquelin. "They have had this great sorrow, but a *louis d'or* would dull the wound. But we're all penniless. O for the sight of a little gold!"

"I have a *louis* at home," said I; and I felt Coquelin lay his hand on my head.

"What was the matter with the husband?" he asked.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said my aunt, glancing round at the bed. "I don't know."

Coquelin looked at her, half amazed, half worshipping.

"Who are they, these people? What are they?" she asked.

"Mademoiselle," said Coquelin, fervently, "you're an angel!"

"I wish I were," said Mlle. de Bergerac, simply; and she turned to the old mother.

We walked home together,—the curé with Mlle. de Chalais and me, and Mlle. de Bergerac in front with Coquelin. Asking how the two young girls had found their way to the deathbed we had just left, I learned from Mlle. de Chalais that they had set out for a stroll together, and, striking into a footpath across the fields, had gone farther than they supposed, and lost their way. While they were trying to recover it, they came upon the wretched hut where we had found them, and were struck by the sight of two children, standing crying at the door. Mlle. de Bergerac had stopped and questioned them to ascertain the cause of their sorrow, which with some difficulty she found to be that their father was dying of a fever. Whereupon, in spite of her companion's lively opposition, she had entered the miserable abode, and taken her place at the wretched couch, in the position in which we had discovered her. All this, doubtless, implied no extraordinary merit on Mlle. de Bergerac's part; but it placed her in a gracious, pleasing light.

The next morning the young girls went off in the great coach of M. de Chalais, which had been sent for them overnight, my father riding along as an escort. My aunt was absent a week, and I think I may say we keenly missed her. When I say we, I mean Coquelin and I, and when I say Coquelin and I, I mean Coquelin in particular; for it had come to this, that my tutor was roundly in love with my aunt. I didn't know it then, of course; but looking back, I see that he must already have been stirred to his soul's depths. Young as I was, moreover, I believe that I even then suspected his passion, and, loving him as I did, watched it with a vague, childish awe and sympathy. My aunt was to me, of course, a very old story, and I am sure she neither charmed nor dazzled my boyish fancy. I was quite too young to apprehend the meaning or the consequences of Coquelin's feelings; but I knew that he had a secret, and I wished him joy of it. He kept so jealous a guard on it that I would have defied my elders to discover the least reason for accusing him; but with a simple child of ten, thinking himself alone and uninterpreted, he showed himself plainly a lover. He was absent, restless, preoccupied; now steeped in languid revery, now pacing up and down with the exaltation of something akin to hope. Hope itself he could never have felt; for it must have seemed to him that his passion was so audacious as almost to be criminal. Mlle. de Bergerac's absence showed him, I imagine, that to know her had been the event of his life; to see her across the table, to hear her voice, her tread, to pass her, to meet her eye, a deep, consoling, healing joy. It revealed to him the force with which she had grasped his heart, and I think he was half frightened at the energy of his passion.

One evening, while Mlle. de Bergerac was still away, I sat in his window, committing my lesson for the morrow by the waning light. He was walking up and down among the shadows. "Chevalier," said he, suddenly, "what should you do if I were to leave you?"

My poor little heart stood still. "Leave me?" I cried, aghast; "why should you leave me?"

"Why, you know I didn't come to stay forever."

"But you came to stay till I'm a man grown. Don't you like your place?"

"Perfectly."

"Don't you like my father?"

"Your father is excellent."

"And my mother?"

"Your mother is perfect."

"And me, Coquelin?"

"You, Chevalier, are a little goose."

And then, from a sort of unreasoned instinct that Mlle. de Bergerac was somehow connected with his idea of going away, "And my aunt?" I added.

"How, your aunt?"

"Don't you like her?"

Coquelin had stopped in his walk, and stood near me and above me. He looked at me some moments without answering, and then sat down beside me in the window-seat, and laid his hand on my head.

"Chevalier," he said, "I will tell you something."

"Well?" said I, after I had waited some time.

"One of these days you will be a man grown, and I shall have left you long before that. You'll learn a great many things that you don't know now. You'll learn what a strange, vast world it is, and what strange creatures men are—and women; how strong, how weak, how happy, how unhappy. You'll learn how many feelings and passions they have, and what a power of joy and of suffering. You'll be Baron de Bergerac and master of the château and of this little house. You'll sometimes be very proud of your title, and you'll sometimes feel very sad that it's so little more than a bare title. But neither your pride nor your grief will come to anything beside this, that one day, in the prime of your youth and strength and good looks, you'll see a woman whom you will love more than all these things,—more than your name, your lands, your youth, and strength, and beauty. It happens to all men, especially the good ones, and you'll be a good one. But the woman you love will be far out of your reach. She'll be a princess, perhaps she'll be the Queen. How can a poor little Baron de Bergerac expect her to look at him? You will give up your life for a touch of her hand; but what will she care for your life or your death? You'll curse your love, and yet you'll bless it, and perhaps—not having your living to get—you'll come up here and shut yourself up with your dreams and regrets. You'll come perhaps into this pavilion, and sit here alone in the twilight. And then, my child, you'll remember this evening; that I foretold it all and gave you my blessing in advance and—kissed you." He bent over, and I felt his burning lips on my forehead.

I understood hardly a word of what he said; but whether it was that I was terrified by his picture of the possible insignificance of a Baron de Bergerac, or that I was vaguely overawed by his deep, solemn tones, I know not; but my eyes very quietly began to emit a flood of tears. The effect of my grief was to induce him to assure me that he had no present intention of leaving me. It was not, of course, till later in life, that, thinking over the situation, I understood his impulse to arrest his hopeless passion for Mlle. de Bergerac by immediate departure. He was not brave in time.

At the end of a week she returned one evening as we were at supper. She came in with M. de Chalais, an amiable old man, who had been so kind as to accompany her. She greeted us severally, and nodded to Coquelin. She talked, I remember, with great volubility, relating what she had seen and done in her absence, and laughing with extraordinary freedom. As we left the table, she took my hand, and I put out the other and took Coquelin's.

"Has the Chevalier been a good boy?" she asked.

"Perfect," said Coquelin; "but he has wanted his aunt sadly."

"Not at all," said I, resenting the imputation as derogatory to my independence.

"You have had a pleasant week, mademoiselle?" said Coquelin.

"A charming week. And you?"

"M. Coquelin has been very unhappy," said I. "He thought of going away."

"Ah?" said my aunt.

Coquelin was silent.

"You think of going away?"

"I merely spoke of it, mademoiselle. I must go away some time, you know. The Chevalier looks upon me as something eternal."

"What's eternal?" asked the Chevalier.

"There is nothing eternal, my child," said Mlle. de Bergerac. "Nothing lasts more than a moment."

"O," said Coquelin, "I don't agree with you!"

"You don't believe that in this world everything is vain and fleeting and transitory?"

"By no means; I believe in the permanence of many things."

"Of what, for instance?"

"Well, of sentiments and passions."

"Very likely. But not of the hearts that hold them. 'Lovers die, but love survives.' I heard a gentleman say that at Chalais."

"It's better, at least, than if he had put it the other way. But lovers last too. They survive; they outlive the things that would fain destroy them,—indifference, denial, and despair."

"But meanwhile the loved object disappears. When it isn't one, it's the other."

"O, I admit that it's a shifting world. But I have a philosophy for that."

"I'm curious to know your philosophy."

"It's a very old one. It's simply to make the most of life while it lasts. I'm very fond of life," said Coquelin, laughing.

"I should say that as yet, from what I know of your history, you have had no great reason to be."

"Nay, it's like a cruel mistress," said Coquelin. "When once you love her, she's absolute. Her hard usage doesn't affect you. And certainly I have nothing to complain of now."

"You're happy here then?"

"Profoundly, mademoiselle, in spite of the Chevalier."

"I should suppose that with your tastes you would prefer something more active, more ardent."

"*Mon Dieu*, my tastes are very simple. And then—happiness, *cela ne se raisonne pas*. You don't find it when you go in quest of it. It's like fortune; it comes to you in your sleep."

"I imagine," said Mlle. de Bergerac, "that I was never happy."

"That's a sad story," said Coquelin.

The young girl began to laugh. "And never unhappy."

"Dear me, that's still worse. Never fear, it will come."

"What will come?"

"That which is both bliss and misery at once."

Mlle. de Bergerac hesitated a moment. "And what is this strange thing?" she asked.

On his side Coquelin was silent. "When it comes to you," he said, at last, "you'll tell me what you call it."

About a week after this, at breakfast, in pursuance of an urgent request of mine, Coquelin proposed to my father to allow him to take me to visit the ruins of an ancient feudal castle some four leagues distant, which he had observed and explored while he trudged across the country on his way to Bergerac, and which, indeed, although the taste for ruins was at that time by no means so general as since the Revolution (when one may say it was in a measure created), enjoyed a certain notoriety throughout the province. My father good-naturedly consented; and as the distance was too great to be achieved on foot, he placed his two old coach-horses at our service. You know that although I affected, in boyish sort, to have been indifferent to my aunt's absence, I was really very fond of her, and it occurred to me that our excursion would be more solemn and splendid for her taking part in it. So I appealed to my father and asked if Mlle. de Bergerac might be allowed to go with us. What the Baron would have decided had he been left to himself I know not; but happily for our cause my mother cried out that, to her mind, it was highly improper that her sister-in-law should travel twenty miles alone with two young men.

"One of your young men is a child," said my father, "and her nephew into the bargain; and the other,"—and he laughed, coarsely but not ill-humoredly,—"the other is—Coquelin!"

"Coquelin is not a child nor is mademoiselle either," said my mother.

"All the more reason for their going, Gabrielle, will you go?" My father, I fear, was not remarkable in general for his tenderness or his *prévenance* for the poor girl whom fortune had given him to protect; but from time to time he would wake up to a downright sense of kinship and duty, kindled by the pardonable aggressions of my mother, between whom and her sister-in-law there existed a singular antagonism of temper.

Mlle. de Bergerac looked at my father intently and with a little blush. "Yes, brother. I'll go. The Chevalier can take me *en croupe*."

So we started, Coquelin on one horse, and I on the other, with my aunt mounted behind me. Our sport for the first part of the journey consisted chiefly in my urging my beast into a somewhat ponderous gallop, so as to terrify my aunt, who was not very sure of her seat, and who, at moments, between pleading and laughing, had hard work to preserve her balance. At these times Coquelin would ride close alongside of us, at the same cumbersome pace, declaring himself ready to catch the young girl if she fell. In this way we jolted along, in a cloud of dust, with shouts and laughter.

"Madame the Baronne was wrong," said Coquelin, "in denying that we are children."

"O, this is nothing yet," cried my aunt.

The castle of Fossy lifted its dark and crumbling towers with a decided air of feudal arrogance from the summit of a gentle eminence in the recess of a shallow gorge among the hills. Exactly when it had flourished and when it had decayed I knew not, but in the year of grace of our pilgrimage it was a truly venerable, almost a formidable, ruin. Two great towers were standing,—one of them diminished by half its upper elevation, and the other sadly scathed and shattered, but still exposing its hoary head to the weather, and offering the sullen hospitality of its empty skull to a colony of swallows. I shall never forget that day at Fossy; it was one of those long raptures of childhood which seem to imprint upon the mind an

ineffaceable stain of light. The novelty and mystery of the dilapidated fortress,—its antiquity, its intricacy, its sounding vaults and corridors, its inaccessible heights and impenetrable depths, the broad sunny glare of its grass-grown courts and yards, the twilight of its passages and midnight of its dungeons, and along with all this my freedom to rove and scramble, my perpetual curiosity, my lusty absorption of the sun-warmed air, and the contagion of my companions' careless and sensuous mirth,—all these things combined to make our excursion one of the memorable events of my youth. My two companions accepted the situation and drank in the beauty of the day and the richness of the spot with all my own reckless freedom. Coquelin was half mad with the joy of spending a whole unbroken summer's day with the woman whom he secretly loved. He was all motion and humor and resonant laughter; and yet intermingled with his random gayety there lurked a solemn sweetness and reticence, a feverish concentration of thought, which to a woman with a woman's senses must have fairly betrayed his passion. Mlle. de Bergerac, without quite putting aside her natural dignity and gravity of mien, lent herself with a charming girlish energy to the undisciplined spirit of the hour.

Our first thoughts, after Coquelin had turned the horses to pasture in one of the grassy courts of the castle, were naturally bestowed upon our little basket of provisions; and our first act was to sit down on a heap of fallen masonry and divide its contents. After that we wandered. We climbed the still practicable staircases, and wedged ourselves into the turrets and strolled through the chambers and halls; we started from their long repose every echo and bat and owl within the innumerable walls.

Finally, after we had rambled a couple of hours, Mlle. de Bergerac betrayed signs of fatigue. Coquelin went with her in search of a place of rest, and I was left to my own devices. For an hour I found plenty of diversion, at the end of which I returned to my friends. I had some difficulty in finding them. They had mounted by an imperfect and somewhat perilous ascent to one of the upper platforms of the castle. Mlle. de Bergerac was sitting in a listless posture on a block of stone, against the wall, in the shadow of the still surviving tower; opposite, in the light, half leaning, half sitting on the parapet of the terrace, was her companion.

"For the last half-hour, mademoiselle," said Coquelin, as I came up, "you've not spoken a word."

"All the morning," said Mlle. de Bergerac, "I've been scrambling and chattering and laughing. Now, by reaction, I'm *triste*."

"I protest, so am I," said Coquelin. "The truth is, this old feudal fortress is a decidedly melancholy spot. It's haunted with the ghost of the past. It smells of tragedies, sorrows, and cruelties." He uttered these words with singular emphasis. "It's a horrible place," he pursued, with a shudder.

Mlle. de Bergerac began to laugh. "It's odd that we should only just now have discovered it!"

"No, it's like the history of that abominable past of which it's a relic. At the first glance we see nothing but the great proportions, the show, and the splendor; but when we come to explore, we detect a vast underground world of iniquity and suffering. Only half this castle is above the soil; the rest is dungeons and vaults and *oubliettes*."

"Nevertheless," said the young girl, "I should have liked to live in those old days. Shouldn't you?"

"Verily, no, mademoiselle!" And then after a pause, with a certain irrepressible bitterness: "Life is hard enough now."

Mlle. de Bergerac stared but said nothing.

"In those good old days," Coquelin resumed, "I should have been a brutal, senseless peasant, yoked down like an ox, with my forehead in the soil. Or else I should have been a trembling, groaning, fasting monk, moaning my soul away in the ecstasies of faith."

Mlle. de Bergerac rose and came to the edge of the platform. "Was no other career open in those days?"

"To such a one as me,—no. As I say, mademoiselle, life is hard now, but it was a mere dead weight then. I know it was. I feel in my bones and pulses that awful burden of despair under which my wretched ancestors struggled. *Tenez*, I'm the great man of the race. My father came next; he was one of four brothers, who all thought it a prodigious rise in the world when he became a village tailor. If we had lived five hundred years ago, in the shadow of these great towers, we should never have risen at all. We should have stuck with our feet in the clay. As I'm not a fighting man, I suppose I should have gone into the Church. If I hadn't died from an overdose of inanition, very likely I might have lived to be a cardinal."

Mlle. de Bergerac leaned against the parapet, and with a meditative droop of the head looked down the little glen toward the plain and the highway. "For myself," she said, "I can imagine very charming things of life in this castle of Fossy."

"For yourself, very likely."

"Fancy the great moat below filled with water and sheeted with lilies, and the drawbridge lowered, and a company of knights riding into the gates. Within, in one of those vaulted, quaintly timbered rooms, the châtelaine stands ready to receive them, with her women, her chaplain, her physician, and her little page. They come clanking up the staircase, with ringing swords, sweeping the ground with their plumes. They are all brave and splendid and fierce, but one of them far more than the rest. They each bend a knee to the lady—"

"But he bends two," cried Coquelin. "They wander apart into one of those deep embrasures and spin the threads of perfect love. Ah, I could fancy a sweet life, in those days, mademoiselle, if I could only fancy myself a knight!"

"And you can't," said the young girl, gravely, looking at him.

"It's an idle game; it's not worth trying."

"Apparently then, you're a cynic; you have an equally small opinion of the past and the present."

"No; you do me injustice."

"But you say that life is hard."

"I speak not for myself, but for others; for my brothers and sisters and kinsmen in all degrees; for the great mass of petits gens of my own class."

"Dear me, M. Coquelin, while you're about it, you can speak for others still; for poor portionless girls, for instance."

"Are they very much to be pitied?"

Mlle. de Bergerac was silent. "After all," she resumed, "they oughtn't to complain."

"Not when they have a great name and beauty," said Coquelin.

"O heaven!" said the young girl, impatiently, and turned away. Coquelin stood watching her, his brow contracted, his lips parted. Presently, she came back. "Perhaps you think," she said, "that I care for my name,—my great name, as you call it."

"Assuredly, I do."

She stood looking at him, blushing a little and frowning. As he said these words, she gave an impatient toss of the head and turned away again. In her hand she carried an ornamented fan, an antiquated and sadly dilapidated instrument. She suddenly raised it above her head, swung it a moment, and threw it far across the parapet. "There goes the name of Bergerac!" she said; and sweeping round, made the young man a very low courtesy.

There was in the whole action a certain passionate freedom which set poor Coquelin's heart a-throbbing. "To have a good name, mademoiselle," he said, "and to be indifferent to it, is the sign of a noble mind." (In parenthesis, I may say that I think he was quite wrong.)

"It's quite as noble, monsieur," returned my aunt, "to have a small name and not to blush for it."

With these words I fancy they felt as if they had said enough; the conversation was growing rather too pointed.

"I think," said my aunt, "that we had better prepare to go." And she cast a farewell glance at the broad expanse of country which lay stretched out beneath us, striped with the long afternoon shadows.

Coquelin followed the direction of her eyes. "I wish very much," he said, "that before we go we might be able to make our way up into the summit of the great tower. It would be worth the attempt. The view from here, charming as it is, must be only a fragment of what you see from that topmost platform."

"It's not likely," said my aunt, "that the staircase is still in a state to be used."

"Possibly not; but we can see."

"Nay," insisted my aunt, "I'm afraid to trust the Chevalier. There are great breaches in the sides of the ascent, which are so many open doors to destruction."

I strongly opposed this view of the case; but Coquelin, after scanning the elevation of the tower and such of the fissures as were visible from our standpoint, declared that my aunt was right and that it was my duty to comply. "And you, too, mademoiselle," he said, "had better not try it, unless you pride yourself on your strong head."

"No, indeed, I have a particularly weak one. And you?"

"I confess I'm very curious to see the view. I always want to read to the end of a book, to walk to the turn of a road, and to climb to the top of a building."

"Good," said Mlle. de Bergerac. "We'll wait for you."

Although in a straight line from the spot which we occupied, the distance through the air to the rugged sides of the great cylinder of masonry which frowned above us was not more than thirty yards, Coquelin was obliged, in order to strike at the nearest accessible point the winding staircase which clung to its massive ribs, to retrace his steps through the interior of the castle and make a *détour* of some five minutes' duration. In ten minutes more he showed himself at an aperture in the wall, facing our terrace.

"How do you prosper?" cried my aunt, raising her voice.

"I've mounted eighty steps," he shouted; "I've a hundred more." Presently he appeared again at another opening. "The steps have stopped," he cried.

"You've only to stop too," rejoined Mlle. de Bergerac. Again he was lost to sight and we supposed he was returning. A quarter of an hour elapsed, and we began to wonder at his not

having overtaken us, when we heard a loud call high above our heads. There he stood, on the summit of the edifice, waving his hat. At this point he was so far above us that it was difficult to communicate by sounds, in spite of our curiosity to know how, in the absence of a staircase, he had effected the rest of the ascent. He began to represent, by gestures of pretended rapture, the immensity and beauty of the prospect. Finally Mlle. de Bergerac beckoned to him to descend, and pointed to the declining sun, informing him at the same time that we would go down and meet him in the lower part of the castle. We left the terrace accordingly, and, making the best of our way through the intricate passages of the edifice, at last, not without a feeling of relief, found ourselves on the level earth. We waited quite half an hour without seeing anything of our companion. My aunt, I could see, had become anxious, although she endeavored to appear at her ease. As the time elapsed, however, it became so evident that Coquelin had encountered some serious obstacle to his descent, that Mlle. de Bergerac proposed we should, in so far as was possible, betake ourselves to his assistance. The point was to approach him within speaking distance.

We entered the body of the castle again, climbed to one of the upper levels, and reached a spot where an extensive destruction of the external wall partially exposed the great tower. As we approached this crumbling breach, Mlle. de Bergerac drew back from its brink with a loud cry of horror. It was not long before I discerned the cause of her movement. The side of the tower visible from where we stood presented a vast yawning fissure, which explained the interruption of the staircase, the latter having fallen for want of support. The central column, to which the steps had been fastened, seemed, nevertheless, still to be erect, and to have formed, with the agglomeration of fallen fragments and various occasional projections of masonry, the means by which Coquelin, with extraordinary courage and skill, had reached the topmost platform. The ascent, then, had been possible; the descent, curiously enough, he seemed to have found another matter; and after striving in vain to retrace his footsteps, had been obliged to commit himself to the dangerous experiment of passing from the tower to the external surface of the main fortress. He had accomplished half his journey and now stood directly over against us in a posture which caused my young limbs to stiffen with dismay. The point to which he had directed himself was apparently the breach at which we stood; meanwhile he had paused, clinging in mid-air to heaven knows what narrow ledge or flimsy iron clump in the stone-work, and straining his nerves to an agonized tension in the effort not to fall, while his eyes vaguely wandered in quest of another footing. The wall of the castle was so immensely thick, that wherever he could embrace its entire section, progress was comparatively easy; the more especially as, above our heads, this same wall had been demolished in such a way as to maintain a rapid upward inclination to the point where it communicated with the tower.

I stood staring at Coquelin with my heart in my throat, forgetting (or rather too young to reflect) that the sudden shock of seeing me where I was might prove fatal to his equipoise. He perceived me, however, and tried to smile. "Don't be afraid," he cried, "I'll be with you in a moment." My aunt, who had fallen back, returned to the aperture, and gazed at him with pale cheeks and clasped hands. He made a long step forward, successfully, and, as he recovered himself, caught sight of her face and looked at her with fearful intentness. Then seeing, I suppose, that she was sickened by his insecurity, he disengaged one hand and motioned her back. She retreated, paced in a single moment the length of the enclosure in which we stood, returned and stopped just short of the point at which she would have seen him again. She buried her face in her hands, like one muttering a rapid prayer, and then advanced once more within range of her friend's vision. As she looked at him, clinging in mid-air and planting step after step on the jagged and treacherous edge of the immense perpendicular chasm, she repressed another loud cry only by thrusting her handkerchief into her mouth. He caught her

eyes again, gazed into them with piercing keenness, as if to drink in coolness and confidence, and then, as she closed them again in horror, motioned me with his head to lead her away. She returned to the farther end of the apartment and leaned her head against the wall. I remained staring at poor Coquelin, fascinated by the spectacle of his mingled danger and courage. Inch by inch, yard by yard, I saw him lessen the interval which threatened his life. It was a horrible, beautiful sight. Some five minutes elapsed; they seemed like fifty. The last few yards he accomplished with a rush; he reached the window which was the goal of his efforts, swung himself in and let himself down by a prodigious leap to the level on which we stood. Here he stopped, pale, lacerated, and drenched with perspiration. He put out his hand to Mlle. de Bergerac, who, at the sound of his steps, had turned herself about. On seeing him she made a few steps forward and burst into tears. I took his extended hand. He bent over me and kissed me, and then giving me a push, "Go and kiss your poor aunt," he said. Mlle. de Bergerac clasped me to her breast with a most convulsive pressure. From that moment till we reached home, there was very little said. Both my companions had matter for silent reflection,—Mlle. de Bergerac in the deep significance of that offered hand, and Coquelin in the rich avowal of her tears.

PART III

A week after this memorable visit to Fossy, in emulation of my good preceptor, I treated my friends, or myself at least, to a five minutes' fright. Wandering beside the river one day when Coquelin had been detained within doors to overlook some accounts for my father, I amused myself, where the bank projected slightly over the stream, with kicking the earth away in fragments, and watching it borne down the current. The result may be anticipated: I came very near going the way of those same fragments. I lost my foothold and fell into the stream, which, however, was so shallow as to offer no great obstacle to self-preservation. I scrambled ashore, wet to the bone, and, feeling rather ashamed of my misadventure, skulked about in the fields for a couple of hours, in my dripping clothes. Finally, there being no sun and my garments remaining inexorably damp, my teeth began to chatter and my limbs to ache. I went home and surrendered myself. Here again the result may be foreseen: the next day I was laid up with a high fever.

Mlle. de Bergerac, as I afterwards learned, immediately appointed herself my nurse, removed me from my little sleeping-closet to her own room, and watched me with the most tender care. My illness lasted some ten days, my convalescence a week. When I began to mend, my bed was transferred to an unoccupied room adjoining my aunt's. Here, late one afternoon, I lay languidly singing to myself and watching the western sunbeams shimmering on the opposite wall. If you were ever ill as a child, you will remember such moments. You look by the hour at your thin, white hands; you listen to the sounds in the house, the opening of doors and the tread of feet; you murmur strange odds and ends of talk; and you watch the fading of the day and the dark flowering of the night. Presently my aunt came in, introducing Coquelin, whom she left by my bedside. He sat with me a long time, talking in the old, kind way, and gradually lulled me to sleep with the gentle murmur of his voice. When I awoke again it was night. The sun was quenched on the opposite wall, but through a window on the same side came a broad ray of moonlight. In the window sat Coquelin, who had apparently not left the room. Near him was Mlle. de Bergerac.

Some time elapsed between my becoming conscious of their presence and my distinguishing the sense of the words that were passing between them. When I did so, if I had reached the age when one ponders and interprets what one hears, I should readily have perceived that since those last thrilling moments at Fossy their friendship had taken a very long step, and that the secret of each heart had changed place with its mate. But even now there was little

that was careless and joyous in their young love; the first words of Mlle. Bergerac that I distinguished betrayed the sombre tinge of their passion.

"I don't care what happens now," she said. "It will always be something to have lived through these days."

"You're stronger than I, then," said Coquelin. "I haven't the courage to defy the future. I'm afraid to think of it. Ah, why can't we make a future of our own?"

"It would be a greater happiness than we have a right to. Who are you, Pierre Coquelin, that you should claim the right to marry the girl you love, when she's a demoiselle de Bergerac to begin with? And who am I, that I should expect to have deserved a greater blessing than that one look of your eyes, which I shall never, never forget? It is more than enough to watch you and pray for you and worship you in silence."

"What am I? what are you? We are two honest mortals, who have a perfect right to repudiate the blessings of God. If ever a passion deserved its reward, mademoiselle, it's the absolute love I bear you. It's not a spasm, a miracle, or a delusion; it's the most natural emotion of my nature."

"We don't live in a natural world, Coquelin. If we did, there would be no need of concealing this divine affection. Great heaven! who's natural? Is it my sister-in-law? Is it M. de Treuil? Is it my brother? My brother is sometimes so natural that he's brutal. Is it I myself? There are moments when I'm afraid of my nature."

It was too dark for me to distinguish my companions' faces in the course of this singular dialogue; but it's not hard to imagine how, as my aunt uttered these words, with a burst of sombre *naïveté*, her lover must have turned upon her face the puzzled brightness of his eyes.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"*Mon Dieu!* think how I have lived! What a senseless, thoughtless, passionless life! What solitude, ignorance, and languor! What trivial duties and petty joys! I have fancied myself happy at times, for it was God's mercy that I didn't know what I lacked. But now that my soul begins to stir and throb and live, it shakes me with its mighty pulsations. I feel as if in the mere wantonness of strength and joy it might drive me to some extravagance. I seem to feel myself making a great rush, with my eyes closed and my heart in my throat. And then the earth sinks away from under my feet, and in my ears is the sound of a dreadful tumult."

"Evidently we have very different ways of feeling. For you our love is action, passion; for me it's rest. For you it's romance; for me it's reality. For me it's a necessity; for you (how shall I say it?) it's a luxury. In point of fact, mademoiselle, how should it be otherwise? When a demoiselle de Bergerac bestows her heart upon an obscure adventurer, a man born in poverty and servitude, it's a matter of charity, of noble generosity."

Mlle. de Bergerac received this speech in silence, and for some moments nothing was said. At last she resumed: "After all that has passed between us, Coquelin, it seems to me a matter neither of generosity nor of charity to allude again to that miserable fact of my birth."

"I was only trying to carry out your own idea, and to get at the truth with regard to our situation. If our love is worth a straw, we needn't be afraid of that. Isn't it true—blessedly true, perhaps, for all I know—that you shrink a little from taking me as I am? Except for my character, I'm so little! It's impossible to be less of a *personage*. You can't quite reconcile it to your dignity to love a nobody, so you fling over your weakness a veil of mystery and romance and exaltation. You regard your passion, perhaps, as more of an escapade, an adventure, than it needs to be."

"My 'nobody,'" said Mlle. de Bergerac, gently, "is a very wise man, and a great philosopher. I don't understand a word you say."

"Ah, so much the better!" said Coquelin with a little laugh.

"Will you promise me," pursued the young girl, "never again by word or deed to allude to the difference of our birth? If you refuse, I shall consider you an excellent pedagogue, but no lover."

"Will you in return promise me—"

"Promise you what?"

Coquelin was standing before her, looking at her, with folded arms. "Promise me likewise to forget it!"

Mlle. de Bergerac stared a moment, and also rose to her feet. "Forget it! Is this generous?" she cried. "Is it delicate? I had pretty well forgot it, I think, on that dreadful day at Fossy!" Her voice trembled and swelled; she burst into tears. Coquelin attempted to remonstrate, but she motioned him aside, and swept out of the room.

It must have been a very genuine passion between these two, you'll observe, to allow this handling without gloves. Only a plant of hardy growth could have endured this chilling blast of discord and disputation. Ultimately, indeed, its effect seemed to have been to fortify and consecrate their love. This was apparent several days later; but I know not what manner of communication they had had in the interval. I was much better, but I was still weak and languid. Mlle. de Bergerac brought me my breakfast in bed, and then, having helped me to rise and dress, led me out into the garden, where she had caused a chair to be placed in the shade. While I sat watching the bees and butterflies, and pulling the flowers to pieces, she strolled up and down the alley close at hand, taking slow stitches in a piece of embroidery. We had been so occupied about ten minutes, when Coquelin came towards us from his lodge,—by appointment, evidently, for this was a roundabout way to the house. Mlle. de Bergerac met him at the end of the path, where I could not hear what they said, but only see their gestures. As they came along together, she raised both hands to her ears, and shook her head with vehemence, as if to refuse to listen to what he was urging. When they drew near my resting-place, she had interrupted him.

"No, no, no!" she cried, "I will never forget it to my dying day. How should I? How can I look at you without remembering it? It's in your face, your figure, your movements, the tones of your voice. It's you,—it's what I love in you! It was that which went through my heart that day at Fossy. It was the look, the tone, with which you called the place horrible; it was your bitter plebeian hate. When you spoke of the misery and baseness of your race, I could have cried out in an anguish of love! When I contradicted you, and pretended that I prized and honored all these tokens of your servitude,—just heaven! you know now what my words were worth!"

Coquelin walked beside her with his hands clasped behind him, and his eyes fixed on the ground with a look of repressed sensibility. He passed his poor little convalescent pupil without heeding him. When they came down the path again, the young girl was still talking with the same feverish volubility.

"But most of all, the first day, the first hour, when you came up the avenue to my brother! I had never seen any one like you. I had seen others, but you had something that went to my soul. I devoured you with my eyes,—your dusty clothes, your uncombed hair, your pale face, the way you held yourself not to seem tired. I went down on my knees, then; I haven't been up since."

The poor girl, you see, was completely possessed by her passion, and yet she was in a very strait place. For her life she wouldn't recede; and yet how was she to advance? There must have been an odd sort of simplicity in her way of bestowing her love; or perhaps you'll think it an odd sort of subtlety. It seems plain to me now, as I tell the story, that Coquelin, with his perfect good sense, was right, and that there was, at this moment, a large element of romance in the composition of her feelings. She seemed to feel no desire to realize her passion. Her hand was already bestowed; fate was inexorable. She wished simply to compress a world of bliss into her few remaining hours of freedom.

The day after this interview in the garden I came down to dinner; on the next I sat up to supper, and for some time afterwards, thanks to my aunt's preoccupation of mind. On rising from the table, my father left the château; my mother, who was ailing, returned to her room. Coquelin disappeared, under pretence of going to his own apartments; but, Mlle. de Bergerac having taken me into the drawing-room and detained me there some minutes, he shortly rejoined us.

"Great heaven, mademoiselle, this must end!" he cried, as he came into the room. "I can stand it no longer."

"Nor can I," said my aunt. "But I have given my word."

"Take back your word, then! Write him a letter—go to him—send me to him—anything! I can't stay here on the footing of a thief and impostor. I'll do anything," he continued, as she was silent. "I'll go to him in person; I'll go to your brother; I'll go to your sister even. I'll proclaim it to the world. Or, if you don't like that. I'll keep it a mortal secret. I'll leave the château with you without an hour's delay. I'll defy pursuit and discovery. We'll go to America,—anywhere you wish, if it's only action. Only spare me the agony of seeing you drift along into that man's arms."

Mlle. de Bergerac made no reply for some moments. At last, "I will never marry M. de Treuil," she said.

To this declaration Coquelin made no response; but after a pause, "Well, well, well?" he cried.

"Ah, you're pitiless!" said the young girl.

"No, mademoiselle, from the bottom of my heart I pity you."

"Well, then, think of all you ask! Think of the inexpressible criminality of my love. Think of me standing here,—here before my mother's portrait,—murmuring out my shame, scorched by my sister's scorn, buffeted by my brother's curses! Gracious heaven, Coquelin, suppose after all I were a bad, hard girl!"

"I'll suppose nothing; this is no time for hair-splitting." And then, after a pause, as if with a violent effort, in a voice hoarse and yet soft: "Gabrielle, passion is blind. Reason alone is worth a straw. I'll not counsel you in passion, let us wait till reason comes to us." He put out his hand; she gave him her own; he pressed it to his lips and departed.

On the following day, as I still professed myself too weak to resume my books, Coquelin left the château alone, after breakfast, for a long walk. He was going, I suppose, into the woods and meadows in quest of Reason. She was hard to find, apparently, for he failed to return to dinner. He reappeared, however, at supper, but now my father was absent. My mother, as she left the table, expressed the wish that Mlle. de Bergerac should attend her to her own room. Coquelin, meanwhile, went with me into the great saloon, and for half an hour talked to me

gravely and kindly about my studies, and questioned me on what we had learned before my illness. At the end of this time Mlle. de Bergerac returned.

"I got this letter to-day from M. de Treuil," she said, and offered him a missive which had apparently been handed to her since dinner.

"I don't care to read it," he said.

She tore it across and held the pieces to the flame of the candle. "He is to be here to-morrow," she added finally.

"Well?" asked Coquelin gravely.

"You know my answer."

"Your answer to him, perfectly. But what is your answer to me?"

She looked at him in silence. They stood for a minute, their eyes locked together. And then, in the same posture,—her arms loose at her sides, her head slightly thrown back,—"To you," she said, "my answer is—farewell."

The word was little more than whispered; but, though he heard it, he neither started nor spoke. He stood unmoved, all his soul trembling under his brows and filling the space between his mistress and himself with a sort of sacred stillness. Then, gradually, his head sank on his breast, and his eyes dropped on the ground.

"It's reason," the young girl began. "Reason has come to me. She tells me that if I marry in my brother's despite, and in opposition to all the traditions that have been kept sacred in my family, I shall neither find happiness nor give it. I must choose the simplest course. The other is a gulf; I can't leap it. It's harder than you think. Something in the air forbids it,—something in the very look of these old walls, within which I was born and I've lived. I shall never marry; I shall go into religion. I tried to fling away my name; it was sowing dragons' teeth. I don't ask you to forgive me. It's small enough comfort that you should have the right to think of me as a poor, weak heart. Keep repeating that: it will console you. I shall not have the compensation of doubting the perfection of what I love."

Coquelin turned away in silence. Mlle. de Bergerac sprang after him. "In Heaven's name," she cried, "say something! Rave, storm, swear, but don't let me think I've broken your heart."

"My heart's sound," said Coquelin, almost with a smile. "I regret nothing that has happened. O, how I love you!"

The young girl buried her face in her hands.

"This end," he went on, "is doubtless the only possible one. It's thinking very lightly of life to expect any other. After all, what call had I to interrupt your life,—to burden you with a trouble, a choice, a decision? As much as anything that I have ever known in you I admire your beautiful delicacy of conscience."

"Ah," said the young girl, with a moan, "don't kill me with fine names!"

And then came the farewell. "I feel," said poor Coquelin, "that I can't see you again. We must not meet. I will leave Bergerac immediately,—to-night,—under pretext of having been summoned home by my mother's illness. In a few days I will write to your brother that circumstances forbid me to return."

My own part in this painful interview I shall not describe at length. When it began to dawn upon my mind that my friend was actually going to disappear, I was seized with a convulsion of rage and grief. "Ah," cried Mlle. de Bergerac bitterly, "that was all that was wanting!"

What means were taken to restore me to composure, what promises were made me, what pious deception was practised, I forget; but, when at last I came to my senses, Coquelin had made his exit.

My aunt took me by the hand and prepared to lead me up to bed, fearing naturally that my ruffled aspect and swollen visage would arouse suspicion. At this moment I heard the clatter of hoofs in the court, mingled with the sound of voices. From the window, I saw M. de Treuil and my father alighting from horseback. Mlle. de Bergerac, apparently, made the same observation; she dropped my hand and sank down in a chair. She was not left long in suspense. Perceiving a light in the saloon, the two gentlemen immediately made their way to this apartment. They came in together, arm in arm, the Vicomte dressed in mourning. Just within the threshold they stopped; my father disengaged his arm, took his companion by the hand and led him to Mlle. de Bergerac. She rose to her feet as you may imagine a sitting statue to rise. The Vicomte bent his knee.

"At last, mademoiselle," said he,— "sooner than I had hoped,—my long probation is finished."

The young girl spoke, but no one would have recognized her voice. "I fear, M. le Vicomte," she said, "that it has only begun."

The Vicomte broke into a harsh, nervous laugh.

"Fol de rol, mademoiselle," cried my father, "your pleasantry is in very bad taste."

But the Vicomte had recovered himself. "Mademoiselle is quite right," he declared; "she means that I must now begin to deserve my happiness." This little speech showed a very brave fancy. It was in flagrant discord with the expression of the poor girl's figure, as she stood twisting her hands together and rolling her eyes,—an image of sombre desperation.

My father felt there was a storm in the air. "M. le Vicomte is in mourning for M. de Sorbières," he said. "M. le Vicomte is his sole legatee. He comes to exact the fulfilment of your promise."

"I made no promise," said Mlle. de Bergerac.

"Excuse me, mademoiselle; you gave your word that you'd wait for me."

"Gracious heaven!" cried the young girl; "haven't I waited for you!"

"*Ma toute belle*" said the Baron, trying to keep his angry voice within the compass of an undertone, and reducing it in the effort to a very ugly whisper, "if I had supposed you were going to make us a scene, *nom de Dieu!* I would have taken my precautions beforehand! You know what you're to expect. Vicomte, keep her to her word. I'll give you half an hour. Come, Chevalier." And he took me by the hand.

We had crossed the threshold and reached the hall, when I heard the Vicomte give a long moan, half plaintive, half indignant. My father turned, and answered with a fierce, inarticulate cry, which I can best describe as a roar. He straightway retraced his steps, I, of course, following. Exactly what, in the brief interval, had passed between our companions I am unable to say; but it was plain that Mlle. de Bergerac, by some cruelly unerring word or act, had discharged the bolt of her refusal. Her gallant lover had sunk into a chair, burying his face in his hands, and stamping his feet on the floor in a frenzy of disappointment. She stood regarding him in a sort of helpless, distant pity. My father had been going to break out into a storm of imprecations; but he suppressed them, and folded his arms.

"And now, mademoiselle," he said, "will you be so good as to inform me of your intentions?"

Beneath my father's gaze the softness passed out of my aunt's face and gave place to an angry defiance, which he must have recognized as cousin-german, at least, to the passion in his own breast. "My intentions had been," she said, "to let M. le Vicomte know that I couldn't marry him, with as little offence as possible. But you seem determined, my brother, to thrust in a world of offence somewhere."

You must not blame Mlle. de Bergerac for the sting of her retort. She foresaw a hard fight; she had only sprung to her arms.

My father looked at the wretched Vicomte, as he sat sobbing and stamping like a child His bosom was wrung with pity for his friend "Look at that dear Gaston, that charming man, and blush for your audacity."

"I know a great deal more about my audacity than you, brother. I might tell you things that would surprise you."

"Gabrielle, you are mad!" the Baron broke out.

"Perhaps I am," said the young girl. And then, turning to M. de Treuil, in a tone of exquisite reproach, "M. le Vicomte, you suffer less well than I had hoped."

My father could endure no more. He seized his sister by her two wrists, so that beneath the pressure her eyes filled with tears. "Heartless fool!" he cried, "do you know what I can do to you?"

"I can imagine, from this specimen," said the poor creature.

The Baron was beside himself with passion. "Down, down on your knees," he went on, "and beg our pardon all round for your senseless, shameless perversity!" As he spoke, he increased the pressure of his grasp to that degree that, after a vain struggle to free herself, she uttered a scream of pain. The Vicomte sprang to his feet. "In heaven's name, Gabrielle," he cried,—and it was the only real *naiïveté* that he had ever uttered,—"isn't it all a horrible jest?"

Mlle. de Bergerac shook her head. "It seems hard. Vicomte," she said, "that I should be answerable for your happiness."

"You hold it there in your hand. Think of what I suffer. To have lived for weeks in the hope of this hour, and to find it what you would fain make it! To have dreamed of rapturous bliss, and to wake to find it hideous misery! Think of it once again!"

"She shall have a chance to think of it," the Baron declared; "she shall think of it quite at her ease. Go to your room, mademoiselle, and remain there till further notice."

Gabrielle prepared to go, but, as she moved away, "I used to fear you, brother," she said with homely scorn, "but I don't fear you now. Judge whether it's because I love you more!"

"Gabrielle," the Vicomte cried out, "I haven't given you up."

"Your feelings are your own, M. le Vicomte. I would have given more than I can say rather than have caused you to suffer. Your asking my hand has been the great honor of my life; my withholding it has been the great trial." And she walked out of the room with the step of unacted tragedy. My father, with an oath, despatched me to bed in her train. Heavy-headed with the recent spectacle of so much half-apprehended emotion, I speedily fell asleep.

I was aroused by the sound of voices, and the grasp of a heavy hand on my shoulder. My father stood before me, holding a candle, with M. de Treuil beside him. "Chevalier," he said, "open your eyes like a man, and come to your senses."

Thus exhorted, I sat up and stared. The Baron sat down on the edge of the bed. "This evening," he began, "before the Vicomte and I came in, were you alone with your aunt?"—My dear friend, you see the scene from here. I answered with the cruel directness of my years. Even if I had had the wit to dissemble, I should have lacked the courage. Of course I had no story to tell. I had drawn no inferences; I didn't say that my tutor was my aunt's lover. I simply said that he had been with us after supper, and that he wanted my aunt to go away with him. Such was my part in the play. I see the whole picture again,—my father brandishing the candlestick, and devouring my words with his great flaming eyes; and the Vicomte behind, portentously silent, with his black clothes and his pale face.

They had not been three minutes out of the room when the door leading to my aunt's chamber opened and Mlle. de Bergerac appeared. She had heard sounds in my apartment, and suspected the visit of the gentlemen and its motive. She immediately won from me the recital of what I had been forced to avow. "Poor Chevalier," she cried, for all commentary. And then, after a pause, "What made them suspect that M. Coquelin had been with us?"

"They saw him, or some one, leave the château as they came in."

"And where have they gone now?"

"To supper. My father said to M. de Treuil that first of all they must sup."

Mlle. de Bergerac stood a moment in meditation. Then suddenly, "Get up, Chevalier," she said, "I want you to go with me."

"Where are you going?"

"To M. Coquelin's."

I needed no second admonition. I hustled on my clothes; Mlle. de Bergerac left the room and immediately returned, clad in a light mantle. We made our way undiscovered to one of the private entrances of the château, hurried across the park and found a light in the window of Coquelin's lodge. It was about half past nine. Mlle. de Bergerac gave a loud knock at the door, and we entered her lover's apartment.

Coquelin was seated at his table writing. He sprang to his feet with a cry of amazement. Mlle. de Bergerac stood panting, with one hand pressed to her heart, while rapidly moving the other as if to enjoin calmness.

"They are come back," she began,— "M. de Treuil and my brother!"

"I thought he was to come to-morrow. Was it a deception?"

"Ah, no! not from him,—an accident Pierre Coquelin, I've had such a scene! But it's not your fault."

"What made the scene?"

"My refusal, of course."

"You turned off the Vicomte?"

"Holy Virgin! You ask me?"

"Unhappy girl!" cried Coquelin.

"No, I was a happy girl to have had a chance to act as my heart bade me. I had faltered enough. But it was hard!"

"It's all hard."

"The hardest is to come," said my aunt She put out her hand; he sprang to her and seized it, and she pressed his own with vehemence. "They have discovered our secret,—don't ask how. It was Heaven's will. From this moment, of course—"

"From this moment, of course," cried Coquelin, "I stay where I am!"

With an impetuous movement she raised his hand to her lips and kissed it. "You stay where you are. We have nothing to conceal, but we have nothing to avow. We have no confessions to make. Before God we have done our duty. You may expect them, I fancy, to-night; perhaps, too, they will honor me with a visit. They are supping between two battles. They will attack us with fury, I know; but let them dash themselves against our silence as against a wall of stone. I have taken my stand. My love, my errors, my longings, are my own affair. My reputation is a sealed book. Woe to him who would force it open!"

The poor girl had said once, you know, that she was afraid of her nature. Assuredly it had now sprung erect in its strength; it came hurrying into action on the winds of her indignation. "Remember, Coquelin," she went on, "you are still and always my friend. You are the guardian of my weakness, the support of my strength."

"Say it all, Gabrielle!" he cried. "I'm for ever and ever your lover!"

Suddenly, above the music of his voice, there came a great rattling knock at the door. Coquelin sprang forward; it opened in his face and disclosed my father and M. de Treuil. I have no words in my dictionary, no images in my rhetoric, to represent the sudden horror that leaped into my father's face as his eye fell upon his sister. He staggered back a step and then stood glaring, until his feelings found utterance in a single word: "*Coureuse!*" I have never been able to look upon the word as trivial since that moment.

The Vicomte came striding past him into the room, like a bolt of lightning from a rumbling cloud, quivering with baffled desire, and looking taller by the head for his passion. "And it was for this, mademoiselle," he cried, "and for *that!*" and he flung out a scornful hand toward Coquelin. "For a beggarly, boorish, ignorant pedagogue!"

Coquelin folded his arms. "Address me directly, M. le Vicomte," he said; "don't fling mud at me over mademoiselle's head."

"You? Who are you?" hissed the nobleman. "A man doesn't address you; he sends his lackeys to flog you!"

"Well, M. le Vicomte, you're complete," said Coquelin, eyeing him from head to foot.

"Complete?" and M. de Treuil broke into an almost hysterical laugh. "I only lack having married your mistress!"

"Ah!" cried Mlle. de Bergerac.

"O, you poor, insensate fool!" said Coquelin.

"Heaven help me," the young man went on, "I'm ready to marry her still."

While these words were rapidly exchanged, my father stood choking with the confusion of amusement and rage. He was stupefied at his sister's audacity,—at the dauntless spirit which ventured to flaunt its shameful passion in the very face of honor and authority. Yet that simple interjection which I have quoted from my aunt's lips stirred a secret tremor in his heart; it was like the striking of some magic silver bell, portending monstrous things. His passion faltered, and, as his eyes glanced upon my innocent head (which, it must be confessed, was sadly out of place in that pernicious scene), alighted on this smaller wrong.

"The next time you go on your adventures, mademoiselle," he cried, "I'd thank you not to pollute my son by dragging him at your skirts."

"I'm not sorry to have my family present," said the young girl, who had had time to collect her thoughts. "I should be glad even if my sister were here. I wish simply to bid you farewell."

Coquelin, at these words, made a step towards her. She passed her hand through his arm. "Things have taken place—and chiefly within the last moment—which change the face of the future. You've done the business, brother," and she fixed her glittering eyes on the Baron; "you've driven me back on myself. I spared you, but you never spared me. I cared for my name; you loaded it with dishonor. I chose between happiness and duty,—duty as you would have laid it down: I preferred duty. But now that happiness has become one with simple safety from violence and insult, I go back to happiness. I give you back your name; though I have kept it more jealously than you. I have another ready for me. O Messieurs!" she cried, with a burst of rapturous exaltation, "for what you have done to me I thank you."

My father began to groan and tremble. He had grasped my hand in his own, which was clammy with perspiration. "For the love of God, Gabrielle," he implored, "or the fear of the Devil, speak so that a sickened, maddened Christian can understand you! For what purpose did you come here to-night?"

"*Mon Dieu*, it's a long story. You made short work with it. I might in justice do as much. I came here, brother, to guard my reputation, and not to lose it."

All this while my father had neither looked at Coquelin nor spoken to him, either because he thought him not worth his words, or because he had kept some transcendent insult in reserve. Here my governor broke in. "It seems to me time, M. le Baron, that I should inquire the purpose of your own visit."

My father stared a moment. "I came, M. Coquelin, to take you by the shoulders and eject you through that door, with the further impulsion, if necessary, of a vigorous kick."

"Good! And M. le Vicomte?"

"M. le Vicomte came to see it done."

"Perfect! A little more and you had come too late. I was on the point of leaving Bergerac. I can put the story into three words. I have been so happy as to secure the affections of Mlle. de Bergerac. She asked herself, devoutly, what course of action was possible under the circumstances. She decided that the only course was that we should immediately separate. I had no hesitation in bringing my residence with M. le Chevalier to a sudden close. I was to have quitted the château early to-morrow morning, leaving mademoiselle at absolute liberty. With her refusal of M. de Treuil I have nothing to do. Her action in this matter seems to have been strangely precipitated, and my own departure anticipated in consequence. It was at her adjuration that I was preparing to depart. She came here this evening to command me to stay. In our relations there was nothing that the world had a right to lay a finger upon. From the moment that they were suspected it was of the first importance to the security and sanctity of Mlle. de Bergerac's position that there should be no appearance on my part of elusion or flight. The relations I speak of had ceased to exist; there was, therefore, every reason why for the present I should retain my place. Mlle. de Bergerac had been here some three minutes, and had just made known her wishes, when you arrived with the honorable intentions which you avow, and under that illusion the perfect stupidity of which is its least reproach. In my own turn. Messieurs, I thank you!"

"Gabrielle," said my father, as Coquelin ceased speaking, "the long and short of it appears to be that after all you needn't marry this man. Am I to understand that you intend to?"

"Brother, I mean to marry M. Coquelin."

My father stood looking from the young girl to her lover. The Vicomte walked to the window, as if he were in want of air. The night was cool and the window closed. He tried the sash, but for some reason it resisted. Whereupon he raised his sword-hilt and with a violent blow shivered a pane into fragments. The Baron went on: "On what do you propose to live?"

"It's for me to propose," said Coquelin. "My wife shall not suffer."

"Whither do you mean to go?"

"Since you're so good as to ask,—to Paris."

My father had got back his fire. "Well, then," he cried, "my bitterest unforgiveness go with you, and turn your unholy pride to abject woe! My sister may marry a base-born vagrant if she wants, but I shall not give her away. I hope you'll enjoy the mud in which you've planted yourself. I hope your marriage will be blessed in the good old fashion, and that you'll regard philosophically the sight of a half-dozen starving children. I hope you'll enjoy the company of chandlers and cobblers and scribblers!" The Baron could go no further. "Ah, my sister!" he half exclaimed. His voice broke; he gave a great convulsive sob, and fell into a chair.

"Coquelin," said my aunt, "take me back to the château."

As she walked to the door, her hand in the young man's arm, the Vicomte turned short about from the window, and stood with his drawn sword, grimacing horribly.

"Not if I can help it!" he cried through his teeth, and with a sweep of his weapon he made a savage thrust at the young girl's breast Coquelin, with equal speed, sprang before her, threw out his arm, and took the blow just below the elbow.

"Thank you, M. le Vicomte," he said, "for the chance of calling you a coward! There was something I wanted."

Mlle. de Bergerac spent the night at the château, but by early dawn she had disappeared. Whither Coquelin betook himself with his gratitude and his wound, I know not. He lay, I suppose, at some neighboring farmer's. My father and the Vicomte kept for an hour a silent, sullen vigil in my preceptor's vacant apartment,—for an hour and perhaps longer, for at the end of this time I fell asleep, and when I came to my senses, the next morning, I was in my own bed.

M. de Bergerac had finished his talk.

"But the marriage," I asked, after a pause,— "was it happy?"

"Reasonably so, I fancy. There is no doubt that Coquelin was an excellent fellow. They had three children, and lost them all. They managed to live. He painted portraits and did literary work.

"And his wife?"

"Her history, I take it, is that of all good wives: she loved her husband. When the Revolution came, they went into politics; but here, in spite of his base birth, Coquelin acted with that superior temperance which I always associate with his memory. He was no *sans-culotte*. They both went to the scaffold among the Girondists."

A Passionate Pilgrim

I

Intending to sail for America in the early part of June, I determined to spend the interval of six weeks in England, to which country my mind's eye only had as yet been introduced. I had formed in Italy and France a resolute preference for old inns, considering that what they sometimes cost the ungratified body they repay the delighted mind. On my arrival in London, therefore, I lodged at a certain antique hostelry, much to the east of Temple Bar, deep in the quarter that I had inevitably figured as the Johnsonian. Here, on the first evening of my stay, I descended to the little coffee-room and bespoke my dinner of the genius of "attendance" in the person of the solitary waiter. No sooner had I crossed the threshold of this retreat than I felt I had cut a golden-ripe crop of English "impressions." The coffee-room of the Red Lion, like so many other places and things I was destined to see in the motherland, seemed to have been waiting for long years, with just that sturdy sufferance of time written on its visage, for me to come and extract the romantic essence of it.

The latent preparedness of the American mind even for the most characteristic features of English life was a matter I meanwhile failed to get to the bottom of. The roots of it are indeed so deeply buried in the soil of our early culture that, without some great upheaval of feeling, we are at a loss to say exactly when and where and how it begins. It makes an American's enjoyment of England an emotion more searching than anything Continental. I had seen the coffee-room of the Red Lion years ago, at home—at Saragossa Illinois—in books, in visions, in dreams, in Dickens, in Smollett, in Boswell. It was small and subdivided into six narrow compartments by a series of perpendicular screens of mahogany, something higher than a man's stature, furnished on either side with a meagre uncushioned ledge, denominated in ancient Britain a seat. In each of these rigid receptacles was a narrow table—a table expected under stress to accommodate no less than four pairs of active British elbows. High pressure indeed had passed away from the Red Lion for ever. It now knew only that of memories and ghosts and atmosphere. Round the room there marched, breast-high, a magnificent panelling of mahogany, so dark with time and so polished with unremitting friction that by gazing a while into its lucid blackness I made out the dim reflexion of a party of wigged gentlemen in knee-breeches just arrived from York by the coach. On the dark yellow walls, coated by the fumes of English coal, of English mutton, of Scotch whiskey, were a dozen melancholy prints, sallow-toned with age—the Derby favourite of the year 1807, the Bank of England, her Majesty the Queen. On the floor was a Turkey carpet—as old as the mahogany almost, as the Bank of England, as the Queen—into which the waiter had in his lonely revolutions trodden so many massive soot-flakes and drops of overflowing beer that the glowing looms of Smyrna would certainly not have recognised it. To say that I ordered my dinner of this archaic type would be altogether to misrepresent the process owing to which, having dreamed of lamb and spinach and a *salade de saison*, I sat down in penitence to a mutton-chop and a rice pudding. Bracing my feet against the cross-beam of my little oaken table, I opposed to the mahogany partition behind me the vigorous dorsal resistance that must have expressed the old-English idea of repose. The sturdy screen refused even to creak, but my poor Yankee joints made up the deficiency.

While I was waiting there for my chop there came into the room a person whom, after I had looked at him a moment, I supposed to be a fellow lodger and probably the only one. He seemed, like myself, to have submitted to proposals for dinner; the table on the other side of my partition had been prepared to receive him. He walked up to the fire, exposed his back to

it and, after consulting his watch, looked directly out of the window and indirectly at me. He was a man of something less than middle age and more than middle stature, though indeed you would have called him neither young nor tall. He was chiefly remarkable for his emphasised leanness. His hair, very thin on the summit of his head, was dark short and fine. His eye was of a pale turbid grey, unsuited, perhaps, to his dark hair and well-drawn brows, but not altogether out of harmony with his colourless bilious complexion. His nose was aquiline and delicate; beneath it his moustache languished much rather than bristled. His mouth and chin were negative, or at the most provisional; not vulgar, doubtless, but ineffectually refined. A cold fatal gentlemanly weakness was expressed indeed in his attenuated person. His eye was restless and deprecating; his whole physiognomy, his manner of shifting his weight from foot to foot, the spiritless droop of his head, told of exhausted intentions, of a will relaxed. His dress was neat and “toned down”—he might have been in mourning. I made up my mind on three points: he was a bachelor, he was out of health, he was not indigenous to the soil. The waiter approached him, and they conversed in accents barely audible. I heard the words “claret,” “sherry” with a tentative inflexion, and finally “beer” with its last letter changed to “ah.” Perhaps he was a Russian in reduced circumstances; he reminded me slightly of certain sceptical cosmopolite Russians whom I had met on the Continent. While in my extravagant way I followed this train—for you see I was interested—there appeared a short brisk man with reddish-brown hair, with a vulgar nose, a sharp blue eye and a red beard confined to his lower jaw and chin. My putative Russian, still in possession of the rug, let his mild gaze stray over the dingy ornaments of the room. The other drew near, and his umbrella dealt a playful poke at the concave melancholy waistcoat. “A penny ha’penny for your thoughts!”

My friend, as I call him, uttered an exclamation, stared, then laid his two hands on the other’s shoulders. The latter looked round at me keenly, compassing me in a momentary glance. I read in its own vague light that this was a transatlantic eyebeam; and with such confidence that I hardly needed to see its owner, as he prepared, with his companion, to seat himself at the table adjoining my own, take from his overcoat-pocket three New York newspapers and lay them beside his plate. As my neighbours proceeded to dine I felt the crumbs of their conversation scattered pretty freely abroad. I could hear almost all they said, without straining to catch it, over the top of the partition that divided us. Occasionally their voices dropped to recovery of discretion, but the mystery pieced itself together as if on purpose to entertain me. Their speech was pitched in the key that may in English air be called alien in spite of a few coincidences. The voices were American, however, with a difference; and I had no hesitation in assigning the softer and clearer sound to the pale thin gentleman, whom I decidedly preferred to his comrade. The latter began to question him about his voyage.

“Horrible, horrible! I was deadly sick from the hour we left New York.”

“Well, you do look considerably reduced,” said the second-comer.

“Reduced! I’ve been on the verge of the grave. I haven’t slept six hours for three weeks.” This was said with great gravity.

“Well, I’ve made the voyage for the last time.”

“The plague you have! You mean to locate here permanently?”

“Oh it won’t be so very permanent!”

There was a pause; after which: “You’re the same merry old boy, Searle. Going to give up the ghost to-morrow, eh?”

“I almost wish I were.”

“You’re not so sweet on England then? I’ve heard people say at home that you dress and talk and act like an Englishman. But I know these people here and I know you. You’re not one of this crowd, Clement Searle, not you. You’ll go under here, sir; you’ll go under as sure as my name’s Simmons.”

Following this I heard a sudden clatter as of the drop of a knife and fork. “Well, you’re a delicate sort of creature, if it IS your ugly name! I’ve been wandering about all day in this accursed city, ready to cry with homesickness and heartsickness and every possible sort of sickness, and thinking, in the absence of anything better, of meeting you here this evening and of your uttering some sound of cheer and comfort and giving me some glimmer of hope. Go under? Ain’t I under now? I can’t do more than get under the ground!”

Mr. Simmons’s superior brightness appeared to flicker a moment in this gust of despair, but the next it was burning steady again. “*Don’t ‘cry,* Searle,” I heard him say. “Remember the waiter. I’ve grown Englishman enough for that. For heaven’s sake don’t let’s have any nerves. Nerves won’t do anything for you here. It’s best to come to the point. Tell me in three words what you expect of me.”

I heard another movement, as if poor Searle had collapsed in his chair. “Upon my word, sir, you’re quite inconceivable. You never got my letter?”

“Yes, I got your letter. I was never sorrier to get anything in my life.”

At this declaration Mr. Searle rattled out an oath, which it was well perhaps that I but partially heard. “Abijah Simmons,” he then cried, “what demon of perversity possesses you? Are you going to betray me here in a foreign land, to turn out a false friend, a heartless rogue?”

“Go on, sir,” said sturdy Simmons. “Pour it all out. I’ll wait till you’ve done. Your beer’s lovely,” he observed independently to the waiter. “I’ll have some more.”

“For God’s sake explain yourself!” his companion appealed.

There was a pause, at the end of which I heard Mr. Simmons set down his empty tankard with emphasis. “You poor morbid mooning man,” he resumed, “I don’t want to say anything to make you feel sore. I regularly pity you. But you must allow that you’ve acted more like a confirmed crank than a member of our best society—in which every one’s so sensible.”

Mr. Searle seemed to have made an effort to compose himself. “Be so good as to tell me then what was the meaning of your letter.”

“Well, you had got on *my* nerves, if you want to know, when I wrote it. It came of my always wishing so to please folks. I had much better have let you alone. To tell you the plain truth I never was so horrified in my life as when I found that on the strength of my few kind words you had come out here to seek your fortune.”

“What then did you expect me to do?”

“I expected you to wait patiently till I had made further enquiries and had written you again.”

“And you’ve made further enquiries now?”

“Enquiries! I’ve committed assaults.”

“And you find I’ve no claim?”

“No claim that one of *these* big bugs will look at. It struck me at first that you had rather a neat little case. I confess the look of it took hold of me—”

“Thanks to your liking so to please folks!” Mr. Simmons appeared for a moment at odds with something; it proved to be with his liquor. “I rather think your beer’s too good to be true,” he said to the waiter. “I guess I’ll take water. Come, old man,” he resumed, “don’t challenge me to the arts of debate, or you’ll have me right down on you, and then you *will* feel me. My native sweetness, as I say, was part of it. The idea that if I put the thing through it would be a very pretty feather in my cap and a very pretty penny in my purse was part of it. And the satisfaction of seeing a horrid low American walk right into an old English estate was a good deal of it. Upon my word, Searle, when I think of it I wish with all my heart that, extravagant vain man as you are, I *could*, for the charm of it, put you through! I should hardly care what you did with the blamed place when you got it. I could leave you alone to turn it into Yankee notions—into ducks and drakes as they call ‘em here. I should like to see you tearing round over it and kicking up its sacred dust in their very faces!”

“You don’t know me one little bit,” said Mr. Searle, rather shirking, I thought, the burden of this tribute and for all response to the ambiguity of the compliment.

“I should be very glad to think I didn’t, sir. I’ve been to no small amount of personal inconvenience for you. I’ve pushed my way right up to the headspring. I’ve got the best opinion that’s to be had. The best opinion that’s to be had just gives you one leer over its spectacles. I guess that look will fix you if you ever get it straight. I’ve been able to tap, indirectly,” Mr. Simmons went on, “the solicitor of your usurping cousin, and he evidently knows something to be in the wind. It seems your elder brother twenty years ago put out a feeler. So you’re not to have the glory of even making them sit up.”

“I never made any one sit up,” I heard Mr. Searle plead. “I shouldn’t begin at this time of day. I should approach the subject like a gentleman.”

“Well, if you want very much to do something like a gentleman you’ve got a capital chance. Take your disappointment like a gentleman.”

I had finished my dinner and had become keenly interested in poor Mr. Searle’s unencouraging—or unencouraged—claim; so interested that I at last hated to hear his trouble reflected in his voice without being able—all respectfully!—to follow it in his face. I left my place, went over to the fire, took up the evening paper and established a post of observation behind it.

His cold counsellor was in the act of choosing a soft chop from the dish—an act accompanied by a great deal of prying and poking with that gentleman’s own fork. My disillusioned compatriot had pushed away his plate; he sat with his elbows on the table, gloomily nursing his head with his hands. His companion watched him and then seemed to wonder—to do Mr. Simmons justice—how he could least ungracefully give him up. “I say, Searle,”—and for my benefit, I think, taking me for a native ingenuous enough to be dazzled by his wit, he lifted his voice a little and gave it an ironical ring—“in this country it’s the inestimable privilege of a loyal citizen, under whatsoever stress of pleasure or of pain, to make a point of eating his dinner.”

Mr. Searle gave his plate another push. “Anything may happen now. I don’t care a straw.”

“You ought to care. Have another chop and you *will* care. Have some better tippie. Take my advice!” Mr. Simmons went on.

My friend—I adopt that name for him—gazed from between his two hands coldly before him. “I’ve had enough of your advice.”

“A little more,” said Simmons mildly; “I shan’t trouble you again. What do you mean to do?”

“Nothing.”

“Oh come!”

“Nothing, nothing, nothing!”

“Nothing but starve. How about meeting expenses?”

“Why do you ask?” said my friend. “You don’t care.”

“My dear fellow, if you want to make me offer you twenty pounds you set most clumsily about it. You said just now I don’t know you,” Mr. Simmons went on. “Possibly. Come back with me then,” he said kindly enough, “and let’s improve our acquaintance.”

“I won’t go back. I shall never go back.”

“Never?”

“Never.”

Mr. Simmons thought it shrewdly over. “Well, you *are* sick!” he exclaimed presently. “All I can say is that if you’re working out a plan for cold poison, or for any other act of desperation, you had better give it right up. You can’t get a dose of the commonest kind of cold poison for nothing, you know. Look here, Searle”—and the worthy man made what struck me as a very decent appeal. “If you’ll consent to return home with me by the steamer of the twenty-third I’ll pay your passage down. More than that, I’ll pay for your beer.”

My poor gentleman met it. “I believe I never made up my mind to anything before, but I think it’s made up now. I shall stay here till I take my departure for a newer world than any patched-up newness of ours. It’s an odd feeling—I rather like it! What should I do at home?”

“You said just now you were homesick.”

“I meant I was sick for a home. Don’t I belong here? Haven’t I longed to get here all my life? Haven’t I counted the months and the years till I should be able to ‘go’ as we say? And now that I’ve ‘gone,’ that is that I’ve come, must I just back out? No, no, I’ll move on. I’m much obliged to you for your offer. I’ve enough money for the present. I’ve about my person some forty pounds’ worth of British gold, and the same amount, say, of the toughness of the heaven-sent idiot. They’ll see me through together! After they’re gone I shall lay my head in some English churchyard, beside some ivied tower, beneath an old gnarled black yew.”

I had so far distinctly followed the dialogue; but at this point the landlord entered and, begging my pardon, would suggest that number 12, a most superior apartment, having now been vacated, it would give him pleasure if I would look in. I declined to look in, but agreed for number 12 at a venture and gave myself again, with dissimulation, to my friends. They had got up; Simmons had put on his overcoat; he stood polishing his rusty black hat with his napkin. “Do you mean to go down to the place?” he asked.

“Possibly. I’ve thought of it so often that I should like to see it.”

“Shall you call on Mr. Searle?”

“Heaven forbid!”

“Something has just occurred to me,” Simmons pursued with a grin that made his upper lip look more than ever denuded by the razor and jerked the ugly ornament of his chin into the air. “There’s a certain Miss Searle, the old man’s sister.”

“Well?” my gentleman quavered.

“Well, sir!—you talk of moving on. You might move on the damsel.”

Mr. Searle frowned in silence and his companion gave him a tap on the stomach. "Line those ribs a bit first!" He blushed crimson; his eyes filled with tears. "You ARE a coarse brute," he said. The scene quite harrowed me, but I was prevented from seeing it through by the reappearance of the landlord on behalf of number 12. He represented to me that I ought in justice to him to come and see how tidy they *had* made it. Half an hour afterwards I was rattling along in a hansom toward Covent Garden, where I heard Madame Bosio in *The Barber of Seville*. On my return from the opera I went into the coffee-room; it had occurred to me I might catch there another glimpse of Mr. Searle. I was not disappointed. I found him seated before the fire with his head sunk on his breast: he slept, dreaming perhaps of Abijah Simmons. I watched him for some moments. His closed eyes, in the dim lamplight, looked even more helpless and resigned, and I seemed to see the fine grain of his nature in his unconscious mask. They say fortune comes while we sleep, and, standing there, I felt really tender enough—though otherwise most unqualified—to be poor Mr. Searle's fortune. As I walked away I noted in one of the little prandial pews I have described the melancholy waiter, whose whiskered chin also reposed on the bulge of his shirt-front. I lingered a moment beside the old inn-yard in which, upon a time, the coaches and post-chaises found space to turn and disgorge. Above the dusky shaft of the enclosing galleries, where lounging lodgers and crumpled chambermaids and all the picturesque domesticity of a rattling tavern must have leaned on their elbows for many a year, I made out the far-off lurid twinkle of the London constellations. At the foot of the stairs, enshrined in the glittering niche of her well-appointed bar, the landlady sat napping like some solemn idol amid votive brass and plate.

The next morning, not finding the subject of my benevolent curiosity in the coffee-room, I learned from the waiter that he had ordered breakfast in bed. Into this asylum I was not yet prepared to pursue him. I spent the morning in the streets, partly under pressure of business, but catching all kinds of romantic impressions by the way. To the searching American eye there is no tint of association with which the great grimy face of London doesn't flush. As the afternoon approached, however, I began to yearn for some site more gracefully classic than what surrounded me, and, thinking over the excursions recommended to the ingenuous stranger, decided to take the train to Hampton Court. The day was the more propitious that it yielded just that dim subaqueous light which sleeps so fondly upon the English landscape.

At the end of an hour I found myself wandering through the apartments of the great palace. They follow each other in infinite succession, with no great variety of interest or aspect, but with persistent pomp and a fine specific effect. They are exactly of their various times. You pass from painted and panelled bedchambers and closets, anterooms, drawing-rooms, council-rooms, through king's suite, queen's suite, prince's suite, until you feel yourself move through the appointed hours and stages of some rigid monarchical day. On one side are the old monumental upholsteries, the big cold tarnished beds and canopies, with the circumference of disapparelled royalty symbolised by a gilded balustrade, and the great carved and yawning chimney-places where dukes-in-waiting may have warmed their weary heels; on the other, in deep recesses, rise the immense windows, the framed and draped embrasures where the sovereign whispered and favourites smiled, looking out on terraced gardens and misty park. The brown walls are dimly illumined by innumerable portraits of courtiers and captains, more especially with various members of the Batavian *entourage* of William of Orange, the restorer of the palace; with good store too of the lily-bosomed models of Lely and Kneller. The whole tone of this processional interior is singularly stale and sad. The tints of all things have both faded and darkened—you taste the chill of the place as you walk from room to room. It was still early in the day and in the season, and I flattered myself that I was the only visitor. This complacency, however, dropped at sight of a person standing motionless before a simpering countess of Sir Peter Lely's creation. On hearing my footstep

this victim of an evaporated spell turned his head and I recognised my fellow lodger of the Red Lion. I was apparently recognised as well; he looked as if he could scarce wait for me to be kind to him, and in fact didn't wait. Seeing I had a catalogue he asked the name of the portrait. On my satisfying him he appealed, rather timidly, as to my opinion of the lady.

"Well," said I, not quite timidly enough perhaps, "I confess she strikes me as no great matter."

He remained silent and was evidently a little abashed. As we strolled away he stole a sidelong glance of farewell at his leering shepherdess. To speak with him face to face was to feel keenly that he was no less interesting than infirm. We talked of our inn, of London, of the palace; he uttered his mind freely, but seemed to struggle with a weight of depression. It was an honest mind enough, with no great cultivation but with a certain natural love of excellent things. I foresaw that I should find him quite to the manner born—to ours; full of glimpses and responses, of deserts and desolations. His perceptions would be fine and his opinions pathetic; I should moreover take refuge from his sense of proportion in his sense of humour, and then refuge from *that*, ah me!—in what? On my telling him that I was a fellow citizen he stopped short, deeply touched, and, silently passing his arm into my own, suffered me to lead him through the other apartments and down into the gardens. A large gravelled platform stretches itself before the basement of the palace, taking the afternoon sun. Parts of the great structure are reserved for private use and habitation, occupied by state-pensioners, reduced gentlewomen in receipt of the Queen's bounty and other deserving persons. Many of the apartments have their dependent gardens, and here and there, between the verdure-coated walls, you catch a glimpse of these somewhat stuffy bowers. My companion and I measured more than once this long expanse, looking down on the floral figures of the rest of the affair and on the stoutly-woven tapestry of creeping plants that muffle the foundations of the huge red pile. I thought of the various images of old-world gentility which, early and late, must have strolled in front of it and felt the protection and security of the place. We peeped through an antique grating into one of the mossy cages and saw an old lady with a black mantilla on her head, a decanter of water in one hand and a crutch in the other, come forth, followed by three little dogs and a cat, to sprinkle a plant. She would probably have had an opinion on the virtue of Queen Caroline. Feeling these things together made us quickly, made us extraordinarily, intimate. My companion seemed to ache with his impression; he scowled, all gently, as if it gave him pain. I proposed at last that we should dine somewhere on the spot and take a late train to town. We made our way out of the gardens into the adjoining village, where we entered an inn which I pronounced, very sincerely, exactly what we wanted. Mr. Searle had approached our board as shyly as if it had been a cold bath; but, gradually warming to his work, he declared at the end of half an hour that for the first time in a month he enjoyed his victuals.

"I'm afraid you're rather out of health," I risked.

"Yes, sir—I'm an incurable."

The little village of Hampton Court stands clustered about the entrance of Bushey Park, and after we had dined we lounged along into the celebrated avenue of horse-chestnuts. There is a rare emotion, familiar to every intelligent traveller, in which the mind seems to swallow the sum total of its impressions at a gulp. You take in the whole place, whatever it be. You feel England, you feel Italy, and the sensation involves for the moment a kind of thrill. I had known it from time to time in Italy and had opened my soul to it as to the spirit of the Lord. Since my landing in England I had been waiting for it to arrive. A bottle of tolerable Burgundy, at dinner, had perhaps unlocked to it the gates of sense; it arrived now with irresistible force. Just the scene around me was the England of one's early reveries. Over

against us, amid the ripeness of its gardens, the dark red residence, with its formal facings and its vacant windows, seemed to make the past definite and massive; the little village, nestling between park and palace, around a patch of turfy common, with its taverns of figurative names, its ivy-towered church, its mossy roofs, looked like the property of a feudal lord. It was in this dark composite light that I had read the British classics; it was this mild moist air that had blown from the pages of the poets; while I seemed to feel the buried generations in the dense and elastic sod. And that I must have testified in some form or other to what I have called my thrill I gather, remembering it, from a remark of my companion's.

"You've the advantage over me in coming to all this with an educated eye. You already know what old things can be. I've never known it but by report. I've always fancied I should like it. In a small way at home, of course, I did try to stand by my idea of it. I must be a conservative by nature. People at home used to call me a cockney and a fribble. But it wasn't true," he went on; "if it had been I should have made my way over here long ago: before—before—" He paused, and his head dropped sadly on his breast.

The bottle of Burgundy had loosened his tongue; I had but to choose my time for learning his story. Something told me that I had gained his confidence and that, so far as attention and attitude might go, I was "in" for responsibilities. But somehow I didn't dread them. "Before you lost your health," I suggested.

"Before I lost my health," he answered. "And my property—the little I had. And my ambition. And any power to take myself seriously."

"Come!" I cried. "You shall recover everything. This tonic English climate will wind you up in a month. And *then* see how you'll take yourself—and how I shall take you!"

"Oh," he gratefully smiled, "I may turn to dust in your hands! I should like," he presently pursued, "to be an old genteel pensioner, lodged over there in the palace and spending my days in maundering about these vistas. I should go every morning, at the hour when it gets the sun, into that long gallery where all those pretty women of Lely's are hung—I know you despise them!—and stroll up and down and say something kind to them. Poor precious forsaken creatures! So flattered and courted in their day, so neglected now! Offering up their shoulders and ringlets and smiles to that musty deadly silence!"

I laid my hand on my friend's shoulder. "Oh sir, you're all right!"

Just at this moment there came cantering down the shallow glade of the avenue a young girl on a fine black horse—one of those little budding gentlewomen, perfectly mounted and equipped, who form to alien eyes one of the prettiest incidents of English scenery. She had distanced her servant and, as she came abreast of us, turned slightly in her saddle and glanced back at him. In the movement she dropped the hunting-crop with which she was armed; whereupon she reined up and looked shyly at us and at the implement. "This is something better than a Lely," I said. Searle hastened forward, picked up the crop and, with a particular courtesy that became him, handed it back to the rider. Fluttered and blushing she reached forward, took it with a quick sweet sound, and the next moment was bounding over the quiet turf. Searle stood watching her; the servant, as he passed us, touched his hat. When my friend turned toward me again I saw that he too was blushing. "Oh sir, you're all right," I repeated.

At a short distance from where we had stopped was an old stone bench. We went and sat down on it and, as the sun began to sink, watched the light mist powder itself with gold. "We ought to be thinking of the train back to London, I suppose," I at last said.

"Oh hang the train!" sighed my companion.

“Willingly. There could be no better spot than this to feel the English evening stand still.” So we lingered, and the twilight hung about us, strangely clear in spite of the thickness of the air. As we sat there came into view an apparition unmistakable from afar as an immemorial vagrant—the disowned, in his own rich way, of all the English ages. As he approached us he slackened pace and finally halted, touching his cap. He was a man of middle age, clad in a greasy bonnet with false-looking ear-locks depending from its sides. Round his neck was a grimy red scarf, tucked into his waistcoat; his coat and trousers had a remote affinity with those of a reduced hostler. In one hand he had a stick; on his arm he bore a tattered basket, with a handful of withered vegetables at the bottom. His face was pale haggard and degraded beyond description—as base as a counterfeit coin, yet as modelled somehow as a tragic mask. He too, like everything else, had a history. From what height had he fallen, from what depth had he risen? He was the perfect symbol of generated constituted baseness; and I felt before him in presence of a great artist or actor.

“For God’s sake, gentlemen,” he said in the raucous tone of weather-beaten poverty, the tone of chronic sore-throat exacerbated by perpetual gin, “for God’s sake, gentlemen, have pity on a poor fern-collector!”—turning up his stale daisies. “Food hasn’t passed my lips, gentlemen, for the last three days.” We gaped at him and at each other, and to our imagination his appeal had almost the force of a command. “I wonder if half-a-crown would help?” I privately wailed. And our fasting botanist went limping away through the park with the grace of controlled stupefaction still further enriching his outline.

“I feel as if I had seen my *Doppelgänger*,” said Searle. “He reminds me of myself. What am I but a mere figure in the landscape, a wandering minstrel or picker of daisies?”

“What are you ‘anyway,’ my friend?” I thereupon took occasion to ask. “Who are you? kindly tell me.”

The colour rose again to his pale face and I feared I had offended him. He poked a moment at the sod with the point of his umbrella before answering. “Who am I?” he said at last. “My name is Clement Searle. I was born in New York, and that’s the beginning and the end of me.”

“Ah not the end!” I made bold to plead.

“Then it’s because I *have* no end—any more than an ill-written book. I just stop anywhere; which means I’m a failure,” the poor man all lucidly and unreservedly pursued: “a failure, as hopeless and helpless, sir, as any that ever swallowed up the slender investments of the widow and the orphan. I don’t pay five cents on the dollar. What I might have been—once!—there’s nothing left to show. I was rotten before I was ripe. To begin with, certainly, I wasn’t a fountain of wisdom. All the more reason for a definite channel—for having a little character and purpose. But I hadn’t even a little. I had nothing but nice tastes, as they call them, and fine sympathies and sentiments. Take a turn through New York to-day and you’ll find the tattered remnants of these things dangling on every bush and fluttering in every breeze; the men to whom I lent money, the women to whom I made love, the friends I trusted, the follies I invented, the poisonous fumes of pleasure amid which nothing was worth a thought but the manhood they stifled! It was my fault that I believed in pleasure here below. I believe in it still, but as I believe in the immortality of the soul. The soul is immortal, certainly—if you’ve got one; but most people haven’t. Pleasure would be right if it were pleasure straight through; but it never is. My taste was to be the best in the world; well, perhaps it was. I had a little money; it went the way of my little wit. Here in my pocket I have the scant dregs of it. I should tell you I was the biggest kind of ass. Just now that description would flatter me; it would assume there’s something left of me. But the ghost of a donkey—what’s that? I think,”

he went on with a charming turn and as if striking off his real explanation, "I should have been all right in a world arranged on different lines. Before heaven, sir—whoever you are—I'm in practice so absurdly tender-hearted that I can afford to say it: I entered upon life a perfect gentleman. I had the love of old forms and pleasant rites, and I found them nowhere—found a world all hard lines and harsh lights, without shade, without composition, as they say of pictures, without the lovely mystery of colour. To furnish colour I melted down the very substance of my own soul. I went about with my brush, touching up and toning down; a very pretty chiaroscuro you'll find in my track! Sitting here in this old park, in this old country, I feel that I hover on the misty verge of what might have been! I should have been born here and not there; here my makeshift distinctions would have found things they'd have been true of. How it was I never got free is more than I can say. It might have cut the knot, but the knot was too tight. I was always out of health or in debt or somehow desperately dangling. Besides, I had a horror of the great black sickening sea. A year ago I was reminded of the existence of an old claim to an English estate, which has danced before the eyes of my family, at odd moments, any time these eighty years. I confess it's a bit of a muddle and a tangle, and am by no means sure that to this hour I've got the hang of it. You look as if you had a clear head: some other time, if you consent, we'll have a go at it, such as it is, together. Poverty was staring me in the face; I sat down and tried to commit the 'points' of our case to memory, as I used to get nine-times-nine by heart as a boy. I dreamed of it for six months, half-expecting to wake up some fine morning and hear through a latticed casement the cawing of an English rookery. A couple of months ago there came out to England on business of his own a man who once got me out of a dreadful mess (not that I had hurt anyone but myself), a legal practitioner in our courts, a very rough diamond, but with a great deal of *flair*, as they say in New York. It was with him yesterday you saw me dining. He undertook, as he called it, to 'nose round' and see if anything could be made of our questionable but possible show. The matter had never seriously been taken up. A month later I got a letter from Simmons assuring me that it seemed a very good show indeed and that he should be greatly surprised if I were unable to do something. This was the greatest push I had ever got in my life; I took a deliberate step, for the first time; I sailed for England. I've been here three days: they've seemed three months. After keeping me waiting for thirty-six hours my legal adviser makes his appearance last night and states to me, with his mouth full of mutton, that I haven't a leg to stand on, that my claim is moonshine, and that I must do penance and take a ticket for six more days of purgatory with his presence thrown in. My friend, my friend—shall I say I was disappointed? I'm already resigned. I didn't really believe I had any case. I felt in my deeper consciousness that it was the crowning illusion of a life of illusions. Well, it was a pretty one. Poor legal adviser!—I forgive him with all my heart. But for him I shouldn't be sitting in this place, in this air, under these impressions. This is a world I could have got on with beautifully. There's an immense charm in its having been kept for the last. After it nothing else would have been tolerable. I shall now have a month of it, I hope, which won't be long enough for it to "go back on me. There's one thing!"—and here, pausing, he laid his hand on mine; I rose and stood before him—"I wish it were possible you should be with me to the end."

"I promise you to leave you only when you kick me downstairs." But I suggested my terms. "It must be on condition of your omitting from your conversation this intolerable flavour of mortality. I know nothing of 'ends.' I'm all for beginnings."

He kept on me his sad weak eyes. Then with a faint smile: "Don't cut down a man you find hanging. He has had a reason for it. I'm bankrupt."

“Oh health’s money!” I said. “Get well, and the rest will take care of itself. I’m interested in your questionable claim—it’s the question that’s the charm; and pretenders, to anything big enough, have always been, for me, an attractive class. Only their first duty’s to be gallant.”

“Their first duty’s to understand their own points and to know their own mind,” he returned with hopeless lucidity. “Don’t ask me to climb our family tree now,” he added; “I fear I haven’t the head for it. I’ll try some day—if it will bear my weight; or yours added to mine. There’s no doubt, however, that we, as they say, go back. But I know nothing of business. If I were to take the matter in hand I should break in two the poor little silken thread from which everything hangs. In a better world than this I think I should be listened to. But the wind doesn’t set to ideal justice. There’s no doubt that a hundred years ago we suffered a palpable wrong. Yet we made no appeal at the time, and the dust of a century now lies heaped upon our silence. Let it rest!”

“What then,” I asked, “is the estimated value of your interest?”

“We were instructed from the first to accept a compromise. Compared with the whole property our ideas have been small. We were once advised in the sense of a hundred and thirty thousand dollars. Why a hundred and thirty I’m sure I don’t know. Don’t beguile me into figures.”

“Allow me one more question,” I said. “Who’s actually in possession?”

“A certain Mr. Richard Searle. I know nothing about him.”

“He’s in some way related to you?”

“Our great-grandfathers were half-brothers. What does that make us?”

“Twentieth cousins, say. And where does your twentieth cousin live?”

“At a place called Lackley—in Middleshire.”

I thought it over. “Well, suppose we look up Lackley in Middleshire!”

He got straight up. “Go and see it?”

“Go and see it.”

“Well,” he said, “with you I’ll go anywhere.”

On our return to town we determined to spend three days there together and then proceed to our errand. We were as conscious one as the other of that deeper mystic appeal made by London to those superstitious pilgrims who feel it the mother-city of their race, the distributing heart of their traditional life. Certain characteristics of the dusky Babylon, certain aspects, phases, features, “say” more to the American spiritual ear than anything else in Europe. The influence of these things on Searle it charmed me to note. His observation I soon saw to be, as I pronounced it to him, searching and caressing. His almost morbid appetite for any over-scoring of time, well-nigh extinct from long inanition, threw the flush of its revival into his face and his talk.

II

We looked out the topography of Middleshire in a county-guide, which spoke highly, as the phrase is, of Lackley Park, and took up our abode, our journey ended, at a wayside inn where, in the days of leisure, the coach must have stopped for luncheon and burnished pewters of rustic ale been handed up as straight as possible to outsiders athirst with the sense of speed. We stopped here for mere gaping joy of its steep-thatched roof, its latticed windows, its hospitable porch, and allowed a couple of days to elapse in vague undirected strolls and sweet

sentimental observance of the land before approaching the particular business that had drawn us on. The region I allude to is a compendium of the general physiognomy of England. The noble friendliness of the scenery, its latent old-friendliness, the way we scarcely knew whether we were looking at it for the first or the last time, made it arrest us at every step. The countryside, in the full warm rains of the last of April, had burst into sudden perfect spring. The dark walls of the hedgerows had turned into blooming screens, the sodden verdure of lawn and meadow been washed over with a lighter brush. We went forth without loss of time for a long walk on the great grassy hills, smooth arrested central billows of some primitive upheaval, from the summits of which you find half England unrolled at your feet. A dozen broad counties, within the scope of your vision, commingle their green exhalations. Closely beneath us lay the dark rich hedgy flats and the copse-chequered slopes, white with the blossom of apples. At widely opposite points of the expanse two great towers of cathedrals rose sharply out of a reddish blur of habitation, taking the mild English light.

We gave an irrepressible attention to this same solar reserve, and found in it only a refinement of art. The sky never was empty and never idle; the clouds were continually at play for our benefit. Over against us, from our station on the hills, we saw them piled and dissolved, condensed and shifted, blotting the blue with sullen rain-spots, stretching, breeze-fretted, into dappled fields of grey, bursting into an explosion of light or melting into a drizzle of silver. We made our way along the rounded ridge of the downs and reached, by a descent, through slanting angular fields, green to cottage-doors, a russet village that beckoned us from the heart of the maze in which the hedges wrapped it up. Close beside it, I admit, the roaring train bounces out of a hole in the hills; yet there broods upon this charming hamlet an old-time quietude that makes a violation of confidence of naming it so far away. We struck through a narrow lane, a green lane, dim with its barriers of hawthorn; it led us to a superb old farmhouse, now rather rudely jostled by the multiplied roads and by-ways that have reduced its ancient appanage. It stands there in stubborn picturesqueness, doggedly submitting to be pointed out and sketched. It is a wonderful image of the domiciliary conditions of the past—cruelly complete; with bended beams and joists, beneath the burden of gables, that seem to ache and groan with memories and regrets. The short low windows, where lead and glass combine equally to create an inward gloom, retain their opacity as a part of the primitive idea of defence. Such an old house provokes on the part of an American a luxury of respect. So propped and patched, so tinkered with clumsy tenderness, clustered so richly about its central English sturdiness, its oaken vertebrations, so humanised with ages of use and touches of beneficent affection, it seemed to offer to our grateful eyes a small rude symbol of the great English social order. Passing out upon the highroad, we came to the common browsing-patch, the “village-green” of the tales of our youth. Nothing was absent: the shaggy mouse-coloured donkey, nosing the turf with his mild and huge proboscis, the geese, the old woman—*the* old woman, in person, with her red cloak and her black bonnet, frilled about the face and double-frilled beside her decent placid cheeks—the towering ploughman with his white smock-frock puckered on chest and back, his short corduroys, his mighty calves, his big red rural face. We greeted these things as children greet the loved pictures in a storybook lost and mourned and found again. We recognised them as one recognises the handwriting on letter-backs. Beside the road we saw a ploughboy straddle whistling on a stile, and he had the merit of being not only a ploughboy but a Gainsborough. Beyond the stile, across the level velvet of a meadow, a footpath wandered like a streak drawn by a finger over a surface of fine plush. We followed it from field to field and from stile to stile; it was all adorably the way to church. At the church we finally arrived, lost in its rook-haunted churchyard, hidden from the workday world by the broad stillness of pastures—a grey, grey tower, a huge black yew, a cluster of village-graves with crooked

headstones and protrusions that had settled and sunk. The place seemed so to ache with consecration that my sensitive companion gave way to the force of it.

“You must bury me here, you know”—he caught at my arm. “It’s the first place of worship I’ve seen in my life. How it makes a Sunday where it stands!”

It took the Church, we agreed, to make churches, but we had the sense the next day of seeing still better why. We walked over some seven miles, to the nearer of the two neighbouring seats of that lesson; and all through such a mist of local colour that we felt ourselves a pair of Smollett’s pedestrian heroes faring tavernward for a night of adventures. As we neared the provincial city we saw the steepled mass of the cathedral, long and high, rise far into the cloud-freckled blue; and as we got closer stopped on a bridge and looked down at the reflexion of the solid minster in a yellow stream. Going further yet we entered the russet town—where surely Miss Austen’s heroines, in chariots and curricles, must often have come a-shopping for their sandals and mittens; we lounged in the grassed and gravelled precinct and gazed insatiably at that most soul-soothing sight, the waning wasting afternoon light, the visible ether that feels the voices of the chimes cling far aloft to the quiet sides of the cathedral-tower; saw it linger and nestle and abide, as it loves to do on all perpendicular spaces, converting them irresistibly into registers and dials; tasted too, as deeply, of the peculiar stillness of this place of priests; saw a rosy English lad come forth and lock the door of the old foundation-school that dovetailed with cloister and choir, and carry his big responsible key into one of the quiet canonical houses: and then stood musing together on the effect on one’s mind of having in one’s boyhood gone and come through cathedral-shades as a King’s scholar, and yet kept ruddy with much cricket in misty river meadows. On the third morning we betook ourselves to Lackley, having learned that parts of the “grounds” were open to visitors, and that indeed on application the house was sometimes shown.

Within the range of these numerous acres the declining spurs of the hills continued to undulate and subside. A long avenue wound and circled from the outermost gate through an untrimmed woodland, whence you glanced at further slopes and glades and copses and bosky recesses—at everything except the limits of the place. It was as free and untended as I had found a few of the large loose villas of old Italy, and I was still never to see the angular fact of English landlordism muffle itself in so many concessions. The weather had just become perfect; it was one of the dozen exquisite days of the English year—days stamped with a purity unknown in climates where fine weather is cheap. It was as if the mellow brightness, as tender as that of the primroses which starred the dark waysides like petals wind-scattered over beds of moss, had been meted out to us by the cubic foot—distilled from an alchemist’s crucible. From this pastoral abundance we moved upon the more composed scene, the park proper—passed through a second lodge-gate, with weather-worn gilding on its twisted bars, to the smooth slopes where the great trees stood singly and the tame deer browsed along the bed of a woodland stream. Here before us rose the gabled grey front of the Tudor-time, developed and terraced and gardened to some later loss, as we were afterwards to know, of type.

“Here you can wander all day,” I said to Searle, “like an exiled prince who has come back on tiptoe and hovers about the dominion of the usurper.”

“To think of ‘others’ having hugged this all these years!” he answered. “I know what I am, but what might I have been? What do such places make of a man?”

“I dare say he gets stupidly used to them,” I said. “But I dare say too, even then, that when you scratch the mere owner you find the perfect lover.”

“What a perfect scene and background it forms!” my friend, however, had meanwhile gone on. “What legends, what histories it knows! My heart really breaks with all I seem to guess. There’s Tennyson’s Talking Oak! What summer days one could spend here! How I could lounge the rest of my life away on this turf of the middle ages! Haven’t I some maiden-cousin in that old hall, or grange, or court—what in the name of enchantment do you call the thing?—who would give me kind leave?” And then he turned almost fiercely upon me. “Why did you bring me here? Why did you drag me into this distraction of vain regrets?”

At this moment there passed within call a decent lad who had emerged from the gardens and who might have been an underling in the stables. I hailed him and put the question of our possible admittance to the house. He answered that the master was away from home, but that he thought it probable the housekeeper would consent to do the honours. I passed my arm into Searle’s. “Come,” I said; “drain the cup, bitter-sweet though it be. We must go in.” We hastened slowly and approached the fine front. The house was one of the happiest fruits of its freshly-feeling era, a multitudinous cluster of fair gables and intricate chimneys, brave projections and quiet recesses, brown old surfaces weathered to silver and mottled roofs that testified not to seasons but to centuries. Two broad terraces commanded the wooded horizon. Our appeal was answered by a butler who condescended to our weakness. He renewed the assertion that Mr. Searle was away from home, but he would himself lay our case before the housekeeper. We would be so good, however, as to give him our cards. This request, following so directly on the assertion that Mr. Searle was absent, was rather resented by my companion. “Surely not for the housekeeper.”

The butler gave a diplomatic cough. “Miss Searle is at home, sir.”

“Yours alone will have to serve,” said my friend. I took out a card and pencil and wrote beneath my name *New York*. As I stood with the pencil poised a temptation entered into it. Without in the least considering proprieties or results I let my implement yield—I added above my name that of Mr. Clement Searle. What would come of it?

Before many minutes the housekeeper waited upon us—a fresh rosy little old woman in a clean dowdy cap and a scanty sprigged gown; a quaint careful person, but accessible to the tribute of our pleasure, to say nothing of any other. She had the accent of the country, but the manners of the house. Under her guidance we passed through a dozen apartments, duly stocked with old pictures, old tapestry, old carvings, old armour, with a hundred ornaments and treasures. The pictures were especially valuable. The two Vandykes, the trio of rosy Rubenses, the sole and sombre Rembrandt, glowed with conscious authenticity. A Claude, a Murillo, a Greuze, a couple of Gainsboroughs, hung there with high complacency. Searle strolled about, scarcely speaking, pale and grave, with bloodshot eyes and lips compressed. He uttered no comment on what we saw—he asked but a question or two. Missing him at last from my side I retraced my steps and found him in a room we had just left, on a faded old ottoman and with his elbows on his knees and his face buried in his hands. Before him, ranged on a great *crédence*, was a magnificent collection of old Italian majolica; plates of every shape, with their glaze of happy colour, jugs and vases nobly bellied and embossed. There seemed to rise before me, as I looked, a sudden vision of the young English gentleman who, eighty years ago, had travelled by slow stages to Italy and been waited on at his inn by persuasive toymen. “What is it, my dear man?” I asked. “Are you unwell?”

He uncovered his haggard face and showed me the flush of a consciousness sharper, I think, to myself than to him. “A memory of the past! There comes back to me a china vase that used to stand on the parlour mantel-shelf when I was a boy, with a portrait of General Jackson painted on one side and a bunch of flowers on the other. How long do you suppose that majolica has been in the family?”

“A long time probably. It was brought hither in the last century, into old, old England, out of old, old Italy, by some contemporary dandy with a taste for foreign gimcracks. Here it has stood for a hundred years, keeping its clear firm hues in this quiet light that has never sought to advertise it.”

Searle sprang to his feet. “I say, for mercy’s sake, take me away! I can’t stand this sort of thing. Before I know it I shall do something scandalous. I shall steal some of their infernal crockery. I shall proclaim my identity and assert my rights. I shall go blubbering to Miss Searle and ask her in pity’s name to ‘put me up.’”

If he could ever have been said to threaten complications he rather visibly did so now. I began to regret my officious presentation of his name and prepared without delay to lead him out of the house. We overtook the housekeeper in the last room of the series, a small unused boudoir over whose chimney-piece hung a portrait of a young man in a powdered wig and a brocaded waistcoat. I was struck with his resemblance to my companion while our guide introduced him. “This is Mr. Clement Searle, Mr. Searle’s great-uncle, by Sir Joshua Reynolds. He died young, poor gentleman; he perished at sea, going to America.”

“He was the young buck who brought the majolica out of Italy,” I supplemented.

“Indeed, sir, I believe he did,” said the housekeeper without wonder.

“He’s the image of you, my dear Searle,” I further observed.

“He’s remarkably like the gentleman, saving his presence,” said the housekeeper.

My friend stood staring. “Clement Searle—at sea—going to America—?” he broke out. Then with some sharpness to our old woman: “Why the devil did he go to America?”

“Why indeed, sir? You may well ask. I believe he had kinsfolk there. It was for them to come to him.”

Searle broke into a laugh. “It was for them to come to him! Well, well,” he said, fixing his eyes on our guide, “they’ve come to him at last!”

She blushed like a wrinkled rose-leaf. “Indeed, sir, I verily believe you’re one of *us!*”

“My name’s the name of that beautiful youth,” Searle went on. “Dear kinsman I’m happy to meet you! And what do you think of this?” he pursued as he grasped me by the arm. “I have an idea. He perished at sea. His spirit came ashore and wandered about in misery till it got another incarnation—in this poor trunk!” And he tapped his hollow chest. “Here it has rattled about these forty years, beating its wings against its rickety cage, begging to be taken home again. And I never knew what was the matter with me! Now at last the bruised spirit can escape!”

Our old lady gaped at a breadth of appreciation—if not at the disclosure of a connexion—beyond her. The scene was really embarrassing, and my confusion increased as we became aware of another presence. A lady had appeared in the doorway and the housekeeper dropped just audibly: “Miss Searle!” My first impression of Miss Searle was that she was neither young nor beautiful. She stood without confidence on the threshold, pale, trying to smile and twirling my card in her fingers. I immediately bowed. Searle stared at her as if one of the pictures had stepped out of its frame.

“If I’m not mistaken one of you gentlemen is Mr. Clement Searle,” the lady adventured.

“My friend’s Mr. Clement Searle,” I took upon myself to reply. “Allow me to add that I alone am responsible for your having received his name.”

“I should have been sorry not to—not to see him,” said Miss Searle, beginning to blush. “Your being from America has led me—perhaps to intrude!”

“The intrusion, madam, has been on our part. And with just that excuse—that we come from so far away.”

Miss Searle, while I spoke, had fixed her eyes on my friend as he stood silent beneath Sir Joshua’s portrait. The housekeeper, agitated and mystified, fairly let herself go. “Heaven preserve us, Miss! It’s your great-uncle’s picture come to life.”

“I’m not mistaken then,” said Miss Searle—“we must be distantly related.” She had the air of the shyest of women, for whom it was almost anguish to make an advance without help. Searle eyed her with gentle wonder from head to foot, and I could easily read his thoughts. This then was his maiden-cousin, prospective mistress of these hereditary treasures. She was of some thirty-five years of age, taller than was then common and perhaps stouter than is now enjoined. She had small kind grey eyes, a considerable quantity of very light-brown hair and a smiling well-formed mouth. She was dressed in a lustreless black satin gown with a short train. Disposed about her neck was a blue handkerchief, and over this handkerchief, in many convolutions, a string of amber beads. Her appearance was singular; she was large yet somehow vague, mature yet undeveloped. Her manner of addressing us spoke of all sorts of deep diffidences. Searle, I think, had prefigured to himself some proud cold beauty of five-and-twenty; he was relieved at finding the lady timid and not obtrusively fair. He at once had an excellent tone.

“We’re distant cousins, I believe. I’m happy to claim a relationship which you’re so good as to remember. I hadn’t counted on your knowing anything about me.”

“Perhaps I’ve done wrong.” And Miss Searle blushed and smiled anew. “But I’ve always known of there being people of our blood in America, and have often wondered and asked about them—without ever learning much. To-day, when this card was brought me and I understood a Clement Searle to be under our roof as a stranger, I felt I ought to do something. But, you know, I hardly knew what. My brother’s in London. I’ve done what I think he would have done. Welcome as a cousin.” And with a resolution that ceased to be awkward she put out her hand.

“I’m welcome indeed if he would have done it half so graciously!” Again Searle, taking her hand, acquitted himself beautifully.

“You’ve seen what there is, I think,” Miss Searle went on. “Perhaps now you’ll have luncheon.” We followed her into a small breakfast-room where a deep bay window opened on the mossy flags of a terrace. Here, for some moments, she remained dumb and abashed, as if resting from a measurable effort. Searle too had ceased to overflow, so that I had to relieve the silence. It was of course easy to descant on the beauties of park and mansion, and as I did so I observed our hostess. She had no arts, no impulses nor graces—scarce even any manners; she was queerly, almost frowsily dressed; yet she pleased me well. She had an antique sweetness, a homely fragrance of old traditions. To be so simple, among those complicated treasures, so pampered and yet so fresh, so modest and yet so placid, told of just the spacious leisure in which Searle and I had imagined human life to be steeped in such places as that. This figure was to the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood what a fact is to a fairy-tale, an interpretation to a myth. We, on our side, were to our hostess subjects of a curiosity not cunningly veiled.

“I should like so to go abroad!” she exclaimed suddenly, as if she meant us to take the speech for an expression of interest in ourselves.

“Have you never been?” one of us asked.

“Only once. Three years ago my brother took me to Switzerland. We thought it extremely beautiful. Except for that journey I’ve always lived here. I was born in this house. It’s a dear old place indeed, and I know it well. Sometimes one wants a change.” And on my asking her how she spent her time and what society she saw, “Of course it’s very quiet,” she went on, proceeding by short steps and simple statements, in the manner of a person called upon for the first time to analyse to that extent her situation. “We see very few people. I don’t think there are many nice ones hereabouts. At least we don’t know them. Our own family’s very small. My brother cares for nothing but riding and books. He had a great sorrow ten years ago. He lost his wife and his only son, a dear little boy, who of course would have had everything. Do you know that that makes me the heir, as they’ve done something—I don’t quite know what—to the entail? Poor old me! Since his loss my brother has preferred to be quite alone. I’m sorry he’s away. But you must wait till he comes back. I expect him in a day or two.” She talked more and more, as if our very strangeness led her on, about her circumstances, her solitude, her bad eyes, so that she couldn’t read, her flowers, her ferns, her dogs, and the vicar, recently presented to the living by her brother and warranted quite safe, who had lately begun to light his altar candles; pausing every now and then to gasp in self-surprise, yet, in the quaintest way in the world, keeping up her story as if it were a slow rather awkward old-time dance, a difficult *pas seul* in which she would have been better with more practice, but of which she must complete the figure. Of all the old things I had seen in England this exhibited mind of Miss Searle’s seemed to me the oldest, the most handed down and taken for granted; fenced and protected as it was by convention and precedent and usage, thoroughly acquainted with its subordinate place. I felt as if I were talking with the heroine of a last-century novel. As she talked she rested her dull eyes on her kinsman with wondering kindness. At last she put it to him: “Did you mean to go away without asking for us?”

“I had thought it over, Miss Searle, and had determined not to trouble you. You’ve shown me how unfriendly I should have been.”

“But you knew of the place being ours, and of our relationship?”

“Just so. It was because of these things that I came down here—because of them almost that I came to England. I’ve always liked to think of them,” said my companion.

“You merely wished to look then? We don’t pretend to be much to look at.”

He waited; her words were too strange. “You don’t know what you are, Miss Searle.”

“You like the old place then?”

Searle looked at her again in silence. “If I could only tell you!” he said at last.

“Do tell me. You must come and stay with us.”

It moved him to an oddity of mirth. “Take care, take care—I should surprise you! I’m afraid I should bore you. I should never leave you.”

“Oh you’d get homesick—for your real home!”

At this he was still more amused. “By the way, tell Miss Searle about our real home,” he said to me. And he stepped, through the window, out upon the terrace, followed by two beautiful dogs, a setter and a young stag-hound who from the moment we came in had established the fondest relation with him. Miss Searle looked at him, while he went, as if she vaguely yearned over him; it began to be plain that she was interested in her exotic cousin. I suddenly recalled the last words I had heard spoken by my friend’s adviser in London and which, in a very crude form, had reference to his making a match with this lady. If only Miss Searle

could be induced to think of that, and if one had but the tact to put it in a light to her! Something assured me that her heart was virgin-soil, that the flower of romantic affection had never bloomed there. If I might just sow the seed! There seemed to shape itself within her the perfect image of one of the patient wives of old.

“He has lost his heart to England,” I said. “He ought to have been born here.”

“And yet he doesn’t look in the least an Englishman,” she still rather guardedly prosed.

“Oh it isn’t his looks, poor fellow.”

“Of course looks aren’t everything. I never talked with a foreigner before; but he talks as I have fancied foreigners.”

“Yes, he’s foreign enough.”

“Is he married?”

“His wife’s dead and he’s all alone in the world.”

“Has he much property?”

“None to speak of.”

“But he has means to travel.”

I meditated. “He has not expected to travel far,” I said at last. “You know, he’s in very poor health.”

“Poor gentleman! So I supposed.”

“But there’s more of him to go on with than he thinks. He came here because he wanted to see your place before he dies.”

“Dear me—kind man!” And I imagined in the quiet eyes the hint of a possible tear. “And he was going away without my seeing him?”

“He’s very modest, you see.”

“He’s very much the gentleman.”

I couldn’t but smile. “He’s *all*—”

At this moment we heard on the terrace a loud harsh cry. “It’s the great peacock!” said Miss Searle, stepping to the window and passing out while I followed her. Below us, leaning on the parapet, stood our appreciative friend with his arm round the neck of the setter. Before him on the grand walk strutted the familiar fowl of gardens—a splendid specimen—with ruffled neck and expanded tail. The other dog had apparently indulged in a momentary attempt to abash the gorgeous biped, but at Searle’s summons had bounded back to the terrace and leaped upon the ledge, where he now stood licking his new friend’s face. The scene had a beautiful old-time air: the peacock flaunting in the foreground like the genius of stately places; the broad terrace, which flattered an innate taste of mine for all deserted walks where people may have sat after heavy dinners to drink coffee in old Sevres and where the stiff brocade of women’s dresses may have rustled over grass or gravel; and far around us, with one leafy circle melting into another, the timbered acres of the park. “The very beasts have made him welcome,” I noted as we rejoined our companion.

“The peacock has done for you, Mr. Searle,” said his cousin, “what he does only for very great people. A year ago there came here a great person—a grand old lady—to see my brother. I don’t think that since then he has spread his tail as wide for any one else—not by a dozen feathers.”

“It’s not alone the peacock,” said Searle. “Just now there came slipping across my path a little green lizard, the first I ever saw, the lizard of literature! And if you’ve a ghost, broad daylight though it be, I expect to see him here. Do you know the annals of your house, Miss Searle?”

“Oh dear, no! You must ask my brother for all those things.”

“You ought to have a collection of legends and traditions. You ought to have loves and murders and mysteries by the roomful. I shall be ashamed of you if you haven’t.”

“Oh Mr. Searle! We’ve always been a very well-behaved family,” she quite seriously pleaded. “Nothing out of the way has ever happened, I think.”

“Nothing out of the way? Oh that won’t do! We’ve managed better than that in America. Why I myself!”—and he looked at her ruefully enough, but enjoying too his idea that he might embody the social scandal or point to the darkest drama of the Searles. “Suppose I should turn out a better Searle than you—better than you nursed here in romance and extravagance? Come, don’t disappoint me. You’ve some history among you all, you’ve some poetry, you’ve some accumulation of legend. I’ve been famished all my days for these things. Don’t you understand? Ah you can’t understand! Tell me,” he rambled on, “something tremendous. When I think of what must have happened here; of the lovers who must have strolled on this terrace and wandered under the beeches, of all the figures and passions and purposes that must have haunted these walls! When I think of the births and deaths, the joys and sufferings, the young hopes and the old regrets, the rich experience of life—!” He faltered a moment with the increase of his agitation. His humour of dismay at a threat of the commonplace in the history he felt about him had turned to a deeper reaction. I began to fear however that he was really losing his head. He went on with a wilder play. “To see it all called up there before me, if the Devil alone could do it I’d make a bargain with the Devil! Ah Miss Searle,” he cried, “I’m a most unhappy man!”

“Oh dear, oh dear!” she almost wailed while I turned half away.

“Look at that window, that dear little window!” I turned back to see him point to a small protruding oriel, above us, relieved against the purple brickwork, framed in chiselled stone and curtained with ivy.

“It’s my little room,” she said.

“Of course it’s a woman’s room. Think of all the dear faces—all of them so mild and yet so proud—that have looked out of that lattice, and of all the old-time women’s lives whose principal view of the world has been this quiet park! Every one of them was a cousin of mine. And you, dear lady, you’re one of them yet.” With which he marched toward her and took her large white hand. She surrendered it, blushing to her eyes and pressing her other hand to her breast. “You’re a woman of the past. You’re nobly simple. It has been a romance to see you. It doesn’t matter what I say to you. You didn’t know me yesterday, you’ll not know me tomorrow. Let me to-day do a mad sweet thing. Let me imagine in you the spirit of all the dead women who have trod the terrace-flats that lie here like sepulchral tablets in the pavement of a church. Let me say I delight in you!”—he raised her hand to his lips. She gently withdrew it and for a moment averted her face. Meeting her eyes the next instant I saw the tears had come. The Sleeping Beauty was awake.

There followed an embarrassed pause. An issue was suddenly presented by the appearance of the butler bearing a letter. “A telegram, Miss,” he announced.

“Oh what shall I do?” cried Miss Searle. “I can’t open a telegram. Cousin, help me.”

Searle took the missive, opened it and read aloud: "*I shall be home to dinner. Keep the American.*"

III

"Keep the American!" Miss Searle, in compliance with the injunction conveyed in her brother's telegram (with something certainly of telegraphic curtness), lost no time in expressing the pleasure it would give her that our friend should remain. "Really you must," she said; and forthwith repaired to the house-keeper to give orders for the preparation of a room.

"But how in the world did he know of my being here?" my companion put to me.

I answered that he had probably heard from his solicitor of the other's visit. "Mr. Simmons and that gentleman must have had another interview since your arrival in England. Simmons, for reasons of his own, has made known to him your journey to this neighbourhood, and Mr. Searle, learning this, has immediately taken for granted that you've formally presented yourself to his sister. He's hospitably inclined and wishes her to do the proper thing by you. There may even," I went on, "be more in it than that. I've my little theory that he's the very phoenix of usurpers, that he has been very much struck with what the experts have had to say for you, and that he wishes to have the originality of making over to you your share—so limited after all—of the estate."

"I give it up!" my friend mused. "Come what come will!"

"You, of course," said Miss Searle, reappearing and turning to me, "are included in my brother's invitation. I've told them to see about a room for you. Your luggage shall immediately be sent for."

It was arranged that I in person should be driven over to our little inn and that I should return with our effects in time to meet Mr. Searle at dinner. On my arrival several hours later I was immediately conducted to my room. The servant pointed out to me that it communicated by a door and a private passage with that of my fellow visitor. I made my way along this passage—a low narrow corridor with a broad latticed casement through which there streamed upon a series of grotesquely sculptured oaken closets and cupboards the vivid animating glow of the western sun—knocked at his door and, getting no answer, opened it. In an armchair by the open window sat my friend asleep, his arms and legs relaxed and head dropped on his breast. It was a great relief to see him rest thus from his rhapsodies, and I watched him for some moments before waking him. There was a faint glow of colour in his cheek and a light expressive parting of his lips, something nearer to ease and peace than I had yet seen in him. It was almost happiness, it was almost health. I laid my hand on his arm and gently shook it. He opened his eyes, gazed at me a moment, vaguely recognised me, then closed them again. "Let me dream, let me dream!"

"What are you dreaming about?"

A moment passed before his answer came. "About a tall woman in a quaint black dress, with yellow hair and a sweet, sweet smile, and a soft low delicious voice! I'm in love with her."

"It's better to see her than to dream about her," I said. "Get up and dress; then we'll go down to dinner and meet her."

"Dinner—dinner—?" And he gradually opened his eyes again. "Yes, upon my word I shall dine!"

“Oh you’re all right!” I declared for the twentieth time as he rose to his feet. “You’ll live to bury Mr. Simmons.” He told me he had spent the hours of my absence with Miss Searle—they had strolled together half over the place. “You must be very intimate,” I smiled.

“She’s intimate with *me*. Goodness knows what rigmarole I’ve treated her to!” They had parted an hour ago; since when, he believed, her brother had arrived.

The slow-fading twilight was still in the great drawing-room when we came down. The housekeeper had told us this apartment was rarely used, there being others, smaller and more convenient, for the same needs. It seemed now, however, to be occupied in my comrade’s honour. At the furthest end, rising to the roof like a royal tomb in a cathedral, was a great chimney-piece of chiselled white marble, yellowed by time, in which a light fire was crackling. Before the fire stood a small short man, with his hands behind him; near him was Miss Searle, so transformed by her dress that at first I scarcely knew her. There was in our entrance and reception something remarkably chilling and solemn. We moved in silence up the long room; Mr. Searle advanced slowly, a dozen steps, to meet us; his sister stood motionless. I was conscious of her masking her visage with a large white tinselled fan, and that her eyes, grave and enlarged, watched us intently over the top of it. The master of Lackley grasped in silence the proffered hand of his kinsman and eyed him from head to foot, suppressing, I noted, a start of surprise at his resemblance to Sir Joshua’s portrait. “This is a happy day.” And then turning to me with an odd little sharp stare: “My cousin’s friend is my friend.” Miss Searle lowered her fan.

The first thing that struck me in Mr. Searle’s appearance was his very limited stature, which was less by half a head than that of his sister. The second was the preternatural redness of his hair and beard. They intermingled over his ears and surrounded his head like a huge lurid nimbus. His face was pale and attenuated, the face of a scholar, a dilettante, a comparer of points and texts, a man who lives in a library bending over books and prints and medals. At a distance it might have passed for smooth and rather blankly composed; but on a nearer view it revealed a number of wrinkles, sharply etched and scratched, of a singularly aged and refined effect. It was the complexion of a man of sixty. His nose was arched and delicate, identical almost with the nose of my friend. His eyes, large and deep-set, had a kind of auburn glow, the suggestion of a keen metal red-hot—or, more plainly, were full of temper and spirit. Imagine this physiognomy—grave and solemn, grotesquely solemn, in spite of the bushy brightness which made a sort of frame for it—set in motion by a queer, quick, defiant, perfunctory, preoccupied smile, and you will have an imperfect notion of the remarkable presence of our host; something better worth seeing and knowing, I perceived as I quite breathlessly took him in, than anything we had yet encountered. How thoroughly I had entered into sympathy with my poor picked-up friend, and how effectually I had associated my sensibilities with his own, I had not suspected till, within the short five minutes before the signal for dinner, I became aware, without his giving me the least hint, of his placing himself on the defensive. To neither of us was Mr. Searle sympathetic. I might have guessed from her attitude that his sister entered into our thoughts. A marked change had been wrought in her since the morning; during the hour, indeed—as I read in the light of the wondering glance he cast at her—that had elapsed since her parting with her cousin. She had not yet recovered from some great agitation. Her face was pale and she had clearly been crying. These notes of trouble gave her a new and quite perverse dignity, which was further enhanced by something complimentary and commemorative in her dress.

Whether it was taste or whether it was accident I know not; but the amiable creature, as she stood there half in the cool twilight, half in the arrested glow of the fire as it spent itself in the vastness of its marble cave, was a figure for a painter. She was habited in some faded

splendour of sea-green crape and silk, a piece of millinery which, though it must have witnessed a number of dull dinners, preserved still a festive air. Over her white shoulders she wore an ancient web of the most precious and venerable lace and about her rounded throat a single series of large pearls. I went in with her to dinner, and Mr. Searle, following with my friend, took his arm, as the latter afterwards told me, and pretended jocosely to conduct him. As dinner proceeded the feeling grew within me that a drama had begun to be played in which the three persons before me were actors—each of a really arduous part. The character allotted to my friend, however, was certainly the least easy to represent with effect, though I overflowed with the desire that he should acquit himself to his honour. I seemed to see him urge his faded faculties to take their cue and perform. The poor fellow tried to do himself credit more seriously than ever in his old best days. With Miss Searle, credulous passive and pitying, he had finally flung aside all vanity and propriety and shown the bottom of his fantastic heart. But with our host there might be no talking of nonsense nor taking of liberties; there and then, if ever, sat a consummate conservative, breathing the fumes of hereditary privilege and security. For an hour, accordingly, I saw my poor protege attempt, all in pain, to meet a new decorum. He set himself the task of appearing very American, in order that his appreciation of everything Mr. Searle represented might seem purely disinterested. What his kinsman had expected him to be I know not; but I made Mr. Searle out as annoyed, in spite of his exaggerated urbanity, at finding him so harmless. Our host was not the man to show his hand, but I think his best card had been a certain implicit confidence that so provincial a parasite would hardly have good manners.

He led the conversation to the country we had left; rather as if a leash had been attached to the collar of some lumpish and half-domesticated animal the tendency of whose movements had to be recognised. He spoke of it indeed as of some fabled planet, alien to the British orbit, lately proclaimed to have the admixture of atmospheric gases required to support animal life, but not, save under cover of a liberal afterthought, to be admitted into one's regular conception of things. I, for my part, felt nothing but regret that the spheric smoothness of his universe should be disfigured by the extrusion even of such inconsiderable particles as ourselves.

"I knew in a general way of our having somehow ramified over there," Mr. Searle mentioned; "but had scarcely followed it more than you pretend to pick up the fruit your long-armed pear tree may drop, on the other side of your wall, in your neighbour's garden. There was a man I knew at Cambridge, a very odd fellow, a decent fellow too; he and I were rather cronies; I think he afterwards went to the Middle States. They'll be, I suppose, about the Mississippi? At all events, there was that great-uncle of mine whom Sir Joshua painted. He went to America, but he never got there. He was lost at sea. You look enough like him to make one fancy he *did* get there and that you've kept him alive by one of those beastly processes—I think you have 'em over there: what do you call it, 'putting up' things? If you're he you've not done a wise thing to show yourself here. He left a bad name behind him. There's a ghost who comes sobbing about the house every now and then, the ghost of one to whom he did a wrong."

"Oh mercy *on* us!" cried Miss Searle in simple horror.

"Of course *you* know nothing of such things," he rather dryly allowed. "You're too sound a sleeper to hear the sobbing of ghosts."

"I'm sure I should like immensely to hear the sobbing of a ghost," said my friend, the light of his previous eagerness playing up into his eyes. "Why does it sob? I feel as if that were what we've come above all to learn."

Mr. Searle eyed his audience a moment gaugingly; he held the balance as to measure his resources. He wished to do justice to his theme. With the long finger-nails of his left hand nervously playing against the tinkling crystal of his wineglass and his conscious eyes betraying that, small and strange as he sat there, he knew himself, to his pleasure and advantage, remarkably impressive, he dropped into our untutored minds the sombre legend of his house. "Mr. Clement Searle, from all I gather, was a young man of great talents but a weak disposition. His mother was left a widow early in life, with two sons, of whom he was the elder and the more promising. She educated him with the greatest affection and care. Of course when he came to manhood she wished him to marry well. His means were quite sufficient to enable him to overlook the want of money in his wife; and Mrs. Searle selected a young lady who possessed, as she conceived, every good gift save a fortune—a fine proud handsome girl, the daughter of an old friend, an old lover I suspect, of her own. Clement, however, as it appeared, had either chosen otherwise or was as yet unprepared to choose. The young lady opened upon him in vain the battery of her attractions; in vain his mother urged her cause. Clement remained cold, insensible, inflexible. Mrs. Searle had a character which appears to have gone out of fashion in my family nowadays; she was a great manager, a *maîtresse-femme*. A proud passionate imperious woman, she had had immense cares and ever so many law-suits; they had sharpened her temper and her will. She suspected that her son's affections had another object, and this object she began to hate. Irritated by his stubborn defiance of her wishes she persisted in her purpose. The more she watched him the more she was convinced he loved in secret. If he loved in secret of course he loved beneath him. He went about the place all sombre and sullen and brooding. At last, with the rashness of an angry woman, she threatened to bring the young lady of her choice—who, by the way, seems to have been no shrinking blossom—to stay in the house. A stormy scene was the result. He threatened that if she did so he would leave the country and sail for America. She probably disbelieved him; she knew him to be weak, but she overrated his weakness. At all events the rejected one arrived and Clement Searle departed. On a dark December day he took ship at Southampton. The two women, desperate with rage and sorrow, sat alone in this big house, mingling their tears and imprecations. A fortnight later, on Christmas Eve, in the midst of a great snowstorm long famous in the country, something happened that quickened their bitterness. A young woman, battered and chilled by the storm, gained entrance to the house and, making her way into the presence of the mistress and her guest, poured out her tale. She was a poor curate's daughter out of some little hole in Gloucestershire. Clement Searle had loved her—loved her all too well! She had been turned out in wrath from her father's house; his mother at least might pity her—if not for herself then for the child she was soon to bring forth. But the poor girl had been a second time too trustful. The women, in scorn, in horror, with blows possibly, drove her forth again into the storm. In the storm she wandered and in the deep snow she died. Her lover, as you know, perished in that hard winter weather at sea; the news came to his mother late, but soon enough. We're haunted by the curate's daughter!"

Mr. Searle retailed this anecdote with infinite taste and point, the happiest art; when he ceased there was a pause of some moments. "Ah well we may be!" Miss Searle then mournfully murmured.

Searle blazed up into enthusiasm. "Of course, you know"—with which he began to blush violently—"I should be sorry to claim any identity with the poor devil my faithless namesake. But I should be immensely gratified if the young lady's spirit, deceived by my resemblance, were to mistake me for her cruel lover. She's welcome to the comfort of it. What one can do in the case I shall be glad to do. But can a ghost haunt a ghost? I *am* a ghost!"

Mr. Searle stared a moment and then had a subtle sneer. "I could almost believe you are!"

“Oh brother—and cousin!” cried Miss Searle with the gentlest yet most appealing dignity. “How can you talk so horribly?” The horrible talk, however, evidently possessed a potent magic for my friend; and his imagination, checked a while by the influence of his kinsman, began again to lead him a dance. From this moment he ceased to steer his frail bark, to care what he said or how he said it, so long as he expressed his passionate appreciation of the scene around him. As he kept up this strain I ceased even secretly to wish he wouldn’t. I have wondered since that I shouldn’t have been annoyed by the way he reverted constantly to himself. But a great frankness, for the time, makes its own law and a great passion its own channel. There was moreover an irresponsible indescribable effect of beauty in everything his lips uttered. Free alike from adulation and from envy, the essence of his discourse was a divine apprehension, a romantic vision free as the flight of Ariel, of the poetry of his companions’ situation and their contrasted general irresponsiveness.

“How does the look of age come?” he suddenly broke out at dessert. “Does it come of itself, unobserved, unrecorded, unmeasured? Or do you woo it and set baits and traps for it, and watch it like the dawning brownness of a meerschaum pipe, and make it fast, when it appears, just where it peeps out, and light a votive taper beneath it and give thanks to it daily? Or do you forbid it and fight it and resist it, and yet feel it settling and deepening about you as irresistible as fate?”

“What the deuce is the man talking about?” said the smile of our host.

“I found a little grey hair this morning,” Miss Searle incoherently prosed.

“Well then I hope you paid it every respect!” cried her visitor.

“I looked at it for a long time in my hand-glass,” she answered with more presence of mind.

“Miss Searle can for many years to come afford to be amused at grey hairs,” I interposed in the hope of some greater ease. It had its effect. “Ten years from last Thursday I shall be forty-four,” she almost comfortably smiled.

“Well, that’s just what I am,” said Searle. “If I had only come here ten years ago! I should have had more time to enjoy the feast, but I should have had less appetite. I needed first to get famished.”

“Oh why did you wait for that?” his entertainer asked. “To think of these ten years that we might have been enjoying you!” At the vision of which waste and loss Mr. Searle had a fine shrill laugh.

“Well,” my friend explained, “I always had a notion—a stupid vulgar notion if there ever was one—that to come abroad properly one had to have a pot of money. My pot was too nearly empty. At last I came with my empty pot!”

Mr. Searle had a wait for delicacy, but he proceeded. “You’re reduced, you’re—a—straitened?”

Our companion’s very breath blew away the veil. “Reduced to nothing. Straitened to the clothes on my back!”

“You don’t say so!” said Mr. Searle with a large vague gasp. “Well—well—well!” he added in a voice which might have meant everything or nothing; and then, in his whimsical way, went on to finish a glass of wine. His searching eye, as he drank, met mine, and for a moment we each rather deeply sounded the other, to the effect no doubt of a slight embarrassment. “And you,” he said by way of carrying this off—“how about *your* wardrobe?”

“Oh his!” cried my friend; “his wardrobe’s immense. He could dress up a regiment!” He had drunk more champagne—I admit that the champagne was good—than was from any point of view to have been desired. He was rapidly drifting beyond any tacit dissuasion of mine. He was feverish and rash, and all attempt to direct would now simply irritate him. As we rose from the table he caught my troubled look. Passing his arm for a moment into mine, “This is the great night!” he strangely and softly said; “the night and the crisis that will settle me.”

Mr. Searle had caused the whole lower portion of the house to be thrown open and a multitude of lights to be placed in convenient and effective positions. Such a marshalled wealth of ancient candlesticks and flambeaux I had never beheld. Nighed against the dusky wainscots, casting great luminous circles upon the pendent stiffness of sombre tapestries, enhancing and completing with admirable effect the variety and mystery of the great ancient house, they seemed to people the wide rooms, as our little group passed slowly from one to another, with a dim expectant presence. We had thus, in spite of everything, a wonderful hour of it. Mr. Searle at once assumed the part of cicerone, and—I had not hitherto done him justice—Mr. Searle became almost agreeable. While I lingered behind with his sister he walked in advance with his kinsman. It was as if he had said: “Well, if you want the old place you shall have it—so far as the impression goes!” He spared us no thrill—I had almost said no pang—of that experience. Carrying a tall silver candlestick in his left hand, he raised it and lowered it and cast the light hither and thither, upon pictures and hangings and carvings and cornices. He knew his house to perfection. He touched upon a hundred traditions and memories, he threw off a cloud of rich reference to its earlier occupants. He threw off again, in his easy elegant way, a dozen—happily lighter—anecdotes. His relative attended with a brooding deference. Miss Searle and I meanwhile were not wholly silent.

“I suppose that by this time you and your cousin are almost old friends,” I remarked.

She trifled a moment with her fan and then raised her kind small eyes. “Old friends—yet at the same time strangely new! My cousin, my cousin”—and her voice lingered on the word—“it seems so strange to call him my cousin after thinking these many years that I’ve no one in the world but my brother. But he’s really so very odd!”

“It’s not so much he as—well, as his situation, that deserves that name,” I tried to reason.

“I’m so sorry for his situation. I wish I could help it in some way. He interests me so much.” She gave a sweet-sounding sigh. “I wish I could have known him sooner—and better. He tells me he’s but the shadow of what he used to be.”

I wondered if he had been consciously practising on the sensibilities of this gentle creature. If he had I believed he had gained his point. But his position had in fact become to my sense so precarious that I hardly ventured to be glad. “His better self just now seems again to be taking shape,” I said. “It will have been a good deed on your part if you help to restore him to all he ought to be.”

She met my idea blankly. “Dear me, what can I do?”

“Be a friend to him. Let him like you, let him love you. I dare say you see in him now much to pity and to wonder at. But let him simply enjoy a while the grateful sense of your nearness and dearness. He’ll be a better and stronger man for it, and then you can love him, you can esteem him, without restriction.”

She fairly frowned for helplessness. “It’s a hard part for poor stupid me to play!”

Her almost infantine innocence left me no choice but to be absolutely frank. “Did you ever play any part at all?”

She blushed as if I had been reproaching her with her insignificance. "Never! I think I've hardly lived."

"You've begun to live now perhaps. You've begun to care for something else than your old-fashioned habits. Pardon me if I seem rather meddlesome; you know we Americans are very rough and ready. It's a great moment. I wish you joy!"

"I could almost believe you're laughing at me. I feel more trouble than joy."

"Why do you feel trouble?"

She paused with her eyes fixed on our companions. "My cousin's arrival's a great disturbance," she said at last.

"You mean you did wrong in coming to meet him? In that case the fault's mine. He had no intention of giving you the opportunity."

"I certainly took too much on myself. But I can't find it in my heart to regret it. I never shall regret it! I did the only thing I *could*, heaven forgive me!"

"Heaven bless you, Miss Searle! Is any harm to come of it? I did the evil; let me bear the brunt!"

She shook her head gravely. "You don't know my brother!"

"The sooner I master the subject the better then," I said. I couldn't help relieving myself—at least by the tone of my voice—of the antipathy with which, decidedly, this gentleman had inspired me. "Not perhaps that we should get on so well together!" After which, as she turned away, "Are you *very* much afraid of him?" I added.

She gave me a shuddering sidelong glance. "He's looking at me!"

He was placed with his back to us, holding a large Venetian hand-mirror, framed in chiselled silver, which he had taken from a shelf of antiquities, just at such an angle that he caught the reflexion of his sister's person. It was evident that I too was under his attention, and was resolved I wouldn't be suspected for nothing. "Miss Searle," I said with urgency, "promise me something."

She turned upon me with a start and a look that seemed to beg me to spare her. "Oh don't ask me—please don't!" It was as if she were standing on the edge of a place where the ground had suddenly fallen away, and had been called upon to make a leap. I felt retreat was impossible, however, and that it was the greater kindness to assist her to jump.

"Promise me," I repeated.

Still with her eyes she protested. "Oh what a dreadful day!" she cried at last.

"Promise me to let him speak to you alone if he should ask you—any wish you may suspect on your brother's part notwithstanding." She coloured deeply. "You mean he has something so particular to say?"

"Something so particular!"

"Poor cousin!"

"Well, poor cousin! But promise me."

"I promise," she said, and moved away across the long room and out of the door.

"You're in time to hear the most delightful story," Searle began to me as I rejoined him and his host. They were standing before an old sombre portrait of a lady in the dress of Queen

Anne's time, whose ill-painted flesh-tints showed livid, in the candle-light, against her dark drapery and background. "This is Mrs. Margaret Searle—a sort of Beatrix Esmond—*qui se passait ses fantaisies*. She married a paltry Frenchman, a penniless fiddler, in the teeth of her whole family. Pretty Mrs. Margaret, you must have been a woman of courage! Upon my word, she looks like Miss Searle! But pray go on. What came of it all?"

Our companion watched him with an air of distaste for his boisterous homage and of pity for his crude imagination. But he took up the tale with an effective dryness: "I found a year ago, in a box of very old papers, a letter from the lady in question to a certain Cynthia Searle, her elder sister. It was dated from Paris and dreadfully ill-spelled. It contained a most passionate appeal for pecuniary assistance. She had just had a baby, she was starving and dreadfully neglected by her husband—she cursed the day she had left England. It was a most dismal production. I never heard she found means to return."

"So much for marrying a Frenchman!" I said sententiously.

Our host had one of his waits. "This is the only lady of the family who ever was taken in by an adventurer."

"Does Miss Searle know her history?" asked my friend with a stare at the rounded whiteness of the heroine's cheek.

"Miss Searle knows nothing!" said our host with expression.

"She shall know at least the tale of Mrs. Margaret," their guest returned; and he walked rapidly away in search of her.

Mr. Searle and I pursued our march through the lighted rooms. "You've found a cousin with a vengeance," I doubtless awkwardly enough laughed.

"Ah a vengeance?" my entertainer stiffly repeated.

"I mean that he takes as keen an interest in your annals and possessions as yourself."

"Oh exactly so! He tells me he's a bad invalid," he added in a moment. "I should never have supposed it."

"Within the past few hours he's a changed man. Your beautiful house, your extreme kindness, have refreshed him immensely." Mr. Searle uttered the vague ejaculation with which self-conscious Britons so often betray the concussion of any especial courtesy of speech. But he followed this by a sudden odd glare and the sharp declaration: "I'm an honest man!" I was quite prepared to assent; but he went on with a fury of frankness, as if it were the first time in his life he had opened himself to any one, as if the process were highly disagreeable and he were hurrying through it as a task. "An honest man, mind you! I know nothing about Mr. Clement Searle! I never expected to see him. He has been to me a—a—!" And here he paused to select a word which should vividly enough express what, for good or for ill, his kinsman represented. "He has been to me an Amazement! I've no doubt he's a most amiable man. You'll not deny, however, that he's a very extraordinary sort of person. I'm sorry he's ill. I'm sorry he's poor. He's my fiftieth cousin. Well and good. I'm an honest man. He shall not have it to say that he wasn't received at my house."

"He too, thank heaven, is an honest man!" I smiled.

"Why the devil then," cried Mr. Searle, turning almost fiercely on me, "has he put forward this underhand claim to my property?"

The question, quite ringing out, flashed backward a gleam of light upon the demeanour of our host and the suppressed agitation of his sister. In an instant the jealous gentleman revealed

itself. For a moment I was so surprised and scandalised at the directness of his attack that I lacked words to reply. As soon as he had spoken indeed Mr. Searle appeared to feel he had been wanting in form. "Pardon me," he began afresh, "if I speak of this matter with heat. But I've been more disgusted than I can say to hear, as I heard this morning from my solicitor, of the extraordinary proceedings of Mr. Clement Searle. Gracious goodness, sir, for what does the man take me? He pretends to the Lord knows what fantastic admiration for my place. Let him then show his respect for it by not taking too many liberties! Let him, with his high-flown parade of loyalty, imagine a tithe of what *I* feel! I love my estate; it's my passion, my conscience, my life! Am I to divide it up at this time of day with a beggarly foreigner—a man without means, without appearance, without proof, a pretender, an adventurer, a chattering mountebank? I thought America boasted having lands for all men! Upon my soul, sir, I've never been so shocked in my life."

I paused for some moments before speaking, to allow his passion fully to expend itself and to flicker up again if it chose; for so far as I was concerned in the whole awkward matter I but wanted to deal with him discreetly. "Your apprehensions, sir," I said at last, "your not unnatural surprise, perhaps, at the candour of our interest, have acted too much on your nerves. You're attacking a man of straw, a creature of unworthy illusion; though I'm sadly afraid you've wounded a man of spirit and conscience. Either my friend has no valid claim on your estate, in which case your agitation is superfluous; or he *has* a valid claim—"

Mr. Searle seized my arm and glared at me; his pale face paler still with the horror of my suggestion, his great eyes of alarm glowing and his strange red hair erect and quivering. "A valid claim!" he shouted. "Let him try it—let him bring it into court!"

We had emerged into the great hall and stood facing the main doorway. The door was open into the portico, through the stone archway of which I saw the garden glitter in the blue light of a full moon. As the master of the house uttered the words I have just repeated my companion came slowly up into the porch from without, bareheaded, bright in the outer moonlight, dark in the shadow of the archway, and bright again in the lamplight at the entrance of the hall. As he crossed the threshold the butler made an appearance at the head of the staircase on our left, faltering visibly a moment at sight of Mr. Searle; after which, noting my friend, he gravely descended. He bore in his hand a small silver tray. On the tray, gleaming in the light of the suspended lamp, lay a folded note. Clement Searle came forward, staring a little and startled, I think, by some quick nervous prevision of a catastrophe. The butler applied the match to the train. He advanced to my fellow visitor, all solemnly, with the offer of his missive. Mr. Searle made a movement as if to spring forward, but controlled himself. "Tottenham!" he called in a strident voice.

"Yes, sir!" said Tottenham, halting.

"Stand where you are. For whom is that note?"

"For Mr. Clement Searle," said the butler, staring straight before him and dissociating himself from everything.

"Who gave it to you?"

"Mrs. Horridge, sir." This personage, I afterwards learned, was our friend the housekeeper.

"Who gave it Mrs. Horridge?"

There was on Tottenham's part just an infinitesimal pause before replying.

"My dear sir," broke in Searle, his equilibrium, his ancient ease, completely restored by the crisis, "isn't that rather my business?"

“What happens in my house is my business, and detestable things seem to be happening.” Our host, it was clear, now so furiously detested them that I was afraid he would snatch the bone of contention without more ceremony. “Bring me that thing!” he cried; on which Tottenham stiffly moved to obey.

“Really this is too much!” broke out my companion, affronted and helpless.

So indeed it struck me, and before Mr. Searle had time to take the note I possessed myself of it. “If you’ve no consideration for your sister let a stranger at least act for her.” And I tore the disputed object into a dozen pieces.

“In the name of decency, what does this horrid business mean?” my companion quavered.

Mr. Searle was about to open fire on him, but at that moment our hostess appeared on the staircase, summoned evidently by our high-pitched contentious voices. She had exchanged her dinner-dress for a dark wrapper, removed her ornaments and begun to disarrange her hair, a thick tress of which escaped from the comb. She hurried down with a pale questioning face. Feeling distinctly that, for ourselves, immediate departure was in the air, and divining Mr. Tottenham to be a person of a few deep-seated instincts and of much latent energy, I seized the opportunity to request him, *sotto voce*, to send a carriage to the door without delay. “And put up our things,” I added.

Our host rushed at his sister and grabbed the white wrist that escaped from the loose sleeve of her dress. “What was in that note?” he quite hissed at her.

Miss Searle looked first at its scattered fragments and then at her cousin. “Did you read it?”

“No, but I thank you for it!” said Searle.

Her eyes, for an instant, communicated with his own as I think they had never, never communicated with any other source of meaning; then she transferred them to her brother’s face, where the sense went out of them, only to leave a dull sad patience. But there was something even in this flat humility that seemed to him to mock him, so that he flushed crimson with rage and spite and flung her away. “You always were an idiot! Go to bed.”

In poor Searle’s face as well the gathered serenity had been by this time all blighted and distorted and the reflected brightness of his happy day turned to blank confusion. “Have I been dealing these three hours with a madman?” he woefully cried.

“A madman, yes, if you will! A man mad with the love of his home and the sense of its stability. I’ve held my tongue till now, but you’ve been too much for me. Who the devil are you, and what and why and whence?” the terrible little man continued. “From what paradise of fools do you come that you fancy I shall make over to you, for the asking, a part of my property and my life? I’m forsooth, you ridiculous person, to go shares with you? Prove your preposterous claim! There isn’t *that* in it!” And he kicked one of the bits of paper on the floor.

Searle received this broadside gaping. Then turning away he went and seated himself on a bench against the wall and rubbed his forehead amazedly. I looked at my watch and listened for the wheels of our carriage.

But his kinsman was too launched to pull himself up. “Wasn’t it enough that you should have plotted against my rights? Need you have come into my very house to intrigue with my sister?”

My friend put his two hands to his face. “Oh, oh, oh!” he groaned while Miss Searle crossed rapidly and dropped on her knees at his side.

“Go to bed, you fool!” shrieked her brother.

“Dear cousin,” she said, “it’s cruel you’re to have so to think of us!”

“Oh I shall think of *you* as you’d like!” He laid a hand on her head.

“I believe you’ve done nothing wrong,” she brought bravely out.

“I’ve done what I could,” Mr. Searle went on—“but it’s arrant folly to pretend to friendship when this abomination lies between us. You were welcome to my meat and my wine, but I wonder you could swallow them. The sight spoiled *my* appetite!” cried the master of Lackley with a laugh. “Proceed with your trumpery case! My people in London are instructed and prepared.”

“I shouldn’t wonder if your case had improved a good deal since you gave it up,” I was moved to observe to Searle.

“Oho! you don’t feign ignorance then?” and our insane entertainer shook his shining head at me. “It’s very kind of you to give it up! Perhaps you’ll also give up my sister!”

Searle sat staring in distress at his adversary. “Ah miserable man—I thought we had become such beautiful friends.”

“Boh, you hypocrite!” screamed our host.

Searle seemed not to hear him. “Am I seriously expected,” he slowly and painfully pursued, “to defend myself against the accusation of any real indelicacy—to prove I’ve done nothing underhand or impudent? Think what you please!” And he rose, with an effort, to his feet. “I know what *you* think!” he added to Miss Searle.

The wheels of the carriage resounded on the gravel, and at the same moment a footman descended with our two portmanteaux. Mr. Tottenham followed him with our hats and coats.

“Good God,” our host broke out again, “you’re not going away?”—an ejaculation that, after all that had happened, had the grandest comicality. “Bless my soul,” he then remarked as artlessly, “of course you’re going!”

“It’s perhaps well,” said Miss Searle with a great effort, inexpressibly touching in one for whom great efforts were visibly new and strange, “that I should tell you what my poor little note contained.”

“That matter of your note, madam,” her brother interrupted, “you and I will settle together!”

“Let me imagine all sorts of kind things!” Searle beautifully pleaded.

“Ah too much has been imagined!” she answered simply. “It was only a word of warning. It was to tell you to go. I knew something painful was coming.”

He took his hat. “The pains and the pleasures of this day,” he said to his kinsman, “I shall equally never forget. Knowing you,” and he offered his hand to Miss Searle, “has been the pleasure of pleasures. I hoped something more might have come of it.”

“A monstrous deal too much has come of it!” Mr. Searle irrepressibly declared.

His departing guest looked at him mildly, almost benignantly, from head to foot, and then with closed eyes and some collapse of strength, “I’m afraid so, I can’t stand more,” he went on. I gave him my arm and we crossed the threshold. As we passed out I heard Miss Searle break into loud weeping.

“We shall hear from each other yet, I take it!” her brother pursued, harassing our retreat.

My friend stopped, turning round on him fiercely. "You very impossible man!" he cried in his face.

"Do you mean to say you'll not prosecute?" Mr. Searle kept it up. "I shall force you to prosecute! I shall drag you into court, and you shall be beaten—beaten—beaten!" Which grim reiteration followed us on our course.

We drove of course to the little wayside inn from which we had departed in the morning so unencumbered, in all broad England, either with enemies or friends. My companion, as the carriage rolled along, seemed overwhelmed and exhausted. "What a beautiful horrible dream!" he confusedly wailed. "What a strange awakening! What a long long day! What a hideous scene! Poor me! Poor woman!" When we had resumed possession of our two little neighbouring rooms I asked him whether Miss Searle's note had been the result of anything that had passed between them on his going to rejoin her. "I found her on the terrace," he said, "walking restlessly up and down in the moonlight. I was greatly excited—I hardly know what I said. I asked her, I think, if she knew the story of Margaret Searle. She seemed frightened and troubled, and she used just the words her brother had used—'I know nothing.' For the moment, somehow, I felt as a man drunk. I stood before her and told her, with great emphasis, how poor Margaret had married a beggarly foreigner—all in obedience to her heart and in defiance to her family. As I talked the sheeted moonlight seemed to close about us, so that we stood there in a dream, in a world quite detached. She grew younger, prettier, more attractive—I found myself talking all kinds of nonsense. Before I knew it I had gone very far. I was taking her hand and calling her 'Margaret, dear Margaret!' She had said it was impossible, that she could do nothing, that she was a fool, a child, a slave. Then with a sudden sense—it was odd how it came over me there—of the reality of my connexion with the place, I spoke of my claim against the estate. 'It exists,' I declared, 'but I've given it up. Be generous! Pay me for my sacrifice.' For an instant her face was radiant. 'If I marry you,' she asked, 'will it make everything right?' Of that I at once assured her—in our marriage the whole difficulty would melt away like a rain-drop in the great sea. 'Our marriage!' she repeated in wonder; and the deep ring of her voice seemed to wake us up and show us our folly. 'I love you, but I shall never see you again,' she cried; and she hurried away with her face in her hands. I walked up and down the terrace for some moments, and then came in and met you. That's the only witchcraft I've used!"

The poor man was at once so roused and so shaken by the day's events that I believed he would get little sleep. Conscious on my own part that I shouldn't close my eyes, I but partly undressed, stirred my fire and sat down to do some writing. I heard the great clock in the little parlour below strike twelve, one, half-past one. Just as the vibration of this last stroke was dying on the air the door of communication with Searle's room was flung open and my companion stood on the threshold, pale as a corpse, in his nightshirt, shining like a phantom against the darkness behind him. "Look well at me!" he intensely gasped; "touch me, embrace me, revere me! You see a man who has seen a ghost!"

"Gracious goodness, what do you mean?"

"Write it down!" he went on. "There, take your pen. Put it into dreadful words. How do I look? Am I human? Am I pale? Am I red? Am I speaking English? A ghost, sir! Do you understand?"

I confess there came upon me by contact a kind of supernatural shock. I shall always feel by the whole communication of it that I too have seen a ghost. My first movement—I can smile at it now—was to spring to the door, close it quickly and turn the key upon the gaping blackness from which Searle had emerged. I seized his two hands; they were wet with

perspiration. I pushed my chair to the fire and forced him to sit down in it; then I got on my knees and held his hands as firmly as possible. They trembled and quivered; his eyes were fixed save that the pupil dilated and contracted with extraordinary force. I asked no questions, but waited there, very curious for what he would say. At last he spoke. "I'm not frightened, but I'm—oh excited! This is life! This is living! My nerves—my heart—my brain! They're throbbing—don't you feel it? Do you tingle? Are you hot? Are you cold? Hold me tight—tight—tight! I shall tremble away into waves—into surges—and know all the secrets of things and all the reasons and all the mysteries!" He paused a moment and then went on: "A woman—as clear as that candle: no, far clearer! In a blue dress, with a black mantle on her head and a little black muff. Young and wonderfully pretty, pale and ill; with the sadness of all the women who ever loved and suffered pleading and accusing in her wet-looking eyes. God knows I never did any such thing! But she took me for my elder, for the other Clement. She came to me here as she would have come to me there. She wrung her hands and she spoke to me 'marry me!' she moaned; 'marry me and put an end to my shame!' I sat up in bed, just as I sit here, looked at her, heard her—heard her voice melt away, watched her figure fade away. Bless us and save us! Here I be!"

I made no attempt either to explain or to criticise this extraordinary passage. It's enough that I yielded for the hour to the strange force of my friend's emotion. On the whole I think my own vision was the more interesting of the two. He beheld but the transient irresponsible spectre—I beheld the human subject hot from the spectral presence. Yet I soon recovered my judgement sufficiently to be moved again to try to guard him against the results of excitement and exposure. It was easily agreed that he was not for the night to return to his room, and I made him fairly comfortable in his place by my fire. Wishing above all to preserve him from a chill I removed my bedding and wrapped him in the blankets and counterpane. I had no nerves either for writing or for sleep; so I put out my lights, renewed the fuel and sat down on the opposite side of the hearth. I found it a great and high solemnity just to watch my companion. Silent, swathed and muffled to his chin, he sat rigid and erect with the dignity of his adventure. For the most part his eyes were closed; though from time to time he would open them with a steady expansion and stare, never blinking, into the flame, as if he again beheld without terror the image of the little woman with the muff. His cadaverous emaciated face, his tragic wrinkles intensified by the upward glow from the hearth, his distorted moustache, his extraordinary gravity and a certain fantastical air as the red light flickered over him, all re-enforced his fine likeness to the vision-haunted knight of La Mancha when laid up after some grand exploit. The night passed wholly without speech. Toward its close I slept for half an hour. When I awoke the awakened birds had begun to twitter and Searle, unperturbed, sat staring at me. We exchanged a long look, and I felt with a pang that his glittering eyes had tasted their last of natural sleep. "How is it? Are you comfortable?" I nevertheless asked.

He fixed me for a long time without replying and then spoke with a weak extravagance and with such pauses between his words as might have represented the slow prompting of an inner voice. "You asked me when you first knew me what I was. 'Nothing,' I said, 'nothing of any consequence.' Nothing I've always supposed myself to be. But I've wronged myself—I'm a great exception. I'm a haunted man!"

If sleep had passed out of his eyes I felt with even a deeper pang that sanity had abandoned his spirit. From this moment I was prepared for the worst. There were in my friend, however, such confirmed habits of mildness that I found myself not in the least fearing he would prove unmanageable. As morning began fully to dawn upon us I brought our curious vigil to a close. Searle was so enfeebled that I gave him my hands to help him out of his chair, and he retained them for some moments after rising to his feet, unable as he seemed to keep his

balance. "Well," he said, "I've been once favoured, but don't think I shall be favoured again. I shall soon be myself as fit to 'appear' as any of them. I shall haunt the master of Lackley! It can only mean one thing—that they're getting ready for me on the other side of the grave."

When I touched the question of breakfast he replied that he had his breakfast in his pocket; and he drew from his travelling-bag a phial of morphine. He took a strong dose and went to bed. At noon I found him on foot again, dressed, shaved, much refreshed. "Poor fellow," he said, "you've got more than you bargained for—not only a man with a grievance but a man with a ghost. Well, it won't be for long!" It had of course promptly become a question whither we should now direct our steps. "As I've so little time," he argued for this, "I should like to see the best, the best alone." I answered that either for time or eternity I had always supposed Oxford to represent the English maximum, and for Oxford in the course of an hour we accordingly departed.

IV

Of that extraordinary place I shall not attempt to speak with any order or indeed with any coherence. It must ever remain one of the supreme gratifications of travel for any American aware of the ancient pieties of race. The impression it produces, the emotions it kindles in the mind of such a visitor, are too rich and various to be expressed in the halting rhythm of prose. Passing through the small oblique streets in which the long grey battered public face of the colleges seems to watch jealously for sounds that may break upon the stillness of study, you feel it the most dignified and most educated of cities. Over and through it all the great corporate fact of the University slowly throbs after the fashion of some steady bass in a concerted piece or that of the mediaeval mystical presence of the Empire in the old States of Germany. The plain perpendicular of the so mildly conventual fronts, masking blest seraglios of culture and leisure, irritates the imagination scarce less than the harem-walls of Eastern towns. Within their arching portals, however, you discover more sacred and sunless courts, and the dark verdure soothing and cooling to bookish eyes. The grey-green quadrangles stand for ever open with a trustful hospitality. The seat of the humanities is stronger in her own good manners than in a marshalled host of wardens and beadles. Directly after our arrival my friend and I wandered forth in the luminous early dusk. We reached the bridge that under-spans the walls of Magdalen and saw the eight-spired tower, delicately fluted and embossed, rise in temperate beauty—the perfect prose of Gothic—wooing the eyes to the sky that was slowly drained of day. We entered the low monkish doorway and stood in the dim little court that nestles beneath the tower, where the swallows niche more lovingly in the tangled ivy than elsewhere in Oxford, and passed into the quiet cloister and studied the small sculptured monsters on the entablature of the arcade. I rejoiced in every one of my unhappy friend's responsive vibrations, even while feeling that they might as direfully multiply as those that had preceded them. I may say that from this time forward I found it difficult to distinguish in his company between the riot of fancy and the labour of thought, or to fix the balance between what he saw and what he imagined. He had already begun playfully to exchange his identity for that of the earlier Clement Searle, and he now delivered himself almost wholly in the character of his old-time kinsman.

"*This* was my college, you know," he would almost anywhere break out, applying the words wherever we stood—"the sweetest and noblest in the whole place. How often have I strolled in this cloister with my intimates of the other world! They are all dead and buried, but many a young fellow as we meet him, dark or fair, tall or short, reminds me of the past age and the early attachment. Even as we stand here, they say, the whole thing feels about its massive base the murmurs of the tide of time; some of the foundation-stones are loosened, some of the breaches will have to be repaired. Mine was the old unregenerate Oxford, the home of rank

abuses, of distinctions and privileges the most delicious and invidious. What cared I, who was a perfect gentleman and with my pockets full of money? I had an allowance of a thousand a year.”

It was at once plain to me that he had lost the little that remained of his direct grasp on life and was unequal to any effort of seeing things in their order. He read my apprehension in my eyes and took pains to assure me I was right. “I’m going straight down hill. Thank heaven it’s an easy slope, coated with English turf and with an English churchyard at the foot.” The hysterical emotion produced by our late dire misadventure had given place to an unruffled calm in which the scene about us was reflected as in an old-fashioned mirror. We took an afternoon walk through Christ-Church meadow and at the river-bank procured a boat which I pulled down the stream to Iffley and to the slanting woods of Nuneham—the sweetest flattest reediest stream-side landscape that could be desired. Here of course we encountered the scattered phalanx of the young, the happy generation, clad in white flannel and blue, muscular fair-haired magnificent fresh, whether floated down the current by idle punts and lounging in friendly couples when not in a singleness that nursed ambitions, or straining together in rhythmic crews and hoarsely exhorted from the near bank. When to the exhibition of so much of the clearest joy of wind and limb we added the great sense of perfumed protection shed by all the enclosed lawns and groves and bowers, we felt that to be young in such scholastic shades must be a double, an infinite blessing. As my companion found himself less and less able to walk we repaired in turn to a series of gardens and spent long hours sitting in their greenest places. They struck us as the fairest things in England and the ripest and sweetest fruit of the English system. Locked in their antique verdure, guarded, as in the case of New College, by gentle battlements of silver-grey, outshouldering the matted leafage of undissectable plants, filled with nightingales and memories, a sort of chorus of tradition; with vaguely-generous youths sprawling bookishly on the turf as if to spare it the injury of their boot-heels, and with the great conservative college countenance appealing gravely from the restless outer world, they seem places to lie down on the grass in for ever, in the happy faith that life is all a green old English garden and time an endless summer afternoon. This charmed seclusion was especially grateful to my friend, and his sense of it reached its climax, I remember, on one of the last of such occasions and while we sat in fascinated *flânerie* over against the sturdy back of Saint John’s. The wide discreetly-windowed wall here perhaps broods upon the lawn with a more effective air of property than elsewhere. Searle dropped into fitful talk and spun his humour into golden figures. Any passing undergraduate was a peg to hang a fable, every feature of the place a pretext for more embroidery.

“Isn’t it all a delightful lie?” he wanted to know. “Mightn’t one fancy this the very central point of the world’s heart, where all the echoes of the general life arrive but to falter and die? Doesn’t one feel the air just thick with arrested voices? It’s well there should be such places, shaped in the interest of factitious needs, invented to minister to the book-begotten longing for a medium in which one may dream unwaked and believe unconfuted; to foster the sweet illusion that all’s well in a world where so much is so damnable, all right and rounded, smooth and fair, in this sphere of the rough and ragged, the pitiful unachieved especially, and the dreadful uncommenced. The world’s made—work’s over. Now for leisure! England’s safe—now for Theocritus and Horace, for lawn and sky! What a sense it all gives one of the composite life of the country and of the essential furniture of its luckier minds! Thank heaven they had the wit to send me here in the other time. I’m not much visibly the braver perhaps, but think how I’m the happier! The misty spires and towers, seen far off on the level, have been all these years one of the constant things of memory. Seriously, what do the spires and towers do for these people? Are they wiser, gentler, finer, cleverer? My diminished dignity

reverts in any case at moments to the naked background of our own education, the deadly dry air in which we gasp for impressions and comparisons. I assent to it all with a sort of desperate calmness; I accept it with a dogged pride. We're nursed at the opposite pole. Naked come we into a naked world. There's a certain grandeur in the lack of decorations, a certain heroic strain in that young imagination of ours which finds nothing made to its hands, which has to invent its own traditions and raise high into our morning-air, with a ringing hammer and nails, the castles in which we dwell. *Noblesse oblige*—Oxford must damnably do so. What a horrible thing not to rise to such examples! If you pay the pious debt to the last farthing of interest you may go through life with her blessing; but if you let it stand unhonoured you're a worse barbarian than we! But for the better or worse, in a myriad private hearts, think how she must be loved! How the youthful sentiment of mankind seems visibly to brood upon her! Think of the young lives now taking colour in her cloisters and halls. Think of the centuries' tale of dead lads—dead alike with the end of the young days to which these haunts were a present world, and the close of the larger lives which the general mother-scene has dropped into less bottomless traps. What are those two young fellows kicking their heels over on the grass there? One of them has the *Saturday Review*; the other—upon my soul—the other has Artemus Ward! Where do they live, how do they live, to what end do they live? Miserable boys! How can they read Artemus Ward under those windows of Elizabeth? What do you think loveliest in all Oxford? The poetry of certain windows. Do you see that one yonder, the second of those lesser bays, with the broken cornice and the lattice? That used to be the window of my bosom friend a hundred years ago. Remind me to tell you the story of that broken cornice. Don't pretend it's not a common thing to have one's bosom friend at another college. Pray was I committed to common things? He was a charming fellow. By the way, he was a good deal like you. Of course his cocked hat, his long hair in a black ribbon, his cinnamon velvet suit and his flowered waistcoat made a difference. We gentlemen used to wear swords."

There was really the touch of grace in my poor friend's divagations—the disheartened dandy had so positively turned rhapsodist and seer. I was particularly struck with his having laid aside the diffidence and self-consciousness of the first days of our acquaintance. He had become by this time a disembodied observer and critic; the shell of sense, growing daily thinner and more transparent, transmitted the tremor of his quickened spirit. He seemed to pick up acquaintances, in the course of our contemplations, merely by putting out his hand. If I left him for ten minutes I was sure to find him on my return in earnest conversation with some affable wandering scholar. Several young men with whom he had thus established relations invited him to their rooms and entertained him, as I gathered, with rather rash hospitality. For myself, I chose not to be present at these symposia; I shrank partly from being held in any degree responsible for his extravagance, partly from the pang of seeing him yield to champagne and an admiring circle. He reported such adventures with less keen a complacency than I had supposed he might use, but a certain method in his madness, a certain dignity in his desire to fraternise, appeared to save him from mischance. If they didn't think him a harmless lunatic they certainly thought him a celebrity of the Occident. Two things, however, grew evident—that he drank deeper than was good for him and that the flagrant freshness of his young patrons rather interfered with his predetermined sense of the element of finer romance. At the same time it completed his knowledge of the place. Making the acquaintance of several tutors and fellows, he dined in hall in half a dozen colleges, alluding afterwards to these banquets with religious unction. One evening after a participation indiscreetly prolonged he came back to the hotel in a cab, accompanied by a friendly undergraduate and a physician and looking deadly pale. He had swooned away on leaving table and remained so rigidly unconscious as much to agitate his banqueters. The following twenty-four hours he of course spent in bed, but on the third day declared himself strong

enough to begin afresh. On his reaching the street his strength once more forsook him, so that I insisted on his returning to his room. He besought me with tears in his eyes not to shut him up. "It's my last chance—I want to go back for an hour to that garden of Saint John's. Let me eat and drink—to-morrow I die." It seemed to me possible that with a Bath-chair the expedition might be accomplished. The hotel, it appeared, possessed such a convenience, which was immediately produced. It became necessary hereupon that we should have a person to propel the chair. As there was no one on the spot at liberty I was about to perform the office; but just as my patient had got seated and wrapped—he now had a perpetual chill—an elderly man emerged from a lurking-place near the door and, with a formal salute, offered to wait upon the gentleman. We assented, and he proceeded solemnly to trundle the chair before him. I recognised him as a vague personage whom I had observed to lounge shyly about the doors of the hotels, at intervals during our stay, with a depressed air of wanting employment and a poor semblance of finding it. He had once indeed in a half-hearted way proposed himself as an amateur cicerone for a tour through the colleges; and I now, as I looked at him, remembered with a pang that I had too curtly declined his ministrations. Since then his shyness, apparently, had grown less or his misery greater, for it was with a strange grim avidity that he now attached himself to our service. He was a pitiful image of shabby gentility and the dinginess of "reduced circumstances." He would have been, I suppose, some fifty years of age; but his pale haggard unwholesome visage, his plaintive drooping carriage and the irremediable disarray of his apparel seemed to add to the burden of his days and tribulations. His eyes were weak and bloodshot, his bold nose was sadly compromised, and his reddish beard, largely streaked with grey, bristled under a month's neglect of the razor. In all this rusty forlornness lurked a visible assurance of our friend's having known better days. Obviously he was the victim of some fatal depreciation in the market value of pure gentility. There had been something terribly affecting in the way he substituted for the attempt to touch the greasy rim of his antiquated hat some such bow as one man of the world might make another. Exchanging a few words with him as we went I was struck with the decorum of his accent. His fine whole voice should have been congruously cracked.

"Take me by some long roundabout way," said Searle, "so that I may see as many college-walls as possible."

"You know," I asked of our attendant, "all these wonderful ins and outs?"

"I ought to, sir," he said, after a moment, with pregnant gravity. And as we were passing one of the colleges, "That used to be my place," he added.

At these words Searle desired him to stop and come round within sight. "You say that's *your* college?"

"The place might deny me, sir; but heaven forbid I should seem to take it ill of her. If you'll allow me to wheel you into the quad I'll show you my windows of thirty years ago."

Searle sat staring, his huge pale eyes, which now left nothing else worth mentioning in his wasted face, filled with wonder and pity. "If you'll be so kind," he said with great deference. But just as this perverted product of a liberal education was about to propel him across the threshold of the court he turned about, disengaged the mercenary hands, with one of his own, from the back of the chair, drew their owner alongside and turned to me. "While we're here, my dear fellow," he said, "be so good as to perform this service. You understand?" I gave our companion a glance of intelligence and we resumed our way. The latter showed us his window of the better time, where a rosy youth in a scarlet smoking-fez now puffed a cigarette at the open casement. Thence we proceeded into the small garden, the smallest, I believe, and certainly the sweetest, of all the planted places of Oxford. I pushed the chair along to a bench

on the lawn, turned it round, toward the front of the college and sat down by it on the grass. Our attendant shifted mournfully from one foot to the other, his patron eyeing him open-mouthed. At length Searle broke out: "God bless my soul, sir, you don't suppose I expect you to stand! There's an empty bench."

"Thank you," said our friend, who bent his joints to sit.

"You English are really fabulous! I don't know whether I most admire or most abominate you! Now tell me: who are you? what are you? what brought you to this?"

The poor fellow blushed up to his eyes, took off his hat and wiped his forehead with an indescribable fabric drawn from his pocket. "My name's Rawson, sir. Beyond that it's a long story."

"I ask out of sympathy," said Searle. "I've a fellow-feeling. If you're a poor devil I'm a poor devil as well."

"I'm the poorer devil of the two," said the stranger with an assurance for once presumptuous.

"Possibly. I suppose an English poor devil's the poorest of all poor devils. And then you've fallen from a height. From a gentleman commoner—is that what they called you?—to a propeller of Bath-chairs. Good heavens, man, the fall's enough to kill you!"

"I didn't take it all at once, sir. I dropped a bit one time and a bit another."

"That's me, that's me!" cried Searle with all his seriousness.

"And now," said our friend, "I believe I can't drop any further."

"My dear fellow"—and Searle clasped his hand and shook it—"I too am at the very bottom of the hole."

Mr. Rawson lifted his eyebrows. "Well, sir, there's a difference between sitting in such a pleasant convenience and just trudging behind it!"

"Yes—there's a shade. But I'm at my last gasp, Mr. Rawson."

"I'm at my last penny, sir."

"Literally, Mr. Rawson?"

Mr. Rawson shook his head with large loose bitterness. "I've almost come to the point of drinking my beer and buttoning my coat figuratively; but I don't talk in figures."

Fearing the conversation might appear to achieve something like gaiety at the expense of Mr. Rawson's troubles, I took the liberty of asking him, with all consideration, how he made a living.

"I don't make a living," he answered with tearful eyes; "I can't make a living. I've a wife and three children—and all starving, sir. You wouldn't believe what I've come to. I sent my wife to her mother's, who can ill afford to keep her, and came to Oxford a week ago, thinking I might pick up a few half-crowns by showing people about the colleges. But it's no use. I haven't the assurance. I don't look decent. They want a nice little old man with black gloves and a clean shirt and a silver-headed stick. What do I look as if I knew about Oxford, sir?"

"Mercy on us," cried Searle, "why didn't you speak to us before?"

"I wanted to; half a dozen times I've been on the point of it. I knew you were Americans."

"And Americans are rich!" cried Searle, laughing. "My dear Mr. Rawson, American as I am I'm living on charity."

“And I’m exactly not, sir! There it is. I’m dying for the lack of that same. You say you’re a pauper, but it takes an American pauper to go bowling about in a Bath-chair. America’s an easy country.”

“Ah me!” groaned Searle. “Have I come to the most delicious corner of the ancient world to hear the praise of Yankeeland?”

“Delicious corners are very well, and so is the ancient world,” said Mr. Rawson; “but one may sit here hungry and shabby, so long as one isn’t too shabby, as well as elsewhere. You’ll not persuade me that it’s not an easier thing to keep afloat yonder than here. I wish *I* were in Yankeeland, that’s all!” he added with feeble force. Then brooding for a moment on his wrongs: “Have you a bloated brother? or you, sir? It matters little to you. But it has mattered to me with a vengeance! Shabby as I sit here I can boast that advantage—as he his five thousand a year. Being but a twelvemonth my elder he swaggers while I go thus. There’s old England for you! A very pretty place for *him!*”

“Poor old England!” said Searle softly.

“Has your brother never helped you?” I asked.

“A five-pound note now and then! Oh I don’t say there haven’t been times when I haven’t inspired an irresistible sympathy. I’ve not been what I should. I married dreadfully out of the way. But the devil of it is that he started fair and I started foul; with the tastes, the desires, the needs, the sensibilities of a gentleman—and not another blessed ‘tip.’ I can’t afford to live in England.”

“*This* poor gentleman fancied a couple of months ago that he couldn’t afford to live in America,” I fondly explained.

“I’d ‘swap’—do you call it?—chances with him!” And Mr. Rawson looked quaintly rueful over his freedom of speech.

Searle sat supported there with his eyes closed and his face twitching for violent emotion, and then of a sudden had a glare of gravity. “My friend, you’re a dead failure! Be judged! Don’t talk about ‘swapping.’ Don’t talk about chances. Don’t talk about fair starts and false starts. I’m at that point myself that I’ve a right to speak. It lies neither in one’s chance nor one’s start to make one a success; nor in anything one’s brother—however bloated—can do or can undo. It lies in one’s character. You and I, sir, have *had* no character—that’s very plain. We’ve been weak, sir; as weak as water. Here we are for it—sitting staring in each other’s faces and reading our weakness in each other’s eyes. We’re of no importance whatever, Mr. Rawson!”

Mr. Rawson received this sally with a countenance in which abject submission to the particular affirmed truth struggled with the comparative propriety of his general rebellion against fate. In the course of a minute a due self-respect yielded to the warm comfortable sense of his being relieved of the cares of an attitude. “Go on, sir, go on,” he said. “It’s wholesome doctrine.” And he wiped his eyes with what seemed his sole remnant of linen.

“Dear, dear,” sighed Searle, “I’ve made you cry! Well, we speak as from man to man. I should be glad to think you had felt for a moment the side-light of that great undarkening of the spirit which precedes—which precedes the grand illumination of death.”

Mr. Rawson sat silent a little, his eyes fixed on the ground and his well-cut nose but the more deeply dyed by his agitation. Then at last looking up: “You’re a very good-natured man, sir, and you’ll never persuade me you don’t come of a kindly race. Say what you please about a chance; when a man’s fifty—degraded, penniless, a husband and father—a chance to get on

his legs again is not to be despised. Something tells me that my luck may be in your country—which has brought luck to so many. I can come on the parish here of course, but I don't want to come on the parish. Hang it, sir, I want to hold up my head. I see thirty years of life before me yet. If only by God's help I could have a real change of air! It's a fixed idea of mine. I've had it for the last ten years. It's not that I'm a low radical. Oh I've no vulgar opinions. Old England's good enough for me, but I'm not good enough for old England. I'm a shabby man that wants to get out of a room full of staring gentlefolk. I'm for ever put to the blush. It's a perfect agony of spirit; everything reminds me of my younger and better self. The thing for me would be a cooling cleansing plunge into the unknowing and the unknown! I lie awake thinking of it."

Searle closed his eyes, shivering with a long-drawn tremor which I hardly knew whether to take for an expression of physical or of mental pain. In a moment I saw it was neither. "Oh my country, my country, my country!" he murmured in a broken voice; and then sat for some time abstracted and lost. I signalled our companion that it was time we should bring our small session to a close, and he, without hesitating, possessed himself of the handle of the Bath-chair and pushed it before him. We had got halfway home before Searle spoke or moved. Suddenly in the High Street, as we passed a chop-house from whose open doors we caught a waft of old-fashioned cookery and other restorative elements, he motioned us to halt. "This is my last five pounds"—and he drew a note from his pocket-book. "Do me the favour, Mr. Rawson, to accept it. Go in there and order the best dinner they can give you. Call for a bottle of Burgundy and drink it to my eternal rest!"

Mr. Rawson stiffened himself up and received the gift with fingers momentarily irresponsible. But Mr. Rawson had the nerves of a gentleman. I measured the spasm with which his poor dispossessed hand closed upon the crisp paper, I observed his empurpled nostril convulsive under the other solicitation. He crushed the crackling note in his palm with a passionate pressure and jerked a spasmodic bow. "I shall not do you the wrong, sir, of anything but the best!" The next moment the door swung behind him.

Searle sank again into his apathy, and on reaching the hotel I helped him to get to bed. For the rest of the day he lay without motion or sound and beyond reach of any appeal. The doctor, whom I had constantly in attendance, was sure his end was near. He expressed great surprise that he should have lasted so long; he must have been living for a month on the very dregs of his strength. Toward evening, as I sat by his bedside in the deepening dusk, he roused himself with a purpose I had vaguely felt gathering beneath his stupor. "My cousin, my cousin," he said confusedly. "Is she here?" It was the first time he had spoken of Miss Searle since our retreat from her brother's house, and he continued to ramble. "I was to have married her. What a dream! That day was like a string of verses—rhymed hours. But the last verse is bad measure. What's the rhyme to 'love'? *Above!* Was she a simple woman, a kind sweet woman? Or have I only dreamed it? She had the healing gift; her touch would have cured my madness. I want you to do something. Write three lines, three words: 'Good-bye; remember me; be happy.'" And then after a long pause: "It's strange a person in my state should have a wish. Why should one eat one's breakfast the day one's hanged? What a creature is man! What a farce is life! Here I lie, worn down to a mere throbbing fever-point; I breathe and nothing more, and yet *I desire!* My desire lives. If I could see her! Help me out with it and let me die."

Half an hour later, at a venture, I dispatched by post a note to Miss Searle: "*Your cousin is rapidly sinking. He asks to see you.*" I was conscious of a certain want of consideration in this act, since it would bring her great trouble and yet no power to face the trouble; but out of her distress I fondly hoped a sufficient force might be born. On the following day my friend's

exhaustion had become so great that I began to fear his intelligence altogether broken up. But toward evening he briefly rallied, to maunder about many things, confounding in a sinister jumble the memories of the past weeks and those of bygone years. "By the way," he said suddenly, "I've made no will. I haven't much to bequeath. Yet I have something." He had been playing listlessly with a large signet-ring on his left hand, which he now tried to draw off. "I leave you this"—working it round and round vainly—"if you can get it off. What enormous knuckles! There must be such knuckles in the mummies of the Pharaohs. Well, when I'm gone—! No, I leave you something more precious than gold—the sense of a great kindness. But I've a little gold left. Bring me those trinkets." I placed on the bed before him several articles of jewellery, relics of early foppery: his watch and chain, of great value, a locket and seal, some odds and ends of goldsmith's work. He trifled with them feebly for some moments, murmuring various names and dates associated with them. At last, looking up with clearer interest, "What has become," he asked, "of Mr. Rawson?"

"You want to see him?"

"How much are these things worth?" he went on without heeding me. "How much would they bring?" And he weighed them in his weak hands. "They're pretty heavy. Some hundred or so? Oh I'm richer than I thought! Rawson—Rawson—you want to get out of this awful England?"

I stepped to the door and requested the servant whom I kept in constant attendance in our adjacent sitting-room to send and ascertain if Mr. Rawson were on the premises. He returned in a few moments, introducing our dismal friend. Mr. Rawson was pale even to his nose and derived from his unaffectedly concerned state an air of some distinction. I led him up to the bed. In Searle's eyes, as they fell on him, there shone for a moment the light of a human message.

"Lord have mercy!" gasped Mr. Rawson.

"My friend," said Searle, "there's to be one American the less—so let there be at the same time one the more. At the worst you'll be as good a one as I. Foolish me! Take these battered relics; you can sell them; let them help you on your way. They're gifts and mementoes, but this is a better use. Heaven speed you! May America be kind to you. Be kind, at the last, to your own country!"

"Really this is too much; I can't," the poor man protested, almost scared and with tears in his eyes. "Do come round and get well and I'll stop here. I'll stay with you and wait on you."

"No, I'm booked for my journey, you for yours. I hope you don't mind the voyage."

Mr. Rawson exhaled a groan of helpless gratitude, appealing piteously from so strange a windfall. "It's like the angel of the Lord who bids people in the Bible to rise and flee!"

Searle had sunk back upon his pillow, quite used up; I led Mr. Rawson back into the sitting-room, where in three words I proposed to him a rough valuation of our friend's trinkets. He assented with perfect good-breeding; they passed into my possession and a second bank-note into his.

From the collapse into which this wondrous exercise of his imagination had plunged him my charge then gave few signs of being likely to emerge. He breathed, as he had said, and nothing more. The twilight deepened; I lighted the night-lamp. The doctor sat silent and official at the foot of the bed; I resumed my constant place near the head. Suddenly our patient opened his eyes wide. "She'll not come," he murmured. "Amen! she's an English sister." Five minutes passed; he started forward. "She's come, she's here!" he confidently quavered. His words conveyed to my mind so absolute an assurance that I lightly rose and

passed into the sitting-room. At the same moment, through the opposite door, the servant introduced a lady. A lady, I say; for an instant she was simply such—tall pale dressed in deep mourning. The next instant I had uttered her name—“Miss Searle!” She looked ten years older.

She met me with both hands extended and an immense question in her face. “He has just announced you,” I said. And then with a fuller consciousness of the change in her dress and countenance: “What has happened?”

“Oh death, death!” she wailed. “You and I are left.”

There came to me with her words a sickening shock, the sense of poetic justice somehow cheated, defeated. “Your brother?” I panted.

She laid her hand on my arm and I felt its pressure deepen as she spoke. “He was thrown from his horse in the park. He died on the spot. Six days have passed. Six months!”

She accepted my support and a moment later we had entered the room and approached the bedside, from which the doctor withdrew. Searle opened his eyes and looked at her from head to foot. Suddenly he seemed to make out her mourning. “Already!” he cried audibly and with a smile, as I felt, of pleasure.

She dropped on her knees and took his hand. “Not for you, cousin,” she whispered. “For my poor brother.”

He started, in all his deathly longitude, as with a galvanic shock. “Dead! *He* dead! Life itself!” And then after a moment and with a slight rising inflexion: “You’re free?”

“Free, cousin. Too sadly free. And now—*now*—with what use for freedom?”

He looked steadily into her eyes, dark in the heavy shadow of her musty mourning-veil. “For me wear colours!”

In a moment more death had come, the doctor had silently attested it, and she had burst into sobs.

We buried him in the little churchyard in which he had expressed the wish to lie; beneath one of the blackest and widest of English yews and the little tower than which none in all England has a softer and hoarier grey. A year has passed; Miss Searle, I believe, has begun to wear colours.

The Madonna Of The Future

We had been talking about the masters who had achieved but a single masterpiece—the artists and poets who but once in their lives had known the divine afflatus and touched the high level of perfection. Our host had been showing us a charming little cabinet picture by a painter whose name we had never heard, and who, after this single spasmodic bid for fame, had apparently relapsed into obscurity and mediocrity. There was some discussion as to the frequency of this phenomenon; during which, I observed, H--- sat silent, finishing his cigar with a meditative air, and looking at the picture which was being handed round the table. “I don’t know how common a case it is,” he said at last, “but I have seen it. I have known a poor fellow who painted his one masterpiece, and”—he added with a smile—“he didn’t even paint that. He made his bid for fame and missed it.” We all knew H--- for a clever man who had seen much of men and manners, and had a great stock of reminiscences. Some one immediately questioned him further, and while I was engrossed with the raptures of my neighbour over the little picture, he was induced to tell his tale. If I were to doubt whether it would bear repeating, I should only have to remember how that charming woman, our hostess, who had left the table, ventured back in rustling rose-colour to pronounce our lingering a want of gallantry, and, finding us a listening circle, sank into her chair in spite of our cigars, and heard the story out so graciously that, when the catastrophe was reached, she glanced across at me and showed me a tear in each of her beautiful eyes.

* * * * *

It relates to my youth, and to Italy: two fine things! (H--- began). I had arrived late in the evening at Florence, and while I finished my bottle of wine at supper, had fancied that, tired traveller though I was, I might pay the city a finer compliment than by going vulgarly to bed. A narrow passage wandered darkly away out of the little square before my hotel, and looked as if it bored into the heart of Florence. I followed it, and at the end of ten minutes emerged upon a great piazza, filled only with the mild autumn moonlight. Opposite rose the Palazzo Vecchio, like some huge civic fortress, with the great bell-tower springing from its embattled verge as a mountain-pine from the edge of a cliff. At its base, in its projected shadow, gleamed certain dim sculptures which I wonderingly approached. One of the images, on the left of the palace door, was a magnificent colossus, shining through the dusky air like a sentinel who has taken the alarm. In a moment I recognised him as Michael Angelo’s *David*. I turned with a certain relief from his sinister strength to a slender figure in bronze, stationed beneath the high light loggia, which opposes the free and elegant span of its arches to the dead masonry of the palace; a figure supremely shapely and graceful; gentle, almost, in spite of his holding out with his light nervous arm the snaky head of the slaughtered Gorgon. His name is Perseus, and you may read his story, not in the Greek mythology, but in the memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini. Glancing from one of these fine fellows to the other, I probably uttered some irrepressible commonplace of praise, for, as if provoked by my voice, a man rose from the steps of the loggia, where he had been sitting in the shadow, and addressed me in good English—a small, slim personage, clad in a sort of black velvet tunic (as it seemed), and with a mass of auburn hair, which gleamed in the moonlight, escaping from a little mediæval birretta. In a tone of the most insinuating deference he asked me for my “impressions.” He seemed picturesque, fantastic, slightly unreal. Hovering there in this consecrated neighbourhood, he might have passed for the genius of æsthetic hospitality—if the genius of æsthetic hospitality were not commonly some shabby little custode, flourishing a calico pocket-handkerchief and openly resentful of the

divided franc. This analogy was made none the less complete by the brilliant tirade with which he greeted my embarrassed silence.

“I have known Florence long, sir, but I have never known her so lovely as tonight. It’s as if the ghosts of her past were abroad in the empty streets. The present is sleeping; the past hovers about us like a dream made visible. Fancy the old Florentines strolling up in couples to pass judgment on the last performance of Michael, of Benvenuto! We should come in for a precious lesson if we might overhear what they say. The plainest burgher of them, in his cap and gown, had a taste in the matter! That was the prime of art, sir. The sun stood high in heaven, and his broad and equal blaze made the darkest places bright and the dullest eyes clear. We live in the evening of time! We grope in the gray dusk, carrying each our poor little taper of selfish and painful wisdom, holding it up to the great models and to the dim idea, and seeing nothing but overwhelming greatness and dimness. The days of illumination are gone! But do you know I fancy—I fancy”—and he grew suddenly almost familiar in this visionary fervour—“I fancy the light of that time rests upon us here for an hour! I have never seen the David so grand, the Perseus so fair! Even the inferior productions of John of Bologna and of Baccio Bandinelli seem to realise the artist’s dream. I feel as if the moonlit air were charged with the secrets of the masters, and as if, standing here in religious attention, we might—we might witness a revelation!” Perceiving at this moment, I suppose, my halting comprehension reflected in my puzzled face, this interesting rhapsodist paused and blushed. Then with a melancholy smile, “You think me a moonstruck charlatan, I suppose. It’s not my habit to bang about the piazza and pounce upon innocent tourists. But tonight, I confess, I am under the charm. And then, somehow, I fancied you too were an artist!”

“I am not an artist, I am sorry to say, as you must understand the term. But pray make no apologies. I am also under the charm; your eloquent remarks have only deepened it.”

“If you are not an artist you are worthy to be one!” he rejoined, with an expressive smile. “A young man who arrives at Florence late in the evening, and, instead of going prosaically to bed, or hanging over the traveller’s book at his hotel, walks forth without loss of time to pay his devoirs to the beautiful, is a young man after my own heart!”

The mystery was suddenly solved; my friend was an American! He must have been, to take the picturesque so prodigiously to heart. “None the less so, I trust,” I answered, “if the young man is a sordid New Yorker.”

“New Yorkers have been munificent patrons of art!” he answered, urbanely.

For a moment I was alarmed. Was this midnight reverie mere Yankee enterprise, and was he simply a desperate brother of the brush who had posted himself here to extort an “order” from a sauntering tourist? But I was not called to defend myself. A great brazen note broke suddenly from the far-off summit of the bell-tower above us, and sounded the first stroke of midnight. My companion started, apologised for detaining me, and prepared to retire. But he seemed to offer so lively a promise of further entertainment that I was indisposed to part with him, and suggested that we should stroll homeward together. He cordially assented; so we turned out of the Piazza, passed down before the statued arcade of the Uffizi, and came out upon the Arno. What course we took I hardly remember, but we roamed slowly about for an hour, my companion delivering by snatches a sort of moon-touched æsthetic lecture. I listened in puzzled fascination, and wondered who the deuce he was. He confessed with a melancholy but all-respectful head-shake to his American origin.

“We are the disinherited of Art!” he cried. “We are condemned to be superficial! We are excluded from the magic circle. The soil of American perception is a poor little barren

artificial deposit. Yes! we are wedded to imperfection. An American, to excel, has just ten times as much to learn as a European. We lack the deeper sense. We have neither taste, nor tact, nor power. How should we have them? Our crude and garish climate, our silent past, our deafening present, the constant pressure about us of unlovely circumstance, are as void of all that nourishes and prompts and inspires the artist, as my sad heart is void of bitterness in saying so! We poor aspirants must live in perpetual exile.”

“You seem fairly at home in exile,” I answered, “and Florence seems to me a very pretty Siberia. But do you know my own thought? Nothing is so idle as to talk about our want of a nutritive soil, of opportunity, of inspiration, and all the rest of it. The worthy part is to do something fine! There is no law in our glorious Constitution against that. Invent, create, achieve! No matter if you have to study fifty times as much as one of these! What else are you an artist for? Be you our Moses,” I added, laughing, and laying my hand on his shoulder, “and lead us out of the house of bondage!”

“Golden words—golden words, young man!” he cried, with a tender smile. “‘Invent, create, achieve!’ Yes, that’s our business; I know it well. Don’t take me, in Heaven’s name, for one of your barren complainers—impotent cynics who have neither talent nor faith! I am at work!”—and he glanced about him and lowered his voice as if this were a quite peculiar secret—“I’m at work night and day. I have undertaken a *creation*! I am no Moses; I am only a poor patient artist; but it would be a fine thing if I were to cause some slender stream of beauty to flow in our thirsty land! Don’t think me a monster of conceit,” he went on, as he saw me smile at the avidity with which he adopted my illustration; “I confess that I am in one of those moods when great things seem possible! This is one of my nervous nights—I dream waking! When the south wind blows over Florence at midnight it seems to coax the soul from all the fair things locked away in her churches and galleries; it comes into my own little studio with the moonlight, and sets my heart beating too deeply for rest. You see I am always adding a thought to my conception! This evening I felt that I couldn’t sleep unless I had communed with the genius of Buonarroti!”

He seemed deeply versed in local history and tradition, and he expatiated *con amore* on the charms of Florence. I gathered that he was an old resident, and that he had taken the lovely city into his heart. “I owe her everything,” he declared. “It’s only since I came here that I have really lived, intellectually. One by one, all profane desires, all mere worldly aims, have dropped away from me, and left me nothing but my pencil, my little note-book” (and he tapped his breast-pocket), “and the worship of the pure masters—those who were pure because they were innocent, and those who were pure because they were strong!”

“And have you been very productive all this time?” I asked sympathetically.

He was silent a while before replying. “Not in the vulgar sense!” he said at last. “I have chosen never to manifest myself by imperfection. The good in every performance I have re-absorbed into the generative force of new creations; the bad—there is always plenty of that—I have religiously destroyed. I may say, with some satisfaction, that I have not added a mite to the rubbish of the world. As a proof of my conscientiousness”—and he stopped short, and eyed me with extraordinary candour, as if the proof were to be overwhelming—“I have never sold a picture! ‘At least no merchant traffics in my heart!’ Do you remember that divine line in Browning? My little studio has never been profaned by superficial, feverish, mercenary work. It’s a temple of labour, but of leisure! Art is long. If we work for ourselves, of course we must hurry. If we work for her, we must often pause. She can wait!”

This had brought us to my hotel door, somewhat to my relief, I confess, for I had begun to feel unequal to the society of a genius of this heroic strain. I left him, however, not without

expressing a friendly hope that we should meet again. The next morning my curiosity had not abated; I was anxious to see him by common daylight. I counted upon meeting him in one of the many pictorial haunts of Florence, and I was gratified without delay. I found him in the course of the morning in the Tribune of the Uffizi—that little treasure-chamber of world-famous things. He had turned his back on the Venus de' Medici, and with his arms resting on the rail-mug which protects the pictures, and his head buried in his hands, he was lost in the contemplation of that superb triptych of Andrea Mantegna—a work which has neither the material splendour nor the commanding force of some of its neighbours, but which, glowing there with the loveliness of patient labour, suits possibly a more constant need of the soul. I looked at the picture for some time over his shoulder; at last, with a heavy sigh, he turned away and our eyes met. As he recognised me a deep blush rose to his face; he fancied, perhaps, that he had made a fool of himself overnight. But I offered him my hand with a friendliness which assured him I was not a scoffer. I knew him by his ardent *chevelure*; otherwise he was much altered. His midnight mood was over, and he looked as haggard as an actor by daylight. He was far older than I had supposed, and he had less bravery of costume and gesture. He seemed the quiet, poor, patient artist he had proclaimed himself, and the fact that he had never sold a picture was more obvious than glorious. His velvet coat was threadbare, and his short slouched hat, of an antique pattern, revealed a rustiness which marked it an “original,” and not one of the picturesque reproductions which brethren of his craft affect. His eye was mild and heavy, and his expression singularly gentle and acquiescent; the more so for a certain pallid leanness of visage, which I hardly knew whether to refer to the consuming fire of genius or to a meagre diet. A very little talk, however, cleared his brow and brought back his eloquence.

“And this is your first visit to these enchanted halls?” he cried. “Happy, thrice happy youth!” And taking me by the arm, he prepared to lead me to each of the pre-eminent works in turn and show me the cream of the gallery. But before we left the Mantegna he pressed my arm and gave it a loving look. “*He* was not in a hurry,” he murmured. “He knew nothing of ‘raw Haste, half-sister to Delay!’” How sound a critic my friend was I am unable to say, but he was an extremely amusing one; overflowing with opinions, theories, and sympathies, with disquisition and gossip and anecdote. He was a shade too sentimental for my own sympathies, and I fancied he was rather too fond of superfine discriminations and of discovering subtle intentions in shallow places. At moments, too, he plunged into the sea of metaphysics, and floundered a while in waters too deep for intellectual security. But his abounding knowledge and happy judgment told a touching story of long attentive hours in this worshipful company; there was a reproach to my wasteful saunterings in so devoted a culture of opportunity. “There are two moods,” I remember his saying, “in which we may walk through galleries—the critical and the ideal. They seize us at their pleasure, and we can never tell which is to take its turn. The critical mood, oddly, is the genial one, the friendly, the condescending. It relishes the pretty trivialities of art, its vulgar cleverness, its conscious graces. It has a kindly greeting for anything which looks as if, according to his light, the painter had enjoyed doing it—for the little Dutch cabbages and kettles, for the taper fingers and breezy mantles of late-coming Madonnas, for the little blue-hilled, pastoral, sceptical Italian landscapes. Then there are the days of fierce, fastidious longing—solemn church feasts of the intellect—when all vulgar effort and all petty success is a weariness, and everything but the best—the best of the best—disgusts. In these hours we are relentless aristocrats of taste. We will not take Michael Angelo for granted, we will not swallow Raphael whole!”

The gallery of the Uffizi is not only rich in its possessions, but peculiarly fortunate in that fine architectural accident, as one may call it, which unites it—with the breadth of river and

city between them—to those princely chambers of the Pitti Palace. The Louvre and the Vatican hardly give you such a sense of sustained inclosure as those long passages projected over street and stream to establish a sort of inviolate transition between the two palaces of art. We passed along the gallery in which those precious drawings by eminent hands hang chaste and gray above the swirl and murmur of the yellow Arno, and reached the ducal saloons of the Pitti. Ducal as they are, it must be confessed that they are imperfect as show-rooms, and that, with their deep-set windows and their massive mouldings, it is rather a broken light that reaches the pictured walls. But here the masterpieces hang thick, and you seem to see them in a luminous atmosphere of their own. And the great saloons, with their superb dim ceilings, their outer wall in splendid shadow, and the sombre opposite glow of mellow canvas and dusky gilding, make, themselves, almost as fine a picture as the Titians and Raphaels they imperfectly reveal. We lingered briefly before many a Raphael and Titian; but I saw my friend was impatient, and I suffered him at last to lead me directly to the goal of our journey—the most tenderly fair of Raphael’s virgins, the Madonna in the Chair. Of all the fine pictures of the world, it seemed to me this is the one with which criticism has least to do. None betrays less effort, less of the mechanism of success and of the irrepressible discord between conception and result, which shows dimly in so many consummate works. Graceful, human, near to our sympathies as it is, it has nothing of manner, of method, nothing, almost, of style; it blooms there in rounded softness, as instinct with harmony as if it were an immediate exhalation of genius. The figure melts away the spectator’s mind into a sort of passionate tenderness which he knows not whether he has given to heavenly purity or to earthly charm. He is intoxicated with the fragrance of the tenderest blossom of maternity that ever bloomed on earth.

“That’s what I call a fine picture,” said my companion, after we had gazed a while in silence. “I have a right to say so, for I have copied it so often and so carefully that I could repeat it now with my eyes shut. Other works are of Raphael: this *is* Raphael himself. Others you can praise, you can qualify, you can measure, explain, account for: this you can only love and admire. I don’t know in what seeming he walked among men while this divine mood was upon him; but after it, surely, he could do nothing but die; this world had nothing more to teach him. Think of it a while, my friend, and you will admit that I am not raving. Think of his seeing that spotless image, not for a moment, for a day, in a happy dream, or a restless fever-fit; not as a poet in a five minutes’ frenzy—time to snatch his phrase and scribble his immortal stanza; but for days together, while the slow labour of the brush went on, while the foul vapours of life interposed, and the fancy ached with tension, fixed, radiant, distinct, as we see it now! What a master, certainly! But ah! what a seer!”

“Don’t you imagine,” I answered, “that he had a model, and that some pretty young woman—”

“As pretty a young woman as you please! It doesn’t diminish the miracle! He took his hint, of course, and the young woman, possibly, sat smiling before his canvas. But, meanwhile, the painter’s idea had taken wings. No lovely human outline could charm it to vulgar fact. He saw the fair form made perfect; he rose to the vision without tremor, without effort of wing; he communed with it face to face, and resolved into finer and lovelier truth the purity which completes it as the fragrance completes the rose. That’s what they call idealism; the word’s vastly abused, but the thing is good. It’s my own creed, at any rate. Lovely Madonna, model at once and muse, I call you to witness that I too am an idealist!”

“An idealist, then,” I said, half jocosely, wishing to provoke him to further utterance, “is a gentleman who says to Nature in the person of a beautiful girl, ‘Go to, you are all

wrong! Your fine is coarse, your bright is dim, your grace is *gaucherie*. This is the way you should have done it! Is not the chance against him?"

He turned upon me almost angrily, but perceiving the genial savour of my sarcasm, he smiled gravely. "Look at that picture," he said, "and cease your irreverent mockery! Idealism is *that*! There's no explaining it; one must feel the flame! It says nothing to Nature, or to any beautiful girl, that they will not both forgive! It says to the fair woman, 'Accept me as your artist friend, lend me your beautiful face, trust me, help me, and your eyes shall be half my masterpiece!' No one so loves and respects the rich realities of nature as the artist whose imagination caresses and flatters them. He knows what a fact may hold (whether Raphael knew, you may judge by his portrait, behind us there, of Tommaso Inghirami); bad his fancy hovers above it, as Ariel hovered above the sleeping prince. There is only one Raphael, bad an artist may still be an artist. As I said last night, the days of illumination are gone; visions are rare; we have to look long to see them. But in meditation we may still cultivate the ideal; round it, smooth it, perfect it. The result—the result," (here his voice faltered suddenly, and he fixed his eyes for a moment on the picture; when they met my own again they were full of tears)—"the result may be less than this; but still it may be good, it may be *great*!" he cried with vehemence. "It may hang somewhere, in after years, in goodly company, and keep the artist's memory warm. Think of being known to mankind after some such fashion as this! of hanging here through the slow centuries in the gaze of an altered world; living on and on in the cunning of an eye and hand that are part of the dust of ages, a delight and a law to remote generations; making beauty a force and purity an example!"

"Heaven forbid," I said, smiling, "that I should take the wind out of your sails! But doesn't it occur to you that, besides being strong in his genius, Raphael was happy in a certain good faith of which we have lost the trick? There are people, I know, who deny that his spotless Madonnas are anything more than pretty blondes of that period enhanced by the Raphaellesque touch, which they declare is a profane touch. Be that as it may, people's religious and æsthetic needs went arm in arm, and there was, as I may say, a demand for the Blessed Virgin, visible and adorable, which must have given firmness to the artist's hand. I am afraid there is no demand now."

My companion seemed painfully puzzled; he shivered, as it were, in this chilling blast of scepticism. Then shaking his head with sublime confidence—"There is always a demand!" he cried; "that ineffable type is one of the eternal needs of man's heart; but pious souls long for it in silence, almost in shame. Let it appear, and their faith grows brave. How *should* it appear in this corrupt generation? It cannot be made to order. It could, indeed, when the order came, trumpet-toned, from the lips of the Church herself, and was addressed to genius panting with inspiration. But it can spring now only from the soil of passionate labour and culture. Do you really fancy that while, from time to time, a man of complete artistic vision is born into the world, that image can perish? The man who paints it has painted everything. The subject admits of every perfection—form, colour, expression, composition. It can be as simple as you please, and yet as rich; as broad and pure, and yet as full of delicate detail. Think of the chance for flesh in the little naked, nestling child, irradiating divinity; of the chance for drapery in the chaste and ample garment of the mother! think of the great story you compress into that simple theme! Think, above all, of the mother's face and its ineffable suggestiveness, of the mingled burden of joy and trouble, the tenderness turned to worship, and the worship turned to far-seeing pity! Then look at it all in perfect line and lovely colour, breathing truth and beauty and mastery!"

"Anch' io son pittore!" I cried. "Unless I am mistaken, you have a masterpiece on the stocks. If you put all that in, you will do more than Raphael himself did. Let me know when

your picture is finished, and wherever in the wide world I may be, I will post back to Florence and pay my respects to—the *Madonna of the future!*”

He blushed vividly and gave a heavy sigh, half of protest, half of resignation. “I don’t often mention my picture by name. I detest this modern custom of premature publicity. A great work needs silence, privacy, mystery even. And then, do you know, people are so cruel, so frivolous, so unable to imagine a man’s wishing to paint a Madonna at this time of day, that I have been laughed at—laughed at, sir!” and his blush deepened to crimson. “I don’t know what has prompted me to be so frank and trustful with you. You look as if you wouldn’t laugh at me. My dear young man”—and he laid his hand on my arm—“I am worthy of respect. Whatever my talents may be, I am honest. There is nothing grotesque in a pure ambition, or in a life devoted to it.”

There was something so sternly sincere in his look and tone that further questions seemed impertinent. I had repeated opportunity to ask them, however, for after this we spent much time together. Daily for a fortnight, we met by appointment, to see the sights. He knew the city so well, he had strolled and lounged so often through its streets and churches and galleries, he was so deeply versed in its greater and lesser memories, so imbued with the local genius, that he was an altogether ideal *valet de place*, and I was glad enough to leave my Murray at home, and gather facts and opinions alike from his gossiping commentary. He talked of Florence like a lover, and admitted that it was a very old affair; he had lost his heart to her at first sight. “It’s the fashion to talk of all cities as feminine,” he said, “but, as a rule, it’s a monstrous mistake. Is Florence of the same sex as New York, as Chicago? She is the sole perfect lady of them all; one feels towards her as a lad in his teens feels to some beautiful older woman with a ‘history.’ She fills you with a sort of aspiring gallantry.” This disinterested passion seemed to stand my friend in stead of the common social ties; he led a lonely life, and cared for nothing but his work. I was duly flattered by his having taken my frivolous self into his favour, and by his generous sacrifice of precious hours to my society. We spent many of these hours among those early paintings in which Florence is so rich, returning ever and anon, with restless sympathies, to wonder whether these tender blossoms of art had not a vital fragrance and savour more precious than the full-fruited knowledge of the later works. We lingered often in the sepulchral chapel of San Lorenzo, and watched Michael Angelo’s dim-visaged warrior sitting there like some awful Genius of Doubt and brooding behind his eternal mask upon the mysteries of life. We stood more than once in the little convent chambers where Fra Angelico wrought as if an angel indeed had held his hand, and gathered that sense of scattered dews and early bird-notes which makes an hour among his relics seem like a morning stroll in some monkish garden. We did all this and much more—wandered into dark chapels, damp courts, and dusty palace-rooms, in quest of lingering hints of fresco and lurking treasures of carving.

I was more and more impressed with my companion’s remarkable singleness of purpose. Everything was a pretext for some wildly idealistic rhapsody or reverie. Nothing could be seen or said that did not lead him sooner or later to a glowing discourse on the true, the beautiful, and the good. If my friend was not a genius, he was certainly a monomaniac; and I found as great a fascination in watching the odd lights and shades of his character as if he had been a creature from another planet. He seemed, indeed, to know very little of this one, and lived and moved altogether in his own little province of art. A creature more unsullied by the world it is impossible to conceive, and I often thought it a flaw in his artistic character that he had not a harmless vice or two. It amused me greatly at times to think that he was of our shrewd Yankee race; but, after all, there could be no better token of his American origin than this high æsthetic fever. The very heat of his devotion was a sign of conversion; those born to European opportunity manage better to reconcile enthusiasm with

comfort. He had, moreover, all our native mistrust for intellectual discretion, and our native relish for sonorous superlatives. As a critic he was very much more generous than just, and his mildest terms of approbation were “stupendous,” “transcendent,” and “incomparable.” The small change of admiration seemed to him no coin for a gentleman to handle; and yet, frank as he was intellectually, he was personally altogether a mystery. His professions, somehow, were all half-professions, and his allusions to his work and circumstances left something dimly ambiguous in the background. He was modest and proud, and never spoke of his domestic matters. He was evidently poor; yet he must have had some slender independence, since he could afford to make so merry over the fact that his culture of ideal beauty had never brought him a penny. His poverty, I supposed, was his motive for neither inviting me to his lodging nor mentioning its whereabouts. We met either in some public place or at my hotel, where I entertained him as freely as I might without appearing to be prompted by charity. He seemed always hungry, and this was his nearest approach to human grossness. I made a point of asking no impertinent questions, but, each time we met, I ventured to make some respectful allusion to the *magnum opus*, to inquire, as it were, as to its health and progress. “We are getting on, with the Lord’s help,” he would say, with a grave smile. “We are doing well. You see, I have the grand advantage that I lose no time. These hours I spend with you are pure profit. They are *suggestive*! Just as the truly religious soul is always at worship, the genuine artist is always in labour. He takes his property wherever he finds it, and learns some precious secret from every object that stands up in the light. If you but knew the rapture of observation! I gather with every glance some hint for light, for colour, or relief! When I get home, I pour out my treasures into the lap of toy Madonna. Oh, I am not idle! *Nulla dies sine linea.*”

I was introduced in Florence to an American lady whose drawing-room had long formed an attractive place of reunion for the foreign residents. She lived on a fourth floor, and she was not rich; but she offered her visitors very good tea, little cakes at option, and conversation not quite to match. Her conversation had mainly an æsthetic flavour, for Mrs. Coventry was famously “artistic.” Her apartment was a sort of Pitti Palace *au petit pied*. She possessed “early masters” by the dozen—a cluster of Peruginos in her dining-room, a Giotto in her boudoir, an Andrea del Sarto over her drawing-room chimney-piece. Surrounded by these treasures, and by innumerable bronzes, mosaics, majolica dishes, and little worm-eaten diptychs covered with angular saints on gilded backgrounds, our hostess enjoyed the dignity of a sort of high-priestess of the arts. She always wore on her bosom a huge miniature copy of the Madonna della Seggiola. Gaining her ear quietly one evening, I asked her whether she knew that remarkable man, Mr. Theobald.

“Know him!” she exclaimed; “know poor Theobald! All Florence knows him, his flame-coloured locks, his black velvet coat, his interminable harangues on the beautiful, and his wondrous Madonna that mortal eye has never seen, and that mortal patience has quite given up expecting.”

“Really,” I cried, “you don’t believe in his Madonna?”

“My dear ingenuous youth,” rejoined my shrewd friend, “has he made a convert of you? Well, we all believed in him once; he came down upon Florence and took the town by storm. Another Raphael, at the very least, had been born among men, and the poor dear United States were to have the credit of him. Hadn’t he the very hair of Raphael flowing down on his shoulders? The hair, alas, but not the head! We swallowed him whole, however; we hung upon his lips and proclaimed his genius on the house-tops. The women were all dying to sit to him for their portraits and be made immortal, like Leonardo’s Joconde. We decided that his manner was a good deal like Leonardo’s—mysterious, and

inscrutable, and fascinating. Mysterious it certainly was; mystery was the beginning and the end of it. The months passed by, and the miracle hung fire; our master never produced his masterpiece. He passed hours in the galleries and churches, posturing, musing, and gazing; he talked more than ever about the beautiful, but he never put brush to canvas. We had all subscribed, as it were, to the great performance; but as it never came off people began to ask for their money again. I was one of the last of the faithful; I carried devotion so far as to sit to him for my head. If you could have seen the horrible creature he made of me, you would admit that even a woman with no more vanity than will tie her bonnet straight must have cooled off then. The man didn't know the very alphabet of drawing! His strong point, he intimated, was his sentiment; but is it a consolation, when one has been painted a fright, to know it has been done with peculiar gusto? One by one, I confess, we fell away from the faith, and Mr. Theobald didn't lift his little finger to preserve us. At the first hint that we were tired of waiting, and that we should like the show to begin, he was off in a huff. 'Great work requires time, contemplation, privacy, mystery! O ye of little faith!' We answered that we didn't insist on a great work; that the five-act tragedy might come at his convenience; that we merely asked for something to keep us from yawning, some inexpensive little *lever de rideau*. Hereupon the poor man took his stand as a genius misconceived and persecuted, an *âme méconnue*, and washed his hands of us from that hour! No, I believe he does me the honour to consider me the head and front of the conspiracy formed to nip his glory in the bud—a bud that has taken twenty years to blossom. Ask him if he knows me, and he will tell you I am a horribly ugly old woman, who has vowed his destruction because he won't paint her portrait as a pendant to Titian's Flora. I fancy that since then he has had none but chance followers, innocent strangers like yourself, who have taken him at his word. The mountain is still in labour; I have not heard that the mouse has been born. I pass him once in a while in the galleries, and he fixes his great dark eyes on me with a sublimity of indifference, as if I were a bad copy of a Sassoferrato! It is a long time ago now that I heard that he was making studies for a Madonna who was to be a *résumé* of all the other Madonnas of the Italian school—like that antique Venus who borrowed a nose from one great image and an ankle from another. It's certainly a masterly idea. The parts may be fine, but when I think of my unhappy portrait I tremble for the whole. He has communicated this striking idea under the pledge of solemn secrecy to fifty chosen spirits, to every one he has ever been able to button-hole for five minutes. I suppose he wants to get an order for it, and he is not to blame; for Heaven knows how he lives. I see by your blush," my hostess frankly continued, "that you have been honoured with his confidence. You needn't be ashamed, my dear young man; a man of your age is none the worse for a certain generous credulity. Only allow me to give you a word of advice: keep your credulity out of your pockets! Don't pay for the picture till it's delivered. You have not been treated to a peep at it, I imagine! No more have your fifty predecessors in the faith. There are people who doubt whether there is any picture to be seen. I fancy, myself, that if one were to get into his studio, one would find something very like the picture in that tale of Balzac's—a mere mass of incoherent scratches and daubs, a jumble of dead paint!"

I listened to this pungent recital in silent wonder. It had a painfully plausible sound, and was not inconsistent with certain shy suspicions of my own. My hostess was not only a clever woman, but presumably a generous one. I determined to let my judgment wait upon events. Possibly she was right; but if she was wrong, she was cruelly wrong! Her version of my friend's eccentricities made me impatient to see him again and examine him in the light of public opinion. On our next meeting I immediately asked him if he knew Mrs. Coventry. He laid his hand on my arm and gave me a sad smile. "Has she taxed *your* gallantry at last?" he asked. "She's a foolish woman. She's frivolous and heartless, and she pretends to be serious and kind. She prattles about Giotto's second manner

and Vittoria Colonna's liaison with 'Michael'—one would think that Michael lived across the way and was expected in to take a hand at whist—but she knows as little about art, and about the conditions of production, as I know about Buddhism. She profanes sacred words," he added more vehemently, after a pause. "She cares for you only as some one to band teacups in that horrible mendacious little parlour of hers, with its trumpery Peruginos! If you can't dash off a new picture every three days, and let her hand it round among her guests, she tells them in plain English that you are an impostor!"

This attempt of mine to test Mrs. Coventry's accuracy was made in the course of a late afternoon walk to the quiet old church of San Miniato, on one of the hill-tops which directly overlook the city, from whose gates you are guided to it by a stony and cypress-bordered walk, which seems a very fitting avenue to a shrine. No spot is more propitious to lingering repose than the broad terrace in front of the church, where, lounging against the parapet, you may glance in slow alternation from the black and yellow marbles of the church façade, seamed and cracked with time and wind-sown with a tender flora of its own, down to the full domes and slender towers of Florence and over to the blue sweep of the wide-mouthed cup of mountains into whose hollow the little treasure city has been dropped. I had proposed, as a diversion from the painful memories evoked by Mrs. Coventry's name, that Theobald should go with me the next evening to the opera, where some rarely-played work was to be given. He declined, as I half expected, for I observed that he regularly kept his evenings in reserve, and never alluded to his manner of passing them. "You have reminded me before," I said, smiling, "of that charming speech of the Florentine painter in Alfred de Musset's 'Lorenzaccio': 'I do no harm to anyone. I pass my days in my studio, On Sunday I go to the Annunziata or to Santa Mario; the monks think I have a voice; they dress me in a white gown and a red cap, and I take a share in the choruses; sometimes I do a little solo: these are the only times I go into public. In the evening, I visit my sweetheart; when the night is fine, we pass it on her balcony.' I don't know whether you have a sweetheart, or whether she has a balcony. But if you are so happy, it's certainly better than trying to find a charm in a third-rate prima donna."

He made no immediate response, but at last he turned to me solemnly. "Can you look upon a beautiful woman with reverent eyes?"

"Really," I said, "I don't pretend to be sheepish, but I should be sorry to think I was impudent." And I asked him what in the world he meant. When at last I had assured him that I could undertake to temper admiration with respect, he informed me, with an air of religious mystery, that it was in his power to introduce me to the most beautiful woman in Italy—"A beauty with a soul!"

"Upon my word," I cried, "you are extremely fortunate, and that is a most attractive description."

"This woman's beauty," he went on, "is a lesson, a morality, a poem! It's my daily study."

Of course, after this, I lost no time in reminding him of what, before we parted, had taken the shape of a promise. "I feel somehow," he had said, "as if it were a sort of violation of that privacy in which I have always contemplated her beauty. This is friendship, my friend. No hint of her existence has ever fallen from my lips. But with too great a familiarity we are apt to lose a sense of the real value of things, and you perhaps will throw some new light upon it and offer a fresher interpretation."

We went accordingly by appointment to a certain ancient house in the heart of Florence—the precinct of the Mercato Vecchio—and climbed a dark, steep staircase, to the very summit of the edifice. Theobald's beauty seemed as loftily exalted above the line of common vision as

his artistic ideal was lifted above the usual practice of men. He passed without knocking into the dark vestibule of a small apartment, and, flinging open an inner door, ushered me into a small saloon. The room seemed mean and sombre, though I caught a glimpse of white curtains swaying gently at an open window. At a table, near a lamp, sat a woman dressed in black, working at a piece of embroidery. As Theobald entered she looked up calmly, with a smile; but seeing me she made a movement of surprise, and rose with a kind of stately grace. Theobald stepped forward, took her hand and kissed it, with an indescribable air of immemorial usage. As he bent his head she looked at me askance, and I thought she blushed. “Behold the Serafina!” said Theobald, frankly, waving me forward. “This is a friend, and a lover of the arts,” he added, introducing me. I received a smile, a curtsy, and a request to be seated.

The most beautiful woman in Italy was a person of a generous Italian type and of a great simplicity of demeanour. Seated again at her lamp, with her embroidery, she seemed to have nothing whatever to say. Theobald, bending towards her in a sort of Platonic ecstasy, asked her a dozen paternally tender questions as to her health, her state of mind, her occupations, and the progress of her embroidery, which he examined minutely and summoned me to admire. It was some portion of an ecclesiastical vestment—yellow satin wrought with an elaborate design of silver and gold. She made answer in a full rich voice, but with a brevity which I hesitated whether to attribute to native reserve or to the profane constraint of my presence. She had been that morning to confession; she had also been to market, and had bought a chicken for dinner. She felt very happy; she had nothing to complain of except that the people for whom she was making her vestment, and who furnished her materials, should be willing to put such rotten silver thread into the garment, as one might say, of the Lord. From time to time, as she took her slow stitches, she raised her eyes and covered me with a glance which seemed at first to denote a placid curiosity, but in which, as I saw it repeated, I thought I perceived the dim glimmer of an attempt to establish an understanding with me at the expense of our companion. Meanwhile, as mindful as possible of Theobald’s injunction of reverence, I considered the lady’s personal claims to the fine compliment he had paid her.

That she was indeed a beautiful woman I perceived, after recovering from the surprise of finding her without the freshness of youth. Her beauty was of a sort which, in losing youth, loses little of its essential charm, expressed for the most part as it was in form and structure, and, as Theobald would have said, in “composition.” She was broad and ample, low-browed and large-eyed, dark and pale. Her thick brown hair hung low beside her cheek and ear, and seemed to drape her head with a covering as chaste and formal as the veil of a nun. The poise and carriage of her head were admirably free and noble, and they were the more effective that their freedom was at moments discreetly corrected by a little sanctimonious droop, which harmonised admirably with the level gaze of her dark and quiet eye. A strong, serene, physical nature, and the placid temper which comes of no nerves and no troubles, seemed this lady’s comfortable portion. She was dressed in plain dull black, save for a sort of dark blue kerchief which was folded across her bosom and exposed a glimpse of her massive throat. Over this kerchief was suspended a little silver cross. I admired her greatly, and yet with a large reserve. A certain mild intellectual apathy belonged properly to her type of beauty, and had always seemed to round and enrich it; but this *bourgeoise* Egeria, if I viewed her right, betrayed a rather vulgar stagnation of mind. There might have been once a dim spiritual light in her face; but it had long since begun to wane. And furthermore, in plain prose, she was growing stout. My disappointment amounted very nearly to complete disenchantment when Theobald, as if to facilitate my covert inspection, declaring that the lamp was very dim, and that she would ruin her eyes without more light, rose and fetched a

couple of candles from the mantelpiece, which he placed lighted on the table. In this brighter illumination I perceived that our hostess was decidedly an elderly woman. She was neither haggard, nor worn, nor gray; she was simply coarse. The "soul" which Theobald had promised seemed scarcely worth making such a point of; it was no deeper mystery than a sort of matronly mildness of lip and brow. I should have been ready even to declare that that sanctified bend of the head was nothing more than the trick of a person constantly working at embroidery. It occurred to me even that it was a trick of a less innocent sort; for, in spite of the mellow quietude of her wits, this stately needlewoman dropped a hint that she took the situation rather less seriously than her friend. When he rose to light the candles she looked across at me with a quick, intelligent smile, and tapped her forehead with her forefinger; then, as from a sudden feeling of compassionate loyalty to poor Theobald, I preserved a blank face, she gave a little shrug and resumed her work.

What was the relation of this singular couple? Was he the most ardent of friends or the most reverent of lovers? Did she regard him as an eccentric swain, whose benevolent admiration of her beauty she was not ill pleased to humour at this small cost of having him climb into her little parlour and gossip of summer nights? With her decent and sombre dress, her simple gravity, and that fine piece of priestly needlework, she looked like some pious lay-member of a sisterhood, living by special permission outside her convent walls. Or was she maintained here aloft by her friend in comfortable leisure, so that he might have before him the perfect, eternal type, uncorrupted and untarnished by the struggle for existence? Her shapely hands, I observed, wore very fair and white; they lacked the traces of what is called honest toil.

"And the pictures, how do they come on?" she asked of Theobald, after a long pause.

"Finely, finely! I have here a friend whose sympathy and encouragement give me new faith and ardour."

Our hostess turned to me, gazed at me a moment rather inscrutably, and then tapping her forehead with the gesture she had used a minute before, "He has a magnificent genius!" she said, with perfect gravity.

"I am inclined to think so," I answered, with a smile.

"Eh, why do you smile?" she cried. "If you doubt it, you must see the *bambino*!" And she took the lamp and conducted me to the other side of the room, where on the wall, in a plain black frame, hung a large drawing in red chalk. Beneath it was fastened a little howl for holy water. The drawing represented a very young child, entirely naked, half nestling back against his mother's gown, but with his two little arms outstretched, as if in the act of benediction. It was executed with singular freedom and power, and yet seemed vivid with the sacred bloom of infancy. A sort of dimpled elegance and grace, mingled with its boldness, recalled the touch of Correggio. "That's what he can do!" said my hostess. "It's the blessed little boy whom I lost. It's his very image, and the Signor Teobaldo gave it me as a gift. He has given me many things besides!"

I looked at the picture for some time and admired it immensely. Turning back to Theobald I assured him that if it were hung among the drawings in the Uffizi and labelled with a glorious name it would hold its own. My praise seemed to give him extreme pleasure; he pressed my hands, and his eyes filled with tears. It moved him apparently with the desire to expatiate on the history of the drawing, for he rose and made his adieux to our companion, kissing her band with the same mild ardour as before. It occurred to me that the offer of a similar piece of gallantry on my own part might help me to know what manner of woman she was. When she perceived my intention she withdrew her hand, dropped her eyes solemnly, and made me a severe curtsy. Theobald took my arm and led me rapidly into the street.

“And what do you think of the divine Serafina?” he cried with fervour.

“It is certainly an excellent style of good looks!” I answered.

He eyed me an instant askance, and then seemed hurried along by the current of remembrance. “You should have seen the mother and the child together, seen them as I first saw them—the mother with her head draped in a shawl, a divine trouble in her face, and the bambino pressed to her bosom. You would have said, I think, that Raphael had found his match in common chance. I was coming in, one summer night, from a long walk in the country, when I met this apparition at the city gate. The woman held out her hand. I hardly knew whether to say, ‘What do you want?’ or to fall down and worship. She asked for a little money. I saw that she was beautiful and pale; she might have stepped out of the stable of Bethlehem! I gave her money and helped her on her way into the town. I had guessed her story. She, too, was a maiden mother, and she had been turned out into the world in her shame. I felt in all my pulses that here was my subject marvellously realised. I felt like one of the old monkish artists who had had a vision. I rescued the poor creatures, cherished them, watched them as I would have done some precious work of art, some lovely fragment of fresco discovered in a mouldering cloister. In a month—as if to deepen and sanctify the sadness and sweetness of it all—the poor little child died. When she felt that he was going she held him up to me for ten minutes, and I made that sketch. You saw a feverish haste in it, I suppose; I wanted to spare the poor little mortal the pain of his position. After that I doubly valued the mother. She is the simplest, sweetest, most natural creature that ever bloomed in this brave old land of Italy. She lives in the memory of her child, in her gratitude for the scanty kindness I have been able to show her, and in her simple religion! She is not even conscious of her beauty; my admiration has never made her vain. Heaven knows that I have made no secret of it. You must have observed the singular transparency of her expression, the lovely modesty of her glance. And was there ever such a truly virginal brow, such a natural classic elegance in the wave of the hair and the arch of the forehead? I have studied her; I may say I know her. I have absorbed her little by little; my mind is stamped and imbued, and I have determined now to clinch the impression; I shall at last invite her to sit for me!”

“‘At last—at last?’” I repeated, in much amazement. “Do you mean that she has never done so yet?”

“I have not really had—a—a sitting,” said Theobald, speaking very slowly. “I have taken notes, you know; I have got my grand fundamental impression. That’s the great thing! But I have not actually had her as a model, posed and draped and lighted, before my easel.”

What had become for the moment of my perception and my tact I am at a loss to say; in their absence I was unable to repress a headlong exclamation. I was destined to regret it. We had stopped at a turning, beneath a lamp. “My poor friend,” I exclaimed, laying my hand on his shoulder, “you have *dawdled*! She’s an old, old woman—for a Madonna!”

It was as if I had brutally struck him; I shall never forget the long, slow, almost ghastly look of pain, with which he answered me.

“Dawdled?—old, old?” he stammered. “Are you joking?”

“Why, my dear fellow, I suppose you don’t take her for a woman of twenty?”

He drew a long breath and leaned against a house, looking at me with questioning, protesting, reproachful eyes. At last, starting forward, and grasping my arm—“Answer me solemnly: does she seem to you truly old? Is she wrinkled, is she faded, am I blind?”

Then at last I understood the immensity of his illusion how, one by one, the noiseless years had ebbed away and left him brooding in charmed inaction, for ever preparing for a work for ever deferred. It seemed to me almost a kindness now to tell him the plain truth. "I should be sorry to say you are blind," I answered, "but I think you are deceived. You have lost time in effortless contemplation. Your friend was once young and fresh and virginal; but, I protest, that was some years ago. Still, she has *de beaux restes*. By all means make her sit for you!" I broke down; his face was too horribly reproachful.

He took off his hat and stood passing his handkerchief mechanically over his forehead. "*De beaux restes*? I thank you for sparing me the plain English. I must make up my Madonna out of *de beaux restes*! What a masterpiece she will be! Old—old! Old—old!" he murmured.

"Never mind her age," I cried, revolted at what I had done, "never mind my impression of her! You have your memory, your notes, your genius. Finish your picture in a month. I pronounce it beforehand a masterpiece, and I hereby offer you for it any sum you may choose to ask."

He stared, but he seemed scarcely to understand me. "Old—old!" he kept stupidly repeating. "If she is old, what am I? If her beauty has faded, where—where is my strength? Has life been a dream? Have I worshipped too long—have I loved too well?" The charm, in truth, was broken. That the chord of illusion should have snapped at my light accidental touch showed how it had been weakened by excessive tension. The poor fellow's sense of wasted time, of vanished opportunity, seemed to roll in upon his soul in waves of darkness. He suddenly dropped his head and burst into tears.

I led him homeward with all possible tenderness, but I attempted neither to check his grief, to restore his equanimity, nor to unsay the hard truth. When we reached my hotel I tried to induce him to come so.

"We will drink a glass of wine," I said, smiling, "to the completion of the Madonna."

With a violent effort he held up his head, mused for a moment with a formidably sombre frown, and then giving me his hand, "I will finish it," he cried, "in a month! No, in a fortnight! After all, I have it *here*!" And he tapped his forehead. "Of course she's old! She can afford to have it said of her—a woman who has made twenty years pass like a twelvemonth! Old—old! Why, sir, she shall be eternal!"

I wished to see him safely to his own door, but he waved me back and walked away with an air of resolution, whistling and swinging his cane. I waited a moment, and then followed him at a distance, and saw him proceed to cross the Santa Trinità Bridge. When he reached the middle he suddenly paused, as if his strength had deserted him, and leaned upon the parapet gazing over into the river. I was careful to keep him in sight; I confess that I passed ten very nervous minutes. He recovered himself at last, and went his way, slowly and with hanging head.

That I had really startled poor Theobald into a bolder use of his long-garnered stores of knowledge and taste, into the vulgar effort and hazard of production, seemed at first reason enough for his continued silence and absence; but as day followed day without his either calling or sending me a line, and without my meeting him in his customary haunts, in the galleries, in the Chapel at San Lorenzo, or strolling between the Arno side and the great hedge-screen of verdure which, along the drive of the Cascine, throws the fair occupants of barouche and phaeton into such becoming relief—as for more than a week I got neither tidings nor sight of him, I began to fear that I had fatally offended him, and that, instead of giving a wholesome impetus to his talent, I had brutally paralysed it. I had a wretched suspicion that I had made him ill. My stay at Florence was drawing to a close, and it was

important that, before resuming my journey, I should assure myself of the truth. Theobald, to the last, had kept his lodging a mystery, and I was altogether at a loss where to look for him. The simplest course was to make inquiry of the beauty of the Mercato Vecchio, and I confess that unsatisfied curiosity as to the lady herself counselled it as well. Perhaps I had done her injustice, and she was as immortally fresh and fair as he conceived her. I was, at any rate, anxious to behold once more the ripe enchantress who had made twenty years pass as a twelvemonth. I repaired accordingly, one morning, to her abode, climbed the interminable staircase, and reached her door. It stood ajar, and as I hesitated whether to enter, a little serving-maid came clattering out with an empty kettle, as if she had just performed some savoury errand. The inner door, too, was open; so I crossed the little vestibule and entered the room in which I had formerly been received. It had not its evening aspect. The table, or one end of it, was spread for a late breakfast, and before it sat a gentleman—an individual, at least, of the male sex—doing execution upon a beefsteak and onions, and a bottle of wine. At his elbow, in friendly proximity, was placed the lady of the house. Her attitude, as I entered, was not that of an enchantress. With one hand she held in her lap a plate of smoking macaroni; with the other she had lifted high in air one of the pendulous filaments of this succulent compound, and was in the act of slipping it gently down her throat. On the uncovered end of the table, facing her companion, were ranged half a dozen small statuettes, of some snuff-coloured substance resembling terra-cotta. He, brandishing his knife with ardour, was apparently descanting on their merits.

Evidently I darkened the door. My hostess dropped her macaroni—into her mouth, and rose hastily with a harsh exclamation and a flushed face. I immediately perceived that the Signora Serafina's secret was even better worth knowing than I had supposed, and that the way to learn it was to take it for granted. I summoned my best Italian, I smiled and bowed and apologised for my intrusion; and in a moment, whether or no I had dispelled the lady's irritation, I had at least stimulated her prudence. I was welcome, she said; I must take a seat. This was another friend of hers—also an artist, she declared with a smile which was almost amiable. Her companion wiped his moustache and bowed with great civility. I saw at a glance that he was equal to the situation. He was presumably the author of the statuettes on the table, and he knew a money-spending *forestière* when he saw one. He was a small wiry man, with a clever, impudent, tossed-up nose, a sharp little black eye, and waxed ends to his moustache. On the side of his head he wore jauntily a little crimson velvet smoking-cap, and I observed that his feet were encased in brilliant slippers. On Serafina's remarking with dignity that I was the friend of Mr. Theobald, he broke out into that fantastic French of which certain Italians are so insistently lavish, and declared with fervour that Mr. Theobald was a magnificent genius.

"I am sure I don't know," I answered with a shrug. "If you are in a position to affirm it, you have the advantage of me. I have seen nothing from his hand but the bambino yonder, which certainly is fine."

He declared that the bambino was a masterpiece, a pure Corregio. It was only a pity, he added with a knowing laugh, that the sketch had not been made on some good bit of honeycombed old panel. The stately Serafina hereupon protested that Mr. Theobald was the soul of honour, and that he would never lend himself to a deceit. "I am not a judge of genius," she said, "and I know nothing of pictures. I am but a poor simple widow; but I know that the Signor Teobaldo has the heart of an angel and the virtue of a saint. He is my benefactor," she added sententiously. The after-glow of the somewhat sinister flush with which she had greeted me still lingered in her cheek, and perhaps did not favour her beauty; I could not but fancy it a wise custom of Theobald's to visit her only by candle-light. She was coarse, and her pour adorer was a poet.

“I have the greatest esteem for him,” I said; “it is for this reason that I have been uneasy at not seeing him for ten days. Have you seen him? Is he perhaps ill?”

“Ill! Heaven forbid!” cried Serafina, with genuine vehemence.

Her companion uttered a rapid expletive, and reproached her with not having been to see him. She hesitated a moment; then she simpered the least bit and bridled. “He comes to see me—without reproach! But it would not be the same for me to go to him, though, indeed, you may almost call him a man of holy life.”

“He has the greatest admiration for you,” I said. “He would have been honoured by your visit.”

She looked at me a moment sharply. “More admiration than you. Admit that!” Of course I protested with all the eloquence at my command, and my mysterious hostess then confessed that she had taken no fancy to me on my former visit, and that, Theobald not having returned, she believed I had poisoned his mind against her. “It would be no kindness to the poor gentleman, I can tell you that,” she said. “He has come to see me every evening for years. It’s a long friendship! No one knows him as well as I.”

“I don’t pretend to know him or to understand him,” I said. “He’s a mystery! Nevertheless, he seems to me a little—” And I touched my forehead and waved my hand in the air.

Serafina glanced at her companion a moment, as if for inspiration. He contented himself with shrugging his shoulders as he filled his glass again. The *padrona* hereupon gave me a more softly insinuating smile than would have seemed likely to bloom on so candid a brow. “It’s for that that I love him!” she said. “The world has so little kindness for such persons. It laughs at them, and despises them, and cheats them. He is too good for this wicked life! It’s his fancy that he finds a little Paradise up here in my poor apartment. If he thinks so, how can I help it? He has a strange belief—really, I ought to be ashamed to tell you—that I resemble the Blessed Virgin: Heaven forgive me! I let him think what he pleases, so long as it makes him happy. He was very kind to me once, and I am not one that forgets a favour. So I receive him every evening civilly, and ask after his health, and let him look at me on this side and that! For that matter, I may say it without vanity, I was worth looking at once! And he’s not always amusing, poor man! He sits sometimes for an hour without speaking a word, or else he talks away, without stopping, on art and nature, and beauty and duty, and fifty fine things that are all so much Latin to me. I beg you to understand that he has never said a word to me that I mightn’t decently listen to. He may be a little cracked, but he’s one of the blessed saints.”

“Eh!” cried the man, “the blessed saints were all a little cracked!”

Serafina, I fancied, left part of her story untold; but she told enough of it to make poor Theobald’s own statement seem intensely pathetic in its exalted simplicity. “It’s a strange fortune, certainly,” she went on, “to have such a friend as this dear man—a friend who is less than a lover and more than a friend.” I glanced at her companion, who preserved an impenetrable smile, twisted the end of his moustache, and disposed of a copious mouthful. Was *he* less than a lover? “But what will you have?” Serafina pursued. “In this hard world one must not ask too many questions; one must take what comes and keep what one gets. I have kept my good friend for twenty years, and I do hope that, at this time of day, signore, you have not come to turn him against me!”

I assured her that I had no such design, and that I should vastly regret disturbing Mr. Theobald’s habits or convictions. On the contrary, I was alarmed about him, and I should immediately go in search of him. She gave me his address, and a florid account of her

sufferings at his non-appearance. She had not been to him for various reasons; chiefly because she was afraid of displeasing him, as he had always made such a mystery of his home. “You might have sent this gentleman!” I ventured to suggest.

“Ah,” cried the gentleman, “he admires the Signora Serafina, but he wouldn’t admire me.” And then, confidentially, with his finger on his nose, “He’s a purist!”

I was about to withdraw, after having promised that I would inform the Signora Serafina of my friend’s condition, when her companion, who had risen from table and girded his loins apparently for the onset, grasped me gently by the arm, and led me before the row of statuettes. “I perceive by your conversation, signore, that you are a patron of the arts. Allow me to request your honourable attention for these modest products of my own ingenuity. They are brand-new, fresh from my atelier, and have never been exhibited in public. I have brought them here to receive the verdict of this dear lady, who is a good critic, for all she may pretend to the contrary. I am the inventor of this peculiar style of statuette—of subject, manner, material, everything. Touch them, I pray you; handle them freely—you needn’t fear. Delicate as they look, it is impossible they should break! My various creations have met with great success. They are especially admired by Americans. I have sent them all over Europe—to London, Paris, Vienna! You may have observed some little specimens in Paris, on the Boulevard, in a shop of which they constitute the specialty. There is always a crowd about the window. They form a very pleasing ornament for the mantel-shelf of a gay young bachelor, for the boudoir of a pretty woman. You couldn’t make a prettier present to a person with whom you wished to exchange a harmless joke. It is not classic art, signore, of course; but, between ourselves, isn’t classic art sometimes rather a bore? Caricature, burlesque, *la charge*, as the French say, has hitherto been confined to paper, to the pen and pencil. Now, it has been my inspiration to introduce it into statuary. For this purpose I have invented a peculiar plastic compound which you will permit me not to divulge. That’s my secret, signore! It’s as light, you perceive, as cork, and yet as firm as alabaster! I frankly confess that I really pride myself as much on this little stroke of chemical ingenuity as upon the other element of novelty in my creations—my types. What do you say to my types, signore? The idea is bold; does it strike you as happy? Cats and monkeys—monkeys and cats—all human life is there! Human life, of course, I mean, viewed with the eye of the satirist! To combine sculpture and satire, signore, has been my unprecedented ambition. I flatter myself that I have not egregiously failed.”

As this jaunty Juvenal of the chimney-piece delivered himself of his persuasive allocution, he took up his little groups successively from the table, held them aloft, turned them about, rapped them with his knuckles, and gazed at them lovingly, with his head on one side. They consisted each of a cat and a monkey, fantastically draped, in some preposterously sentimental conjunction. They exhibited a certain sameness of motive, and illustrated chiefly the different phases of what, in delicate terms, may be called gallantry and coquetry; but they were strikingly clever and expressive, and were at once very perfect cats and monkeys and very natural men and women. I confess, however, that they failed to amuse me. I was doubtless not in a mood to enjoy them, for they seemed to me peculiarly cynical and vulgar. Their imitative felicity was revolting. As I looked askance at the complacent little artist, brandishing them between finger and thumb and caressing them with an amorous eye, he seemed to me himself little more than an exceptionally intelligent ape. I mustered an admiring grin, however, and he blew another blast. “My figures are studied from life! I have a little menagerie of monkeys whose frolics I contemplate by the hour. As for the cats, one has only to look out of one’s back window! Since I have begun to examine these expressive little brutes, I have made many profound observations. Speaking, signore, to a man of imagination, I may say that my little designs are not without a philosophy of their

own. Truly, I don't know whether the cats and monkeys imitate us, or whether it's we who imitate them." I congratulated him on his philosophy, and he resumed: "You will do use the honour to admit that I have handled my subjects with delicacy. Eh, it was needed, signore! I have been free, but not too free—eh? Just a hint, you know! You may see as much or as little as you please. These little groups, however, are no measure of my invention. If you will favour me with a call at my studio, I think that you will admit that my combinations are really infinite. I likewise execute figures to command. You have perhaps some little motive—the fruit of your philosophy of life, signore—which you would like to have interpreted. I can promise to work it up to your satisfaction; it shall be as malicious as you please! Allow me to present you with my card, and to remind you that my prices are moderate. Only sixty francs for a little group like that. My statuettes are as durable as bronze—*ære perennius*, signore—and, between ourselves, I think they are more amusing!"

As I pocketed his card I glanced at Madonna Serafina, wondering whether she had an eye for contrasts. She had picked up one of the little couples and was tenderly dusting it with a feather broom.

What I had just seen and heard had so deepened my compassionate interest in my deluded friend that I took a summary leave, making my way directly to the house designated by this remarkable woman. It was in an obscure corner of the opposite side of the town, and presented a sombre and squalid appearance. An old woman in the doorway, on my inquiring for Theobald, ushered me in with a mumbled blessing and an expression of relief at the poor gentleman having a friend. His lodging seemed to consist of a single room at the top of the house. On getting no answer to my knock, I opened the door, supposing that he was absent, so that it gave me a certain shock to find him sitting there helpless and dumb. He was seated near the single window, facing an easel which supported a large canvas. On my entering he looked up at me blankly, without changing his position, which was that of absolute lassitude and dejection, his arms loosely folded, his legs stretched before him, his head hanging on his breast. Advancing into the room I perceived that his face vividly corresponded with his attitude. He was pale, haggard, and unshaven, and his dull and sunken eye gazed at me without a spark of recognition. I had been afraid that he would greet me with fierce reproaches, as the cruelly officious patron who had turned his contentment to bitterness, and I was relieved to find that my appearance awakened no visible resentment. "Don't you know me?" I asked, as I put out my hand. "Have you already forgotten me?"

He made no response, kept his position stupidly, and left me staring about the room. It spoke most plaintively for itself. Shabby, sordid, naked, it contained, beyond the wretched bed, but the scantiest provision for personal comfort. It was bedroom at once and studio—a grim ghost of a studio. A few dusty casts and prints on the walls, three or four old canvases turned face inward, and a rusty-looking colour-box, formed, with the easel at the window, the sum of its appurtenances. The place savoured horribly of poverty. Its only wealth was the picture on the easel, presumably the famous Madonna. Averted as this was from the door, I was unable to see its face; but at last, sickened by the vacant misery of the spot, I passed behind Theobald, eagerly and tenderly. I can hardly say that I was surprised at what I found—a canvas that was a mere dead blank, cracked and discoloured by time. This was his immortal work! Though not surprised, I confess I was powerfully moved, and I think that for five minutes I could not have trusted myself to speak. At last my silent nearness affected him; he stirred and turned, and then rose and looked at me with a slowly kindling eye. I murmured some kind ineffective nothings about his being ill and needing advice and care, but he seemed absorbed in the effort to recall distinctly what had last passed between us. "You were right," he said, with a pitiful smile, "I am a dawdler! I am a failure! I shall do nothing more in this world. You opened my eyes; and, though the truth is bitter, I bear you no grudge. Amen! I

have been sitting here for a week, face to face with the truth, with the past, with my weakness and poverty and nullity. I shall never touch a brush! I believe I have neither eaten nor slept. Look at that canvas!" he went on, as I relieved my emotion in an urgent request that he would come home with me and dine. "That was to have contained my masterpiece! Isn't it a promising foundation? The elements of it are all *here*." And he tapped his forehead with that mystic confidence which had marked the gesture before. "If I could only transpose them into some brain that has the hand, the will! Since I have been sitting here taking stock of my intellects, I have come to believe that I have the material for a hundred masterpieces. But my hand is paralysed now, and they will never be painted. I never began! I waited and waited to be worthier to begin, and wasted my life in preparation. While I fancied my creation was growing it was dying. I have taken it all too hard! Michael Angelo didn't, when he went at the Lorenzo! He did his best at a venture, and his venture is immortal. *That's* mine!" And he pointed with a gesture I shall never forget at the empty canvas. "I suppose we are a genus by ourselves in the providential scheme—we talents that can't act, that can't do nor dare! We take it out in talk, in plans and promises, in study, in visions! But our visions, let me tell you," he cried, with a toss of his head, "have a way of being brilliant, and a man has not lived in vain who has seen the things I have seen! Of course you will not believe in them when that bit of worm-eaten cloth is all I have to show for them; but to convince you, to enchant and astound the world, I need only the hand of Raphael. His brain I already have. A pity, you will say, that I haven't his modesty! Ah, let me boast and babble now; it's all I have left! I am the half of a genius! Where in the wide world is my other half? Lodged perhaps in the vulgar soul, the cunning, ready fingers of some dull copyist or some trivial artisan, who turns out by the dozen his easy prodigies of touch! But it's not for me to sneer at him; he at least does something. He's not a dawdler! Well for me if I had been vulgar and clever and reckless, if I could have shut my eyes and taken my leap."

What to say to the poor fellow, what to do for him, seemed hard to determine; I chiefly felt that I must break the spell of his present inaction, and remove him from the haunted atmosphere of the little room it was such a cruel irony to call a studio. I cannot say I persuaded him to come out with me; he simply suffered himself to be led, and when we began to walk in the open air I was able to appreciate his pitifully weakened condition. Nevertheless, he seemed in a certain way to revive, and murmured at last that he should like to go to the Pitti Gallery. I shall never forget our melancholy stroll through those gorgeous halls, every picture on whose walls seemed, even to my own sympathetic vision, to glow with a sort of insolent renewal of strength and lustre. The eyes and lips of the great portraits appeared to smile in ineffable scorn of the dejected pretender who had dreamed of competing with their triumphant authors; the celestial candour, even, of the Madonna of the Chair, as we paused in perfect silence before her, was tinged with the sinister irony of the women of Leonardo. Perfect silence, indeed, marked our whole progress—the silence of a deep farewell; for I felt in all my pulses, as Theobald, leaning on my arm, dragged one heavy foot after the other, that he was looking his last. When we came out he was so exhausted that instead of taking him to my hotel to dine, I called a carriage and drove him straight to his own poor lodging. He had sunk into an extraordinary lethargy; he lay back in the carriage, with his eyes closed, as pale as death, his faint breathing interrupted at intervals by a sudden gasp, like a smothered sob or a vain attempt to speak. With the help of the old woman who had admitted me before, and who emerged from a dark back court, I contrived to lead him up the long steep staircase and lay him on his wretched bed. To her I gave him in charge, while I prepared in all haste to seek a physician. But she followed me out of the room with a pitiful clasping of her hands.

"Poor, dear, blessed gentleman," she murmured; "is he dying?"

“Possibly. How long has he been thus?”

“Since a certain night he passed ten days ago. I came up in the morning to make his poor bed, and found him sitting up in his clothes before that great canvas he keeps there. Poor, dear, strange man, he says his prayers to it! He had not been to bed, nor since then, properly! What has happened to him? Has he found out about the Serafina?” she whispered, with a glittering eye and a toothless grin.

“Prove at least that one old woman can be faithful,” I said, “and watch him well till I come back.” My return was delayed, through the absence of the English physician, who was away on a round of visits, and whom I vainly pursued from house to house before I overtook him. I brought him to Theobald’s bedside none too soon. A violent fever had seized our patient, and the case was evidently grave. A couple of hours later I knew that he had brain fever. From this moment I was with him constantly; but I am far from wishing to describe his illness. Excessively painful to witness, it was happily brief. Life burned out in delirium. One night in particular that I passed at his pillow, listening to his wild snatches of regret, of aspiration, of rapture and awe at the phantasmal pictures with which his brain seemed to swarm, comes back to my memory now like some stray page from a lost masterpiece of tragedy. Before a week was over we had buried him in the little Protestant cemetery on the way to Fiesole. The Signora Serafina, whom I had caused to be informed of his illness, had come in person, I was told, to inquire about its progress; but she was absent from his funeral, which was attended by but a scanty concourse of mourners. Half a dozen old Florentine sojourners, in spite of the prolonged estrangement which had preceded his death, had felt the kindly impulse to honour his grave. Among them was my friend Mrs. Coventry, whom I found, on my departure, waiting in her carriage at the gate of the cemetery.

“Well,” she said, relieving at last with a significant smile the solemnity of our immediate greeting, “and the great Madonna? Have you seen her, after all?”

“I have seen her,” I said; “she is mine—by bequest. But I shall never show her to you.”

“And why not, pray?”

“My dear Mrs. Coventry, you would not understand her!”

“Upon my word, you are polite.”

“Excuse me; I am sad and vexed and bitter.” And with reprehensible rudeness I marched away. I was excessively impatient to leave Florence; my friend’s dark spirit seemed diffused through all things. I had packed my trunk to start for Rome that night, and meanwhile, to beguile my unrest, I aimlessly paced the streets. Chance led me at last to the church of San Lorenzo. Remembering poor Theobald’s phrase about Michael Angelo—“He did his best at a venture”—I went in and turned my steps to the chapel of the tombs. Viewing in sadness the sadness of its immortal treasures, I fancied, while I stood there, that they needed no ampler commentary than these simple words. As I passed through the church again to leave it, a woman, turning away from one of the side altars, met me face to face. The black shawl depending from her head draped picturesquely the handsome visage of Madonna Serafina. She stopped as she recognised me, and I saw that she wished to speak. Her eye was bright, and her ample bosom heaved in a way that seemed to portend a certain sharpness of reproach. But the expression of my own face, apparently, drew the sting from her resentment, and she addressed me in a tone in which bitterness was tempered by a sort of dogged resignation. “I know it was you, now, that separated us,” she said. “It was a pity he ever brought you to see me! Of course, you couldn’t think of me as he did. Well, the Lord gave him, the Lord has taken him. I have just paid for a nine days’ mass for his soul. And I can tell you this, signore—I never deceived him. Who put it into his head that I was made to

live on holy thoughts and fine phrases? It was his own fancy, and it pleased him to think so.—Did he suffer much?” she added more softly, after a pause.

“His sufferings were great, but they were short.”

“And did he speak of me?” She had hesitated and dropped her eyes; she raised them with her question, and revealed in their sombre stillness a gleam of feminine confidence which, for the moment, revived and illumined her beauty. Poor Theobald! Whatever name he had given his passion, it was still her fine eyes that had charmed him.

“Be contented, madam,” I answered, gravely.

She dropped her eyes again and was silent. Then exhaling a full rich sigh, as she gathered her shawl together—“He was a magnificent genius!”

I bowed, and we separated.

Passing through a narrow side street on my way back to my hotel, I perceived above a doorway a sign which it seemed to me I had read before. I suddenly remembered that it was identical with the superscription of a card that I had carried for an hour in my waistcoat pocket. On the threshold stood the ingenious artist whose claims to public favour were thus distinctly signalled, smoking a pipe in the evening air, and giving the finishing polish with a bit of rag to one of his inimitable “combinations.” I caught the expressive curl of a couple of tails. He recognised me, removed his little red cap with a most obsequious bow, and motioned me to enter his studio. I returned his salute and passed on, vexed with the apparition. For a week afterwards, whenever I was seized among the ruins of triumphant Rome with some peculiarly poignant memory of Theobald’s transcendent illusions and deplorable failure, I seemed to hear a fantastic, impertinent murmur, “Cats and monkeys, monkeys and cats; all human life there!”

Madame De Mauves

I

The view from the terrace at Saint-Germain-en-Laye is immense and famous. Paris lies spread before you in dusky vastness, domed and fortified, glittering here and there through her light vapours and girdled with her silver Seine. Behind you is a park of stately symmetry, and behind that a forest where you may lounge through turfy avenues and light-chequered glades and quite forget that you are within half an hour of the boulevards. One afternoon, however, in mid-spring, some five years ago, a young man seated on the terrace had preferred to keep this in mind. His eyes were fixed in idle wistfulness on the mighty human hive before him. He was fond of rural things, and he had come to Saint-Germain a week before to meet the spring halfway; but though he could boast of a six months' acquaintance with the great city he never looked at it from his present vantage without a sense of curiosity still unappeased. There were moments when it seemed to him that not to be there just then was to miss some thrilling chapter of experience. And yet his winter's experience had been rather fruitless and he had closed the book almost with a yawn. Though not in the least a cynic he was what one may call a disappointed observer, and he never chose the right-hand road without beginning to suspect after an hour's wayfaring that the left would have been the better. He now had a dozen minds to go to Paris for the evening, to dine at the Cafe Brebant and repair afterwards to the Gymnase and listen to the latest exposition of the duties of the injured husband. He would probably have risen to execute this project if he had not noticed a little girl who, wandering along the terrace, had suddenly stopped short and begun to gaze at him with round-eyed frankness. For a moment he was simply amused, the child's face denoting such helpless wonderment; the next he was agreeably surprised. "Why this is my friend Maggie," he said; "I see you've not forgotten me."

Maggie, after a short parley, was induced to seal her remembrance with a kiss. Invited then to explain her appearance at Saint-Germain, she embarked on a recital in which the general, according to the infantine method, was so fatally sacrificed to the particular that Longmore looked about him for a superior source of information. He found it in Maggie's mamma, who was seated with another lady at the opposite end of the terrace; so, taking the child by the hand, he led her back to her companions.

Maggie's mamma was a young American lady, as you would immediately have perceived, with a pretty and friendly face and a great elegance of fresh finery. She greeted Longmore with amazement and joy, mentioning his name to her friend and bidding him bring a chair and sit with them. The other lady, in whom, though she was equally young and perhaps even prettier, muslins and laces and feathers were less of a feature, remained silent, stroking the hair of the little girl, whom she had drawn against her knee. She had never heard of Longmore, but she now took in that her companion had crossed the ocean with him, had met him afterwards in travelling and—having left her husband in Wall Street—was indebted to him for sundry services. Maggie's mamma turned from time to time and smiled at this lady with an air of invitation; the latter smiled back and continued gracefully to say nothing. For ten minutes, meanwhile, Longmore felt a revival of interest in his old acquaintance; then (as mild riddles are more amusing than mere commonplaces) it gave way to curiosity about her friend. His eyes wandered; her volubility shook a sort of sweetness out of the friend's silence.

The stranger was perhaps not obviously a beauty nor obviously an American, but essentially both for the really seeing eye. She was slight and fair and, though naturally pale, was

delicately flushed just now, as by the effect of late agitation. What chiefly struck Longmore in her face was the union of a pair of beautifully gentle, almost languid grey eyes with a mouth that was all expression and intention. Her forehead was a trifle more expansive than belongs to classic types, and her thick brown hair dressed out of the fashion, just then even more ugly than usual. Her throat and bust were slender, but all the more in harmony with certain rapid charming movements of the head, which she had a way of throwing back every now and then with an air of attention and a sidelong glance from her dove-like eyes. She seemed at once alert and indifferent, contemplative and restless, and Longmore very soon discovered that if she was not a brilliant beauty she was at least a most attaching one. This very impression made him magnanimous. He was certain he had interrupted a confidential conversation, and judged it discreet to withdraw, having first learned from Maggie's mamma—Mrs. Draper—that she was to take the six o'clock train back to Paris. He promised to meet her at the station.

He kept his appointment, and Mrs. Draper arrived betimes, accompanied by her friend. The latter, however, made her farewells at the door and drove away again, giving Longmore time only to raise his hat. "Who is she?" he asked with visible ardour as he brought the traveller her tickets.

"Come and see me to-morrow at the Hotel de l'Empire," she answered, "and I'll tell you all about her." The force of this offer in making him punctual at the Hotel de l'Empire Longmore doubtless never exactly measured; and it was perhaps well he was vague, for he found his friend, who was on the point of leaving Paris, so distracted by procrastinating milliners and perjured lingeries that coherence had quite deserted her. "You must find Saint-Germain dreadfully dull," she nevertheless had the presence of mind to say as he was going. "Why won't you come with me to London?"

"Introduce me to Madame de Mauves," he answered, "and Saint-Germain will quite satisfy me." All he had learned was the lady's name and residence.

"Ah she, poor woman, won't make your affair a carnival. She's very unhappy," said Mrs. Draper.

Longmore's further enquiries were arrested by the arrival of a young lady with a bandbox; but he went away with the promise of a note of introduction, to be immediately dispatched to him at Saint-Germain.

He then waited a week, but the note never came, and he felt how little it was for Mrs. Draper to complain of engagements unperformed. He lounged on the terrace and walked in the forest, studied suburban street life and made a languid attempt to investigate the records of the court of the exiled Stuarts; but he spent most of his time in wondering where Madame de Mauves lived and whether she ever walked on the terrace. Sometimes, he was at last able to recognise; for one afternoon toward dusk he made her out from a distance, arrested there alone and leaning against the low wall. In his momentary hesitation to approach her there was almost a shade of trepidation, but his curiosity was not chilled by such a measure of the effect of a quarter of an hour's acquaintance. She at once recovered their connexion, on his drawing near, and showed it with the frankness of a person unprovided with a great choice of contacts. Her dress, her expression, were the same as before; her charm came out like that of fine music on a second hearing. She soon made conversation easy by asking him for news of Mrs. Draper. Longmore told her that he was daily expecting news and after a pause mentioned the promised note of introduction.

"It seems less necessary now," he said—"for me at least. But for you—I should have liked you to know the good things our friend would probably have been able to say about me."

“If it arrives at last,” she answered, “you must come and see me and bring it. If it doesn’t you must come without it.”

Then, as she continued to linger through the thickening twilight, she explained that she was waiting for her husband, who was to arrive in the train from Paris and who often passed along the terrace on his way home. Longmore well remembered that Mrs. Draper had spoken of uneasy things in her life, and he found it natural to guess that this same husband was the source of them. Edified by his six months in Paris, “What else is possible,” he put it, “for a sweet American girl who marries an unholy foreigner?”

But this quiet dependence on her lord’s return rather shook his shrewdness, and it received a further check from the free confidence with which she turned to greet an approaching figure. Longmore distinguished in the fading light a stoutish gentleman, on the fair side of forty, in a high grey hat, whose countenance, obscure as yet against the quarter from which it came, mainly presented to view the large outward twist of its moustache. M. de Mauves saluted his wife with punctilious gallantry and, having bowed to Longmore, asked her several questions in French. Before taking his offered arm to walk to their carriage, which was in waiting at the gate of the terrace, she introduced our hero as a friend of Mrs. Draper and also a fellow countryman, whom she hoped they might have the pleasure of seeing, as she said, *chez eux*. M. de Mauves responded briefly, but civilly, in fair English, and led his wife away.

Longmore watched him as he went, renewing the curl of his main facial feature—watched him with an irritation devoid of any mentionable ground. His one pretext for gnashing his teeth would have been in his apprehension that this gentleman’s worst English might prove a matter to shame his own best French. For reasons involved apparently in the very structure of his being Longmore found a colloquial use of that idiom as insecure as the back of a restive horse, and was obliged to take his exercise, as he was aware, with more tension than grace. He reflected meanwhile with comfort that Madame de Mauves and he had a common tongue, and his anxiety yielded to his relief at finding on his table that evening a letter from Mrs. Draper. It enclosed a short formal missive to Madame de Mauves, but the epistle itself was copious and confidential. She had deferred writing till she reached London, where for a week, of course, she had found other amusements.

“I think it’s the sight of so many women here who don’t look at all like her that has reminded me by the law of contraries of my charming friend at Saint-Germain and my promise to introduce you to her,” she wrote. “I believe I spoke to you of her rather blighted state, and I wondered afterwards whether I hadn’t been guilty of a breach of confidence. But you would certainly have arrived at guesses of your own, and, besides, she has never told me her secrets. The only one she ever pretended to was that she’s the happiest creature in the world, after assuring me of which, poor thing, she went off into tears; so that I prayed to be delivered from such happiness. It’s the miserable story of an American girl born neither to submit basely nor to rebel crookedly marrying a shining sinful Frenchman who believes a woman must do one or the other of those things. The lightest of US have a ballast that they can’t imagine, and the poorest a moral imagination that they don’t require. She was romantic and perverse—she thought the world she had been brought up in too vulgar or at least too prosaic. To have a decent home-life isn’t perhaps the greatest of adventures; but I think she wishes nowadays she hadn’t gone in quite so desperately for thrills. M. de Mauves cared of course for nothing but her money, which he’s spending royally on his menus plaisirs. I hope you appreciate the compliment I pay you when I recommend you to go and cheer up a lady domestically dejected. Believe me, I’ve given no other man a proof of this esteem; so if you were to take me in an inferior sense I would never speak to you again. Prove to this fine sore creature that our manners may have all the grace without wanting to make such selfish terms

for it. She avoids society and lives quite alone, seeing no one but a horrible French sister-in-law. Do let me hear that you've made her patience a little less absent-minded. Make her WANT to forget; make her like you."

This ingenious appeal left the young man uneasy. He found himself in presence of more complications than had been in his reckoning. To call on Madame de Mauves with his present knowledge struck him as akin to fishing in troubled waters. He was of modest composition, and yet he asked himself whether an appearance of attentions from any gallant gentleman mightn't give another twist to her tangle. A flattering sense of unwonted opportunity, however—of such a possible value constituted for him as he had never before been invited to rise to—made him with the lapse of time more confident, possibly more reckless. It was too inspiring not to act upon the idea of kindling a truer light in his fair countrywoman's slow smile, and at least he hoped to persuade her that even a raw representative of the social order she had not done justice to was not necessarily a mere fortuitous collocation of atoms. He immediately called on her.

II

She had been placed for her education, fourteen years before, in a Parisian convent, by a widowed mamma who was fonder of Homburg and Nice than of letting out tucks in the frocks of a vigorously growing daughter. Here, besides various elegant accomplishments—the art of wearing a train, of composing a bouquet, of presenting a cup of tea—she acquired a certain turn of the imagination which might have passed for a sign of precocious worldliness. She dreamed of marrying a man of hierarchical "rank"—not for the pleasure of hearing herself called Madame la Vicomtesse, for which it seemed to her she should never greatly care, but because she had a romantic belief that the enjoyment of inherited and transmitted consideration, consideration attached to the fact of birth, would be the direct guarantee of an ideal delicacy of feeling. She supposed it would be found that the state of being noble does actually enforce the famous obligation. Romances are rarely worked out in such transcendent good faith, and Euphemia's excuse was the prime purity of her moral vision. She was essentially incorruptible, and she took this pernicious conceit to her bosom very much as if it had been a dogma revealed by a white-winged angel. Even after experience had given her a hundred rude hints she found it easier to believe in fables, when they had a certain nobleness of meaning, than in well-attested but sordid facts. She believed that a gentleman with a long pedigree must be of necessity a very fine fellow, and enjoyment of a chance to carry further a family chronicle begun ever so far back must be, as a consciousness, a source of the most beautiful impulses. It wasn't therefore only that noblesse oblige, she thought, as regards yourself, but that it ensures as nothing else does in respect to your wife. She had never, at the start, spoken to a nobleman in her life, and these convictions were but a matter of extravagant theory. They were the fruit, in part, of the perusal of various Ultramontane works of fiction—the only ones admitted to the convent library—in which the hero was always a Legitimist vicomte who fought duels by the dozen but went twice a month to confession; and in part of the strong social scent of the gossip of her companions, many of them filles de haut lieu who, in the convent-garden, after Sundays at home, depicted their brothers and cousins as Prince Charmings and young Paladins. Euphemia listened and said nothing; she shrouded her visions of matrimony under a coronet in the silence that mostly surrounds all ecstatic faith. She was not of that type of young lady who is easily induced to declare that her husband must be six feet high and a little near-sighted, part his hair in the middle and have amber lights in his beard. To her companions her flights of fancy seemed short, rather, and poor and untutored; and even the fact that she was a sprig of the transatlantic democracy never sufficiently explained her apathy on social questions. She had a mental image of that son of the Crusaders who was to suffer her to adore him, but like many an artist who has produced a

masterpiece of idealisation she shrank from exposing it to public criticism. It was the portrait of a gentleman rather ugly than handsome and rather poor than rich. But his ugliness was to be nobly expressive and his poverty delicately proud. She had a fortune of her own which, at the proper time, after fixing on her in eloquent silence those fine eyes that were to soften the feudal severity of his visage, he was to accept with a world of stifled protestations. One condition alone she was to make—that he should have “race” in a state as documented as it was possible to have it. On this she would stake her happiness; and it was so to happen that several accidents conspired to give convincing colour to this artless philosophy.

Inclined to long pauses and slow approaches herself, Euphemia was a great sitter at the feet of breathless volubility, and there were moments when she fairly hung upon the lips of Mademoiselle Marie de Mauves. Her intimacy with this chosen schoolmate was founded on the perception—all her own—that their differences were just the right ones. Mademoiselle de Mauves was very positive, very shrewd, very ironical, very French—everything that Euphemia felt herself unpardonable for not being. During her Sundays en ville she had examined the world and judged it, and she imparted her impressions to our attentive heroine with an agreeable mixture of enthusiasm and scepticism. She was moreover a handsome and well-grown person, on whom Euphemia’s ribbons and trinkets had a trick of looking better than on their slender proprietress. She had finally the supreme merit of being a rigorous example of the virtue of exalted birth, having, as she did, ancestors honourably mentioned by Joinville and Commines, and a stately grandmother with a hooked nose who came up with her after the holidays from a veritable castel in Auvergne. It seemed to our own young woman that these attributes made her friend more at home in the world than if she had been the daughter of even the most prosperous grocer. A certain aristocratic impudence Mademoiselle de Mauves abundantly possessed, and her raids among her friend’s finery were quite in the spirit of her baronial ancestors in the twelfth century—a spirit regarded by Euphemia but as a large way of understanding friendship, a freedom from conformities without style, and one that would sooner or later express itself in acts of surprising magnanimity. There doubtless prevailed in the breast of Mademoiselle de Mauves herself a dimmer vision of the large securities that Euphemia envied her. She was to become later in life so accomplished a schemer that her sense of having further heights to scale might well have waked up early. The especially fine appearance made by our heroine’s ribbons and trinkets as her friend wore them ministered to pleasure on both sides, and the spell was not of a nature to be menaced by the young American’s general gentleness. The concluding motive of Marie’s writing to her grandmamma to invite Euphemia for a three weeks’ holiday to the castel in Auvergne involved, however, the subtlest considerations. Mademoiselle de Mauves indeed, at this time seventeen years of age and capable of views as wide as her wants, was as proper a figure as could possibly have been found for the foreground of a scene artfully designed; and Euphemia, whose years were of like number, asked herself if a right harmony with such a place mightn’t come by humble prayer. It is a proof of the sincerity of the latter’s aspirations that the castel was not a shock to her faith. It was neither a cheerful nor a luxurious abode, but it was as full of wonders as a box of old heirlooms or objects “willed.” It had battered towers and an empty moat, a rusty drawbridge and a court paved with crooked grass-grown slabs over which the antique coach-wheels of the lady with the hooked nose seemed to awaken the echoes of the seventeenth century. Euphemia was not frightened out of her dream; she had the pleasure of seeing all the easier passages translated into truth, as the learner of a language begins with the common words. She had a taste for old servants, old anecdotes, old furniture, faded household colours and sweetly stale odours—musty treasures in which the Chateau de Mauves abounded. She made a dozen sketches in water-colours after her conventual pattern; but sentimentally, as one may say, she was for ever sketching with a freer hand.

Old Madame de Mauves had nothing severe but her nose, and she seemed to Euphemia—what indeed she had every claim to pass for—the very image and pattern of an “historical character.” Belonging to a great order of things, she patronised the young stranger who was ready to sit all day at her feet and listen to anecdotes of the *bon temps* and quotations from the family chronicles. Madame de Mauves was a very honest old woman; she uttered her thoughts with ancient plainness. One day after pushing back Euphemia’s shining locks and blinking with some tenderness from behind an immense *face-a-main* that acted as for the relegation of the girl herself to the glass case of a museum, she declared with an energetic shake of the head that she didn’t know what to make of such a little person. And in answer to the little person’s evident wonder, “I should like to advise you,” she said, “but you seem to me so all of a piece that I’m afraid that if I advise you I shall spoil you. It’s easy to see you’re not one of us. I don’t know whether you’re better, but you seem to me to have been wound up by some key that isn’t kept by your governess or your confessor or even your mother, but that you wear by a fine black ribbon round your own neck. Little persons in my day—when they were stupid they were very docile, but when they were clever they were very sly! You’re clever enough, I imagine, and yet if I guessed all your secrets at this moment is there one I should have to frown at? I can tell you a wickeder one than any you’ve discovered for yourself. If you wish to live at ease in the *doux pays de France* don’t trouble too much about the key of your conscience or even about your conscience itself—I mean your own particular one. You’ll fancy it saying things it won’t help your case to hear. They’ll make you sad, and when you’re sad you’ll grow plain, and when you’re plain you’ll grow bitter, and when you’re bitter you’ll be *peu aimable*. I was brought up to think that a woman’s first duty is to be infinitely so, and the happiest women I’ve known have been in fact those who performed this duty faithfully. As you’re not a Catholic I suppose you can’t be a devotee; and if you don’t take life as a fifty years’ mass the only way to take it’s as a game of skill. Listen to this. Not to lose at the game of life you must—I don’t say cheat, but not be too sure your neighbour won’t, and not be shocked out of your self-possession if he does. Don’t lose, my dear—I beseech you don’t lose. Be neither suspicious nor credulous, and if you find your neighbour peeping don’t cry out; only very politely wait your own chance. I’ve had my revenge more than once in my day, but I really think the sweetest I could take, *en somme*, against the past I’ve known, would be to have your blest innocence profit by my experience.”

This was rather bewildering advice, but Euphemia understood it too little to be either edified or frightened. She sat listening to it very much as she would have listened to the speeches of an old lady in a comedy whose diction should strikingly correspond to the form of her high-backed armchair and the fashion of her *coif*. Her indifference was doubly dangerous, for Madame de Mauves spoke at the instance of coming events, and her words were the result of a worry of scruples—scruples in the light of which Euphemia was on the one hand too tender a victim to be sacrificed to an ambition and the prosperity of her own house on the other too precious a heritage to be sacrificed to an hesitation. The prosperity in question had suffered repeated and grievous breaches and the menaced institution been overmuch pervaded by that cold comfort in which people are obliged to balance dinner-table allusions to feudal ancestors against the absence of side-dishes; a state of things the sorrier as the family was now mainly represented by a gentleman whose appetite was large and who justly maintained that its historic glories hadn’t been established by underfed heroes.

Three days after Euphemia’s arrival Richard de Mauves, coming down from Paris to pay his respects to his grandmother, treated our heroine to her first encounter with a *gentilhomme* in the flesh. On appearing he kissed his grandmother’s hand with a smile which caused her to draw it away with dignity, and set Euphemia, who was standing by, to ask herself what could have happened between them. Her unanswered wonder was but the beginning of a long chain

of puzzlements, but the reader is free to know that the smile of M. de Mauves was a reply to a postscript affixed by the old lady to a letter addressed to him by her granddaughter as soon as the girl had been admitted to justify the latter's promises. Mademoiselle de Mauves brought her letter to her grandmother for approval, but obtained no more than was expressed in a frigid nod. The old lady watched her with this coldness while she proceeded to seal the letter, then suddenly bade her open it again and bring her a pen.

"Your sister's flatteries are all nonsense," she wrote; "the young lady's far too good for you, mauvais sujet beyond redemption. If you've a particle of conscience you'll not come and disturb the repose of an angel of innocence."

The other relative of the subject of this warning, who had read these lines, made up a little face as she freshly indited the address; but she laid down her pen with a confident nod which might have denoted that by her judgement her brother was appealed to on the ground of a principle that didn't exist in him. And "if you meant what you said," the young man on his side observed to his grandmother on his first private opportunity, "it would have been simpler not to have sent the letter."

Put out of humour perhaps by this gross impugment of her sincerity, the head of the family kept her room on pretexts during a greater part of Euphemia's stay, so that the latter's angelic innocence was left all to her grandson's mercy. It suffered no worse mischance, however, than to be prompted to intenser communion with itself. Richard de Mauves was the hero of the young girl's romance made real, and so completely accordant with this creature of her imagination that she felt afraid of him almost as she would have been of a figure in a framed picture who should have stepped down from the wall. He was now thirty-three—young enough to suggest possibilities of ardent activity and old enough to have formed opinions that a simple woman might deem it an intellectual privilege to listen to. He was perhaps a trifle handsomer than Euphemia's rather grim Quixotic ideal, but a very few days reconciled her to his good looks as effectually they would have reconciled her to a characterised want of them. He was quiet, grave, eminently distinguished. He spoke little, but his remarks, without being sententious, had a nobleness of tone that caused them to re-echo in the young girl's ears at the end of the day. He paid her very little direct attention, but his chance words—when he only asked her if she objected to his cigarette—were accompanied by a smile of extraordinary kindness.

It happened that shortly after his arrival, riding an unruly horse which Euphemia had with shy admiration watched him mount in the castle-yard, he was thrown with a violence which, without disparaging his skill, made him for a fortnight an interesting invalid lounging in the library with a bandaged knee. To beguile his confinement the accomplished young stranger was repeatedly induced to sing for him, which she did with a small natural tremor that might have passed for the finish of vocal art. He never overwhelmed her with compliments, but he listened with unflinching attention, remembered all her melodies and would sit humming them to himself. While his imprisonment lasted indeed he passed hours in her company, making her feel not unlike some unfriended artist who has suddenly gained the opportunity to devote a fortnight to the study of a great model. Euphemia studied with noiseless diligence what she supposed to be the "character" of M. de Mauves, and the more she looked the more fine lights and shades she seemed to behold in this masterpiece of nature. M. de Mauves's character indeed, whether from a sense of being so generously and intensely taken for granted, or for reasons which bid graceful defiance to analysis, had never been so much on show, even to the very casual critic lodged, as might be said, in an out-of-the-way corner of it; it seemed really to reflect the purity of Euphemia's pious opinion. There had been nothing especially to admire in the state of mind in which he left Paris—a settled resolve to marry a

young person whose charms might or might not justify his sister's account of them, but who was mistress, at the worst, of a couple of hundred thousand francs a year. He had not counted out sentiment—if she pleased him so much the better; but he had left a meagre margin for it and would hardly have admitted that so excellent a match could be improved by it. He was a robust and serene sceptic, and it was a singular fate for a man who believed in nothing to be so tenderly believed in. What his original faith had been he could hardly have told you, for as he came back to his childhood's home to mend his fortunes by pretending to fall in love he was a thoroughly perverse creature and overlaid with more corruptions than a summer day's questioning of his conscience would have put to flight. Ten years' pursuit of pleasure, which a bureau full of unpaid bills was all he had to show for, had pretty well stifled the natural lad whose violent will and generous temper might have been shaped by a different pressure to some such showing as would have justified a romantic faith. So should he have exhaled the natural fragrance of a late-blooming flower of hereditary honour. His violence indeed had been subdued and he had learned to be irreproachably polite; but he had lost the fineness of his generosity, and his politeness, which in the long run society paid for, was hardly more than a form of luxurious egotism, like his fondness for ciphered pocket-handkerchiefs, lavender gloves and other fopperies by which shopkeepers remained out of pocket. In after-years he was terribly polite to his wife. He had formed himself, as the phrase was, and the form prescribed to him by the society into which his birth and his tastes had introduced him was marked by some peculiar features. That which mainly concerns us is its classification of the fairer half of humanity as objects not essentially different—say from those very lavender gloves that are soiled in an evening and thrown away. To do M. de Mauves justice, he had in the course of time encountered in the feminine character such plentiful evidence of its pliant softness and fine adjustability that idealism naturally seemed to him a losing game.

Euphemia, as he lay on his sofa, struck him as by no means contradictory; she simply reminded him that very young women are generally innocent and that this is on the whole the most potent source of their attraction. Her innocence moved him to perfect consideration, and it seemed to him that if he shortly became her husband it would be exposed to a danger the less. Old Madame de Mauves, who flattered herself that in this whole matter she was very laudably rigid, might almost have taken a lesson from the delicacy he practised. For two or three weeks her grandson was well-nigh a blushing boy again. He watched from behind the Figaro, he admired and desired and held his tongue. He found himself not in the least moved to a flirtation; he had no wish to trouble the waters he proposed to transfuse into the golden cup of matrimony. Sometimes a word, a look, a gesture of Euphemia's gave him the oddest sense of being, or of seeming at least, almost bashful; for she had a way of not dropping her eyes according to the mysterious virginal mechanism, of not fluttering out of the room when she found him there alone, of treating him rather as a glorious than as a pernicious influence—a radiant frankness of demeanour in fine, despite an infinite natural reserve, which it seemed at once graceless not to be complimentary about and indelicate not to take for granted. In this way had been wrought in the young man's mind a vague unwonted resonance of soft impressions, as we may call it, which resembled the happy stir of the change from dreaming pleasantly to waking happily. His imagination was touched; he was very fond of music and he now seemed to give easy ear to some of the sweetest he had ever heard. In spite of the bore of being laid up with a lame knee he was in better humour than he had known for months; he lay smoking cigarettes and listening to the nightingales with the satisfied smile of one of his country neighbours whose big ox should have taken the prize at a fair. Every now and then, with an impatient suspicion of the resemblance, he declared himself pitifully bete; but he was under a charm that braved even the supreme penalty of seeming ridiculous. One morning he had half an hour's tete-a-tete with his grandmother's confessor, a soft-voiced old Abbe whom, for reasons of her own, Madame de Mauves had suddenly

summoned and had left waiting in the drawing-room while she rearranged her curls. His reverence, going up to the old lady, assured her that M. le Comte was in a most edifying state of mind and the likeliest subject for the operation of grace. This was a theological interpretation of the count's unusual equanimity. He had always lazily wondered what priests were good for, and he now remembered, with a sense of especial obligation to the Abbe, that they were excellent for marrying people.

A day or two after this he left off his bandages and tried to walk. He made his way into the garden and hobbled successfully along one of the alleys, but in the midst of his progress was pulled up by a spasm of pain which forced him to stop and call for help. In an instant Euphemia came tripping along the path and offered him her arm with the frankest solicitude.

"Not to the house," he said, taking it; "further on, to the bosquet." This choice was prompted by her having immediately confessed that she had seen him leave the house, had feared an accident and had followed him on tiptoe.

"Why didn't you join me?" he had asked, giving her a look in which admiration was no longer disguised and yet felt itself half at the mercy of her replying that a *jeune fille* shouldn't be seen following a gentleman. But it drew a breath which filled its lungs for a long time afterwards when she replied simply that if she had overtaken him he might have accepted her arm out of politeness, whereas she wished to have the pleasure of seeing him walk alone.

The bosquet was covered with an odorous tangle of blossoming creepers, and a nightingale overhead was shaking out love-notes with a profusion that made the Count feel his own conduct the last word of propriety. "I've always heard that in America, when a man wishes to marry a young girl, he offers himself simply face to face and without ceremony—without parents and uncles and aunts and cousins sitting round in a circle."

"Why I believe so," said Euphemia, staring and too surprised to be alarmed.

"Very well then—suppose our arbour here to be your great sensible country. I offer you my hand a *l'Americaine*. It will make me intensely happy to feel you accept it."

Whether Euphemia's acceptance was in the American manner is more than I can say; I incline to think that for fluttering grateful trustful softly-amazed young hearts there is only one manner all over the world.

That evening, in the massive turret chamber it was her happiness to inhabit, she wrote a dutiful letter to her mamma, and had just sealed it when she was sent for by Madame de Mauves. She found this ancient lady seated in her boudoir in a lavender satin gown and with her candles all lighted as for the keeping of some fete. "Are you very happy?" the old woman demanded, making Euphemia sit down before her.

"I'm almost afraid to say so, lest I should wake myself up."

"May you never wake up, *belle enfant*," Madame de Mauves grandly returned. "This is the first marriage ever made in our family in this way—by a Comte de Mauves proposing to a young girl in an arbour like Jeannot and Jeannette. It has not been our way of doing things, and people may say it wants frankness. My grandson tells me he regards it—for the conditions—as the perfection of good taste. Very well. I'm a very old woman, and if your differences should ever be as marked as your agreements I shouldn't care to see them. But I should be sorry to die and think you were going to be unhappy. You can't be, my dear, beyond a certain point; because, though in this world the Lord sometimes makes light of our expectations he never altogether ignores our deserts. But you're very young and innocent and easy to dazzle. There never was a man in the world—among the saints themselves—as good as you believe my grandson. But he's a *galant homme* and a gentleman, and I've been talking

to him to-night. To you I want to say this—that you're to forget the worldly rubbish I talked the other day about the happiness of frivolous women. It's not the kind of happiness that would suit you, *ma toute-belle*. Whatever befalls you, promise me this: to be, to remain, your own sincere little self only, charming in your own serious little way. The Comtesse de Mauves will be none the worse for it. Your brave little self, understand, in spite of everything—bad precepts and bad examples, bad fortune and even bad usage. Be persistently and patiently just what the good God has made you, and even one of us—and one of those who is most what we ARE—will do you justice!”

Euphemia remembered this speech in after-years, and more than once, wearily closing her eyes, she seemed to see the old woman sitting upright in her faded finery and smiling grimly like one of the Fates who sees the wheel of fortune turning up her favourite event. But at the moment it had for her simply the proper gravity of the occasion: this was the way, she supposed, in which lucky young girls were addressed on their engagement by wise old women of quality.

At her convent, to which she immediately returned, she found a letter from her mother which disconcerted her far more than the remarks of Madame de Mauves. Who were these people, Mrs. Cleve demanded, who had presumed to talk to her daughter of marriage without asking her leave? Questionable gentleness plainly; the best French people never did such things. Euphemia would return straightway to her convent, shut herself up and await her own arrival. It took Mrs. Cleve three weeks to travel from Nice to Paris, and during this time the young girl had no communication with her lover beyond accepting a bouquet of violets marked with his initials and left by a female friend. “I've not brought you up with such devoted care,” she declared to her daughter at their first interview, “to marry a presumptuous and penniless Frenchman. I shall take you straight home and you'll please forget M. de Mauves.”

Mrs. Cleve received that evening at her hotel a visit from this personage which softened her wrath but failed to modify her decision. He had very good manners, but she was sure he had horrible morals; and the lady, who had been a good-natured censor on her own account, felt a deep and real need to sacrifice her daughter to propriety. She belonged to that large class of Americans who make light of their native land in familiar discourse but are startled back into a sense of having blasphemed when they find Europeans taking them at their word. “I know the type, my dear,” she said to her daughter with a competent nod. “He won't beat you. Sometimes you'll wish he would.”

Euphemia remained solemnly silent, for the only answer she felt capable of making was that her mother's mind was too small a measure of things and her lover's type an historic, a social masterpiece that it took some mystic illumination to appreciate. A person who confounded him with the common throng of her watering-place acquaintance was not a person to argue with. It struck the girl she had simply no cause to plead; her cause was in the Lord's hands and in those of M. de Mauves.

This agent of Providence had been irritated and mortified by Mrs. Cleve's opposition, and hardly knew how to handle an adversary who failed to perceive that a member of his family gave of necessity more than he received. But he had obtained information on his return to Paris which exalted the uses of humility. Euphemia's fortune, wonderful to say, was greater than its fame, and in view of such a prize, even a member of his family could afford to take a snubbing.

The young man's tact, his deference, his urbane insistence, won a concession from Mrs. Cleve. The engagement was to be put off and her daughter was to return home, be brought out and receive the homage she was entitled to and which might well take a form representing

peril to the suit of this first headlong aspirant. They were to exchange neither letters nor mementoes nor messages; but if at the end of two years Euphemia had refused offers enough to attest the permanence of her attachment he should receive an invitation to address her again. This decision was promulgated in the presence of the parties interested. The Count bore himself gallantly, looking at his young friend as if he expected some tender protestation. But she only looked at him silently in return, neither weeping nor smiling nor putting out her hand. On this they separated, and as M. de Mauves walked away he declared to himself that in spite of the confounded two years he was one of the luckiest of men—to have a fiancée who to several millions of francs added such strangely beautiful eyes.

How many offers Euphemia refused but scantily concerns us—and how the young man wore his two years away. He found he required pastimes, and as pastimes were expensive he added heavily to the list of debts to be cancelled by Euphemia's fortune. Sometimes, in the thick of what he had once called pleasure with a keener conviction than now, he put to himself the case of their failing him after all; and then he remembered that last mute assurance of her pale face and drew a long breath of such confidence as he felt in nothing else in the world save his own punctuality in an affair of honour.

At last, one morning, he took the express to Havre with a letter of Mrs. Cleve's in his pocket, and ten days later made his bow to mother and daughter in New York. His stay was brief, and he was apparently unable to bring himself to view what Euphemia's uncle, Mr. Butterworth, who gave her away at the altar, called our great experiment of democratic self-government, in a serious light. He smiled at everything and seemed to regard the New World as a colossal *plaisanterie*. It is true that a perpetual smile was the most natural expression of countenance for a man about to marry Euphemia Cleve.

III

Longmore's first visit seemed to open to him so large a range of quiet pleasure that he very soon paid a second, and at the end of a fortnight had spent uncounted hours in the little drawing-room which Madame de Mauves rarely quitted except to drive or walk in the forest. She lived in an old-fashioned pavilion, between a high-walled court and an excessively artificial garden, beyond whose enclosure you saw a long line of tree-tops. Longmore liked the garden and in the mild afternoons used to move his chair through the open window to the smooth terrace which overlooked it while his hostess sat just within. Presently she would come out and wander through the narrow alleys and beside the thin-spouting fountain, and at last introduce him to a private gate in the high wall, the opening to a lane which led to the forest. Hitherwards she more than once strolled with him, bareheaded and meaning to go but twenty rods, but always going good-naturedly further and often stretching it to the freedom of a promenade. They found many things to talk about, and to the pleasure of feeling the hours slip along like some silver stream Longmore was able to add the satisfaction of suspecting that he was a "resource" for Madame de Mauves. He had made her acquaintance with the sense, not wholly inspiring, that she was a woman with a painful twist in her life and that seeking her acquaintance would be like visiting at a house where there was an invalid who could bear no noise. But he very soon recognised that her grievance, if grievance it was, was not aggressive; that it was not fond of attitudes and ceremonies, and that her most earnest wish was to remember it as little as possible. He felt that even if Mrs. Draper hadn't told him she was unhappy he would have guessed it, and yet that he couldn't have pointed to his proof. The evidence was chiefly negative—she never alluded to her husband. Beyond this it seemed to him simply that her whole being was pitched in a lower key than harmonious Nature had designed; she was like a powerful singer who had lost her high notes. She never drooped nor sighed nor looked unutterable things; she dealt no sarcastic digs at her fate; she had in short

none of the conscious graces of the woman wronged. Only Longmore was sure that her gentle gaiety was but the milder or sharper flush of a settled ache, and that she but tried to interest herself in his thoughts in order to escape from her own. If she had wished to irritate his curiosity and lead him to take her confidence by storm nothing could have served her purpose better than this studied discretion. He measured the rare magnanimity of self-effacement so deliberate, he felt how few women were capable of exchanging a luxurious woe for a thankless effort. Madame de Mauves, he himself felt, wasn't sweeping the horizon for a compensation or a consoler; she had suffered a personal deception that had disgusted her with persons. She wasn't planning to get the worth of her trouble back in some other way; for the present she was proposing to live with it peaceably, respectably and without scandal—turning the key on it occasionally as you would on a companion liable to attacks of insanity.

Longmore was a man of fine senses and of a speculative spirit, leading-strings that had never been slipped. He began to regard his hostess as a figure haunted by a shadow which was somehow her intenser and more authentic self. This lurking duality in her put on for him an extraordinary charm. Her delicate beauty acquired to his eye the serious cast of certain blank-browed Greek statues; and sometimes when his imagination, more than his ear, detected a vague tremor in the tone in which she attempted to make a friendly question seem to have behind it none of the hollow resonance of absent-mindedness, his marvelling eyes gave her an answer more eloquent, though much less to the point, than the one she demanded.

She supplied him indeed with much to wonder about, so that he fitted, in his ignorance, a dozen high-flown theories to her apparent history. She had married for love and staked her whole soul on it; of that he was convinced. She hadn't changed her allegiance to be near Paris and her base of supplies of millinery; he was sure she had seen her perpetrated mistake in a light of which her present life, with its conveniences for shopping and its moral aridity, was the absolute negation. But by what extraordinary process of the heart—through what mysterious intermission of that moral instinct which may keep pace with the heart even when this organ is making unprecedented time—had she fixed her affections on an insolently frivolous Frenchman? Longmore needed no telling; he knew that M. de Mauves was both cynical and shallow; these things were stamped on his eyes, his nose, his mouth, his voice, his gesture, his step. Of Frenchwomen themselves, when all was said, our young man, full of nursed discriminations, went in no small fear; they all seemed to belong to the type of a certain fine lady to whom he had ventured to present a letter of introduction and whom, directly after his first visit to her, he had set down in his note-book as "metallic." Why should Madame de Mauves have chosen a Frenchwoman's lot—she whose nature had an atmospheric envelope absent even from the brightest metals? He asked her one day frankly if it had cost her nothing to transplant herself—if she weren't oppressed with a sense of irreconcilable difference from "all these people." She replied nothing at first, till he feared she might think it her duty to resent a question that made light of all her husband's importances. He almost wished she would; it would seem a proof that her policy of silence had a limit. "I almost grew up here," she said at last, "and it was here for me those visions of the future took shape that we all have when we begin to think or to dream beyond mere playtime. As matters stand one may be very American and yet arrange it with one's conscience to live in Europe. My imagination perhaps—I had a little when I was younger—helped me to think I should find happiness here. And after all, for a woman, what does it signify? This isn't America, no—this element, but it's quite as little France. France is out there beyond the garden, France is in the town and the forest; but here, close about me, in my room and"—she paused a moment—"in my mind, it's a nameless, and doubtless not at all remarkable, little country of my own. It's not her country," she added, "that makes a woman happy or unhappy."

Madame Clairin, Euphemia's sister-in-law, might meanwhile have been supposed to have undertaken the graceful task of making Longmore ashamed of his uncivil jottings about her sex and nation. Mademoiselle de Mauves, bringing example to the confirmation of precept, had made a remunerative match and sacrificed her name to the millions of a prosperous and aspiring wholesale druggist—a gentleman liberal enough to regard his fortune as a moderate price for being towed into circles unpervaded by pharmaceutic odours. His system possibly was sound, but his own application of it to be deplored. M. Clairin's head was turned by his good luck. Having secured an aristocratic wife he adopted an aristocratic vice and began to gamble at the Bourse. In an evil hour he lost heavily, and then staked heavily to recover himself. But he was to learn that the law of compensation works with no such pleasing simplicity, and he rolled to the dark bottom of his folly. There he felt everything go—his wits, his courage, his probity, everything that had made him what his fatuous marriage had so promptly unmade. He walked up the Rue Vivienne with his hands in his empty pockets and stood half an hour staring confusedly up and down the brave boulevard. People brushed against him and half a dozen carriages almost ran over him, until at last a policeman, who had been watching him for some time, took him by the arm and led him gently away. He looked at the man's cocked hat and sword with tears in his eyes; he hoped for some practical application of the wrath of heaven, something that would express violently his dead-weight of self-abhorrence. The sergent de ville, however, only stationed him in the embrasure of a door, out of harm's way, and walked off to supervise a financial contest between an old lady and a cabman. Poor M. Clairin had only been married a year, but he had had time to measure the great spirit of true children of the anciens preux. When night had fallen he repaired to the house of a friend and asked for a night's lodging; and as his friend, who was simply his old head book-keeper and lived in a small way, was put to some trouble to accommodate him, "You must pardon me," the poor man said, "but I can't go home. I'm afraid of my wife!" Toward morning he blew his brains out. His widow turned the remnants of his property to better account than could have been expected and wore the very handsomest mourning. It was for this latter reason perhaps that she was obliged to retrench at other points and accept a temporary home under her brother's roof.

Fortune had played Madame Clairin a terrible trick, but had found an adversary and not a victim. Though quite without beauty she had always had what is called the grand air, and her air from this time forth was grander than ever. As she trailed about in her sable furbelows, tossing back her well-dressed head and holding up her vigilant long-handled eyeglass, she seemed to be sweeping the whole field of society and asking herself where she should pluck her revenge. Suddenly she espied it, ready made to her hand, in poor Longmore's wealth and amiability. American dollars and American complaisance had made her brother's fortune; why shouldn't they make hers? She overestimated the wealth and misinterpreted the amiability; for she was sure a man could neither be so contented without being rich nor so "backward" without being weak. Longmore met her advances with a formal politeness that covered a good deal of unflattering discomposure. She made him feel deeply uncomfortable; and though he was at a loss to conceive how he could be an object of interest to a sharp Parisienne he had an indefinable sense of being enclosed in a magnetic circle, of having become the victim of an incantation. If Madame Clairin could have fathomed his Puritanic soul she would have laid by her wand and her book and dismissed him for an impossible subject. She gave him a moral chill, and he never named her to himself save as that dreadful woman—that awful woman. He did justice to her grand air, but for his pleasure he preferred the small air of Madame de Mauves; and he never made her his bow, after standing frigidly passive for five minutes to one of her gracious overtures to intimacy, without feeling a peculiar desire to ramble away into the forest, fling himself down on the warm grass and, staring up at the blue sky, forget that there were any women in nature who didn't please like

the swaying tree-tops. One day, on his arrival at the house, she met him in the court with the news that her sister-in-law was shut up with a headache and that his visit must be for HER. He followed her into the drawing-room with the best grace at his command, and sat twirling his hat for half an hour. Suddenly he understood her; her caressing cadences were so almost explicit an invitation to solicit the charming honour of her hand. He blushed to the roots of his hair and jumped up with uncontrollable alacrity; then, dropping a glance at Madame Clairin, who sat watching him with hard eyes over the thin edge of her smile, perceived on her brow a flash of unforgiving wrath. It was not pleasing in itself, but his eyes lingered a moment, for it seemed to show off her character. What he saw in the picture frightened him and he felt himself murmur "Poor Madame de Mauves!" His departure was abrupt, and this time he really went into the forest and lay down on the grass.

After which he admired his young countrywoman more than ever; her intrinsic clearness shone out to him even through the darker shade cast over it. At the end of a month he received a letter from a friend with whom he had arranged a tour through the Low Countries, reminding him of his promise to keep their tryst at Brussels. It was only after his answer was posted that he fully measured the zeal with which he had declared that the journey must either be deferred or abandoned—since he couldn't possibly leave Saint-Germain. He took a walk in the forest and asked himself if this were indeed portentously true. Such a truth somehow made it surely his duty to march straight home and put together his effects. Poor Webster, who, he knew, had counted ardently on this excursion, was the best of men; six weeks ago he would have gone through anything to join poor Webster. It had never been in his books to throw overboard a friend whom he had loved ten years for a married woman whom he had six weeks—well, admired. It was certainly beyond question that he hung on at Saint-Germain because this admirable married woman was there; but in the midst of so much admiration what had become of his fine old power to conclude? This was the conduct of a man not judging but drifting, and he had pretended never to drift. If she were as unhappy as he believed the active sympathy of such a man would help her very little more than his indifference; if she were less so she needed no help and could dispense with his professions. He was sure moreover that if she knew he was staying on her account she would be extremely annoyed. This very feeling indeed had much to do with making it hard to go; her displeasure would be the flush on the snow of the high cold stoicism that touched him to the heart. At moments withal he assured himself that staying to watch her—and what else did it come to?—was simply impertinent; it was gross to keep tugging at the cover of a book so intentionally closed. Then inclination answered that some day her self-support would fail, and he had a vision of this exquisite creature calling vainly for help. He would just be her friend to any length, and it was unworthy of either to think about consequences. He was a friend, however, who nursed a brooding regret for his not having known her five years earlier, as well as a particular objection to those who had smartly anticipated him. It seemed one of fortune's most mocking strokes that she should be surrounded by persons whose only merit was that they threw every side of her, as she turned in her pain, into radiant relief.

Our young man's growing irritation made it more and more difficult for him to see any other merit than this in Richard de Mauves. And yet, disinterestedly, it would have been hard to give a name to the pitiless perversity lighted by such a conclusion, and there were times when Longmore was almost persuaded against his finer judgement that he was really the most considerate of husbands and that it was not a man's fault if his wife's love of life had pitched itself once for all in the minor key. The Count's manners were perfect, his discretion irreproachable, and he seemed never to address his companion but, sentimentally speaking, hat in hand. His tone to Longmore—as the latter was perfectly aware—was that of a man of the world to a man not quite of the world; but what it lacked in true frankness it made up in

easy form. "I can't thank you enough for having overcome my wife's shyness," he more than once declared. "If we left her to do as she pleased she would—in her youth and her beauty—bury herself all absurdly alive. Come often, and bring your good friends and compatriots—some of them are so amusing. She'll have nothing to do with mine, but perhaps you'll be able to offer her better son affaire."

M. de Mauves made these speeches with a bright assurance very amazing to our hero, who had an innocent belief that a man's head may point out to him the shortcomings of his heart and make him ashamed of them. He couldn't fancy him formed both to neglect his wife and to take the derisive view of her minding it. Longmore had at any rate an exasperated sense that this nobleman thought rather the less of their interesting friend on account of that very same fine difference of nature which so deeply stirred his own sympathies. He was rarely present during the sessions of the American visitor, and he made a daily journey to Paris, where he had *de gros soucis d'affaires* as he once mentioned—with an all-embracing flourish and not in the least in the tone of apology. When he appeared it was late in the evening and with an imperturbable air of being on the best of terms with every one and every thing which was peculiarly annoying if you happened to have a tacit quarrel with him. If he was an honest man he was an honest man somehow spoiled for confidence. Something he had, however, that his critic vaguely envied, something in his address, splendidly positive, a manner rounded and polished by the habit of conversation and the friction of full experience, an urbanity exercised for his own sake, not for his neighbour's, which seemed the fruit of one of those strong temperaments that rule the inward scene better than the best conscience. The Count had plainly no sense for morals, and poor Longmore, who had the finest, would have been glad to borrow his recipe for appearing then so to range the whole scale of the senses. What was it that enabled him, short of being a monster with visibly cloven feet and exhaling brimstone, to misprize so cruelly a nature like his wife's and to walk about the world with such a handsome invincible grin? It was the essential grossness of his imagination, which had nevertheless helped him to such a store of neat speeches. He could be highly polite and could doubtless be damnably impertinent, but the life of the spirit was a world as closed to him as the world of great music to a man without an ear. It was ten to one he didn't in the least understand how his wife felt; he and his smooth sister had doubtless agreed to regard their relative as a Puritanical little person, of meagre aspirations and few talents, content with looking at Paris from the terrace and, as a special treat, having a countryman very much like herself to regale her with innocent echoes of their native wit. M. de Mauves was tired of his companion; he liked women who could, frankly, amuse him better. She was too dim, too delicate, too modest; she had too few arts, too little coquetry, too much charity. Lighting a cigar some day while he summed up his situation, her husband had probably decided she was incurably stupid. It was the same taste, in essence, our young man moralised, as the taste for M. Gerome and M. Baudry in painting and for M. Gustave Flaubert and M. Charles Baudelaire in literature. The Count was a pagan and his wife a Christian, and between them an impassable gulf. He was by race and instinct a grand seigneur. Longmore had often heard of that historic type, and was properly grateful for an opportunity to examine it closely. It had its elegance of outline, but depended on spiritual sources so remote from those of which he felt the living gush in his own soul that he found himself gazing at it, in irreconcilable antipathy, through a dim historic mist. "I'm a modern bourgeois," he said, "and not perhaps so good a judge of how far a pretty woman's tongue may go at supper before the mirrors properly crack to hear. But I've not met one of the rarest of women without recognising her, without making my reflexion that, charm for charm, such a *maniere d'etre* is more 'fetching' even than the worst of Theresa's songs sung by a dissipated duchess. Wit for wit, I think mine carries me further." It was easy indeed to perceive that, as became a grand seigneur, M. de Mauves had a stock of social principles. He wouldn't especially have desired perhaps that

his wife should compete in amateur operettas with the duchesses in question, for the most part of comparatively recent origin; but he held that a gentleman may take his amusement where he finds it, that he is quite at liberty not to find it at home, and that even an adoptive daughter of his house who should hang her head and have red eyes and allow herself to make any other response to officious condolence than that her husband's amusements were his own affair, would have forfeited every claim to having her finger-tips bowed over and kissed. And yet in spite of this definite faith Longmore figured him much inconvenienced by the Countess's avoidance of betrayals. Did it dimly occur to him that the principle of this reserve was self-control and not self-effacement? She was a model to all the inferior matrons of his line, past and to come, and an occasional "scene" from her at a manageable hour would have had something reassuring—would have attested her stupidity rather better than this mere polish of her patience.

Longmore would have given much to be able to guess how this latter secret worked, and he tried more than once, though timidly and awkwardly enough, to make out the game she was playing. She struck him as having long resisted the force of cruel evidence, and, as though succumbing to it at last, having denied herself on simple grounds of generosity the right to complain. Her faith might have perished, but the sense of her own old deep perversity remained. He believed her thus quite capable of reproaching herself with having expected too much and of trying to persuade herself out of her bitterness by saying that her hopes had been vanities and follies and that what was before her was simply Life. "I hate tragedy," she once said to him; "I'm a dreadful coward about having to suffer or to bleed. I've always tried to believe that—without base concessions—such extremities may always somehow be dodged or indefinitely postponed. I should be willing to buy myself off, from having ever to be OVERWHELMED, by giving up—well, any amusement you like." She lived evidently in nervous apprehension of being fatally convinced—of seeing to the end of her deception. Longmore, when he thought of this, felt the force of his desire to offer her something of which she could be as sure as of the sun in heaven.

IV

His friend Webster meanwhile lost no time in accusing him of the basest infidelity and in asking him what he found at suburban Saint-Germain to prefer to Van Eyck and Memling, Rubens and Rembrandt. A day or two after the receipt of this friend's letter he took a walk with Madame de Mauves in the forest. They sat down on a fallen log and she began to arrange into a bouquet the anemones and violets she had gathered. "I've a word here," he said at last, "from a friend whom I some time ago promised to join in Brussels. The time has come—it has passed. It finds me terribly unwilling to leave Saint-Germain."

She looked up with the immediate interest she always showed in his affairs, but with no hint of a disposition to make a personal application of his words. "Saint-Germain is pleasant enough, but are you doing yourself justice? Shan't you regret in future days that instead of travelling and seeing cities and monuments and museums and improving your mind you simply sat here—for instance—on a log and pulled my flowers to pieces?"

"What I shall regret in future days," he answered after some hesitation, "is that I should have sat here—sat here so much—and never have shown what's the matter with me. I'm fond of museums and monuments and of improving my mind, and I'm particularly fond of my friend Webster. But I can't bring myself to leave Saint-Germain without asking you a question. You must forgive me if it's indiscreet and be assured that curiosity was never more respectful. Are you really as unhappy as I imagine you to be?"

She had evidently not expected his appeal, and, making her change colour, it took her unprepared. "If I strike you as unhappy," she none the less simply said, "I've been a poorer friend to you than I wished to be."

"I, perhaps, have been a better friend of yours than you've supposed," he returned. "I've admired your reserve, your courage, your studied gaiety. But I've felt the existence of something beneath them that was more YOU—more you as I wished to know you—than they were; some trouble in you that I've permitted myself to hate and resent."

She listened all gravely, but without an air of offence, and he felt that while he had been timorously calculating the last consequences of friendship she had quietly enough accepted them. "You surprise me," she said slowly, and her flush still lingered. "But to refuse to answer you would confirm some impression in you even now much too strong. Any 'trouble'—if you mean any unhappiness—that one can sit comfortably talking about is an unhappiness with distinct limitations. If I were examined before a board of commissioners for testing the felicity of mankind I'm sure I should be pronounced a very fortunate woman." There was something that deeply touched him in her tone, and this quality pierced further as she continued. "But let me add, with all gratitude for your sympathy, that it's my own affair altogether. It needn't disturb you, my dear sir," she wound up with a certain quaintness of gaiety, "for I've often found myself in your company contented enough and diverted enough."

"Well, you're a wonderful woman," the young man declared, "and I admire you as I've never admired any one. You're wiser than anything I, for one, can say to you; and what I ask of you is not to let me advise or console you, but simply thank you for letting me know you." He had intended no such outburst as this, but his voice rang loud and he felt an unfamiliar joy as he uttered it.

She shook her head with some impatience. "Let us be friends—as I supposed we were going to be—without protestations and fine words. To have you paying compliments to my wisdom—that would be real wretchedness. I can dispense with your admiration better than the Flemish painters can—better than Van Eyck and Rubens, in spite of all their worshippers. Go join your friend—see everything, enjoy everything, learn everything, and write me an excellent letter, brimming over with your impressions. I'm extremely fond of the Dutch painters," she added with the faintest quaver in the world, an impressible break of voice that Longmore had noticed once or twice before and had interpreted as the sudden weariness, the controlled convulsion, of a spirit self-condemned to play a part.

"I don't believe you care a button for the Dutch painters," he said with a laugh. "But I shall certainly write you a letter."

She rose and turned homeward, thoughtfully rearranging her flowers as she walked. Little was said; Longmore was asking himself with an agitation of his own in the unspoken words whether all this meant simply that he was in love. He looked at the rooks wheeling against the golden-hued sky, between the tree-tops, but not at his companion, whose personal presence seemed lost in the felicity she had created. Madame de Mauves was silent and grave—she felt she had almost grossly failed and she was proportionately disappointed. An emotional friendship she had not desired; her scheme had been to pass with her visitor as a placid creature with a good deal of leisure which she was disposed to devote to profitable conversation of an impersonal sort. She liked him extremely, she felt in him the living force of something to which, when she made up her girlish mind that a needy nobleman was the ripest fruit of time, she had done too scant justice. They went through the little gate in the garden-wall and approached the house. On the terrace Madame Clairin was entertaining a

friend—a little elderly gentleman with a white moustache and an order in his buttonhole. Madame de Mauves chose to pass round the house into the court; whereupon her sister-in-law, greeting Longmore with an authoritative nod, lifted her eye-glass and stared at them as they went by. Longmore heard the little old gentleman uttering some old-fashioned epigram about “*la vieille galanterie française*”—then by a sudden impulse he looked at Madame de Mauves and wondered what she was doing in such a world. She stopped before the house, not asking him to come in. “I hope you will act on my advice and waste no more time at Saint-Germain.”

For an instant there rose to his lips some faded compliment about his time not being wasted, but it expired before the simple sincerity of her look. She stood there as gently serious as the angel of disinterestedness, and it seemed to him he should insult her by treating her words as a bait for flattery. “I shall start in a day or two,” he answered, “but I won’t promise you not to come back.”

“I hope not,” she said simply. “I expect to be here a long time.”

“I shall come and say good-bye,” he returned—which she appeared to accept with a smile as she went in.

He stood a moment, then walked slowly homeward by the terrace. It seemed to him that to leave her thus, for a gain on which she herself insisted, was to know her better and admire her more. But he was aware of a vague ferment of feeling which her evasion of his question half an hour before had done more to deepen than to allay. In the midst of it suddenly, on the great terrace of the Chateau, he encountered M. de Mauves, planted there against the parapet and finishing a cigar. The Count, who, he thought he made out, had an air of peculiar affability, offered him his white plump hand. Longmore stopped; he felt a sharp, a sore desire to cry out to him that he had the most precious wife in the world, that he ought to be ashamed of himself not to know it, and that for all his grand assurance he had never looked down into the depths of her eyes. Richard de Mauves, we have seen, considered he had; but there was doubtless now something in this young woman’s eyes that had not been there five years before. The two men conversed formally enough, and M. de Mauves threw off a light bright remark or two about his visit to America. His tone was not soothing to Longmore’s excited sensibilities. He seemed to have found the country a gigantic joke, and his blandness went but so far as to allow that jokes on that scale are indeed inexhaustible. Longmore was not by habit an aggressive apologist for the seat of his origin, but the Count’s easy diagnosis confirmed his worst estimate of French superficiality. He had understood nothing, felt nothing, learned nothing, and his critic, glancing askance at his aristocratic profile, declared that if the chief merit of a long pedigree was to leave one so fatuously stupid he thanked goodness the Longmores had emerged from obscurity in the present century and in the person of an enterprising timber-merchant. M. de Mauves dwelt of course on that prime oddity of the American order—the liberty allowed the fairer half of the unmarried young, and confessed to some personal study of the “occasions” it offered to the speculative visitor; a line of research in which, during a fortnight’s stay, he had clearly spent his most agreeable hours. “I’m bound to admit,” he said, “that in every case I was disarmed by the extreme candour of the young lady, and that they took care of themselves to better purpose than I have seen some mammas in France take care of them.” Longmore greeted this handsome concession with the grimmest of smiles and damned his impertinent patronage.

Mentioning, however, at last that he was about to leave Saint-Germain, he was surprised, without exactly being flattered, by his interlocutor’s quickened attention. “I’m so very sorry; I hoped we had you for the whole summer.” Longmore murmured something civil and wondered why M. de Mauves should care whether he stayed or went. “You’ve been a real

resource to Madame de Mauves," the Count added; "I assure you I've mentally blessed your visits."

"They were a great pleasure to me," Longmore said gravely. "Some day I expect to come back."

"Pray do"—and the Count made a great and friendly point of it. "You see the confidence I have in you." Longmore said nothing and M. de Mauves puffed his cigar reflectively and watched the smoke. "Madame de Mauves," he said at last, "is a rather singular person." And then while our young man shifted his position and wondered whether he was going to "explain" Madame de Mauves, "Being, as you are, her fellow countryman," this lady's husband pursued, "I don't mind speaking frankly. She's a little overstrained; the most charming woman in the world, as you see, but a little *volontaire* and morbid. Now you see she has taken this extraordinary fancy for solitude. I can't get her to go anywhere, to see any one. When my friends present themselves she's perfectly polite, but it cures them of coming again. She doesn't do herself justice, and I expect every day to hear two or three of them say to me, 'Your wife's *jolie a croquer*: what a pity she hasn't a little *esprit*.' You must have found out that she has really a great deal. But, to tell the whole truth, what she needs is to forget herself. She sits alone for hours poring over her English books and looking at life through that terrible brown fog they seem to me—don't they?—to fling over the world. I doubt if your English authors," the Count went on with a serenity which Longmore afterwards characterised as sublime, "are very sound reading for young married women. I don't pretend to know much about them; but I remember that not long after our marriage Madame de Mauves undertook to read me one day some passages from a certain Wordsworth—a poet highly esteemed, it appears, *chez vous*. It was as if she had taken me by the nape of the neck and held my head for half an hour over a basin of *soupe aux choux*: I felt as if we ought to ventilate the drawing-room before any one called. But I suppose you know him—*ce genie-la*. Every nation has its own ideals of every kind, but when I remember some of OUR charming writers! I think at all events my wife never forgave me and that it was a real shock to her to find she had married a man who had very much the same taste in literature as in cookery. But you're a man of general culture, a man of the world," said M. de Mauves, turning to Longmore but looking hard at the seal of his watchguard. "You can talk about everything, and I'm sure you like Alfred de Musset as well as Monsieur Wordsworth. Talk to her about everything you can, Alfred de Musset included. Bah! I forgot you're going. Come back then as soon as possible and report on your travels. If my wife too would make a little voyage it would do her great good. It would enlarge her horizon"—and M. de Mauves made a series of short nervous jerks with his stick in the air—"it would wake up her imagination. She's too much of one piece, you know—it would show her how much one may bend without breaking." He paused a moment and gave two or three vigorous puffs. Then turning to his companion again with eyebrows expressively raised: "I hope you admire my candour. I beg you to believe I wouldn't say such things to one of US!"

Evening was at hand and the lingering light seemed to charge the air with faintly golden motes. Longmore stood gazing at these luminous particles; he could almost have fancied them a swarm of humming insects, the chorus of a refrain: "She has a great deal of *esprit*—she has a great deal of *esprit*." "Yes,—she has a great deal," he said mechanically, turning to the Count. M. de Mauves glanced at him sharply, as if to ask what the deuce he was talking about. "She has a great deal of intelligence," said Longmore quietly, "a great deal of beauty, a great many virtues."

M. de Mauves busied himself for a moment in lighting another cigar, and when he had finished, with a return of his confidential smile, "I suspect you of thinking that I don't do my

wife justice.” he made answer. “Take care—take care, young man; that’s a dangerous assumption. In general a man always does his wife justice. More than justice,” the Count laughed—“that we keep for the wives of other men!”

Longmore afterwards remembered in favour of his friend’s fine manner that he had not measured at this moment the dusky abyss over which it hovered. Hut a deepening subterranean echo, loudest at the last, lingered on his spiritual ear. For the present his keenest sensation was a desire to get away and cry aloud that M. de Mauves was no better than a pompous dunce. He bade him an abrupt good-night, which was to serve also, he said, as good-bye.

“Decidedly then you go?” It was spoken almost with the note of irritation.

“Decidedly.”

“But of course you’ll come and take leave—?” His manner implied that the omission would be uncivil, but there seemed to Longmore himself something so ludicrous in his taking a lesson in consideration from M. de Mauves that he put the appeal by with a laugh. The Count frowned as if it were a new and unpleasant sensation for him to be left at a loss. “Ah you people have your facons!” he murmured as Longmore turned away, not foreseeing that he should learn still more about his facons before he had done with him.

Longmore sat down to dinner at his hotel with his usual good intentions, but in the act of lifting his first glass of wine to his lips he suddenly fell to musing and set down the liquor untasted. This mood lasted long, and when he emerged from it his fish was cold; but that mattered little, for his appetite was gone. That evening he packed his trunk with an indignant energy. This was so effective that the operation was accomplished before bedtime, and as he was not in the least sleepy he devoted the interval to writing two letters, one of them a short note to Madame de Mauves, which he entrusted to a servant for delivery the next morning. He had found it best, he said, to leave Saint-Germain immediately, but he expected to return to Paris early in the autumn. The other letter was the result of his having remembered a day or two before that he had not yet complied with Mrs. Draper’s injunction to give her an account of his impression of her friend. The present occasion seemed propitious, and he wrote half a dozen pages. His tone, however, was grave, and Mrs. Draper, on reading him over, was slightly disappointed—she would have preferred he should have “raved” a little more. But what chiefly concerns us is the concluding passage.

“The only time she ever spoke to me of her marriage,” he wrote, “she intimated that it had been a perfect love-match. With all abatements, I suppose, this is what most marriages take themselves to be; but it would mean in her case, I think, more than in that of most women, for her love was an absolute idealisation. She believed her husband to be a hero of rose-coloured romance, and he turns out to be not even a hero of very sad-coloured reality. For some time now she has been sounding her mistake, but I don’t believe she has yet touched the bottom. She strikes me as a person who’s begging off from full knowledge—who has patched up a peace with some painful truth and is trying a while the experiment of living with closed eyes. In the dark she tries to see again the gilding on her idol. Illusion of course is illusion, and one must always pay for it; but there’s something truly tragical in seeing an earthly penalty levied on such divine folly as this. As for M. de Mauves he’s a shallow Frenchman to his fingers’ ends, and I confess I should dislike him for this if he were a much better man. He can’t forgive his wife for having married him too extravagantly and loved him too well; since he feels, I suppose, in some uncorrupted corner of his being that as she originally saw him so he ought to have been. It disagrees with him somewhere that a little American bourgeoisie should have fancied him a finer fellow than he is or than he at all wants to be. He hasn’t a

glimmering of real acquaintance with his wife; he can't understand the stream of passion flowing so clear and still. To tell the truth I hardly understand it myself, but when I see the sight I find I greatly admire it. The Count at any rate would have enjoyed the comfort of believing his wife as bad a case as himself, and you'll hardly believe me when I assure you he goes about intimating to gentlemen whom he thinks it may concern that it would be a convenience to him they should make love to Madame de Mauves."

V

On reaching Paris Longmore straightaway purchased a Murray's "Belgium" to help himself to believe that he would start on the morrow for Brussels; but when the morrow came it occurred to him that he ought by way of preparation to acquaint himself more intimately with the Flemish painters in the Louvre. This took a whole morning, but it did little to hasten his departure. He had abruptly left Saint-Germain because it seemed to him that respect for Madame de Mauves required he should bequeath her husband no reason to suppose he had, as it were, taken a low hint; but now that he had deferred to that scruple he found himself thinking more and more ardently of his friend. It was a poor expression of ardour to be lingering irresolutely on the forsaken boulevard, but he detested the idea of leaving Saint-Germain five hundred miles behind him. He felt very foolish, nevertheless, and wandered about nervously, promising himself to take the next train. A dozen trains started, however, and he was still in Paris. This inward ache was more than he had bargained for, and as he looked at the shop-windows he wondered if it represented a "passion." He had never been fond of the word and had grown up with much mistrust of what it stood for. He had hoped that when he should fall "really" in love he should do it with an excellent conscience, with plenty of confidence and joy, doubtless, but no strange soreness, no pangs nor regrets. Here was a sentiment concocted of pity and anger as well as of admiration, and bristling with scruples and doubts and fears. He had come abroad to enjoy the Flemish painters and all others, but what fair-tressed saint of Van Eyck or Memling was so interesting a figure as the lonely lady of Saint-Germain? His restless steps carried him at last out of the long villa-bordered avenue which leads to the Bois de Boulogne.

Summer had fairly begun and the drive beside the lake was empty, but there were various loungers on the benches and chairs, and the great cafe had an air of animation. Longmore's walk had given him an appetite, and he went into the establishment and demanded a dinner, remarking for the hundredth time, as he admired the smart little tables disposed in the open air, how much better (than anywhere else) they ordered this matter in France. "Will monsieur dine in the garden or in the salon?" the waiter blandly asked. Longmore chose the garden and, observing that a great cluster of June roses was trained over the wall of the house, placed himself at a table near by, where the best of dinners was served him on the whitest of linen and in the most shining of porcelain. It so happened that his table was near a window and that as he sat he could look into a corner of the salon. So it was that his attention rested on a lady seated just within the window, which was open, face to face apparently with a companion who was concealed by the curtain. She was a very pretty woman, and Longmore looked at her as often as was consistent with good manners. After a while he even began to wonder who she was and finally to suspect that she was one of those ladies whom it is no breach of good manners to look at as often as you like. Our young man too, if he had been so disposed, would have been the more free to give her all his attention that her own was fixed upon the person facing her. She was what the French call a belle brune, and though Longmore, who had rather a conservative taste in such matters, was but half-charmed by her bold outlines and even braver complexion, he couldn't help admiring her expression of basking contentment.

She was evidently very happy, and her happiness gave her an air of innocence. The talk of her friend, whoever he was, abundantly suited her humour, for she sat listening to him with a broad idle smile and interrupting him fitfully, while she crunched her bonbons, with a murmured response, presumably as broad, which appeared to have the effect of launching him again. She drank a great deal of champagne and ate an immense number of strawberries, and was plainly altogether a person with an impartial relish for strawberries, champagne and what she doubtless would have called betises.

They had half-finished dinner when Longmore sat down, and he was still in his place when they rose. She had hung her bonnet on a nail above her chair, and her companion passed round the table to take it down for her. As he did so she bent her head to look at a wine-stain on her dress, and in the movement exposed the greater part of the back of a very handsome neck. The gentleman observed it, and observed also, apparently, that the room beyond them was empty; that he stood within eyeshot of Longmore he failed to observe. He stooped suddenly and imprinted a gallant kiss on the fair expanse. In the author of this tribute Longmore then recognised Richard de Mauves. The lady to whom it had been rendered put on her bonnet, using his flushed smile as a mirror, and in a moment they passed through the garden on their way to their carriage. Then for the first time M. de Mauves became aware of his wife's young friend. He measured with a rapid glance this spectator's relation to the open window and checked himself in the impulse to stop and speak to him. He contented himself with bowing all imperturbably as he opened the gate for his companion.

That evening Longmore made a railway journey, but not to Brussels. He had effectually ceased to care for Brussels; all he cared for in the world now was Madame de Mauves. The air of his mind had had a sudden clearing-up; pity and anger were still throbbing there, but they had space to range at their pleasure, for doubts and scruples had abruptly departed. It was little, he felt, that he could interpose between her resignation and the indignity of her position; but that little, if it involved the sacrifice of everything that bound him to the tranquil past, he could offer her with a rapture which at last made stiff resistance a terribly inferior substitute for faith. Nothing in his tranquil past had given such a zest to consciousness as this happy sense of choosing to go straight back to Saint-Germain. How to justify his return, how to explain his ardour, troubled him little. He wasn't even sure he wished to be understood; he wished only to show how little by any fault of his Madame de Mauves was alone so with the harshness of fate. He was conscious of no distinct desire to "make love" to her; if he could have uttered the essence of his longing he would have said that he wished her to remember that in a world coloured grey to her vision by the sense of her mistake there was one vividly honest man. She might certainly have remembered it, however, without his coming back to remind her; and it is not to be denied that as he waited for the morrow he longed immensely for the sound of her voice.

He waited the next day till his usual hour of calling—the late afternoon; but he learned at the door that the mistress of the house was not at home. The servant offered the information that she was walking a little way in the forest. Longmore went through the garden and out of the small door into the lane, and, after half an hour's vain exploration, saw her coming toward him at the end of a green by-path. As he appeared she stopped a moment, as if to turn aside; then recognising him she slowly advanced and had presently taken the hand he held out.

"Nothing has happened," she said with her beautiful eyes on him. "You're not ill?"

"Nothing except that when I got to Paris I found how fond I had grown of Saint-Germain."

She neither smiled nor looked flattered; it seemed indeed to Longmore that she took his reappearance with no pleasure. But he was uncertain, for he immediately noted that in his

absence the whole character of her face had changed. It showed him something momentous had happened. It was no longer self-contained melancholy that he read in her eyes, but grief and agitation which had lately struggled with the passionate love of peace ruling her before all things else, and forced her to know that deep experience is never peaceful. She was pale and had evidently been shedding tears. He felt his heart beat hard—he seemed now to touch her secret. She continued to look at him with a clouded brow, as if his return had surrounded her with complications too great to be disguised by a colourless welcome. For some moments, as he turned and walked beside her, neither spoke; then abruptly, “Tell me truly, Mr. Longmore,” she said, “why you’ve come back.” He inclined himself to her, almost pulling up again, with an air that startled her into a certainty of what she had feared. “Because I’ve learned the real answer to the question I asked you the other day. You’re not happy—you’re too good to be happy on the terms offered you. Madame de Mauves,” he went on with a gesture which protested against a gesture of her own, “I can’t be happy, you know, when you’re as little so as I make you out. I don’t care for anything so long as I only feel helpless and sore about you. I found during those dreary days in Paris that the thing in life I most care for is this daily privilege of seeing you. I know it’s very brutal to tell you I admire you; it’s an insult to you to treat you as if you had complained to me or appealed to me. But such a friendship as I waked up to there”—and he tossed his head toward the distant city—“is a potent force, I assure you. When forces are stupidly stifled they explode. However,” he went on, “if you had told me every trouble in your heart it would have mattered little; I couldn’t say more than I—that if that in life from which you’ve hoped most has given you least, this devoted respect of mine will refuse no service and betray no trust.”

She had begun to make marks in the earth with the point of her parasol, but she stopped and listened to him in perfect immobility—immobility save for the appearance by the time he had stopped speaking of a flush in her guarded clearness. Such as it was it told Longmore she was moved, and his first perceiving it was the happiest moment of his life. She raised her eyes at last, and they uttered a plea for non-insistence that unspeakably touched him.

“Thank you—thank you!” she said calmly enough; but the next moment her own emotion baffled this pretence, a convulsion shook her for ten seconds and she burst into tears. Her tears vanished as quickly as they came, but they did Longmore a world of good. He had always felt indefinitely afraid of her; her being had somehow seemed fed by a deeper faith and a stronger will than his own; but her half-dozen smothered sobs showed him the bottom of her heart and convinced him she was weak enough to be grateful. “Excuse me,” she said; “I’m too nervous to listen to you. I believe I could have dealt with an enemy to-day, but I can’t bear up under a friend.”

“You’re killing yourself with stoicism—that’s what is the matter with you!” he cried. “Listen to a friend for his own sake if not for yours. I’ve never presumed to offer you an atom of compassion, and you can’t accuse yourself of an abuse of charity.”

She looked about her as under the constraint of this appeal, but it promised him a reluctant attention. Noting, however, by the wayside the fallen log on which they had rested a few evenings before, she went and sat down on it with a resigned grace while the young man, silent before her and watching her, took from her the mute assurance that if she was charitable now he must at least be very wise.

“Something came to my knowledge yesterday,” he said as he sat down beside her, “which gave me an intense impression of your loneliness. You’re truth itself, and there’s no truth about you. You believe in purity and duty and dignity, and you live in a world in which they’re daily belied. I ask myself with vain rage how you ever came into such a world, and why the perversity of fate never let me know you before.”

She waited a little; she looked down, straight before her. "I like my 'world' no better than you do, and it was not for its own sake I came into it. But what particular group of people is worth pinning one's faith upon? I confess it sometimes seems to me men and women are very poor creatures. I suppose I'm too romantic and always was. I've an unfortunate taste for poetic fitness. Life's hard prose, and one must learn to read prose contentedly. I believe I once supposed all the prose to be in America, which was very foolish. What I thought, what I believed, what I expected, when I was an ignorant girl fatally addicted to falling in love with my own theories, is more than I can begin to tell you now. Sometimes when I remember certain impulses, certain illusions of those days they take away my breath, and I wonder that my false point of view hasn't led me into troubles greater than any I've now to lament. I had a conviction which you'd probably smile at if I were to attempt to express it to you. It was a singular form for passionate faith to take, but it had all of the sweetness and the ardour of passionate faith. It led me to take a great step, and it lies behind me now, far off, a vague deceptive form melting in the light of experience. It has faded, but it hasn't vanished. Some feelings, I'm sure, die only with ourselves; some illusions are as much the condition of our life as our heart-beats. They say that life itself is an illusion—that this world is a shadow of which the reality is yet to come. Life is all of a piece then and there's no shame in being miserably human. As for my loneliness, it doesn't greatly matter; it is the fault in part of my obstinacy. There have been times when I've been frantically distressed and, to tell you the truth, wretchedly homesick, because my maid—a jewel of a maid—lied to me with every second breath. There have been moments when I've wished I was the daughter of a poor New England minister—living in a little white house under a couple of elms and doing all the housework."

She had begun to speak slowly, with reserve and effort; but she went on quickly and as if talk were at last a relief. "My marriage introduced me to people and things which seemed to me at first very strange and then very horrible, and then, to tell the truth, of very little importance. At first I expended a great deal of sorrow and dismay and pity on it all; but there soon came a time when I began to wonder if it were worth one's tears. If I could tell you the eternal friendships I've seen broken, the inconsolable woes consoled, the jealousies and vanities scrambling to outdo each other, you'd agree with me that tempers like yours and mine can understand neither such troubles nor such compensations. A year ago, while I was in the country, a friend of mine was in despair at the infidelity of her husband; she wrote me a most dolorous letter, and on my return to Paris I went immediately to see her. A week had elapsed, and as I had seen stranger things I thought she might have recovered her spirits. Not at all; she was still in despair—but at what? At the conduct, the abandoned, shameless conduct of—well of a lady I'll call Madame de T. You'll imagine of course that Madame de T. was the lady whom my friend's husband preferred to his wife. Far from it; he had never seen her. Who then was Madame de T.? Madame de T. was cruelly devoted to M. de V. And who was M. de V.? M. de V. was—well, in two words again, my friend was cultivating two jealousies at once. I hardly know what I said to her; something at any rate that she found unpardonable, for she quite gave me up. Shortly afterwards my husband proposed we should cease to live in Paris, and I gladly assented, for I believe I had taken a turn of spirits that made me a detestable companion. I should have preferred to go quite into the country, into Auvergne, where my husband has a house. But to him Paris in some degree is necessary, and Saint-Germain has been a conscious compromise."

"A conscious compromise!" Longmore expressively repeated. "That's your whole life."

"It's the life of many people," she made prompt answer—"of most people of quiet tastes, and it's certainly better than acute distress. One's at a loss theoretically to defend compromises; but if I found a poor creature who had managed to arrive at one I should think myself not

urgently called to expose its weak side.” But she had no sooner uttered these words than she laughed all amicably, as if to mitigate their too personal application.

“Heaven forbid one should do that unless one has something better to offer,” Longmore returned. “And yet I’m haunted by the dream of a life in which you should have found no compromises, for they’re a perversion of natures that tend only to goodness and rectitude. As I see it you should have found happiness serene, profound, complete; a *femme de chambre* not a jewel perhaps, but warranted to tell but one fib a day; a society possibly rather provincial, but—in spite of your poor opinion of mankind—a good deal of solid virtue; jealousies and vanities very tame, and no particular iniquities and adulteries. A husband,” he added after a moment—“a husband of your own faith and race and spiritual substance, who would have loved you well.”

She rose to her feet, shaking her head. “You’re very kind to go to the expense of such dazzling visions for me. Visions are vain things; we must make the best of the reality we happen to be in for.”

“And yet,” said Longmore, provoked by what seemed the very wantonness of her patience, “the reality YOU ‘happen to be in for’ has, if I’m not in error, very recently taken a shape that keenly tests your philosophy.”

She seemed on the point of replying that his sympathy was too zealous; but a couple of impatient tears in his eyes proved it founded on a devotion of which she mightn’t make light. “Ah philosophy?” she echoed. “I HAVE none. Thank heaven,” she cried with vehemence, “I have none! I believe, Mr. Longmore,” she added in a moment, “that I’ve nothing on earth but a conscience—it’s a good time to tell you so—nothing but a dogged obstinate clinging conscience. Does that prove me to be indeed of your faith and race, and have you one yourself for which you can say as much? I don’t speak in vanity, for I believe that if my conscience may prevent me from doing anything very base it will effectually prevent me also from doing anything very fine.”

“I’m delighted to hear it,” her friend returned with high emphasis—“that proves we’re made for each other. It’s very certain I too shall never cut a great romantic figure. And yet I’ve fancied that in my case the unaccommodating organ we speak of might be blinded and gagged a while, in a really good cause, if not turned out of doors. In yours,” he went on with the same appealing irony, “is it absolutely beyond being ‘squared’?”

But she made no concession to his tone. “Don’t laugh at your conscience,” she answered gravely; “that’s the only blasphemy I know.”

She had hardly spoken when she turned suddenly at an unexpected sound, and at the same moment he heard a footstep in an adjacent by-path which crossed their own at a short distance from where they stood.

“It’s M. de Mauves,” she said at once; with which she moved slowly forward. Longmore, wondering how she knew without seeing, had overtaken her by the time her husband came into view. A solitary walk in the forest was a pastime to which M. de Mauves was not addicted, but he seemed on this occasion to have resorted to it with some equanimity. He was smoking a fragrant cigar and had thrust his thumb into the armhole of his waistcoat with the air of a man thinking at his ease. He stopped short with surprise on seeing his wife and her companion, and his surprise had for Longmore even the pitch of impertinence. He glanced rapidly from one to the other, fixed the young man’s own look sharply a single instant and then lifted his hat with formal politeness.

“I was not aware,” he said, turning to Madame de Mauves, “that I might congratulate you on the return of monsieur.”

“You should at once have known it,” she immediately answered, “if I had expected such a pleasure.”

She had turned very pale, and Longmore felt this to be a first meeting after some commotion. “My return was unexpected to myself,” he said to her husband. “I came back last night.”

M. de Mauves seemed to express such satisfaction as could consort with a limited interest. “It’s needless for me to make you welcome. Madame de Mauves knows the duties of hospitality.” And with another bow he continued his walk.

She pursued her homeward course with her friend, neither of them pretending much not to consent to appear silent. The Count’s few moments with them had both chilled Longmore and angered him, casting a shadow across a prospect which had somehow, just before, begun to open and almost to brighten. He watched his companion narrowly as they went, and wondered what she had last had to suffer. Her husband’s presence had checked her disposition to talk, though nothing betrayed she had recognised his making a point at her expense. Yet if matters were none the less plainly at a crisis between them he could but wonder vainly what it was on her part that prevented some practical protest or some rupture. What did she suspect?—how much did she know? To what was she resigned?—how much had she forgiven? How, above all, did she reconcile with knowledge, or with suspicion, that intense consideration she had just now all but assured him she entertained? “She has loved him once,” Longmore said with a sinking of the heart, “and with her to love once is to commit herself for ever. Her clever husband thinks her too prim. What would a stupid poet call it?” He relapsed with aching impotence into the sense of her being somehow beyond him, unattainable, immeasurable by his own fretful logic. Suddenly he gave three passionate switches in the air with his cane which made Madame de Mauves look round. She could hardly have guessed their signifying that where ambition was so vain the next best thing to it was the very ardour of hopelessness.

She found in her drawing-room the little elderly Frenchman, M. de Chalumeau, whom Longmore had observed a few days before on the terrace. On this occasion too Madame Clairin was entertaining him, but as her sister-in-law came in she surrendered her post and addressed herself to our hero. Longmore, at thirty, was still an ingenuous youth, and there was something in this lady’s large assured attack that fairly intimidated him. He was doubtless not as reassured as he ought to have been at finding he had not absolutely forfeited her favour by his want of resource during their last interview, and a suspicion of her being prepared to approach him on another line completed his distress.

“So you’ve returned from Brussels by way of the forest?” she archly asked.

“I’ve not been to Brussels. I returned yesterday from Paris by the only way—by the train.”

Madame Clairin was infinitely struck. “I’ve never known a person at all to be so fond of Saint-Germain. They generally declare it’s horribly dull.”

“That’s not very polite to you,” said Longmore, vexed at his lack of superior form and determined not to be abashed.

“Ah what have I to do with it?” Madame Clairin brightly wailed. “I’m the dullest thing here. They’ve not had, other gentlemen, your success with my sister-in-law.”

“It would have been very easy to have it. Madame de Mauves is kindness itself.”

She swung open her great fan. “To her own countrymen!”

Longmore remained silent; he hated the tone of this conversation.

The speaker looked at him a little and then took in their hostess, to whom M. de Chalumeau was serving up another epigram, which the charming creature received with a droop of the head and eyes that strayed through the window. "Don't pretend to tell me," Madame Clairin suddenly exhaled, "that you're not in love with that pretty woman."

"Allons donc!" cried Longmore in the most inspired French he had ever uttered. He rose the next minute and took a hasty farewell.

VI

He allowed several days to pass without going back; it was of a sublime suitability to appear to regard his friend's frankness during their last interview as a general invitation. The sacrifice cost him a great effort, for hopeless passions are exactly not the most patient; and he had moreover a constant fear that if, as he believed, deep within the circle round which he could only hover, the hour of supreme explanations had come, the magic of her magnanimity might convert M. de Mauves. Vicious men, it was abundantly recorded, had been so converted as to be acceptable to God, and the something divine in this lady's composition would sanctify any means she should choose to employ. Her means, he kept repeating, were no business of his, and the essence of his admiration ought to be to allow her to do as she liked; but he felt as if he should turn away into a world out of which most of the joy had departed if she should like, after all, to see nothing more in his interest in her than might be repaid by mere current social coin.

When at last he went back he found to his vexation that he was to run the gauntlet of Madame Clairin's officious hospitality. It was one of the first mornings of perfect summer, and the drawing-room, through the open windows, was flooded with such a confusion of odours and bird-notes as might warrant the hope that Madame de Mauves would renew with him for an hour or two the exploration of the forest. Her sister-in-law, however, whose hair was not yet dressed, emerged like a brassy discord in a maze of melody. At the same moment the servant returned with his mistress's regrets; she begged to be excused, she was indisposed and unable to see Mr. Longmore. The young man knew just how disappointed he looked and just what Madame Clairin thought of it, and this consciousness determined in him an attitude of almost aggressive frigidity. This was apparently what she desired. She wished to throw him off his balance and, if she was not mistaken, knew exactly how.

"Put down your hat, Mr. Longmore," she said, "and be polite for once. You were not at all polite the other day when I asked you that friendly question about the state of your heart."

"I HAVE no heart—to talk about," he returned with as little grace.

"As well say you've none at all. I advise you to cultivate a little eloquence; you may have use for it. That was not an idle question of mine; I don't ask idle questions. For a couple of months now that you've been coming and going among us it seems to me you've had very few to answer of any sort."

"I've certainly been very well treated," he still dryly allowed.

His companion waited ever so little to bring out: "Have you never felt disposed to ask any?"

Her look, her tone, were so charged with insidious meanings as to make him feel that even to understand her would savour of dishonest complicity. "What is it you have to tell me?" he cried with a flushed frown.

Her own colour rose at the question. It's rather hard, when you come bearing yourself very much as the sibyl when she came to the Roman king, to be treated as something worse than a

vulgar gossip. "I might tell you, monsieur," she returned, "that you've as bad a ton as any young man I ever met. Where have you lived—what are your ideas? A stupid one of my own—possibly!—has been to call your attention to a fact that it takes some delicacy to touch upon. You've noticed, I suppose, that my sister-in-law isn't the happiest woman in the world."

"Oh!"—Longmore made short work of it.

She seemed to measure his intelligence a little uncertainly. "You've formed, I suppose," she nevertheless continued, "your conception of the grounds of her discontent?"

"It hasn't required much forming. The grounds—or at least a specimen or two of them—have simply stared me in the face."

Madame Clairin considered a moment with her eyes on him. "Yes—ces choses-la se voient. My brother, in a single word, has the deplorable habit of falling in love with other women. I don't judge him; I don't judge my sister-in-law. I only permit myself to say that in her position I would have managed otherwise. I'd either have kept my husband's affection or I'd have frankly done without it. But my sister's an odd compound; I don't profess to understand her. Therefore it is, in a measure, that I appeal to you, her fellow countryman. Of course you'll be surprised at my way of looking at the matter, and I admit that it's a way in use only among people whose history—that of a race—has cultivated in them the sense for high political solutions." She paused and Longmore wondered where the history of her race was going to lead her. But she clearly saw her course. "There has never been a galant homme among us, I fear, who has not given his wife, even when she was very charming, the right to be jealous. We know our history for ages back, and the fact's established. It's not a very edifying one if you like, but it's something to have scandals with pedigrees—if you can't have them with attenuations. Our men have been Frenchmen of France, and their wives—I may say it—have been of no meaner blood. You may see all their portraits at our poor charming old house—every one of them an 'injured' beauty, but not one of them hanging her head. Not one of them ever had the bad taste to be jealous, and yet not one in a dozen ever consented to an indiscretion—allowed herself, I mean, to be talked about. Voila comme elles ont su s'arranger. How they did it—go and look at the dusky faded canvases and pastels and ask. They were dear brave women of wit. When they had a headache they put on a little rouge and came to supper as usual, and when they had a heart-ache they touched up that quarter with just such another brush. These are great traditions and charming precedents, I hold, and it doesn't seem to me fair that a little American bourgeoisie should come in and pretend to alter them—all to hang her modern photograph and her obstinate little air penche in the gallery of our shrewd great-grandmothers. She should fall into line, she should keep up the tone. When she married my brother I don't suppose she took him for a member of a societe de bonnes oeuvres. I don't say we're right; who IS right? But we are as history has made us, and if any one's to change it had better be our charming, but not accommodating, friend." Again Madame Clairin paused, again she opened and closed her great modern fan, which clattered like the screen of a shop-window. "Let her keep up the tone!" she prodigiously repeated.

Longmore felt himself gape, but he gasped an "Ah!" to cover it. Madame Clairin's dip into the family annals had apparently imparted an honest zeal to her indignation. "For a long time," she continued, "my belle-soeur has been taking the attitude of an injured woman, affecting a disgust with the world and shutting herself up to read free-thinking books. I've never permitted myself, you may believe, the least observation on her conduct, but I can't accept it as the last word either of taste or of tact. When a woman with her prettiness lets her husband stray away she deserves no small part of her fate. I don't wish you to agree with

me—on the contrary; but I call such a woman a pure noodle. She must have bored him to death. What has passed between them for many months needn't concern us; what provocation my sister has had—monstrous, if you wish—what ennui my brother has suffered. It's enough that a week ago, just after you had ostensibly gone to Brussels, something happened to produce an explosion. She found a letter in his pocket, a photograph, a trinket, *que sais-je?* At any rate there was a grand scene. I didn't listen at the keyhole, and I don't know what was said; but I've reason to believe that my poor brother was hauled over the coals as I fancy none of his ancestors have ever been—even by angry ladies who weren't their wives."

Longmore had leaned forward in silent attention with his elbows on his knees, and now, impulsively, he dropped his face into his hands. "Ah poor poor woman!"

"Voilà!" said Madame Clairin. "You pity her."

"Pity her?" cried Longmore, looking up with ardent eyes and forgetting the spirit of the story to which he had been treated in the miserable facts. "Don't you?"

"A little. But I'm not acting sentimentally—I'm acting scientifically. We've always been capable of ideas. I want to arrange things; to see my brother free to do as he chooses; to see his wife contented. Do you understand me?"

"Very well, I think," the young man said. "You're the most immoral person I've lately had the privilege of conversing with."

Madame Clairin took it calmly. "Possibly. When was ever a great peacemaker not immoral?"

"Ah no," Longmore protested. "You're too superficial to be a great peacemaker. You don't begin to know anything about Madame de Mauves."

She inclined her head to one side while her fine eyes kept her visitor in view; she mused a moment and then smiled as with a certain compassionate patience. "It's not in my interest to contradict you."

"It would be in your interest to learn, madam" he resolutely returned, "what honest men most admire in a woman—and to recognise it when you see it."

She was wonderful—she waited a moment. "So you ARE in love!" she then effectively brought out.

For a moment he thought of getting up, but he decided to stay. "I wonder if you'd understand me," he said at last, "if I were to tell you that I have for Madame de Mauves the most devoted and most respectful friendship?"

"You underrate my intelligence. But in that case you ought to exert your influence to put an end to these painful domestic scenes."

"Do you imagine she talks to me about her domestic scenes?" Longmore cried.

His companion stared. "Then your friendship isn't returned?" And as he but ambiguously threw up his hands, "Now, at least," she added, "she'll have something to tell you. I happen to know the upshot of my brother's last interview with his wife." Longmore rose to his feet as a protest against the indelicacy of the position into which he had been drawn; but all that made him tender made him curious, and she caught in his averted eyes an expression that prompted her to strike her blow. "My brother's absurdly entangled with a certain person in Paris; of course he ought not to be, but he wouldn't be my brother if he weren't. It was this irregular passion that dictated his words. 'Listen to me, madam,' he cried at last; 'let us live like people who understand life! It's unpleasant to be forced to say such things outright, but you've a way of bringing one down to the rudiments. I'm faithless, I'm heartless, I'm brutal,

I'm everything horrible—it's understood. Take your revenge, console yourself: you're too charming a woman to have anything to complain of. Here's a handsome young man sighing himself into a consumption for you. Listen to your poor compatriot and you'll find that virtue's none the less becoming for being good-natured. You'll see that it's not after all such a doleful world and that there's even an advantage in having the most impudent of husbands." Madame Clairin paused; Longmore had turned very pale. "You may believe it," she amazingly pursued; "the speech took place in my presence; things were done in order. And now, monsieur"—this with a wondrous strained grimace which he was too troubled at the moment to appreciate, but which he remembered later with a kind of awe—"we count on you!"

"Her husband said this to her face to face, as you say it to me now?" he asked after a silence.

"Word for word and with the most perfect politeness."

"And Madame de Mauves—what did she say?"

Madame Clairin smiled again. "To such a speech as that a woman says—nothing. She had been sitting with a piece of needlework, and I think she hadn't seen Richard since their quarrel the day before. He came in with the gravity of an ambassador, and I'm sure that when he made his *demande en mariage* his manner wasn't more respectful. He only wanted white gloves!" said Longmore's friend. "My belle-soeur sat silent a few moments, drawing her stitches, and then without a word, without a glance, walked out of the room. It was just what she SHOULD have done!"

"Yes," the young man repeated, "it was just what she should have done."

"And I, left alone with my brother, do you know what I said?"

Longmore shook his head.

"Mauvals sujet!" he suggested.

"'You've done me the honour,' I said, 'to take this step in my presence. I don't pretend to qualify it. You know what you're about, and it's your own affair. But you may confide in my discretion.' Do you think he has had reason to complain of it?" She received no answer; her visitor had slowly averted himself; he passed his gloves mechanically round the band of his hat. "I hope," she cried, "you're not going to start for Brussels!"

Plainly he was much disturbed, and Madame Clairin might congratulate herself on the success of her plea for old-fashioned manners. And yet there was something that left her more puzzled than satisfied in the colourless tone with which he answered, "No, I shall remain here for the present." The processes of his mind were unsocially private, and she could have fancied for a moment that he was linked with their difficult friend in some monstrous conspiracy of asceticism.

"Come this evening," she nevertheless bravely resumed. "The rest will take care of itself. Meanwhile I shall take the liberty of telling my sister-in-law that I've repeated—in short, that I've put you *au fait*"

He had a start but he controlled himself, speaking quietly enough. "Tell her what you please. Nothing you can tell her will affect her conduct."

"Voyons! Do you mean to tell me that a woman young, pretty, sentimental, neglected, wronged if you will—? I see you don't believe it. Believe simply in your own opportunity!" she went on. "But for heaven's sake, if it is to lead anywhere, don't come back with that *visage de croquemort*. You look as if you were going to bury your heart—not to offer it to a

pretty woman. You're much better when you smile—you're very nice then. Come, do yourself justice."

He remained a moment face to face with her, but his expression didn't change. "I shall do myself justice," he however after an instant made answer; and abruptly, with a bow, he took his departure.

VII

He felt, when he found himself unobserved and outside, that he must plunge into violent action, walk fast and far and defer the opportunity for thought. He strode away into the forest, swinging his cane, throwing back his head, casting his eyes into verdurous vistas and following the road without a purpose. He felt immensely excited, but could have given no straight name to his agitation. It was a joy as all increase of freedom is joyous; something seemed to have been cleared out of his path and his destiny to have rounded a cape and brought him into sight of an open sea. But it was a pain in the degree in which his freedom somehow resolved itself into the need of despising all mankind with a single exception; and the fact that Madame de Mauves inhabited a planet contaminated by the presence of the baser multitude kept elation from seeming a pledge of ideal bliss.

There she was, at any rate, and circumstances now forced them to be intimate. She had ceased to have what men call a secret for him, and this fact itself brought with it a sort of rapture. He had no prevision that he should "profit," in the vulgar sense, by the extraordinary position into which they had been thrown; it might be but a cruel trick of destiny to make hope a harsher mockery and renunciation a keener suffering. But above all this rose the conviction that she could do nothing that wouldn't quicken his attachment. It was this conviction that gross accident—all odious in itself—would force the beauty of her character into more perfect relief for him that made him stride along as if he were celebrating a spiritual feast. He rambled at hazard for a couple of hours, finding at last that he had left the forest behind him and had wandered into an unfamiliar region. It was a perfectly rural scene, and the still summer day gave it a charm for which its meagre elements but half accounted.

He thought he had never seen anything so characteristically French; all the French novels seemed to have described it, all the French landscapists to have painted it. The fields and trees were of a cool metallic green; the grass looked as if it might stain his trousers and the foliage his hands. The clear light had a mild greyness, the sheen of silver, not of gold, was in the work-a-day sun. A great red-roofed high-stacked farmhouse, with whitewashed walls and a straggling yard, surveyed the highroad, on one side, from behind a transparent curtain of poplars. A narrow stream half-choked with emerald rushes and edged with grey aspens occupied the opposite quarter. The meadows rolled and sloped away gently to the low horizon, which was barely concealed by the continuous line of clipped and marshalled trees. The prospect was not rich, but had a frank homeliness that touched the young man's fancy. It was full of light atmosphere and diffused clearness, and if it was prosaic it was somehow sociable.

Longmore was disposed to walk further, and he advanced along the road beneath the poplars. In twenty minutes he came to a village which straggled away to the right, among orchards and potagers. On the left, at a stone's throw from the road, stood a little pink-faced inn which reminded him that he had not breakfasted, having left home with a prevision of hospitality from Madame de Mauves. In the inn he found a brick-tiled parlour and a hostess in sabots and a white cap, whom, over the omelette she speedily served him—borrowing licence from the bottle of sound red wine that accompanied it—he assured she was a true artist. To reward his compliment she invited him to smoke his cigar in her little garden behind the house.

Here he found a tonnelle and a view of tinted crops stretching down to the stream. The tonnelle was rather close, and he preferred to lounge on a bench against the pink wall, in the sun, which was not too hot. Here, as he rested and gazed and mused, he fell into a train of thought which, in an indefinable fashion, was a soft influence from the scene about him. His heart, which had been beating fast for the past three hours, gradually checked its pulses and left him looking at life with rather a more level gaze. The friendly tavern sounds coming out through the open windows, the sunny stillness of the yellowing grain which covered so much vigorous natural life, conveyed no strained nor high-pitched message, had little to say about renunciation—nothing at all about spiritual zeal. They communicated the sense of plain ripe nature, expressed the unperverted reality of things, declared that the common lot isn't brilliantly amusing and that the part of wisdom is to grasp frankly at experience lest you miss it altogether. What reason there was for his beginning to wonder after this whether a deeply-wounded heart might be soothed and healed by such a scene, it would be difficult to explain; certain it was that as he sat there he dreamt, awake, of an unhappy woman who strolled by the slow-flowing stream before him and who pulled down the fruit-laden boughs in the orchards. He mused and mused, and at last found himself quite angry that he couldn't somehow think worse of Madame de Mauves—or at any rate think otherwise. He could fairly claim that in the romantic way he asked very little of life—made modest demands on passion: why then should his only passion be born to ill fortune? Why should his first—his last—glimpse of positive happiness be so indissolubly linked with renunciation?

It is perhaps because, like many spirits of the same stock, he had in his composition a lurking principle of sacrifice, sacrifice for sacrifice's sake, to the authority of which he had ever paid due deference, that he now felt all the vehemence of rebellion. To renounce, to renounce again, to renounce for ever, was this all that youth and longing and ardour were meant for? Was experience to be muffled and mutilated like an indecent picture? Was a man to sit and deliberately condemn his future to be the blank memory of a regret rather than the long possession of a treasure? Sacrifice? The word was a trap for minds muddled by fear, an ignoble refuge of weakness. To insist now seemed not to dare, but simply to BE, to live on possible terms.

His hostess came out to hang a moist cloth on the hedge, and, though her guest was sitting quietly enough, she might have imagined in his kindled eyes a flattering testimony to the quality of her wine. As she turned back into the house she was met by a young man of whom Longmore took note in spite of his high distraction. He was evidently a member of that jovial fraternity of artists whose very shabbiness has an affinity with the unestablished and unexpected in life—the element often gazed at with a certain wistfulness out of the curtained windows even of the highest respectability. Longmore was struck first with his looking like a very clever man and then with his looking like a contented one. The combination, as it was expressed in his face, might have arrested the attention of a less exasperated reasoner. He had a slouched hat and a yellow beard, a light easel under one arm, and an unfinished sketch in oils under the other. He stopped and stood talking for some moments to the landlady, while something pleasant played in his face. They were discussing the possibilities of dinner; the hostess enumerated some very savoury ones, and he nodded briskly, assenting to everything. It couldn't be, Longmore thought, that he found such ideal ease in the prospect of lamb-chops and spinach and a croute aux fruits. When the dinner had been ordered he turned up his sketch, and the good woman fell to admiring and comparing, to picking up, off by the stream-side, the objects represented.

Was it his work, Longmore wondered, that made him so happy? Was a strong talent the best thing in the world? The landlady went back to her kitchen, and the young painter stood, as if he were waiting for something, beside the gate which opened upon the path across the fields.

Longmore sat brooding and asking himself if it weren't probably better to cultivate the arts than to cultivate the passions. Before he had answered the question the painter had grown tired of waiting. He had picked up a pebble, tossed it lightly into an upper window and called familiarly "Claudine!" Claudine appeared; Longmore heard her at the window, bidding the young man cultivate patience. "But I'm losing my light," he said; "I must have my shadows in the same place as yesterday."

"Go without me then," Claudine answered; "I'll join you in ten minutes." Her voice was fresh and young; it represented almost aggressively to Longmore that she was as pleased as her companion.

"Don't forget the Chenier," cried the young man, who, turning away, passed out of the gate and followed the path across the fields until he disappeared among the trees by the side of the stream. Who might Claudine be? Longmore vaguely wondered; and was she as pretty as her voice? Before long he had a chance to satisfy himself; she came out of the house with her hat and parasol, prepared to follow her companion. She had on a pink muslin dress and a little white hat, and she was as pretty as suffices almost any Frenchwoman to be pleasing. She had a clear brown skin and a bright dark eye and a step that made walking as light a matter as being blown—and this even though she happened to be at the moment not a little overweighted. Her hands were encumbered with various articles involved in her pursuit of her friend. In one arm she held her parasol and a large roll of needlework, and in the other a shawl and a heavy white umbrella, such as painters use for sketching. Meanwhile she was trying to thrust into her pocket a paper-covered volume which Longmore saw to be the poems of Andre Chenier, and in the effort dropping the large umbrella and marking this with a half-smiled exclamation of disgust. Longmore stepped forward and picked up the umbrella, and as she, protesting her gratitude, put out her hand to take it, he recognised her as too obliging to the young man who had preceded her.

"You've too much to carry," he said; "you must let me help you."

"You're very good, monsieur," she answered. "My husband always forgets something. He can do nothing without his umbrella. He is d'une etourderie—"

"You must allow me to carry the umbrella," Longmore risked; "there's too much of it for a lady."

She assented, after many compliments to his politeness; and he walked by her side into the meadow. She went lightly and rapidly, picking her steps and glancing forward to catch a glimpse of her husband. She was graceful, she was charming, she had an air of decision and yet of accommodation, and it seemed to our friend that a young artist would work none the worse for having her seated at his side reading Chenier's iambics. They were newly married, he supposed, and evidently their path of life had none of the mocking crookedness of some others. They asked little; but what need to ask more than such quiet summer days by a shady stream, with a comrade all amiability, to say nothing of art and books and a wide unmenaced horizon? To spend such a morning, to stroll back to dinner in the red-tiled parlour of the inn, to ramble away again as the sun got low—all this was a vision of delight which floated before him only to torture him with a sense of the impossible. All Frenchwomen were not coquettes, he noted as he kept pace with his companion. She uttered a word now and then for politeness' sake, but she never looked at him and seemed not in the least to care that he was a well-favoured and well-dressed young man. She cared for nothing but the young artist in the shabby coat and the slouched hat, and for discovering where he had set up his easel.

This was soon done. He was encamped under the trees, close to the stream, and, in the diffused green shade of the little wood, couldn't have felt immediate need of his umbrella. He

received a free rebuke, however, for forgetting it, and was informed of what he owed to Longmore's complaisance. He was duly grateful; he thanked our hero warmly and offered him a seat on the grass. But Longmore felt himself a marplot and lingered only long enough to glance at the young man's sketch and to see in it an easy rendering of the silvery stream and the vivid green rushes. The young wife had spread her shawl on the grass at the base of a tree and meant to seat herself when he had left them, meant to murmur Chenier's verses to the music of the gurgling river. Longmore looked a while from one of these lucky persons to the other, barely stifled a sigh, bade them good-morning and took his departure. He knew neither where to go nor what to do; he seemed afloat on the sea of ineffectual longing. He strolled slowly back to the inn, where, in the doorway, he met the landlady returning from the butcher's with the lambchops for the dinner of her lodgers.

"Monsieur has made the acquaintance of the dame of our young painter," she said with a free smile—a smile too free for malicious meanings. "Monsieur has perhaps seen the young man's picture. It appears that he's d'une jolie force."

"His picture's very charming," said Longmore, "but his dame is more charming still."

"She's a very nice little woman; but I pity her all the more."

"I don't see why she's to be pitied," Longmore pleaded. "They seem a very happy couple."

The landlady gave a knowing nod. "Don't trust to it, monsieur! Those artists—*ca na pas de principes!* From one day to another he can plant her there! I know them, *allez*. I've had them here very often; one year with one, another year with another."

Longmore was at first puzzled. Then, "You mean she's not his wife?" he asked.

She took it responsibly. "What shall I tell you? They're not *des hommes serieux*, those gentlemen! They don't engage for eternity. It's none of my business, and I've no wish to speak ill of madame. She's *gentille*—but *gentille*, and she loves her *jeune homme* to distraction."

"Who then is so distinguished a young woman?" asked Longmore. "What do you know about her?"

"Nothing for certain; but it's my belief that she's better than he. I've even gone so far as to believe that she's a lady—a *vraie dame*—and that she has given up a great many things for him. I do the best I can for them, but I don't believe she has had all her life to put up with a dinner of two courses." And she turned over her lamb-chops tenderly, as to say that though a good cook could imagine better things, yet if you could have but one course lamb-chops had much in their favour. "I shall do them with breadcrumbs. *Voila les femmes, monsieur!*"

Longmore turned away with the feeling that women were indeed a measureless mystery, and that it was hard to say in which of their forms of perversity there was most merit. He walked back to Saint-Germain more slowly than he had come, with less philosophic resignation to any event and more of the urgent egotism of the passion pronounced by philosophers the supremely selfish one. Now and then the episode of the happy young painter and the charming woman who had given up a great many things for him rose vividly in his mind and seemed to mock his moral unrest like some obtrusive vision of unattainable bliss.

The landlady's gossip had cast no shadow on its brightness; her voice seemed that of the vulgar chorus of the uninitiated, which stands always ready with its gross prose rendering of the inspired passages of human action. Was it possible a man could take THAT from a woman—take all that lent lightness to that other woman's footstep and grace to her surrender and not give her the absolute certainty of a devotion as unalterable as the process of the sun?

Was it possible that so clear a harmony had the seeds of trouble, that the charm of so perfect union could be broken by anything but death? Longmore felt an immense desire to cry out a thousand times "No!" for it seemed to him at last that he was somehow only a graver equivalent of the young lover and that rustling Claudine was a lighter sketch of Madame de Mauves. The heat of the sun, as he walked along, became oppressive, and when he re-entered the forest he turned aside into the deepest shade he could find and stretched himself on the mossy ground at the foot of a great beech. He lay for a while staring up into the verdurous dusk overhead and trying mentally to see his friend at Saint-Germain hurry toward some quiet stream-side where HE waited, as he had seen that trusting creature hurry an hour before. It would be hard to say how well he succeeded; but the effort soothed rather than excited him, and as he had had a good deal both of moral and physical fatigue he sank at last into a quiet sleep. While he slept moreover he had a strange and vivid dream. He seemed to be in a wood, very much like the one on which his eyes had lately closed; but the wood was divided by the murmuring stream he had left an hour before. He was walking up and down, he thought, restlessly and in intense expectation of some momentous event. Suddenly, at a distance, through the trees, he saw a gleam of a woman's dress, on which he hastened to meet her. As he advanced he recognised her, but he saw at the same time that she was on the other bank of the river. She seemed at first not to notice him, but when they had come to opposite places she stopped and looked at him very gravely and pityingly. She made him no sign that he must cross the stream, but he wished unutterably to stand by her side. He knew the water was deep, and it seemed to him he knew how he should have to breast it and how he feared that when he rose to the surface she would have disappeared. Nevertheless he was going to plunge when a boat turned into the current from above and came swiftly toward them, guided by an oarsman who was sitting so that they couldn't see his face. He brought the boat to the bank where Longmore stood; the latter stepped in, and with a few strokes they touched the opposite shore. Longmore got out and, though he was sure he had crossed the stream, Madame de Mauves was not there. He turned with a kind of agony and saw that now she was on the other bank—the one he had left. She gave him a grave silent glance and walked away up the stream. The boat and the boatman resumed their course, but after going a short distance they stopped and the boatman turned back and looked at the still divided couple. Then Longmore recognised him—just as he had recognised him a few days before at the restaurant in the Bois de Boulogne.

VIII

He must have slept some time after he ceased dreaming for he had no immediate memory of this vision. It came back to him later, after he had roused himself and had walked nearly home. No great arrangement was needed to make it seem a striking allegory, and it haunted and oppressed him for the rest of the day. He took refuge, however, in his quickened conviction that the only sound policy in life is to grasp unsparingly at happiness; and it seemed no more than one of the vigorous measures dictated by such a policy to return that evening to Madame de Mauves. And yet when he had decided to do so and had carefully dressed himself he felt an irresistible nervous tremor which made it easier to linger at his open window, wondering with a strange mixture of dread and desire whether Madame Clairin had repeated to her sister-in-law what she had said to him. His presence now might be simply a gratuitous annoyance, and yet his absence might seem to imply that it was in the power of circumstances to make them ashamed to meet each other's eyes. He sat a long time with his head in his hands, lost in a painful confusion of hopes and ambiguities. He felt at moments as if he could throttle Madame Clairin, and yet couldn't help asking himself if it weren't possible she had done him a service. It was late when he left the hotel, and as he entered the gate of the other house his heart beat so fast that he was sure his voice would show it.

The servant ushered him into the drawing-room, which was empty and with the lamp burning low. But the long windows were open and their light curtains swaying in a soft warm wind, so that Longmore immediately stepped out upon the terrace. There he found Madame de Mauves alone, slowly pacing its length. She was dressed in white, very simply, and her hair was arranged not as she usually wore it, but in a single loose coil and as if she were unprepared for company. She stopped when she saw her friend, showed some surprise, uttered an exclamation and stood waiting for him to speak. He tried, with his eyes on her, to say something, but found no words. He knew it was awkward, it was offensive, to stand gazing at her; but he couldn't say what was suitable and mightn't say what he wished. Her face was indistinct in the dim light, but he felt her eyes fixed on him and wondered what they expressed. Did they warn him, did they plead, or did they confess to a sense of provocation? For an instant his head swam; he was sure it would make all things clear to stride forward and fold her in his arms. But a moment later he was still dumb there before her; he hadn't moved; he knew she had spoken, but he hadn't understood.

"You were here this morning," she continued; and now, slowly, the meaning of her words came to him. "I had a bad headache and had to shut myself up." She spoke with her usual voice.

Longmore mastered his agitation and answered her without betraying himself. "I hope you're better now."

"Yes, thank you, I'm better—much better."

He waited again and she moved away to a chair and seated herself. After a pause he followed her and leaned closer to her, against the balustrade of the terrace. "I hoped you might have been able to come out for the morning into the forest. I went alone; it was a lovely day, and I took a long walk."

"It was a lovely day," she said absently, and sat with her eyes lowered, slowly opening and closing her fan. Longmore, as he watched her, felt more and more assured her sister-in-law had seen her since her interview with him; that her attitude toward him was changed. It was this same something that hampered the desire with which he had come, or at least converted all his imagined freedom of speech about it to a final hush of wonder. No, certainly, he couldn't clasp her to his arms now, any more than some antique worshipper could have clasped the marble statue in his temple. But Longmore's statue spoke at last with a full human voice and even with a shade of human hesitation. She looked up, and it seemed to him her eyes shone through the dusk.

"I'm very glad you came this evening—and I've a particular reason for being glad. I half-expected you, and yet I thought it possible you mightn't come."

"As the case has been present to me," Longmore answered, "it was impossible I shouldn't come. I've spent every minute of the day in thinking of you."

She made no immediate reply, but continued to open and close her fan thoughtfully. At last, "I've something important to say to you," she resumed with decision. "I want you to know to a certainty that I've a very high opinion of you." Longmore gave an uneasy shift to his position. To what was she coming? But he said nothing, and she went on: "I take a great interest in you. There's no reason why I shouldn't say it. I feel a great friendship for you." He began to laugh, all awkwardly—he hardly knew why, unless because this seemed the very irony of detachment. But she went on in her way: "You know, I suppose, that a great disappointment always implies a great confidence—a great hope."

“I’ve certainly hoped,” he said, “hoped strongly; but doubtless never rationally enough to have a right to bemoan my disappointment.”

There was something troubled in her face that seemed all the while to burn clearer. “You do yourself injustice. I’ve such confidence in your fairness of mind that I should be greatly disappointed if I were to find it wanting.”

“I really almost believe you’re amusing yourself at my expense,” the young man cried. “My fairness of mind? Of all the question-begging terms!” he laughed. “The only thing for one’s mind to be fair to is the thing one FEELS!”

She rose to her feet and looked at him hard. His eyes by this time were accustomed to the imperfect light, and he could see that if she was urgent she was yet beseechingly kind. She shook her head impatiently and came near enough to lay her fan on his arm with a strong pressure. “If that were so it would be a weary world. I know enough, however, of your probable attitude. You needn’t try to express it. It’s enough that your sincerity gives me the right to ask a favour of you—to make an intense, a solemn request.”

“Make it; I listen.”

“DON’T DISAPPOINT ME. If you don’t understand me now you will to-morrow or very soon. When I said just now that I had a high opinion of you, you see I meant it very seriously,” she explained. “It wasn’t a vain compliment. I believe there’s no appeal one may make to your generosity that can remain long unanswered. If this were to happen—if I were to find you selfish where I thought you generous, narrow where I thought you large”—and she spoke slowly, her voice lingering with all emphasis on each of these words—“vulgar where I thought you rare, I should think worse of human nature. I should take it, I assure you, very hard indeed. I should say to myself in the dull days of the future: ‘There was ONE man who might have done so and so, and he too failed.’ But this shan’t be. You’ve made too good an impression on me not to make the very best. If you wish to please me for ever there’s a way.”

She was standing close to him, with her dress touching him, her eyes fixed on his. As she went on her tone became, to his sense, extraordinary, and she offered the odd spectacle of a beautiful woman preaching reason with the most communicative and irresistible passion. Longmore was dazzled, but mystified and bewildered. The intention of her words was all remonstrance, refusal, dismissal, but her presence and effect there, so close, so urgent, so personal, a distracting contradiction of it. She had never been so lovely. In her white dress, with her pale face and deeply-lighted brow, she seemed the very spirit of the summer night. When she had ceased speaking she drew a long breath; he felt it on his cheek, and it stirred in his whole being a sudden perverse imagination. Were not her words, in their high impossible rigour, a mere challenge to his sincerity, a mere precaution of her pride, meant to throw into relief her almost ghostly beauty, and wasn’t this the only truth, the only law, the only thing to take account of?

He closed his eyes and felt her watch him not without pain and perplexity herself. He looked at her again, met her own eyes and saw them fill with strange tears. Then this last sophistry of his great desire for her knew itself touched as a bubble is pricked; it died away with a stifled murmur, and her beauty, more and more radiant in the darkness, rose before him as a symbol of something vague which was yet more beautiful than itself. “I may understand you to-morrow,” he said, “but I don’t understand you now.”

“And yet I took counsel with myself to-day and asked myself how I had best speak to you. On one side I might have refused to see you at all.” Longmore made a violent movement, and she added: “In that case I should have written to you. I might see you, I thought, and simply

say to you that there were excellent reasons why we should part, and that I begged this visit should be your last. This I inclined to do; what made me decide otherwise was—well, simply that I like you so. I said to myself that I should be glad to remember in future days, not that I had, in the horrible phrase, got rid of you, but that you had gone away out of the fulness of your own wisdom and the excellence of your own taste.”

“Ah wisdom and taste!” the poor young man wailed.

“I’m prepared, if necessary,” Madame de Mauves continued after a pause, “to fall back on my strict right. But, as I said before, I shall be greatly disappointed if I’m obliged to do that.”

“When I listen to your horrible and unnatural lucidity,” Longmore answered, “I feel so angry, so merely sore and sick, that I wonder I don’t leave you without more words.”

“If you should go away in anger this idea of mine about our parting would be but half-realised,” she returned with no drop in her ardour. “No, I don’t want to think of you as feeling a great pain, I don’t want even to think of you as making a great sacrifice. I want to think of you—”

“As a stupid brute who has never existed, who never CAN exist!” he broke in. “A creature who could know you without loving you, who could leave you without for ever missing you!”

She turned impatiently away and walked to the other end of the terrace. When she came back he saw that her impatience had grown sharp and almost hard. She stood before him again, looking at him from head to foot and without consideration now; so that as the effect of it he felt his assurance finally quite sink. This then she took from him, withholding in consequence something she had meant to say. She moved off afresh, walked to the other end of the terrace and stood there with her face to the garden. She assumed that he understood her, and slowly, slowly, half as the fruit of this mute pressure, he let everything go but the rage of a purpose somehow still to please her. She was giving him a chance to do gallantly what it seemed unworthy of both of them he should do meanly. She must have “liked” him indeed, as she said, to wish so to spare him, to go to the trouble of conceiving an ideal of conduct for him. With this sense of her tenderness still in her dreadful consistency, his spirit rose with a new flight and suddenly felt itself breathe clearer air. Her profession ceased to seem a mere bribe to his eagerness; it was charged with eagerness itself; it was a present reward and would somehow last. He moved rapidly toward her as with the sense of a gage that he might sublimely yet immediately enjoy.

They were separated by two thirds of the length of the terrace, and he had to pass the drawing-room window. As he did so he started with an exclamation. Madame Clairin stood framed in the opening as if, though just arriving on the scene, she too were already aware of its interest. Conscious, apparently, that she might be suspected of having watched them she stepped forward with a smile and looked from one to the other. “Such a tete-a-tete as that one owes no apology for interrupting. One ought to come in for good manners.”

Madame de Mauves turned to her, but answered nothing. She looked straight at Longmore, and her eyes shone with a lustre that struck him as divine. He was not exactly sure indeed what she meant them to say, but it translated itself to something that would do. “Call it what you will, what you’ve wanted to urge upon me is the thing this woman can best conceive. What I ask of you is something she can’t begin to!” They seemed somehow to beg him to suffer her to be triumphantly herself, and to intimate—yet this too all decently—how little that self was of Madame Clairin’s particular swelling measure. He felt an immense answering desire not to do anything then that might seem probable or prevu to this lady. He had laid his hat and stick on the parapet of the terrace. He took them up, offered his hand to Madame de

Mauves with a simple good-night, bowed silently to Madame Clairin and found his way, with tingling ears, out of the place.

IX

He went home and, without lighting his candle, flung himself on his bed. But he got no sleep till morning; he lay hour after hour tossing, thinking, wondering; his mind had never been so active. It seemed to him his friend had laid on him in those last moments a heavy charge and had expressed herself almost as handsomely as if she had listened complacently to an assurance of his love. It was neither easy nor delightful thoroughly to understand her; but little by little her perfect meaning sank into his mind and soothed it with a sense of opportunity which somehow stifled his sense of loss. For, to begin with, she meant that she could love him in no degree or contingency, in no imaginable future. This was absolute—he knew he could no more alter it than he could pull down one of the constellations he lay gazing at through his open window. He wondered to what it was, in the background of her life, she had so dedicated herself. A conception of duty unquenchable to the end? A love that no outrage could stifle? “Great heaven!” he groaned; “is the world so rich in the purest pearls of passion that such tenderness as that can be wasted for ever—poured away without a sigh into bottomless darkness?” Had she, in spite of the detestable present, some precious memory that still kept the door of possibility open? Was she prepared to submit to everything and yet to believe? Was it strength, was it weakness, was it a vulgar fear, was it conviction, conscience, constancy?

Longmore sank back with a sigh and an oppressive feeling that it was vain to guess at such a woman’s motives. He only felt that those of this one were buried deep in her soul and that they must be of the noblest, must contain nothing base. He had his hard impression that endless constancy was all her law—a constancy that still found a foothold among crumbling ruins. “She has loved once,” he said to himself as he rose and wandered to his window; “and that’s for ever. Yes, yes—if she loved again she’d be COMMON!” He stood for a long time looking out into the starlit silence of the town and forest and thinking of what life would have been if his constancy had met her own in earlier days. But life was this now, and he must live. It was living, really, to stand there with such a faith even in one’s self still flung over one by such hands. He was not to disappoint her, he was to justify a conception it had beguiled her weariness to form. His imagination embraced it; he threw back his head and seemed to be looking for his friend’s conception among the blinking mocking stars. But it came to him rather on the mild night-wind wandering in over the house-tops which covered the rest of so many heavy human hearts. What she asked he seemed to feel her ask not for her own sake—she feared nothing, she needed nothing—but for that of his own happiness and his own character. He must assent to destiny. Why else was he young and strong, intelligent and resolute? He mustn’t give it to her to reproach him with thinking she had had a moment’s attention for his love, give it to her to plead, to argue, to break off in bitterness. He must see everything from above, her indifference and his own ardour; he must prove his strength, must do the handsome thing, must decide that the handsome thing was to submit to the inevitable, to be supremely delicate, to spare her all pain, to stifle his passion, to ask no compensation, to depart without waiting and to try to believe that wisdom is its own reward. All this, neither more nor less, it was a matter of beautiful friendship with him for her to expect of him. And what should he himself gain by it? He should have pleased her! Well, he flung himself on his bed again, fell asleep at last and slept till morning.

Before noon next day he had made up his mind to leave Saint-Germain at once. It seemed easiest to go without seeing her, and yet if he might ask for a grain of “compensation” this would be five minutes face to face with her. He passed a restless day. Wherever he went he

saw her stand before him in the dusky halo of evening, saw her look at him with an air of still negation more intoxicating than the most passionate self-surrender. He must certainly go, and yet it was hideously hard. He compromised and went to Paris to spend the rest of the day. He strolled along the boulevard and paused sightlessly before the shops, sat a while in the Tuileries gardens and looked at the shabby unfortunates for whom this only was nature and summer; but simply felt afresh, as a result of it all, the dusty dreary lonely world to which Madame de Mauves had consigned him.

In a sombre mood he made his way back to the centre of motion and sat down at a table before a cafe door, on the great plain of hot asphalt. Night arrived, the lamps were lighted, the tables near him found occupants, and Paris began to wear that evening grimace of hers that seems to tell, in the flare of plate glass and of theatre-doors, the muffled rumble of swift-rolling carriages, how this is no world for you unless you have your pockets lined and your delicacies perverted. Longmore, however, had neither scruples nor desires; he looked at the great preoccupied place for the first time with an easy sense of repaying its indifference. Before long a carriage drove up to the pavement directly in front of him and remained standing for several minutes without sign from its occupant. It was one of those neat plain coupes, drawn by a single powerful horse, in which the flaneur figures a pale handsome woman buried among silk cushions and yawning as she sees the gas-lamps glittering in the gutters. At last the door opened and out stepped Richard de Mauves. He stopped and leaned on the window for some time, talking in an excited manner to a person within. At last he gave a nod and the carriage rolled away. He stood swinging his cane and looking up and down the boulevard, with the air of a man fumbling, as one might say, the loose change of time. He turned toward the cafe and was apparently, for want of anything better worth his attention, about to seat himself at one of the tables when he noticed Longmore. He wavered an instant and then, without a shade of difference in his careless gait, advanced to the accompaniment of a thin recognition. It was the first time they had met since their encounter in the forest after Longmore's false start for Brussels. Madame Clairin's revelations, as he might have regarded them, had not made the Count especially present to his mind; he had had another call to meet than the call of disgust. But now, as M. de Mauves came toward him he felt abhorrence well up. He made out, however, for the first time, a cloud on this nobleman's superior clearness, and a delight at finding the shoe somewhere at last pinching HIM, mingled with the resolve to be blank and unaccommodating, enabled him to meet the occasion with due promptness.

M. de Mauves sat down, and the two men looked at each other across the table, exchanging formal remarks that did little to lend grace to their encounter. Longmore had no reason to suppose the Count knew of his sister's various interventions. He was sure M. de Mauves cared very little about his opinions, and yet he had a sense of something grim in his own New York face which would have made him change colour if keener suspicion had helped it to be read there. M. de Mauves didn't change colour, but he looked at his wife's so oddly, so more than naturally (wouldn't it be?) detached friend with an intentness that betrayed at once an irritating memory of the episode in the Bois de Boulogne and such vigilant curiosity as was natural to a gentleman who had entrusted his "honour" to another gentleman's magnanimity—or to his artlessness.

It might appear that these virtues shone out of our young man less engagingly or reassuringly than a few days before; the shadow at any rate fell darker across the brow of his critic, who turned away and frowned while lighting a cigar. The person in the coupe, he accordingly judged, whether or no the same person as the heroine of the episode of the Bois de Boulogne, was not a source of unalloyed delight. Longmore had dark blue eyes of admirable clarity, settled truth-telling eyes which had in his childhood always made his harshest taskmasters smile at his notion of a subterfuge. An observer watching the two men and knowing

something of their relations would certainly have said that what he had at last both to recognise and to miss in those eyes must not a little have puzzled and tormented M. de Mauves. They took possession of him, they laid him out, they measured him in that state of flatness, they triumphed over him, they treated him as no pair of eyes had perhaps ever treated any member of his family before. The Count's scheme had been to provide for a positive state of ease on the part of no one save himself, but here was Longmore already, if appearances perhaps not appreciable to the vulgar meant anything, primed as for some prospect of pleasure more than Parisian. Was this candid young barbarian but a faux bonhomme after all? He had never really quite satisfied his occasional host, but was he now, for a climax, to leave him almost gaping?

M. de Mauves, as if hating to seem preoccupied, took up the evening paper to help himself to seem indifferent. As he glanced over it he threw off some perfunctory allusion to the crisis—the political—which enabled Longmore to reply with perfect veracity that, with other things to think about, he had had no attention to spare for it. And yet our hero was in truth far from secure against rueful reflexion. The Count's ruffled state was a comfort so far as it pointed to the possibility that the lady in the coupe might be proving too many for him; but it ministered to no vindictive sweetness for Longmore so far as it should perhaps represent rising jealousy. It passed through his mind that jealousy is a passion with a double face and that on one of its sides it may sometimes almost look generous. It glimmered upon him odiously M. de Mauves might grow ashamed of his political compact with his wife, and he felt how far more tolerable it would be in future to think of him as always impertinent than to think of him as occasionally contrite. The two men pretended meanwhile for half an hour to outsit each other conveniently; and the end—at that rate—might have been distant had not the tension in some degree yielded to the arrival of a friend of M. de Mauves—a tall pale consumptive-looking dandy who filled the air with the odour of heliotrope. He looked up and down the boulevard wearily, examined the Count's garments in some detail, then appeared to refer restlessly to his own, and at last announced resignedly that the Duchess was in town. M. de Mauves must come with him to call; she had abused him dreadfully a couple of evenings before—a sure sign she wanted to see him. “I depend on you,” said with an infantine drawl this specimen of an order Longmore felt he had never had occasion so intimately to appreciate, “to put her en train.”

M. de Mauves resisted, he protested that he was d'une humeur massacrate; but at last he allowed himself to be drawn to his feet and stood looking awkwardly—awkwardly for M. de Mauves—at Longmore. “You'll excuse me,” he appeared to find some difficulty in saying; “you too probably have occupation for the evening?”

“None but to catch my train.” And our friend looked at his watch.

“Ah you go back to Saint-Germain?”

“In half an hour.”

M. de Mauves seemed on the point of disengaging himself from his companion's arm, which was locked in his own; but on the latter's uttering some persuasive murmur he lifted his hat stiffly and turned away.

Longmore the next day wandered off to the terrace to try and beguile the restlessness with which he waited for the evening; he wished to see Madame de Mauves for the last time at the hour of long shadows and pale reflected amber lights, as he had almost always seen her. Destiny, however, took no account of this humble plea for poetic justice; it was appointed him to meet her seated by the great walk under a tree and alone. The hour made the place almost empty; the day was warm, but as he took his place beside her a light breeze stirred the

leafy edges of their broad circle of shadow. She looked at him almost with no pretence of not having believed herself already rid of him, and he at once told her that he should leave Saint-Germain that evening, but must first bid her farewell. Her face lighted a moment, he fancied, as he spoke; but she said nothing, only turning it off to far Paris which lay twinkling and flashing through hot exhalations. "I've a request to make of you," he added. "That you think of me as a man who has felt much and claimed little."

She drew a long breath which almost suggested pain. "I can't think of you as unhappy. That's impossible. You've a life to lead, you've duties, talents, inspirations, interests. I shall hear of your career. And then," she pursued after a pause, though as if it had before this quite been settled between them, "one can't be unhappy through having a better opinion of a friend instead of a worse."

For a moment he failed to understand her. "Do you mean that there can be varying degrees in my opinion of you?"

She rose and pushed away her chair. "I mean," she said quickly, "that it's better to have done nothing in bitterness—nothing in passion." And she began to walk.

Longmore followed her without answering at first. But he took off his hat and with his pocket-handkerchief wiped his forehead. "Where shall you go? what shall you do?" he simply asked at last.

"Do? I shall do as I've always done—except perhaps that I shall go for a while to my husband's old home."

"I shall go to MY old one. I've done with Europe for the present," the young man added.

She glanced at him as he walked beside her, after he had spoken these words, and then bent her eyes for a long time on the ground. But suddenly, as if aware of her going too far she stopped and put out her hand. "Good-bye. May you have all the happiness you deserve!"

He took her hand with his eyes on her, but something was at work in him that made it impossible to deal in the easy way with her touch. Something of infinite value was floating past him, and he had taken an oath, with which any such case interfered, not to raise a finger to stop it. It was borne by the strong current of the world's great life and not of his own small one. Madame de Mauves disengaged herself, gathered in her long scarf and smiled at him almost as you would do at a child you should wish to encourage. Several moments later he was still there watching her leave him and leave him. When she was out of sight he shook himself, walked at once back to his hotel and, without waiting for the evening train, paid his bill and departed.

Later in the day M. de Mauves came into his wife's drawing-room, where she sat waiting to be summoned to dinner. He had dressed as he usually didn't dress for dining at home. He walked up and down for some moments in silence, then rang the bell for a servant and went out into the hall to meet him. He ordered the carriage to take him to the station, paused a moment with his hand on the knob of the door, dismissed the servant angrily as the latter lingered observing him, re-entered the drawing-room, resumed his restless walk and at last stopped abruptly before his wife, who had taken up a book. "May I ask the favour," he said with evident effort, in spite of a forced smile as of allusion to a large past exercise of the very best taste, "of having a question answered?"

"It's a favour I never refused," she replied.

"Very true. Do you expect this evening a visit from Mr. Longmore?"

“Mr. Longmore,” said his wife, “has left Saint-Germain.” M. de Mauves waited, but his smile expired. “Mr. Longmore,” his wife continued, “has gone to America.”

M. de Mauves took it—a rare thing for him—with confessed, if momentary, intellectual indigence. But he raised, as it were, the wind. “Has anything happened?” he asked, “Had he a sudden call?” But his question received no answer. At the same moment the servant threw open the door and announced dinner; Madame Clairin rustled in, rubbing her white hands, Madame de Mauves passed silently into the dining-room, but he remained outside—outside of more things, clearly, than his mere *salle-a-manger*. Before long he went forth to the terrace and continued his uneasy walk. At the end of a quarter of an hour the servant came to let him know that his carriage was at the door. “Send it away,” he said without hesitation. “I shan’t use it.” When the ladies had half-finished dinner he returned and joined them, with a formal apology to his wife for his inconsequence.

The dishes were brought back, but he hardly tasted them; he drank on the other hand more wine than usual. There was little talk, scarcely a convivial sound save the occasional expressive appreciative “M-m-m!” of Madame Clairin over the succulence of some dish. Twice this lady saw her brother’s eyes, fixed on her own over his wineglass, put to her a question she knew she should have to irritate him later on by not being able to answer. She replied, for the present at least, by an elevation of the eyebrows that resembled even to her own humour the vain raising of an umbrella in anticipation of a storm. M. de Mauves was left alone to finish his wine; he sat over it for more than an hour and let the darkness gather about him. At last the servant came in with a letter and lighted a candle. The letter was a telegram, which M. de Mauves, when he had read it, burnt at the candle. After five minutes’ meditation he wrote a message on the back of a visiting-card and gave it to the servant to carry to the office. The man knew quite as much as his master suspected about the lady to whom the telegram was addressed; but its contents puzzled him; they consisted of the single word “Impossible.” As the evening passed without her brother’s reappearing in the drawing-room Madame Clairin came to him where he sat by his solitary candle. He took no notice of her presence for some time, but this affected her as unexpected indulgence. At last, however, he spoke with a particular harshness. “Ce jeune mufle has gone home at an hour’s notice. What the devil does it mean?”

Madame Clairin now felt thankful for her umbrella. “It means that I’ve a sister-in-law whom I’ve not the honour to understand.”

He said nothing more and silently allowed her, after a little, to depart. It had been her duty to provide him with an explanation, and he was disgusted with her blankness; but she was—if there was no more to come—getting off easily. When she had gone he went into the garden and walked up and down with his cigar. He saw his wife seated alone on the terrace, but remained below, wandering, turning, pausing, lingering. He remained a long time. It grew late and Madame de Mauves disappeared. Toward midnight he dropped upon a bench, tired, with a long vague exhalation of unrest. It was sinking into his spirit that he too didn’t understand Madame Clairin’s sister-in-law.

Longmore was obliged to wait a week in London for a ship. It was very hot, and he went out one day to Richmond. In the garden of the hotel at which he dined he met his friend Mrs. Draper, who was staying there. She made eager enquiry about Madame de Mauves; but Longmore at first, as they sat looking out at the famous view of the Thames, parried her questions and confined himself to other topics. At last she said she was afraid he had something to conceal; whereupon, after a pause, he asked her if she remembered recommending him, in the letter she had addressed him at Saint-Germain, to draw the sadness

from her friend's smile. "The last I saw of her was her smile," he said—"when I bade her good-bye."

"I remember urging you to 'console' her," Mrs. Draper returned, "and I wondered afterwards whether—model of discretion as you are—I hadn't cut you out work for which you wouldn't thank me."

"She has her consolation in herself," the young man said; "she needs none that any one else can offer her. That's for troubles for which—be it more, be it less—our own folly has to answer. Madame de Mauves hasn't a grain of folly left."

"Ah don't say that!"—Mrs. Draper knowingly protested. "Just a little folly's often very graceful."

Longmore rose to go—she somehow annoyed him. "Don't talk of grace," he said, "till you've measured her reason!"

For two years after his return to America he heard nothing of Madame de Mauves. That he thought of her intently, constantly, I need hardly say; most people wondered why such a clever young man shouldn't "devote" himself to something; but to himself he seemed absorbingly occupied. He never wrote to her; he believed she wouldn't have "liked" it. At last he heard that Mrs. Draper had come home and he immediately called on her. "Of course," she said after the first greetings, "you're dying for news of Madame de Mauves. Prepare yourself for something strange. I heard from her two or three times during the year after your seeing her. She left Saint-Germain and went to live in the country on some old property of her husband's. She wrote me very kind little notes, but I felt somehow that—in spite of what you said about 'consolation'—they were the notes of a wretched woman. The only advice I could have given her was to leave her scamp of a husband and come back to her own land and her own people. But this I didn't feel free to do, and yet it made me so miserable not to be able to help her that I preferred to let our correspondence die a natural death. I had no news of her for a year. Last summer, however, I met at Vichy a clever young Frenchman whom I accidentally learned to be a friend of that charming sister of the Count's, Madame Clairin. I lost no time in asking him what he knew about Madame de Mauves—a countrywoman of mine and an old friend. 'I congratulate you on the friendship of such a person,' he answered. 'That's the terrible little woman who killed her husband.' You may imagine I promptly asked for an explanation, and he told me—from his point of view—what he called the whole story. M. de Mauves had fait quelques folies which his wife had taken absurdly to heart. He had repented and asked her forgiveness, which she had inexorably refused. She was very pretty, and severity must have suited her style; for, whether or no her husband had been in love with her before, he fell madly in love with her now. He was the proudest man in France, but he had begged her on his knees to be re-admitted to favour. All in vain! She was stone, she was ice, she was outraged virtue. People noticed a great change in him; he gave up society, ceased to care for anything, looked shockingly. One fine day they discovered he had blown out his brains. My friend had the story of course from Madame Clairin."

Longmore was strongly moved, and his first impulse after he had recovered his composure was to return immediately to Europe. But several years have passed, and he still lingers at home. The truth is that, in the midst of all the ardent tenderness of his memory of Madame de Mauves, he has become conscious of a singular feeling—a feeling of wonder, of uncertainty, of awe.

Eugene Pickering

CHAPTER I.

It was at Homburg, several years ago, before the gaming had been suppressed. The evening was very warm, and all the world was gathered on the terrace of the Kursaal and the esplanade below it to listen to the excellent orchestra; or half the world, rather, for the crowd was equally dense in the gaming-rooms around the tables. Everywhere the crowd was great. The night was perfect, the season was at its height, the open windows of the Kursaal sent long shafts of unnatural light into the dusky woods, and now and then, in the intervals of the music, one might almost hear the clink of the napoleons and the metallic call of the croupiers rise above the watching silence of the saloons. I had been strolling with a friend, and we at last prepared to sit down. Chairs, however, were scarce. I had captured one, but it seemed no easy matter to find a mate for it. I was on the point of giving up in despair, and proposing an adjournment to the silken ottomans of the Kursaal, when I observed a young man lounging back on one of the objects of my quest, with his feet supported on the rounds of another. This was more than his share of luxury, and I promptly approached him. He evidently belonged to the race which has the credit of knowing best, at home and abroad, how to make itself comfortable; but something in his appearance suggested that his present attitude was the result of inadvertence rather than of egotism. He was staring at the conductor of the orchestra and listening intently to the music. His hands were locked round his long legs, and his mouth was half open, with rather a foolish air. "There are so few chairs," I said, "that I must beg you to surrender this second one." He started, stared, blushed, pushed the chair away with awkward alacrity, and murmured something about not having noticed that he had it.

"What an odd-looking youth!" said my companion, who had watched me, as I seated myself beside her.

"Yes, he is odd-looking; but what is odder still is that I have seen him before, that his face is familiar to me, and yet that I can't place him." The orchestra was playing the Prayer from *Der Freischütz*, but Weber's lovely music only deepened the blank of memory. Who the deuce was he? where, when, how, had I known him? It seemed extraordinary that a face should be at once so familiar and so strange. We had our backs turned to him, so that I could not look at him again. When the music ceased we left our places, and I went to consign my friend to her mamma on the terrace. In passing, I saw that my young man had departed; I concluded that he only strikingly resembled some one I knew. But who in the world was it he resembled? The ladies went off to their lodgings, which were near by, and I turned into the gaming-rooms and hovered about the circle at roulette. Gradually I filtered through to the inner edge, near the table, and, looking round, saw my puzzling friend stationed opposite to me. He was watching the game, with his hands in his pockets; but singularly enough, now that I observed him at my leisure, the look of familiarity quite faded from his face. What had made us call his appearance odd was his great length and leanness of limb, his long, white neck, his blue, prominent eyes, and his ingenuous, unconscious absorption in the scene before him. He was not handsome, certainly, but he looked peculiarly amiable and if his overt wonderment savoured a trifle of rurality, it was an agreeable contrast to the hard, inexpressive masks about him. He was the verdant offshoot, I said to myself, of some ancient, rigid stem; he had been brought up in the quietest of homes, and he was having his first glimpse of life. I was curious to see whether he would put anything on the table; he evidently felt the temptation, but he seemed paralysed by chronic embarrassment. He stood gazing at the

chinking complexity of losses and gains, shaking his loose gold in his pocket, and every now and then passing his hand nervously over his eyes.

Most of the spectators were too attentive to the play to have many thoughts for each other; but before long I noticed a lady who evidently had an eye for her neighbours as well as for the table. She was seated about half-way between my friend and me, and I presently observed that she was trying to catch his eye. Though at Homburg, as people said, "one could never be sure," I yet doubted whether this lady were one of those whose especial vocation it was to catch a gentleman's eye. She was youthful rather than elderly, and pretty rather than plain; indeed, a few minutes later, when I saw her smile, I thought her wonderfully pretty. She had a charming gray eye and a good deal of yellow hair disposed in picturesque disorder; and though her features were meagre and her complexion faded, she gave one a sense of sentimental, artificial gracefulness. She was dressed in white muslin very much puffed and filled, but a trifle the worse for wear, relieved here and there by a pale blue ribbon. I used to flatter myself on guessing at people's nationality by their faces, and, as a rule, I guessed aright. This faded, crumpled, vaporous beauty, I conceived, was a German—such a German, somehow, as I had seen imagined in literature. Was she not a friend of poets, a correspondent of philosophers, a muse, a priestess of æsthetics—something in the way of a Bettina, a Rahel? My conjectures, however, were speedily merged in wonderment as to what my diffident friend was making of her. She caught his eye at last, and raising an ungloved hand, covered altogether with blue-gemmed rings—turquoises, sapphires, and lapis—she beckoned him to come to her. The gesture was executed with a sort of practised coolness, and accompanied with an appealing smile. He stared a moment, rather blankly, unable to suppose that the invitation was addressed to him; then, as it was immediately repeated with a good deal of intensity, he blushed to the roots of his hair, wavered awkwardly, and at last made his way to the lady's chair. By the time he reached it he was crimson, and wiping his forehead with his pocket-handkerchief. She tilted back, looked up at him with the same smile, laid two fingers on his sleeve, and said something, interrogatively, to which he replied by a shake of the head. She was asking him, evidently, if he had ever played, and he was saying no. Old players have a fancy that when luck has turned her back on them they can put her into good-humour again by having their stakes placed by a novice. Our young man's physiognomy had seemed to his new acquaintance to express the perfection of inexperience, and, like a practical woman, she had determined to make him serve her turn. Unlike most of her neighbours, she had no little pile of gold before her, but she drew from her pocket a double napoleon, put it into his hand, and bade him place it on a number of his own choosing. He was evidently filled with a sort of delightful trouble; he enjoyed the adventure, but he shrank from the hazard. I would have staked the coin on its being his companion's last; for although she still smiled intently as she watched his hesitation, there was anything but indifference in her pale, pretty face. Suddenly, in desperation, he reached over and laid the piece on the table. My attention was diverted at this moment by my having to make way for a lady with a great many flounces, before me, to give up her chair to a rustling friend to whom she had promised it; when I again looked across at the lady in white muslin, she was drawing in a very goodly pile of gold with her little blue-gemmed claw. Good luck and bad, at the Homburg tables, were equally undemonstrative, and this happy adventuress rewarded her young friend for the sacrifice of his innocence with a single, rapid, upward smile. He had innocence enough left, however, to look round the table with a gleeful, conscious laugh, in the midst of which his eyes encountered my own. Then suddenly the familiar look which had vanished from his face flickered up unmistakably; it was the boyish laugh of a boyhood's friend. Stupid fellow that I was, I had been looking at Eugene Pickering!

Though I lingered on for some time longer he failed to recognise me. Recognition, I think, had kindled a smile in my own face; but, less fortunate than he, I suppose my smile had ceased to be boyish. Now that luck had faced about again, his companion played for herself—played and won, hand over hand. At last she seemed disposed to rest on her gains, and proceeded to bury them in the folds of her muslin. Pickering had staked nothing for himself, but as he saw her prepare to withdraw he offered her a double napoleon and begged her to place it. She shook her head with great decision, and seemed to bid him put it up again; but he, still blushing a good deal, pressed her with awkward ardour, and she at last took it from him, looked at him a moment fixedly, and laid it on a number. A moment later the croupier was raking it in. She gave the young man a little nod which seemed to say, “I told you so;” he glanced round the table again and laughed; she left her chair, and he made a way for her through the crowd. Before going home I took a turn on the terrace and looked down on the esplanade. The lamps were out, but the warm starlight vaguely illumined a dozen figures scattered in couples. One of these figures, I thought, was a lady in a white dress.

I had no intention of letting Pickering go without reminding him of our old acquaintance. He had been a very singular boy, and I was curious to see what had become of his singularity. I looked for him the next morning at two or three of the hotels, and at last I discovered his whereabouts. But he was out, the waiter said; he had gone to walk an hour before. I went my way, confident that I should meet him in the evening. It was the rule with the Homburg world to spend its evenings at the Kursaal, and Pickering, apparently, had already discovered a good reason for not being an exception. One of the charms of Homburg is the fact that of a hot day you may walk about for a whole afternoon in unbroken shade. The umbrageous gardens of the Kursaal mingle with the charming Hardtwald, which in turn melts away into the wooded slopes of the Taunus Mountains. To the Hardtwald I bent my steps, and strolled for an hour through mossy glades and the still, perpendicular gloom of the fir-woods. Suddenly, on the grassy margin of a by-path, I came upon a young man stretched at his length in the sun-checked shade, and kicking his heels towards a patch of blue sky. My step was so noiseless on the turf that, before he saw me, I had time to recognise Pickering again. He looked as if he had been lounging there for some time; his hair was tossed about as if he had been sleeping; on the grass near him, beside his hat and stick, lay a sealed letter. When he perceived me he jerked himself forward, and I stood looking at him without introducing myself—purposely, to give him a chance to recognise me. He put on his glasses, being awkwardly near-sighted, and stared up at me with an air of general trustfulness, but without a sign of knowing me. So at last I introduced myself. Then he jumped up and grasped my hands, and stared and blushed and laughed, and began a dozen random questions, ending with a demand as to how in the world I had known him.

“Why, you are not changed so utterly,” I said; “and after all, it’s but fifteen years since you used to do my Latin exercises for me.”

“Not changed, eh?” he answered, still smiling, and yet speaking with a sort of ingenuous dismay.

Then I remembered that poor Pickering had been, in those Latin days, a victim of juvenile irony. He used to bring a bottle of medicine to school and take a dose in a glass of water before lunch; and every day at two o’clock, half an hour before the rest of us were liberated, an old nurse with bushy eyebrows came and fetched him away in a carriage. His extremely fair complexion, his nurse, and his bottle of medicine, which suggested a vague analogy with the sleeping-potion in the tragedy, caused him to be called Juliet. Certainly Romeo’s sweetheart hardly suffered more; she was not, at least, a standing joke in

Verona. Remembering these things, I hastened to say to Pickering that I hoped he was still the same good fellow who used to do my Latin for me. "We were capital friends, you know," I went on, "then and afterwards."

"Yes, we were very good friends," he said, "and that makes it the stranger I shouldn't have known you. For you know, as a boy, I never had many friends, nor as a man either. You see," he added, passing his hand over his eyes, "I am rather dazed, rather bewildered at finding myself for the first time—alone." And he jerked back his shoulders nervously, and threw up his head, as if to settle himself in an unwonted position. I wondered whether the old nurse with the bushy eyebrows had remained attached to his person up to a recent period, and discovered presently that, virtually at least, she had. We had the whole summer day before us, and we sat down on the grass together and overhauled our old memories. It was as if we had stumbled upon an ancient cupboard in some dusky corner, and rummaged out a heap of childish playthings—tin soldiers and torn story-books, jack-knives and Chinese puzzles. This is what we remembered between us.

He had made but a short stay at school—not because he was tormented, for he thought it so fine to be at school at all that he held his tongue at home about the sufferings incurred through the medicine-bottle, but because his father thought he was learning bad manners. This he imparted to me in confidence at the time, and I remember how it increased my oppressive awe of Mr. Pickering, who had appeared to me in glimpses as a sort of high priest of the proprieties. Mr. Pickering was a widower—a fact which seemed to produce in him a sort of preternatural concentration of parental dignity. He was a majestic man, with a hooked nose, a keen dark eye, very large whiskers, and notions of his own as to how a boy—or his boy, at any rate—should be brought up. First and foremost, he was to be a "gentleman"; which seemed to mean, chiefly, that he was always to wear a muffler and gloves, and be sent to bed, after a supper of bread and milk, at eight o'clock. School-life, on experiment, seemed hostile to these observances, and Eugene was taken home again, to be moulded into urbanity beneath the parental eye. A tutor was provided for him, and a single select companion was prescribed. The choice, mysteriously, fell on me, born as I was under quite another star; my parents were appealed to, and I was allowed for a few months to have my lessons with Eugene. The tutor, I think, must have been rather a snob, for Eugene was treated like a prince, while I got all the questions and the raps with the ruler. And yet I remember never being jealous of my happier comrade, and striking up, for the time, one of those friendships of childhood. He had a watch and a pony and a great store of picture-books, but my envy of these luxuries was tempered by a vague compassion which left me free to be generous. I could go out to play alone, I could button my jacket myself, and sit up till I was sleepy. Poor Pickering could never take a step without asking leave, or spend half an hour in the garden without a formal report of it when he came in. My parents, who had no desire to see me inoculated with importunate virtues, sent me back to school at the end of six months. After that I never saw Eugene. His father went to live in the country, to protect the lad's morals, and Eugene faded, in reminiscence, into a pale image of the depressing effects of education. I think I vaguely supposed that he would melt into thin air, and indeed began gradually to doubt of his existence, and to regard him as one of the foolish things one ceased to believe in as one grew older. It seemed natural that I should have no more news of him. Our present meeting was my first assurance that he had really survived all that muffling and coddling.

I observed him now with a good deal of interest, for he was a rare phenomenon—the fruit of a system persistently and uninterruptedly applied. He struck me, in a fashion, as certain young monks I had seen in Italy; he had the same candid, unsophisticated cloister face. His education had been really almost monastic. It had found him evidently a very compliant,

yielding subject; his gentle affectionate spirit was not one of those that need to be broken. It had bequeathed him, now that he stood on the threshold of the great world, an extraordinary freshness of impression and alertness of desire, and I confess that, as I looked at him and met his transparent blue eye, I trembled for the unwarned innocence of such a soul. I became aware, gradually, that the world had already wrought a certain work upon him and roused him to a restless, troubled self-consciousness. Everything about him pointed to an experience from which he had been debarred; his whole organism trembled with a dawning sense of unsuspected possibilities of feeling. This appealing tremor was indeed outwardly visible. He kept shifting himself about on the grass, thrusting his hands through his hair, wiping a light perspiration from his forehead, breaking out to say something and rushing off to something else. Our sudden meeting had greatly excited him, and I saw that I was likely to profit by a certain overflow of sentimental fermentation. I could do so with a good conscience, for all this trepidation filled me with a great friendliness.

“It’s nearly fifteen years, as you say,” he began, “since you used to call me ‘butter-fingers’ for always missing the ball. That’s a long time to give an account of, and yet they have been, for me, such eventless, monotonous years, that I could almost tell their history in ten words. You, I suppose, have had all kinds of adventures and travelled over half the world. I remember you had a turn for deeds of daring; I used to think you a little Captain Cook in roundabouts, for climbing the garden fence to get the ball when I had let it fly over. I climbed no fences then or since. You remember my father, I suppose, and the great care he took of me? I lost him some five months ago. From those boyish days up to his death we were always together. I don’t think that in fifteen years we spent half a dozen hours apart. We lived in the country, winter and summer, seeing but three or four people. I had a succession of tutors, and a library to browse about in; I assure you I am a tremendous scholar. It was a dull life for a growing boy, and a duller life for a young man grown, but I never knew it. I was perfectly happy.” He spoke of his father at some length, and with a respect which I privately declined to emulate. Mr. Pickering had been, to my sense, a frigid egotist, unable to conceive of any larger vocation for his son than to strive to reproduce so irreproachable a model. “I know I have been strangely brought up,” said my friend, “and that the result is something grotesque; but my education, piece by piece, in detail, became one of my father’s personal habits, as it were. He took a fancy to it at first through his intense affection for my mother and the sort of worship he paid her memory. She died at my birth, and as I grew up, it seems that I bore an extraordinary likeness to her. Besides, my father had a great many theories; he prided himself on his conservative opinions; he thought the usual American *laissez-aller* in education was a very vulgar practice, and that children were not to grow up like dusty thorns by the wayside.” “So you see,” Pickering went on, smiling and blushing, and yet with something of the irony of vain regret, “I am a regular garden plant. I have been watched and watered and pruned, and if there is any virtue in tending I ought to take the prize at a flower show. Some three years ago my father’s health broke down, and he was kept very much within doors. So, although I was a man grown, I lived altogether at home. If I was out of his sight for a quarter of an hour he sent some one after me. He had severe attacks of neuralgia, and he used to sit at his window, basking in the sun. He kept an opera-glass at hand, and when I was out in the garden he used to watch me with it. A few days before his death I was twenty-seven years old, and the most innocent youth, I suppose, on the continent. After he died I missed him greatly,” Pickering continued, evidently with no intention of making an epigram. “I stayed at home, in a sort of dull stupor. It seemed as if life offered itself to me for the first time, and yet as if I didn’t know how to take hold of it.”

He uttered all this with a frank eagerness which increased as he talked, and there was a singular contrast between the meagre experience he described and a certain radiant

intelligence which I seemed to perceive in his glance and tone. Evidently he was a clever fellow, and his natural faculties were excellent. I imagined he had read a great deal, and recovered, in some degree, in restless intellectual conjecture, the freedom he was condemned to ignore in practice. Opportunity was now offering a meaning to the empty forms with which his imagination was stored, but it appeared to him dimly, through the veil of his personal diffidence.

“I have not sailed round the world, as you suppose,” I said, “but I confess I envy you the novelties you are going to behold. Coming to Homburg you have plunged *in medias res*.”

He glanced at me to see if my remark contained an allusion, and hesitated a moment. “Yes, I know it. I came to Bremen in the steamer with a very friendly German, who undertook to initiate me into the glories and mysteries of the Fatherland. At this season, he said, I must begin with Homburg. I landed but a fortnight ago, and here I am.” Again he hesitated, as if he were going to add something about the scene at the Kursaal but suddenly, nervously, he took up the letter which was lying beside him, looked hard at the seal with a troubled frown, and then flung it back on the grass with a sigh.

“How long do you expect to be in Europe?” I asked.

“Six months I supposed when I came. But not so long—now!” And he let his eyes wander to the letter again.

“And where shall you go—what shall you do?”

“Everywhere, everything, I should have said yesterday. But now it is different.”

I glanced at the letter—interrogatively, and he gravely picked it up and put it into his pocket. We talked for a while longer, but I saw that he had suddenly become preoccupied; that he was apparently weighing an impulse to break some last barrier of reserve. At last he suddenly laid his hand on my arm, looked at me a moment appealingly, and cried, “Upon my word, I should like to tell you everything!”

“Tell me everything, by all means,” I answered, smiling. “I desire nothing better than to lie here in the shade and hear everything.”

“Ah, but the question is, will you understand it? No matter; you think me a queer fellow already. It’s not easy, either, to tell you what I feel—not easy for so queer a fellow as I to tell you in how many ways he is queer!” He got up and walked away a moment, passing his hand over his eyes, then came back rapidly and flung himself on the grass again. “I said just now I always supposed I was happy; it’s true; but now that my eyes are open, I see I was only stultified. I was like a poodle-dog that is led about by a blue ribbon, and scoured and combed and fed on slops. It was not life; life is learning to know one’s self, and in that sense I have lived more in the past six weeks than in all the years that preceded them. I am filled with this feverish sense of liberation; it keeps rising to my head like the fumes of strong wine. I find I am an active, sentient, intelligent creature, with desires, with passions, with possible convictions—even with what I never dreamed of, a possible will of my own! I find there is a world to know, a life to lead, men and women to form a thousand relations with. It all lies there like a great surging sea, where we must plunge and dive and feel the breeze and breast the waves. I stand shivering here on the brink, staring, longing, wondering, charmed by the smell of the brine and yet afraid of the water. The world beckons and smiles and calls, but a nameless influence from the past, that I can neither wholly obey nor wholly resist, seems to hold me back. I am full of impulses, but, somehow, I am not full of strength. Life seems inspiring at certain moments, but it seems terrible and unsafe; and I ask myself why I should wantonly measure myself with merciless forces, when I have learned so well how to stand

aside and let them pass. Why shouldn't I turn my back upon it all and go home to—what awaits me?—to that sightless, soundless country life, and long days spent among old books? But if a man *is* weak, he doesn't want to assent beforehand to his weakness; he wants to taste whatever sweetness there may be in paying for the knowledge. So it is that it comes back—this irresistible impulse to take my plunge—to let myself swing, to go where liberty leads me.” He paused a moment, fixing me with his excited eyes, and perhaps perceived in my own an irrepressible smile at his perplexity. ““Swing ahead, in Heaven's name,’ you want to say, ‘and much good may it do you.’ I don't know whether you are laughing at my scruples or at what possibly strikes you as my depravity. I doubt,” he went on gravely, “whether I have an inclination toward wrong-doing; if I have, I am sure I shall not prosper in it. I honestly believe I may safely take out a license to amuse myself. But it isn't that I think of, any more than I dream of, playing with suffering. Pleasure and pain are empty words to me; what I long for is knowledge—some other knowledge than comes to us in formal, colourless, impersonal precept. You would understand all this better if you could breathe for an hour the musty in-door atmosphere in which I have always lived. To break a window and let in light and air—I feel as if at last I must *act!*”

“Act, by all means, now and always, when you have a chance,” I answered. “But don't take things too hard, now or ever. Your long confinement makes you think the world better worth knowing than you are likely to find it. A man with as good a head and heart as yours has a very ample world within himself, and I am no believer in art for art, nor in what's called ‘life’ for life's sake. Nevertheless, take your plunge, and come and tell me whether you have found the pearl of wisdom.” He frowned a little, as if he thought my sympathy a trifle meagre. I shook him by the hand and laughed. “The pearl of wisdom,” I cried, “is love; honest love in the most convenient concentration of experience! I advise you to fall in love.” He gave me no smile in response, but drew from his pocket the letter of which I have spoken, held it up, and shook it solemnly. “What is it?” I asked.

“It is my sentence!”

“Not of death, I hope!”

“Of marriage.”

“With whom?”

“With a person I don't love.”

This was serious. I stopped smiling, and begged him to explain.

“It is the singular part of my story,” he said at last. “It will remind you of an old-fashioned romance. Such as I sit here, talking in this wild way, and tossing off provocations to destiny, my destiny is settled and sealed. I am engaged, I am given in marriage. It's a bequest of the past—the past I had no hand in! The marriage was arranged by my father, years ago, when I was a boy. The young girl's father was his particular friend; he was also a widower, and was bringing up his daughter, on his side, in the same severe seclusion in which I was spending my days. To this day I am unacquainted with the origin of the bond of union between our respective progenitors. Mr. Vernor was largely engaged in business, and I imagine that once upon a time he found himself in a financial strait and was helped through it by my father's coming forward with a heavy loan, on which, in his situation, he could offer no security but his word. Of this my father was quite capable. He was a man of dogmas, and he was sure to have a rule of life—as clear as if it had been written out in his beautiful copper-plate hand—adapted to the conduct of a gentleman toward a friend in pecuniary embarrassment. What is more, he was sure to adhere to it. Mr. Vernor, I believe, got on his feet, paid his debt, and vowed my father an eternal gratitude. His little daughter was the apple of his eye, and he

pledged himself to bring her up to be the wife of his benefactor's son. So our fate was fixed, parentally, and we have been educated for each other. I have not seen my betrothed since she was a very plain-faced little girl in a sticky pinafore, hugging a one-armed doll—of the male sex, I believe—as big as herself. Mr. Vernor is in what is called the Eastern trade, and has been living these many years at Smyrna. Isabel has grown up there in a white-walled garden, in an orange grove, between her father and her governess. She is a good deal my junior; six months ago she was seventeen; when she is eighteen we are to marry.”

He related all this calmly enough, without the accent of complaint, drily rather and doggedly, as if he were weary of thinking of it. “It’s a romance, indeed, for these dull days,” I said, “and I heartily congratulate you. It’s not every young man who finds, on reaching the marrying age, a wife kept in a box of rose-leaves for him. A thousand to one Miss Vernor is charming; I wonder you don’t post off to Smyrna.”

“You are joking,” he answered, with a wounded air, “and I am terribly serious. Let me tell you the rest. I never suspected this superior conspiracy till something less than a year ago. My father, wishing to provide against his death, informed me of it very solemnly. I was neither elated nor depressed; I received it, as I remember, with a sort of emotion which varied only in degree from that with which I could have hailed the announcement that he had ordered me a set of new shirts. I supposed that was the way that all marriages were made; I had heard of their being made in heaven, and what was my father but a divinity? Novels and poems, indeed, talked about falling in love; but novels and poems were one thing and life was another. A short time afterwards he introduced me to a photograph of my predestined, who has a pretty, but an extremely inanimate, face. After this his health failed rapidly. One night I was sitting, as I habitually sat for hours, in his dimly-lighted room, near his bed, to which he had been confined for a week. He had not spoken for some time, and I supposed he was asleep; but happening to look at him I saw his eyes wide open, and fixed on me strangely. He was smiling benignantly, intensely, and in a moment he beckoned to me. Then, on my going to him—‘I feel that I shall not last long,’ he said; ‘but I am willing to die when I think how comfortably I have arranged your future.’ He was talking of death, and anything but grief at that moment was doubtless impious and monstrous; but there came into my heart for the first time a throbbing sense of being over-governed. I said nothing, and he thought my silence was all sorrow. ‘I shall not live to see you married,’ he went on, ‘but since the foundation is laid, that little signifies; it would be a selfish pleasure, and I have never thought of myself but in you. To foresee your future, in its main outline, to know to a certainty that you will be safely domiciled here, with a wife approved by my judgment, cultivating the moral fruit of which I have sown the seed—this will content me. But, my son, I wish to clear this bright vision from the shadow of a doubt. I believe in your docility; I believe I may trust the salutary force of your respect for my memory. But I must remember that when I am removed you will stand here alone, face to face with a hundred nameless temptations to perversity. The fumes of unrighteous pride may rise into your brain and tempt you, in the interest of a vulgar theory which it will call your independence, to shatter the edifice I have so laboriously constructed. So I must ask you for a promise—the solemn promise you owe my condition.’ And he grasped my hand. ‘You will follow the path I have marked; you will be faithful to the young girl whom an influence as devoted as that which has governed your own young life has moulded into everything amiable; you will marry Isabel Vernor.’ This was pretty ‘steep,’ as we used to say at school. I was frightened; I drew away my hand and asked to be trusted without any such terrible vow. My reluctance startled my father into a suspicion that the vulgar theory of independence had already been whispering to me. He sat up in his bed and looked at me with eyes which seemed to foresee a lifetime of odious ingratitude. I felt the reproach; I feel it now. I promised! And even now I don’t regret my

promise nor complain of my father's tenacity. I feel, somehow, as if the seeds of ultimate repose had been sown in those unsuspecting years—as if after many days I might gather the mellow fruit. But after many days! I will keep my promise, I will obey; but I want to *live* first!”

“My dear fellow, you are living now. All this passionate consciousness of your situation is a very ardent life. I wish I could say as much for my own.”

“I want to forget my situation. I want to spend three months without thinking of the past or the future, grasping whatever the present offers me. Yesterday I thought I was in a fair way to sail with the tide. But this morning comes this memento!” And he held up his letter again.

“What is it?”

“A letter from Smyrna.”

“I see you have not yet broken the seal.”

“No; nor do I mean to, for the present. It contains bad news.”

“What do you call bad news?”

“News that I am expected in Smyrna in three weeks. News that Mr. Vernor disapproves of my roving about the world. News that his daughter is standing expectant at the altar.”

“Is not this pure conjecture?”

“Conjecture, possibly, but safe conjecture. As soon as I looked at the letter something smote me at the heart. Look at the device on the seal, and I am sure you will find it's *Tarry not!*” And he flung the letter on the grass.

“Upon my word, you had better open it,” I said.

“If I were to open it and read my summons, do you know what I should do? I should march home and ask the Oberkellner how one gets to Smyrna, pack my trunk, take my ticket, and not stop till I arrived. I know I should; it would be the fascination of habit. The only way, therefore, to wander to my rope's end is to leave the letter unread.”

“In your place,” I said, “curiosity would make me open it.”

He shook his head. “I have no curiosity! For a long time now the idea of my marriage has ceased to be a novelty, and I have contemplated it mentally in every possible light. I fear nothing from that side, but I do fear something from conscience. I want my hands tied. Will you do me a favour? Pick up the letter, put it into your pocket, and keep it till I ask you for it. When I do, you may know that I am at my rope's end.”

I took the letter, smiling. “And how long is your rope to be? The Homburg season doesn't last for ever.”

“Does it last a month? Let that be my season! A month hence you will give it back to me.”

“To-morrow if you say so. Meanwhile, let it rest in peace!” And I consigned it to the most sacred interstice of my pocket-book. To say that I was disposed to humour the poor fellow would seem to be saying that I thought his request fantastic. It was his situation, by no fault of his own, that was fantastic, and he was only trying to be natural. He watched me put away the letter, and when it had disappeared gave a soft sigh of relief. The sigh was natural, and yet it set me thinking. His general recoil from an immediate responsibility imposed by others might be wholesome enough; but if there was an old grievance on one side, was there not possibly a new-born delusion on the other? It would be unkind to withhold a reflection that

might serve as a warning; so I told him, abruptly, that I had been an undiscovered spectator, the night before, of his exploits at roulette.

He blushed deeply, but he met my eyes with the same clear good-humour.

“Ah, then, you saw that wonderful lady?”

“Wonderful she was indeed. I saw her afterwards, too, sitting on the terrace in the starlight. I imagine she was not alone.”

“No, indeed, I was with her—for nearly an hour. Then I walked home with her.”

“Ah! And did you go in?”

“No, she said it was too late to ask me; though she remarked that in a general way she did not stand upon ceremony.”

“She did herself injustice. When it came to losing your money for you, she made you insist.”

“Ah, you noticed that too?” cried Pickering, still quite unconfused. “I felt as if the whole table were staring at me; but her manner was so gracious and reassuring that I supposed she was doing nothing unusual. She confessed, however, afterwards, that she is very eccentric. The world began to call her so, she said, before she ever dreamed of it, and at last finding that she had the reputation, in spite of herself, she resolved to enjoy its privileges. Now, she does what she chooses.”

“In other words, she is a lady with no reputation to lose!”

Pickering seemed puzzled; he smiled a little. “Is not that what you say of bad women?”

“Of some—of those who are found out.”

“Well,” he said, still smiling, “I have not yet found out Madame Blumenthal.”

“If that’s her name, I suppose she’s German.”

“Yes; but she speaks English so well that you wouldn’t know it. She is very clever. Her husband is dead.”

I laughed involuntarily at the conjunction of these facts, and Pickering’s clear glance seemed to question my mirth. “You have been so bluntly frank with me,” I said, “that I too must be frank. Tell me, if you can, whether this clever Madame Blumenthal, whose husband is dead, has given a point to your desire for a suspension of communication with Smyrna.”

He seemed to ponder my question, unshrinkingly. “I think not,” he said, at last. “I have had the desire for three months; I have known Madame Blumenthal for less than twenty-four hours.”

“Very true. But when you found this letter of yours on your place at breakfast, did you seem for a moment to see Madame Blumenthal sitting opposite?”

“Opposite?”

“Opposite, my dear fellow, or anywhere in the neighbourhood. In a word, does she interest you?”

“Very much!” he cried, joyously.

“Amen!” I answered, jumping up with a laugh. “And now, if we are to see the world in a month, there is no time to lose. Let us begin with the Hardtwald.”

Pickering rose, and we strolled away into the forest, talking of lighter things. At last we reached the edge of the wood, sat down on a fallen log, and looked out across an interval of

meadow at the long wooded waves of the Taunus. What my friend was thinking of I can't say; I was meditating on his queer biography, and letting my wonderment wander away to Smyrna. Suddenly I remembered that he possessed a portrait of the young girl who was waiting for him there in a white-walled garden. I asked him if he had it with him. He said nothing, but gravely took out his pocket-book and drew forth a small photograph. It represented, as the poet says, a simple maiden in her flower—a slight young girl, with a certain childish roundness of contour. There was no ease in her posture; she was standing, stiffly and shyly, for her likeness; she wore a short-waisted white dress; her arms hung at her sides and her hands were clasped in front; her head was bent downward a little, and her dark eyes fixed. But her awkwardness was as pretty as that of some angular seraph in a mediæval carving, and in her timid gaze there seemed to lurk the questioning gleam of childhood. “What is this for?” her charming eyes appeared to ask; “why have I been dressed up for this ceremony in a white frock and amber beads?”

“Gracious powers!” I said to myself; “what an enchanting thing is innocence!”

“That portrait was taken a year and a half ago,” said Pickering, as if with an effort to be perfectly just. “By this time, I suppose, she looks a little wiser.”

“Not much, I hope,” I said, as I gave it back. “She is very sweet!”

“Yes, poor girl, she is very sweet—no doubt!” And he put the thing away without looking at it.

We were silent for some moments. At last, abruptly—“My dear fellow,” I said, “I should take some satisfaction in seeing you immediately leave Homburg.”

“Immediately?”

“To-day—as soon as you can get ready.”

He looked at me, surprised, and little by little he blushed. “There is something I have not told you,” he said; “something that your saying that Madame Blumenthal has no reputation to lose has made me half afraid to tell you.”

“I think I can guess it. Madame Blumenthal has asked you to come and play her game for her again.”

“Not at all!” cried Pickering, with a smile of triumph. “She says that she means to play no more for the present. She has asked me to come and take tea with her this evening.”

“Ah, then,” I said, very gravely, “of course you can't leave Homburg.”

He answered nothing, but looked askance at me, as if he were expecting me to laugh. “Urge it strongly,” he said in a moment. “Say it's my duty—that I *must*.”

I didn't quite understand him, but, feathering the shaft with a harmless expletive, I told him that unless he followed my advice I would never speak to him again.

He got up, stood before me, and struck the ground with his stick. “Good!” he cried; “I wanted an occasion to break a rule—to leap a barrier. Here it is. I stay!”

I made him a mock bow for his energy. “That's very fine,” I said; “but now, to put you in a proper mood for Madame Blumenthal's tea, we will go and listen to the band play Schubert under the lindens.” And we walked back through the woods.

I went to see Pickering the next day, at his inn, and on knocking, as directed, at his door, was surprised to hear the sound of a loud voice within. My knock remained unnoticed, so I presently introduced myself. I found no company, but I discovered my friend walking up and

down the room and apparently declaiming to himself from a little volume bound in white vellum. He greeted me heartily, threw his book on the table, and said that he was taking a German lesson.

“And who is your teacher?” I asked, glancing at the book.

He rather avoided meeting my eye, as he answered, after an instant’s delay, “Madame Blumenthal.”

“Indeed! Has she written a grammar?”

“It’s not a grammar; it’s a tragedy.” And he handed me the book.

I opened it, and beheld, in delicate type, with a very large margin, an *Historisches Trauerspiel* in five acts, entitled “Cleopatra.” There were a great many marginal corrections and annotations, apparently from the author’s hand; the speeches were very long, and there was an inordinate number of soliloquies by the heroine. One of them, I remember, towards the end of the play, began in this fashion—

“What, after all, is life but sensation, and sensation but deception?—reality that pales before the light of one’s dreams as Octavia’s dull beauty fades beside mine? But let me believe in some intenser bliss, and seek it in the arms of death!”

“It seems decidedly passionate,” I said. “Has the tragedy ever been acted?”

“Never in public; but Madame Blumenthal tells me that she had it played at her own house in Berlin, and that she herself undertook the part of the heroine.”

Pickering’s unworldly life had not been of a sort to sharpen his perception of the ridiculous, but it seemed to me an unmistakable sign of his being under the charm, that this information was very soberly offered. He was preoccupied, he was irresponsive to my experimental observations on vulgar topics—the hot weather, the inn, the advent of Adelina Patti. At last, uttering his thoughts, he announced that Madame Blumenthal had proved to be an extraordinarily interesting woman. He seemed to have quite forgotten our long talk in the Hartwaldt, and betrayed no sense of this being a confession that he had taken his plunge and was floating with the current. He only remembered that I had spoken slightly of the lady, and he now hinted that it behoved me to amend my opinion. I had received the day before so strong an impression of a sort of spiritual fastidiousness in my friend’s nature, that on hearing now the striking of a new hour, as it were, in his consciousness, and observing how the echoes of the past were immediately quenched in its music, I said to myself that it had certainly taken a delicate hand to wind up that fine machine. No doubt Madame Blumenthal was a clever woman. It is a good German custom at Homburg to spend the hour preceding dinner in listening to the orchestra in the Kurgarten; Mozart and Beethoven, for organisms in which the interfusion of soul and sense is peculiarly mysterious, are a vigorous stimulus to the appetite. Pickering and I conformed, as we had done the day before, to the fashion, and when we were seated under the trees, he began to expatiate on his friend’s merits.

“I don’t know whether she is eccentric or not,” he said; “to me every one seems eccentric, and it’s not for me, yet a while, to measure people by my narrow precedents. I never saw a gaming table in my life before, and supposed that a gambler was of necessity some dusky villain with an evil eye. In Germany, says Madame Blumenthal, people play at roulette as they play at billiards, and her own venerable mother originally taught her the rules of the game. It is a recognised source of subsistence for decent people with small means. But I confess Madame Blumenthal might do worse things than play at roulette, and yet make them harmonious and beautiful. I have never been in the habit of thinking positive beauty the most excellent thing in a woman. I have always said to myself that if my heart were ever to be

captured it would be by a sort of general grace—a sweetness of motion and tone—on which one could count for soothing impressions, as one counts on a musical instrument that is perfectly in tune. Madame Blumenthal has it—this grace that soothes and satisfies; and it seems the more perfect that it keeps order and harmony in a character really passionately ardent and active. With her eager nature and her innumerable accomplishments nothing would be easier than that she should seem restless and aggressive. You will know her, and I leave you to judge whether she does seem so! She has every gift, and culture has done everything for each. What goes on in her mind I of course can't say; what reaches the observer—the admirer—is simply a sort of fragrant emanation of intelligence and sympathy."

"Madame Blumenthal," I said, smiling, "might be the loveliest woman in the world, and you the object of her choicest favours, and yet what I should most envy you would be, not your peerless friend, but your beautiful imagination."

"That's a polite way of calling me a fool," said Pickering. "You are a sceptic, a cynic, a satirist! I hope I shall be a long time coming to that."

"You will make the journey fast if you travel by express trains. But pray tell me, have you ventured to intimate to Madame Blumenthal your high opinion of her?"

"I don't know what I may have said. She listens even better than she talks, and I think it possible I may have made her listen to a great deal of nonsense. For after the first few words I exchanged with her I was conscious of an extraordinary evaporation of all my old diffidence. I have, in truth, I suppose," he added in a moment, "owing to my peculiar circumstances, a great accumulated fund of unuttered things of all sorts to get rid of. Last evening, sitting there before that charming woman, they came swarming to my lips. Very likely I poured them all out. I have a sense of having enshrouded myself in a sort of mist of talk, and of seeing her lovely eyes shining through it opposite to me, like fog-lamps at sea." And here, if I remember rightly, Pickering broke off into an ardent parenthesis, and declared that Madame Blumenthal's eyes had something in them that he had never seen in any others. "It was a jumble of crudities and inanities," he went on; "they must have seemed to her great rubbish; but I felt the wiser and the stronger, somehow, for having fired off all my guns—they could hurt nobody now if they hit—and I imagine I might have gone far without finding another woman in whom such an exhibition would have provoked so little of mere cold amusement."

"Madame Blumenthal, on the contrary," I surmised, "entered into your situation with warmth."

"Exactly so—the greatest! She has felt and suffered, and now she understands!"

"She told you, I imagine, that she understood you as if she had made you, and she offered to be your guide, philosopher, and friend."

"She spoke to me," Pickering answered, after a pause, "as I had never been spoken to before, and she offered me, formally, all the offices of a woman's friendship."

"Which you as formally accepted?"

"To you the scene sounds absurd, I suppose, but allow me to say I don't care!" Pickering spoke with an air of genial defiance which was the most inoffensive thing in the world. "I was very much moved; I was, in fact, very much excited. I tried to say something, but I couldn't; I had had plenty to say before, but now I stammered and bungled, and at last I bolted out of the room."

"Meanwhile she had dropped her tragedy into your pocket!"

“Not at all. I had seen it on the table before she came in. Afterwards she kindly offered to read German aloud with me, for the accent, two or three times a week. ‘What shall we begin with?’ she asked. ‘With this!’ I said, and held up the book. And she let me take it to look it over.”

I was neither a cynic nor a satirist, but even if I had been, I might have been disarmed by Pickering’s assurance, before we parted, that Madame Blumenthal wished to know me and expected him to introduce me. Among the foolish things which, according to his own account, he had uttered, were some generous words in my praise, to which she had civilly replied. I confess I was curious to see her, but I begged that the introduction should not be immediate, for I wished to let Pickering work out his destiny alone. For some days I saw little of him, though we met at the Kursaal and strolled occasionally in the park. I watched, in spite of my desire to let him alone, for the signs and portents of the world’s action upon him—of that portion of the world, in especial, of which Madame Blumenthal had constituted herself the agent. He seemed very happy, and gave me in a dozen ways an impression of increased self-confidence and maturity. His mind was admirably active, and always, after a quarter of an hour’s talk with him, I asked myself what experience could really do, that innocence had not done, to make it bright and fine. I was struck with his deep enjoyment of the whole spectacle of foreign life—its novelty, its picturesqueness, its light and shade—and with the infinite freedom with which he felt he could go and come and rove and linger and observe it all. It was an expansion, an awakening, a coming to moral manhood. Each time I met him he spoke a little less of Madame Blumenthal; but he let me know generally that he saw her often, and continued to admire her. I was forced to admit to myself, in spite of preconceptions, that if she were really the ruling star of this happy season, she must be a very superior woman. Pickering had the air of an ingenuous young philosopher sitting at the feet of an austere muse, and not of a sentimental spendthrift dangling about some supreme incarnation of levity.

CHAPTER II.

Madame Blumenthal seemed, for the time, to have abjured the Kursaal, and I never caught a glimpse of her. Her young friend, apparently, was an interesting study, and the studious mind prefers seclusion.

She reappeared, however, at last, one evening at the opera, where from my chair I perceived her in a box, looking extremely pretty. Adelina Patti was singing, and after the rising of the curtain I was occupied with the stage; but on looking round when it fell for the *entr’acte*, I saw that the authoress of “Cleopatra” had been joined by her young admirer. He was sitting a little behind her, leaning forward, looking over her shoulder and listening, while she, slowly moving her fan to and fro and letting her eye wander over the house, was apparently talking of this person and that. No doubt she was saying sharp things; but Pickering was not laughing; his eyes were following her covert indications; his mouth was half open, as it always was when he was interested; he looked intensely serious. I was glad that, having her back to him, she was unable to see how he looked. It seemed the proper moment to present myself and make her my bow; but just as I was about to leave my place a gentleman, whom in a moment I perceived to be an old acquaintance, came to occupy the next chair. Recognition and mutual greetings followed, and I was forced to postpone my visit to Madame Blumenthal. I was not sorry, for it very soon occurred to me that Niedermeyer would be just the man to give me a fair prose version of Pickering’s lyric tributes to his friend. He was an Austrian by birth, and had formerly lived about Europe a great deal in a series of small diplomatic posts. England especially he had often visited, and he spoke the language almost without accent. I had once spent three rainy days with him in the house of

an English friend in the country. He was a sharp observer, and a good deal of a gossip; he knew a little something about every one, and about some people everything. His knowledge on social matters generally had the quality of all German science; it was copious, minute, exhaustive.

“Do tell me,” I said, as we stood looking round the house, “who and what is the lady in white, with the young man sitting behind her.”

“Who?” he answered, dropping his glass. “Madame Blumenthal! What! It would take long to say. Be introduced; it’s easily done; you will find her charming. Then, after a week, you will tell me what she is.”

“Perhaps I should not. My friend there has known her a week, and I don’t think he is yet able to give a coherent account of her.”

He raised his glass again, and after looking a while, “I am afraid your friend is a little—what do you call it?—a little ‘soft.’ Poor fellow! he’s not the first. I have never known this lady that she has not had some eligible youth hovering about in some such attitude as that, undergoing the softening process. She looks wonderfully well, from here. It’s extraordinary how those women last!”

“You don’t mean, I take it, when you talk about ‘those women,’ that Madame Blumenthal is not embalmed, for duration, in a certain infusion of respectability?”

“Yes and no. The atmosphere that surrounds her is entirely of her own making. There is no reason in her antecedents that people should drop their voice when they speak of her. But some women are never at their ease till they have given some damnable twist or other to their position before the world. The attitude of upright virtue is unbecoming, like sitting too straight in a fauteuil. Don’t ask me for opinions, however; content yourself with a few facts and with an anecdote. Madame Blumenthal is Prussian, and very well born. I remember her mother, an old Westphalian Gräfin, with principles marshalled out like Frederick the Great’s grenadiers. She was poor, however, and her principles were an insufficient dowry for Anastasia, who was married very young to a vicious Jew, twice her own age. He was supposed to have money, but I am afraid he had less than was nominated in the bond, or else that his pretty young wife spent it very fast. She has been a widow these six or eight years, and has lived, I imagine, in rather a hand-to-mouth fashion. I suppose she is some six or eight and thirty years of age. In winter one hears of her in Berlin, giving little suppers to the artistic rabble there; in summer one often sees her across the green table at Ems and Wiesbaden. She’s very clever, and her cleverness has spoiled her. A year after her marriage she published a novel, with her views on matrimony, in the George Sand manner—beating the drum to Madame Sand’s trumpet. No doubt she was very unhappy; Blumenthal was an old beast. Since then she has published a lot of literature—novels and poems and pamphlets on every conceivable theme, from the conversion of Lola Montez to the Hegelian philosophy. Her talk is much better than her writing. Her *conjugophobia*—I can’t call it by any other name—made people think lightly of her at a time when her rebellion against marriage was probably only theoretic. She had a taste for spinning fine phrases, she drove her shuttle, and when she came to the end of her yarn she found that society had turned its back. She tossed her head, declared that at last she could breathe the sacred air of freedom, and formally announced that she had embraced an ‘intellectual’ life. This meant unlimited *camaraderie* with scribblers and daubers, Hegelian philosophers and Hungarian pianists. But she has been admired also by a great many really clever men; there was a time, in fact, when she turned a head as well set on its shoulders as this one!” And Niedermeyer tapped his forehead. “She has a great charm, and, literally, I know no harm of her. Yet for

all that, I am not going to speak to her; I am not going near her box. I am going to leave her to say, if she does me the honour to observe the omission, that I too have gone over to the Philistines. It's not that; it is that there is something sinister about the woman. I am too old for it to frighten me, but I am good-natured enough for it to pain me. Her quarrel with society has brought her no happiness, and her outward charm is only the mask of a dangerous discontent. Her imagination is lodged where her heart should be! So long as you amuse it, well and good; she's radiant. But the moment you let it flag, she is capable of dropping you without a pang. If you land on your feet you are so much the wiser, simply; but there have been two or three, I believe, who have almost broken their necks in the fall."

"You are reversing your promise," I said, "and giving me an opinion, but not an anecdote."

"This is my anecdote. A year ago a friend of mine made her acquaintance in Berlin, and though he was no longer a young man, and had never been what is called a susceptible one, he took a great fancy to Madame Blumenthal. He's a major in the Prussian artillery—grizzled, grave, a trifle severe, a man every way firm in the faith of his fathers. It's a proof of Anastasia's charm that such a man should have got into the habit of going to see her every day of his life. But the major was in love, or next door to it! Every day that he called he found her scribbling away at a little ormolu table on a lot of half-sheets of note-paper. She used to bid him sit down and hold his tongue for a quarter of an hour, till she had finished her chapter; she was writing a novel, and it was promised to a publisher. Clorinda, she confided to him, was the name of the injured heroine. The major, I imagine, had never read a work of fiction in his life, but he knew by hearsay that Madame Blumenthal's literature, when put forth in pink covers, was subversive of several respectable institutions. Besides, he didn't believe in women knowing how to write at all, and it irritated him to see this inky goddess correcting proof-sheets under his nose—irritated him the more that, as I say, he was in love with her and that he ventured to believe she had a kindness for his years and his honours. And yet she was not such a woman as he could easily ask to marry him. The result of all this was that he fell into the way of railing at her intellectual pursuits and saying he should like to run his sword through her pile of papers. A woman was clever enough when she could guess her husband's wishes, and learned enough when she could read him the newspapers. At last, one day, Madame Blumenthal flung down her pen and announced in triumph that she had finished her novel. Clorinda had expired in the arms of—some one else than her husband. The major, by way of congratulating her, declared that her novel was immoral rubbish, and that her love of vicious paradoxes was only a peculiarly depraved form of coquetry. He added, however, that he loved her in spite of her follies, and that if she would formally abjure them he would as formally offer her his hand. They say that women like to be snubbed by military men. I don't know, I'm sure; I don't know how much pleasure, on this occasion, was mingled with Anastasia's wrath. But her wrath was very quiet, and the major assured me it made her look uncommonly pretty. 'I have told you before,' she says, 'that I write from an inner need. I write to unburden my heart, to satisfy my conscience. You call my poor efforts coquetry, vanity, the desire to produce a sensation. I can prove to you that it is the quiet labour itself I care for, and not the world's more or less flattering attention to it!' And seizing the history of Clorinda she thrust it into the fire. The major stands staring, and the first thing he knows she is sweeping him a great curtsey and bidding him farewell for ever. Left alone and recovering his wits, he fishes out Clorinda from the embers, and then proceeds to thump vigorously at the lady's door. But it never opened, and from that day to the day three months ago when he told me the tale, he had not beheld her again."

"By Jove, it's a striking story," I said. "But the question is, what does it prove?"

“Several things. First (what I was careful not to tell my friend), that Madame Blumenthal cared for him a trifle more than he supposed; second, that he cares for her more than ever; third, that the performance was a master-stroke, and that her allowing him to force an interview upon her again is only a question of time.”

“And last?” I asked.

“This is another anecdote. The other day, Unter den Linden, I saw on a bookseller’s counter a little pink-covered romance—‘Sophronia,’ by Madame Blumenthal. Glancing through it, I observed an extraordinary abuse of asterisks; every two or three pages the narrative was adorned with a portentous blank, crossed with a row of stars.”

“Well, but poor Clorinda?” I objected, as Niedermeyer paused.

“Sophronia, my dear fellow, is simply Clorinda renamed by the baptism of fire. The fair author came back, of course, and found Clorinda tumbled upon the floor, a good deal scorched, but, on the whole, more frightened than hurt. She picks her up, brushes her off, and sends her to the printer. Wherever the flames had burnt a hole she swings a constellation! But if the major is prepared to drop a penitent tear over the ashes of Clorinda, I shall not whisper to him that the urn is empty.”

Even Adelina Patti’s singing, for the next half-hour, but half availed to divert me from my quickened curiosity to behold Madame Blumenthal face to face. As soon as the curtain had fallen again I repaired to her box and was ushered in by Pickering with zealous hospitality. His glowing smile seemed to say to me, “Ay, look for yourself, and adore!” Nothing could have been more gracious than the lady’s greeting, and I found, somewhat to my surprise, that her prettiness lost nothing on a nearer view. Her eyes indeed were the finest I have ever seen—the softest, the deepest, the most intensely responsive. In spite of something faded and jaded in her physiognomy, her movements, her smile, and the tone of her voice, especially when she laughed, had an almost girlish frankness and spontaneity. She looked at you very hard with her radiant gray eyes, and she indulged while she talked in a superabundance of restless, rather affected little gestures, as if to make you take her meaning in a certain very particular and superfine sense. I wondered whether after a while this might not fatigue one’s attention; then meeting her charming eyes, I said, Not for a long time. She was very clever, and, as Pickering had said, she spoke English admirably. I told her, as I took my seat beside her, of the fine things I had heard about her from my friend, and she listened, letting me go on some time, and exaggerate a little, with her fine eyes fixed full upon me. “Really?” she suddenly said, turning short round upon Pickering, who stood behind us, and looking at him in the same way. “Is that the way you talk about me?”

He blushed to his eyes, and I repented. She suddenly began to laugh; it was then I observed how sweet her voice was in laughter. We talked after this of various matters, and in a little while I complimented her on her excellent English, and asked if she had learnt it in England.

“Heaven forbid!” she cried. “I have never been there and wish never to go. I should never get on with the—” I wondered what she was going to say; the fogs, the smoke, or whist with sixpenny stakes?—“I should never get on,” she said, “with the aristocracy! I am a fierce democrat—I am not ashamed of it. I hold opinions which would make my ancestors turn in their graves. I was born in the lap of feudalism. I am a daughter of the crusaders. But I am a revolutionist! I have a passion for freedom—my idea of happiness is to die on a great barricade! It’s to your great country I should like to go. I should like to see the wonderful spectacle of a great people free to do everything it chooses, and yet never doing anything wrong!”

I replied, modestly, that, after all, both our freedom and our good conduct had their limits, and she turned quickly about and shook her fan with a dramatic gesture at Pickering. "No matter, no matter!" she cried; "I should like to see the country which produced that wonderful young man. I think of it as a sort of Arcadia—a land of the golden age. He's so delightfully innocent! In this stupid old Germany, if a young man is innocent he's a fool; he has no brains; he's not a bit interesting. But Mr. Pickering says the freshest things, and after I have laughed five minutes at their freshness it suddenly occurs to me that they are very wise, and I think them over for a week." "True!" she went on, nodding at him. "I call them inspired solecisms, and I treasure them up. Remember that when I next laugh at you!"

Glancing at Pickering, I was prompted to believe that he was in a state of beatific exaltation which weighed Madame Blumenthal's smiles and frowns in an equal balance. They were equally hers; they were links alike in the golden chain. He looked at me with eyes that seemed to say, "Did you ever hear such wit? Did you ever see such grace?" It seemed to me that he was but vaguely conscious of the meaning of her words; her gestures, her voice and glance, made an absorbing harmony. There is something painful in the spectacle of absolute enthralment, even to an excellent cause. I gave no response to Pickering's challenge, but made some remark upon the charm of Adelina Patti's singing. Madame Blumenthal, as became a "revolutionist," was obliged to confess that she could see no charm in it; it was meagre, it was trivial, it lacked soul. "You must know that in music, too," she said, "I think for myself!" And she began with a great many flourishes of her fan to explain what it was she thought. Remarkable things, doubtless; but I cannot answer for it, for in the midst of the explanation the curtain rose again. "You can't be a great artist without a great passion!" Madame Blumenthal was affirming. Before I had time to assent Madame Patti's voice rose wheeling like a skylark, and rained down its silver notes. "Ah, give me that art," I whispered, "and I will leave you your passion!" And I departed for my own place in the orchestra. I wondered afterwards whether the speech had seemed rude, and inferred that it had not on receiving a friendly nod from the lady, in the lobby, as the theatre was emptying itself. She was on Pickering's arm, and he was taking her to her carriage. Distances are short in Homburg, but the night was rainy, and Madame Blumenthal exhibited a very pretty satin-shod foot as a reason why, though but a penniless widow, she should not walk home. Pickering left us together a moment while he went to hail the vehicle, and my companion seized the opportunity, as she said, to beg me to be so very kind as to come and see her. It was for a particular reason! It was reason enough for me, of course, I answered, that she had given me leave. She looked at me a moment with that extraordinary gaze of hers which seemed so absolutely audacious in its candour, and rejoined that I paid more compliments than our young friend there, but that she was sure I was not half so sincere. "But it's about him I want to talk," she said. "I want to ask you many things; I want you to tell me all about him. He interests me; but you see my sympathies are so intense, my imagination is so lively, that I don't trust my own impressions. They have misled me more than once!" And she gave a little tragic shudder.

I promised to come and compare notes with her, and we bade her farewell at her carriage door. Pickering and I remained a while, walking up and down the long glazed gallery of the Kursaal. I had not taken many steps before I became aware that I was beside a man in the very extremity of love. "Isn't she wonderful?" he asked, with an implicit confidence in my sympathy which it cost me some ingenuity to elude. If he were really in love, well and good! For although, now that I had seen her, I stood ready to confess to large possibilities of fascination on Madame Blumenthal's part, and even to certain possibilities of sincerity of which my appreciation was vague, yet it seemed to me less ominous that he should be simply smitten than that his admiration should pique itself on being discriminating. It was on his

fundamental simplicity that I counted for a happy termination of his experiment, and the former of these alternatives seemed to me the simpler. I resolved to hold my tongue and let him run his course. He had a great deal to say about his happiness, about the days passing like hours, the hours like minutes, and about Madame Blumenthal being a “revelation.” “She was nothing to-night,” he said; “nothing to what she sometimes is in the way of brilliancy—in the way of repartee. If you could only hear her when she tells her adventures!”

“Adventures?” I inquired. “Has she had adventures?”

“Of the most wonderful sort!” cried Pickering, with rapture. “She hasn’t vegetated, like me! She has lived in the tumult of life. When I listen to her reminiscences, it’s like hearing the opening tumult of one of Beethoven’s symphonies as it loses itself in a triumphant harmony of beauty and faith!”

I could only lift my eyebrows, but I desired to know before we separated what he had done with that troublesome conscience of his. “I suppose you know, my dear fellow,” I said, “that you are simply in love. That’s what they happen to call your state of mind.”

He replied with a brightening eye, as if he were delighted to hear it—“So Madame Blumenthal told me only this morning!” And seeing, I suppose, that I was slightly puzzled, “I went to drive with her,” he continued; “we drove to Königstein, to see the old castle. We scrambled up into the heart of the ruin and sat for an hour in one of the crumbling old courts. Something in the solemn stillness of the place unloosed my tongue; and while she sat on an ivied stone, on the edge of the plunging wall, I stood there and made a speech. She listened to me, looking at me, breaking off little bits of stone and letting them drop down into the valley. At last she got up and nodded at me two or three times silently, with a smile, as if she were applauding me for a solo on the violin. ‘You are in love,’ she said. ‘It’s a perfect case!’ And for some time she said nothing more. But before we left the place she told me that she owed me an answer to my speech. She thanked me heartily, but she was afraid that if she took me at my word she would be taking advantage of my inexperience. I had known few women; I was too easily pleased; I thought her better than she really was. She had great faults; I must know her longer and find them out; I must compare her with other women—women younger, simpler, more innocent, more ignorant; and then if I still did her the honour to think well of her, she would listen to me again. I told her that I was not afraid of preferring any woman in the world to her, and then she repeated, ‘Happy man, happy man! you are in love, you are in love!’”

I called upon Madame Blumenthal a couple of days later, in some agitation of thought. It has been proved that there are, here and there, in the world, such people as sincere impostors; certain characters who cultivate fictitious emotions in perfect good faith. Even if this clever lady enjoyed poor Pickering’s bedazzlement, it was conceivable that, taking vanity and charity together, she should care more for his welfare than for her own entertainment; and her offer to abide by the result of hazardous comparison with other women was a finer stroke than her reputation had led me to expect. She received me in a shabby little sitting-room littered with uncut books and newspapers, many of which I saw at a glance were French. One side of it was occupied by an open piano, surmounted by a jar full of white roses. They perfumed the air; they seemed to me to exhale the pure aroma of Pickering’s devotion. Buried in an arm-chair, the object of this devotion was reading the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. The purpose of my visit was not to admire Madame Blumenthal on my own account, but to ascertain how far I might safely leave her to work her will upon my friend. She had impugned my sincerity the evening of the opera, and I was careful on this occasion to abstain from compliments, and not to place her on her guard against my penetration. It is needless to narrate our interview in detail; indeed, to tell the perfect truth, I

was punished for my rash attempt to surprise her by a temporary eclipse of my own perspicacity. She sat there so questioning, so perceptive, so genial, so generous, and so pretty withal, that I was quite ready at the end of half an hour to subscribe to the most comprehensive of Pickering's rhapsodies. She was certainly a wonderful woman. I have never liked to linger, in memory, on that half-hour. The result of it was to prove that there were many more things in the composition of a woman who, as Niedermeyer said, had lodged her imagination in the place of her heart than were dreamt of in my philosophy. Yet, as I sat there stroking my hat and balancing the account between nature and art in my affable hostess, I felt like a very competent philosopher. She had said she wished me to tell her everything about our friend, and she questioned me as to his family, his fortune, his antecedents, and his character. All this was natural in a woman who had received a passionate declaration of love, and it was expressed with an air of charmed solicitude, a radiant confidence that there was really no mistake about his being a most distinguished young man, and that if I chose to be explicit, I might deepen her conviction to disinterested ecstasy, which might have almost provoked me to invent a good opinion, if I had not had one ready made. I told her that she really knew Pickering better than I did, and that until we met at Homburg I had not seen him since he was a boy.

"But he talks to you freely," she answered; "I know you are his confidant. He has told me certainly a great many things, but I always feel as if he were keeping something back; as if he were holding something behind him, and showing me only one hand at once. He seems often to be hovering on the edge of a secret. I have had several friendships in my life—thank Heaven! but I have had none more dear to me than this one. Yet in the midst of it I have the painful sense of my friend being half afraid of me; of his thinking me terrible, strange, perhaps a trifle out of my wits. Poor me! If he only knew what a plain good soul I am, and how I only want to know him and befriend him!"

These words were full of a plaintive magnanimity which made mistrust seem cruel. How much better I might play providence over Pickering's experiments with life if I could engage the fine instincts of this charming woman on the providential side! Pickering's secret was, of course, his engagement to Miss Vernor; it was natural enough that he should have been unable to bring himself to talk of it to Madame Blumenthal. The simple sweetness of this young girl's face had not faded from my memory; I could not rid myself of the suspicion that in going further Pickering might fare much worse. Madame Blumenthal's professions seemed a virtual promise to agree with me, and, after some hesitation, I said that my friend had, in fact, a substantial secret, and that perhaps I might do him a good turn by putting her in possession of it. In as few words as possible I told her that Pickering stood pledged by filial piety to marry a young lady at Smyrna. She listened intently to my story; when I had finished it there was a faint flush of excitement in each of her cheeks. She broke out into a dozen exclamations of admiration and compassion. "What a wonderful tale—what a romantic situation! No wonder poor Mr. Pickering seemed restless and unsatisfied; no wonder he wished to put off the day of submission. And the poor little girl at Smyrna, waiting there for the young Western prince like the heroine of an Eastern tale! She would give the world to see her photograph; did I think Mr. Pickering would show it to her? But never fear; she would ask nothing indiscreet! Yes, it was a marvellous story, and if she had invented it herself, people would have said it was absurdly improbable." She left her seat and took several turns about the room, smiling to herself, and uttering little German cries of wonderment. Suddenly she stopped before the piano and broke into a little laugh; the next moment she buried her face in the great bouquet of roses. It was time I should go, but I was indisposed to leave her without obtaining some definite assurance that, as far as pity was concerned, she pitied the young girl at Smyrna more than the young man at Homburg.

“Of course you know what I wished in telling you this,” I said, rising. “She is evidently a charming creature, and the best thing he can do is to marry her. I wished to interest you in that view of it.”

She had taken one of the roses from the vase and was arranging it in the front of her dress. Suddenly, looking up, “Leave it to me, leave it to me!” she cried. “I am interested!” And with her little blue-gemmed hand she tapped her forehead. “I am deeply interested!”

And with this I had to content myself. But more than once the next day I repented of my zeal, and wondered whether a providence with a white rose in her bosom might not turn out a trifle too human. In the evening, at the Kursaal, I looked for Pickering, but he was not visible, and I reflected that my revelation had not as yet, at any rate, seemed to Madame Blumenthal a reason for prescribing a cooling-term to his passion. Very late, as I was turning away, I saw him arrive—with no small satisfaction, for I had determined to let him know immediately in what way I had attempted to serve him. But he straightway passed his arm through my own and led me off towards the gardens. I saw that he was too excited to allow me to speak first.

“I have burnt my ships!” he cried, when we were out of earshot of the crowd. “I have told her everything. I have insisted that it’s simple torture for me to wait with this idle view of loving her less. It’s well enough for her to ask it, but I feel strong enough now to override her reluctance. I have cast off the millstone from round my neck. I care for nothing, I know nothing, but that I love her with every pulse of my being—and that everything else has been a hideous dream, from which she may wake me into blissful morning with a single word!”

I held him off at arm’s-length and looked at him gravely. “You have told her, you mean, of your engagement to Miss Vernor?”

“The whole story! I have given it up—I have thrown it to the winds. I have broken utterly with the past. It may rise in its grave and give me its curse, but it can’t frighten me now. I have a right to be happy, I have a right to be free, I have a right not to bury myself alive. It was not *I* who promised—I was not born then. I myself, my soul, my mind, my option—all this is but a month old! Ah,” he went on, “if you knew the difference it makes—this having chosen and broken and spoken! I am twice the man I was yesterday! Yesterday I was afraid of her; there was a kind of mocking mystery of knowledge and cleverness about her, which oppressed me in the midst of my love. But now I am afraid of nothing but of being too happy!”

I stood silent, to let him spend his eloquence. But he paused a moment, and took off his hat and fanned himself. “Let me perfectly understand,” I said at last. “You have asked Madame Blumenthal to be your wife?”

“The wife of my intelligent choice!”

“And does she consent?”

“She asks three days to decide.”

“Call it four! She has known your secret since this morning. I am bound to let you know I told her.”

“So much the better!” cried Pickering, without apparent resentment or surprise. “It’s not a brilliant offer for such a woman, and in spite of what I have at stake, I feel that it would be brutal to press her.”

“What does she say to your breaking your promise?” I asked in a moment.

Pickering was too much in love for false shame. "She tells me that she loves me too much to find courage to condemn me. She agrees with me that I have a right to be happy. I ask no exemption from the common law. What I claim is simply freedom to try to be!"

Of course I was puzzled; it was not in that fashion that I had expected Madame Blumenthal to make use of my information. But the matter now was quite out of my hands, and all I could do was to bid my companion not work himself into a fever over either fortune.

The next day I had a visit from Niedermeyer, on whom, after our talk at the opera, I had left a card. We gossiped a while, and at last he said suddenly, "By the way, I have a sequel to the history of Clorinda. The major is at Homburg!"

"Indeed!" said I. "Since when?"

"These three days."

"And what is he doing?"

"He seems," said Niedermeyer, with a laugh, "to be chiefly occupied in sending flowers to Madame Blumenthal. That is, I went with him the morning of his arrival to choose a nosegay, and nothing would suit him but a small haystack of white roses. I hope it was received."

"I can assure you it was," I cried. "I saw the lady fairly nestling her head in it. But I advise the major not to build upon that. He has a rival."

"Do you mean the soft young man of the other night?"

"Pickering is soft, if you will, but his softness seems to have served him. He has offered her everything, and she has not yet refused it." I had handed my visitor a cigar, and he was puffing it in silence. At last he abruptly asked if I had been introduced to Madame Blumenthal, and, on my affirmative, inquired what I thought of her. "I will not tell you," I said, "or you'll call *me* soft."

He knocked away his ashes, eyeing me askance. "I have noticed your friend about," he said, "and even if you had not told me, I should have known he was in love. After he has left his adored, his face wears for the rest of the day the expression with which he has risen from her feet, and more than once I have felt like touching his elbow, as you would that of a man who has inadvertently come into a drawing-room in his overshoes. You say he has offered our friend everything; but, my dear fellow, he has not everything to offer her. He evidently is as amiable as the morning, but the lady has no taste for daylight."

"I assure you Pickering is a very interesting fellow," I said.

"Ah, there it is! Has he not some story or other? Isn't he an orphan, or a natural child, or consumptive, or contingent heir to great estates? She will read his little story to the end, and close the book very tenderly and smooth down the cover; and then, when he least expects it, she will toss it into the dusty limbo of her other romances. She will let him dangle, but she will let him drop!"

"Upon my word," I cried, with heat, "if she does, she will be a very unprincipled little creature!"

Niedermeyer shrugged his shoulders. "I never said she was a saint!"

Shrewd as I felt Niedermeyer to be, I was not prepared to take his simple word for this event, and in the evening I received a communication which fortified my doubts. It was a note from Pickering, and it ran as follows:—

“My Dear Friend—I have every hope of being happy, but I am to go to Wiesbaden to learn my fate. Madame Blumenthal goes thither this afternoon to spend a few days, and she allows me to accompany her. Give me your good wishes; you shall hear of the result.

E. P.”

One of the diversions of Homburg for new-comers is to dine in rotation at the different tables d’hôte. It so happened that, a couple of days later, Niedermeyer took pot-luck at my hotel, and secured a seat beside my own. As we took our places I found a letter on my plate, and, as it was postmarked Wiesbaden, I lost no time in opening it. It contained but three lines—

“I am happy—I am accepted—an hour ago. I can hardly believe it’s your poor friend

E. P.”

I placed the note before Niedermeyer; not exactly in triumph, but with the alacrity of all felicitous confutation. He looked at it much longer than was needful to read it, stroking down his beard gravely, and I felt it was not so easy to confute a pupil of the school of Metternich. At last, folding the note and handing it back, “Has your friend mentioned Madame Blumenthal’s errand at Wiesbaden?” he asked.

“You look very wise. I give it up!” said I.

“She is gone there to make the major follow her. He went by the next train.”

“And has the major, on his side, dropped you a line?”

“He is not a letter-writer.”

“Well,” said I, pocketing my letter, “with this document in my hand I am bound to reserve my judgment. We will have a bottle of Johannisberg, and drink to the triumph of virtue.”

For a whole week more I heard nothing from Pickering—somewhat to my surprise, and, as the days went by, not a little to my discomposure. I had expected that his bliss would continue to overflow in brief bulletins, and his silence was possibly an indication that it had been clouded. At last I wrote to his hotel at Wiesbaden, but received no answer; whereupon, as my next resource, I repaired to his former lodging at Homburg, where I thought it possible he had left property which he would sooner or later send for. There I learned that he had indeed just telegraphed from Cologne for his luggage. To Cologne I immediately despatched a line of inquiry as to his prosperity and the cause of his silence. The next day I received three words in answer—a simple uncommented request that I would come to him. I lost no time, and reached him in the course of a few hours. It was dark when I arrived, and the city was sheeted in a cold autumnal rain. Pickering had stumbled, with an indifference which was itself a symptom of distress, on a certain musty old Mainzerhof, and I found him sitting over a smouldering fire in a vast dingy chamber which looked as if it had grown gray with watching the *ennui* of ten generations of travellers. Looking at him, as he rose on my entrance, I saw that he was in extreme tribulation. He was pale and haggard; his face was five years older. Now, at least, in all conscience, he had tasted of the cup of life! I was anxious to know what had turned it so suddenly to bitterness; but I spared him all importunate curiosity, and let him take his time. I accepted tacitly his tacit confession of distress, and we made for a while a feeble effort to discuss the picturesqueness of Cologne. At last he rose and stood a long time looking into the fire, while I slowly paced the length of the dusky room.

“Well!” he said, as I came back; “I wanted knowledge, and I certainly know something I didn’t a month ago.” And herewith, calmly and succinctly enough, as if dismay had worn itself out, he related the history of the foregoing days. He touched lightly on details; he evidently never was to gush as freely again as he had done during the prosperity of his

suit. He had been accepted one evening, as explicitly as his imagination could desire, and had gone forth in his rapture and roamed about till nearly morning in the gardens of the Conversation-house, taking the stars and the perfumes of the summer night into his confidence. "It is worth it all, almost," he said, "to have been wound up for an hour to that celestial pitch. No man, I am sure, can ever know it but once." The next morning he had repaired to Madame Blumenthal's lodging and had been met, to his amazement, by a naked refusal to see him. He had strode about for a couple of hours—in another mood—and then had returned to the charge. The servant handed him a three-cornered note; it contained these words: "Leave me alone to-day; I will give you ten minutes to-morrow evening." Of the next thirty-six hours he could give no coherent account, but at the appointed time Madame Blumenthal had received him. Almost before she spoke there had come to him a sense of the depth of his folly in supposing he knew her. "One has heard all one's days," he said, "of people removing the mask; it's one of the stock phrases of romance. Well, there she stood with her mask in her hand. Her face," he went on gravely, after a pause—"her face was horrible!" . . . "I give you ten minutes," she had said, pointing to the clock. "Make your scene, tear your hair, brandish your dagger!" And she had sat down and folded her arms. "It's not a joke," she cried, "it's dead earnest; let us have it over. You are dismissed—have you nothing to say?" He had stammered some frantic demand for an explanation; and she had risen and come near him, looking at him from head to feet, very pale, and evidently more excited than she wished him to see. "I have done with you!" she said, with a smile; "you ought to have done with me! It has all been delightful, but there are excellent reasons why it should come to an end." "You have been playing a part, then," he had gasped out; "you never cared for me?" "Yes; till I knew you; till I saw how far you would go. But now the story's finished; we have reached the *dénoûment*. We will close the book and be good friends." "To see how far I would go?" he had repeated. "You led me on, meaning all the while to do *this*!" "I led you on, if you will. I received your visits, in season and out! Sometimes they were very entertaining; sometimes they bored me fearfully. But you were such a very curious case of—what shall I call it?—of sincerity, that I determined to take good and bad together. I wanted to make you commit yourself unmistakably. I should have preferred not to bring you to this place; but that too was necessary. Of course I can't marry you; I can do better. So can you, for that matter; thank your fate for it. You have thought wonders of me for a month, but your good-humour wouldn't last. I am too old and too wise; you are too young and too foolish. It seems to me that I have been very good to you; I have entertained you to the top of your bent, and, except perhaps that I am a little brusque just now, you have nothing to complain of. I would have let you down more gently if I could have taken another month to it; but circumstances have forced my hand. Abuse me, curse me, if you like. I will make every allowance!" Pickering listened to all this intently enough to perceive that, as if by some sudden natural cataclysm, the ground had broken away at his feet, and that he must recoil. He turned away in dumb amazement. "I don't know how I seemed to be taking it," he said, "but she seemed really to desire—I don't know why—something in the way of reproach and vituperation. But I couldn't, in that way, have uttered a syllable. I was sickened; I wanted to get away into the air—to shake her off and come to my senses. 'Have you nothing, nothing, nothing to say?' she cried, as if she were disappointed, while I stood with my hand on the door. 'Haven't I treated you to talk enough?' I believed I answered. 'You will write to me then, when you get home?' 'I think not,' said I. 'Six months hence, I fancy, you will come and see me!' 'Never!' said I. 'That's a confession of stupidity,' she answered. 'It means that, even on reflection, you will never understand the philosophy of my conduct.' The word 'philosophy' seemed so strange that I verily believe I smiled. 'I have given you all that you gave me,' she went on. 'Your passion was an affair of the head.' 'I only wish you had told me sooner that you considered it so!' I exclaimed. And I

went my way. The next day I came down the Rhine. I sat all day on the boat, not knowing where I was going, where to get off. I was in a kind of ague of terror; it seemed to me I had seen something infernal. At last I saw the cathedral towers here looming over the city. They seemed to say something to me, and when the boat stopped, I came ashore. I have been here a week. I have not slept at night—and yet it has been a week of rest!”

It seemed to me that he was in a fair way to recover, and that his own philosophy, if left to take its time, was adequate to the occasion. After his story was once told I referred to his grievance but once—that evening, later, as we were about to separate for the night. “Suffer me to say that there was some truth in *her* account of your relations,” I said. “You were using her intellectually, and all the while, without your knowing it, she was using you. It was diamond cut diamond. Her needs were the more superficial, and she got tired of the game first.” He frowned and turned uneasily away, but without contradicting me. I waited a few moments, to see if he would remember, before we parted, that he had a claim to make upon me. But he seemed to have forgotten it.

The next day we strolled about the picturesque old city, and of course, before long, went into the cathedral. Pickering said little; he seemed intent upon his own thoughts. He sat down beside a pillar near a chapel, in front of a gorgeous window, and, leaving him to his meditations, I wandered through the church. When I came back I saw he had something to say. But before he had spoken I laid my hand on his shoulder and looked at him with a significant smile. He slowly bent his head and dropped his eyes, with a mixture of assent and humility. I drew forth from where it had lain untouched for a month the letter he had given me to keep, placed it silently on his knee, and left him to deal with it alone.

Half an hour later I returned to the same place, but he had gone, and one of the sacristans, hovering about and seeing me looking for Pickering, said he thought he had left the church. I found him in his gloomy chamber at the inn, pacing slowly up and down. I should doubtless have been at a loss to say just what effect I expected the letter from Smyrna to produce; but his actual aspect surprised me. He was flushed, excited, a trifle irritated.

“Evidently,” I said, “you have read your letter.”

“It is proper I should tell you what is in it,” he answered. “When I gave it to you a month ago, I did my friends injustice.”

“You called it a ‘summons,’ I remember.”

“I was a great fool! It’s a release!”

“From your engagement?”

“From everything! The letter, of course, is from Mr. Vernor. He desires to let me know at the earliest moment that his daughter, informed for the first time a week before of what had been expected of her, positively refuses to be bound by the contract or to assent to my being bound. She had been given a week to reflect, and had spent it in inconsolable tears. She had resisted every form of persuasion! from compulsion, writes Mr. Vernor, he naturally shrinks. The young lady considers the arrangement ‘horrible.’ After accepting her duties cut and dried all her life, she pretends at last to have a taste of her own. I confess I am surprised; I had been given to believe that she was stupidly submissive, and would remain so to the end of the chapter. Not a bit of it. She has insisted on my being formally dismissed, and her father intimates that in case of non-compliance she threatens him with an attack of brain fever. Mr. Vernor condoles with me handsomely, and lets me know that the young lady’s attitude has been a great shock to his nerves. He adds that he will not aggravate such regret as I may do him the honour to entertain, by any allusions to his daughter’s charms and to the

magnitude of my loss, and he concludes with the hope that, for the comfort of all concerned, I may already have amused my fancy with other ‘views.’ He reminds me in a postscript that, in spite of this painful occurrence, the son of his most valued friend will always be a welcome visitor at his house. I am free, he observes; I have my life before me; he recommends an extensive course of travel. Should my wanderings lead me to the East, he hopes that no false embarrassment will deter me from presenting myself at Smyrna. He can promise me at least a friendly reception. It’s a very polite letter.”

Polite as the letter was, Pickering seemed to find no great exhilaration in having this famous burden so handsomely lifted from his spirit. He began to brood over his liberation in a manner which you might have deemed proper to a renewed sense of bondage. “Bad news,” he had called his letter originally; and yet, now that its contents proved to be in flat contradiction to his foreboding, there was no impulsive voice to reverse the formula and declare the news was good. The wings of impulse in the poor fellow had of late been terribly clipped. It was an obvious reflection, of course, that if he had not been so stiffly certain of the matter a month before, and had gone through the form of breaking Mr. Vernor’s seal, he might have escaped the purgatory of Madame Blumenthal’s sub-acid blandishments. But I left him to moralise in private; I had no desire, as the phrase is, to rub it in. My thoughts, moreover, were following another train; I was saying to myself that if to those gentle graces of which her young visage had offered to my fancy the blooming promise, Miss Vernor added in this striking measure the capacity for magnanimous action, the amendment to my friend’s career had been less happy than the rough draught. Presently, turning about, I saw him looking at the young lady’s photograph. “Of course, now,” he said, “I have no right to keep it!” And before I could ask for another glimpse of it, he had thrust it into the fire.

“I am sorry to be saying it just now,” I observed after a while, “but I shouldn’t wonder if Miss Vernor were a charming creature.”

“Go and find out,” he answered, gloomily. “The coast is clear. My part is to forget her,” he presently added. “It ought not to be hard. But don’t you think,” he went on suddenly, “that for a poor fellow who asked nothing of fortune but leave to sit down in a quiet corner, it has been rather a cruel pushing about?”

Cruel indeed, I declared, and he certainly had the right to demand a clean page on the book of fate and a fresh start. Mr. Vernor’s advice was sound; he should amuse himself with a long journey. If it would be any comfort to him, I would go with him on his way. Pickering assented without enthusiasm; he had the embarrassed look of a man who, having gone to some cost to make a good appearance in a drawing-room, should find the door suddenly slammed in his face. We started on our journey, however, and little by little his enthusiasm returned. He was too capable of enjoying fine things to remain permanently irresponsive, and after a fortnight spent among pictures and monuments and antiquities, I felt that I was seeing him for the first time in his best and healthiest mood. He had had a fever, and then he had had a chill; the pendulum had swung right and left in a manner rather trying to the machine; but now, at last, it was working back to an even, natural beat. He recovered in a measure the generous eloquence with which he had fanned his flame at Homburg, and talked about things with something of the same passionate freshness. One day when I was laid up at the inn at Bruges with a lame foot, he came home and treated me to a rhapsody about a certain meek-faced virgin of Hans Memling, which seemed to me sounder sense than his compliments to Madame Blumenthal. He had his dull days and his sombre moods—hours of irresistible retrospect; but I let them come and go without remonstrance, because I fancied they always left him a trifle more alert and resolute. One evening, however, he sat hanging his head in so doleful a fashion that I took the bull by the horns and told him he had by this time surely paid

his debt to penitence, and that he owed it to himself to banish that woman for ever from his thoughts.

He looked up, staring; and then with a deep blush—"That woman?" he said. "I was not thinking of Madame Blumenthal!"

After this I gave another construction to his melancholy. Taking him with his hopes and fears, at the end of six weeks of active observation and keen sensation, Pickering was as fine a fellow as need be. We made our way down to Italy and spent a fortnight at Venice. There something happened which I had been confidently expecting; I had said to myself that it was merely a question of time. We had passed the day at Torcello, and came floating back in the glow of the sunset, with measured oar-strokes. "I am well on the way," Pickering said; "I think I will go!"

We had not spoken for an hour, and I naturally asked him, Where? His answer was delayed by our getting into the Piazzetta. I stepped ashore first and then turned to help him. As he took my hand he met my eyes, consciously, and it came. "To Smyrna!"

A couple of days later he started. I had risked the conjecture that Miss Vernor was a charming creature, and six months afterwards he wrote me that I was right.

Four Meetings

I.

The first one took place in the country, at a little tea-party, one snowy night. It must have been some seventeen years ago. My friend Latouche, going to spend Christmas with his mother, had persuaded me to go with him, and the good lady had given in our honor the entertainment of which I speak. To me it was really entertaining; I had never been in the depths of New England at that season. It had been snowing all day, and the drifts were knee-high. I wondered how the ladies had made their way to the house; but I perceived that at Grimwinter a *conversazione* offering the attraction of two gentlemen from New York was felt to be worth an effort.

Mrs. Latouche, in the course of the evening, asked me if I “didn’t want to” show the photographs to some of the young ladies. The photographs were in a couple of great portfolios, and had been brought home by her son, who, like myself, was lately returned from Europe. I looked round and was struck with the fact that most of the young ladies were provided with an object of interest more absorbing than the most vivid sun-picture. But there was a person standing alone near the mantelshelf, and looking round the room with a small gentle smile which seemed at odds, somehow, with her isolation. I looked at her a moment, and then said, “I should like to show them to that young lady.”

“Oh, yes,” said Mrs. Latouche, “she is just the person. She doesn’t care for flirting; I will speak to her.”

I rejoined that if she did not care for flirting, she was, perhaps, not just the person; but Mrs. Latouche had already gone to propose the photographs to her.

“She’s delighted,” she said, coming back. “She is just the person, so quiet and so bright.” And then she told me the young lady was, by name, Miss Caroline Spencer, and with this she introduced me.

Miss Caroline Spencer was not exactly a beauty, but she was a charming little figure. She must have been close upon thirty, but she was made almost like a little girl, and she had the complexion of a child. She had a very pretty head, and her hair was arranged as nearly as possible like the hair of a Greek bust, though indeed it was to be doubted if she had ever seen a Greek bust. She was “artistic,” I suspected, so far as Grimwinter allowed such tendencies. She had a soft, surprised eye, and thin lips, with very pretty teeth. Round her neck she wore what ladies call, I believe, a “ruche,” fastened with a very small pin in pink coral, and in her hand she carried a fan made of plaited straw and adorned with pink ribbon. She wore a scanty black silk dress. She spoke with a kind of soft precision, showing her white teeth between her narrow but tender-looking lips, and she seemed extremely pleased, even a little fluttered, at the prospect of my demonstrations. These went forward very smoothly, after I had moved the portfolios out of their corner and placed a couple of chairs near a lamp. The photographs were usually things I knew,—large views of Switzerland, Italy, and Spain, landscapes, copies of famous buildings, pictures, and statues. I said what I could about them, and my companion, looking at them as I held them up, sat perfectly still, with her straw fan raised to her underlip. Occasionally, as I laid one of the pictures down, she said very softly, “Have you seen that place?” I usually answered that I had seen it several times (I had been a great traveller), and then I felt that she looked at me askance for a moment with her pretty eyes. I had asked her at the outset whether she had been to Europe; to this she answered, “No, no,

no,” in a little quick, confidential whisper. But after that, though she never took her eyes off the pictures, she said so little that I was afraid she was bored. Accordingly, after we had finished one portfolio, I offered, if she desired it, to desist. I felt that she was not bored, but her reticence puzzled me, and I wished to make her speak. I turned round to look at her, and saw that there was a faint flush in each of her cheeks. She was waving her little fan to and fro. Instead of looking at me she fixed her eyes upon the other portfolio, which was leaning against the table.

“Won’t you show me that?” she asked, with a little tremor in her voice. I could almost have believed she was agitated.

“With pleasure,” I answered, “if you are not tired.”

“No, I am not tired,” she affirmed. “I like it—I love it.”

And as I took up the other portfolio she laid her hand upon it, rubbing it softly.

“And have you been here too?” she asked.

On my opening the portfolio it appeared that I had been there. One of the first photographs was a large view of the Castle of Chillon, on the Lake of Geneva.

“Here,” I said, “I have been many a time. Is it not beautiful?” And I pointed to the perfect reflection of the rugged rocks and pointed towers in the clear still water. She did not say, “Oh, enchanting!” and push it away to see the next picture. She looked awhile, and then she asked if it was not where Bonnivard, about whom Byron wrote, was confined. I assented, and tried to quote some of Byron’s verses, but in this attempt I succeeded imperfectly.

She fanned herself a moment, and then repeated the lines correctly, in a soft, flat, and yet agreeable voice. By the time she had finished she was blushing. I complimented her and told her she was perfectly equipped for visiting Switzerland and Italy. She looked at me askance again, to see whether I was serious, and I added, that if she wished to recognize Byron’s descriptions she must go abroad speedily; Europe was getting sadly dis-Byronized.

“How soon must I go?” she asked.

“Oh, I will give you ten years.”

“I think I can go within ten years,” she answered very soberly.

“Well,” I said, “you will enjoy it immensely; you will find it very charming.” And just then I came upon a photograph of some nook in a foreign city which I had been very fond of, and which recalled tender memories. I discoursed (as I suppose) with a certain eloquence; my companion sat listening, breathless.

“Have you been *very* long in foreign lands?” she asked, some time after I had ceased.

“Many years,” I said.

“And have you travelled everywhere?”

“I have travelled a great deal. I am very fond of it; and, happily, I have been able.”

Again she gave me her sidelong gaze. “And do you know the foreign languages?”

“After a fashion.”

“Is it hard to speak them?”

“I don’t believe you would find it hard,” I gallantly responded.

“Oh, I shouldn’t want to speak; I should only want to listen,” she said. Then, after a pause, she added, “They say the French theatre is so beautiful.”

“It is the best in the world.”

“Did you go there very often?”

“When I was first in Paris I went every night.”

“Every night!” And she opened her clear eyes very wide. “That to me is:—” and she hesitated a moment—“is very wonderful.” A few minutes later she asked, “Which country do you prefer?”

“There is one country I prefer to all others. I think you would do the same.”

She looked at me a moment, and then she said softly, “Italy?”

“Italy,” I answered softly, too; and for a moment we looked at each other. She looked as pretty as if, instead of showing her photographs, I had been making love to her. To increase the analogy, she glanced away, blushing. There was a silence, which she broke at last by saying,—

“That is the place which, in particular, I thought of going to.”

“Oh, that’s the place, that’s the place!” I said.

She looked at two or three photographs in silence. “They say it is not so dear.”

“As some other countries? Yes, that is not the least of its charms.”

“But it is all very dear, is it not?”

“Europe, you mean?”

“Going there and travelling. That has been the trouble. I have very little money. I give lessons,” said Miss Spencer.

“Of course one must have money,” I said, “but one can manage with a moderate amount.”

“I think I should manage. I have laid something by, and I am always adding a little to it. It’s all for that.” She paused a moment, and then went on with a kind of suppressed eagerness, as if telling me the story were a rare, but a possibly impure satisfaction, “But it has not been only the money; it has been everything. Everything has been against it I have waited and waited. It has been a mere castle in the air. I am almost afraid to talk about it. Two or three times it has been a little nearer, and then I have talked about it and it has melted away. I have talked about it too much,” she said hypocritically; for I saw that such talking was now a small tremulous ecstasy. “There is a lady who is a great friend of mine; she doesn’t want to go; I always talk to her about it. I tire her dreadfully. She told me once she didn’t know what would become of me. I should go crazy if I did not go to Europe, and I should certainly go crazy if I did.”

“Well,” I said, “you have not gone yet, and nevertheless you are not crazy.”

She looked at me a moment, and said, “I am not so sure. I don’t think of anything else. I am always thinking of it. It prevents me from thinking of things that are nearer home, things that I ought to attend to. That is a kind of craziness.”

“The cure for it is to go,” I said.

“I have a faith that I shall go. I have a cousin in Europe!” she announced.

We turned over some more photographs, and I asked her if she had always lived at Grimwinter.

“Oh, no, sir,” said Miss Spencer. “I have spent twenty-three months in Boston.”

I answered, jocosely, that in that case foreign lands would probably prove a disappointment to her; but I quite failed to alarm her.

“I know more about them than you might think,” she said, with her shy, neat little smile. “I mean by reading; I have read a great deal I have not only read Byron; I have read histories and guidebooks. I know I shall like it.”

“I understand your case,” I rejoined. “You have the native American passion,—the passion for the picturesque. With us, I think it is primordial,—antecedent to experience. Experience comes and only shows us something we have dreamt of.”

“I think that is very true,” said Caroline Spencer. “I have dreamt of everything; I shall know it all!”

“I am afraid you have wasted a great deal of time.”

“Oh, yes, that has been my great wickedness.”

The people about us had begun to scatter; they were taking their leave. She got up and put out her hand to me, timidly, but with a peculiar brightness in her eyes.

“I am going back there,” I said, as I shook hands with her. “I shall look out for you.”

“I will tell you,” she answered, “if I am disappointed.”

And she went away, looking delicately agitated, and moving her little straw fan.

II.

A few months after this I returned to Europe, and some three years elapsed. I had been living in Paris, and, toward the end of October, I went from that city to Havre, to meet my sister and her husband, who had written me that they were about to arrive there. On reaching Havre I found that the steamer was already in; I was nearly two hours late. I repaired directly to the hotel, where my relatives were already established. My sister had gone to bed, exhausted and disabled by her voyage; she was a sadly incompetent sailor, and her sufferings on this occasion had been extreme. She wished, for the moment, for undisturbed rest, and was unable to see me more than five minutes; so it was agreed that we should remain at Havre until the next day. My brother-in-law, who was anxious about his wife, was unwilling to leave her room; but she insisted upon his going out with me to take a walk and recover his landlegs. The early autumn day was warm and charming, and our stroll through the bright-colored, busy streets of the old French seaport was sufficiently entertaining. We walked along the sunny, noisy quays, and then turned into a wide, pleasant street, which lay half in sun and half in shade—a French provincial street, that looked like an old water-color drawing: tall, gray, steep-roofed, red-gabled, many-storied houses; green shutters on windows and old scroll-work above them; flower-pots in balconies, and white-capped women in doorways. We walked in the shade; all this stretched away on the sunny side of the street and made a picture. We looked at it as we passed along; then, suddenly, my brother-in-law stopped, pressing my arm and staring. I followed his gaze and saw that we had paused just before coming to a *café*, where, under an awning, several tables and chairs were disposed upon the pavement. The windows were open behind; half a dozen plants in tubs were ranged beside the door; the pavement was besprinkled with clean bran. It was a nice little, quiet, old-fashioned *café*; inside, in the comparative dusk, I saw a stout, handsome woman, with pink

ribbons in her cap, perched up with a mirror behind her back, smiling at some one who was out of sight. All this, however, I perceived afterwards; what I first observed was a lady sitting alone, outside, at one of the little marble-topped tables. My brother-in-law had stopped to look at her. There was something on the little table, but she was leaning back quietly, with her hands folded, looking down the street, away from us. I saw her only in something less than profile; nevertheless, I instantly felt that I had seen her before.

“The little lady of the steamer!” exclaimed my brother-in-law.

“Was she on your steamer?” I asked.

“From morning till night She was never sick. She used to sit perpetually at the side of the vessel with her hands crossed that way, looking at the eastward horizon.”

“Are you going to speak to her?”

“I don’t know her. I never made acquaintance with her. I was too seedy. But I used to watch her and—I don’t know why—to be interested in her. She’s a dear little Yankee woman. I have an idea she is a schoolmistress taking a holiday, for which her scholars have made up a purse.”

She turned her face a little more into profile, looking at the steep gray house-fronts opposite to her. Then I said, “I shall speak to her myself.”

“I wouldn’t; she is very shy,” said my brother-in-law.

“My dear fellow, I know her. I once showed her photographs at a tea-party.”

And I went up to her. She turned and looked at me, and I saw she was in fact Miss Caroline Spencer. But she was not so quick to recognize me; she looked startled. I pushed a chair to the table and sat down.

“Well,” I said, “I hope you are not disappointed!”

She stared, blushing a little; then she gave a small jump which betrayed recognition.

“It was you who showed me the photographs, at Grimwinter!”

“Yes, it was I. This happens very charmingly, for I feel as if it were for me to give you a formal reception here, an official welcome. I talked to you so much about Europe.”

“You didn’t say too much. I am so happy!” she softly exclaimed.

Very happy she looked. There was no sign of her being older; she was as gravely, decently, demurely pretty as before. If she had seemed before a thin-stemmed, mild-hued flower of Puritanism, it may be imagined whether in her present situation this delicate bloom was less apparent. Beside her an old gentleman was drinking absinthe; behind her the *dame de comptoir* in the pink ribbons was calling “Alcibiade! Alcibiade!” to the long-aproned waiter. I explained to Miss Spencer that my companion had lately been her shipmate, and my brother-in-law came up and was introduced to her. But she looked at him as if she had never seen him before, and I remembered that he had told me that her eyes were always fixed upon the eastward horizon. She had evidently not noticed him, and, still timidly smiling, she made no attempt whatever to pretend that she had. I stayed with her at the *café* door, and he went back to the hotel and to his wife. I said to Miss Spencer that this meeting of ours in the first hour of her landing was really very strange, but that I was delighted to be there and receive her first impressions.

“Oh, I can’t tell you,” she said; “I feel as if I were in a dream. I have been sitting here for an hour, and I don’t want to move. Everything is so picturesque. I don’t know whether the coffee has intoxicated me; it ‘s so delicious.”

“Really,” said I, “if you are so pleased with this poor prosaic Havre, you will have no admiration left for better things. Don’t spend your admiration all the first day; remember it’s your intellectual letter of credit. Remember all the beautiful places and things that are waiting for you; remember that lovely Italy!”

“I ‘m not afraid of running short,” she said gayly, still looking at the opposite houses. “I could sit here all day, saying to myself that here I am at last. It’s so dark and old and different.”

“By the way,” I inquired, “how come you to be sitting here? Have you not gone to one of the inns?” For I was half amused, half alarmed, at the good conscience with which this delicately pretty woman had stationed herself in conspicuous isolation on the edge of the *trottoir*.

“My cousin brought me here,” she answered. “You know I told you I had a cousin in Europe. He met me at the steamer this morning.”

“It was hardly worth his while to meet you if he was to desert you so soon.”

“Oh, he has only left me for half an hour,” said Miss Spencer. “He has gone to get my money.”

“Where is your money?”

She gave a little laugh. “It makes me feel very fine to tell you! It is in some circular notes.”

“And where are your circular notes?”

“In my cousin’s pocket.”

This statement was very serenely uttered, but—I can hardly say why—it gave me a sensible chill. At the moment I should have been utterly unable to give the reason of this sensation, for I knew nothing of Miss Spencer’s cousin. Since he was her cousin, the presumption was in his favor. But I felt suddenly uncomfortable at the thought that, half an hour after her landing, her scanty funds should have passed into his hands.

“Is he to travel with you?” I asked.

“Only as far as Paris. He is an art-student, in Paris. I wrote to him that I was coming, but I never expected him to come off to the ship. I supposed he would only just meet me at the train in Paris. It is very kind of him. But he *is* very kind, and very bright.”

I instantly became conscious of an extreme curiosity to see this bright cousin who was an art-student.

“He is gone to the banker’s?” I asked.

“Yes, to the banker’s. He took me to a hotel, such a queer, quaint, delicious little place, with a court in the middle, and a gallery all round, and a lovely landlady, in such a beautifully fluted cap, and such a perfectly fitting dress! After a while we came out to walk to the banker’s, for I haven’t got any French money. But I was very dizzy from the motion of the vessel, and I thought I had better sit down. He found this place for me here, and he went off to the banker’s himself. I am to wait here till he comes back.”

It may seem very fantastic, but it passed through my mind that he would never come back. I settled myself in my chair beside Miss Spencer and determined to await the event. She was extremely observant; there was something touching in it. She noticed everything that the

movement of the street brought before us,—peculiarities of costume, the shapes of vehicles, the big Norman horses, the fat priests, the shaven poodles. We talked of these things, and there was something charming in her freshness of perception and the way her book-nourished fancy recognized and welcomed everything.

“And when your cousin comes back, what are you going to do?” I asked.

She hesitated a moment. “We don’t quite know.”

“When do you go to Paris? If you go by the four o’clock train, I may have the pleasure of making the journey with you.”

“I don’t think we shall do that. My cousin thinks I had better stay here a few days.”

“Oh!” said I; and for five minutes said nothing more. I was wondering what her cousin was, in vulgar parlance, “up to.” I looked up and down the street, but saw nothing that looked like a bright American art-student. At last I took the liberty of observing that Havre was hardly a place to choose as one of the æsthetic stations of a European tour. It was a place of convenience, nothing more; a place of transit, through which transit should be rapid. I recommended her to go to Paris by the afternoon train, and meanwhile to amuse herself by driving to the ancient fortress at the mouth of the harbor,—that picturesque circular structure which bore the name of Francis the First, and looked like a small castle of St. Angelo. (It has lately been demolished.)

She listened with much interest; then for a moment she looked grave.

“My cousin told me that when he returned he should have something particular to say to me, and that we could do nothing or decide nothing until I should have heard it. But I will make him tell me quickly, and then we will go to the ancient fortress. There is no hurry to get to Paris; there is plenty of time.”

She smiled with her softly severe little lips as she spoke those last words. But I, looking at her with a purpose, saw just a tiny gleam of apprehension in her eye.

“Don’t tell me,” I said, “that this wretched man is going to give you bad news!”

“I suspect it is a little bad, but I don’t believe it is very bad. At any rate, I must listen to it.”

I looked at her again an instant. “You didn’t come to Europe to listen,” I said. “You came to see!” But now I was sure her cousin would come back; since he had something disagreeable to say to her, he certainly would turn up. We sat a while longer, and I asked her about her plans of travel. She had them on her fingers’ ends, and she told over the names with a kind of solemn distinctness: from Paris to Dijon and to Avignon, from Avignon to Marseilles and the Cornice road; thence to Genoa, to Spezia, to Pisa, to Florence, to Home. It apparently had never occurred to her that there could be the least incommodity in her travelling alone; and since she was unprovided with a companion I of course scrupulously abstained from disturbing her sense of security. At last her cousin came back. I saw him turn towards us out of a side street, and from the moment my eyes rested upon him I felt that this was the bright American art-student. He wore a slouch hat and a rusty black velvet jacket, such as I had often encountered in the Rue Bonaparte. His shirt-collar revealed the elongation of a throat which, at a distance, was not strikingly statuesque. He was tall and lean; he had red hair and freckles. So much I had time to observe while he approached the *café*, staring at me with natural surprise from under his umbrageous coiffure. When he came up to us I immediately introduced myself to him as an old acquaintance of Miss Spencer. He looked at me hard with a pair of little red eyes, then he made me a solemn bow in the French fashion, with his sombrero.

“You were not on the ship?” he said.

“No, I was not on the ship. I have been in Europe these three years.”

He bowed once more, solemnly, and motioned me to be seated again. I sat down, but it was only for the purpose of observing him an instant; I saw it was time I should return to my sister. Miss Spencer’s cousin was a queer fellow. Nature had not shaped him for a Raphaellesque or Byronic attire, and his velvet doublet and naked neck were not in harmony with his facial attributes. His hair was cropped close to his head; his ears were large and ill-adjusted to the same. He had a lackadaisical carriage and a sentimental droop which were peculiarly at variance with his keen, strange-colored eyes. Perhaps I was prejudiced, but I thought his eyes treacherous. He said nothing for some time; he leaned his hands on his cane and looked up and down the street. Then at last, slowly lifting his cane and pointing with it, “That’s a very nice bit,” he remarked, softly. He had his head on one side, and his little eyes were half closed. I followed the direction of his stick; the object it indicated was a red cloth hung out of an old window. “Nice bit of color,” he continued; and without moving his head he transferred his half-closed gaze to me. “Composes well,” he pursued. “Make a nice thing.” He spoke in a hard vulgar voice.

“I see you have a great deal of eye,” I replied. “Your cousin tells me you are studying art.” He looked at me in the same way without answering, and I went on with deliberate urbanity, “I suppose you are at the studio of one of those great men.”

Still he looked at me, and then he said softly, “Gérôme.”

“Do you like it?” I asked.

“Do you understand French?” he said.

“Some kinds,” I answered.

He kept his little eyes on me; then he said, “J’adore la peinture!”

“Oh, I understand that kind!” I rejoined. Miss Spencer laid her hand upon her cousin’s arm with a little pleased and fluttered movement; it was delightful to be among people who were on such easy terms with foreign tongues. I got up to take leave, and asked Miss Spencer where, in Paris, I might have the honor of waiting upon her. To what hotel would she go?

She turned to her cousin inquiringly, and he honored me again with his little languid leer. “Do you know the Hôtel des Princes?”

“I know where it is.”

“I shall take her there.”

“I congratulate you,” I said to Caroline Spencer. “I believe it is the best inn in the world; and in case I should still have a moment to call upon you here, where are you lodged?”

“Oh, it’s such a pretty name,” said Miss Spencer gleefully. “À la Belle Normande.”

As I left them her cousin gave me a great flourish with his picturesque hat.

III.

My sister, as it proved, was not sufficiently restored to leave Havre by the afternoon train; so that, as the autumn dusk began to fall, I found myself at liberty to call at the sign of the Fair Norman. I must confess that I had spent much of the interval in wondering what the disagreeable thing was that my charming friend’s disagreeable cousin had been telling her. The “Belle Normande” was a modest inn in a shady bystreet, where it gave me satisfaction to think Miss Spencer must have encountered local color in abundance. There was a crooked

little court, where much of the hospitality of the house was carried on; there was a staircase climbing to bedrooms on the outer side of the wall; there was a small trickling fountain with a stucco statuette in the midst of it; there was a little boy in a white cap and apron cleaning copper vessels at a conspicuous kitchen door; there was a chattering landlady, neatly laced, arranging apricots and grapes into an artistic pyramid upon a pink plate. I looked about, and on a green bench outside of an open door labelled *Salle à Manger*, I perceived Caroline Spencer. No sooner had I looked at her than I saw that something had happened since the morning. She was leaning back on her bench, her hands were clasped in her lap, and her eyes were fixed upon the landlady, at the other side of the court, manipulating her apricots.

But I saw she was not thinking of apricots. She was staring absently, thoughtfully; as I came near her I perceived that she had been crying. I sat down on the bench beside her before she saw me; then, when she had done so, she simply turned round, without surprise, and rested her sad eyes upon me. Something very bad indeed had happened; she was completely changed.

I immediately charged her with it. "Your cousin has been giving you bad news; you are in great distress."

For a moment she said nothing, and I supposed that she was afraid to speak, lest her tears should come back. But presently I perceived that in the short time that had elapsed since my leaving her in the morning she had shed them all, and that she was now softly stoical, intensely composed.

"My poor cousin is in distress," she said at last. "His news was bad." Then, after a brief hesitation, "He was in terrible want of money."

"In want of yours, you mean?"

"Of any that he could get—honestly. Mine was the only money."

"And he has taken yours?"

She hesitated again a moment, but her glance, meanwhile, was pleading. "I gave him what I had."

I have always remembered the accent of those words as the most angelic bit of human utterance I had ever listened to; but then, almost with a sense of personal outrage, I jumped up. "Good heavens!" I said, "do you call that getting, it honestly?"

I had gone too far; she blushed deeply. "We will not speak of it," she said.

"We *must* speak of it," I answered, sitting down again. "I am your friend; it seems to me you need one. What is the matter with your cousin?"

"He is in debt."

"No doubt! But what is the special fitness of your paying his debts?"

"He has told me all his story; I am very sorry for him."

"So am I! But I hope he will give you back your money."

"Certainly he will; as soon as he can."

"When will that be?"

"When he has finished his great picture."

"My dear young lady, confound his great picture! Where is this desperate cousin?"

She certainly hesitated now. Then,—“At his dinner,” she answered.

I turned about and looked through the open door into the *salle à manger*. There, alone at the end of a long table, I perceived the object of Miss Spencer’s compassion, the bright young art-student. He was dining too attentively to notice me at first; but in the act of setting down a well-emptied wineglass he caught sight of my observant attitude. He paused in his repast, and, with his head on one side and his meagre jaws slowly moving, fixedly returned my gaze. Then the landlady came lightly brushing by with her pyramid of apricots.

“And that nice little plate of fruit is for him?” I exclaimed.

Miss Spencer glanced at it tenderly. “They do that so prettily!” she murmured.

I felt helpless and irritated. “Come now, really,” I said; “do you approve of that long strong fellow accepting your funds?” She looked away from me; I was evidently giving her pain. The case was hopeless; the long strong fellow had “interested” her.

“Excuse me if I speak of him so unceremoniously,” I said. “But you are really too generous, and he is not quite delicate enough. He made his debts himself; he ought to pay them himself.”

“He has been foolish,” she answered; “I know that He has told me everything. We had a long talk this morning; the poor fellow threw himself upon my charity. He has signed notes to a large amount.”

“The more fool he!”

“He is in extreme distress; and it is not only himself. It is his poor wife.”

“Ah, he has a poor wife?”

“I didn’t know it; but he confessed everything. He married two years since, secretly.”

“Why secretly?”

Caroline Spencer glanced about her, as if she feared listeners. Then softly, in a little impressive tone,—“She was a countess!”

“Are you very sure of that?”

“She has written me a most beautiful letter.”

“Asking you for money, eh?”

“Asking me for confidence and sympathy,” said Miss Spencer. “She has been disinherited by her father. My cousin told me the story, and she tells it in her own way, in the letter. It is like an old romance. Her father opposed the marriage, and when he discovered that she had secretly disobeyed him he cruelly cast her off. It is really most romantic. They are the oldest family in Provence.”

I looked and listened in wonder. It really seemed that the poor woman was enjoying the “romance” of having a discarded countess-cousin, out of Provence, so deeply as almost to lose the sense of what the forfeiture of her money meant for her.

“My dear young lady,” I said, “you don’t want to be ruined for picturesqueness’ sake?”

“I shall not be ruined. I shall come back before long to stay with them. The Countess insists upon that.”

“Come back! You are going home, then?”

She sat for a moment with her eyes lowered, then with an heroic suppression of a faint tremor of the voice,—“I have no money for travelling!” she answered.

“You gave it *all* up?”

“I have kept enough to take me home.”

I gave an angry groan; and at this juncture Miss Spencer’s cousin, the fortunate possessor of her sacred savings and of the hand of the Provençal countess, emerged from the little dining-room. He stood on the threshold for an instant, removing the stone from a plump apricot which he had brought away from the table; then he put the apricot into his mouth, and while he let it sojourn there, gratefully, stood looking at us, with his long legs apart and his hands dropped into the pockets of his velvet jacket. My companion got up, giving him a thin glance which I caught in its passage, and which expressed a strange commixture of resignation and fascination,—a sort of perverted exaltation. Ugly, vulgar, pretentious, dishonest, as I thought the creature, he had appealed successfully to her eager and tender imagination. I was deeply disgusted, but I had no warrant to interfere, and at any rate I felt that it would be vain.

The young man waved his hand with a pictorial gesture. “Nice old court,” he observed. “Nice mellow old place. Good tone in that brick. Nice crooked old staircase.”

Decidedly, I couldn’t stand it; without responding I gave my hand to Caroline Spencer. She looked at me an instant with her little white face and expanded eyes, and as she showed her pretty teeth I suppose she meant to smile.

“Don’t be sorry for me,” she said, “I am very sure I shall see something of this dear old Europe yet.”

I told her that I would not bid her goodbye; I should find a moment to come back the next morning. Her cousin, who had put on his sombrero again, flourished it off at me by way of a bow, upon which I took my departure.

The next morning I came back to the inn, where I met in the court the landlady, more loosely laced than in the evening. On my asking for Miss Spencer,—“*Partie*, monsieu,” said the hostess. “She went away last night at ten o’clock, with her—her—not her husband, eh?—in fine, her *monsieur*. They went down to the American ship.” I turned away; the poor girl had been about thirteen hours in Europe.

IV.

I myself, more fortunate, was there some five years longer. During this period I lost my friend Latouche, who died of a malarious fever during a tour in the Levant. One of the first things I did on my return was to go up to Grimwinter to pay a consolatory visit to his poor mother. I found her in deep affliction, and I sat with her the whole of the morning that followed my arrival (I had come in late at night), listening to her tearful descant and singing the praises of my friend. We talked of nothing else, and our conversation terminated only with the arrival of a quick little woman who drove herself up to the door in a “carryall,” and whom I saw toss the reins upon the horse’s back with the briskness of a startled sleeper throwing back the bed-clothes. She jumped out of the carryall and she jumped into the room. She proved to be the minister’s wife and the great town-gossip, and she had evidently, in the latter capacity, a choice morsel to communicate. I was as sure of this as I was that poor Mrs. Latouche was not absolutely too bereaved to listen to her. It seemed to me discreet to retire; I said I believed I would go and take a walk before dinner.

“And, by the way,” I added, “if you will tell me where my old friend Miss Spencer lives, I will walk to her house.”

The minister's wife immediately responded. Miss Spencer lived in the fourth house beyond the "Baptist church; the Baptist church was the one on the right, with that queer green thing over the door; they called it a portico, but it looked more like an old-fashioned bedstead.

"Yes, do go and see poor Caroline," said Mrs. Latouche. "It will refresh her to see a strange face."

"I should think she had had enough of strange faces!" cried the minister's wife.

"I mean, to see a visitor," said Mrs. Latouche, amending her phrase.

"I should think she had had enough of visitors!" her companion rejoined. "But *you* don't mean to stay ten years," she added, glancing at me.

"Has she a visitor of that sort?" I inquired, perplexed.

"You will see the sort!" said the minister's wife. "She's easily seen; she generally sits in the front yard. Only take care what you say to her, and be very sure you are polite."

"Ah, she is so sensitive?"

The minister's wife jumped up and dropped me a curtsy, a most ironical curtsy.

"That's what she is, if you please. She's a countess!"

And pronouncing this word with the most scathing accent, the little woman seemed fairly to laugh in the Countess's face. I stood a moment, staring, wondering, remembering.

"Oh, I shall be very polite!" I cried; and grasping my hat and stick, I went on my way.

I found Miss Spencer's residence without difficulty. The Baptist church was easily identified, and the small dwelling near it, of a rusty white, with a large central chimney-stack and a Virginia creeper, seemed naturally and properly the abode of a frugal old maid with a taste for the picturesque. As I approached I slackened my pace, for I had heard that some one was always sitting in the front yard, and I wished to reconnoitre. I looked cautiously over the low white fence which separated the small garden-space from the unpaved street; but I descried nothing in the shape of a countess. A small straight path led up to the crooked doorstep, and on either side of it was a little grass-plot, fringed with currant-bushes. In the middle of the grass, on either side, was a large quince-tree, full of antiquity and contortions, and beneath one of the quince-trees were placed a small table and a couple of chairs. On the table lay a piece of unfinished embroidery and two or three books in bright-colored paper covers. I went in at the gate and paused halfway along the path, scanning the place for some farther token of its occupant, before whom—I could hardly have said why—I hesitated abruptly to present myself. Then I saw that the poor little house was very shabby. I felt a sudden doubt of my right to intrude; for curiosity had been my motive, and curiosity here seemed singularly indelicate. While I hesitated, a figure appeared in the open doorway and stood there looking at me. I immediately recognized Caroline Spencer, but she looked at me as if she had never seen me before. Gently, but gravely and timidly, I advanced to the doorstep, and then I said, with an attempt at friendly badinage,—

"I waited for you over there to come back, but you never came."

"Waited where, sir?" she asked softly, and her light-colored eyes expanded more than before. She was much older; she looked tired and wasted.

"Well," I said, "I waited at Havre."

She stared; then she recognized me. She smiled and blushed and clasped her two hands together. "I remember you now," she said. "I remember that day." But she stood there, neither coming out nor asking me to come in. She was embarrassed.

I, too, felt a little awkward. I poked my stick into the path. "I kept looking out for you, year after year," I said.

"You mean in Europe?" murmured Miss Spencer.

"In Europe, of course! Here, apparently, you are easy enough to find."

She leaned her hand against the unpainted doorpost, and her head fell a little to one side. She looked at me for a moment without speaking, and I thought I recognized the expression that one sees in women's eyes when tears are rising. Suddenly she stepped out upon the cracked slab of stone before the threshold and closed the door behind her. Then she began to smile intently, and I saw that her teeth were as pretty as ever. But there had been tears too.

"Have you been there ever since?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

"Until three weeks ago. And you—you never came back?"

Still looking at me with her fixed smile, she put her hand behind her and opened the door again. "I am not very polite," she said. "Won't you come in?"

"I am afraid I incommode you."

"Oh, no!" she answered, smiling more than ever. And she pushed back the door, with a sign that I should enter.

I went in, following her. She led the way to a small room on the left of the narrow hall, which I supposed to be her parlor, though it was at the back of the house, and we passed the closed door of another apartment which apparently enjoyed a view of the quince-trees. This one looked out upon a small woodshed and two clucking hens. But I thought it very pretty, until I saw that its elegance was of the most frugal kind; after which, presently, I thought it prettier still, for I had never seen faded chintz and old mezzotint engravings, framed in varnished autumn leaves, disposed in so graceful a fashion. Miss Spencer sat down on a very small portion of the sofa, with her hands tightly clasped in her lap. She looked ten years older, and it would have souuded very perverse now to speak of her as pretty. But I thought her so; or at least I thought her touching. She was peculiarly agitated. I tried to appear not to notice it; but suddenly, in the most inconsequent fashion,—it was an irresistible memory of our little friendship at Havre,—I said to her, "I do incommode you. You are distressed."

She raised her two hands to her face, and for a moment kept it buried in them. Then, taking them away,—*"It's because you remind me—"* she said.

"I remind you, you mean, of that miserable day at Havre?"

She shook her head. "It was not miserable. It was delightful."

"I never was so shocked as when, on going back to your inn the next morning, I found you had set sail again."

She was silent a moment; and then she said, "Please let us not speak of that."

"Did you come straight back here?" I asked.

"I was back here just thirty days after I had gone away."

"And here you have remained ever since?"

"Oh, yes!" she said gently.

“When are you going to Europe again?”

This question seemed brutal; but there was something that irritated me in the softness of her resignation, and I wished to extort from her some expression of impatience.

She fixed her eyes for a moment upon a small sunspot on the carpet; then she got up and lowered the window-blind a little, to obliterate it. Presently, in the same mild voice, answering my question, she said, “Never!”

“I hope your cousin repaid you your money.”

“I don’t care for it now,” she said, looking away from me.

“You don’t care for your money?”

“For going to Europe.”

“Do you mean that you would not go if you could?”

“I can’t—I can’t,” said Caroline Spencer. “It is all over; I never think of it.”

“He never repaid you, then!” I exclaimed.

“Please—please,” she began.

But she stopped; she was looking toward the door. There had been a rustling and a sound of steps in the hall.

I also looked toward the door, which was open, and now admitted another person, a lady, who paused just within the threshold. Behind her came a young man. The lady looked at me with a good deal of fixedness, long enough for my glance to receive a vivid impression of herself. Then she turned to Caroline Spencer, and, with a smile and a strong foreign accent,—“Excuse my interruption!” she said. “I knew not you had company, the gentleman came in so quietly.”

With this she directed her eyes toward me again.

She was very strange; yet my first feeling was that I had seen her before. Then I perceived that I had only seen ladies who were very much like her. But I had seen them very far away from Grimwinter, and it was an odd sensation to be seeing her here. Whither was it the sight of her seemed to transport me? To some dusky landing before a shabby Parisian *quatrième*,—to an open door revealing a greasy antechamber, and to Madame leaning over the banisters, while she holds a faded dressing-gown together and bawls down to the portress to bring up her coffee. Miss Spencer’s visitor was a very large woman, of middle age, with a plump, dead-white face, and hair drawn back *a la chinoise*. She had a small penetrating eye, and what is called in French an agreeable smile. She wore an old pink cashmere dressing-gown, covered with white embroideries, and, like the figure in my momentary vision, she was holding it together in front with a bare and rounded arm and a plump and deeply dimpled hand.

“It is only to spick about my *café*,” she said to Miss Spencer, with her agreeable smile. “I should like it served in the garden under the leetle tree.”

The young man behind her had now stepped into the room, and he also stood looking at me. He was a pretty-faced little fellow, with an air of provincial foppishness,—a tiny Adonis of Grimwinter. He had a small pointed nose, a small pointed chin, and, as I observed, the most diminutive feet. He looked at me foolishly, with his mouth open.

“You shall have your coffee,” said Miss Spencer, who had a faint red spot in each of her cheeks.

“It is well!” said the lady in the dressing-gown. “Find your book,” she added, turning to the young man.

He gazed vaguely round the room. “My grammar, d ‘ye mean?” he asked, with a helpless intonation.

But the large lady was inspecting me, curiously, and gathering in her dressing-gown with her white arm.

“Find your book, my friend,” she repeated.

“My poetry, d ‘ye mean?” said the young man, also staring at me again.

“Never mind your book,” said his companion. “To-day we will talk. We will make some conversation. But we must not interrupt. Come;” and she turned away. “Under the leetle tree,” she added, for the benefit of Miss Spencer.

Then she gave me a sort of salutation, and a “Monsieur!” with which she swept away again, followed by the young man.

Caroline Spencer stood there with her eyes fixed upon the ground.

“Who is that?” I asked.

“The Countess, my cousin.”

“And who is the young man?”

“Her pupil, Mr. Mixer.”

This description of the relation between the two persons who had just left the room made me break into a little laugh. Miss Spencer looked at me gravely.

“She gives French lessons; she has lost her fortune.”

“I see,” I said. “She is determined to be a burden to no one. That is very proper.”

Miss Spencer looked down on the ground again, “I must go and get the coffee,” she said.

“Has the lady many pupils?” I asked.

“She has only Mr. Mixer. She gives all her time to him.”

At this I could not laugh, though I smelt provocation; Miss Spencer was too grave. “He pays very well,” she presently added, with simplicity. “He is very rich. He is very kind. He takes the Countess to drive.” And she was turning away.

“You are going for the Countess’s coffee?” I said.

“If you will excuse me a few moments.”

“Is there no one else to do it?”

She looked at me with the softest serenity. “I keep no servants.”

“Can she not wait upon herself?”

“She is not used to that.”

“I see,” said I, as gently as possible. “But before you go, tell me this: who is this lady?”

“I told you about her before—that day. She is the wife of my cousin, whom you saw.”

“The lady who was disowned by her family in consequence of her marriage?”

“Yes; they have never seen her again. They have cast her off.”

“And where is her husband?”

“He is dead.”

“And where is your money?”

The poor girl flinched; there was something too consistent in my questions. “I don’t know,” she said wearily.

But I continued a moment. “On her husband’s death this lady came over here?”

“Yes, she arrived one day.”

“How long ago?”

“Two years.”

“She has been here ever since?”

“Every moment.”

“How does she like it?”

“Not at all.”

“And how do *you* like it?”

Miss Spencer laid her face in her two hands an instant, as she had done ten minutes before. Then, quickly, she went to get the Countess’s coffee.

I remained alone in the little parlor; I wanted to see more, to learn more. At the end of five minutes the young man whom Miss Spencer had described as the Countess’s pupil came in. He stood looking at me for a moment with parted lips. I saw he was a very rudimentary young man.

“She wants to know if you won’t come out there,” he observed at last.

“Who wants to know?”

“The Countess. That French lady.”

“She has asked you to bring me?”

“Yes, sir,” said the young man feebly, looking at my six feet of stature.

I went out with him, and we found the Countess sitting under one of the little quince-trees in front of the house. She was drawing a needle through the piece of embroidery which she had taken from the small table. She pointed graciously to the chair beside her, and I seated myself. Mr. Mixer glanced about him, and then sat down in the grass at her feet. He gazed upward, looking with parted lips from the Countess to me. “I am sure you speak French,” said the Countess, fixing her brilliant little eyes upon me.

“I do, madam, after a fashion,” I answered in the lady’s own tongue.

“*Voilà!*” she cried most expressively. “I knew it so soon as I looked at you. You have been in my poor dear country.”

“A long time.”

“You know Paris?”

“Thoroughly, madam.” And with a certain conscious purpose I let my eyes meet her own.

She presently, hereupon, moved her own and glanced down at Mr. Mixter “What are we talking about?” she demanded of her attentive pupil.

He pulled his knees up, plucked at the grass with his hand, stared, blushed a little. “You are talking French,” said Mr. Mixter.

“*La belle découverte!*” said the Countess. “Here are ten months,” she explained to me, “that I am giving him lessons. Don’t put yourself out not to say he’s an idiot; he won’t understand you.”

“I hope your other pupils are more gratifying,” I remarked.

“I have no others. They don’t know what French is in this place; they don’t want to know. You may therefore imagine the pleasure it is to me to meet a person who speaks it like yourself.” I replied that my own pleasure was not less; and she went on drawing her stitches through her embroidery, with her little finger curled out. Every few moments she put her eyes close to her work, nearsightedly. I thought her a very disagreeable person; she was coarse, affected, dishonest, and no more a countess than I was a caliph. “Talk to me of Paris,” she went on. “The very name of it gives me an emotion! How long since you were there?”

“Two months ago.”

“Happy man! Tell me something about it What were they doing? Oh, for an hour of the boulevard!”

“They were doing about what they are always doing,—amusing themselves a good deal.”

“At the theatres, eh?” sighed the Countess. “At the *cafés-concerts*, at the little tables in front of the doors? *Quelle existence!* You know I am a Parisienne, monsieur,” she added, “to my fingertips.”

“Miss Spencer was mistaken, then,” I ventured to rejoin, “in telling me that you are a Provençale.”

She stared a moment, then she put her nose to her embroidery, which had a dingy, desultory aspect. “Ah, I am a Provençale by birth; but I am a Parisienne by—inclination.”

“And by experience, I suppose?” I said.

She questioned me a moment with her hard little eyes. “Oh, experience! I could talk of experience if I wished. I never expected, for example, that experience had *this* in store for me.” And she pointed with her bare elbow, and with a jerk of her head, at everything that surrounded her,—at the little white house, the quince-tree, the rickety paling, even at Mr. Mixter.

“You are in exile!” I said, smiling.

“You may imagine what it is! These two years that I have been here I have passed hours—hours! One gets used to things, and sometimes I think I have got used to this. But there are some things that are always beginning over again. For example, my coffee.”

“Do you always have coffee at this hour?” I inquired.

She tossed back her head and measured me.

“At what hour would you prefer me to have it? I must have my little cup after breakfast.”

“Ah, you breakfast at this hour?”

“At midday—*comme cela se fait*. Here they breakfast at a quarter past seven! That ‘quarter past’ is charming!”

“But you were telling me about your *coffee*? I observed sympathetically.

“My *cousine* can’t believe in it; she can’t understand it. She’s an excellent girl; but that little cup of black coffee, with a drop of cognac, served at this hour,—they exceed her comprehension. So I have to break the ice every day, and it takes the coffee the time you see to arrive. And when it arrives, monsieur! If I don’t offer you any of it you must not take it ill. It will be because I know you have drunk it on the boulevard.”

I resented extremely this scornful treatment of poor Caroline Spencer’s humble hospitality; but I said nothing, in order to say nothing uncivil. I only looked on Mr. Mixter, who had clasped his arms round his knees and was watching my companion’s demonstrative graces in solemn fascination. She presently saw that I was observing him; she glanced at me with a little bold explanatory smile. “You know, he adores me,” she murmured, putting her nose into her tapestry again. I expressed the promptest credence, and she went on. “He dreams of becoming my lover! Yes, it’s his dream. He has read a French novel; it took him six months. But ever since that he has thought himself the hero, and me the heroine!”

Mr. Mixter had evidently not an idea that he was being talked about; he was too preoccupied with the ecstasy of contemplation. At this moment Caroline Spencer came out of the house, bearing a coffee-pot on a little tray. I noticed that on her way from the door to the table she gave me a single quick, vaguely appealing glance. I wondered what it signified; I felt that it signified a sort of half-frightened longing to know what, as a man of the world who had been in France, I thought of the Countess. It made me extremely uncomfortable. I could not tell her that the Countess was very possibly the runaway wife of a little hair-dresser. I tried suddenly, on the contrary, to show a high consideration for her. But I got up; I couldn’t stay longer. It vexed me to see Caroline Spencer standing there like a waiting-maid.

“You expect to remain some time at Grimwinter?” I said to the Countess.

She gave a terrible shrug.

“Who knows? Perhaps for years. When one is in misery!—*Chere belle*” she added, turning to Miss Spencer, “you have forgotten the cognac!”

I detained Caroline Spencer as, after looking a moment in silence at the little table, she was turning away to procure this missing delicacy. I silently gave her my hand in farewell. She looked very tired, but there was a strange hint of prospective patience in her severely mild little face. I thought she was rather glad I was going. Mr. Mixter had risen to his feet and was pouring out the Countess’s coffee. As I went back past the Baptist church I reflected that poor Miss Spencer had been right in her presentiment that she should still see something of that dear old Europe.

Daisy Miller: A Study

PART I

At the little town of Vevey, in Switzerland, there is a particularly comfortable hotel. There are, indeed, many hotels, for the entertainment of tourists is the business of the place, which, as many travelers will remember, is seated upon the edge of a remarkably blue lake—a lake that it behooves every tourist to visit. The shore of the lake presents an unbroken array of establishments of this order, of every category, from the “grand hotel” of the newest fashion, with a chalk-white front, a hundred balconies, and a dozen flags flying from its roof, to the little Swiss pension of an elder day, with its name inscribed in German-looking lettering upon a pink or yellow wall and an awkward summerhouse in the angle of the garden. One of the hotels at Vevey, however, is famous, even classical, being distinguished from many of its upstart neighbors by an air both of luxury and of maturity. In this region, in the month of June, American travelers are extremely numerous; it may be said, indeed, that Vevey assumes at this period some of the characteristics of an American watering place. There are sights and sounds which evoke a vision, an echo, of Newport and Saratoga. There is a flitting hither and thither of “stylish” young girls, a rustling of muslin flounces, a rattle of dance music in the morning hours, a sound of high-pitched voices at all times. You receive an impression of these things at the excellent inn of the “Trois Couronnes” and are transported in fancy to the Ocean House or to Congress Hall. But at the “Trois Couronnes,” it must be added, there are other features that are much at variance with these suggestions: neat German waiters, who look like secretaries of legation; Russian princesses sitting in the garden; little Polish boys walking about held by the hand, with their governors; a view of the sunny crest of the Dent du Midi and the picturesque towers of the Castle of Chillon.

I hardly know whether it was the analogies or the differences that were uppermost in the mind of a young American, who, two or three years ago, sat in the garden of the “Trois Couronnes,” looking about him, rather idly, at some of the graceful objects I have mentioned. It was a beautiful summer morning, and in whatever fashion the young American looked at things, they must have seemed to him charming. He had come from Geneva the day before by the little steamer, to see his aunt, who was staying at the hotel—Geneva having been for a long time his place of residence. But his aunt had a headache—his aunt had almost always a headache—and now she was shut up in her room, smelling camphor, so that he was at liberty to wander about. He was some seven-and-twenty years of age; when his friends spoke of him, they usually said that he was at Geneva “studying.” When his enemies spoke of him, they said—but, after all, he had no enemies; he was an extremely amiable fellow, and universally liked. What I should say is, simply, that when certain persons spoke of him they affirmed that the reason of his spending so much time at Geneva was that he was extremely devoted to a lady who lived there—a foreign lady—a person older than himself. Very few Americans—indeed, I think none—had ever seen this lady, about whom there were some singular stories. But Winterbourne had an old attachment for the little metropolis of Calvinism; he had been put to school there as a boy, and he had afterward gone to college there—circumstances which had led to his forming a great many youthful friendships. Many of these he had kept, and they were a source of great satisfaction to him.

After knocking at his aunt’s door and learning that she was indisposed, he had taken a walk about the town, and then he had come in to his breakfast. He had now finished his breakfast; but he was drinking a small cup of coffee, which had been served to him on a little table in the garden by one of the waiters who looked like an *attache*. At last he finished his coffee and

lit a cigarette. Presently a small boy came walking along the path—an urchin of nine or ten. The child, who was diminutive for his years, had an aged expression of countenance, a pale complexion, and sharp little features. He was dressed in knickerbockers, with red stockings, which displayed his poor little spindle-shanks; he also wore a brilliant red cravat. He carried in his hand a long alpenstock, the sharp point of which he thrust into everything that he approached—the flowerbeds, the garden benches, the trains of the ladies' dresses. In front of Winterbourne he paused, looking at him with a pair of bright, penetrating little eyes.

“Will you give me a lump of sugar?” he asked in a sharp, hard little voice—a voice immature and yet, somehow, not young.

Winterbourne glanced at the small table near him, on which his coffee service rested, and saw that several morsels of sugar remained. “Yes, you may take one,” he answered; “but I don't think sugar is good for little boys.”

This little boy stepped forward and carefully selected three of the coveted fragments, two of which he buried in the pocket of his knickerbockers, depositing the other as promptly in another place. He poked his alpenstock, lance-fashion, into Winterbourne's bench and tried to crack the lump of sugar with his teeth.

“Oh, blazes; it's har-r-d!” he exclaimed, pronouncing the adjective in a peculiar manner.

Winterbourne had immediately perceived that he might have the honor of claiming him as a fellow countryman. “Take care you don't hurt your teeth,” he said, paternally.

“I haven't got any teeth to hurt. They have all come out. I have only got seven teeth. My mother counted them last night, and one came out right afterward. She said she'd slap me if any more came out. I can't help it. It's this old Europe. It's the climate that makes them come out. In America they didn't come out. It's these hotels.”

Winterbourne was much amused. “If you eat three lumps of sugar, your mother will certainly slap you,” he said.

“She's got to give me some candy, then,” rejoined his young interlocutor. “I can't get any candy here—any American candy. American candy's the best candy.”

“And are American little boys the best little boys?” asked Winterbourne.

“I don't know. I'm an American boy,” said the child.

“I see you are one of the best!” laughed Winterbourne.

“Are you an American man?” pursued this vivacious infant. And then, on Winterbourne's affirmative reply—“American men are the best,” he declared.

His companion thanked him for the compliment, and the child, who had now got astride of his alpenstock, stood looking about him, while he attacked a second lump of sugar. Winterbourne wondered if he himself had been like this in his infancy, for he had been brought to Europe at about this age.

“Here comes my sister!” cried the child in a moment. “She's an American girl.”

Winterbourne looked along the path and saw a beautiful young lady advancing. “American girls are the best girls,” he said cheerfully to his young companion.

“My sister ain't the best!” the child declared. “She's always blowing at me.”

“I imagine that is your fault, not hers,” said Winterbourne. The young lady meanwhile had drawn near. She was dressed in white muslin, with a hundred frills and flounces, and knots of pale-colored ribbon. She was bareheaded, but she balanced in her hand a large parasol, with a

deep border of embroidery; and she was strikingly, admirably pretty. "How pretty they are!" thought Winterbourne, straightening himself in his seat, as if he were prepared to rise.

The young lady paused in front of his bench, near the parapet of the garden, which overlooked the lake. The little boy had now converted his alpenstock into a vaulting pole, by the aid of which he was springing about in the gravel and kicking it up not a little.

"Randolph," said the young lady, "what ARE you doing?"

"I'm going up the Alps," replied Randolph. "This is the way!" And he gave another little jump, scattering the pebbles about Winterbourne's ears.

"That's the way they come down," said Winterbourne.

"He's an American man!" cried Randolph, in his little hard voice.

The young lady gave no heed to this announcement, but looked straight at her brother. "Well, I guess you had better be quiet," she simply observed.

It seemed to Winterbourne that he had been in a manner presented. He got up and stepped slowly toward the young girl, throwing away his cigarette. "This little boy and I have made acquaintance," he said, with great civility. In Geneva, as he had been perfectly aware, a young man was not at liberty to speak to a young unmarried lady except under certain rarely occurring conditions; but here at Vevey, what conditions could be better than these?—a pretty American girl coming and standing in front of you in a garden. This pretty American girl, however, on hearing Winterbourne's observation, simply glanced at him; she then turned her head and looked over the parapet, at the lake and the opposite mountains. He wondered whether he had gone too far, but he decided that he must advance farther, rather than retreat. While he was thinking of something else to say, the young lady turned to the little boy again.

"I should like to know where you got that pole," she said.

"I bought it," responded Randolph.

"You don't mean to say you're going to take it to Italy?"

"Yes, I am going to take it to Italy," the child declared.

The young girl glanced over the front of her dress and smoothed out a knot or two of ribbon. Then she rested her eyes upon the prospect again. "Well, I guess you had better leave it somewhere," she said after a moment.

"Are you going to Italy?" Winterbourne inquired in a tone of great respect.

The young lady glanced at him again. "Yes, sir," she replied. And she said nothing more.

"Are you—a—going over the Simplon?" Winterbourne pursued, a little embarrassed.

"I don't know," she said. "I suppose it's some mountain. Randolph, what mountain are we going over?"

"Going where?" the child demanded.

"To Italy," Winterbourne explained.

"I don't know," said Randolph. "I don't want to go to Italy. I want to go to America."

"Oh, Italy is a beautiful place!" rejoined the young man.

"Can you get candy there?" Randolph loudly inquired.

"I hope not," said his sister. "I guess you have had enough candy, and mother thinks so too."

“I haven’t had any for ever so long—for a hundred weeks!” cried the boy, still jumping about.

The young lady inspected her flounces and smoothed her ribbons again; and Winterbourne presently risked an observation upon the beauty of the view. He was ceasing to be embarrassed, for he had begun to perceive that she was not in the least embarrassed herself. There had not been the slightest alteration in her charming complexion; she was evidently neither offended nor flattered. If she looked another way when he spoke to her, and seemed not particularly to hear him, this was simply her habit, her manner. Yet, as he talked a little more and pointed out some of the objects of interest in the view, with which she appeared quite unacquainted, she gradually gave him more of the benefit of her glance; and then he saw that this glance was perfectly direct and unshrinking. It was not, however, what would have been called an immodest glance, for the young girl’s eyes were singularly honest and fresh. They were wonderfully pretty eyes; and, indeed, Winterbourne had not seen for a long time anything prettier than his fair countrywoman’s various features—her complexion, her nose, her ears, her teeth. He had a great relish for feminine beauty; he was addicted to observing and analyzing it; and as regards this young lady’s face he made several observations. It was not at all insipid, but it was not exactly expressive; and though it was eminently delicate, Winterbourne mentally accused it—very forgivingly—of a want of finish. He thought it very possible that Master Randolph’s sister was a coquette; he was sure she had a spirit of her own; but in her bright, sweet, superficial little visage there was no mockery, no irony. Before long it became obvious that she was much disposed toward conversation. She told him that they were going to Rome for the winter—she and her mother and Randolph. She asked him if he was a “real American”; she shouldn’t have taken him for one; he seemed more like a German—this was said after a little hesitation—especially when he spoke. Winterbourne, laughing, answered that he had met Germans who spoke like Americans, but that he had not, so far as he remembered, met an American who spoke like a German. Then he asked her if she should not be more comfortable in sitting upon the bench which he had just quitted. She answered that she liked standing up and walking about; but she presently sat down. She told him she was from New York State—“if you know where that is.” Winterbourne learned more about her by catching hold of her small, slippery brother and making him stand a few minutes by his side.

“Tell me your name, my boy,” he said.

“Randolph C. Miller,” said the boy sharply. “And I’ll tell you her name;” and he leveled his alpenstock at his sister.

“You had better wait till you are asked!” said this young lady calmly.

“I should like very much to know your name,” said Winterbourne.

“Her name is Daisy Miller!” cried the child. “But that isn’t her real name; that isn’t her name on her cards.”

“It’s a pity you haven’t got one of my cards!” said Miss Miller.

“Her real name is Annie P. Miller,” the boy went on.

“Ask him HIS name,” said his sister, indicating Winterbourne.

But on this point Randolph seemed perfectly indifferent; he continued to supply information with regard to his own family. “My father’s name is Ezra B. Miller,” he announced. “My father ain’t in Europe; my father’s in a better place than Europe.”

Winterbourne imagined for a moment that this was the manner in which the child had been taught to intimate that Mr. Miller had been removed to the sphere of celestial reward. But Randolph immediately added, "My father's in Schenectady. He's got a big business. My father's rich, you bet!"

"Well!" ejaculated Miss Miller, lowering her parasol and looking at the embroidered border. Winterbourne presently released the child, who departed, dragging his alpenstock along the path. "He doesn't like Europe," said the young girl. "He wants to go back."

"To Schenectady, you mean?"

"Yes; he wants to go right home. He hasn't got any boys here. There is one boy here, but he always goes round with a teacher; they won't let him play."

"And your brother hasn't any teacher?" Winterbourne inquired.

"Mother thought of getting him one, to travel round with us. There was a lady told her of a very good teacher; an American lady—perhaps you know her—Mrs. Sanders. I think she came from Boston. She told her of this teacher, and we thought of getting him to travel round with us. But Randolph said he didn't want a teacher traveling round with us. He said he wouldn't have lessons when he was in the cars. And we ARE in the cars about half the time. There was an English lady we met in the cars—I think her name was Miss Featherstone; perhaps you know her. She wanted to know why I didn't give Randolph lessons—give him 'instruction,' she called it. I guess he could give me more instruction than I could give him. He's very smart."

"Yes," said Winterbourne; "he seems very smart."

"Mother's going to get a teacher for him as soon as we get to Italy. Can you get good teachers in Italy?"

"Very good, I should think," said Winterbourne.

"Or else she's going to find some school. He ought to learn some more. He's only nine. He's going to college." And in this way Miss Miller continued to converse upon the affairs of her family and upon other topics. She sat there with her extremely pretty hands, ornamented with very brilliant rings, folded in her lap, and with her pretty eyes now resting upon those of Winterbourne, now wandering over the garden, the people who passed by, and the beautiful view. She talked to Winterbourne as if she had known him a long time. He found it very pleasant. It was many years since he had heard a young girl talk so much. It might have been said of this unknown young lady, who had come and sat down beside him upon a bench, that she chattered. She was very quiet; she sat in a charming, tranquil attitude; but her lips and her eyes were constantly moving. She had a soft, slender, agreeable voice, and her tone was decidedly sociable. She gave Winterbourne a history of her movements and intentions and those of her mother and brother, in Europe, and enumerated, in particular, the various hotels at which they had stopped. "That English lady in the cars," she said—"Miss Featherstone—asked me if we didn't all live in hotels in America. I told her I had never been in so many hotels in my life as since I came to Europe. I have never seen so many—it's nothing but hotels." But Miss Miller did not make this remark with a querulous accent; she appeared to be in the best humor with everything. She declared that the hotels were very good, when once you got used to their ways, and that Europe was perfectly sweet. She was not disappointed—not a bit. Perhaps it was because she had heard so much about it before. She had ever so many intimate friends that had been there ever so many times. And then she had had ever so many dresses and things from Paris. Whenever she put on a Paris dress she felt as if she were in Europe.

“It was a kind of a wishing cap,” said Winterbourne.

“Yes,” said Miss Miller without examining this analogy; “it always made me wish I was here. But I needn’t have done that for dresses. I am sure they send all the pretty ones to America; you see the most frightful things here. The only thing I don’t like,” she proceeded, “is the society. There isn’t any society; or, if there is, I don’t know where it keeps itself. Do you? I suppose there is some society somewhere, but I haven’t seen anything of it. I’m very fond of society, and I have always had a great deal of it. I don’t mean only in Schenectady, but in New York. I used to go to New York every winter. In New York I had lots of society. Last winter I had seventeen dinners given me; and three of them were by gentlemen,” added Daisy Miller. “I have more friends in New York than in Schenectady—more gentleman friends; and more young lady friends too,” she resumed in a moment. She paused again for an instant; she was looking at Winterbourne with all her prettiness in her lively eyes and in her light, slightly monotonous smile. “I have always had,” she said, “a great deal of gentlemen’s society.”

Poor Winterbourne was amused, perplexed, and decidedly charmed. He had never yet heard a young girl express herself in just this fashion; never, at least, save in cases where to say such things seemed a kind of demonstrative evidence of a certain laxity of deportment. And yet was he to accuse Miss Daisy Miller of actual or potential inconstancy, as they said at Geneva? He felt that he had lived at Geneva so long that he had lost a good deal; he had become dishabituated to the American tone. Never, indeed, since he had grown old enough to appreciate things, had he encountered a young American girl of so pronounced a type as this. Certainly she was very charming, but how deucedly sociable! Was she simply a pretty girl from New York State? Were they all like that, the pretty girls who had a good deal of gentlemen’s society? Or was she also a designing, an audacious, an unscrupulous young person? Winterbourne had lost his instinct in this matter, and his reason could not help him. Miss Daisy Miller looked extremely innocent. Some people had told him that, after all, American girls were exceedingly innocent; and others had told him that, after all, they were not. He was inclined to think Miss Daisy Miller was a flirt—a pretty American flirt. He had never, as yet, had any relations with young ladies of this category. He had known, here in Europe, two or three women—persons older than Miss Daisy Miller, and provided, for respectability’s sake, with husbands—who were great coquettes—dangerous, terrible women, with whom one’s relations were liable to take a serious turn. But this young girl was not a coquette in that sense; she was very unsophisticated; she was only a pretty American flirt. Winterbourne was almost grateful for having found the formula that applied to Miss Daisy Miller. He leaned back in his seat; he remarked to himself that she had the most charming nose he had ever seen; he wondered what were the regular conditions and limitations of one’s intercourse with a pretty American flirt. It presently became apparent that he was on the way to learn.

“Have you been to that old castle?” asked the young girl, pointing with her parasol to the far-gleaming walls of the Chateau de Chillon.

“Yes, formerly, more than once,” said Winterbourne. “You too, I suppose, have seen it?”

“No; we haven’t been there. I want to go there dreadfully. Of course I mean to go there. I wouldn’t go away from here without having seen that old castle.”

“It’s a very pretty excursion,” said Winterbourne, “and very easy to make. You can drive, you know, or you can go by the little steamer.”

“You can go in the cars,” said Miss Miller.

“Yes; you can go in the cars,” Winterbourne assented.

“Our courier says they take you right up to the castle,” the young girl continued. “We were going last week, but my mother gave out. She suffers dreadfully from dyspepsia. She said she couldn’t go. Randolph wouldn’t go either; he says he doesn’t think much of old castles. But I guess we’ll go this week, if we can get Randolph.”

“Your brother is not interested in ancient monuments?” Winterbourne inquired, smiling.

“He says he don’t care much about old castles. He’s only nine. He wants to stay at the hotel. Mother’s afraid to leave him alone, and the courier won’t stay with him; so we haven’t been to many places. But it will be too bad if we don’t go up there.” And Miss Miller pointed again at the Chateau de Chillon.

“I should think it might be arranged,” said Winterbourne. “Couldn’t you get some one to stay for the afternoon with Randolph?”

Miss Miller looked at him a moment, and then, very placidly, “I wish YOU would stay with him!” she said.

Winterbourne hesitated a moment. “I should much rather go to Chillon with you.”

“With me?” asked the young girl with the same placidity.

She didn’t rise, blushing, as a young girl at Geneva would have done; and yet Winterbourne, conscious that he had been very bold, thought it possible she was offended. “With your mother,” he answered very respectfully.

But it seemed that both his audacity and his respect were lost upon Miss Daisy Miller. “I guess my mother won’t go, after all,” she said. “She don’t like to ride round in the afternoon. But did you really mean what you said just now—that you would like to go up there?”

“Most earnestly,” Winterbourne declared.

“Then we may arrange it. If mother will stay with Randolph, I guess Eugenio will.”

“Eugenio?” the young man inquired.

“Eugenio’s our courier. He doesn’t like to stay with Randolph; he’s the most fastidious man I ever saw. But he’s a splendid courier. I guess he’ll stay at home with Randolph if mother does, and then we can go to the castle.”

Winterbourne reflected for an instant as lucidly as possible—“we” could only mean Miss Daisy Miller and himself. This program seemed almost too agreeable for credence; he felt as if he ought to kiss the young lady’s hand. Possibly he would have done so and quite spoiled the project, but at this moment another person, presumably Eugenio, appeared. A tall, handsome man, with superb whiskers, wearing a velvet morning coat and a brilliant watch chain, approached Miss Miller, looking sharply at her companion. “Oh, Eugenio!” said Miss Miller with the friendliest accent.

Eugenio had looked at Winterbourne from head to foot; he now bowed gravely to the young lady. “I have the honor to inform mademoiselle that luncheon is upon the table.”

Miss Miller slowly rose. “See here, Eugenio!” she said; “I’m going to that old castle, anyway.”

“To the Chateau de Chillon, mademoiselle?” the courier inquired. “Mademoiselle has made arrangements?” he added in a tone which struck Winterbourne as very impertinent.

Eugenio’s tone apparently threw, even to Miss Miller’s own apprehension, a slightly ironical light upon the young girl’s situation. She turned to Winterbourne, blushing a little—a very little. “You won’t back out?” she said.

“I shall not be happy till we go!” he protested.

“And you are staying in this hotel?” she went on. “And you are really an American?”

The courier stood looking at Winterbourne offensively. The young man, at least, thought his manner of looking an offense to Miss Miller; it conveyed an imputation that she “picked up” acquaintances. “I shall have the honor of presenting to you a person who will tell you all about me,” he said, smiling and referring to his aunt.

“Oh, well, we’ll go some day,” said Miss Miller. And she gave him a smile and turned away. She put up her parasol and walked back to the inn beside Eugenio. Winterbourne stood looking after her; and as she moved away, drawing her muslin furbelows over the gravel, said to himself that she had the tournure of a princess.

He had, however, engaged to do more than proved feasible, in promising to present his aunt, Mrs. Costello, to Miss Daisy Miller. As soon as the former lady had got better of her headache, he waited upon her in her apartment; and, after the proper inquiries in regard to her health, he asked her if she had observed in the hotel an American family—a mamma, a daughter, and a little boy.

“And a courier?” said Mrs. Costello. “Oh yes, I have observed them. Seen them—heard them—and kept out of their way.” Mrs. Costello was a widow with a fortune; a person of much distinction, who frequently intimated that, if she were not so dreadfully liable to sick headaches, she would probably have left a deeper impress upon her time. She had a long, pale face, a high nose, and a great deal of very striking white hair, which she wore in large puffs and rouleaux over the top of her head. She had two sons married in New York and another who was now in Europe. This young man was amusing himself at Hamburg, and, though he was on his travels, was rarely perceived to visit any particular city at the moment selected by his mother for her own appearance there. Her nephew, who had come up to Vevey expressly to see her, was therefore more attentive than those who, as she said, were nearer to her. He had imbibed at Geneva the idea that one must always be attentive to one’s aunt. Mrs. Costello had not seen him for many years, and she was greatly pleased with him, manifesting her approbation by initiating him into many of the secrets of that social sway which, as she gave him to understand, she exerted in the American capital. She admitted that she was very exclusive; but, if he were acquainted with New York, he would see that one had to be. And her picture of the minutely hierarchical constitution of the society of that city, which she presented to him in many different lights, was, to Winterbourne’s imagination, almost oppressively striking.

He immediately perceived, from her tone, that Miss Daisy Miller’s place in the social scale was low. “I am afraid you don’t approve of them,” he said.

“They are very common,” Mrs. Costello declared. “They are the sort of Americans that one does one’s duty by not—not accepting.”

“Ah, you don’t accept them?” said the young man.

“I can’t, my dear Frederick. I would if I could, but I can’t.”

“The young girl is very pretty,” said Winterbourne in a moment.

“Of course she’s pretty. But she is very common.”

“I see what you mean, of course,” said Winterbourne after another pause.

“She has that charming look that they all have,” his aunt resumed. “I can’t think where they pick it up; and she dresses in perfection—no, you don’t know how well she dresses. I can’t think where they get their taste.”

“But, my dear aunt, she is not, after all, a Comanche savage.”

“She is a young lady,” said Mrs. Costello, “who has an intimacy with her mamma’s courier.”

“An intimacy with the courier?” the young man demanded.

“Oh, the mother is just as bad! They treat the courier like a familiar friend—like a gentleman. I shouldn’t wonder if he dines with them. Very likely they have never seen a man with such good manners, such fine clothes, so like a gentleman. He probably corresponds to the young lady’s idea of a count. He sits with them in the garden in the evening. I think he smokes.”

Winterbourne listened with interest to these disclosures; they helped him to make up his mind about Miss Daisy. Evidently she was rather wild. “Well,” he said, “I am not a courier, and yet she was very charming to me.”

“You had better have said at first,” said Mrs. Costello with dignity, “that you had made her acquaintance.”

“We simply met in the garden, and we talked a bit.”

“Tout bonnement! And pray what did you say?”

“I said I should take the liberty of introducing her to my admirable aunt.”

“I am much obliged to you.”

“It was to guarantee my respectability,” said Winterbourne.

“And pray who is to guarantee hers?”

“Ah, you are cruel!” said the young man. “She’s a very nice young girl.”

“You don’t say that as if you believed it,” Mrs. Costello observed.

“She is completely uncultivated,” Winterbourne went on. “But she is wonderfully pretty, and, in short, she is very nice. To prove that I believe it, I am going to take her to the Chateau de Chillon.”

“You two are going off there together? I should say it proved just the contrary. How long had you known her, may I ask, when this interesting project was formed? You haven’t been twenty-four hours in the house.”

“I have known her half an hour!” said Winterbourne, smiling.

“Dear me!” cried Mrs. Costello. “What a dreadful girl!”

Her nephew was silent for some moments. “You really think, then,” he began earnestly, and with a desire for trustworthy information—“you really think that—” But he paused again.

“Think what, sir?” said his aunt.

“That she is the sort of young lady who expects a man, sooner or later, to carry her off?”

“I haven’t the least idea what such young ladies expect a man to do. But I really think that you had better not meddle with little American girls that are uncultivated, as you call them. You have lived too long out of the country. You will be sure to make some great mistake. You are too innocent.”

“My dear aunt, I am not so innocent,” said Winterbourne, smiling and curling his mustache.

“You are guilty too, then!”

Winterbourne continued to curl his mustache meditatively. “You won’t let the poor girl know you then?” he asked at last.

“Is it literally true that she is going to the Chateau de Chillon with you?”

“I think that she fully intends it.”

“Then, my dear Frederick,” said Mrs. Costello, “I must decline the honor of her acquaintance. I am an old woman, but I am not too old, thank Heaven, to be shocked!”

“But don’t they all do these things—the young girls in America?” Winterbourne inquired.

Mrs. Costello stared a moment. “I should like to see my granddaughters do them!” she declared grimly.

This seemed to throw some light upon the matter, for Winterbourne remembered to have heard that his pretty cousins in New York were “tremendous flirts.” If, therefore, Miss Daisy Miller exceeded the liberal margin allowed to these young ladies, it was probable that anything might be expected of her. Winterbourne was impatient to see her again, and he was vexed with himself that, by instinct, he should not appreciate her justly.

Though he was impatient to see her, he hardly knew what he should say to her about his aunt’s refusal to become acquainted with her; but he discovered, promptly enough, that with Miss Daisy Miller there was no great need of walking on tiptoe. He found her that evening in the garden, wandering about in the warm starlight like an indolent sylph, and swinging to and fro the largest fan he had ever beheld. It was ten o’clock. He had dined with his aunt, had been sitting with her since dinner, and had just taken leave of her till the morrow. Miss Daisy Miller seemed very glad to see him; she declared it was the longest evening she had ever passed.

“Have you been all alone?” he asked.

“I have been walking round with mother. But mother gets tired walking round,” she answered.

“Has she gone to bed?”

“No; she doesn’t like to go to bed,” said the young girl. “She doesn’t sleep—not three hours. She says she doesn’t know how she lives. She’s dreadfully nervous. I guess she sleeps more than she thinks. She’s gone somewhere after Randolph; she wants to try to get him to go to bed. He doesn’t like to go to bed.”

“Let us hope she will persuade him,” observed Winterbourne.

“She will talk to him all she can; but he doesn’t like her to talk to him,” said Miss Daisy, opening her fan. “She’s going to try to get Eugenio to talk to him. But he isn’t afraid of Eugenio. Eugenio’s a splendid courier, but he can’t make much impression on Randolph! I don’t believe he’ll go to bed before eleven.” It appeared that Randolph’s vigil was in fact triumphantly prolonged, for Winterbourne strolled about with the young girl for some time without meeting her mother. “I have been looking round for that lady you want to introduce me to,” his companion resumed. “She’s your aunt.” Then, on Winterbourne’s admitting the fact and expressing some curiosity as to how she had learned it, she said she had heard all about Mrs. Costello from the chambermaid. She was very quiet and very *comme il faut*; she wore white puffs; she spoke to no one, and she never dined at the table d’hôte. Every two days she had a headache. “I think that’s a lovely description, headache and all!” said Miss Daisy, chattering along in her thin, gay voice. “I want to know her ever so much. I know just

what YOUR aunt would be; I know I should like her. She would be very exclusive. I like a lady to be exclusive; I'm dying to be exclusive myself. Well, we ARE exclusive, mother and I. We don't speak to everyone—or they don't speak to us. I suppose it's about the same thing. Anyway, I shall be ever so glad to know your aunt."

Winterbourne was embarrassed. "She would be most happy," he said; "but I am afraid those headaches will interfere."

The young girl looked at him through the dusk. "But I suppose she doesn't have a headache every day," she said sympathetically.

Winterbourne was silent a moment. "She tells me she does," he answered at last, not knowing what to say.

Miss Daisy Miller stopped and stood looking at him. Her prettiness was still visible in the darkness; she was opening and closing her enormous fan. "She doesn't want to know me!" she said suddenly. "Why don't you say so? You needn't be afraid. I'm not afraid!" And she gave a little laugh.

Winterbourne fancied there was a tremor in her voice; he was touched, shocked, mortified by it. "My dear young lady," he protested, "she knows no one. It's her wretched health."

The young girl walked on a few steps, laughing still. "You needn't be afraid," she repeated. "Why should she want to know me?" Then she paused again; she was close to the parapet of the garden, and in front of her was the starlit lake. There was a vague sheen upon its surface, and in the distance were dimly seen mountain forms. Daisy Miller looked out upon the mysterious prospect and then she gave another little laugh. "Gracious! she IS exclusive!" she said. Winterbourne wondered whether she was seriously wounded, and for a moment almost wished that her sense of injury might be such as to make it becoming in him to attempt to reassure and comfort her. He had a pleasant sense that she would be very approachable for consolatory purposes. He felt then, for the instant, quite ready to sacrifice his aunt, conversationally; to admit that she was a proud, rude woman, and to declare that they needn't mind her. But before he had time to commit himself to this perilous mixture of gallantry and impiety, the young lady, resuming her walk, gave an exclamation in quite another tone. "Well, here's Mother! I guess she hasn't got Randolph to go to bed." The figure of a lady appeared at a distance, very indistinct in the darkness, and advancing with a slow and wavering movement. Suddenly it seemed to pause.

"Are you sure it is your mother? Can you distinguish her in this thick dusk?" Winterbourne asked.

"Well!" cried Miss Daisy Miller with a laugh; "I guess I know my own mother. And when she has got on my shawl, too! She is always wearing my things."

The lady in question, ceasing to advance, hovered vaguely about the spot at which she had checked her steps.

"I am afraid your mother doesn't see you," said Winterbourne. "Or perhaps," he added, thinking, with Miss Miller, the joke permissible—"perhaps she feels guilty about your shawl."

"Oh, it's a fearful old thing!" the young girl replied serenely. "I told her she could wear it. She won't come here because she sees you."

"Ah, then," said Winterbourne, "I had better leave you."

"Oh, no; come on!" urged Miss Daisy Miller.

“I’m afraid your mother doesn’t approve of my walking with you.”

Miss Miller gave him a serious glance. “It isn’t for me; it’s for you—that is, it’s for HER. Well, I don’t know who it’s for! But mother doesn’t like any of my gentlemen friends. She’s right down timid. She always makes a fuss if I introduce a gentleman. But I DO introduce them—almost always. If I didn’t introduce my gentlemen friends to Mother,” the young girl added in her little soft, flat monotone, “I shouldn’t think I was natural.”

“To introduce me,” said Winterbourne, “you must know my name.” And he proceeded to pronounce it.

“Oh, dear, I can’t say all that!” said his companion with a laugh. But by this time they had come up to Mrs. Miller, who, as they drew near, walked to the parapet of the garden and leaned upon it, looking intently at the lake and turning her back to them. “Mother!” said the young girl in a tone of decision. Upon this the elder lady turned round. “Mr. Winterbourne,” said Miss Daisy Miller, introducing the young man very frankly and prettily. “Common,” she was, as Mrs. Costello had pronounced her; yet it was a wonder to Winterbourne that, with her commonness, she had a singularly delicate grace.

Her mother was a small, spare, light person, with a wandering eye, a very exiguous nose, and a large forehead, decorated with a certain amount of thin, much frizzled hair. Like her daughter, Mrs. Miller was dressed with extreme elegance; she had enormous diamonds in her ears. So far as Winterbourne could observe, she gave him no greeting—she certainly was not looking at him. Daisy was near her, pulling her shawl straight. “What are you doing, poking round here?” this young lady inquired, but by no means with that harshness of accent which her choice of words may imply.

“I don’t know,” said her mother, turning toward the lake again.

“I shouldn’t think you’d want that shawl!” Daisy exclaimed.

“Well I do!” her mother answered with a little laugh.

“Did you get Randolph to go to bed?” asked the young girl.

“No; I couldn’t induce him,” said Mrs. Miller very gently. “He wants to talk to the waiter. He likes to talk to that waiter.”

“I was telling Mr. Winterbourne,” the young girl went on; and to the young man’s ear her tone might have indicated that she had been uttering his name all her life.

“Oh, yes!” said Winterbourne; “I have the pleasure of knowing your son.”

Randolph’s mamma was silent; she turned her attention to the lake. But at last she spoke.

“Well, I don’t see how he lives!”

“Anyhow, it isn’t so bad as it was at Dover,” said Daisy Miller.

“And what occurred at Dover?” Winterbourne asked.

“He wouldn’t go to bed at all. I guess he sat up all night in the public parlor. He wasn’t in bed at twelve o’clock: I know that.”

“It was half-past twelve,” declared Mrs. Miller with mild emphasis.

“Does he sleep much during the day?” Winterbourne demanded.

“I guess he doesn’t sleep much,” Daisy rejoined.

“I wish he would!” said her mother. “It seems as if he couldn’t.”

“I think he’s real tiresome,” Daisy pursued.

Then, for some moments, there was silence. “Well, Daisy Miller,” said the elder lady, presently, “I shouldn’t think you’d want to talk against your own brother!”

“Well, he IS tiresome, Mother,” said Daisy, quite without the asperity of a retort.

“He’s only nine,” urged Mrs. Miller.

“Well, he wouldn’t go to that castle,” said the young girl. “I’m going there with Mr. Winterbourne.”

To this announcement, very placidly made, Daisy’s mamma offered no response. Winterbourne took for granted that she deeply disapproved of the projected excursion; but he said to himself that she was a simple, easily managed person, and that a few deferential protestations would take the edge from her displeasure. “Yes,” he began; “your daughter has kindly allowed me the honor of being her guide.”

Mrs. Miller’s wandering eyes attached themselves, with a sort of appealing air, to Daisy, who, however, strolled a few steps farther, gently humming to herself. “I presume you will go in the cars,” said her mother.

“Yes, or in the boat,” said Winterbourne.

“Well, of course, I don’t know,” Mrs. Miller rejoined. “I have never been to that castle.”

“It is a pity you shouldn’t go,” said Winterbourne, beginning to feel reassured as to her opposition. And yet he was quite prepared to find that, as a matter of course, she meant to accompany her daughter.

“We’ve been thinking ever so much about going,” she pursued; “but it seems as if we couldn’t. Of course Daisy—she wants to go round. But there’s a lady here—I don’t know her name—she says she shouldn’t think we’d want to go to see castles HERE; she should think we’d want to wait till we got to Italy. It seems as if there would be so many there,” continued Mrs. Miller with an air of increasing confidence. “Of course we only want to see the principal ones. We visited several in England,” she presently added.

“Ah yes! in England there are beautiful castles,” said Winterbourne. “But Chillon here, is very well worth seeing.”

“Well, if Daisy feels up to it—” said Mrs. Miller, in a tone impregnated with a sense of the magnitude of the enterprise. “It seems as if there was nothing she wouldn’t undertake.”

“Oh, I think she’ll enjoy it!” Winterbourne declared. And he desired more and more to make it a certainty that he was to have the privilege of a tete-a-tete with the young lady, who was still strolling along in front of them, softly vocalizing. “You are not disposed, madam,” he inquired, “to undertake it yourself?”

Daisy’s mother looked at him an instant askance, and then walked forward in silence. Then—“I guess she had better go alone,” she said simply. Winterbourne observed to himself that this was a very different type of maternity from that of the vigilant matrons who massed themselves in the forefront of social intercourse in the dark old city at the other end of the lake. But his meditations were interrupted by hearing his name very distinctly pronounced by Mrs. Miller’s unprotected daughter.

“Mr. Winterbourne!” murmured Daisy.

“Mademoiselle!” said the young man.

“Don’t you want to take me out in a boat?”

“At present?” he asked.

“Of course!” said Daisy.

“Well, Annie Miller!” exclaimed her mother.

“I beg you, madam, to let her go,” said Winterbourne ardently; for he had never yet enjoyed the sensation of guiding through the summer starlight a skiff freighted with a fresh and beautiful young girl.

“I shouldn’t think she’d want to,” said her mother. “I should think she’d rather go indoors.”

“I’m sure Mr. Winterbourne wants to take me,” Daisy declared. “He’s so awfully devoted!”

“I will row you over to Chillon in the starlight.”

“I don’t believe it!” said Daisy.

“Well!” ejaculated the elder lady again.

“You haven’t spoken to me for half an hour,” her daughter went on.

“I have been having some very pleasant conversation with your mother,” said Winterbourne.

“Well, I want you to take me out in a boat!” Daisy repeated. They had all stopped, and she had turned round and was looking at Winterbourne. Her face wore a charming smile, her pretty eyes were gleaming, she was swinging her great fan about. No; it’s impossible to be prettier than that, thought Winterbourne.

“There are half a dozen boats moored at that landing place,” he said, pointing to certain steps which descended from the garden to the lake. “If you will do me the honor to accept my arm, we will go and select one of them.”

Daisy stood there smiling; she threw back her head and gave a little, light laugh. “I like a gentleman to be formal!” she declared.

“I assure you it’s a formal offer.”

“I was bound I would make you say something,” Daisy went on.

“You see, it’s not very difficult,” said Winterbourne. “But I am afraid you are chaffing me.”

“I think not, sir,” remarked Mrs. Miller very gently.

“Do, then, let me give you a row,” he said to the young girl.

“It’s quite lovely, the way you say that!” cried Daisy.

“It will be still more lovely to do it.”

“Yes, it would be lovely!” said Daisy. But she made no movement to accompany him; she only stood there laughing.

“I should think you had better find out what time it is,” interposed her mother.

“It is eleven o’clock, madam,” said a voice, with a foreign accent, out of the neighboring darkness; and Winterbourne, turning, perceived the florid personage who was in attendance upon the two ladies. He had apparently just approached.

“Oh, Eugenio,” said Daisy, “I am going out in a boat!”

Eugenio bowed. “At eleven o’clock, mademoiselle?”

“I am going with Mr. Winterbourne—this very minute.”

“Do tell her she can’t,” said Mrs. Miller to the courier.

“I think you had better not go out in a boat, mademoiselle,” Eugenio declared.

Winterbourne wished to Heaven this pretty girl were not so familiar with her courier; but he said nothing.

“I suppose you don’t think it’s proper!” Daisy exclaimed. “Eugenio doesn’t think anything’s proper.”

“I am at your service,” said Winterbourne.

“Does mademoiselle propose to go alone?” asked Eugenio of Mrs. Miller.

“Oh, no; with this gentleman!” answered Daisy’s mamma.

The courier looked for a moment at Winterbourne—the latter thought he was smiling—and then, solemnly, with a bow, “As mademoiselle pleases!” he said.

“Oh, I hoped you would make a fuss!” said Daisy. “I don’t care to go now.”

“I myself shall make a fuss if you don’t go,” said Winterbourne.

“That’s all I want—a little fuss!” And the young girl began to laugh again.

“Mr. Randolph has gone to bed!” the courier announced frigidly.

“Oh, Daisy; now we can go!” said Mrs. Miller.

Daisy turned away from Winterbourne, looking at him, smiling and fanning herself. “Good night,” she said; “I hope you are disappointed, or disgusted, or something!”

He looked at her, taking the hand she offered him. “I am puzzled,” he answered.

“Well, I hope it won’t keep you awake!” she said very smartly; and, under the escort of the privileged Eugenio, the two ladies passed toward the house.

Winterbourne stood looking after them; he was indeed puzzled. He lingered beside the lake for a quarter of an hour, turning over the mystery of the young girl’s sudden familiarities and caprices. But the only very definite conclusion he came to was that he should enjoy deucedly “going off” with her somewhere.

Two days afterward he went off with her to the Castle of Chillon. He waited for her in the large hall of the hotel, where the couriers, the servants, the foreign tourists, were lounging about and staring. It was not the place he should have chosen, but she had appointed it. She came tripping downstairs, buttoning her long gloves, squeezing her folded parasol against her pretty figure, dressed in the perfection of a soberly elegant traveling costume. Winterbourne was a man of imagination and, as our ancestors used to say, sensibility; as he looked at her dress and, on the great staircase, her little rapid, confiding step, he felt as if there were something romantic going forward. He could have believed he was going to elope with her. He passed out with her among all the idle people that were assembled there; they were all looking at her very hard; she had begun to chatter as soon as she joined him. Winterbourne’s preference had been that they should be conveyed to Chillon in a carriage; but she expressed a lively wish to go in the little steamer; she declared that she had a passion for steamboats. There was always such a lovely breeze upon the water, and you saw such lots of people. The sail was not long, but Winterbourne’s companion found time to say a great many things. To the young man himself their little excursion was so much of an escapade—an adventure—that, even allowing for her habitual sense of freedom, he had some expectation of seeing her regard it in the same way. But it must be confessed that, in this particular, he was disappointed. Daisy Miller was extremely animated, she was in charming spirits; but she was

apparently not at all excited; she was not fluttered; she avoided neither his eyes nor those of anyone else; she blushed neither when she looked at him nor when she felt that people were looking at her. People continued to look at her a great deal, and Winterbourne took much satisfaction in his pretty companion's distinguished air. He had been a little afraid that she would talk loud, laugh overmuch, and even, perhaps, desire to move about the boat a good deal. But he quite forgot his fears; he sat smiling, with his eyes upon her face, while, without moving from her place, she delivered herself of a great number of original reflections. It was the most charming garrulity he had ever heard. He had assented to the idea that she was "common"; but was she so, after all, or was he simply getting used to her commonness? Her conversation was chiefly of what metaphysicians term the objective cast, but every now and then it took a subjective turn.

"What on EARTH are you so grave about?" she suddenly demanded, fixing her agreeable eyes upon Winterbourne's.

"Am I grave?" he asked. "I had an idea I was grinning from ear to ear."

"You look as if you were taking me to a funeral. If that's a grin, your ears are very near together."

"Should you like me to dance a hornpipe on the deck?"

"Pray do, and I'll carry round your hat. It will pay the expenses of our journey."

"I never was better pleased in my life," murmured Winterbourne.

She looked at him a moment and then burst into a little laugh. "I like to make you say those things! You're a queer mixture!"

In the castle, after they had landed, the subjective element decidedly prevailed. Daisy tripped about the vaulted chambers, rustled her skirts in the corkscrew staircases, flirted back with a pretty little cry and a shudder from the edge of the oubliettes, and turned a singularly well-shaped ear to everything that Winterbourne told her about the place. But he saw that she cared very little for feudal antiquities and that the dusky traditions of Chillon made but a slight impression upon her. They had the good fortune to have been able to walk about without other companionship than that of the custodian; and Winterbourne arranged with this functionary that they should not be hurried—that they should linger and pause wherever they chose. The custodian interpreted the bargain generously—Winterbourne, on his side, had been generous—and ended by leaving them quite to themselves. Miss Miller's observations were not remarkable for logical consistency; for anything she wanted to say she was sure to find a pretext. She found a great many pretexts in the rugged embrasures of Chillon for asking Winterbourne sudden questions about himself—his family, his previous history, his tastes, his habits, his intentions—and for supplying information upon corresponding points in her own personality. Of her own tastes, habits, and intentions Miss Miller was prepared to give the most definite, and indeed the most favorable account.

"Well, I hope you know enough!" she said to her companion, after he had told her the history of the unhappy Bonivard. "I never saw a man that knew so much!" The history of Bonivard had evidently, as they say, gone into one ear and out of the other. But Daisy went on to say that she wished Winterbourne would travel with them and "go round" with them; they might know something, in that case. "Don't you want to come and teach Randolph?" she asked. Winterbourne said that nothing could possibly please him so much, but that he had unfortunately other occupations. "Other occupations? I don't believe it!" said Miss Daisy. "What do you mean? You are not in business." The young man admitted that he was not in business; but he had engagements which, even within a day or two, would force him to go

back to Geneva. "Oh, bother!" she said; "I don't believe it!" and she began to talk about something else. But a few moments later, when he was pointing out to her the pretty design of an antique fireplace, she broke out irrelevantly, "You don't mean to say you are going back to Geneva?"

"It is a melancholy fact that I shall have to return to Geneva tomorrow."

"Well, Mr. Winterbourne," said Daisy, "I think you're horrid!"

"Oh, don't say such dreadful things!" said Winterbourne—"just at the last!"

"The last!" cried the young girl; "I call it the first. I have half a mind to leave you here and go straight back to the hotel alone." And for the next ten minutes she did nothing but call him horrid. Poor Winterbourne was fairly bewildered; no young lady had as yet done him the honor to be so agitated by the announcement of his movements. His companion, after this, ceased to pay any attention to the curiosities of Chillon or the beauties of the lake; she opened fire upon the mysterious charmer in Geneva whom she appeared to have instantly taken it for granted that he was hurrying back to see. How did Miss Daisy Miller know that there was a charmer in Geneva? Winterbourne, who denied the existence of such a person, was quite unable to discover, and he was divided between amazement at the rapidity of her induction and amusement at the frankness of her persiflage. She seemed to him, in all this, an extraordinary mixture of innocence and crudity. "Does she never allow you more than three days at a time?" asked Daisy ironically. "Doesn't she give you a vacation in summer? There's no one so hard worked but they can get leave to go off somewhere at this season. I suppose, if you stay another day, she'll come after you in the boat. Do wait over till Friday, and I will go down to the landing to see her arrive!" Winterbourne began to think he had been wrong to feel disappointed in the temper in which the young lady had embarked. If he had missed the personal accent, the personal accent was now making its appearance. It sounded very distinctly, at last, in her telling him she would stop "teasing" him if he would promise her solemnly to come down to Rome in the winter.

"That's not a difficult promise to make," said Winterbourne. "My aunt has taken an apartment in Rome for the winter and has already asked me to come and see her."

"I don't want you to come for your aunt," said Daisy; "I want you to come for me." And this was the only allusion that the young man was ever to hear her make to his invidious kinswoman. He declared that, at any rate, he would certainly come. After this Daisy stopped teasing. Winterbourne took a carriage, and they drove back to Vevey in the dusk; the young girl was very quiet.

In the evening Winterbourne mentioned to Mrs. Costello that he had spent the afternoon at Chillon with Miss Daisy Miller.

"The Americans—of the courier?" asked this lady.

"Ah, happily," said Winterbourne, "the courier stayed at home."

"She went with you all alone?"

"All alone."

Mrs. Costello sniffed a little at her smelling bottle. "And that," she exclaimed, "is the young person whom you wanted me to know!"

PART II

Winterbourne, who had returned to Geneva the day after his excursion to Chillon, went to Rome toward the end of January. His aunt had been established there for several weeks, and

he had received a couple of letters from her. "Those people you were so devoted to last summer at Vevey have turned up here, courier and all," she wrote. "They seem to have made several acquaintances, but the courier continues to be the most intimate. The young lady, however, is also very intimate with some third-rate Italians, with whom she rackets about in a way that makes much talk. Bring me that pretty novel of Cherbuliez's—Paule Mere—and don't come later than the 23rd."

In the natural course of events, Winterbourne, on arriving in Rome, would presently have ascertained Mrs. Miller's address at the American banker's and have gone to pay his compliments to Miss Daisy. "After what happened at Vevey, I think I may certainly call upon them," he said to Mrs. Costello.

"If, after what happens—at Vevey and everywhere—you desire to keep up the acquaintance, you are very welcome. Of course a man may know everyone. Men are welcome to the privilege!"

"Pray what is it that happens—here, for instance?" Winterbourne demanded.

"The girl goes about alone with her foreigners. As to what happens further, you must apply elsewhere for information. She has picked up half a dozen of the regular Roman fortune hunters, and she takes them about to people's houses. When she comes to a party she brings with her a gentleman with a good deal of manner and a wonderful mustache."

"And where is the mother?"

"I haven't the least idea. They are very dreadful people."

Winterbourne meditated a moment. "They are very ignorant—very innocent only. Depend upon it they are not bad."

"They are hopelessly vulgar," said Mrs. Costello. "Whether or no being hopelessly vulgar is being 'bad' is a question for the metaphysicians. They are bad enough to dislike, at any rate; and for this short life that is quite enough."

The news that Daisy Miller was surrounded by half a dozen wonderful mustaches checked Winterbourne's impulse to go straightway to see her. He had, perhaps, not definitely flattered himself that he had made an ineffaceable impression upon her heart, but he was annoyed at hearing of a state of affairs so little in harmony with an image that had lately flitted in and out of his own meditations; the image of a very pretty girl looking out of an old Roman window and asking herself urgently when Mr. Winterbourne would arrive. If, however, he determined to wait a little before reminding Miss Miller of his claims to her consideration, he went very soon to call upon two or three other friends. One of these friends was an American lady who had spent several winters at Geneva, where she had placed her children at school. She was a very accomplished woman, and she lived in the Via Gregoriana. Winterbourne found her in a little crimson drawing room on a third floor; the room was filled with southern sunshine. He had not been there ten minutes when the servant came in, announcing "Madame Mila!" This announcement was presently followed by the entrance of little Randolph Miller, who stopped in the middle of the room and stood staring at Winterbourne. An instant later his pretty sister crossed the threshold; and then, after a considerable interval, Mrs. Miller slowly advanced.

"I know you!" said Randolph.

"I'm sure you know a great many things," exclaimed Winterbourne, taking him by the hand. "How is your education coming on?"

Daisy was exchanging greetings very prettily with her hostess, but when she heard Winterbourne's voice she quickly turned her head. "Well, I declare!" she said.

“I told you I should come, you know,” Winterbourne rejoined, smiling.

“Well, I didn’t believe it,” said Miss Daisy.

“I am much obliged to you,” laughed the young man.

“You might have come to see me!” said Daisy.

“I arrived only yesterday.”

“I don’t believe that!” the young girl declared.

Winterbourne turned with a protesting smile to her mother, but this lady evaded his glance, and, seating herself, fixed her eyes upon her son. “We’ve got a bigger place than this,” said Randolph. “It’s all gold on the walls.”

Mrs. Miller turned uneasily in her chair. “I told you if I were to bring you, you would say something!” she murmured.

“I told YOU!” Randolph exclaimed. “I tell YOU, sir!” he added jocosely, giving Winterbourne a thump on the knee. “It IS bigger, too!”

Daisy had entered upon a lively conversation with her hostess; Winterbourne judged it becoming to address a few words to her mother. “I hope you have been well since we parted at Vevey,” he said.

Mrs. Miller now certainly looked at him—at his chin. “Not very well, sir,” she answered.

“She’s got the dyspepsia,” said Randolph. “I’ve got it too. Father’s got it. I’ve got it most!”

This announcement, instead of embarrassing Mrs. Miller, seemed to relieve her. “I suffer from the liver,” she said. “I think it’s this climate; it’s less bracing than Schenectady, especially in the winter season. I don’t know whether you know we reside at Schenectady. I was saying to Daisy that I certainly hadn’t found any one like Dr. Davis, and I didn’t believe I should. Oh, at Schenectady he stands first; they think everything of him. He has so much to do, and yet there was nothing he wouldn’t do for me. He said he never saw anything like my dyspepsia, but he was bound to cure it. I’m sure there was nothing he wouldn’t try. He was just going to try something new when we came off. Mr. Miller wanted Daisy to see Europe for herself. But I wrote to Mr. Miller that it seems as if I couldn’t get on without Dr. Davis. At Schenectady he stands at the very top; and there’s a great deal of sickness there, too. It affects my sleep.”

Winterbourne had a good deal of pathological gossip with Dr. Davis’s patient, during which Daisy chattered unremittingly to her own companion. The young man asked Mrs. Miller how she was pleased with Rome. “Well, I must say I am disappointed,” she answered. “We had heard so much about it; I suppose we had heard too much. But we couldn’t help that. We had been led to expect something different.”

“Ah, wait a little, and you will become very fond of it,” said Winterbourne.

“I hate it worse and worse every day!” cried Randolph.

“You are like the infant Hannibal,” said Winterbourne.

“No, I ain’t!” Randolph declared at a venture.

“You are not much like an infant,” said his mother. “But we have seen places,” she resumed, “that I should put a long way before Rome.” And in reply to Winterbourne’s interrogation, “There’s Zurich,” she concluded, “I think Zurich is lovely; and we hadn’t heard half so much about it.”

“The best place we’ve seen is the City of Richmond!” said Randolph.

“He means the ship,” his mother explained. “We crossed in that ship. Randolph had a good time on the City of Richmond.”

“It’s the best place I’ve seen,” the child repeated. “Only it was turned the wrong way.”

“Well, we’ve got to turn the right way some time,” said Mrs. Miller with a little laugh. Winterbourne expressed the hope that her daughter at least found some gratification in Rome, and she declared that Daisy was quite carried away. “It’s on account of the society—the society’s splendid. She goes round everywhere; she has made a great number of acquaintances. Of course she goes round more than I do. I must say they have been very sociable; they have taken her right in. And then she knows a great many gentlemen. Oh, she thinks there’s nothing like Rome. Of course, it’s a great deal pleasanter for a young lady if she knows plenty of gentlemen.”

By this time Daisy had turned her attention again to Winterbourne. “I’ve been telling Mrs. Walker how mean you were!” the young girl announced.

“And what is the evidence you have offered?” asked Winterbourne, rather annoyed at Miss Miller’s want of appreciation of the zeal of an admirer who on his way down to Rome had stopped neither at Bologna nor at Florence, simply because of a certain sentimental impatience. He remembered that a cynical compatriot had once told him that American women—the pretty ones, and this gave a largeness to the axiom—were at once the most exacting in the world and the least endowed with a sense of indebtedness.

“Why, you were awfully mean at Vevey,” said Daisy. “You wouldn’t do anything. You wouldn’t stay there when I asked you.”

“My dearest young lady,” cried Winterbourne, with eloquence, “have I come all the way to Rome to encounter your reproaches?”

“Just hear him say that!” said Daisy to her hostess, giving a twist to a bow on this lady’s dress. “Did you ever hear anything so quaint?”

“So quaint, my dear?” murmured Mrs. Walker in the tone of a partisan of Winterbourne.

“Well, I don’t know,” said Daisy, fingering Mrs. Walker’s ribbons. “Mrs. Walker, I want to tell you something.”

“Mother-r,” interposed Randolph, with his rough ends to his words, “I tell you you’ve got to go. Eugenio’ll raise—something!”

“I’m not afraid of Eugenio,” said Daisy with a toss of her head. “Look here, Mrs. Walker,” she went on, “you know I’m coming to your party.”

“I am delighted to hear it.”

“I’ve got a lovely dress!”

“I am very sure of that.”

“But I want to ask a favor—permission to bring a friend.”

“I shall be happy to see any of your friends,” said Mrs. Walker, turning with a smile to Mrs. Miller.

“Oh, they are not my friends,” answered Daisy’s mamma, smiling shyly in her own fashion. “I never spoke to them.”

“It’s an intimate friend of mine—Mr. Giovanelli,” said Daisy without a tremor in her clear little voice or a shadow on her brilliant little face.

Mrs. Walker was silent a moment; she gave a rapid glance at Winterbourne. “I shall be glad to see Mr. Giovanelli,” she then said.

“He’s an Italian,” Daisy pursued with the prettiest serenity. “He’s a great friend of mine; he’s the handsomest man in the world—except Mr. Winterbourne! He knows plenty of Italians, but he wants to know some Americans. He thinks ever so much of Americans. He’s tremendously clever. He’s perfectly lovely!”

It was settled that this brilliant personage should be brought to Mrs. Walker’s party, and then Mrs. Miller prepared to take her leave. “I guess we’ll go back to the hotel,” she said.

“You may go back to the hotel, Mother, but I’m going to take a walk,” said Daisy.

“She’s going to walk with Mr. Giovanelli,” Randolph proclaimed.

“I am going to the Pincio,” said Daisy, smiling.

“Alone, my dear—at this hour?” Mrs. Walker asked. The afternoon was drawing to a close—it was the hour for the throng of carriages and of contemplative pedestrians. “I don’t think it’s safe, my dear,” said Mrs. Walker.

“Neither do I,” subjoined Mrs. Miller. “You’ll get the fever, as sure as you live. Remember what Dr. Davis told you!”

“Give her some medicine before she goes,” said Randolph.

The company had risen to its feet; Daisy, still showing her pretty teeth, bent over and kissed her hostess. “Mrs. Walker, you are too perfect,” she said. “I’m not going alone; I am going to meet a friend.”

“Your friend won’t keep you from getting the fever,” Mrs. Miller observed.

“Is it Mr. Giovanelli?” asked the hostess.

Winterbourne was watching the young girl; at this question his attention quickened. She stood there, smiling and smoothing her bonnet ribbons; she glanced at Winterbourne. Then, while she glanced and smiled, she answered, without a shade of hesitation, “Mr. Giovanelli—the beautiful Giovanelli.”

“My dear young friend,” said Mrs. Walker, taking her hand pleadingly, “don’t walk off to the Pincio at this hour to meet a beautiful Italian.”

“Well, he speaks English,” said Mrs. Miller.

“Gracious me!” Daisy exclaimed, “I don’t to do anything improper. There’s an easy way to settle it.” She continued to glance at Winterbourne. “The Pincio is only a hundred yards distant; and if Mr. Winterbourne were as polite as he pretends, he would offer to walk with me!”

Winterbourne’s politeness hastened to affirm itself, and the young girl gave him gracious leave to accompany her. They passed downstairs before her mother, and at the door Winterbourne perceived Mrs. Miller’s carriage drawn up, with the ornamental courier whose acquaintance he had made at Vevey seated within. “Goodbye, Eugenio!” cried Daisy; “I’m going to take a walk.” The distance from the Via Gregoriana to the beautiful garden at the other end of the Pincian Hill is, in fact, rapidly traversed. As the day was splendid, however, and the concourse of vehicles, walkers, and loungers numerous, the young Americans found their progress much delayed. This fact was highly agreeable to Winterbourne, in spite of his

consciousness of his singular situation. The slow-moving, idly gazing Roman crowd bestowed much attention upon the extremely pretty young foreign lady who was passing through it upon his arm; and he wondered what on earth had been in Daisy's mind when she proposed to expose herself, unattended, to its appreciation. His own mission, to her sense, apparently, was to consign her to the hands of Mr. Giovanelli; but Winterbourne, at once annoyed and gratified, resolved that he would do no such thing.

"Why haven't you been to see me?" asked Daisy. "You can't get out of that."

"I have had the honor of telling you that I have only just stepped out of the train."

"You must have stayed in the train a good while after it stopped!" cried the young girl with her little laugh. "I suppose you were asleep. You have had time to go to see Mrs. Walker."

"I knew Mrs. Walker—" Winterbourne began to explain.

"I know where you knew her. You knew her at Geneva. She told me so. Well, you knew me at Vevey. That's just as good. So you ought to have come." She asked him no other question than this; she began to prattle about her own affairs. "We've got splendid rooms at the hotel; Eugenio says they're the best rooms in Rome. We are going to stay all winter, if we don't die of the fever; and I guess we'll stay then. It's a great deal nicer than I thought; I thought it would be fearfully quiet; I was sure it would be awfully poky. I was sure we should be going round all the time with one of those dreadful old men that explain about the pictures and things. But we only had about a week of that, and now I'm enjoying myself. I know ever so many people, and they are all so charming. The society's extremely select. There are all kinds—English, and Germans, and Italians. I think I like the English best. I like their style of conversation. But there are some lovely Americans. I never saw anything so hospitable. There's something or other every day. There's not much dancing; but I must say I never thought dancing was everything. I was always fond of conversation. I guess I shall have plenty at Mrs. Walker's, her rooms are so small." When they had passed the gate of the Pincian Gardens, Miss Miller began to wonder where Mr. Giovanelli might be. "We had better go straight to that place in front," she said, "where you look at the view."

"I certainly shall not help you to find him," Winterbourne declared.

"Then I shall find him without you," cried Miss Daisy.

"You certainly won't leave me!" cried Winterbourne.

She burst into her little laugh. "Are you afraid you'll get lost—or run over? But there's Giovanelli, leaning against that tree. He's staring at the women in the carriages: did you ever see anything so cool?"

Winterbourne perceived at some distance a little man standing with folded arms nursing his cane. He had a handsome face, an artfully poised hat, a glass in one eye, and a nosegay in his buttonhole. Winterbourne looked at him a moment and then said, "Do you mean to speak to that man?"

"Do I mean to speak to him? Why, you don't suppose I mean to communicate by signs?"

"Pray understand, then," said Winterbourne, "that I intend to remain with you."

Daisy stopped and looked at him, without a sign of troubled consciousness in her face, with nothing but the presence of her charming eyes and her happy dimples. "Well, she's a cool one!" thought the young man.

"I don't like the way you say that," said Daisy. "It's too imperious."

"I beg your pardon if I say it wrong. The main point is to give you an idea of my meaning."

The young girl looked at him more gravely, but with eyes that were prettier than ever. "I have never allowed a gentleman to dictate to me, or to interfere with anything I do."

"I think you have made a mistake," said Winterbourne. "You should sometimes listen to a gentleman—the right one."

Daisy began to laugh again. "I do nothing but listen to gentlemen!" she exclaimed. "Tell me if Mr. Giovanelli is the right one?"

The gentleman with the nosegay in his bosom had now perceived our two friends, and was approaching the young girl with obsequious rapidity. He bowed to Winterbourne as well as to the latter's companion; he had a brilliant smile, an intelligent eye; Winterbourne thought him not a bad-looking fellow. But he nevertheless said to Daisy, "No, he's not the right one."

Daisy evidently had a natural talent for performing introductions; she mentioned the name of each of her companions to the other. She strolled alone with one of them on each side of her; Mr. Giovanelli, who spoke English very cleverly—Winterbourne afterward learned that he had practiced the idiom upon a great many American heiresses—addressed her a great deal of very polite nonsense; he was extremely urbane, and the young American, who said nothing, reflected upon that profundity of Italian cleverness which enables people to appear more gracious in proportion as they are more acutely disappointed. Giovanelli, of course, had counted upon something more intimate; he had not bargained for a party of three. But he kept his temper in a manner which suggested far-stretching intentions. Winterbourne flattered himself that he had taken his measure. "He is not a gentleman," said the young American; "he is only a clever imitation of one. He is a music master, or a penny-a-liner, or a third-rate artist. D__n his good looks!" Mr. Giovanelli had certainly a very pretty face; but Winterbourne felt a superior indignation at his own lovely fellow countrywoman's not knowing the difference between a spurious gentleman and a real one. Giovanelli chattered and jested and made himself wonderfully agreeable. It was true that, if he was an imitation, the imitation was brilliant. "Nevertheless," Winterbourne said to himself, "a nice girl ought to know!" And then he came back to the question whether this was, in fact, a nice girl. Would a nice girl, even allowing for her being a little American flirt, make a rendezvous with a presumably low-lived foreigner? The rendezvous in this case, indeed, had been in broad daylight and in the most crowded corner of Rome, but was it not impossible to regard the choice of these circumstances as a proof of extreme cynicism? Singular though it may seem, Winterbourne was vexed that the young girl, in joining her amoroso, should not appear more impatient of his own company, and he was vexed because of his inclination. It was impossible to regard her as a perfectly well-conducted young lady; she was wanting in a certain indispensable delicacy. It would therefore simplify matters greatly to be able to treat her as the object of one of those sentiments which are called by romancers "lawless passions." That she should seem to wish to get rid of him would help him to think more lightly of her, and to be able to think more lightly of her would make her much less perplexing. But Daisy, on this occasion, continued to present herself as an inscrutable combination of audacity and innocence.

She had been walking some quarter of an hour, attended by her two cavaliers, and responding in a tone of very childish gaiety, as it seemed to Winterbourne, to the pretty speeches of Mr. Giovanelli, when a carriage that had detached itself from the revolving train drew up beside the path. At the same moment Winterbourne perceived that his friend Mrs. Walker—the lady whose house he had lately left—was seated in the vehicle and was beckoning to him. Leaving Miss Miller's side, he hastened to obey her summons. Mrs. Walker was flushed; she wore an excited air. "It is really too dreadful," she said. "That girl must not do this sort of thing. She must not walk here with you two men. Fifty people have noticed her."

Winterbourne raised his eyebrows. "I think it's a pity to make too much fuss about it."

"It's a pity to let the girl ruin herself!"

"She is very innocent," said Winterbourne.

"She's very crazy!" cried Mrs. Walker. "Did you ever see anything so imbecile as her mother? After you had all left me just now, I could not sit still for thinking of it. It seemed too pitiful, not even to attempt to save her. I ordered the carriage and put on my bonnet, and came here as quickly as possible. Thank Heaven I have found you!"

"What do you propose to do with us?" asked Winterbourne, smiling.

"To ask her to get in, to drive her about here for half an hour, so that the world may see she is not running absolutely wild, and then to take her safely home."

"I don't think it's a very happy thought," said Winterbourne; "but you can try."

Mrs. Walker tried. The young man went in pursuit of Miss Miller, who had simply nodded and smiled at his interlocutor in the carriage and had gone her way with her companion. Daisy, on learning that Mrs. Walker wished to speak to her, retraced her steps with a perfect good grace and with Mr. Giovanelli at her side. She declared that she was delighted to have a chance to present this gentleman to Mrs. Walker. She immediately achieved the introduction, and declared that she had never in her life seen anything so lovely as Mrs. Walker's carriage rug.

"I am glad you admire it," said this lady, smiling sweetly. "Will you get in and let me put it over you?"

"Oh, no, thank you," said Daisy. "I shall admire it much more as I see you driving round with it."

"Do get in and drive with me!" said Mrs. Walker.

"That would be charming, but it's so enchanting just as I am!" and Daisy gave a brilliant glance at the gentlemen on either side of her.

"It may be enchanting, dear child, but it is not the custom here," urged Mrs. Walker, leaning forward in her victoria, with her hands devoutly clasped.

"Well, it ought to be, then!" said Daisy. "If I didn't walk I should expire."

"You should walk with your mother, dear," cried the lady from Geneva, losing patience.

"With my mother dear!" exclaimed the young girl. Winterbourne saw that she scented interference. "My mother never walked ten steps in her life. And then, you know," she added with a laugh, "I am more than five years old."

"You are old enough to be more reasonable. You are old enough, dear Miss Miller, to be talked about."

Daisy looked at Mrs. Walker, smiling intensely. "Talked about? What do you mean?"

"Come into my carriage, and I will tell you."

Daisy turned her quickened glance again from one of the gentlemen beside her to the other. Mr. Giovanelli was bowing to and fro, rubbing down his gloves and laughing very agreeably; Winterbourne thought it a most unpleasant scene. "I don't think I want to know what you mean," said Daisy presently. "I don't think I should like it."

Winterbourne wished that Mrs. Walker would tuck in her carriage rug and drive away, but this lady did not enjoy being defied, as she afterward told him. "Should you prefer being thought a very reckless girl?" she demanded.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Daisy. She looked again at Mr. Giovanelli, then she turned to Winterbourne. There was a little pink flush in her cheek; she was tremendously pretty. "Does Mr. Winterbourne think," she asked slowly, smiling, throwing back her head, and glancing at him from head to foot, "that, to save my reputation, I ought to get into the carriage?"

Winterbourne colored; for an instant he hesitated greatly. It seemed so strange to hear her speak that way of her "reputation." But he himself, in fact, must speak in accordance with gallantry. The finest gallantry, here, was simply to tell her the truth; and the truth, for Winterbourne, as the few indications I have been able to give have made him known to the reader, was that Daisy Miller should take Mrs. Walker's advice. He looked at her exquisite prettiness, and then he said, very gently, "I think you should get into the carriage."

Daisy gave a violent laugh. "I never heard anything so stiff! If this is improper, Mrs. Walker," she pursued, "then I am all improper, and you must give me up. Goodbye; I hope you'll have a lovely ride!" and, with Mr. Giovanelli, who made a triumphantly obsequious salute, she turned away.

Mrs. Walker sat looking after her, and there were tears in Mrs. Walker's eyes. "Get in here, sir," she said to Winterbourne, indicating the place beside her. The young man answered that he felt bound to accompany Miss Miller, whereupon Mrs. Walker declared that if he refused her this favor she would never speak to him again. She was evidently in earnest.

Winterbourne overtook Daisy and her companion, and, offering the young girl his hand, told her that Mrs. Walker had made an imperious claim upon his society. He expected that in answer she would say something rather free, something to commit herself still further to that "recklessness" from which Mrs. Walker had so charitably endeavored to dissuade her. But she only shook his hand, hardly looking at him, while Mr. Giovanelli bade him farewell with a too emphatic flourish of the hat.

Winterbourne was not in the best possible humor as he took his seat in Mrs. Walker's victoria. "That was not clever of you," he said candidly, while the vehicle mingled again with the throng of carriages.

"In such a case," his companion answered, "I don't wish to be clever; I wish to be EARNEST!"

"Well, your earnestness has only offended her and put her off."

"It has happened very well," said Mrs. Walker. "If she is so perfectly determined to compromise herself, the sooner one knows it the better; one can act accordingly."

"I suspect she meant no harm," Winterbourne rejoined.

"So I thought a month ago. But she has been going too far."

"What has she been doing?"

"Everything that is not done here. Flirting with any man she could pick up; sitting in corners with mysterious Italians; dancing all the evening with the same partners; receiving visits at eleven o'clock at night. Her mother goes away when visitors come."

"But her brother," said Winterbourne, laughing, "sits up till midnight."

“He must be edified by what he sees. I’m told that at their hotel everyone is talking about her, and that a smile goes round among all the servants when a gentleman comes and asks for Miss Miller.”

“The servants be hanged!” said Winterbourne angrily. “The poor girl’s only fault,” he presently added, “is that she is very uncultivated.”

“She is naturally indelicate,” Mrs. Walker declared.

“Take that example this morning. How long had you known her at Vevey?”

“A couple of days.”

“Fancy, then, her making it a personal matter that you should have left the place!”

Winterbourne was silent for some moments; then he said, “I suspect, Mrs. Walker, that you and I have lived too long at Geneva!” And he added a request that she should inform him with what particular design she had made him enter her carriage.

“I wished to beg you to cease your relations with Miss Miller—not to flirt with her—to give her no further opportunity to expose herself—to let her alone, in short.”

“I’m afraid I can’t do that,” said Winterbourne. “I like her extremely.”

“All the more reason that you shouldn’t help her to make a scandal.”

“There shall be nothing scandalous in my attentions to her.”

“There certainly will be in the way she takes them. But I have said what I had on my conscience,” Mrs. Walker pursued. “If you wish to rejoin the young lady I will put you down. Here, by the way, you have a chance.”

The carriage was traversing that part of the Pincian Garden that overhangs the wall of Rome and overlooks the beautiful Villa Borghese. It is bordered by a large parapet, near which there are several seats. One of the seats at a distance was occupied by a gentleman and a lady, toward whom Mrs. Walker gave a toss of her head. At the same moment these persons rose and walked toward the parapet. Winterbourne had asked the coachman to stop; he now descended from the carriage. His companion looked at him a moment in silence; then, while he raised his hat, she drove majestically away. Winterbourne stood there; he had turned his eyes toward Daisy and her cavalier. They evidently saw no one; they were too deeply occupied with each other. When they reached the low garden wall, they stood a moment looking off at the great flat-topped pine clusters of the Villa Borghese; then Giovanelli seated himself, familiarly, upon the broad ledge of the wall. The western sun in the opposite sky sent out a brilliant shaft through a couple of cloud bars, whereupon Daisy’s companion took her parasol out of her hands and opened it. She came a little nearer, and he held the parasol over her; then, still holding it, he let it rest upon her shoulder, so that both of their heads were hidden from Winterbourne. This young man lingered a moment, then he began to walk. But he walked—not toward the couple with the parasol; toward the residence of his aunt, Mrs. Costello.

He flattered himself on the following day that there was no smiling among the servants when he, at least, asked for Mrs. Miller at her hotel. This lady and her daughter, however, were not at home; and on the next day after, repeating his visit, Winterbourne again had the misfortune not to find them. Mrs. Walker’s party took place on the evening of the third day, and, in spite of the frigidity of his last interview with the hostess, Winterbourne was among the guests. Mrs. Walker was one of those American ladies who, while residing abroad, make a point, in their own phrase, of studying European society, and she had on this occasion collected

several specimens of her diversely born fellow mortals to serve, as it were, as textbooks. When Winterbourne arrived, Daisy Miller was not there, but in a few moments he saw her mother come in alone, very shyly and ruefully. Mrs. Miller's hair above her exposed-looking temples was more frizzled than ever. As she approached Mrs. Walker, Winterbourne also drew near.

"You see, I've come all alone," said poor Mrs. Miller. "I'm so frightened; I don't know what to do. It's the first time I've ever been to a party alone, especially in this country. I wanted to bring Randolph or Eugenio, or someone, but Daisy just pushed me off by myself. I ain't used to going round alone."

"And does not your daughter intend to favor us with her society?" demanded Mrs. Walker impressively.

"Well, Daisy's all dressed," said Mrs. Miller with that accent of the dispassionate, if not of the philosophic, historian with which she always recorded the current incidents of her daughter's career. "She got dressed on purpose before dinner. But she's got a friend of hers there; that gentleman—the Italian—that she wanted to bring. They've got going at the piano; it seems as if they couldn't leave off. Mr. Giovanelli sings splendidly. But I guess they'll come before very long," concluded Mrs. Miller hopefully.

"I'm sorry she should come in that way," said Mrs. Walker.

"Well, I told her that there was no use in her getting dressed before dinner if she was going to wait three hours," responded Daisy's mamma. "I didn't see the use of her putting on such a dress as that to sit round with Mr. Giovanelli."

"This is most horrible!" said Mrs. Walker, turning away and addressing herself to Winterbourne. "Elle s'affiche. It's her revenge for my having ventured to remonstrate with her. When she comes, I shall not speak to her."

Daisy came after eleven o'clock; but she was not, on such an occasion, a young lady to wait to be spoken to. She rustled forward in radiant loveliness, smiling and chattering, carrying a large bouquet, and attended by Mr. Giovanelli. Everyone stopped talking and turned and looked at her. She came straight to Mrs. Walker. "I'm afraid you thought I never was coming, so I sent mother off to tell you. I wanted to make Mr. Giovanelli practice some things before he came; you know he sings beautifully, and I want you to ask him to sing. This is Mr. Giovanelli; you know I introduced him to you; he's got the most lovely voice, and he knows the most charming set of songs. I made him go over them this evening on purpose; we had the greatest time at the hotel." Of all this Daisy delivered herself with the sweetest, brightest audibleness, looking now at her hostess and now round the room, while she gave a series of little pats, round her shoulders, to the edges of her dress. "Is there anyone I know?" she asked.

"I think every one knows you!" said Mrs. Walker pregnantly, and she gave a very cursory greeting to Mr. Giovanelli. This gentleman bore himself gallantly. He smiled and bowed and showed his white teeth; he curled his mustaches and rolled his eyes and performed all the proper functions of a handsome Italian at an evening party. He sang very prettily half a dozen songs, though Mrs. Walker afterward declared that she had been quite unable to find out who asked him. It was apparently not Daisy who had given him his orders. Daisy sat at a distance from the piano, and though she had publicly, as it were, professed a high admiration for his singing, talked, not inaudibly, while it was going on.

"It's a pity these rooms are so small; we can't dance," she said to Winterbourne, as if she had seen him five minutes before.

“I am not sorry we can’t dance,” Winterbourne answered; “I don’t dance.”

“Of course you don’t dance; you’re too stiff,” said Miss Daisy. “I hope you enjoyed your drive with Mrs. Walker!”

“No. I didn’t enjoy it; I preferred walking with you.”

“We paired off: that was much better,” said Daisy. “But did you ever hear anything so cool as Mrs. Walker’s wanting me to get into her carriage and drop poor Mr. Giovanelli, and under the pretext that it was proper? People have different ideas! It would have been most unkind; he had been talking about that walk for ten days.”

“He should not have talked about it at all,” said Winterbourne; “he would never have proposed to a young lady of this country to walk about the streets with him.”

“About the streets?” cried Daisy with her pretty stare. “Where, then, would he have proposed to her to walk? The Pincio is not the streets, either; and I, thank goodness, am not a young lady of this country. The young ladies of this country have a dreadfully poky time of it, so far as I can learn; I don’t see why I should change my habits for THEM.”

“I am afraid your habits are those of a flirt,” said Winterbourne gravely.

“Of course they are,” she cried, giving him her little smiling stare again. “I’m a fearful, frightful flirt! Did you ever hear of a nice girl that was not? But I suppose you will tell me now that I am not a nice girl.”

“You’re a very nice girl; but I wish you would flirt with me, and me only,” said Winterbourne.

“Ah! thank you—thank you very much; you are the last man I should think of flirting with. As I have had the pleasure of informing you, you are too stiff.”

“You say that too often,” said Winterbourne.

Daisy gave a delighted laugh. “If I could have the sweet hope of making you angry, I should say it again.”

“Don’t do that; when I am angry I’m stiffer than ever. But if you won’t flirt with me, do cease, at least, to flirt with your friend at the piano; they don’t understand that sort of thing here.”

“I thought they understood nothing else!” exclaimed Daisy.

“Not in young unmarried women.”

“It seems to me much more proper in young unmarried women than in old married ones,” Daisy declared.

“Well,” said Winterbourne, “when you deal with natives you must go by the custom of the place. Flirting is a purely American custom; it doesn’t exist here. So when you show yourself in public with Mr. Giovanelli, and without your mother—”

“Gracious! poor Mother!” interposed Daisy.

“Though you may be flirting, Mr. Giovanelli is not; he means something else.”

“He isn’t preaching, at any rate,” said Daisy with vivacity. “And if you want very much to know, we are neither of us flirting; we are too good friends for that: we are very intimate friends.”

“Ah!” rejoined Winterbourne, “if you are in love with each other, it is another affair.”

She had allowed him up to this point to talk so frankly that he had no expectation of shocking her by this ejaculation; but she immediately got up, blushing visibly, and leaving him to exclaim mentally that little American flirts were the queerest creatures in the world. "Mr. Giovanelli, at least," she said, giving her interlocutor a single glance, "never says such very disagreeable things to me."

Winterbourne was bewildered; he stood, staring. Mr. Giovanelli had finished singing. He left the piano and came over to Daisy. "Won't you come into the other room and have some tea?" he asked, bending before her with his ornamental smile.

Daisy turned to Winterbourne, beginning to smile again. He was still more perplexed, for this inconsequent smile made nothing clear, though it seemed to prove, indeed, that she had a sweetness and softness that reverted instinctively to the pardon of offenses. "It has never occurred to Mr. Winterbourne to offer me any tea," she said with her little tormenting manner.

"I have offered you advice," Winterbourne rejoined.

"I prefer weak tea!" cried Daisy, and she went off with the brilliant Giovanelli. She sat with him in the adjoining room, in the embrasure of the window, for the rest of the evening. There was an interesting performance at the piano, but neither of these young people gave heed to it. When Daisy came to take leave of Mrs. Walker, this lady conscientiously repaired the weakness of which she had been guilty at the moment of the young girl's arrival. She turned her back straight upon Miss Miller and left her to depart with what grace she might.

Winterbourne was standing near the door; he saw it all. Daisy turned very pale and looked at her mother, but Mrs. Miller was humbly unconscious of any violation of the usual social forms. She appeared, indeed, to have felt an incongruous impulse to draw attention to her own striking observance of them. "Good night, Mrs. Walker," she said; "we've had a beautiful evening. You see, if I let Daisy come to parties without me, I don't want her to go away without me." Daisy turned away, looking with a pale, grave face at the circle near the door; Winterbourne saw that, for the first moment, she was too much shocked and puzzled even for indignation. He on his side was greatly touched.

"That was very cruel," he said to Mrs. Walker.

"She never enters my drawing room again!" replied his hostess.

Since Winterbourne was not to meet her in Mrs. Walker's drawing room, he went as often as possible to Mrs. Miller's hotel. The ladies were rarely at home, but when he found them, the devoted Giovanelli was always present. Very often the brilliant little Roman was in the drawing room with Daisy alone, Mrs. Miller being apparently constantly of the opinion that discretion is the better part of surveillance. Winterbourne noted, at first with surprise, that Daisy on these occasions was never embarrassed or annoyed by his own entrance; but he very presently began to feel that she had no more surprises for him; the unexpected in her behavior was the only thing to expect. She showed no displeasure at her *tete-a-tete* with Giovanelli being interrupted; she could chatter as freshly and freely with two gentlemen as with one; there was always, in her conversation, the same odd mixture of audacity and puerility. Winterbourne remarked to himself that if she was seriously interested in Giovanelli, it was very singular that she should not take more trouble to preserve the sanctity of their interviews; and he liked her the more for her innocent-looking indifference and her apparently inexhaustible good humor. He could hardly have said why, but she seemed to him a girl who would never be jealous. At the risk of exciting a somewhat derisive smile on the reader's part, I may affirm that with regard to the women who had hitherto interested him, it very often seemed to Winterbourne among the possibilities that, given certain contingencies,

he should be afraid—literally afraid—of these ladies; he had a pleasant sense that he should never be afraid of Daisy Miller. It must be added that this sentiment was not altogether flattering to Daisy; it was part of his conviction, or rather of his apprehension, that she would prove a very light young person.

But she was evidently very much interested in Giovanelli. She looked at him whenever he spoke; she was perpetually telling him to do this and to do that; she was constantly “chaffing” and abusing him. She appeared completely to have forgotten that Winterbourne had said anything to displease her at Mrs. Walker’s little party. One Sunday afternoon, having gone to St. Peter’s with his aunt, Winterbourne perceived Daisy strolling about the great church in company with the inevitable Giovanelli. Presently he pointed out the young girl and her cavalier to Mrs. Costello. This lady looked at them a moment through her eyeglass, and then she said:

“That’s what makes you so pensive in these days, eh?”

“I had not the least idea I was pensive,” said the young man.

“You are very much preoccupied; you are thinking of something.”

“And what is it,” he asked, “that you accuse me of thinking of?”

“Of that young lady’s—Miss Baker’s, Miss Chandler’s—what’s her name?—Miss Miller’s intrigue with that little barber’s block.”

“Do you call it an intrigue,” Winterbourne asked—“an affair that goes on with such peculiar publicity?”

“That’s their folly,” said Mrs. Costello; “it’s not their merit.”

“No,” rejoined Winterbourne, with something of that pensiveness to which his aunt had alluded. “I don’t believe that there is anything to be called an intrigue.”

“I have heard a dozen people speak of it; they say she is quite carried away by him.”

“They are certainly very intimate,” said Winterbourne.

Mrs. Costello inspected the young couple again with her optical instrument. “He is very handsome. One easily sees how it is. She thinks him the most elegant man in the world, the finest gentleman. She has never seen anything like him; he is better, even, than the courier. It was the courier probably who introduced him; and if he succeeds in marrying the young lady, the courier will come in for a magnificent commission.”

“I don’t believe she thinks of marrying him,” said Winterbourne, “and I don’t believe he hopes to marry her.”

“You may be very sure she thinks of nothing. She goes on from day to day, from hour to hour, as they did in the Golden Age. I can imagine nothing more vulgar. And at the same time,” added Mrs. Costello, “depend upon it that she may tell you any moment that she is ‘engaged.’”

“I think that is more than Giovanelli expects,” said Winterbourne.

“Who is Giovanelli?”

“The little Italian. I have asked questions about him and learned something. He is apparently a perfectly respectable little man. I believe he is, in a small way, a cavaliere avvocato. But he doesn’t move in what are called the first circles. I think it is really not absolutely impossible that the courier introduced him. He is evidently immensely charmed with Miss Miller. If she thinks him the finest gentleman in the world, he, on his side, has never found himself in

personal contact with such splendor, such opulence, such expensiveness as this young lady's. And then she must seem to him wonderfully pretty and interesting. I rather doubt that he dreams of marrying her. That must appear to him too impossible a piece of luck. He has nothing but his handsome face to offer, and there is a substantial Mr. Miller in that mysterious land of dollars. Giovanelli knows that he hasn't a title to offer. If he were only a count or a marchese! He must wonder at his luck, at the way they have taken him up."

"He accounts for it by his handsome face and thinks Miss Miller a young lady qui se passe ses fantaisies!" said Mrs. Costello.

"It is very true," Winterbourne pursued, "that Daisy and her mamma have not yet risen to that stage of—what shall I call it?—of culture at which the idea of catching a count or a marchese begins. I believe that they are intellectually incapable of that conception."

"Ah! but the avvocato can't believe it," said Mrs. Costello.

Of the observation excited by Daisy's "intrigue," Winterbourne gathered that day at St. Peter's sufficient evidence. A dozen of the American colonists in Rome came to talk with Mrs. Costello, who sat on a little portable stool at the base of one of the great pilasters. The vesper service was going forward in splendid chants and organ tones in the adjacent choir, and meanwhile, between Mrs. Costello and her friends, there was a great deal said about poor little Miss Miller's going really "too far." Winterbourne was not pleased with what he heard, but when, coming out upon the great steps of the church, he saw Daisy, who had emerged before him, get into an open cab with her accomplice and roll away through the cynical streets of Rome, he could not deny to himself that she was going very far indeed. He felt very sorry for her—not exactly that he believed that she had completely lost her head, but because it was painful to hear so much that was pretty, and undefended, and natural assigned to a vulgar place among the categories of disorder. He made an attempt after this to give a hint to Mrs. Miller. He met one day in the Corso a friend, a tourist like himself, who had just come out of the Doria Palace, where he had been walking through the beautiful gallery. His friend talked for a moment about the superb portrait of Innocent X by Velasquez which hangs in one of the cabinets of the palace, and then said, "And in the same cabinet, by the way, I had the pleasure of contemplating a picture of a different kind—that pretty American girl whom you pointed out to me last week." In answer to Winterbourne's inquiries, his friend narrated that the pretty American girl—prettier than ever—was seated with a companion in the secluded nook in which the great papal portrait was enshrined.

"Who was her companion?" asked Winterbourne.

"A little Italian with a bouquet in his buttonhole. The girl is delightfully pretty, but I thought I understood from you the other day that she was a young lady du meilleur monde."

"So she is!" answered Winterbourne; and having assured himself that his informant had seen Daisy and her companion but five minutes before, he jumped into a cab and went to call on Mrs. Miller. She was at home; but she apologized to him for receiving him in Daisy's absence.

"She's gone out somewhere with Mr. Giovanelli," said Mrs. Miller. "She's always going round with Mr. Giovanelli."

"I have noticed that they are very intimate," Winterbourne observed.

"Oh, it seems as if they couldn't live without each other!" said Mrs. Miller. "Well, he's a real gentleman, anyhow. I keep telling Daisy she's engaged!"

"And what does Daisy say?"

“Oh, she says she isn’t engaged. But she might as well be!” this impartial parent resumed; “she goes on as if she was. But I’ve made Mr. Giovanelli promise to tell me, if SHE doesn’t. I should want to write to Mr. Miller about it—shouldn’t you?”

Winterbourne replied that he certainly should; and the state of mind of Daisy’s mamma struck him as so unprecedented in the annals of parental vigilance that he gave up as utterly irrelevant the attempt to place her upon her guard.

After this Daisy was never at home, and Winterbourne ceased to meet her at the houses of their common acquaintances, because, as he perceived, these shrewd people had quite made up their minds that she was going too far. They ceased to invite her; and they intimated that they desired to express to observant Europeans the great truth that, though Miss Daisy Miller was a young American lady, her behavior was not representative—was regarded by her compatriots as abnormal. Winterbourne wondered how she felt about all the cold shoulders that were turned toward her, and sometimes it annoyed him to suspect that she did not feel at all. He said to himself that she was too light and childish, too uncultivated and unreasoning, too provincial, to have reflected upon her ostracism, or even to have perceived it. Then at other moments he believed that she carried about in her elegant and irresponsible little organism a defiant, passionate, perfectly observant consciousness of the impression she produced. He asked himself whether Daisy’s defiance came from the consciousness of innocence, or from her being, essentially, a young person of the reckless class. It must be admitted that holding one’s self to a belief in Daisy’s “innocence” came to seem to Winterbourne more and more a matter of fine-spun gallantry. As I have already had occasion to relate, he was angry at finding himself reduced to chopping logic about this young lady; he was vexed at his want of instinctive certitude as to how far her eccentricities were generic, national, and how far they were personal. From either view of them he had somehow missed her, and now it was too late. She was “carried away” by Mr. Giovanelli.

A few days after his brief interview with her mother, he encountered her in that beautiful abode of flowering desolation known as the Palace of the Caesars. The early Roman spring had filled the air with bloom and perfume, and the rugged surface of the Palatine was muffled with tender verdure. Daisy was strolling along the top of one of those great mounds of ruin that are embanked with mossy marble and paved with monumental inscriptions. It seemed to him that Rome had never been so lovely as just then. He stood, looking off at the enchanting harmony of line and color that remotely encircles the city, inhaling the softly humid odors, and feeling the freshness of the year and the antiquity of the place reaffirm themselves in mysterious interfusion. It seemed to him also that Daisy had never looked so pretty, but this had been an observation of his whenever he met her. Giovanelli was at her side, and Giovanelli, too, wore an aspect of even unwonted brilliancy.

“Well,” said Daisy, “I should think you would be lonesome!”

“Lonesome?” asked Winterbourne.

“You are always going round by yourself. Can’t you get anyone to walk with you?”

“I am not so fortunate,” said Winterbourne, “as your companion.”

Giovanelli, from the first, had treated Winterbourne with distinguished politeness. He listened with a deferential air to his remarks; he laughed punctiliously at his pleasantries; he seemed disposed to testify to his belief that Winterbourne was a superior young man. He carried himself in no degree like a jealous wooer; he had obviously a great deal of tact; he had no objection to your expecting a little humility of him. It even seemed to Winterbourne at times that Giovanelli would find a certain mental relief in being able to have a private understanding with him—to say to him, as an intelligent man, that, bless you, HE knew how

extraordinary was this young lady, and didn't flatter himself with delusive—or at least TOO delusive—hopes of matrimony and dollars. On this occasion he strolled away from his companion to pluck a sprig of almond blossom, which he carefully arranged in his buttonhole.

"I know why you say that," said Daisy, watching Giovanelli. "Because you think I go round too much with HIM." And she nodded at her attendant.

"Every one thinks so—if you care to know," said Winterbourne.

"Of course I care to know!" Daisy exclaimed seriously. "But I don't believe it. They are only pretending to be shocked. They don't really care a straw what I do. Besides, I don't go round so much."

"I think you will find they do care. They will show it disagreeably."

Daisy looked at him a moment. "How disagreeably?"

"Haven't you noticed anything?" Winterbourne asked.

"I have noticed you. But I noticed you were as stiff as an umbrella the first time I saw you."

"You will find I am not so stiff as several others," said Winterbourne, smiling.

"How shall I find it?"

"By going to see the others."

"What will they do to me?"

"They will give you the cold shoulder. Do you know what that means?"

Daisy was looking at him intently; she began to color. "Do you mean as Mrs. Walker did the other night?"

"Exactly!" said Winterbourne.

She looked away at Giovanelli, who was decorating himself with his almond blossom. Then looking back at Winterbourne, "I shouldn't think you would let people be so unkind!" she said.

"How can I help it?" he asked.

"I should think you would say something."

"I do say something;" and he paused a moment. "I say that your mother tells me that she believes you are engaged."

"Well, she does," said Daisy very simply.

Winterbourne began to laugh. "And does Randolph believe it?" he asked.

"I guess Randolph doesn't believe anything," said Daisy. Randolph's skepticism excited Winterbourne to further hilarity, and he observed that Giovanelli was coming back to them. Daisy, observing it too, addressed herself again to her countryman. "Since you have mentioned it," she said, "I AM engaged." * * * Winterbourne looked at her; he had stopped laughing. "You don't believe!" she added.

He was silent a moment; and then, "Yes, I believe it," he said.

"Oh, no, you don't!" she answered. "Well, then—I am not!"

The young girl and her cicerone were on their way to the gate of the enclosure, so that Winterbourne, who had but lately entered, presently took leave of them. A week afterward he

went to dine at a beautiful villa on the Caelian Hill, and, on arriving, dismissed his hired vehicle. The evening was charming, and he promised himself the satisfaction of walking home beneath the Arch of Constantine and past the vaguely lighted monuments of the Forum. There was a waning moon in the sky, and her radiance was not brilliant, but she was veiled in a thin cloud curtain which seemed to diffuse and equalize it. When, on his return from the villa (it was eleven o'clock), Winterbourne approached the dusky circle of the Colosseum, it recurred to him, as a lover of the picturesque, that the interior, in the pale moonshine, would be well worth a glance. He turned aside and walked to one of the empty arches, near which, as he observed, an open carriage—one of the little Roman streetcabs—was stationed. Then he passed in, among the cavernous shadows of the great structure, and emerged upon the clear and silent arena. The place had never seemed to him more impressive. One-half of the gigantic circus was in deep shade, the other was sleeping in the luminous dusk. As he stood there he began to murmur Byron's famous lines, out of "Manfred," but before he had finished his quotation he remembered that if nocturnal meditations in the Colosseum are recommended by the poets, they are deprecated by the doctors. The historic atmosphere was there, certainly; but the historic atmosphere, scientifically considered, was no better than a villainous miasma. Winterbourne walked to the middle of the arena, to take a more general glance, intending thereafter to make a hasty retreat. The great cross in the center was covered with shadow; it was only as he drew near it that he made it out distinctly. Then he saw that two persons were stationed upon the low steps which formed its base. One of these was a woman, seated; her companion was standing in front of her.

Presently the sound of the woman's voice came to him distinctly in the warm night air. "Well, he looks at us as one of the old lions or tigers may have looked at the Christian martyrs!" These were the words he heard, in the familiar accent of Miss Daisy Miller.

"Let us hope he is not very hungry," responded the ingenious Giovanelli. "He will have to take me first; you will serve for dessert!"

Winterbourne stopped, with a sort of horror, and, it must be added, with a sort of relief. It was as if a sudden illumination had been flashed upon the ambiguity of Daisy's behavior, and the riddle had become easy to read. She was a young lady whom a gentleman need no longer be at pains to respect. He stood there, looking at her—looking at her companion and not reflecting that though he saw them vaguely, he himself must have been more brightly visible. He felt angry with himself that he had bothered so much about the right way of regarding Miss Daisy Miller. Then, as he was going to advance again, he checked himself, not from the fear that he was doing her injustice, but from a sense of the danger of appearing unbecomingly exhilarated by this sudden revulsion from cautious criticism. He turned away toward the entrance of the place, but, as he did so, he heard Daisy speak again.

"Why, it was Mr. Winterbourne! He saw me, and he cuts me!"

What a clever little reprobate she was, and how smartly she played at injured innocence! But he wouldn't cut her. Winterbourne came forward again and went toward the great cross. Daisy had got up; Giovanelli lifted his hat. Winterbourne had now begun to think simply of the craziness, from a sanitary point of view, of a delicate young girl lounging away the evening in this nest of malaria. What if she WERE a clever little reprobate? that was no reason for her dying of the perniciosa. "How long have you been here?" he asked almost brutally.

Daisy, lovely in the flattering moonlight, looked at him a moment. Then—"All the evening," she answered, gently. * * * "I never saw anything so pretty."

“I am afraid,” said Winterbourne, “that you will not think Roman fever very pretty. This is the way people catch it. I wonder,” he added, turning to Giovanelli, “that you, a native Roman, should countenance such a terrible indiscretion.”

“Ah,” said the handsome native, “for myself I am not afraid.”

“Neither am I—for you! I am speaking for this young lady.”

Giovanelli lifted his well-shaped eyebrows and showed his brilliant teeth. But he took Winterbourne’s rebuke with docility. “I told the signorina it was a grave indiscretion, but when was the signorina ever prudent?”

“I never was sick, and I don’t mean to be!” the signorina declared. “I don’t look like much, but I’m healthy! I was bound to see the Colosseum by moonlight; I shouldn’t have wanted to go home without that; and we have had the most beautiful time, haven’t we, Mr. Giovanelli? If there has been any danger, Eugenio can give me some pills. He has got some splendid pills.”

“I should advise you,” said Winterbourne, “to drive home as fast as possible and take one!”

“What you say is very wise,” Giovanelli rejoined. “I will go and make sure the carriage is at hand.” And he went forward rapidly.

Daisy followed with Winterbourne. He kept looking at her; she seemed not in the least embarrassed. Winterbourne said nothing; Daisy chattered about the beauty of the place. “Well, I HAVE seen the Colosseum by moonlight!” she exclaimed. “That’s one good thing.” Then, noticing Winterbourne’s silence, she asked him why he didn’t speak. He made no answer; he only began to laugh. They passed under one of the dark archways; Giovanelli was in front with the carriage. Here Daisy stopped a moment, looking at the young American. “DID you believe I was engaged, the other day?” she asked.

“It doesn’t matter what I believed the other day,” said Winterbourne, still laughing.

“Well, what do you believe now?”

“I believe that it makes very little difference whether you are engaged or not!”

He felt the young girl’s pretty eyes fixed upon him through the thick gloom of the archway; she was apparently going to answer. But Giovanelli hurried her forward. “Quick! quick!” he said; “if we get in by midnight we are quite safe.”

Daisy took her seat in the carriage, and the fortunate Italian placed himself beside her. “Don’t forget Eugenio’s pills!” said Winterbourne as he lifted his hat.

“I don’t care,” said Daisy in a little strange tone, “whether I have Roman fever or not!” Upon this the cab driver cracked his whip, and they rolled away over the desultory patches of the antique pavement.

Winterbourne, to do him justice, as it were, mentioned to no one that he had encountered Miss Miller, at midnight, in the Colosseum with a gentleman; but nevertheless, a couple of days later, the fact of her having been there under these circumstances was known to every member of the little American circle, and commented accordingly. Winterbourne reflected that they had of course known it at the hotel, and that, after Daisy’s return, there had been an exchange of remarks between the porter and the cab driver. But the young man was conscious, at the same moment, that it had ceased to be a matter of serious regret to him that the little American flirt should be “talked about” by low-minded menials. These people, a day or two later, had serious information to give: the little American flirt was alarmingly ill. Winterbourne, when the rumor came to him, immediately went to the hotel for more news.

He found that two or three charitable friends had preceded him, and that they were being entertained in Mrs. Miller's salon by Randolph.

"It's going round at night," said Randolph—"that's what made her sick. She's always going round at night. I shouldn't think she'd want to, it's so plaguy dark. You can't see anything here at night, except when there's a moon. In America there's always a moon!" Mrs. Miller was invisible; she was now, at least, giving her daughter the advantage of her society. It was evident that Daisy was dangerously ill.

Winterbourne went often to ask for news of her, and once he saw Mrs. Miller, who, though deeply alarmed, was, rather to his surprise, perfectly composed, and, as it appeared, a most efficient and judicious nurse. She talked a good deal about Dr. Davis, but Winterbourne paid her the compliment of saying to himself that she was not, after all, such a monstrous goose. "Daisy spoke of you the other day," she said to him. "Half the time she doesn't know what she's saying, but that time I think she did. She gave me a message she told me to tell you. She told me to tell you that she never was engaged to that handsome Italian. I am sure I am very glad; Mr. Giovanelli hasn't been near us since she was taken ill. I thought he was so much of a gentleman; but I don't call that very polite! A lady told me that he was afraid I was angry with him for taking Daisy round at night. Well, so I am, but I suppose he knows I'm a lady. I would scorn to scold him. Anyway, she says she's not engaged. I don't know why she wanted you to know, but she said to me three times, 'Mind you tell Mr. Winterbourne.' And then she told me to ask if you remembered the time you went to that castle in Switzerland. But I said I wouldn't give any such messages as that. Only, if she is not engaged, I'm sure I'm glad to know it."

But, as Winterbourne had said, it mattered very little. A week after this, the poor girl died; it had been a terrible case of the fever. Daisy's grave was in the little Protestant cemetery, in an angle of the wall of imperial Rome, beneath the cypresses and the thick spring flowers. Winterbourne stood there beside it, with a number of other mourners, a number larger than the scandal excited by the young lady's career would have led you to expect. Near him stood Giovanelli, who came nearer still before Winterbourne turned away. Giovanelli was very pale: on this occasion he had no flower in his buttonhole; he seemed to wish to say something. At last he said, "She was the most beautiful young lady I ever saw, and the most amiable;" and then he added in a moment, "and she was the most innocent."

Winterbourne looked at him and presently repeated his words, "And the most innocent?"

"The most innocent!"

Winterbourne felt sore and angry. "Why the devil," he asked, "did you take her to that fatal place?"

Mr. Giovanelli's urbanity was apparently imperturbable. He looked on the ground a moment, and then he said, "For myself I had no fear; and she wanted to go."

"That was no reason!" Winterbourne declared.

The subtle Roman again dropped his eyes. "If she had lived, I should have got nothing. She would never have married me, I am sure."

"She would never have married you?"

"For a moment I hoped so. But no. I am sure."

Winterbourne listened to him: he stood staring at the raw protuberance among the April daisies. When he turned away again, Mr. Giovanelli, with his light, slow step, had retired.

Winterbourne almost immediately left Rome; but the following summer he again met his aunt, Mrs. Costello at Vevey. Mrs. Costello was fond of Vevey. In the interval Winterbourne had often thought of Daisy Miller and her mystifying manners. One day he spoke of her to his aunt—said it was on his conscience that he had done her injustice.

“I am sure I don’t know,” said Mrs. Costello. “How did your injustice affect her?”

“She sent me a message before her death which I didn’t understand at the time; but I have understood it since. She would have appreciated one’s esteem.”

“Is that a modest way,” asked Mrs. Costello, “of saying that she would have reciprocated one’s affection?”

Winterbourne offered no answer to this question; but he presently said, “You were right in that remark that you made last summer. I was booked to make a mistake. I have lived too long in foreign parts.”

Nevertheless, he went back to live at Geneva, whence there continue to come the most contradictory accounts of his motives of sojourn: a report that he is “studying” hard—an intimation that he is much interested in a very clever foreign lady.

An International Episode

PART I

Four years ago—in 1874—two young Englishmen had occasion to go to the United States. They crossed the ocean at midsummer, and, arriving in New York on the first day of August, were much struck with the fervid temperature of that city. Disembarking upon the wharf, they climbed into one of those huge high-hung coaches which convey passengers to the hotels, and with a great deal of bouncing and bumping, took their course through Broadway. The midsummer aspect of New York is not, perhaps, the most favorable one; still, it is not without its picturesque and even brilliant side. Nothing could well resemble less a typical English street than the interminable avenue, rich in incongruities, through which our two travelers advanced—looking out on each side of them at the comfortable animation of the sidewalks, the high-colored, heterogeneous architecture, the huge white marble facades glittering in the strong, crude light, and bedizened with gilded lettering, the multifarious awnings, banners, and streamers, the extraordinary number of omnibuses, horsecars, and other democratic vehicles, the vendors of cooling fluids, the white trousers and big straw hats of the policemen, the tripping gait of the modish young persons on the pavement, the general brightness, newness, juvenility, both of people and things. The young men had exchanged few observations; but in crossing Union Square, in front of the monument to Washington—in the very shadow, indeed, projected by the image of the *pater patriae*—one of them remarked to the other, “It seems a rum-looking place.”

“Ah, very odd, very odd,” said the other, who was the clever man of the two.

“Pity it’s so beastly hot,” resumed the first speaker after a pause.

“You know we are in a low latitude,” said his friend.

“I daresay,” remarked the other.

“I wonder,” said the second speaker presently, “if they can give one a bath?”

“I daresay not,” rejoined the other.

“Oh, I say!” cried his comrade.

This animated discussion was checked by their arrival at the hotel, which had been recommended to them by an American gentleman whose acquaintance they made—with whom, indeed, they became very intimate—on the steamer, and who had proposed to accompany them to the inn and introduce them, in a friendly way, to the proprietor. This plan, however, had been defeated by their friend’s finding that his “partner” was awaiting him on the wharf and that his commercial associate desired him instantly to come and give his attention to certain telegrams received from St. Louis. But the two Englishmen, with nothing but their national prestige and personal graces to recommend them, were very well received at the hotel, which had an air of capacious hospitality. They found that a bath was not unattainable, and were indeed struck with the facilities for prolonged and reiterated immersion with which their apartment was supplied. After bathing a good deal—more, indeed, than they had ever done before on a single occasion—they made their way into the dining room of the hotel, which was a spacious restaurant, with a fountain in the middle, a great many tall plants in ornamental tubs, and an array of French waiters. The first dinner on land, after a sea voyage, is, under any circumstances, a delightful occasion, and there was something particularly agreeable in the circumstances in which our young Englishmen found

themselves. They were extremely good natured young men; they were more observant than they appeared; in a sort of inarticulate, accidentally dissimulative fashion, they were highly appreciative. This was, perhaps, especially the case with the elder, who was also, as I have said, the man of talent. They sat down at a little table, which was a very different affair from the great clattering seesaw in the saloon of the steamer. The wide doors and windows of the restaurant stood open, beneath large awnings, to a wide pavement, where there were other plants in tubs, and rows of spreading trees, and beyond which there was a large shady square, without any palings, and with marble-paved walks. And above the vivid verdure rose other facades of white marble and of pale chocolate-colored stone, squaring themselves against the deep blue sky. Here, outside, in the light and the shade and the heat, there was a great tinkling of the bells of innumerable streetcars, and a constant strolling and shuffling and rustling of many pedestrians, a large proportion of whom were young women in Pompadour-looking dresses. Within, the place was cool and vaguely lighted, with the splash of water, the odor of flowers, and the flitting of French waiters, as I have said, upon soundless carpets.

“It’s rather like Paris, you know,” said the younger of our two travelers.

“It’s like Paris—only more so,” his companion rejoined.

“I suppose it’s the French waiters,” said the first speaker. “Why don’t they have French waiters in London?”

“Fancy a French waiter at a club,” said his friend.

The young Englishman started a little, as if he could not fancy it. “In Paris I’m very apt to dine at a place where there’s an English waiter. Don’t you know what’s-his-name’s, close to the thingumbob? They always set an English waiter at me. I suppose they think I can’t speak French.”

“Well, you can’t.” And the elder of the young Englishmen unfolded his napkin.

His companion took no notice whatever of this declaration. “I say,” he resumed in a moment, “I suppose we must learn to speak American. I suppose we must take lessons.”

“I can’t understand them,” said the clever man.

“What the deuce is HE saying?” asked his comrade, appealing from the French waiter.

“He is recommending some soft-shell crabs,” said the clever man.

And so, in desultory observation of the idiosyncrasies of the new society in which they found themselves, the young Englishmen proceeded to dine—going in largely, as the phrase is, for cooling draughts and dishes, of which their attendant offered them a very long list. After dinner they went out and slowly walked about the neighboring streets. The early dusk of waning summer was coming on, but the heat was still very great. The pavements were hot even to the stout boot soles of the British travelers, and the trees along the curbstone emitted strange exotic odors. The young men wandered through the adjoining square—that queer place without palings, and with marble walks arranged in black and white lozenges. There were a great many benches, crowded with shabby-looking people, and the travelers remarked, very justly, that it was not much like Belgrave Square. On one side was an enormous hotel, lifting up into the hot darkness an immense array of open, brightly lighted windows. At the base of this populous structure was an eternal jangle of horsecars, and all round it, in the upper dusk, was a sinister hum of mosquitoes. The ground floor of the hotel seemed to be a huge transparent cage, flinging a wide glare of gaslight into the street, of which it formed a sort of public adjunct, absorbing and emitting the passersby promiscuously. The young Englishmen went in with everyone else, from curiosity, and saw a couple of hundred men

sitting on divans along a great marble-paved corridor, with their legs stretched out, together with several dozen more standing in a queue, as at the ticket office of a railway station, before a brilliantly illuminated counter of vast extent. These latter persons, who carried portmanteaus in their hands, had a dejected, exhausted look; their garments were not very fresh, and they seemed to be rendering some mysterious tribute to a magnificent young man with a waxed mustache, and a shirtfront adorned with diamond buttons, who every now and then dropped an absent glance over their multitudinous patience. They were American citizens doing homage to a hotel clerk.

“I’m glad he didn’t tell us to go there,” said one of our Englishmen, alluding to their friend on the steamer, who had told them so many things. They walked up the Fifth Avenue, where, for instance, he had told them that all the first families lived. But the first families were out of town, and our young travelers had only the satisfaction of seeing some of the second—or perhaps even the third—taking the evening air upon balconies and high flights of doorsteps, in the streets which radiate from the more ornamental thoroughfare. They went a little way down one of these side streets, and they saw young ladies in white dresses—charming-looking persons—seated in graceful attitudes on the chocolate-colored steps. In one or two places these young ladies were conversing across the street with other young ladies seated in similar postures and costumes in front of the opposite houses, and in the warm night air their colloquial tones sounded strange in the ears of the young Englishmen. One of our friends, nevertheless—the younger one—intimated that he felt a disposition to interrupt a few of these soft familiarities; but his companion observed, pertinently enough, that he had better be careful. “We must not begin with making mistakes,” said his companion.

“But he told us, you know—he told us,” urged the young man, alluding again to the friend on the steamer.

“Never mind what he told us!” answered his comrade, who, if he had greater talents, was also apparently more of a moralist.

By bedtime—in their impatience to taste of a terrestrial couch again our seafarers went to bed early—it was still insufferably hot, and the buzz of the mosquitoes at the open windows might have passed for an audible crepitation of the temperature. “We can’t stand this, you know,” the young Englishmen said to each other; and they tossed about all night more boisterously than they had tossed upon the Atlantic billows. On the morrow, their first thought was that they would re-embark that day for England; and then it occurred to them that they might find an asylum nearer at hand. The cave of Aeolus became their ideal of comfort, and they wondered where the Americans went when they wished to cool off. They had not the least idea, and they determined to apply for information to Mr. J. L. Westgate. This was the name inscribed in a bold hand on the back of a letter carefully preserved in the pocketbook of our junior traveler. Beneath the address, in the left-hand corner of the envelope, were the words, “Introducing Lord Lambeth and Percy Beaumont, Esq.” The letter had been given to the two Englishmen by a good friend of theirs in London, who had been in America two years previously, and had singled out Mr. J. L. Westgate from the many friends he had left there as the consignee, as it were, of his compatriots. “He is a capital fellow,” the Englishman in London had said, “and he has got an awfully pretty wife. He’s tremendously hospitable—he will do everything in the world for you; and as he knows everyone over there, it is quite needless I should give you any other introduction. He will make you see everyone; trust to him for putting you into circulation. He has got a tremendously pretty wife.” It was natural that in the hour of tribulation Lord Lambeth and Mr. Percy Beaumont should have bethought themselves of a gentleman whose attractions had been thus vividly depicted; all the more so that he lived in the Fifth Avenue, and that the Fifth Avenue, as they had ascertained

the night before, was contiguous to their hotel. "Ten to one he'll be out of town," said Percy Beaumont; "but we can at least find out where he has gone, and we can immediately start in pursuit. He can't possibly have gone to a hotter place, you know."

"Oh, there's only one hotter place," said Lord Lambeth, "and I hope he hasn't gone there."

They strolled along the shady side of the street to the number indicated upon the precious letter. The house presented an imposing chocolate-colored expanse, relieved by facings and window cornices of florid sculpture, and by a couple of dusty rose trees which clambered over the balconies and the portico. This last-mentioned feature was approached by a monumental flight of steps.

"Rather better than a London house," said Lord Lambeth, looking down from this altitude, after they had rung the bell.

"It depends upon what London house you mean," replied his companion. "You have a tremendous chance to get wet between the house door and your carriage."

"Well," said Lord Lambeth, glancing at the burning heavens, "I 'guess' it doesn't rain so much here!"

The door was opened by a long Negro in a white jacket, who grinned familiarly when Lord Lambeth asked for Mr. Westgate.

"He ain't at home, sah; he's downtown at his o'fice."

"Oh, at his office?" said the visitors. "And when will he be at home?"

"Well, sah, when he goes out dis way in de mo'ning, he ain't liable to come home all day."

This was discouraging; but the address of Mr. Westgate's office was freely imparted by the intelligent black and was taken down by Percy Beaumont in his pocketbook. The two gentlemen then returned, languidly, to their hotel, and sent for a hackney coach, and in this commodious vehicle they rolled comfortably downtown. They measured the whole length of Broadway again and found it a path of fire; and then, deflecting to the left, they were deposited by their conductor before a fresh, light, ornamental structure, ten stories high, in a street crowded with keen-faced, light-limbed young men, who were running about very quickly and stopping each other eagerly at corners and in doorways. Passing into this brilliant building, they were introduced by one of the keen-faced young men—he was a charming fellow, in wonderful cream-colored garments and a hat with a blue ribbon, who had evidently perceived them to be aliens and helpless—to a very snug hydraulic elevator, in which they took their place with many other persons, and which, shooting upward in its vertical socket, presently projected them into the seventh horizontal compartment of the edifice. Here, after brief delay, they found themselves face to face with the friend of their friend in London. His office was composed of several different rooms, and they waited very silently in one of them after they had sent in their letter and their cards. The letter was not one which it would take Mr. Westgate very long to read, but he came out to speak to them more instantly than they could have expected; he had evidently jumped up from his work. He was a tall, lean personage and was dressed all in fresh white linen; he had a thin, sharp, familiar face, with an expression that was at one and the same time sociable and businesslike, a quick, intelligent eye, and a large brown mustache, which concealed his mouth and made his chin, beneath it, look small. Lord Lambeth thought he looked tremendously clever.

"How do you do, Lord Lambeth—how do you do, sir?" he said, holding the open letter in his hand. "I'm very glad to see you; I hope you're very well. You had better come in here; I think it's cooler," and he led the way into another room, where there were law books and papers,

and windows wide open beneath striped awning. Just opposite one of the windows, on a line with his eyes, Lord Lambeth observed the weathervane of a church steeple. The uproar of the street sounded infinitely far below, and Lord Lambeth felt very high in the air. "I say it's cooler," pursued their host, "but everything is relative. How do you stand the heat?"

"I can't say we like it," said Lord Lambeth; "but Beaumont likes it better than I."

"Well, it won't last," Mr. Westgate very cheerfully declared; "nothing unpleasant lasts over here. It was very hot when Captain Littledale was here; he did nothing but drink sherry cobbles. He expressed some doubt in his letter whether I will remember him—as if I didn't remember making six sherry cobbles for him one day in about twenty minutes. I hope you left him well, two years having elapsed since then."

"Oh, yes, he's all right," said Lord Lambeth.

"I am always very glad to see your countrymen," Mr. Westgate pursued. "I thought it would be time some of you should be coming along. A friend of mine was saying to me only a day or two ago, 'It's time for the watermelons and the Englishmen.'"

"The Englishmen and the watermelons just now are about the same thing," Percy Beaumont observed, wiping his dripping forehead.

"Ah, well, we'll put you on ice, as we do the melons. You must go down to Newport."

"We'll go anywhere," said Lord Lambeth.

"Yes, you want to go to Newport; that's what you want to do," Mr. Westgate affirmed. "But let's see—when did you get here?"

"Only yesterday," said Percy Beaumont.

"Ah, yes, by the Russia. Where are you staying?"

"At the Hanover, I think they call it."

"Pretty comfortable?" inquired Mr. Westgate.

"It seems a capital place, but I can't say we like the gnats," said Lord Lambeth.

Mr. Westgate stared and laughed. "Oh, no, of course you don't like the gnats. We shall expect you to like a good many things over here, but we shan't insist upon your liking the gnats; though certainly you'll admit that, as gnats, they are fine, eh? But you oughtn't to remain in the city."

"So we think," said Lord Lambeth. "If you would kindly suggest something—"

"Suggest something, my dear sir?" and Mr. Westgate looked at him, narrowing his eyelids.

"Open your mouth and shut your eyes! Leave it to me, and I'll put you through. It's a matter of national pride with me that all Englishmen should have a good time; and as I have had considerable practice, I have learned to minister to their wants. I find they generally want the right thing. So just please to consider yourselves my property; and if anyone should try to appropriate you, please to say, 'Hands off; too late for the market.' But let's see," continued the American, in his slow, humorous voice, with a distinctness of utterance which appeared to his visitors to be part of a humorous intention—a strangely leisurely, speculative voice for a man evidently so busy and, as they felt, so professional—"let's see; are you going to make something of a stay, Lord Lambeth?"

"Oh, dear, no," said the young Englishman; "my cousin was coming over on some business, so I just came across, at an hour's notice, for the lark."

“Is it your first visit to the United States?”

“Oh, dear, yes.”

“I was obliged to come on some business,” said Percy Beaumont, “and I brought Lambeth along.”

“And *you* have been here before, sir?”

“Never—never.”

“I thought, from your referring to business—” said Mr. Westgate.

“Oh, you see I’m by way of being a barrister,” Percy Beaumont answered. “I know some people that think of bringing a suit against one of your railways, and they asked me to come over and take measures accordingly.”

“What’s your railroad?” he asked.

“The Tennessee Central.”

The American tilted back his chair a little and poised it an instant. “Well, I’m sorry you want to attack one of our institutions,” he said, smiling. “But I guess you had better enjoy yourself *first!*”

“I’m certainly rather afraid I can’t work in this weather,” the young barrister confessed.

“Leave that to the natives,” said Mr. Westgate. “Leave the Tennessee Central to me, Mr. Beaumont. Some day we’ll talk it over, and I guess I can make it square. But I didn’t know you Englishmen ever did any work, in the upper classes.”

“Oh, we do a lot of work; don’t we, Lambeth?” asked Percy Beaumont.

“I must certainly be at home by the 19th of September,” said the younger Englishman, irrelevantly but gently.

“For the shooting, eh? or is it the hunting, or the fishing?” inquired his entertainer.

“Oh, I must be in Scotland,” said Lord Lambeth, blushing a little.

“Well, then,” rejoined Mr. Westgate, “you had better amuse yourself first, also. You must go down and see Mrs. Westgate.”

“We should be so happy, if you would kindly tell us the train,” said Percy Beaumont.

“It isn’t a train—it’s a boat.”

“Oh, I see. And what is the name of—a—the—a—town?”

“It isn’t a town,” said Mr. Westgate, laughing. “It’s a—well, what shall I call it? It’s a watering place. In short, it’s Newport. You’ll see what it is. It’s cool; that’s the principal thing. You will greatly oblige me by going down there and putting yourself into the hands of Mrs. Westgate. It isn’t perhaps for me to say it, but you couldn’t be in better hands. Also in those of her sister, who is staying with her. She is very fond of Englishmen. She thinks there is nothing like them.”

“Mrs. Westgate or—a—her sister?” asked Percy Beaumont modestly, yet in the tone of an inquiring traveler.

“Oh, I mean my wife,” said Mr. Westgate. “I don’t suppose my sister-in-law knows much about them. She has always led a very quiet life; she has lived in Boston.”

Percy Beaumont listened with interest. "That, I believe," he said, "is the most—a—intellectual town?"

"I believe it is very intellectual. I don't go there much," responded his host.

"I say, we ought to go there," said Lord Lambeth to his companion.

"Oh, Lord Lambeth, wait till the great heat is over," Mr. Westgate interposed. "Boston in this weather would be very trying; it's not the temperature for intellectual exertion. At Boston, you know, you have to pass an examination at the city limits; and when you come away they give you a kind of degree."

Lord Lambeth stared, blushing a little; and Percy Beaumont stared a little also—but only with his fine natural complexion—glancing aside after a moment to see that his companion was not looking too credulous, for he had heard a great deal of American humor. "I daresay it is very jolly," said the younger gentleman.

"I daresay it is," said Mr. Westgate. "Only I must impress upon you that at present—tomorrow morning, at an early hour—you will be expected at Newport. We have a house there; half the people in New York go there for the summer. I am not sure that at this very moment my wife can take you in; she has got a lot of people staying with her; I don't know who they all are; only she may have no room. But you can begin with the hotel, and meanwhile you can live at my house. In that way—simply sleeping at the hotel—you will find it tolerable. For the rest, you must make yourself at home at my place. You mustn't be shy, you know; if you are only here for a month that will be a great waste of time. Mrs. Westgate won't neglect you, and you had better not try to resist her. I know something about that. I expect you'll find some pretty girls on the premises. I shall write to my wife by this afternoon's mail, and tomorrow morning she and Miss Alden will look out for you. Just walk right in and make yourself comfortable. Your steamer leaves from this part of the city, and I will immediately send out and get you a cabin. Then, at half past four o'clock, just call for me here, and I will go with you and put you on board. It's a big boat; you might get lost. A few days hence, at the end of the week, I will come down to Newport and see how you are getting on."

The two young Englishmen inaugurated the policy of not resisting Mrs. Westgate by submitting, with great docility and thankfulness, to her husband. He was evidently a very good fellow, and he made an impression upon his visitors; his hospitality seemed to recommend itself consciously—with a friendly wink, as it were—as if it hinted, judicially, that you could not possibly make a better bargain. Lord Lambeth and his cousin left their entertainer to his labors and returned to their hotel, where they spent three or four hours in their respective shower baths. Percy Beaumont had suggested that they ought to see something of the town; but "Oh, damn the town!" his noble kinsman had rejoined. They returned to Mr. Westgate's office in a carriage, with their luggage, very punctually; but it must be reluctantly recorded that, this time, he kept them waiting so long that they felt themselves missing the steamer, and were deterred only by an amiable modesty from dispensing with his attendance and starting on a hasty scramble to the wharf. But when at last he appeared, and the carriage plunged into the purlieu of Broadway, they jolted and jostled to such good purpose that they reached the huge white vessel while the bell for departure was still ringing and the absorption of passengers still active. It was indeed, as Mr. Westgate had said, a big boat, and his leadership in the innumerable and interminable corridors and cabins, with which he seemed perfectly acquainted, and of which anyone and everyone appeared to have the entree, was very grateful to the slightly bewildered voyagers. He showed them their stateroom—a spacious apartment, embellished with gas lamps, mirrors en pied, and

sculptured furniture—and then, long after they had been intimately convinced that the steamer was in motion and launched upon the unknown stream that they were about to navigate, he bade them a sociable farewell.

“Well, goodbye, Lord Lambeth,” he said; “goodbye, Mr. Percy Beaumont. I hope you’ll have a good time. Just let them do what they want with you. I’ll come down by-and-by and look after you.”

The young Englishmen emerged from their cabin and amused themselves with wandering about the immense labyrinthine steamer, which struck them as an extraordinary mixture of a ship and a hotel. It was densely crowded with passengers, the larger number of whom appeared to be ladies and very young children; and in the big saloons, ornamented in white and gold, which followed each other in surprising succession, beneath the swinging gaslight, and among the small side passages where the Negro domestics of both sexes assembled with an air of philosophic leisure, everyone was moving to and fro and exchanging loud and familiar observations. Eventually, at the instance of a discriminating black, our young men went and had some “supper” in a wonderful place arranged like a theater, where, in a gilded gallery, upon which little boxes appeared to open, a large orchestra was playing operatic selections, and, below, people were handing about bills of fare, as if they had been programs. All this was sufficiently curious; but the agreeable thing, later, was to sit out on one of the great white decks of the steamer, in the warm breezy darkness, and, in the vague starlight, to make out the line of low, mysterious coast. The young Englishmen tried American cigars—those of Mr. Westgate—and talked together as they usually talked, with many odd silences, lapses of logic, and incongruities of transition; like people who have grown old together and learned to supply each other’s missing phrases; or, more especially, like people thoroughly conscious of a common point of view, so that a style of conversation superficially lacking in finish might suffice for reference to a fund of associations in the light of which everything was all right.

“We really seem to be going out to sea,” Percy Beaumont observed. “Upon my word, we are going back to England. He has shipped us off again. I call that ‘real mean.’”

“I suppose it’s all right,” said Lord Lambeth. “I want to see those pretty girls at Newport. You know, he told us the place was an island; and aren’t all islands in the sea?”

“Well,” resumed the elder traveler after a while, “if his house is as good as his cigars, we shall do very well.”

“He seems a very good fellow,” said Lord Lambeth, as if this idea had just occurred to him.

“I say, we had better remain at the inn,” rejoined his companion presently. “I don’t think I like the way he spoke of his house. I don’t like stopping in the house with such a tremendous lot of women.”

“Oh, I don’t mind,” said Lord Lambeth. And then they smoked a while in silence. “Fancy his thinking we do no work in England!” the young man resumed.

“I daresay he didn’t really think so,” said Percy Beaumont.

“Well, I guess they don’t know much about England over here!” declared Lord Lambeth humorously. And then there was another long pause. “He was devilish civil,” observed the young nobleman.

“Nothing, certainly, could have been more civil,” rejoined his companion.

“Littledale said his wife was great fun,” said Lord Lambeth.

“Whose wife—Littledale’s?”

“This American’s—Mrs. Westgate. What’s his name? J.L.”

Beaumont was silent a moment. “What was fun to Littledale,” he said at last, rather sententiously, “may be death to us.”

“What do you mean by that?” asked his kinsman. “I am as good a man as Littledale.”

“My dear boy, I hope you won’t begin to flirt,” said Percy Beaumont.

“I don’t care. I daresay I shan’t begin.”

“With a married woman, if she’s bent upon it, it’s all very well,” Beaumont expounded. “But our friend mentioned a young lady—a sister, a sister-in-law. For God’s sake, don’t get entangled with her!”

“How do you mean entangled?”

“Depend upon it she will try to hook you.”

“Oh, bother!” said Lord Lambeth.

“American girls are very clever,” urged his companion.

“So much the better,” the young man declared.

“I fancy they are always up to some game of that sort,” Beaumont continued.

“They can’t be worse than they are in England,” said Lord Lambeth judicially.

“Ah, but in England,” replied Beaumont, “you have got your natural protectors. You have got your mother and sisters.”

“My mother and sisters—” began the young nobleman with a certain energy. But he stopped in time, puffing at his cigar.

“Your mother spoke to me about it, with tears in her eyes,” said Percy Beaumont. “She said she felt very nervous. I promised to keep you out of mischief.”

“You had better take care of yourself,” said the object of maternal and ducal solicitude.

“Ah,” rejoined the young barrister, “I haven’t the expectation of a hundred thousand a year, not to mention other attractions.”

“Well,” said Lord Lambeth, “don’t cry out before you’re hurt!”

It was certainly very much cooler at Newport, where our travelers found themselves assigned to a couple of diminutive bedrooms in a faraway angle of an immense hotel. They had gone ashore in the early summer twilight and had very promptly put themselves to bed; thanks to which circumstance and to their having, during the previous hours, in their commodious cabin, slept the sleep of youth and health, they began to feel, toward eleven o’clock, very alert and inquisitive. They looked out of their windows across a row of small green fields, bordered with low stone walls of rude construction, and saw a deep blue ocean lying beneath a deep blue sky, and flecked now and then with scintillating patches of foam. A strong, fresh breeze came in through the curtainless casements and prompted our young men to observe, generally, that it didn’t seem half a bad climate. They made other observations after they had emerged from their rooms in pursuit of breakfast—a meal of which they partook in a huge bare hall, where a hundred Negroes, in white jackets, were shuffling about upon an uncarpeted floor; where the flies were superabundant, and the tables and dishes covered over with a strange, voluminous integument of coarse blue gauze; and where several little boys

and girls, who had risen late, were seated in fastidious solitude at the morning repast. These young persons had not the morning paper before them, but they were engaged in languid perusal of the bill of fare.

This latter document was a great puzzle to our friends, who, on reflecting that its bewildering categories had relation to breakfast alone, had an uneasy prevision of an encyclopedic dinner list. They found a great deal of entertainment at the hotel, an enormous wooden structure, for the erection of which it seemed to them that the virgin forests of the West must have been terribly deflowered. It was perforated from end to end with immense bare corridors, through which a strong draught was blowing—bearing along wonderful figures of ladies in white morning dresses and clouds of Valenciennes lace, who seemed to float down the long vistas with expanded furbelows, like angels spreading their wings. In front was a gigantic veranda, upon which an army might have encamped—a vast wooden terrace, with a roof as lofty as the nave of a cathedral. Here our young Englishmen enjoyed, as they supposed, a glimpse of American society, which was distributed over the measureless expanse in a variety of sedentary attitudes, and appeared to consist largely of pretty young girls, dressed as if for a fete champetre, swaying to and fro in rocking chairs, fanning themselves with large straw fans, and enjoying an enviable exemption from social cares. Lord Lambeth had a theory, which it might be interesting to trace to its origin, that it would be not only agreeable, but easily possible, to enter into relations with one of these young ladies; and his companion (as he had done a couple of days before) found occasion to check the young nobleman's colloquial impulses.

“You had better take care,” said Percy Beaumont, “or you will have an offended father or brother pulling out a bowie knife.”

“I assure you it is all right,” Lord Lambeth replied. “You know the Americans come to these big hotels to make acquaintances.”

“I know nothing about it, and neither do you,” said his kinsman, who, like a clever man, had begun to perceive that the observation of American society demanded a readjustment of one's standard.

“Hang it, then let's find out!” cried Lord Lambeth with some impatience. “You know I don't want to miss anything.”

“We will find out,” said Percy Beaumont very reasonably. “We will go and see Mrs. Westgate and make all proper inquiries.”

And so the two inquiring Englishmen, who had this lady's address inscribed in her husband's hand upon a card, descended from the veranda of the big hotel and took their way, according to direction, along a large straight road, past a series of fresh-looking villas embosomed in shrubs and flowers and enclosed in an ingenious variety of wooden palings. The morning was brilliant and cool, the villas were smart and snug, and the walk of the young travelers was very entertaining. Everything looked as if it had received a coat of fresh paint the day before—the red roofs, the green shutters, the clean, bright browns and buffs of the housefronts. The flower beds on the little lawns seemed to sparkle in the radiant air, and the gravel in the short carriage sweeps to flash and twinkle. Along the road came a hundred little basket phaetons, in which, almost always, a couple of ladies were sitting—ladies in white dresses and long white gloves, holding the reins and looking at the two Englishmen, whose nationality was not elusive, through thick blue veils tied tightly about their faces as if to guard their complexions. At last the young men came within sight of the sea again, and then, having interrogated a gardener over the paling of a villa, they turned into an open gate. Here they found themselves face to face with the ocean and with a very picturesque structure,

resembling a magnified chalet, which was perched upon a green embankment just above it. The house had a veranda of extraordinary width all around it and a great many doors and windows standing open to the veranda. These various apertures had, in common, such an accessible, hospitable air, such a breezy flutter within of light curtains, such expansive thresholds and reassuring interiors, that our friends hardly knew which was the regular entrance, and, after hesitating a moment, presented themselves at one of the windows. The room within was dark, but in a moment a graceful figure vaguely shaped itself in the rich-looking gloom, and a lady came to meet them. Then they saw that she had been seated at a table writing, and that she had heard them and had got up. She stepped out into the light; she wore a frank, charming smile, with which she held out her hand to Percy Beaumont.

“Oh, you must be Lord Lambeth and Mr. Beaumont,” she said. “I have heard from my husband that you would come. I am extremely glad to see you.” And she shook hands with each of her visitors. Her visitors were a little shy, but they had very good manners; they responded with smiles and exclamations, and they apologized for not knowing the front door. The lady rejoined, with vivacity, that when she wanted to see people very much she did not insist upon those distinctions, and that Mr. Westgate had written to her of his English friends in terms that made her really anxious. “He said you were so terribly prostrated,” said Mrs. Westgate.

“Oh, you mean by the heat?” replied Percy Beaumont. “We were rather knocked up, but we feel wonderfully better. We had such a jolly—a—voyage down here. It’s so very good of you to mind.”

“Yes, it’s so very kind of you,” murmured Lord Lambeth.

Mrs. Westgate stood smiling; she was extremely pretty. “Well, I did mind,” she said; “and I thought of sending for you this morning to the Ocean House. I am very glad you are better, and I am charmed you have arrived. You must come round to the other side of the piazza.” And she led the way, with a light, smooth step, looking back at the young men and smiling.

The other side of the piazza was, as Lord Lambeth presently remarked, a very jolly place. It was of the most liberal proportions, and with its awnings, its fanciful chairs, its cushions and rugs, its view of the ocean, close at hand, tumbling along the base of the low cliffs whose level tops intervened in lawnlike smoothness, it formed a charming complement to the drawing room. As such it was in course of use at the present moment; it was occupied by a social circle. There were several ladies and two or three gentlemen, to whom Mrs. Westgate proceeded to introduce the distinguished strangers. She mentioned a great many names very freely and distinctly; the young Englishmen, shuffling about and bowing, were rather bewildered. But at last they were provided with chairs—low, wicker chairs, gilded, and tied with a great many ribbons—and one of the ladies (a very young person, with a little snub nose and several dimples) offered Percy Beaumont a fan. The fan was also adorned with pink love knots; but Percy Beaumont declined it, although he was very hot. Presently, however, it became cooler; the breeze from the sea was delicious, the view was charming, and the people sitting there looked exceedingly fresh and comfortable. Several of the ladies seemed to be young girls, and the gentlemen were slim, fair youths, such as our friends had seen the day before in New York. The ladies were working upon bands of tapestry, and one of the young men had an open book in his lap. Beaumont afterward learned from one of the ladies that this young man had been reading aloud, that he was from Boston and was very fond of reading aloud. Beaumont said it was a great pity that they had interrupted him; he should like so much (from all he had heard) to hear a Bostonian read. Couldn’t the young man be induced to go on?

“Oh no,” said his informant very freely; “he wouldn’t be able to get the young ladies to attend to him now.”

There was something very friendly, Beaumont perceived, in the attitude of the company; they looked at the young Englishmen with an air of animated sympathy and interest; they smiled, brightly and unanimously, at everything either of the visitors said. Lord Lambeth and his companion felt that they were being made very welcome. Mrs. Westgate seated herself between them, and, talking a great deal to each, they had occasion to observe that she was as pretty as their friend Littledale had promised. She was thirty years old, with the eyes and the smile of a girl of seventeen, and she was extremely light and graceful, elegant, exquisite. Mrs. Westgate was extremely spontaneous. She was very frank and demonstrative and appeared always—while she looked at you delightedly with her beautiful young eyes—to be making sudden confessions and concessions, after momentary hesitations.

“We shall expect to see a great deal of you,” she said to Lord Lambeth with a kind of joyous earnestness. “We are very fond of Englishmen here; that is, there are a great many we have been fond of. After a day or two you must come and stay with us; we hope you will stay a long time. Newport’s a very nice place when you come really to know it, when you know plenty of people. Of course you and Mr. Beaumont will have no difficulty about that. Englishmen are very well received here; there are almost always two or three of them about. I think they always like it, and I must say I should think they would. They receive ever so much attention. I must say I think they sometimes get spoiled; but I am sure you and Mr. Beaumont are proof against that. My husband tells me you are a friend of Captain Littledale; he was such a charming man. He made himself most agreeable here, and I am sure I wonder he didn’t stay. It couldn’t have been pleasanter for him in his own country, though, I suppose, it is very pleasant in England, for English people. I don’t know myself; I have been there very little. I have been a great deal abroad, but I am always on the Continent. I must say I’m extremely fond of Paris; you know we Americans always are; we go there when we die. Did you ever hear that before? That was said by a great wit, I mean the good Americans; but we are all good; you’ll see that for yourself. All I know of England is London, and all I know of London is that place on that little corner, you know, where you buy jackets—jackets with that coarse braid and those big buttons. They make very good jackets in London, I will do you the justice to say that. And some people like the hats; but about the hats I was always a heretic; I always got my hats in Paris. You can’t wear an English hat—at least I never could—unless you dress your hair a l’Anglaise; and I must say that is a talent I have never possessed. In Paris they will make things to suit your peculiarities; but in England I think you like much more to have—how shall I say it?—one thing for everybody. I mean as regards dress. I don’t know about other things; but I have always supposed that in other things everything was different. I mean according to the people—according to the classes, and all that. I am afraid you will think that I don’t take a very favorable view; but you know you can’t take a very favorable view in Dover Street in the month of November. That has always been my fate. Do you know Jones’s Hotel in Dover Street? That’s all I know of England. Of course everyone admits that the English hotels are your weak point. There was always the most frightful fog; I couldn’t see to try my things on. When I got over to America—into the light—I usually found they were twice too big. The next time I mean to go in the season; I think I shall go next year. I want very much to take my sister; she has never been to England. I don’t know whether you know what I mean by saying that the Englishmen who come here sometimes get spoiled. I mean that they take things as a matter of course—things that are done for them. Now, naturally, they are only a matter of course when the Englishmen are very nice. But, of course, they are almost always very nice. Of course this isn’t nearly such an interesting country as England; there are not nearly so many things to see, and we haven’t your country

life. I have never seen anything of your country life; when I am in Europe I am always on the Continent. But I have heard a great deal about it; I know that when you are among yourselves in the country you have the most beautiful time. Of course we have nothing of that sort, we have nothing on that scale. I don't apologize, Lord Lambeth; some Americans are always apologizing; you must have noticed that. We have the reputation of always boasting and bragging and waving the American flag; but I must say that what strikes me is that we are perpetually making excuses and trying to smooth things over. The American flag has quite gone out of fashion; it's very carefully folded up, like an old tablecloth. Why should we apologize? The English never apologize—do they? No; I must say I never apologize. You must take us as we come—with all our imperfections on our heads. Of course we haven't your country life, and your old ruins, and your great estates, and your leisure class, and all that. But if we haven't, I should think you might find it a pleasant change—I think any country is pleasant where they have pleasant manners. Captain Littledale told me he had never seen such pleasant manners as at Newport, and he had been a great deal in European society. Hadn't he been in the diplomatic service? He told me the dream of his life was to get appointed to a diplomatic post in Washington. But he doesn't seem to have succeeded. I suppose that in England promotion—and all that sort of thing—is fearfully slow. With us, you know, it's a great deal too fast. You see, I admit our drawbacks. But I must confess I think Newport is an ideal place. I don't know anything like it anywhere. Captain Littledale told me he didn't know anything like it anywhere. It's entirely different from most watering places; it's a most charming life. I must say I think that when one goes to a foreign country one ought to enjoy the differences. Of course there are differences, otherwise what did one come abroad for? Look for your pleasure in the differences, Lord Lambeth; that's the way to do it; and then I am sure you will find American society—at least Newport society—most charming and most interesting. I wish very much my husband were here; but he's dreadfully confined to New York. I suppose you think that is very strange—for a gentleman. But you see we haven't any leisure class.”

Mrs. Westgate's discourse, delivered in a soft, sweet voice, flowed on like a miniature torrent, and was interrupted by a hundred little smiles, glances, and gestures, which might have figured the irregularities and obstructions of such a stream. Lord Lambeth listened to her with, it must be confessed, a rather ineffectual attention, although he indulged in a good many little murmurs and ejaculations of assent and deprecation. He had no great faculty for apprehending generalizations. There were some three or four indeed which, in the play of his own intelligence, he had originated, and which had seemed convenient at the moment; but at the present time he could hardly have been said to follow Mrs. Westgate as she darted gracefully about in the sea of speculation. Fortunately she asked for no especial rejoinder, for she looked about at the rest of the company as well, and smiled at Percy Beaumont, on the other side of her, as if he too much understood her and agreed with her. He was rather more successful than his companion; for besides being, as we know, cleverer, his attention was not vaguely distracted by close vicinity to a remarkably interesting young girl, with dark hair and blue eyes. This was the case with Lord Lambeth, to whom it occurred after a while that the young girl with blue eyes and dark hair was the pretty sister of whom Mrs. Westgate had spoken. She presently turned to him with a remark which established her identity.

“It's a great pity you couldn't have brought my brother-in-law with you. It's a great shame he should be in New York in these days.”

“Oh, yes; it's so very hot,” said Lord Lambeth.

“It must be dreadful,” said the young girl.

“I daresay he is very busy,” Lord Lambeth observed.

“The gentlemen in America work too much,” the young girl went on.

“Oh, do they? I daresay they like it,” said her interlocutor.

“I don’t like it. One never sees them.”

“Don’t you, really?” asked Lord Lambeth. “I shouldn’t have fancied that.”

“Have you come to study American manners?” asked the young girl.

“Oh, I don’t know. I just came over for a lark. I haven’t got long.” Here there was a pause, and Lord Lambeth began again. “But Mr. Westgate will come down here, will not he?”

“I certainly hope he will. He must help to entertain you and Mr. Beaumont.”

Lord Lambeth looked at her a little with his handsome brown eyes. “Do you suppose he would have come down with us if we had urged him?”

Mr. Westgate’s sister-in-law was silent a moment, and then, “I daresay he would,” she answered.

“Really!” said the young Englishman. “He was immensely civil to Beaumont and me,” he added.

“He is a dear good fellow,” the young lady rejoined, “and he is a perfect husband. But all Americans are that,” she continued, smiling.

“Really!” Lord Lambeth exclaimed again and wondered whether all American ladies had such a passion for generalizing as these two.

He sat there a good while: there was a great deal of talk; it was all very friendly and lively and jolly. Everyone present, sooner or later, said something to him, and seemed to make a particular point of addressing him by name. Two or three other persons came in, and there was a shifting of seats and changing of places; the gentlemen all entered into intimate conversation with the two Englishmen, made them urgent offers of hospitality, and hoped they might frequently be of service to them. They were afraid Lord Lambeth and Mr. Beaumont were not very comfortable at their hotel; that it was not, as one of them said, “so private as those dear little English inns of yours.” This last gentleman went on to say that unfortunately, as yet, perhaps, privacy was not quite so easily obtained in America as might be desired; still, he continued, you could generally get it by paying for it; in fact, you could get everything in America nowadays by paying for it. American life was certainly growing a great deal more private; it was growing very much like England. Everything at Newport, for instance, was thoroughly private; Lord Lambeth would probably be struck with that. It was also represented to the strangers that it mattered very little whether their hotel was agreeable, as everyone would want them to make visits; they would stay with other people, and, in any case, they would be a great deal at Mrs. Westgate’s. They would find that very charming; it was the pleasantest house in Newport. It was a pity Mr. Westgate was always away; he was a man of the highest ability—very acute, very acute. He worked like a horse, and he left his wife—well, to do about as she liked. He liked her to enjoy herself, and she seemed to know how. She was extremely brilliant and a splendid talker. Some people preferred her sister; but Miss Alden was very different; she was in a different style altogether. Some people even thought her prettier, and, certainly, she was not so sharp. She was more in the Boston style; she had lived a great deal in Boston, and she was very highly educated. Boston girls, it was propounded, were more like English young ladies.

Lord Lambeth had presently a chance to test the truth of this proposition, for on the company rising in compliance with a suggestion from their hostess that they should walk down to the

rocks and look at the sea, the young Englishman again found himself, as they strolled across the grass, in proximity to Mrs. Westgate's sister. Though she was but a girl of twenty, she appeared to feel the obligation to exert an active hospitality; and this was, perhaps, the more to be noticed as she seemed by nature a reserved and retiring person, and had little of her sister's fraternizing quality. She was perhaps rather too thin, and she was a little pale; but as she moved slowly over the grass, with her arms hanging at her sides, looking gravely for a moment at the sea and then brightly, for all her gravity, at him, Lord Lambeth thought her at least as pretty as Mrs. Westgate, and reflected that if this was the Boston style the Boston style was very charming. He thought she looked very clever; he could imagine that she was highly educated; but at the same time she seemed gentle and graceful. For all her cleverness, however, he felt that she had to think a little what to say; she didn't say the first thing that came into her head; he had come from a different part of the world and from a different society, and she was trying to adapt her conversation. The others were scattering themselves near the rocks; Mrs. Westgate had charge of Percy Beaumont.

"Very jolly place, isn't it?" said Lord Lambeth. "It's a very jolly place to sit."

"Very charming," said the young girl. "I often sit here; there are all kinds of cozy corners—as if they had been made on purpose."

"Ah! I suppose you have had some of them made," said the young man.

Miss Alden looked at him a moment. "Oh no, we have had nothing made. It's pure nature."

"I should think you would have a few little benches—rustic seats and that sort of thing. It might be so jolly to sit here, you know," Lord Lambeth went on.

"I am afraid we haven't so many of those things as you," said the young girl thoughtfully.

"I daresay you go in for pure nature, as you were saying. Nature over here must be so grand, you know." And Lord Lambeth looked about him.

The little coast line hereabouts was very pretty, but it was not at all grand, and Miss Alden appeared to rise to a perception of this fact. "I am afraid it seems to you very rough," she said. "It's not like the coast scenery in Kingsley's novels."

"Ah, the novels always overdo it, you know," Lord Lambeth rejoined. "You must not go by the novels."

They were wandering about a little on the rocks, and they stopped and looked down into a narrow chasm where the rising tide made a curious bellowing sound. It was loud enough to prevent their hearing each other, and they stood there for some moments in silence. The young girl looked at her companion, observing him attentively, but covertly, as women, even when very young, know how to do. Lord Lambeth repaid observation; tall, straight, and strong, he was handsome as certain young Englishmen, and certain young Englishmen almost alone, are handsome; with a perfect finish of feature and a look of intellectual repose and gentle good temper which seemed somehow to be consequent upon his well-cut nose and chin. And to speak of Lord Lambeth's expression of intellectual repose is not simply a civil way of saying that he looked stupid. He was evidently not a young man of an irritable imagination; he was not, as he would himself have said, tremendously clever; but though there was a kind of appealing dullness in his eye, he looked thoroughly reasonable and competent, and his appearance proclaimed that to be a nobleman, an athlete, and an excellent fellow was a sufficiently brilliant combination of qualities. The young girl beside him, it may be attested without further delay, thought him the handsomest young man she had ever seen; and Bessie Alden's imagination, unlike that of her companion, was irritable. He, however, was also making up his mind that she was uncommonly pretty.

“I daresay it’s very gay here, that you have lots of balls and parties,” he said; for, if he was not tremendously clever, he rather prided himself on having, with women, a sufficiency of conversation.

“Oh, yes, there is a great deal going on,” Bessie Alden replied. “There are not so many balls, but there are a good many other things. You will see for yourself; we live rather in the midst of it.”

“It’s very kind of you to say that. But I thought you Americans were always dancing.”

“I suppose we dance a good deal; but I have never seen much of it. We don’t do it much, at any rate, in summer. And I am sure,” said Bessie Alden, “that we don’t have so many balls as you have in England.”

“Really!” exclaimed Lord Lambeth. “Ah, in England it all depends, you know.”

“You will not think much of our gaieties,” said the young girl, looking at him with a little mixture of interrogation and decision which was peculiar to her. The interrogation seemed earnest and the decision seemed arch; but the mixture, at any rate, was charming. “Those things, with us, are much less splendid than in England.”

“I fancy you don’t mean that,” said Lord Lambeth, laughing.

“I assure you I mean everything I say,” the young girl declared. “Certainly, from what I have read about English society, it is very different.”

“Ah well, you know,” said her companion, “those things are often described by fellows who know nothing about them. You mustn’t mind what you read.”

“Oh, I *shall* mind what I read!” Bessie Alden rejoined. “When I read Thackeray and George Eliot, how can I help minding them?”

“Ah well, Thackeray, and George Eliot,” said the young nobleman; “I haven’t read much of them.”

“Don’t you suppose they know about society?” asked Bessie Alden.

“Oh, I daresay they know; they were so very clever. But these fashionable novels,” said Lord Lambeth, “they are awful rot, you know.”

His companion looked at him a moment with her dark blue eyes, and then she looked down in the chasm where the water was tumbling about. “Do you mean Mrs. Gore, for instance?” she said presently, raising her eyes.

“I am afraid I haven’t read that, either,” was the young man’s rejoinder, laughing a little and blushing. “I am afraid you’ll think I am not very intellectual.”

“Reading Mrs. Gore is no proof of intellect. But I like reading everything about English life—even poor books. I am so curious about it.”

“Aren’t ladies always curious?” asked the young man jestingly.

But Bessie Alden appeared to desire to answer his question seriously. “I don’t think so—I don’t think we are enough so—that we care about many things. So it’s all the more of a compliment,” she added, “that I should want to know so much about England.”

The logic here seemed a little close; but Lord Lambeth, made conscious of a compliment, found his natural modesty just at hand. “I am sure you know a great deal more than I do.”

“I really think I know a great deal—for a person who has never been there.”

“Have you really never been there?” cried Lord Lambeth. “Fancy!”

“Never—except in imagination,” said the young girl.

“Fancy!” repeated her companion. “But I daresay you’ll go soon, won’t you?”

“It’s the dream of my life!” declared Bessie Alden, smiling.

“But your sister seems to know a tremendous lot about London,” Lord Lambeth went on.

The young girl was silent a moment. “My sister and I are two very different persons,” she presently said. “She has been a great deal in Europe. She has been in England several times. She has known a great many English people.”

“But you must have known some, too,” said Lord Lambeth.

“I don’t think that I have ever spoken to one before. You are the first Englishman that—to my knowledge—I have ever talked with.”

Bessie Alden made this statement with a certain gravity—almost, as it seemed to Lord Lambeth, an impressiveness. Attempts at impressiveness always made him feel awkward, and he now began to laugh and swing his stick. “Ah, you would have been sure to know!” he said. And then he added, after an instant, “I’m sorry I am not a better specimen.”

The young girl looked away; but she smiled, laying aside her impressiveness. “You must remember that you are only a beginning,” she said. Then she retraced her steps, leading the way back to the lawn, where they saw Mrs. Westgate come toward them with Percy Beaumont still at her side. “Perhaps I shall go to England next year,” Miss Alden continued; “I want to, immensely. My sister is going to Europe, and she has asked me to go with her. If we go, I shall make her stay as long as possible in London.”

“Ah, you must come in July,” said Lord Lambeth. “That’s the time when there is most going on.”

“I don’t think I can wait till July,” the young girl rejoined. “By the first of May I shall be very impatient.” They had gone further, and Mrs. Westgate and her companion were near them. “Kitty,” said Miss Alden, “I have given out that we are going to London next May. So please to conduct yourself accordingly.”

Percy Beaumont wore a somewhat animated—even a slightly irritated—air. He was by no means so handsome a man as his cousin, although in his cousin’s absence he might have passed for a striking specimen of the tall, muscular, fair-bearded, clear-eyed Englishman. Just now Beaumont’s clear eyes, which were small and of a pale gray color, had a rather troubled light, and, after glancing at Bessie Alden while she spoke, he rested them upon his kinsman. Mrs. Westgate meanwhile, with her superfluously pretty gaze, looked at everyone alike.

“You had better wait till the time comes,” she said to her sister. “Perhaps next May you won’t care so much about London. Mr. Beaumont and I,” she went on, smiling at her companion, “have had a tremendous discussion. We don’t agree about anything. It’s perfectly delightful.”

“Oh, I say, Percy!” exclaimed Lord Lambeth.

“I disagree,” said Beaumont, stroking down his back hair, “even to the point of not thinking it delightful.”

“Oh, I say!” cried Lord Lambeth again.

“I don’t see anything delightful in my disagreeing with Mrs. Westgate,” said Percy Beaumont.

“Well, I do!” Mrs. Westgate declared; and she turned to her sister. “You know you have to go to town. The phaeton is there. You had better take Lord Lambeth.”

At this point Percy Beaumont certainly looked straight at his kinsman; he tried to catch his eye. But Lord Lambeth would not look at him; his own eyes were better occupied. “I shall be very happy,” cried Bessie Alden. “I am only going to some shops. But I will drive you about and show you the place.”

“An American woman who respects herself,” said Mrs. Westgate, turning to Beaumont with her bright expository air, “must buy something every day of her life. If she can not do it herself, she must send out some member of her family for the purpose. So Bessie goes forth to fulfill my mission.”

The young girl had walked away, with Lord Lambeth by her side, to whom she was talking still; and Percy Beaumont watched them as they passed toward the house. “She fulfills her own mission,” he presently said; “that of being a very attractive young lady.”

“I don’t know that I should say very attractive,” Mrs. Westgate rejoined. “She is not so much that as she is charming when you really know her. She is very shy.”

“Oh, indeed!” said Percy Beaumont.

“Extremely shy,” Mrs. Westgate repeated. “But she is a dear good girl; she is a charming species of girl. She is not in the least a flirt; that isn’t at all her line; she doesn’t know the alphabet of that sort of thing. She is very simple, very serious. She has lived a great deal in Boston, with another sister of mine—the eldest of us—who married a Bostonian. She is very cultivated, not at all like me; I am not in the least cultivated. She has studied immensely and read everything; she is what they call in Boston ‘thoughtful.’”

“A rum sort of girl for Lambeth to get hold of!” his lordship’s kinsman privately reflected.

“I really believe,” Mrs. Westgate continued, “that the most charming girl in the world is a Boston superstructure upon a New York fonds; or perhaps a New York superstructure upon a Boston fonds. At any rate, it’s the mixture,” said Mrs. Westgate, who continued to give Percy Beaumont a great deal of information.

Lord Lambeth got into a little basket phaeton with Bessie Alden, and she drove him down the long avenue, whose extent he had measured on foot a couple of hours before, into the ancient town, as it was called in that part of the world, of Newport. The ancient town was a curious affair—a collection of fresh-looking little wooden houses, painted white, scattered over a hillside and clustered about a long straight street paved with enormous cobblestones. There were plenty of shops—a large proportion of which appeared to be those of fruit vendors, with piles of huge watermelons and pumpkins stacked in front of them; and, drawn up before the shops, or bumping about on the cobblestones, were innumerable other basket phaetons freighted with ladies of high fashion, who greeted each other from vehicle to vehicle and conversed on the edge of the pavement in a manner that struck Lord Lambeth as demonstrative, with a great many “Oh, my dears,” and little quick exclamations and caresses. His companion went into seventeen shops—he amused himself with counting them—and accumulated at the bottom of the phaeton a pile of bundles that hardly left the young Englishman a place for his feet. As she had no groom nor footman, he sat in the phaeton to hold the ponies, where, although he was not a particularly acute observer, he saw much to entertain him—especially the ladies just mentioned, who wandered up and down with the appearance of a kind of aimless intentness, as if they were looking for something to buy, and who, tripping in and out of their vehicles, displayed remarkably pretty feet. It all seemed to

Lord Lambeth very odd, and bright, and gay. Of course, before they got back to the villa, he had had a great deal of desultory conversation with Bessie Alden.

The young Englishmen spent the whole of that day and the whole of many successive days in what the French call the intimite of their new friends. They agreed that it was extremely jolly, that they had never known anything more agreeable. It is not proposed to narrate minutely the incidents of their sojourn on this charming shore; though if it were convenient I might present a record of impressions nonetheless delectable that they were not exhaustively analyzed. Many of them still linger in the minds of our travelers, attended by a train of harmonious images—images of brilliant mornings on lawns and piazzas that overlooked the sea; of innumerable pretty girls; of infinite lounging and talking and laughing and flirting and lunching and dining; of universal friendliness and frankness; of occasions on which they knew everyone and everything and had an extraordinary sense of ease; of drives and rides in the late afternoon over gleaming beaches, on long sea roads, beneath a sky lighted up by marvelous sunsets; of suppers, on the return, informal, irregular, agreeable; of evenings at open windows or on the perpetual verandas, in the summer starlight, above the warm Atlantic. The young Englishmen were introduced to everybody, entertained by everybody, intimate with everybody. At the end of three days they had removed their luggage from the hotel and had gone to stay with Mrs. Westgate—a step to which Percy Beaumont at first offered some conscientious opposition. I call his opposition conscientious, because it was founded upon some talk that he had had, on the second day, with Bessie Alden. He had indeed had a good deal of talk with her, for she was not literally always in conversation with Lord Lambeth. He had meditated upon Mrs. Westgate's account of her sister, and he discovered for himself that the young lady was clever, and appeared to have read a great deal. She seemed very nice, though he could not make out, as Mrs. Westgate had said, she was shy. If she was shy, she carried it off very well.

“Mr. Beaumont,” she had said, “please tell me something about Lord Lambeth's family. How would you say it in England—his position?”

“His position?” Percy Beaumont repeated.

“His rank, or whatever you call it. Unfortunately we haven't got a *peerage*, like the people in Thackeray.”

“That's a great pity,” said Beaumont. “You would find it all set forth there so much better than I can do it.”

“He is a peer, then?”

“Oh, yes, he is a peer.”

“And has he any other title than Lord Lambeth?”

“His title is the Marquis of Lambeth,” said Beaumont; and then he was silent. Bessie Alden appeared to be looking at him with interest. “He is the son of the Duke of Bayswater,” he added presently.

“The eldest son?”

“The only son.”

“And are his parents living?”

“Oh yes; if his father were not living he would be a duke.”

“So that when his father dies,” pursued Bessie Alden with more simplicity than might have been expected in a clever girl, “he will become Duke of Bayswater?”

“Of course,” said Percy Beaumont. “But his father is in excellent health.”

“And his mother?”

Beaumont smiled a little. “The duchess is uncommonly robust.”

“And has he any sisters?”

“Yes, there are two.”

“And what are they called?”

“One of them is married. She is the Countess of Pimlico.”

“And the other?”

“The other is unmarried; she is plain Lady Julia.”

Bessie Alden looked at him a moment. “Is she very plain?”

Beaumont began to laugh again. “You would not find her so handsome as her brother,” he said; and it was after this that he attempted to dissuade the heir of the Duke of Bayswater from accepting Mrs. Westgate’s invitation. “Depend upon it,” he said, “that girl means to try for you.”

“It seems to me you are doing your best to make a fool of me,” the modest young nobleman answered.

“She has been asking me,” said Beaumont, “all about your people and your possessions.”

“I am sure it is very good of her!” Lord Lambeth rejoined.

“Well, then,” observed his companion, “if you go, you go with your eyes open.”

“Damn my eyes!” exclaimed Lord Lambeth. “If one is to be a dozen times a day at the house, it is a great deal more convenient to sleep there. I am sick of traveling up and down this beastly avenue.”

Since he had determined to go, Percy Beaumont would, of course, have been very sorry to allow him to go alone; he was a man of conscience, and he remembered his promise to the duchess. It was obviously the memory of this promise that made him say to his companion a couple of days later that he rather wondered he should be so fond of that girl.

“In the first place, how do you know how fond I am of her?” asked Lord Lambeth. “And, in the second place, why shouldn’t I be fond of her?”

“I shouldn’t think she would be in your line.”

“What do you call my ‘line’? You don’t set her down as ‘fast’?”

“Exactly so. Mrs. Westgate tells me that there is no such thing as the ‘fast girl’ in America; that it’s an English invention, and that the term has no meaning here.”

“All the better. It’s an animal I detest.”

“You prefer a bluestocking.”

“Is that what you call Miss Alden?”

“Her sister tells me,” said Percy Beaumont, “that she is tremendously literary.”

“I don’t know anything about that. She is certainly very clever.”

“Well,” said Beaumont, “I should have supposed you would have found that sort of thing awfully slow.”

“In point of fact,” Lord Lambeth rejoined, “I find it uncommonly lively.”

After this, Percy Beaumont held his tongue; but on the 10th of August he wrote to the Duchess of Bayswater. He was, as I have said, a man of conscience, and he had a strong, incorruptible sense of the proprieties of life. His kinsman, meanwhile, was having a great deal of talk with Bessie Alden—on the red sea rocks beyond the lawn; in the course of long island rides, with a slow return in the glowing twilight; on the deep veranda late in the evening. Lord Lambeth, who had stayed at many houses, had never stayed at a house in which it was possible for a young man to converse so frequently with a young lady. This young lady no longer applied to Percy Beaumont for information concerning his lordship. She addressed herself directly to the young nobleman. She asked him a great many questions, some of which bored him a little; for he took no pleasure in talking about himself.

“Lord Lambeth,” said Bessie Alden, “are you a hereditary legislator?”

“Oh, I say!” cried Lord Lambeth, “don’t make me call myself such names as that.”

“But you are a member of Parliament,” said the young girl.

“I don’t like the sound of that, either.”

“Don’t you sit in the House of Lords?” Bessie Alden went on.

“Very seldom,” said Lord Lambeth.

“Is it an important position?” she asked.

“Oh, dear, no,” said Lord Lambeth.

“I should think it would be very grand,” said Bessie Alden, “to possess, simply by an accident of birth, the right to make laws for a great nation.”

“Ah, but one doesn’t make laws. It’s a great humbug.”

“I don’t believe that,” the young girl declared. “It must be a great privilege, and I should think that if one thought of it in the right way—from a high point of view—it would be very inspiring.”

“The less one thinks of it, the better,” Lord Lambeth affirmed.

“I think it’s tremendous,” said Bessie Alden; and on another occasion she asked him if he had any tenantry. Hereupon it was that, as I have said, he was a little bored.

“Do you want to buy up their leases?” he asked.

“Well, have you got any livings?” she demanded.

“Oh, I say!” he cried. “Have you got a clergyman that is looking out?” But she made him tell her that he had a castle; he confessed to but one. It was the place in which he had been born and brought up, and, as he had an old-time liking for it, he was beguiled into describing it a little and saying it was really very jolly. Bessie Alden listened with great interest and declared that she would give the world to see such a place. Whereupon—“It would be awfully kind of you to come and stay there,” said Lord Lambeth. He took a vague satisfaction in the circumstance that Percy Beaumont had not heard him make the remark I have just recorded.

Mr. Westgate all this time had not, as they said at Newport, “come on.” His wife more than once announced that she expected him on the morrow; but on the morrow she wandered about a little, with a telegram in her jeweled fingers, declaring it was very tiresome that his business detained him in New York; that he could only hope the Englishmen were having a good time. “I must say,” said Mrs. Westgate, “that it is no thanks to him if you are.” And she

went on to explain, while she continued that slow-paced promenade which enabled her well-adjusted skirts to display themselves so advantageously, that unfortunately in America there was no leisure class. It was Lord Lambeth's theory, freely propounded when the young men were together, that Percy Beaumont was having a very good time with Mrs. Westgate, and that, under the pretext of meeting for the purpose of animated discussion, they were indulging in practices that imparted a shade of hypocrisy to the lady's regret for her husband's absence.

"I assure you we are always discussing and differing," said Percy Beaumont. "She is awfully argumentative. American ladies certainly don't mind contradicting you. Upon my word I don't think I was ever treated so by a woman before. She's so devilish positive."

Mrs. Westgate's positive quality, however, evidently had its attractions, for Beaumont was constantly at his hostess's side. He detached himself one day to the extent of going to New York to talk over the Tennessee Central with Mr. Westgate; but he was absent only forty-eight hours, during which, with Mr. Westgate's assistance, he completely settled this piece of business. "They certainly do things quickly in New York," he observed to his cousin; and he added that Mr. Westgate had seemed very uneasy lest his wife should miss her visitor—he had been in such an awful hurry to send him back to her. "I'm afraid you'll never come up to an American husband, if that's what the wives expect," he said to Lord Lambeth.

Mrs. Westgate, however, was not to enjoy much longer the entertainment with which an indulgent husband had desired to keep her provided. On the 21st of August Lord Lambeth received a telegram from his mother, requesting him to return immediately to England; his father had been taken ill, and it was his filial duty to come to him.

The young Englishman was visibly annoyed. "What the deuce does it mean?" he asked of his kinsman. "What am I to do?"

Percy Beaumont was annoyed as well; he had deemed it his duty, as I have narrated, to write to the duchess, but he had not expected that this distinguished woman would act so promptly upon his hint. "It means," he said, "that your father is laid up. I don't suppose it's anything serious; but you have no option. Take the first steamer; but don't be alarmed."

Lord Lambeth made his farewells; but the few last words that he exchanged with Bessie Alden are the only ones that have a place in our record. "Of course I needn't assure you," he said, "that if you should come to England next year, I expect to be the first person that you inform of it."

Bessie Alden looked at him a little, and she smiled. "Oh, if we come to London," she answered, "I should think you would hear of it."

Percy Beaumont returned with his cousin, and his sense of duty compelled him, one windless afternoon, in mid-Atlantic, to say to Lord Lambeth that he suspected that the duchess's telegram was in part the result of something he himself had written to her. "I wrote to her—as I explicitly notified you I had promised to do—that you were extremely interested in a little American girl."

Lord Lambeth was extremely angry, and he indulged for some moments in the simple language of indignation. But I have said that he was a reasonable young man, and I can give no better proof of it than the fact that he remarked to his companion at the end of half an hour, "You were quite right, after all. I am very much interested in her. Only, to be fair," he added, "you should have told my mother also that she is not—seriously—interested in me."

Percy Beaumont gave a little laugh. "There is nothing so charming as modesty in a young man in your position. That speech is a capital proof that you are sweet on her."

“She is not interested—she is not!” Lord Lambeth repeated.

“My dear fellow,” said his companion, “you are very far gone.”

PART II

In point of fact, as Percy Beaumont would have said, Mrs. Westgate disembarked on the 18th of May on the British coast. She was accompanied by her sister, but she was not attended by any other member of her family. To the deprivation of her husband’s society Mrs. Westgate was, however, habituated; she had made half a dozen journeys to Europe without him, and she now accounted for his absence, to interrogative friends on this side of the Atlantic, by allusion to the regrettable but conspicuous fact that in America there was no leisure class. The two ladies came up to London and alighted at Jones’s Hotel, where Mrs. Westgate, who had made on former occasions the most agreeable impression at this establishment, received an obsequious greeting. Bessie Alden had felt much excited about coming to England; she had expected the “associations” would be very charming, that it would be an infinite pleasure to rest her eyes upon the things she had read about in the poets and historians. She was very fond of the poets and historians, of the picturesque, of the past, of retrospect, of mementos and reverberations of greatness; so that on coming into the English world, where strangeness and familiarity would go hand in hand, she was prepared for a multitude of fresh emotions. They began very promptly—these tender, fluttering sensations; they began with the sight of the beautiful English landscape, whose dark richness was quickened and brightened by the season; with the carpeted fields and flowering hedgerows, as she looked at them from the window of the train; with the spires of the rural churches peeping above the rook-haunted treetops; with the oak-studded parks, the ancient homes, the cloudy light, the speech, the manners, the thousand differences. Mrs. Westgate’s impressions had, of course, much less novelty and keenness, and she gave but a wandering attention to her sister’s ejaculations and rhapsodies.

“You know my enjoyment of England is not so intellectual as Bessie’s,” she said to several of her friends in the course of her visit to this country. “And yet if it is not intellectual, I can’t say it is physical. I don’t think I can quite say what it is, my enjoyment of England.” When once it was settled that the two ladies should come abroad and should spend a few weeks in England on their way to the Continent, they of course exchanged a good many allusions to their London acquaintance.

“It will certainly be much nicer having friends there,” Bessie Alden had said one day as she sat on the sunny deck of the steamer at her sister’s feet on a large blue rug.

“Whom do you mean by friends?” Mrs. Westgate asked.

“All those English gentlemen whom you have known and entertained. Captain Littledale, for instance. And Lord Lambeth and Mr. Beaumont,” added Bessie Alden.

“Do you expect them to give us a very grand reception?”

Bessie reflected a moment; she was addicted, as we know, to reflection. “Well, yes.”

“My poor, sweet child,” murmured her sister.

“What have I said that is so silly?” asked Bessie.

“You are a little too simple; just a little. It is very becoming, but it pleases people at your expense.”

“I am certainly too simple to understand you,” said Bessie.

“Shall I tell you a story?” asked her sister.

“If you would be so good. That is what they do to amuse simple people.”

Mrs. Westgate consulted her memory, while her companion sat gazing at the shining sea. “Did you ever hear of the Duke of Green-Erin?”

“I think not,” said Bessie.

“Well, it’s no matter,” her sister went on.

“It’s a proof of my simplicity.”

“My story is meant to illustrate that of some other people,” said Mrs. Westgate. “The Duke of Green-Erin is what they call in England a great swell, and some five years ago he came to America. He spent most of his time in New York, and in New York he spent his days and his nights at the Butterworths’. You have heard, at least, of the Butterworths. *Bien*. They did everything in the world for him—they turned themselves inside out. They gave him a dozen dinner parties and balls and were the means of his being invited to fifty more. At first he used to come into Mrs. Butterworth’s box at the opera in a tweed traveling suit; but someone stopped that. At any rate, he had a beautiful time, and they parted the best friends in the world. Two years elapse, and the Butterworths come abroad and go to London. The first thing they see in all the papers—in England those things are in the most prominent place—is that the Duke of Green-Erin has arrived in town for the Season. They wait a little, and then Mr. Butterworth—as polite as ever—goes and leaves a card. They wait a little more; the visit is not returned; they wait three weeks—silence de mort—the Duke gives no sign. The Butterworths see a lot of other people, put down the Duke of Green-Erin as a rude, ungrateful man, and forget all about him. One fine day they go to Ascot Races, and there they meet him face to face. He stares a moment and then comes up to Mr. Butterworth, taking something from his pocketbook—something which proves to be a banknote. ‘I’m glad to see you, Mr. Butterworth,’ he says, ‘so that I can pay you that ten pounds I lost to you in New York. I saw the other day you remembered our bet; here are the ten pounds, Mr. Butterworth. Goodbye, Mr. Butterworth.’ And off he goes, and that’s the last they see of the Duke of Green-Erin.”

“Is that your story?” asked Bessie Alden.

“Don’t you think it’s interesting?” her sister replied.

“I don’t believe it,” said the young girl.

“Ah,” cried Mrs. Westgate, “you are not so simple after all! Believe it or not, as you please; there is no smoke without fire.”

“Is that the way,” asked Bessie after a moment, “that you expect your friends to treat you?”

“I defy them to treat me very ill, because I shall not give them the opportunity. With the best will in the world, in that case they can’t be very offensive.”

Bessie Alden was silent a moment. “I don’t see what makes you talk that way,” she said.

“The English are a great people.”

“Exactly; and that is just the way they have grown great—by dropping you when you have ceased to be useful. People say they are not clever; but I think they are very clever.”

“You know you have liked them—all the Englishmen you have seen,” said Bessie.

“They have liked me,” her sister rejoined; “it would be more correct to say that. And, of course, one likes that.”

Bessie Alden resumed for some moments her studies in sea green. "Well," she said, "whether they like me or not, I mean to like them. And happily," she added, "Lord Lambeth does not owe me ten pounds."

During the first few days after their arrival at Jones's Hotel our charming Americans were much occupied with what they would have called looking about them. They found occasion to make a large number of purchases, and their opportunities for conversation were such only as were offered by the deferential London shopmen. Bessie Alden, even in driving from the station, took an immense fancy to the British metropolis, and at the risk of exhibiting her as a young woman of vulgar tastes it must be recorded that for a considerable period she desired no higher pleasure than to drive about the crowded streets in a hansom cab. To her attentive eyes they were full of a strange picturesque life, and it is at least beneath the dignity of our historic muse to enumerate the trivial objects and incidents which this simple young lady from Boston found so entertaining. It may be freely mentioned, however, that whenever, after a round of visits in Bond Street and Regent Street, she was about to return with her sister to Jones's Hotel, she made an earnest request that they should be driven home by way of Westminster Abbey. She had begun by asking whether it would not be possible to take the Tower on the way to their lodgings; but it happened that at a more primitive stage of her culture Mrs. Westgate had paid a visit to this venerable monument, which she spoke of ever afterward vaguely as a dreadful disappointment; so that she expressed the liveliest disapproval of any attempt to combine historical researches with the purchase of hairbrushes and notepaper. The most she would consent to do in this line was to spend half an hour at Madame Tussaud's, where she saw several dusty wax effigies of members of the royal family. She told Bessie that if she wished to go to the Tower she must get someone else to take her. Bessie expressed hereupon an earnest disposition to go alone; but upon this proposal as well Mrs. Westgate sprinkled cold water.

"Remember," she said, "that you are not in your innocent little Boston. It is not a question of walking up and down Beacon Street." Then she went on to explain that there were two classes of American girls in Europe—those that walked about alone and those that did not. "You happen to belong, my dear," she said to her sister, "to the class that does not."

"It is only," answered Bessie, laughing, "because you happen to prevent me." And she devoted much private meditation to this question of effecting a visit to the Tower of London.

Suddenly it seemed as if the problem might be solved; the two ladies at Jones's Hotel received a visit from Willie Woodley. Such was the social appellation of a young American who had sailed from New York a few days after their own departure, and who, having the privilege of intimacy with them in that city, had lost no time, on his arrival in London, in coming to pay them his respects. He had, in fact, gone to see them directly after going to see his tailor, than which there can be no greater exhibition of promptitude on the part of a young American who has just alighted at the Charing Cross Hotel. He was a slim, pale youth, of the most amiable disposition, famous for the skill with which he led the "German" in New York. Indeed, by the young ladies who habitually figured in this Terpsichorean revel he was believed to be "the best dancer in the world"; it was in these terms that he was always spoken of, and that his identity was indicated. He was the gentlest, softest young man it was possible to meet; he was beautifully dressed—"in the English style"—and he knew an immense deal about London. He had been at Newport during the previous summer, at the time of our young Englishmen's visit, and he took extreme pleasure in the society of Bessie Alden, whom he always addressed as "Miss Bessie." She immediately arranged with him, in the presence of her sister, that he should conduct her to the scene of Anne Boleyn's execution.

“You may do as you please,” said Mrs. Westgate. “Only—if you desire the information—it is not the custom here for young ladies to knock about London with young men.”

“Miss Bessie has waltzed with me so often,” observed Willie Woodley; “she can surely go out with me in a hansom.”

“I consider waltzing,” said Mrs. Westgate, “the most innocent pleasure of our time.”

“It’s a compliment to our time!” exclaimed the young man with a little laugh, in spite of himself.

“I don’t see why I should regard what is done here,” said Bessie Alden. “Why should I suffer the restrictions of a society of which I enjoy none of the privileges?”

“That’s very good—very good,” murmured Willie Woodley.

“Oh, go to the Tower, and feel the ax, if you like,” said Mrs. Westgate. “I consent to your going with Mr. Woodley; but I should not let you go with an Englishman.”

“Miss Bessie wouldn’t care to go with an Englishman!” Mr. Woodley declared with a faint asperity that was, perhaps, not unnatural in a young man, who, dressing in the manner that I have indicated and knowing a great deal, as I have said, about London, saw no reason for drawing these sharp distinctions. He agreed upon a day with Miss Bessie—a day of that same week.

An ingenious mind might, perhaps, trace a connection between the young girl’s allusion to her destitution of social privileges and a question she asked on the morrow as she sat with her sister at lunch.

“Don’t you mean to write to—to anyone?” said Bessie.

“I wrote this morning to Captain Littledale,” Mrs. Westgate replied.

“But Mr. Woodley said that Captain Littledale had gone to India.”

“He said he thought he had heard so; he knew nothing about it.”

For a moment Bessie Alden said nothing more; then, at last, “And don’t you intend to write to—to Mr. Beaumont?” she inquired.

“You mean to Lord Lambeth,” said her sister.

“I said Mr. Beaumont because he was so good a friend of yours.”

Mrs. Westgate looked at the young girl with sisterly candor. “I don’t care two straws for Mr. Beaumont.”

“You were certainly very nice to him.”

“I am nice to everyone,” said Mrs. Westgate simply.

“To everyone but me,” rejoined Bessie, smiling.

Her sister continued to look at her; then, at last, “Are you in love with Lord Lambeth?” she asked.

The young girl stared a moment, and the question was apparently too humorous even to make her blush. “Not that I know of,” she answered.

“Because if you are,” Mrs. Westgate went on, “I shall certainly not send for him.”

“That proves what I said,” declared Bessie, smiling—“that you are not nice to me.”

“It would be a poor service, my dear child,” said her sister.

“In what sense? There is nothing against Lord Lambeth that I know of.”

Mrs. Westgate was silent a moment. “You *are* in love with him then?”

Bessie stared again; but this time she blushed a little. “Ah! if you won’t be serious,” she answered, “we will not mention him again.”

For some moments Lord Lambeth was not mentioned again, and it was Mrs. Westgate who, at the end of this period, reverted to him. “Of course I will let him know we are here, because I think he would be hurt—justly enough—if we should go away without seeing him. It is fair to give him a chance to come and thank me for the kindness we showed him. But I don’t want to seem eager.”

“Neither do I,” said Bessie with a little laugh.

“Though I confess,” added her sister, “that I am curious to see how he will behave.”

“He behaved very well at Newport.”

“Newport is not London. At Newport he could do as he liked; but here it is another affair. He has to have an eye to consequences.”

“If he had more freedom, then, at Newport,” argued Bessie, “it is the more to his credit that he behaved well; and if he has to be so careful here, it is possible he will behave even better.”

“Better—better,” repeated her sister. “My dear child, what is your point of view?”

“How do you mean—my point of view?”

“Don’t you care for Lord Lambeth—a little?”

This time Bessie Alden was displeased; she slowly got up from the table, turning her face away from her sister. “You will oblige me by not talking so,” she said.

Mrs. Westgate sat watching her for some moments as she moved slowly about the room and went and stood at the window. “I will write to him this afternoon,” she said at last.

“Do as you please!” Bessie answered; and presently she turned round. “I am not afraid to say that I like Lord Lambeth. I like him very much.”

“He is not clever,” Mrs. Westgate declared.

“Well, there have been clever people whom I have disliked,” said Bessie Alden; “so that I suppose I may like a stupid one. Besides, Lord Lambeth is not stupid.”

“Not so stupid as he looks!” exclaimed her sister, smiling.

“If I were in love with Lord Lambeth, as you said just now, it would be bad policy on your part to abuse him.”

“My dear child, don’t give me lessons in policy!” cried Mrs. Westgate. “The policy I mean to follow is very deep.”

The young girl began to walk about the room again; then she stopped before her sister. “I have never heard in the course of five minutes,” she said, “so many hints and innuendoes. I wish you would tell me in plain English what you mean.”

“I mean that you may be much annoyed.”

“That is still only a hint,” said Bessie.

Her sister looked at her, hesitating an instant. “It will be said of you that you have come after Lord Lambeth—that you followed him.”

Bessie Alden threw back her pretty head like a startled hind, and a look flashed into her face that made Mrs. Westgate rise from her chair. "Who says such things as that?" she demanded. "People here."

"I don't believe it," said Bessie.

"You have a very convenient faculty of doubt. But my policy will be, as I say, very deep. I shall leave you to find out this kind of thing for yourself."

Bessie fixed her eyes upon her sister, and Mrs. Westgate thought for a moment there were tears in them. "Do they talk that way here?" she asked.

"You will see. I shall leave you alone."

"Don't leave me alone," said Bessie Alden. "Take me away."

"No; I want to see what you make of it," her sister continued.

"I don't understand."

"You will understand after Lord Lambeth has come," said Mrs. Westgate with a little laugh.

The two ladies had arranged that on this afternoon Willie Woodley should go with them to Hyde Park, where Bessie Alden expected to derive much entertainment from sitting on a little green chair, under the great trees, beside Rotten Row. The want of a suitable escort had hitherto rendered this pleasure inaccessible; but no escort now, for such an expedition, could have been more suitable than their devoted young countryman, whose mission in life, it might almost be said, was to find chairs for ladies, and who appeared on the stroke of half-past five with a white camellia in his buttonhole.

"I have written to Lord Lambeth, my dear," said Mrs. Westgate to her sister, on coming into the room where Bessie Alden, drawing on her long gray gloves, was entertaining their visitor.

Bessie said nothing, but Willie Woodley exclaimed that his lordship was in town; he had seen his name in the Morning Post.

"Do you read the Morning Post?" asked Mrs. Westgate.

"Oh, yes; it's great fun," Willie Woodley affirmed.

"I want so to see it," said Bessie; "there is so much about it in Thackeray."

"I will send it to you every morning," said Willie Woodley.

He found them what Bessie Alden thought excellent places, under the great trees, beside the famous avenue whose humors had been made familiar to the young girl's childhood by the pictures in Punch. The day was bright and warm, and the crowd of riders and spectators, and the great procession of carriages, were proportionately dense and brilliant. The scene bore the stamp of the London Season at its height, and Bessie Alden found more entertainment in it than she was able to express to her companions. She sat silent, under her parasol, and her imagination, according to its wont, let itself loose into the great changing assemblage of striking and suggestive figures. They stirred up a host of old impressions and preconceptions, and she found herself fitting a history to this person and a theory to that, and making a place for them all in her little private museum of types. But if she said little, her sister on one side and Willie Woodley on the other expressed themselves in lively alternation.

"Look at that green dress with blue flounces," said Mrs. Westgate. "Quelle toilette!"

“That’s the Marquis of Blackborough,” said the young man—“the one in the white coat. I heard him speak the other night in the House of Lords; it was something about ramrods; he called them ‘wamwods.’ He’s an awful swell.”

“Did you ever see anything like the way they are pinned back?” Mrs. Westgate resumed. “They never know where to stop.”

“They do nothing but stop,” said Willie Woodley. “It prevents them from walking. Here comes a great celebrity—Lady Beatrice Bellevue. She’s awfully fast; see what little steps she takes.”

“Well, my dear,” Mrs. Westgate pursued, “I hope you are getting some ideas for your couturiere?”

“I am getting plenty of ideas,” said Bessie, “but I don’t know that my couturiere would appreciate them.”

Willie Woodley presently perceived a friend on horseback, who drove up beside the barrier of the Row and beckoned to him. He went forward, and the crowd of pedestrians closed about him, so that for some ten minutes he was hidden from sight. At last he reappeared, bringing a gentleman with him—a gentleman whom Bessie at first supposed to be his friend dismounted. But at a second glance she found herself looking at Lord Lambeth, who was shaking hands with her sister.

“I found him over there,” said Willie Woodley, “and I told him you were here.”

And then Lord Lambeth, touching his hat a little, shook hands with Bessie. “Fancy your being here!” he said. He was blushing and smiling; he looked very handsome, and he had a kind of splendor that he had not had in America. Bessie Alden’s imagination, as we know, was just then in exercise; so that the tall young Englishman, as he stood there looking down at her, had the benefit of it. “He is handsomer and more splendid than anything I have ever seen,” she said to herself. And then she remembered that he was a marquis, and she thought he looked like a marquis.

“I say, you know,” he cried, “you ought to have let a man know you were here!”

“I wrote to you an hour ago,” said Mrs. Westgate.

“Doesn’t all the world know it?” asked Bessie, smiling.

“I assure you I didn’t know it!” cried Lord Lambeth. “Upon my honor I hadn’t heard of it. Ask Woodley now; had I, Woodley?”

“Well, I think you are rather a humbug,” said Willie Woodley.

“You don’t believe that—do you, Miss Alden?” asked his lordship. “You don’t believe I’m a humbug, eh?”

“No,” said Bessie, “I don’t.”

“You are too tall to stand up, Lord Lambeth,” Mrs. Westgate observed. “You are only tolerable when you sit down. Be so good as to get a chair.”

He found a chair and placed it sidewise, close to the two ladies. “If I hadn’t met Woodley I should never have found you,” he went on. “Should I, Woodley?”

“Well, I guess not,” said the young American.

“Not even with my letter?” asked Mrs. Westgate.

“Ah, well, I haven’t got your letter yet; I suppose I shall get it this evening. It was awfully kind of you to write.”

“So I said to Bessie,” observed Mrs. Westgate.

“Did she say so, Miss Alden?” Lord Lambeth inquired. “I daresay you have been here a month.”

“We have been here three,” said Mrs. Westgate.

“Have you been here three months?” the young man asked again of Bessie.

“It seems a long time,” Bessie answered.

“I say, after that you had better not call me a humbug!” cried Lord Lambeth. “I have only been in town three weeks; but you must have been hiding away; I haven’t seen you anywhere.”

“Where should you have seen us—where should we have gone?” asked Mrs. Westgate.

“You should have gone to Hurlingham,” said Willie Woodley.

“No; let Lord Lambeth tell us,” Mrs. Westgate insisted.

“There are plenty of places to go to,” said Lord Lambeth; “each one stupider than the other. I mean people’s houses; they send you cards.”

“No one has sent us cards,” said Bessie.

“We are very quiet,” her sister declared. “We are here as travelers.”

“We have been to Madame Tussaud’s,” Bessie pursued.

“Oh, I say!” cried Lord Lambeth.

“We thought we should find your image there,” said Mrs. Westgate—“yours and Mr. Beaumont’s.”

“In the Chamber of Horrors?” laughed the young man.

“It did duty very well for a party,” said Mrs. Westgate. “All the women were décolletés, and many of the figures looked as if they could speak if they tried.”

“Upon my word,” Lord Lambeth rejoined, “you see people at London parties that look as if they couldn’t speak if they tried.”

“Do you think Mr. Woodley could find us Mr. Beaumont?” asked Mrs. Westgate.

Lord Lambeth stared and looked round him. “I daresay he could. Beaumont often comes here. Don’t you think you could find him, Woodley? Make a dive into the crowd.”

“Thank you; I have had enough diving,” said Willie Woodley. “I will wait till Mr. Beaumont comes to the surface.”

“I will bring him to see you,” said Lord Lambeth; “where are you staying?”

“You will find the address in my letter—Jones’s Hotel.”

“Oh, one of those places just out of Piccadilly? Beastly hole, isn’t it?” Lord Lambeth inquired.

“I believe it’s the best hotel in London,” said Mrs. Westgate.

“But they give you awful rubbish to eat, don’t they?” his lordship went on.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Westgate.

“I always feel so sorry for the people that come up to town and go to live in those places,” continued the young man. “They eat nothing but filth.”

“Oh, I say!” cried Willie Woodley.

“Well, how do you like London, Miss Alden?” Lord Lambeth asked, unperturbed by this ejaculation.

“I think it’s grand,” said Bessie Alden.

“My sister likes it, in spite of the ‘filth!’” Mrs. Westgate exclaimed.

“I hope you are going to stay a long time.”

“As long as I can,” said Bessie.

“And where is Mr. Westgate?” asked Lord Lambeth of this gentleman’s wife.

“He’s where he always is—in that tiresome New York.”

“He must be tremendously clever,” said the young man.

“I suppose he is,” said Mrs. Westgate.

Lord Lambeth sat for nearly an hour with his American friends; but it is not our purpose to relate their conversation in full. He addressed a great many remarks to Bessie Alden, and finally turned toward her altogether, while Willie Woodley entertained Mrs. Westgate. Bessie herself said very little; she was on her guard, thinking of what her sister had said to her at lunch. Little by little, however, she interested herself in Lord Lambeth again, as she had done at Newport; only it seemed to her that here he might become more interesting. He would be an unconscious part of the antiquity, the impressiveness, the picturesqueness, of England; and poor Bessie Alden, like many a Yankee maiden, was terribly at the mercy of picturesqueness.

“I have often wished I were at Newport again,” said the young man. “Those days I spent at your sister’s were awfully jolly.”

“We enjoyed them very much; I hope your father is better.”

“Oh, dear, yes. When I got to England, he was out grouse shooting. It was what you call in America a gigantic fraud. My mother had got nervous. My three weeks at Newport seemed like a happy dream.”

“America certainly is very different from England,” said Bessie.

“I hope you like England better, eh?” Lord Lambeth rejoined almost persuasively.

“No Englishman can ask that seriously of a person of another country.”

Her companion looked at her for a moment. “You mean it’s a matter of course?”

“If I were English,” said Bessie, “it would certainly seem to me a matter of course that everyone should be a good patriot.”

“Oh, dear, yes, patriotism is everything,” said Lord Lambeth, not quite following, but very contented. “Now, what are you going to do here?”

“On Thursday I am going to the Tower.”

“The Tower?”

“The Tower of London. Did you never hear of it?”

“Oh, yes, I have been there,” said Lord Lambeth. “I was taken there by my governess when I was six years old. It’s a rum idea, your going there.”

“Do give me a few more rum ideas,” said Bessie. “I want to see everything of that sort. I am going to Hampton Court, and to Windsor, and to the Dulwich Gallery.”

Lord Lambeth seemed greatly amused. “I wonder you don’t go to the Rosherville Gardens.”

“Are they interesting?” asked Bessie.

“Oh, wonderful.”

“Are they very old? That’s all I care for,” said Bessie.

“They are tremendously old; they are all falling to ruins.”

“I think there is nothing so charming as an old ruinous garden,” said the young girl. “We must certainly go there.”

Lord Lambeth broke out into merriment. “I say, Woodley,” he cried, “here’s Miss Alden wants to go to the Rosherville Gardens!”

Willie Woodley looked a little blank; he was caught in the fact of ignorance of an apparently conspicuous feature of London life. But in a moment he turned it off. “Very well,” he said, “I’ll write for a permit.”

Lord Lambeth’s exhilaration increased. “Gad, I believe you Americans would go anywhere!” he cried.

“We wish to go to Parliament,” said Bessie. “That’s one of the first things.”

“Oh, it would bore you to death!” cried the young man.

“We wish to hear you speak.”

“I never speak—except to young ladies,” said Lord Lambeth, smiling.

Bessie Alden looked at him a while, smiling, too, in the shadow of her parasol. “You are very strange,” she murmured. “I don’t think I approve of you.”

“Ah, now, don’t be severe, Miss Alden,” said Lord Lambeth, smiling still more. “Please don’t be severe. I want you to like me—awfully.”

“To like you awfully? You must not laugh at me, then, when I make mistakes. I consider it my right—as a freeborn American—to make as many mistakes as I choose.”

“Upon my word, I didn’t laugh at you,” said Lord Lambeth.

“And not only that,” Bessie went on; “but I hold that all my mistakes shall be set down to my credit. You must think the better of me for them.”

“I can’t think better of you than I do,” the young man declared.

Bessie Alden looked at him a moment again. “You certainly speak very well to young ladies. But why don’t you address the House?—isn’t that what they call it?”

“Because I have nothing to say,” said Lord Lambeth.

“Haven’t you a great position?” asked Bessie Alden.

He looked a moment at the back of his glove. “I’ll set that down,” he said, “as one of your mistakes—to your credit.” And as if he disliked talking about his position, he changed the subject. “I wish you would let me go with you to the Tower, and to Hampton Court, and to all those other places.”

“We shall be most happy,” said Bessie.

“And of course I shall be delighted to show you the House of Lords—some day that suits you. There are a lot of things I want to do for you. I want to make you have a good time. And I should like very much to present some of my friends to you, if it wouldn’t bore you. Then it would be awfully kind of you to come down to Branches.”

“We are much obliged to you, Lord Lambeth,” said Bessie. “What is Branches?”

“It’s a house in the country. I think you might like it.”

Willie Woodley and Mrs. Westgate at this moment were sitting in silence, and the young man’s ear caught these last words of Lord Lambeth’s. “He’s inviting Miss Bessie to one of his castles,” he murmured to his companion.

Mrs. Westgate, foreseeing what she mentally called “complications,” immediately got up; and the two ladies, taking leave of Lord Lambeth, returned, under Mr. Woodley’s conduct, to Jones’s Hotel.

Lord Lambeth came to see them on the morrow, bringing Percy Beaumont with him—the latter having instantly declared his intention of neglecting none of the usual offices of civility. This declaration, however, when his kinsman informed him of the advent of their American friends, had been preceded by another remark.

“Here they are, then, and you are in for it.”

“What am I in for?” demanded Lord Lambeth.

“I will let your mother give it a name. With all respect to whom,” added Percy Beaumont, “I must decline on this occasion to do any more police duty. Her Grace must look after you herself.”

“I will give her a chance,” said her Grace’s son, a trifle grimly. “I shall make her go and see them.”

“She won’t do it, my boy.”

“We’ll see if she doesn’t,” said Lord Lambeth.

But if Percy Beaumont took a somber view of the arrival of the two ladies at Jones’s Hotel, he was sufficiently a man of the world to offer them a smiling countenance. He fell into animated conversation—conversation, at least, that was animated on her side—with Mrs. Westgate, while his companion made himself agreeable to the younger lady. Mrs. Westgate began confessing and protesting, declaring and expounding.

“I must say London is a great deal brighter and prettier just now than it was when I was here last—in the month of November. There is evidently a great deal going on, and you seem to have a good many flowers. I have no doubt it is very charming for all you people, and that you amuse yourselves immensely. It is very good of you to let Bessie and me come and sit and look at you. I suppose you will think I am very satirical, but I must confess that that’s the feeling I have in London.”

“I am afraid I don’t quite understand to what feeling you allude,” said Percy Beaumont.

“The feeling that it’s all very well for you English people. Everything is beautifully arranged for you.”

“It seems to me it is very well for some Americans, sometimes,” rejoined Beaumont.

“For some of them, yes—if they like to be patronized. But I must say I don’t like to be patronized. I may be very eccentric, and undisciplined, and outrageous, but I confess I never was fond of patronage. I like to associate with people on the same terms as I do in my own country; that’s a peculiar taste that I have. But here people seem to expect something else—Heaven knows what! I am afraid you will think I am very ungrateful, for I certainly have received a great deal of attention. The last time I was here, a lady sent me a message that I was at liberty to come and see her.”

“Dear me! I hope you didn’t go,” observed Percy Beaumont.

“You are deliciously naive, I must say that for you!” Mrs. Westgate exclaimed. “It must be a great advantage to you here in London. I suppose that if I myself had a little more naivete, I should enjoy it more. I should be content to sit on a chair in the park, and see the people pass, and be told that this is the Duchess of Suffolk, and that is the Lord Chamberlain, and that I must be thankful for the privilege of beholding them. I daresay it is very wicked and critical of me to ask for anything else. But I was always critical, and I freely confess to the sin of being fastidious. I am told there is some remarkably superior second-rate society provided here for strangers. *Merci!* I don’t want any superior second-rate society. I want the society that I have been accustomed to.”

“I hope you don’t call Lambeth and me second rate,” Beaumont interposed.

“Oh, I am accustomed to you,” said Mrs. Westgate. “Do you know that you English sometimes make the most wonderful speeches? The first time I came to London I went out to dine—as I told you, I have received a great deal of attention. After dinner, in the drawing room, I had some conversation with an old lady; I assure you I had. I forget what we talked about, but she presently said, in allusion to something we were discussing, ‘Oh, you know, the aristocracy do so-and-so; but in one’s own class of life it is very different.’ In one’s own class of life! What is a poor unprotected American woman to do in a country where she is liable to have that sort of thing said to her?”

“You seem to get hold of some very queer old ladies; I compliment you on your acquaintance!” Percy Beaumont exclaimed. “If you are trying to bring me to admit that London is an odious place, you’ll not succeed. I’m extremely fond of it, and I think it the jolliest place in the world.”

“*Pour vous autres.* I never said the contrary,” Mrs. Westgate retorted. I make use of this expression, because both interlocutors had begun to raise their voices. Percy Beaumont naturally did not like to hear his country abused, and Mrs. Westgate, no less naturally, did not like a stubborn debater.

“Hallo!” said Lord Lambeth; “what are they up to now?” And he came away from the window, where he had been standing with Bessie Alden.

“I quite agree with a very clever countrywoman of mine,” Mrs. Westgate continued with charming ardor, though with imperfect relevancy. She smiled at the two gentlemen for a moment with terrible brightness, as if to toss at their feet—upon their native heath—the gauntlet of defiance. “For me, there are only two social positions worth speaking of—that of an American lady and that of the Emperor of Russia.”

“And what do you do with the American gentlemen?” asked Lord Lambeth.

“She leaves them in America!” said Percy Beaumont.

On the departure of their visitors, Bessie Alden told her sister that Lord Lambeth would come the next day, to go with them to the Tower, and that he had kindly offered to bring his “trap”

and drive them thither. Mrs. Westgate listened in silence to this communication, and for some time afterward she said nothing. But at last, "If you had not requested me the other day not to mention it," she began, "there is something I should venture to ask you." Bessie frowned a little; her dark blue eyes were more dark than blue. But her sister went on. "As it is, I will take the risk. You are not in love with Lord Lambeth: I believe it, perfectly. Very good. But is there, by chance, any danger of your becoming so? It's a very simple question; don't take offense. I have a particular reason," said Mrs. Westgate, "for wanting to know."

Bessie Alden for some moments said nothing; she only looked displeased. "No; there is no danger," she answered at last, curtly.

"Then I should like to frighten them," declared Mrs. Westgate, clasping her jeweled hands.

"To frighten whom?"

"All these people; Lord Lambeth's family and friends."

"How should you frighten them?" asked the young girl.

"It wouldn't be I—it would be you. It would frighten them to think that you should absorb his lordship's young affections."

Bessie Alden, with her clear eyes still overshadowed by her dark brows, continued to interrogate. "Why should that frighten them?"

Mrs. Westgate poised her answer with a smile before delivering it. "Because they think you are not good enough. You are a charming girl, beautiful and amiable, intelligent and clever, and as bien-elevee as it is possible to be; but you are not a fit match for Lord Lambeth."

Bessie Alden was decidedly disgusted. "Where do you get such extraordinary ideas?" she asked. "You have said some such strange things lately. My dear Kitty, where do you collect them?"

Kitty was evidently enamored of her idea. "Yes, it would put them on pins and needles, and it wouldn't hurt you. Mr. Beaumont is already most uneasy; I could soon see that."

The young girl meditated a moment. "Do you mean that they spy upon him—that they interfere with him?"

"I don't know what power they have to interfere, but I know that a British mama may worry her son's life out."

It has been intimated that, as regards certain disagreeable things, Bessie Alden had a fund of skepticism. She abstained on the present occasion from expressing disbelief, for she wished not to irritate her sister. But she said to herself that Kitty had been misinformed—that this was a traveler's tale. Though she was a girl of a lively imagination, there could in the nature of things be, to her sense, no reality in the idea of her belonging to a vulgar category. What she said aloud was, "I must say that in that case I am very sorry for Lord Lambeth."

Mrs. Westgate, more and more exhilarated by her scheme, was smiling at her again. "If I could only believe it was safe!" she exclaimed. "When you begin to pity him, I, on my side, am afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Of your pitying him too much."

Bessie Alden turned away impatiently; but at the end of a minute she turned back. "What if I should pity him too much?" she asked.

Mrs. Westgate hereupon turned away, but after a moment's reflection she also faced her sister again. "It would come, after all, to the same thing," she said.

Lord Lambeth came the next day with his trap, and the two ladies, attended by Willie Woodley, placed themselves under his guidance, and were conveyed eastward, through some of the duskiest portions of the metropolis, to the great turreted donjon which overlooks the London shipping. They all descended from their vehicle and entered the famous inclosure; and they secured the services of a venerable beefeater, who, though there were many other claimants for legendary information, made a fine exclusive party of them and marched them through courts and corridors, through armories and prisons. He delivered his usual peripatetic discourse, and they stopped and stared, and peeped and stooped, according to the official admonitions. Bessie Alden asked the old man in the crimson doublet a great many questions; she thought it a most fascinating place. Lord Lambeth was in high good humor; he was constantly laughing; he enjoyed what he would have called the lark. Willie Woodley kept looking at the ceilings and tapping the walls with the knuckle of a pearl-gray glove; and Mrs. Westgate, asking at frequent intervals to be allowed to sit down and wait till they came back, was as frequently informed that they would never come back. To a great many of Bessie's questions—chiefly on collateral points of English history—the ancient warder was naturally unable to reply; whereupon she always appealed to Lord Lambeth. But his lordship was very ignorant. He declared that he knew nothing about that sort of thing, and he seemed greatly diverted at being treated as an authority.

"You can't expect everyone to know as much as you," he said.

"I should expect you to know a great deal more," declared Bessie Alden.

"Women always know more than men about names and dates and that sort of thing," Lord Lambeth rejoined. "There was Lady Jane Grey we have just been hearing about, who went in for Latin and Greek and all the learning of her age."

"*you* have no right to be ignorant, at all events," said Bessie.

"Why haven't I as good a right as anyone else?"

"Because you have lived in the midst of all these things."

"What things do you mean? Axes, and blocks, and thumbscrews?"

"All these historical things. You belong to a historical family."

"Bessie is really too historical," said Mrs. Westgate, catching a word of this dialogue.

"Yes, you are too historical," said Lord Lambeth, laughing, but thankful for a formula. "Upon my honor, you are too historical!"

He went with the ladies a couple of days later to Hampton Court, Willie Woodley being also of the party. The afternoon was charming, the famous horse chestnuts were in blossom, and Lord Lambeth, who quite entered into the spirit of the cockney excursionist, declared that it was a jolly old place. Bessie Alden was in ecstasies; she went about murmuring and exclaiming.

"It's too lovely," said the young girl; "it's too enchanting; it's too exactly what it ought to be!"

At Hampton Court the little flocks of visitors are not provided with an official bellwether, but are left to browse at discretion upon the local antiquities. It happened in this manner that, in default of another informant, Bessie Alden, who on doubtful questions was able to suggest a great many alternatives, found herself again applying for intellectual assistance to Lord

Lambeth. But he again assured her that he was utterly helpless in such matters—that his education had been sadly neglected.

“And I am sorry it makes you unhappy,” he added in a moment.

“You are very disappointing, Lord Lambeth,” she said.

“Ah, now don’t say that,” he cried. “That’s the worst thing you could possibly say.”

“No,” she rejoined, “it is not so bad as to say that I had expected nothing of you.”

“I don’t know. Give me a notion of the sort of thing you expected.”

“Well,” said Bessie Alden, “that you would be more what I should like to be—what I should try to be—in your place.”

“Ah, my place!” exclaimed Lord Lambeth. “You are always talking about my place!”

The young girl looked at him; he thought she colored a little; and for a moment she made no rejoinder.

“Does it strike you that I am always talking about your place?” she asked.

“I am sure you do it a great honor,” he said, fearing he had been uncivil.

“I have often thought about it,” she went on after a moment. “I have often thought about your being a hereditary legislator. A hereditary legislator ought to know a great many things.”

“Not if he doesn’t legislate.”

“But you do legislate; it’s absurd your saying you don’t. You are very much looked up to here—I am assured of that.”

“I don’t know that I ever noticed it.”

“It is because you are used to it, then. You ought to fill the place.”

“How do you mean to fill it?” asked Lord Lambeth.

“You ought to be very clever and brilliant, and to know almost everything.”

Lord Lambeth looked at her a moment. “Shall I tell you something?” he asked. “A young man in my position, as you call it—”

“I didn’t invent the term,” interposed Bessie Alden. “I have seen it in a great many books.”

“Hang it! you are always at your books. A fellow in my position, then, does very well whatever he does. That’s about what I mean to say.”

“Well, if your own people are content with you,” said Bessie Alden, laughing, “it is not for me to complain. But I shall always think that, properly, you should have been a great mind—a great character.”

“Ah, that’s very theoretic,” Lord Lambeth declared. “Depend upon it, that’s a Yankee prejudice.”

“Happy the country,” said Bessie Alden, “where even people’s prejudices are so elevated!”

“Well, after all,” observed Lord Lambeth, “I don’t know that I am such a fool as you are trying to make me out.”

“I said nothing so rude as that; but I must repeat that you are disappointing.”

“My dear Miss Alden,” exclaimed the young man, “I am the best fellow in the world!”

“Ah, if it were not for that!” said Bessie Alden with a smile.

Mrs. Westgate had a good many more friends in London than she pretended, and before long she had renewed acquaintance with most of them. Their hospitality was extreme, so that, one thing leading to another, she began, as the phrase is, to go out. Bessie Alden, in this way, saw something of what she found it a great satisfaction to call to herself English society. She went to balls and danced, she went to dinners and talked, she went to concerts and listened (at concerts Bessie always listened), she went to exhibitions and wondered. Her enjoyment was keen and her curiosity insatiable, and, grateful in general for all her opportunities, she especially prized the privilege of meeting certain celebrated persons—authors and artists, philosophers and statesmen—of whose renown she had been a humble and distant beholder, and who now, as a part of the habitual furniture of London drawing rooms, struck her as stars fallen from the firmament and become palpable—revealing also sometimes, on contact, qualities not to have been predicted of sidereal bodies. Bessie, who knew so many of her contemporaries by reputation, had a good many personal disappointments; but, on the other hand, she had innumerable satisfactions and enthusiasms, and she communicated the emotions of either class to a dear friend, of her own sex, in Boston, with whom she was in voluminous correspondence. Some of her reflections, indeed, she attempted to impart to Lord Lambeth, who came almost every day to Jones’s Hotel, and whom Mrs. Westgate admitted to be really devoted. Captain Littledale, it appeared, had gone to India; and of several others of Mrs. Westgate’s ex-pensioners—gentlemen who, as she said, had made, in New York, a clubhouse of her drawing room—no tidings were to be obtained; but Lord Lambeth was certainly attentive enough to make up for the accidental absences, the short memories, all the other irregularities of everyone else. He drove them in the park, he took them to visit private collections of pictures, and, having a house of his own, invited them to dinner. Mrs. Westgate, following the fashion of many of her compatriots, caused herself and her sister to be presented at the English court by her diplomatic representative—for it was in this manner that she alluded to the American minister to England, inquiring what on earth he was put there for, if not to make the proper arrangements for one’s going to a Drawing Room.

Lord Lambeth declared that he hated Drawing Rooms, but he participated in the ceremony on the day on which the two ladies at Jones’s Hotel repaired to Buckingham Palace in a remarkable coach which his lordship had sent to fetch them. He had on a gorgeous uniform, and Bessie Alden was particularly struck with his appearance—especially when on her asking him, rather foolishly as she felt, if he were a loyal subject, he replied that he was a loyal subject to *her*. This declaration was emphasized by his dancing with her at a royal ball to which the two ladies afterward went, and was not impaired by the fact that she thought he danced very ill. He seemed to her wonderfully kind; she asked herself, with growing vivacity, why he should be so kind. It was his disposition—that seemed the natural answer. She had told her sister that she liked him very much, and now that she liked him more she wondered why. She liked him for his disposition; to this question as well that seemed the natural answer. When once the impressions of London life began to crowd thickly upon her, she completely forgot her sister’s warning about the cynicism of public opinion. It had given her great pain at the moment, but there was no particular reason why she should remember it; it corresponded too little with any sensible reality; and it was disagreeable to Bessie to remember disagreeable things. So she was not haunted with the sense of a vulgar imputation. She was not in love with Lord Lambeth—she assured herself of that. It will immediately be observed that when such assurances become necessary the state of a young lady’s affections is already ambiguous; and, indeed, Bessie Alden made no attempt to dissimulate—to herself, of course—a certain tenderness that she felt for the young nobleman. She said to herself that she liked the type to which he belonged—the simple, candid, manly, healthy English

temperament. She spoke to herself of him as women speak of young men they like—alluded to his bravery (which she had never in the least seen tested), to his honesty and gentlemanliness, and was not silent upon the subject of his good looks. She was perfectly conscious, moreover, that she liked to think of his more adventitious merits; that her imagination was excited and gratified by the sight of a handsome young man endowed with such large opportunities—opportunities she hardly knew for what, but, as she supposed, for doing great things—for setting an example, for exerting an influence, for conferring happiness, for encouraging the arts. She had a kind of ideal of conduct for a young man who should find himself in this magnificent position, and she tried to adapt it to Lord Lambeth's deportment as you might attempt to fit a silhouette in cut paper upon a shadow projected upon a wall. But Bessie Alden's silhouette refused to coincide with his lordship's image, and this want of harmony sometimes vexed her more than she thought reasonable. When he was absent it was, of course, less striking; then he seemed to her a sufficiently graceful combination of high responsibilities and amiable qualities. But when he sat there within sight, laughing and talking with his customary good humor and simplicity, she measured it more accurately, and she felt acutely that if Lord Lambeth's position was heroic, there was but little of the hero in the young man himself. Then her imagination wandered away from him—very far away; for it was an incontestable fact that at such moments he seemed distinctly dull. I am afraid that while Bessie's imagination was thus invidiously roaming, she cannot have been herself a very lively companion; but it may well have been that these occasional fits of indifference seemed to Lord Lambeth a part of the young girl's personal charm. It had been a part of this charm from the first that he felt that she judged him and measured him more freely and irresponsibly—more at her ease and her leisure, as it were—than several young ladies with whom he had been on the whole about as intimate. To feel this, and yet to feel that she also liked him, was very agreeable to Lord Lambeth. He fancied he had compassed that gratification so desirable to young men of title and fortune—being liked for himself. It is true that a cynical counselor might have whispered to him, "Liked for yourself? Yes; but not so very much!" He had, at any rate, the constant hope of being liked more.

It may seem, perhaps, a trifle singular—but it is nevertheless true—that Bessie Alden, when he struck her as dull, devoted some time, on grounds of conscience, to trying to like him more. I say on grounds of conscience because she felt that he had been extremely "nice" to her sister, and because she reflected that it was no more than fair that she should think as well of him as he thought of her. This effort was possibly sometimes not so successful as it might have been, for the result of it was occasionally a vague irritation, which expressed itself in hostile criticism of several British institutions. Bessie Alden went to some entertainments at which she met Lord Lambeth; but she went to others at which his lordship was neither actually nor potentially present; and it was chiefly on these latter occasions that she encountered those literary and artistic celebrities of whom mention has been made. After a while she reduced the matter to a principle. If Lord Lambeth should appear anywhere, it was a symbol that there would be no poets and philosophers; and in consequence—for it was almost a strict consequence—she used to enumerate to the young man these objects of her admiration.

"You seem to be awfully fond of those sort of people," said Lord Lambeth one day, as if the idea had just occurred to him.

"They are the people in England I am most curious to see," Bessie Alden replied.

"I suppose that's because you have read so much," said Lord Lambeth gallantly.

"I have not read so much. It is because we think so much of them at home."

“Oh, I see,” observed the young nobleman. “In Boston.”

“Not only in Boston; everywhere,” said Bessie. “We hold them in great honor; they go to the best dinner parties.”

“I daresay you are right. I can’t say I know many of them.”

“It’s a pity you don’t,” Bessie Alden declared. “It would do you good.”

“I daresay it would,” said Lord Lambeth very humbly. “But I must say I don’t like the looks of some of them.”

“Neither do I—of some of them. But there are all kinds, and many of them are charming.”

“I have talked with two or three of them,” the young man went on, “and I thought they had a kind of fawning manner.”

“Why should they fawn?” Bessie Alden demanded.

“I’m sure I don’t know. Why, indeed?”

“Perhaps you only thought so,” said Bessie.

“Well, of course,” rejoined her companion, “that’s a kind of thing that can’t be proved.”

“In America they don’t fawn,” said Bessie.

“Ah, well, then, they must be better company.”

Bessie was silent a moment. “That is one of the things I don’t like about England,” she said; “your keeping the distinguished people apart.”

“How do you mean apart?”

“Why, letting them come only to certain places. You never see them.”

Lord Lambeth looked at her a moment. “What people do you mean?”

“The eminent people—the authors and artists—the clever people.”

“Oh, there are other eminent people besides those,” said Lord Lambeth.

“Well, you certainly keep them apart,” repeated the young girl.

“And there are other clever people,” added Lord Lambeth simply.

Bessie Alden looked at him, and she gave a light laugh. “Not many,” she said.

On another occasion—just after a dinner party—she told him that there was something else in England she did not like.

“Oh, I say!” he cried, “haven’t you abused us enough?”

“I have never abused you at all,” said Bessie; “but I don’t like your *precedence*.”

“It isn’t my precedence!” Lord Lambeth declared, laughing.

“Yes, it is yours—just exactly yours; and I think it’s odious,” said Bessie.

“I never saw such a young lady for discussing things! Has someone had the impudence to go before you?” asked his lordship.

“It is not the going before me that I object to,” said Bessie; “it is their thinking that they have a right to do it—a *right that I recognize*.”

“I never saw such a young lady as you are for not ‘recognizing.’ I have no doubt the thing is *bestly*, but it saves a lot of trouble.”

“It makes a lot of trouble. It’s horrid,” said Bessie.

“But how would you have the first people go?” asked Lord Lambeth. “They can’t go last.”

“Whom do you mean by the first people?”

“Ah, if you mean to question first principles!” said Lord Lambeth.

“If those are your first principles, no wonder some of your arrangements are horrid,” observed Bessie Alden with a very pretty ferocity. “I am a young girl, so of course I go last; but imagine what Kitty must feel on being informed that she is not at liberty to budge until certain other ladies have passed out.”

“Oh, I say, she is not ‘informed!’” cried Lord Lambeth. “No one would do such a thing as that.”

“She is made to feel it,” the young girl insisted—“as if they were afraid she would make a rush for the door. No; you have a lovely country,” said Bessie Alden, “but your precedence is horrid.”

“I certainly shouldn’t think your sister would like it,” rejoined Lord Lambeth with even exaggerated gravity. But Bessie Alden could induce him to enter no formal protest against this repulsive custom, which he seemed to think an extreme convenience.

Percy Beaumont all this time had been a very much less frequent visitor at Jones’s Hotel than his noble kinsman; he had, in fact, called but twice upon the two American ladies. Lord Lambeth, who often saw him, reproached him with his neglect and declared that, although Mrs. Westgate had said nothing about it, he was sure that she was secretly wounded by it. “She suffers too much to speak,” said Lord Lambeth.

“That’s all gammon,” said Percy Beaumont; “there’s a limit to what people can suffer!” And, though sending no apologies to Jones’s Hotel, he undertook in a manner to explain his absence. “You are always there,” he said, “and that’s reason enough for my not going.”

“I don’t see why. There is enough for both of us.”

“I don’t care to be a witness of your—your reckless passion,” said Percy Beaumont.

Lord Lambeth looked at him with a cold eye and for a moment said nothing. “It’s not so obvious as you might suppose,” he rejoined dryly, “considering what a demonstrative beggar I am.”

“I don’t want to know anything about it—nothing whatever,” said Beaumont. “Your mother asks me everytime she sees me whether I believe you are really lost—and Lady Pimlico does the same. I prefer to be able to answer that I know nothing about it—that I never go there. I stay away for consistency’s sake. As I said the other day, they must look after you themselves.”

“You are devilish considerate,” said Lord Lambeth. “They never question me.”

“They are afraid of you. They are afraid of irritating you and making you worse. So they go to work very cautiously, and, somewhere or other, they get their information. They know a great deal about you. They know that you have been with those ladies to the dome of St. Paul’s and—where was the other place?—to the Thames Tunnel.”

“If all their knowledge is as accurate as that, it must be very valuable,” said Lord Lambeth.

“Well, at any rate, they know that you have been visiting the ‘sights of the metropolis.’ They think—very naturally, as it seems to me—that when you take to visiting the sights of the metropolis with a little American girl, there is serious cause for alarm.” Lord Lambeth responded to this intimation by scornful laughter, and his companion continued, after a pause: “I said just now I didn’t want to know anything about the affair; but I will confess that I am curious to learn whether you propose to marry Miss Bessie Alden.”

On this point Lord Lambeth gave his interlocutor no immediate satisfaction; he was musing, with a frown. “By Jove,” he said, “they go rather too far. They *shall* find me dangerous—I promise them.”

Percy Beaumont began to laugh. “You don’t redeem your promises. You said the other day you would make your mother call.”

Lord Lambeth continued to meditate. “I asked her to call,” he said simply.

“And she declined?”

“Yes; but she shall do it yet.”

“Upon my word,” said Percy Beaumont, “if she gets much more frightened I believe she will.” Lord Lambeth looked at him, and he went on. “She will go to the girl herself.”

“How do you mean she will go to her?”

“She will beg her off, or she will bribe her. She will take strong measures.”

Lord Lambeth turned away in silence, and his companion watched him take twenty steps and then slowly return. “I have invited Mrs. Westgate and Miss Alden to Branches,” he said, “and this evening I shall name a day.”

“And shall you invite your mother and your sisters to meet them?”

“Explicitly!”

“That will set the duchess off,” said Percy Beaumont. “I suspect she will come.”

“She may do as she pleases.”

Beaumont looked at Lord Lambeth. “You do really propose to marry the little sister, then?”

“I like the way you talk about it!” cried the young man. “She won’t gobble me down; don’t be afraid.”

“She won’t leave you on your knees,” said Percy Beaumont. “What IS the inducement?”

“You talk about proposing: wait till I *have* proposed,” Lord Lambeth went on.

“That’s right, my dear fellow; think about it,” said Percy Beaumont.

“She’s a charming girl,” pursued his lordship.

“Of course she’s a charming girl. I don’t know a girl more charming, intrinsically. But there are other charming girls nearer home.”

“I like her spirit,” observed Lord Lambeth, almost as if he were trying to torment his cousin.

“What’s the peculiarity of her spirit?”

“She’s not afraid, and she says things out, and she thinks herself as good as anyone. She is the only girl I have ever seen that was not dying to marry me.”

“How do you know that, if you haven’t asked her?”

“I don’t know how; but I know it.”

“I am sure she asked me questions enough about your property and your titles,” said Beaumont.

“She has asked me questions, too; no end of them,” Lord Lambeth admitted. “But she asked for information, don’t you know.”

“Information? Aye, I’ll warrant she wanted it. Depend upon it that she is dying to marry you just as much and just as little as all the rest of them.”

“I shouldn’t like her to refuse me—I shouldn’t like that.”

“If the thing would be so disagreeable, then, both to you and to her, in Heaven’s name leave it alone,” said Percy Beaumont.

Mrs. Westgate, on her side, had plenty to say to her sister about the rarity of Mr. Beaumont’s visits and the nonappearance of the Duchess of Bayswater. She professed, however, to derive more satisfaction from this latter circumstance than she could have done from the most lavish attentions on the part of this great lady. “It is most marked,” she said—“most marked. It is a delicious proof that we have made them miserable. The day we dined with Lord Lambeth I was really sorry for the poor fellow.” It will have been gathered that the entertainment offered by Lord Lambeth to his American friends had not been graced by the presence of his anxious mother. He had invited several choice spirits to meet them; but the ladies of his immediate family were to Mrs. Westgate’s sense—a sense possibly morbidly acute—conspicuous by their absence.

“I don’t want to express myself in a manner that you dislike,” said Bessie Alden; “but I don’t know why you should have so many theories about Lord Lambeth’s poor mother. You know a great many young men in New York without knowing their mothers.”

Mrs. Westgate looked at her sister and then turned away. “My dear Bessie, you are superb!” she said.

“One thing is certain,” the young girl continued. “If I believed I were a cause of annoyance—however unwitting—to Lord Lambeth’s family, I should insist—”

“Insist upon my leaving England,” said Mrs. Westgate.

“No, not that. I want to go to the National Gallery again; I want to see Stratford-on-Avon and Canterbury Cathedral. But I should insist upon his coming to see us no more.”

“That would be very modest and very pretty of you; but you wouldn’t do it now.”

“Why do you say ‘now’?” asked Bessie Alden. “Have I ceased to be modest?”

“You care for him too much. A month ago, when you said you didn’t, I believe it was quite true. But at present, my dear child,” said Mrs. Westgate, “you wouldn’t find it quite so simple a matter never to see Lord Lambeth again. I have seen it coming on.”

“You are mistaken,” said Bessie. “You don’t understand.”

“My dear child, don’t be perverse,” rejoined her sister.

“I know him better, certainly, if you mean that,” said Bessie. “And I like him very much. But I don’t like him enough to make trouble for him with his family. However, I don’t believe in that.”

“I like the way you say ‘however,’” Mrs. Westgate exclaimed. “Come; you would not marry him?”

“Oh, no,” said the young girl.

Mrs. Westgate for a moment seemed vexed. “Why not, pray?” she demanded.

“Because I don’t care to,” said Bessie Alden.

The morning after Lord Lambeth had had, with Percy Beaumont, that exchange of ideas which has just been narrated, the ladies at Jones’s Hotel received from his lordship a written invitation to pay their projected visit to Branches Castle on the following Tuesday. “I think I have made up a very pleasant party,” the young nobleman said. “Several people whom you know, and my mother and sisters, who have so long been regrettably prevented from making your acquaintance.” Bessie Alden lost no time in calling her sister’s attention to the injustice she had done the Duchess of Bayswater, whose hostility was now proved to be a vain illusion.

“Wait till you see if she comes,” said Mrs. Westgate. “And if she is to meet us at her son’s house the obligation was all the greater for her to call upon us.”

Bessie had not to wait long, and it appeared that Lord Lambeth’s mother now accepted Mrs. Westgate’s view of her duties. On the morrow, early in the afternoon, two cards were brought to the apartment of the American ladies—one of them bearing the name of the Duchess of Bayswater and the other that of the Countess of Pimlico. Mrs. Westgate glanced at the clock. “It is not yet four,” she said; “they have come early; they wish to see us. We will receive them.” And she gave orders that her visitors should be admitted. A few moments later they were introduced, and there was a solemn exchange of amenities. The duchess was a large lady, with a fine fresh color; the Countess of Pimlico was very pretty and elegant.

The duchess looked about her as she sat down—looked not especially at Mrs. Westgate. “I daresay my son has told you that I have been wanting to come and see you,” she observed.

“You are very kind,” said Mrs. Westgate, vaguely—her conscience not allowing her to assent to this proposition—and, indeed, not permitting her to enunciate her own with any appreciable emphasis.

“He says you were so kind to him in America,” said the duchess.

“We are very glad,” Mrs. Westgate replied, “to have been able to make him a little more—a little less—a little more comfortable.”

“I think he stayed at your house,” remarked the Duchess of Bayswater, looking at Bessie Alden.

“A very short time,” said Mrs. Westgate.

“Oh!” said the duchess; and she continued to look at Bessie, who was engaged in conversation with her daughter.

“Do you like London?” Lady Pimlico had asked of Bessie, after looking at her a good deal—at her face and her hands, her dress and her hair.

“Very much indeed,” said Bessie.

“Do you like this hotel?”

“It is very comfortable,” said Bessie.

“Do you like stopping at hotels?” inquired Lady Pimlico after a pause.

“I am very fond of traveling,” Bessie answered, “and I suppose hotels are a necessary part of it. But they are not the part I am fondest of.”

“Oh, I hate traveling,” said the Countess of Pimlico and transferred her attention to Mrs. Westgate.

“My son tells me you are going to Branches,” the duchess presently resumed.

“Lord Lambeth has been so good as to ask us,” said Mrs. Westgate, who perceived that her visitor had now begun to look at her, and who had her customary happy consciousness of a distinguished appearance. The only mitigation of her felicity on this point was that, having inspected her visitor’s own costume, she said to herself, “She won’t know how well I am dressed!”

“He has asked me to go, but I am not sure I shall be able,” murmured the duchess.

“He had offered us the p—prospect of meeting you,” said Mrs. Westgate.

“I hate the country at this season,” responded the duchess.

Mrs. Westgate gave a little shrug. “I think it is pleasanter than London.”

But the duchess’s eyes were absent again; she was looking very fixedly at Bessie. In a moment she slowly rose, walked to a chair that stood empty at the young girl’s right hand, and silently seated herself. As she was a majestic, voluminous woman, this little transaction had, inevitably, an air of somewhat impressive intention. It diffused a certain awkwardness, which Lady Pimlico, as a sympathetic daughter, perhaps desired to rectify in turning to Mrs. Westgate.

“I daresay you go out a great deal,” she observed.

“No, very little. We are strangers, and we didn’t come here for society.”

“I see,” said Lady Pimlico. “It’s rather nice in town just now.”

“It’s charming,” said Mrs. Westgate. “But we only go to see a few people—whom we like.”

“Of course one can’t like everyone,” said Lady Pimlico.

“It depends upon one’s society,” Mrs. Westgate rejoined.

The Duchess meanwhile had addressed herself to Bessie. “My son tells me the young ladies in America are so clever.”

“I am glad they made so good an impression on him,” said Bessie, smiling.

The Duchess was not smiling; her large fresh face was very tranquil. “He is very susceptible,” she said. “He thinks everyone clever, and sometimes they are.”

“Sometimes,” Bessie assented, smiling still.

The duchess looked at her a little and then went on; “Lambeth is very susceptible, but he is very volatile, too.”

“Volatile?” asked Bessie.

“He is very inconstant. It won’t do to depend on him.”

“Ah,” said Bessie, “I don’t recognize that description. We have depended on him greatly—my sister and I—and he has never disappointed us.”

“He will disappoint you yet,” said the duchess.

Bessie gave a little laugh, as if she were amused at the duchess’s persistency. “I suppose it will depend on what we expect of him.”

“The less you expect, the better,” Lord Lambeth’s mother declared.

“Well,” said Bessie, “we expect nothing unreasonable.”

The duchess for a moment was silent, though she appeared to have more to say. “Lambeth says he has seen so much of you,” she presently began.

“He has been to see us very often; he has been very kind,” said Bessie Alden.

“I daresay you are used to that. I am told there is a great deal of that in America.”

“A great deal of kindness?” the young girl inquired, smiling.

“Is that what you call it? I know you have different expressions.”

“We certainly don’t always understand each other,” said Mrs. Westgate, the termination of whose interview with Lady Pimlico allowed her to give her attention to their elder visitor.

“I am speaking of the young men calling so much upon the young ladies,” the duchess explained.

“But surely in England,” said Mrs. Westgate, “the young ladies don’t call upon the young men?”

“Some of them do—almost!” Lady Pimlico declared. “What the young men are a great *parti*.”

“Bessie, you must make a note of that,” said Mrs. Westgate. “My sister,” she added, “is a model traveler. She writes down all the curious facts she hears in a little book she keeps for the purpose.”

The duchess was a little flushed; she looked all about the room, while her daughter turned to Bessie. “My brother told us you were wonderfully clever,” said Lady Pimlico.

“He should have said my sister,” Bessie answered—“when she says such things as that.”

“Shall you be long at Branches?” the duchess asked, abruptly, of the young girl.

“Lord Lambeth has asked us for three days,” said Bessie.

“I shall go,” the duchess declared, “and my daughter, too.”

“That will be charming!” Bessie rejoined.

“Delightful!” murmured Mrs. Westgate.

“I shall expect to see a great deal of you,” the duchess continued. “When I go to Branches I monopolize my son’s guests.”

“They must be most happy,” said Mrs. Westgate very graciously.

“I want immensely to see it—to see the castle,” said Bessie to the duchess. “I have never seen one—in England, at least; and you know we have none in America.”

“Ah, you are fond of castles?” inquired her Grace.

“Immensely!” replied the young girl. “It has been the dream of my life to live in one.”

The duchess looked at her a moment, as if she hardly knew how to take this assurance, which, from her Grace’s point of view, was either very artless or very audacious. “Well,” she said, rising, “I will show you Branches myself.” And upon this the two great ladies took their departure.

“What did they mean by it?” asked Mrs. Westgate, when they were gone.

“They meant to be polite,” said Bessie, “because we are going to meet them.”

“It is too late to be polite,” Mrs. Westgate replied almost grimly. “They meant to overawe us by their fine manners and their grandeur, and to make you *lacher prise*.”

“*Lacher prise*? What strange things you say!” murmured Bessie Alden.

“They meant to snub us, so that we shouldn’t dare to go to Branches,” Mrs. Westgate continued.

“On the contrary,” said Bessie, “the duchess offered to show me the place herself.”

“Yes, you may depend upon it she won’t let you out of her sight. She will show you the place from morning till night.”

“You have a theory for everything,” said Bessie.

“And you apparently have none for anything.”

“I saw no attempt to ‘overawe’ us,” said the young girl. “Their manners were not fine.”

“They were not even good!” Mrs. Westgate declared.

Bessie was silent a while, but in a few moments she observed that she had a very good theory. “They came to look at me,” she said, as if this had been a very ingenious hypothesis. Mrs. Westgate did it justice; she greeted it with a smile and pronounced it most brilliant, while, in reality, she felt that the young girl’s skepticism, or her charity, or, as she had sometimes called it appropriately, her idealism, was proof against irony. Bessie, however, remained meditative all the rest of that day and well on into the morrow.

On the morrow, before lunch, Mrs. Westgate had occasion to go out for an hour, and left her sister writing a letter. When she came back she met Lord Lambeth at the door of the hotel, coming away. She thought he looked slightly embarrassed; he was certainly very grave. “I am sorry to have missed you. Won’t you come back?” she asked.

“No,” said the young man, “I can’t. I have seen your sister. I can never come back.” Then he looked at her a moment and took her hand. “Goodbye, Mrs. Westgate,” he said. “You have been very kind to me.” And with what she thought a strange, sad look in his handsome young face, he turned away.

She went in, and she found Bessie still writing her letter; that is, Mrs. Westgate perceived she was sitting at the table with the pen in her hand and not writing. “Lord Lambeth has been here,” said the elder lady at last.

Then Bessie got up and showed her a pale, serious face. She bent this face upon her sister for some time, confessing silently and a little pleading. “I told him,” she said at last, “that we could not go to Branches.”

Mrs. Westgate displayed just a spark of irritation. “He might have waited,” she said with a smile, “till one had seen the castle.” Later, an hour afterward, she said, “Dear Bessie, I wish you might have accepted him.”

“I couldn’t,” said Bessie gently.

“He is an excellent fellow,” said Mrs. Westgate.

“I couldn’t,” Bessie repeated.

“If it is only,” her sister added, “because those women will think that they succeeded—that they paralyzed us!”

Bessie Alden turned away; but presently she added, “They were interesting; I should have liked to see them again.”

“So should I!” cried Mrs. Westgate significantly.

“And I should have liked to see the castle,” said Bessie. “But now we must leave England,” she added.

Her sister looked at her. “You will not wait to go to the National Gallery?”

“Not now.”

“Nor to Canterbury Cathedral?”

Bessie reflected a moment. “We can stop there on our way to Paris,” she said.

Lord Lambeth did not tell Percy Beaumont that the contingency he was not prepared at all to like had occurred; but Percy Beaumont, on hearing that the two ladies had left London, wondered with some intensity what had happened; wondered, that is, until the Duchess of Bayswater came a little to his assistance. The two ladies went to Paris, and Mrs. Westgate beguiled the journey to that city by repeating several times—“That’s what I regret; they will think they petrified us.” But Bessie Alden seemed to regret nothing.

The Pension Beaurepas

CHAPTER I.

I was not rich—on the contrary; and I had been told the Pension Beaurepas was cheap. I had, moreover, been told that a boarding-house is a capital place for the study of human nature. I had a fancy for a literary career, and a friend of mine had said to me, "If you mean to write you ought to go and live in a boarding-house; there is no other such place to pick up material." I had read something of this kind in a letter addressed by Stendhal to his sister: "I have a passionate desire to know human nature, and have a great mind to live in a boarding-house, where people cannot conceal their real characters." I was an admirer of La Chartreuse de Parme, and it appeared to me that one could not do better than follow in the footsteps of its author. I remembered, too, the magnificent boarding-house in Balzac's *Pere Goriot*,—the "pension bourgeoise des deux sexes et autres," kept by Madame Vauquer, nee De Conflans. Magnificent, I mean, as a piece of portraiture; the establishment, as an establishment, was certainly sordid enough, and I hoped for better things from the Pension Beaurepas. This institution was one of the most esteemed in Geneva, and, standing in a little garden of its own, not far from the lake, had a very homely, comfortable, sociable aspect. The regular entrance was, as one might say, at the back, which looked upon the street, or rather upon a little place, adorned like every place in Geneva, great or small, with a fountain. This fact was not prepossessing, for on crossing the threshold you found yourself more or less in the kitchen, encompassed with culinary odours. This, however, was no great matter, for at the Pension Beaurepas there was no attempt at gentility or at concealment of the domestic machinery. The latter was of a very simple sort. Madame Beaurepas was an excellent little old woman—she was very far advanced in life, and had been keeping a pension for forty years—whose only faults were that she was slightly deaf, that she was fond of a surreptitious pinch of snuff, and that, at the age of seventy-three, she wore flowers in her cap. There was a tradition in the house that she was not so deaf as she pretended; that she feigned this infirmity in order to possess herself of the secrets of her lodgers. But I never subscribed to this theory; I am convinced that Madame Beaurepas had outlived the period of indiscreet curiosity. She was a philosopher, on a matter-of-fact basis; she had been having lodgers for forty years, and all that she asked of them was that they should pay their bills, make use of the door-mat, and fold their napkins. She cared very little for their secrets. "J'en ai vus de toutes les couleurs," she said to me. She had quite ceased to care for individuals; she cared only for types, for categories. Her large observation had made her acquainted with a great number, and her mind was a complete collection of "heads." She flattered herself that she knew at a glance where to pigeon-hole a new-comer, and if she made any mistakes her deportment never betrayed them. I think that, as regards individuals, she had neither likes nor dislikes; but she was capable of expressing esteem or contempt for a species. She had her own ways, I suppose, of manifesting her approval, but her manner of indicating the reverse was simple and unvarying. "Je trouve que c'est deplacé"—this exhausted her view of the matter. If one of her inmates had put arsenic into the pot-au-feu, I believe Madame Beaurepas would have contented herself with remarking that the proceeding was out of place. The line of misconduct to which she most objected was an undue assumption of gentility; she had no patience with boarders who gave themselves airs. "When people come chez moi, it is not to cut a figure in the world; I have never had that illusion," I remember hearing her say; "and when you pay seven francs a day, tout compris, it comprises everything but the right to look down upon the others. But there are people who, the less they pay, the more they take themselves au sérieux. My most difficult boarders have always been those who have had the little rooms."

Madame Beurepas had a niece, a young woman of some forty odd years; and the two ladies, with the assistance of a couple of thick-waisted, red-armed peasant women, kept the house going. If on your exits and entrances you peeped into the kitchen, it made very little difference; for Celestine, the cook, had no pretension to be an invisible functionary or to deal in occult methods. She was always at your service, with a grateful grin she blacked your boots; she trudged off to fetch a cab; she would have carried your baggage, if you had allowed her, on her broad little back. She was always tramping in and out, between her kitchen and the fountain in the place, where it often seemed to me that a large part of the preparation for our dinner went forward—the wringing out of towels and table-cloths, the washing of potatoes and cabbages, the scouring of saucepans and cleansing of water—bottles. You enjoyed, from the doorstep, a perpetual back-view of Celestine and of her large, loose, woollen ankles, as she craned, from the waist, over into the fountain and dabbled in her various utensils. This sounds as if life went on in a very make-shift fashion at the Pension Beurepas—as if the tone of the establishment were sordid. But such was not at all the case. We were simply very bourgeois; we practised the good old Genevese principle of not sacrificing to appearances. This is an excellent principle—when you have the reality. We had the reality at the Pension Beurepas: we had it in the shape of soft short beds, equipped with fluffy duvets; of admirable coffee, served to us in the morning by Celestine in person, as we lay recumbent on these downy couches; of copious, wholesome, succulent dinners, conformable to the best provincial traditions. For myself, I thought the Pension Beurepas picturesque, and this, with me, at that time was a great word. I was young and ingenuous: I had just come from America. I wished to perfect myself in the French tongue, and I innocently believed that it flourished by Lake Lemman. I used to go to lectures at the Academy, and come home with a violent appetite. I always enjoyed my morning walk across the long bridge (there was only one, just there, in those days) which spans the deep blue out-gush of the lake, and up the dark steep streets of the old Calvinistic city. The garden faced this way, toward the lake and the old town; and this was the pleasantest approach to the house. There was a high wall, with a double gate in the middle, flanked by a couple of ancient massive posts; the big rusty grille contained some old-fashioned iron-work. The garden was rather mouldy and weedy, tangled and untended; but it contained a little thin—flowing fountain, several green benches, a rickety little table of the same complexion, and three orange-trees, in tubs, which were deposited as effectively as possible in front of the windows of the salon.

CHAPTER II.

As commonly happens in boarding-houses, the rustle of petticoats was, at the Pension Beurepas, the most familiar form of the human tread. There was the usual allotment of economical widows and old maids, and to maintain the balance of the sexes there were only an old Frenchman and a young American. It hardly made the matter easier that the old Frenchman came from Lausanne. He was a native of that estimable town, but he had once spent six months in Paris, he had tasted of the tree of knowledge; he had got beyond Lausanne, whose resources he pronounced inadequate. Lausanne, as he said, "manquait d'agremens." When obliged, for reasons which he never specified, to bring his residence in Paris to a close, he had fallen back on Geneva; he had broken his fall at the Pension Beurepas. Geneva was, after all, more like Paris, and at a Genevese boarding-house there was sure to be plenty of Americans with whom one could talk about the French metropolis. M. Pigeonneau was a little lean man, with a large narrow nose, who sat a great deal in the garden, reading with the aid of a large magnifying glass a volume from the cabinet de lecture.

One day, a fortnight after my arrival at the Pension Beurepas, I came back, rather earlier than usual from my academic session; it wanted half an hour of the midday breakfast. I went into the salon with the design of possessing myself of the day's Galignani before one of the

little English old maids should have removed it to her virginal bower—a privilege to which Madame Beaurepas frequently alluded as one of the attractions of the establishment. In the salon I found a new-comer, a tall gentleman in a high black hat, whom I immediately recognised as a compatriot. I had often seen him, or his equivalent, in the hotel parlours of my native land. He apparently supposed himself to be at the present moment in a hotel parlour; his hat was on his head, or, rather, half off it—pushed back from his forehead, and rather suspended than poised. He stood before a table on which old newspapers were scattered, one of which he had taken up and, with his eye-glass on his nose, was holding out at arm's-length. It was that honourable but extremely diminutive sheet, the Journal de Geneve, a newspaper of about the size of a pocket-handkerchief. As I drew near, looking for my Galignani, the tall gentleman gave me, over the top of his eye-glass, a somewhat solemn stare. Presently, however, before I had time to lay my hand on the object of my search, he silently offered me the Journal de Geneve.

"It appears," he said, "to be the paper of the country."

"Yes," I answered, "I believe it's the best."

He gazed at it again, still holding it at arm's-length, as if it had been a looking-glass. "Well," he said, "I suppose it's natural a small country should have small papers. You could wrap it up, mountains and all, in one of our dailies!"

I found my Galignani, and went off with it into the garden, where I seated myself on a bench in the shade. Presently I saw the tall gentleman in the hat appear in one of the open windows of the salon, and stand there with his hands in his pockets and his legs a little apart. He looked very much bored, and—I don't know why—I immediately began to feel sorry for him. He was not at all a picturesque personage; he looked like a jaded, faded man of business. But after a little he came into the garden and began to stroll about; and then his restless, unoccupied carriage, and the vague, unacquainted manner in which his eyes wandered over the place, seemed to make it proper that, as an older resident, I should exercise a certain hospitality. I said something to him, and he came and sat down beside me on my bench, clasping one of his long knees in his hands.

"When is it this big breakfast of theirs comes off?" he inquired.

"That's what I call it—the little breakfast and the big breakfast.

I never thought I should live to see the time when I should care to eat two breakfasts. But a man's glad to do anything over here."

"For myself," I observed, "I find plenty to do."

He turned his head and glanced at me with a dry, deliberate, kind-looking eye. "You're getting used to the life, are you?"

"I like the life very much," I answered, laughing.

"How long have you tried it?"

"Do you mean in this place?"

"Well, I mean anywhere. It seems to me pretty much the same all over."

"I have been in this house only a fortnight," I said.

"Well, what should you say, from what you have seen?" my companion asked.

"Oh," said I, "you can see all there is immediately. It's very simple."

"Sweet simplicity, eh? I'm afraid my two ladies will find it too simple."

"Everything is very good," I went on. "And Madame Beaurepas is a charming old woman. And then it's very cheap."

"Cheap, is it?" my friend repeated meditatively.

"Doesn't it strike you so?" I asked. I thought it very possible he had not inquired the terms. But he appeared not to have heard me; he sat there, clasping his knee and blinking, in a contemplative manner, at the sunshine.

"Are you from the United States, sir?" he presently demanded, turning his head again.

"Yes, sir," I replied; and I mentioned the place of my nativity.

"I presumed," he said, "that you were American or English. I'm from the United States myself; from New York city. Many of our people here?"

"Not so many as, I believe, there have sometimes been. There are two or three ladies."

"Well," my interlocutor declared, "I am very fond of ladies' society. I think when it's superior there's nothing comes up to it. I've got two ladies here myself; I must make you acquainted with them."

I rejoined that I should be delighted, and I inquired of my friend whether he had been long in Europe.

"Well, it seems precious long," he said, "but my time's not up yet. We have been here fourteen weeks and a half."

"Are you travelling for pleasure?" I asked.

My companion turned his head again and looked at me—looked at me so long in silence that I at last also turned and met his eyes.

"No, sir," he said presently. "No, sir," he repeated, after a considerable interval.

"Excuse me," said I, for there was something so solemn in his tone that I feared I had been indiscreet.

He took no notice of my ejaculation; he simply continued to look at me. "I'm travelling," he said, at last, "to please the doctors. They seemed to think they would like it."

"Ah, they sent you abroad for your health?"

"They sent me abroad because they were so confoundedly muddled they didn't know what else to do."

"That's often the best thing," I ventured to remark.

"It was a confession of weakness; they wanted me to stop plaguing them. They didn't know enough to cure me, and that's the way they thought they would get round it. I wanted to be cured—I didn't want to be transported. I hadn't done any harm."

I assented to the general proposition of the inefficiency of doctors, and asked my companion if he had been seriously ill.

"I didn't sleep," he said, after some delay.

"Ah, that's very annoying. I suppose you were overworked."

"I didn't eat; I took no interest in my food."

"Well, I hope you both eat and sleep now," I said.

"I couldn't hold a pen," my neighbour went on. "I couldn't sit still. I couldn't walk from my house to the cars—and it's only a little way. I lost my interest in business."

"You needed a holiday," I observed.

"That's what the doctors said. It wasn't so very smart of them. I had been paying strict attention to business for twenty-three years."

"In all that time you have never had a holiday?" I exclaimed with horror.

My companion waited a little. "Sundays," he said at last.

"No wonder, then, you were out of sorts."

"Well, sir," said my friend, "I shouldn't have been where I was three years ago if I had spent my time travelling round Europe. I was in a very advantageous position. I did a very large business. I was considerably interested in lumber." He paused, turned his head, and looked at me a moment. "Have you any business interests yourself?" I answered that I had none, and he went on again, slowly, softly, deliberately. "Well, sir, perhaps you are not aware that business in the United States is not what it was a short time since. Business interests are very insecure. There seems to be a general falling-off. Different parties offer different explanations of the fact, but so far as I am aware none of their observations have set things going again." I ingeniously intimated that if business was dull, the time was good for coming away; whereupon my neighbour threw back his head and stretched his legs a while. "Well, sir, that's one view of the matter certainly. There's something to be said for that. These things should be looked at all round. That's the ground my wife took. That's the ground," he added in a moment, "that a lady would naturally take;" and he gave a little dry laugh.

"You think it's slightly illogical," I remarked.

"Well, sir, the ground I took was, that the worse a man's business is, the more it requires looking after. I shouldn't want to go out to take a walk—not even to go to church—if my house was on fire. My firm is not doing the business it was; it's like a sick child, it requires nursing. What I wanted the doctors to do was to fix me up, so that I could go on at home. I'd have taken anything they'd have given me, and as many times a day. I wanted to be right there; I had my reasons; I have them still. But I came off all the same," said my friend, with a melancholy smile.

I was a great deal younger than he, but there was something so simple and communicative in his tone, so expressive of a desire to fraternise, and so exempt from any theory of human differences, that I quite forgot his seniority, and found myself offering him paternal advice. "Don't think about all that," said I. "Simply enjoy yourself, amuse yourself, get well. Travel about and see Europe. At the end of a year, by the time you are ready to go home, things will have improved over there, and you will be quite well and happy."

My friend laid his hand on my knee; he looked at me for some moments, and I thought he was going to say, "You are very young!" But he said presently, "YOU have got used to Europe any way!"

CHAPTER III.

At breakfast I encountered his ladies—his wife and daughter. They were placed, however, at a distance from me, and it was not until the pensionnaires had dispersed, and some of them, according to custom, had come out into the garden, that he had an opportunity of making me acquainted with them.

"Will you allow me to introduce you to my daughter?" he said, moved apparently by a paternal inclination to provide this young lady with social diversion. She was standing with her mother, in one of the paths, looking about with no great complacency, as I imagined, at the homely characteristics of the place, and old M. Pigeonneau was hovering near, hesitating apparently between the desire to be urbane and the absence of a pretext. "Mrs. Ruck—Miss Sophy Ruck," said my friend, leading me up.

Mrs. Ruck was a large, plump, light-coloured person, with a smooth fair face, a somnolent eye, and an elaborate coiffure. Miss Sophy was a girl of one-and-twenty, very small and very pretty—what I suppose would have been called a lively brunette. Both of these ladies were attired in black silk dresses, very much trimmed; they had an air of the highest elegance.

"Do you think highly of this pension?" inquired Mrs. Ruck, after a few preliminaries.

"It's a little rough, but it seems to me comfortable," I answered.

"Does it take a high rank in Geneva?" Mrs. Ruck pursued.

"I imagine it enjoys a very fair fame," I said, smiling.

"I should never dream of comparing it to a New York boarding-house," said Mrs. Ruck.

"It's quite a different style," her daughter observed.

Miss Ruck had folded her arms; she was holding her elbows with a pair of white little hands, and she was tapping the ground with a pretty little foot.

"We hardly expected to come to a pension," said Mrs. Ruck. "But we thought we would try; we had heard so much about Swiss pensions. I was saying to Mr. Ruck that I wondered whether this was a favourable specimen. I was afraid we might have made a mistake."

"We knew some people who had been here; they thought everything of Madame Beaurepas," said Miss Sophy. "They said she was a real friend."

"Mr. and Mrs. Parker—perhaps you have heard her speak of them," Mrs. Ruck pursued.

"Madame Beaurepas has had a great many Americans; she is very fond of Americans," I replied.

"Well, I must say I should think she would be, if she compares them with some others."

"Mother is always comparing," observed Miss Ruck.

"Of course I am always comparing," rejoined the elder lady. "I never had a chance till now; I never knew my privileges. Give me an American!" And Mrs. Ruck indulged in a little laugh.

"Well, I must say there are some things I like over here," said Miss Sophy, with courage. And indeed I could see that she was a young woman of great decision.

"You like the shops—that's what you like," her father affirmed.

The young lady addressed herself to me, without heeding this remark.

"I suppose you feel quite at home here."

"Oh, he likes it; he has got used to the life!" exclaimed Mr. Ruck.

"I wish you'd teach Mr. Ruck," said his wife. "It seems as if he couldn't get used to anything."

"I'm used to you, my dear," the husband retorted, giving me a humorous look.

"He's intensely restless," continued Mrs. Ruck.

"That's what made me want to come to a pension. I thought he would settle down more."

"I don't think I AM used to you, after all," said her husband.

In view of a possible exchange of conjugal repartee I took refuge in conversation with Miss Ruck, who seemed perfectly able to play her part in any colloquy. I learned from this young lady that, with her parents, after visiting the British Islands, she had been spending a month in Paris, and that she thought she should have died when she left that city. "I hung out of the carriage, when we left the hotel," said Miss Ruck, "I assure you I did. And mother did, too."

"Out of the other window, I hope," said I.

"Yes, one out of each window," she replied promptly. "Father had hard work, I can tell you. We hadn't half finished; there were ever so many places we wanted to go to."

"Your father insisted on coming away?"

"Yes; after we had been there about a month he said he had enough. He's fearfully restless; he's very much out of health. Mother and I said to him that if he was restless in Paris he needn't hope for peace anywhere. We don't mean to leave him alone till he takes us back." There was an air of keen resolution in Miss Ruck's pretty face, of lucid apprehension of desirable ends, which made me, as she pronounced these words, direct a glance of covert compassion toward her poor recalcitrant father. He had walked away a little with his wife, and I saw only his back and his stooping, patient-looking shoulders, whose air of acute resignation was thrown into relief by the voluminous tranquillity of Mrs. Ruck. "He will have to take us back in September, any way," the young girl pursued; "he will have to take us back to get some things we have ordered."

"Have you ordered a great many things?" I asked jocosely.

"Well, I guess we have ordered SOME. Of course we wanted to take advantage of being in Paris—ladies always do. We have left the principal things till we go back. Of course that is the principal interest, for ladies. Mother said she should feel so shabby if she just passed through. We have promised all the people to be back in September, and I never broke a promise yet. So Mr. Ruck has got to make his plans accordingly."

"And what are his plans?"

"I don't know; he doesn't seem able to make any. His great idea was to get to Geneva; but now that he has got here he doesn't seem to care. It's the effect of ill health. He used to be so bright; but now he is quite subdued. It's about time he should improve, any way. We went out last night to look at the jewellers' windows—in that street behind the hotel. I had always heard of those jewellers' windows. We saw some lovely things, but it didn't seem to rouse father. He'll get tired of Geneva sooner than he did of Paris."

"Ah," said I, "there are finer things here than the jewellers' windows. We are very near some of the most beautiful scenery in Europe."

"I suppose you mean the mountains. Well, we have seen plenty of mountains at home. We used to go to the mountains every summer. We are familiar enough with the mountains. Aren't we, mother?" the young lady demanded, appealing to Mrs. Ruck, who, with her husband, had drawn near again.

"Aren't we what?" inquired the elder lady.

"Aren't we familiar with the mountains?"

"Well, I hope so," said Mrs. Ruck.

Mr. Ruck, with his hands in his pockets, gave me a sociable wink.—

"There's nothing much you can tell them!" he said.

The two ladies stood face to face a few moments, surveying each other's garments. "Don't you want to go out?" the young girl at last inquired of her mother.

"Well, I think we had better; we have got to go up to that place."

"To what place?" asked Mr. Ruck.

"To that jeweller's—to that big one."

"They all seemed big enough; they were too big!" And Mr. Ruck gave me another wink.

"That one where we saw the blue cross," said his daughter.

"Oh, come, what do you want of that blue cross?" poor Mr. Ruck demanded.

"She wants to hang it on a black velvet ribbon and tie it round her neck," said his wife.

"A black velvet ribbon? No, I thank you!" cried the young lady. "Do you suppose I would wear that cross on a black velvet ribbon? On a nice little gold chain, if you please—a little narrow gold chain, like an old-fashioned watch-chain. That's the proper thing for that blue cross. I know the sort of chain I mean; I'm going to look for one. When I want a thing," said Miss Ruck, with decision, "I can generally find it."

"Look here, Sophy," her father urged, "you don't want that blue cross."

"I do want it—I happen to want it." And Sophy glanced at me with a little laugh.

Her laugh, which in itself was pretty, suggested that there were various relations in which one might stand to Miss Ruck; but I think I was conscious of a certain satisfaction in not occupying the paternal one. "Don't worry the poor child," said her mother.

"Come on, mother," said Miss Ruck.

"We are going to look about a little," explained the elder lady to me, by way of taking leave.

"I know what that means," remarked Mr. Ruck, as his companions moved away. He stood looking at them a moment, while he raised his hand to his head, behind, and stood rubbing it a little, with a movement that displaced his hat. (I may remark in parenthesis that I never saw a hat more easily displaced than Mr. Ruck's.) I supposed he was going to say something querulous, but I was mistaken. Mr. Ruck was unhappy, but he was very good-natured. "Well, they want to pick up something," he said. "That's the principal interest, for ladies."

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Ruck distinguished me, as the French say. He honoured me with his esteem, and, as the days elapsed, with a large portion of his confidence. Sometimes he bored me a little, for the tone of his conversation was not cheerful, tending as it did almost exclusively to a melancholy dirge over the financial prostration of our common country. "No, sir, business in the United States is not what it once was," he found occasion to remark several times a day. "There's not the same spring—there's not the same hopeful feeling. You can see it in all departments." He used to sit by the hour in the little garden of the pension, with a roll of American newspapers in his lap and his high hat pushed back, swinging one of his long legs and reading the New York Herald. He paid a daily visit to the American banker's, on the other side of the Rhone, and remained there a long time, turning over the old papers on the green velvet table in the middle of the Salon des Etrangers, and fraternising with chance compatriots. But in spite of these diversions his time hung heavily upon his hands. I used sometimes to propose to him to take a walk; but he had a mortal horror of pedestrianism, and

regarded my own taste for it as' a morbid form of activity. "You'll kill yourself, if you don't look out," he said, "walking all over the country. I don't want to walk round that way; I ain't a postman!" Briefly speaking, Mr. Ruck had few resources. His wife and daughter, on the other hand, it was to be supposed, were possessed of a good many that could not be apparent to an unobtrusive young man. They also sat a great deal in the garden or in the salon, side by side, with folded hands, contemplating material objects, and were remarkably independent of most of the usual feminine aids to idleness—light literature, tapestry, the use of the piano. They were, however, much fonder of locomotion than their companion, and I often met them in the Rue du Rhone and on the quays, loitering in front of the jewellers' windows. They might have had a cavalier in the person of old M. Pigeonneau, who possessed a high appreciation of their charms, but who, owing to the absence of a common idiom, was deprived of the pleasures of intimacy. He knew no English, and Mrs. Ruck and her daughter had, as it seemed, an incurable mistrust of the beautiful tongue which, as the old man endeavoured to impress upon them, was pre-eminently the language of conversation.

"They have a *tournure de princesse*—a distinction supreme," he said to me. "One is surprised to find them in a little pension, at seven francs a day."

"Oh, they don't come for economy," I answered. "They must be rich."

"They don't come for my beaux yeux—for mine," said M. Pigeonneau, sadly. "Perhaps it's for yours, young man. Je vous recommande la mere."

I reflected a moment. "They came on account of Mr. Ruck—because at hotels he's so restless."

M. Pigeonneau gave me a knowing nod. "Of course he is, with such a wife as that—a *femme superbe*. Madame Ruck is preserved in perfection—a miraculous *fraicheur*. I like those large, fair, quiet women; they are often, *dans l'intimite*, the most agreeable. I'll warrant you that at heart Madame Ruck is a finished coquette."

"I rather doubt it," I said.

"You suppose her cold? Ne vous y fiez pas!"

"It is a matter in which I have nothing at stake."

"You young Americans are droll," said M. Pigeonneau; "you never have anything at stake! But the little one, for example; I'll warrant you she's not cold. She is admirably made."

"She is very pretty."

"She is very pretty!" Vous dites cela d'un ton! When you pay compliments to Mademoiselle Ruck, I hope that's not the way you do it."

"I don't pay compliments to Mademoiselle Ruck."

"Ah, decidedly," said M. Pigeonneau, "you young Americans are droll!"

I should have suspected that these two ladies would not especially commend themselves to Madame Beaurepas; that as a *maitresse de salon*, which she in some degree aspired to be, she would have found them wanting in a certain flexibility of deportment. But I should have gone quite wrong; Madame Beaurepas had no fault at all to find with her new pensionnaires. "I have no observation whatever to make about them," she said to me one evening. "I see nothing in those ladies which is at all *deplace*. They don't complain of anything; they don't meddle; they take what's given them; they leave me tranquil. The Americans are often like that. Often, but not always," Madame Beaurepas pursued. "We are to have a specimen tomorrow of a very different sort."

"An American?" I inquired.

"Two Americaines—a mother and a daughter. There are Americans and Americans: when you are difficiles, you are more so than any one, and when you have pretensions—ah, per exemple, it's serious. I foresee that with this little lady everything will be serious, beginning with her cafe au lait. She has been staying at the Pension Chamousset—my concurrent, you know, farther up the street; but she is coming away because the coffee is bad. She holds to her coffee, it appears. I don't know what liquid Madame Chamousset may have invented, but we will do the best we can for her. Only, I know she will make me des histoires about something else. She will demand a new lamp for the salon; vous allez voir cela. She wishes to pay but eleven francs a day for herself and her daughter, tout compris; and for their eleven francs they expect to be lodged like princesses. But she is very 'ladylike'—isn't that what you call it in English? Oh, pour cela, she is ladylike!"

I caught a glimpse on the morrow of this ladylike person, who was arriving at her new residence as I came in from a walk. She had come in a cab, with her daughter and her luggage; and, with an air of perfect softness and serenity, she was disputing the fare as she stood among her boxes, on the steps. She addressed her cabman in a very English accent, but with extreme precision and correctness. "I wish to be perfectly reasonable, but I don't wish to encourage you in exorbitant demands. With a franc and a half you are sufficiently paid. It is not the custom at Geneva to give a pour-boire for so short a drive. I have made inquiries, and I find it is not the custom, even in the best families. I am a stranger, yes, but I always adopt the custom of the native families. I think it my duty toward the natives."

"But I am a native, too, moi!" said the cabman, with an angry laugh.

"You seem to me to speak with a German accent," continued the lady. "You are probably from Basel. A franc and a half is sufficient. I see you have left behind the little red bag which I asked you to hold between your knees; you will please to go back to the other house and get it. Very well, if you are impolite I will make a complaint of you to-morrow at the administration. Aurora, you will find a pencil in the outer pocket of my embroidered satchel; please to write down his number,—87; do you see it distinctly?—in case we should forget it."

The young lady addressed as "Aurora"—a slight, fair girl, holding a large parcel of umbrellas—stood at hand while this allocution went forward, but she apparently gave no heed to it. She stood looking about her, in a listless manner, at the front of the house, at the corridor, at Celestine tucking up her apron in the doorway, at me as I passed in amid the disseminated luggage; her mother's parsimonious attitude seeming to produce in Miss Aurora neither sympathy nor embarrassment. At dinner the two ladies were placed on the same side of the table as myself, below Mrs. Ruck and her daughter, my own position being on the right of Mr. Ruck. I had therefore little observation of Mrs. Church—such I learned to be her name—but I occasionally heard her soft, distinct voice.

"White wine, if you please; we prefer white wine. There is none on the table? Then you will please to get some, and to remember to place a bottle of it always here, between my daughter and myself."

"That lady seems to know what she wants," said Mr. Ruck, "and she speaks so I can understand her. I can't understand every one, over here. I should like to make that lady's acquaintance. Perhaps she knows what *I* want, too; it seems hard to find out. But I don't want any of their sour white wine; that's one of the things I don't want. I expect she'll be an addition to the pension."

Mr. Ruck made the acquaintance of Mrs. Church that evening in the parlour, being presented to her by his wife, who presumed on the rights conferred upon herself by the mutual

proximity, at table, of the two ladies. I suspected that in Mrs. Church's view Mrs. Ruck presumed too far. The fugitive from the Pension Chamousset, as M. Pigeonneau called her, was a little fresh, plump, comely woman, looking less than her age, with a round, bright, serious face. She was very simply and frugally dressed, not at all in the manner of Mr. Ruck's companions, and she had an air of quiet distinction which was an excellent defensive weapon. She exhibited a polite disposition to listen to what Mr. Ruck might have to say, but her manner was equivalent to an intimation that what she valued least in boarding-house life was its social opportunities. She had placed herself near a lamp, after carefully screwing it and turning it up, and she had opened in her lap, with the assistance of a large embroidered marker, an octavo volume, which I perceived to be in German. To Mrs. Ruck and her daughter she was evidently a puzzle, with her economical attire and her expensive culture. The two younger ladies, however, had begun to fraternise very freely, and Miss Ruck presently went wandering out of the room with her arm round the waist of Miss Church. It was a very warm evening; the long windows of the salon stood wide open into the garden, and, inspired by the balmy darkness, M. Pigeonneau and Mademoiselle Beaurepas, a most obliging little woman, who lisped and always wore a huge cravat, declared they would organise a fete de nuit. They engaged in this undertaking, and the fete developed itself, consisting of half-a-dozen red paper lanterns, hung about on the trees, and of several glasses of sirop, carried on a tray by the stout-armed Celestine. As the festival deepened to its climax I went out into the garden, where M. Pigeonneau was master of ceremonies.

"But where are those charming young ladies," he cried, "Miss Ruck and the new-comer, l'aimable transfuge? Their absence has been remarked, and they are wanting to the brilliancy of the occasion. Voyez I have selected a glass of syrup—a generous glass—for Mademoiselle Ruck, and I advise you, my young friend, if you wish to make a good impression, to put aside one which you may offer to the other young lady. What is her name? Miss Church. I see; it's a singular name. There is a church in which I would willingly worship!"

Mr. Ruck presently came out of the salon, having concluded his interview with Mrs. Church. Through the open window I saw the latter lady sitting under the lamp with her German octavo, while Mrs. Ruck, established, empty-handed, in an arm-chair near her, gazed at her with an air of fascination.

"Well, I told you she would know what I want," said Mr. Ruck. "She says I want to go up to Appenzell, wherever that is; that I want to drink whey and live in a high latitude—what did she call it?—a high altitude. She seemed to think we ought to leave for Appenzell to-morrow; she'd got it all fixed. She says this ain't a high enough lat—a high enough altitude. And she says I mustn't go too high either; that would be just as bad; she seems to know just the right figure. She says she'll give me a list of the hotels where we must stop, on the way to Appenzell. I asked her if she didn't want to go with us, but she says she'd rather sit still and read. I expect she's a big reader."

The daughter of this accomplished woman now reappeared, in company with Miss Ruck, with whom she had been strolling through the outlying parts of the garden.

"Well," said Miss Ruck, glancing at the red paper lanterns, "are they trying to stick the flower-pots into the trees?"

"It's an illumination in honour of our arrival," the other young girl rejoined. "It's a triumph over Madame Chamousset."

"Meanwhile, at the Pension Chamousset," I ventured to suggest, "they have put out their lights; they are sitting in darkness, lamenting your departure."

She looked at me, smiling; she was standing in the light that came from the house. M. Pigeonneau, meanwhile, who had been awaiting his chance, advanced to Miss Ruck with his glass of syrup. "I have kept it for you, Mademoiselle," he said; "I have jealously guarded it. It is very delicious!"

Miss Ruck looked at him and his syrup, without any motion to take the glass. "Well, I guess it's sour," she said in a moment; and she gave a little shake of her head.

M. Pigeonneau stood staring with his syrup in his hand; then he slowly turned away. He looked about at the rest of us, as if to appeal from Miss Ruck's insensibility, and went to deposit his rejected tribute on a bench.

"Won't you give it to me?" asked Miss Church, in faultless French.
"J'adore le sirop, moi."

M. Pigeonneau came back with alacrity, and presented the glass with a very low bow. "I adore good manners," murmured the old man.

This incident caused me to look at Miss Church with quickened interest. She was not strikingly pretty, but in her charming irregular face there was something brilliant and ardent. Like her mother, she was very simply dressed.

"She wants to go to America, and her mother won't let her," said Miss Sophy to me, explaining her companion's situation.

"I am very sorry—for America," I answered, laughing.

"Well, I don't want to say anything against your mother, but I think it's shameful," Miss Ruck pursued.

"Mamma has very good reasons; she will tell you them all."

"Well, I'm sure I don't want to hear them," said Miss Ruck. "You have got a right to go to your own country; every one has a right to go to their own country."

"Mamma is not very patriotic," said Aurora Church, smiling.

"Well, I call that dreadful," her companion declared. "I have heard that there are some Americans like that, but I never believed it."

"There are all sorts of Americans," I said, laughing.

"Aurora's one of the right sort," rejoined Miss Ruck, who had apparently become very intimate with her new friend.

"Are you very patriotic?" I asked of the young girl.

"She's right down homesick," said Miss Sophy; "she's dying to go. If I were you my mother would have to take me."

"Mamma is going to take me to Dresden."

"Well, I declare I never heard of anything so dreadful!" cried Miss Ruck. "It's like something in a story."

"I never heard there was anything very dreadful in Dresden," I interposed.

Miss Ruck looked at me a moment. "Well, I don't believe YOU are a good American," she replied, "and I never supposed you were. You had better go in there and talk to Mrs. Church."

"Dresden is really very nice, isn't it?" I asked of her companion.

"It isn't nice if you happen to prefer New York," said Miss Sophy.

"Miss Church prefers New York. Tell him you are dying to see New York; it will make him angry," she went on.

"I have no desire to make him angry," said Aurora, smiling.

"It is only Miss Ruck who can do that," I rejoined. "Have you been a long time in Europe?"

"Always."

"I call that wicked!" Miss Sophy declared.

"You might be in a worse place," I continued. "I find Europe very interesting."

Miss Ruck gave a little laugh. "I was saying that you wanted to pass for a European."

"Yes, I want to pass for a Dalmatian."

Miss Ruck looked at me a moment. "Well, you had better not come home," she said. "No one will speak to you."

"Were you born in these countries?" I asked of her companion.

"Oh, no; I came to Europe when I was a small child. But I remember America a little, and it seems delightful."

"Wait till you see it again. It's just too lovely," said Miss Sophy.

"It's the grandest country in the world," I added.

Miss Ruck began to toss her head. "Come away, my dear," she said. "If there's a creature I despise it's a man that tries to say funny things about his own country."

"Don't you think one can be tired of Europe?" Aurora asked, lingering.

"Possibly—after many years."

"Father was tired of it after three weeks," said Miss Ruck.

"I have been here sixteen years," her friend went on, looking at me with a charming intentness, as if she had a purpose in speaking. "It used to be for my education. I don't know what it's for now."

"She's beautifully educated," said Miss Ruck. "She knows four languages."

"I am not very sure that I know English."

"You should go to Boston!" cried Miss Sophy. "They speak splendidly in Boston."

"C'est mon reve," said Aurora, still looking at me.

"Have you been all over Europe," I asked—"in all the different countries?"

She hesitated a moment. "Everywhere that there's a pension. Mamma is devoted to pensions. We have lived, at one time or another, in every pension in Europe."

"Well, I should think you had seen about enough," said Miss Ruck.

"It's a delightful way of seeing Europe," Aurora rejoined, with her brilliant smile. "You may imagine how it has attached me to the different countries. I have such charming souvenirs! There is a pension awaiting us now at Dresden,—eight francs a day, without wine. That's rather dear. Mamma means to make them give us wine. Mamma is a great authority on pensions; she is known, that way, all over Europe. Last winter we were in Italy, and she discovered one at Piacenza,—four francs a day. We made economies."

"Your mother doesn't seem to mingle much," observed Miss Ruck, glancing through the window at the scholastic attitude of Mrs. Church.

"No, she doesn't mingle, except in the native society. Though she lives in pensions, she detests them."

"Why does she live in them, then?" asked Miss Sophy, rather resentfully.

"Oh, because we are so poor; it's the cheapest way to live. We have tried having a cook, but the cook always steals. Mamma used to set me to watch her; that's the way I passed my jeunesse—my belle jeunesse. We are frightfully poor," the young girl went on, with the same strange frankness—a curious mixture of girlish grace and conscious cynicism. "Nous n'avons pas le sou. That's one of the reasons we don't go back to America; mamma says we can't afford to live there."

"Well, any one can see that you're an American girl," Miss Ruck remarked, in a consolatory manner. "I can tell an American girl a mile off. You've got the American style."

"I'm afraid I haven't the American toilette," said Aurora, looking at the other's superior splendour.

"Well, your dress was cut in France; any one can see that."

"Yes," said Aurora, with a laugh, "my dress was cut in France—at Avranches."

"Well, you've got a lovely figure, any way," pursued her companion.

"Ah," said the young girl, "at Avranches, too, my figure was admired." And she looked at me askance, with a certain coquetry. But I was an innocent youth, and I only looked back at her, wondering. She was a great deal nicer than Miss Ruck, and yet Miss Ruck would not have said that. "I try to be like an American girl," she continued; "I do my best, though mamma doesn't at all encourage it. I am very patriotic. I try to copy them, though mamma has brought me up a la francaise; that is, as much as one can in pensions. For instance, I have never been out of the house without mamma; oh, never, never. But sometimes I despair; American girls are so wonderfully frank. I can't be frank, like that. I am always afraid. But I do what I can, as you see. Excusez du peu!"

I thought this young lady at least as outspoken as most of her unexpatriated sisters; there was something almost comical in her despondency. But she had by no means caught, as it seemed to me, the American tone. Whatever her tone was, however, it had a fascination; there was something dainty about it, and yet it was decidedly audacious.

The young ladies began to stroll about the garden again, and I enjoyed their society until M. Pigeonneau's festival came to an end.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Ruck did not take his departure for Appenzell on the morrow, in spite of the eagerness to witness such an event which he had attributed to Mrs. Church. He continued, on the contrary, for many days after, to hang about the garden, to wander up to the banker's and back again, to engage in desultory conversation with his fellow-boarders, and to endeavour to assuage his constitutional restlessness by perusal of the American journals. But on the morrow I had the honour of making Mrs. Church's acquaintance. She came into the salon, after the midday breakfast, with her German octavo under her arm, and she appealed to me for assistance in selecting a quiet corner.

"Would you very kindly," she said, "move that large fauteuil a little more this way? Not the largest; the one with the little cushion. The fauteuils here are very insufficient; I must ask Madame Beaurepas for another. Thank you; a little more to the left, please; that will do. Are you particularly engaged?" she inquired, after she had seated herself. "If not, I should like to have some conversation with you. It is some time since I have met a young American of your- -what shall I call it?—your affiliations. I have learned your name from Madame Beaurepas; I think I used to know some of your people. I don't know what has become of all my friends. I used to have a charming little circle at home, but now I meet no one I know. Don't you think there is a great difference between the people one meets and the people one would like to meet? Fortunately, sometimes," added my interlocutress graciously, "it's quite the same. I suppose you are a specimen, a favourable specimen," she went on, "of young America. Tell me, now, what is young America thinking of in these days of ours? What are its feelings, its opinions, its aspirations? What is its IDEAL?" I had seated myself near Mrs. Church, and she had pointed this interrogation with the gaze of her bright little eyes. I felt it embarrassing to be treated as a favourable specimen of young America, and to be expected to answer for the great republic. Observing my hesitation, Mrs. Church clasped her hands on the open page of her book and gave an intense, melancholy smile. "HAS it an ideal?" she softly asked. "Well, we must talk of this," she went on, without insisting. "Speak, for the present, for yourself simply. Have you come to Europe with any special design?"

"Nothing to boast of," I said. "I am studying a little."

"Ah, I am glad to hear that. You are gathering up a little European culture; that's what we lack, you know, at home. No individual can do much, of course. But you must not be discouraged; every little counts."

"I see that you, at least, are doing your part," I rejoined gallantly, dropping my eyes on my companion's learned volume.

"Yes, I frankly admit that I am fond of study. There is no one, after all, like the Germans. That is, for facts. For opinions I by no means always go with them. I form my opinions myself. I am sorry to say, however," Mrs. Church continued, "that I can hardly pretend to diffuse my acquisitions. I am afraid I am sadly selfish; I do little to irrigate the soil. I belong—I frankly confess it—to the class of absentees."

"I had the pleasure, last evening," I said, "of making the acquaintance of your daughter. She told me you had been a long time in Europe."

Mrs. Church smiled benignantly. "Can one ever be too long? We shall never leave it."

"Your daughter won't like that," I said, smiling too.

"Has she been taking you into her confidence? She is a more sensible young lady than she sometimes appears. I have taken great pains with her; she is really—I may be permitted to say it—superbly educated."

"She seemed to me a very charming girl," I rejoined. "And I learned that she speaks four languages."

"It is not only that," said Mrs. Church, in a tone which suggested that this might be a very superficial species of culture. "She has made what we call *de fortes etudes*—such as I suppose you are making now. She is familiar with the results of modern science; she keeps pace with the new historical school."

"Ah," said I, "she has gone much farther than I!"

"You doubtless think I exaggerate, and you force me, therefore, to mention the fact that I am able to speak of such matters with a certain intelligence."

"That is very evident," I said. "But your daughter thinks you ought to take her home." I began to fear, as soon as I had uttered these words, that they savoured of treachery to the young lady, but I was reassured by seeing that they produced on her mother's placid countenance no symptom whatever of irritation.

"My daughter has her little theories," Mrs. Church observed; "she has, I may say, her illusions. And what wonder! What would youth be without its illusions? Aurora has a theory that she would be happier in New York, in Boston, in Philadelphia, than in one of the charming old cities in which our lot is cast. But she is mistaken, that is all. We must allow our children their illusions, must we not? But we must watch over them."

Although she herself seemed proof against discomposure, I found something vaguely irritating in her soft, sweet positiveness.

"American cities," I said, "are the paradise of young girls."

"Do you mean," asked Mrs. Church, "that the young girls who come from those places are angels?"

"Yes," I said, resolutely.

"This young lady—what is her odd name?—with whom my daughter has formed a somewhat precipitate acquaintance: is Miss Ruck an angel? But I won't force you to say anything uncivil. It would be too cruel to make a single exception."

"Well," said I, "at any rate, in America young girls have an easier lot. They have much more liberty."

My companion laid her hand for an instant on my arm. "My dear young friend, I know America, I know the conditions of life there, so well. There is perhaps no subject on which I have reflected more than on our national idiosyncrasies."

"I am afraid you don't approve of them," said I, a little brutally.

Brutal indeed my proposition was, and Mrs. Church was not prepared to assent to it in this rough shape. She dropped her eyes on her book, with an air of acute meditation. Then, raising them, "We are very crude," she softly observed—"we are very crude." Lest even this delicately-uttered statement should seem to savour of the vice that she deprecated, she went on to explain. "There are two classes of minds, you know—those that hold back, and those that push forward. My daughter and I are not pushers; we move with little steps. We like the old, trodden paths; we like the old, old world."

"Ah," said I, "you know what you like; there is a great virtue in that."

"Yes, we like Europe; we prefer it. We like the opportunities of Europe; we like the REST. There is so much in that, you know. The world seems to me to be hurrying, pressing forward so fiercely, without knowing where it is going. 'Whither?' I often ask, in my little quiet way. But I have yet to learn that any one can tell me."

"You're a great conservative," I observed, while I wondered whether I myself could answer this inquiry.

Mrs. Church gave me a smile which was equivalent to a confession. "I wish to retain a LITTLE—just a little. Surely, we have done so much, we might rest a while; we might pause. That is all my feeling—just to stop a little, to wait! I have seen so many changes. I wish to draw in, to draw in—to hold back, to hold back."

"You shouldn't hold your daughter back!" I answered, laughing and getting up. I got up, not by way of terminating our interview, for I perceived Mrs. Church's exposition of her views to be by no means complete, but in order to offer a chair to Miss Aurora, who at this moment drew near. She thanked me and remained standing, but without at first, as I noticed, meeting her mother's eye.

"You have been engaged with your new acquaintance, my dear?" this lady inquired.

"Yes, mamma, dear," said the young girl, gently.

"Do you find her very edifying?"

Aurora was silent a moment; then she looked at her mother. "I don't know, mamma; she is very fresh."

I ventured to indulge in a respectful laugh. "Your mother has another word for that. But I must not," I added, "be crude."

"Ah, vous m'en voulez?" inquired Mrs. Church. "And yet I can't pretend I said it in jest. I feel it too much. We have been having a little social discussion," she said to her daughter. "There is still so much to be said." "And I wish," she continued, turning to me, "that I could give you our point of view. Don't you wish, Aurora, that we could give him our point of view?"

"Yes, mamma," said Aurora.

"We consider ourselves very fortunate in our point of view, don't we, dearest?" mamma demanded.

"Very fortunate, indeed, mamma."

"You see we have acquired an insight into European life," the elder lady pursued. "We have our place at many a European fireside. We find so much to esteem—so much to enjoy. Do we not, my daughter?"

"So very much, mamma," the young girl went on, with a sort of inscrutable submissiveness. I wondered at it; it offered so strange a contrast to the mocking freedom of her tone the night before; but while I wondered I was careful not to let my perplexity take precedence of my good manners.

"I don't know what you ladies may have found at European firesides," I said, "but there can be very little doubt what you have left there."

Mrs. Church got up, to acknowledge my compliment. "We have spent some charming hours. And that reminds me that we have just now such an occasion in prospect. We are to call upon some Genevese friends—the family of the Pasteur Galopin. They are to go with us to the old library at the Hotel de Ville, where there are some very interesting documents of the period of the Reformation; we are promised a glimpse of some manuscripts of poor Servetus, the antagonist and victim, you know, of Calvin. Here, of course, one can only speak of Calvin under one's breath, but some day, when we are more private," and Mrs. Church looked round the room, "I will give you my view of him. I think it has a touch of originality. Aurora is familiar with, are you not, my daughter, familiar with my view of Calvin?"

"Yes, mamma," said Aurora, with docility, while the two ladies went to prepare for their visit to the Pasteur Galopin.

CHAPTER VI.

"She has demanded a new lamp; I told you she would!" This communication was made me by Madame Beaurepas a couple of days later. "And she has asked for a new tapis de lit, and

she has requested me to provide Celestine with a pair of light shoes. I told her that, as a general thing, cooks are not shod with satin. That poor Celestine!"

"Mrs. Church may be exacting," I said, "but she is a clever little woman."

"A lady who pays but five francs and a half shouldn't be too clever. C'est deplacé. I don't like the type."

"What type do you call Mrs. Church's?"

"Mon Dieu," said Madame Beaurepas, "c'est une de ces mamans comme vous en avez, qui promettent leur fille."

"She is trying to marry her daughter? I don't think she's of that sort."

But Madame Beaurepas shrewdly held to her idea. "She is trying it in her own way; she does it very quietly. She doesn't want an American; she wants a foreigner. And she wants a mari sérieux. But she is travelling over Europe in search of one. She would like a magistrate."

"A magistrate?"

"A gros bonnet of some kind; a professor or a deputy."

"I am very sorry for the poor girl," I said, laughing.

"You needn't pity her too much; she's a sly thing."

"Ah, for that, no!" I exclaimed. "She's a charming girl."

Madame Beaurepas gave an elderly grin. "She has hooked you, eh? But the mother won't have you."

I developed my idea, without heeding this insinuation. "She's a charming girl, but she is a little odd. It's a necessity of her position. She is less submissive to her mother than she has to pretend to be. That's in self-defence; it's to make her life possible."

"She wishes to get away from her mother," continued Madame Beaurepas.

"She wishes to courir les champs."

"She wishes to go to America, her native country."

"Precisely. And she will certainly go."

"I hope so!" I rejoined.

"Some fine morning—or evening—she will go off with a young man; probably with a young American."

"Allons donc!" said I, with disgust.

"That will be quite America enough," pursued my cynical hostess. "I have kept a boarding-house for forty years. I have seen that type."

"Have such things as that happened chez vous?" I asked.

"Everything has happened chez moi. But nothing has happened more than once. Therefore this won't happen here. It will be at the next place they go to, or the next. Besides, here there is no young American pour la partie—none except you, Monsieur. You are susceptible, but you are too reasonable."

"It's lucky for you I am reasonable," I answered. "It's thanks to that fact that you escape a scolding!"

One morning, about this time, instead of coming back to breakfast at the pension, after my lectures at the Academy, I went to partake of this meal with a fellow-student, at an ancient eating-house in the collegiate quarter. On separating from my friend, I took my way along that charming public walk known in Geneva as the Treille, a shady terrace, of immense elevation, overhanging a portion of the lower town. There are spreading trees and well-worn benches, and over the tiles and chimneys of the ville basse there is a view of the snow-crested Alps. On the other side, as you turn your back to the view, the promenade is overlooked by a row of tall, sober-faced hotels, the dwellings of the local aristocracy. I was very fond of the place, and often resorted to it to stimulate my sense of the picturesque. Presently, as I lingered there on this occasion, I became aware that a gentleman was seated not far from where I stood, with his back to the Alpine chain, which this morning was brilliant and distinct, and a newspaper, unfolded, in his lap. He was not reading, however; he was staring before him in gloomy contemplation. I don't know whether I recognised first the newspaper or its proprietor; one, in either case, would have helped me to identify the other. One was the New York Herald; the other, of course, was Mr. Ruck. As I drew nearer, he transferred his eyes from the stony, high-featured masks of the gray old houses on the other side of the terrace, and I knew by the expression of his face just how he had been feeling about these distinguished abodes. He had made up his mind that their proprietors were a dusky, narrow-minded, unsociable company; plunging their roots into a superfluous past. I endeavoured, therefore, as I sat down beside him, to suggest something more impersonal.

"That's a beautiful view of the Alps," I observed.

"Yes," said Mr. Ruck, without moving, "I've examined it. Fine thing, in its way—fine thing. Beauties of nature—that sort of thing. We came up on purpose to look at it."

"Your ladies, then, have been with you?"

"Yes; they are just walking round. They're awfully restless. They keep saying I'm restless, but I'm as quiet as a sleeping child to them. It takes," he added in a moment, drily, "the form of shopping."

"Are they shopping now?"

"Well, if they ain't, they're trying to. They told me to sit here a while, and they'd just walk round. I generally know what that means. But that's the principal interest for ladies," he added, retracting his irony. "We thought we'd come up here and see the cathedral; Mrs. Church seemed to think it a dead loss that we shouldn't see the cathedral, especially as we hadn't seen many yet. And I had to come up to the banker's any way. Well, we certainly saw the cathedral. I don't know as we are any the better for it, and I don't know as I should know it again. But we saw it, any way. I don't know as I should want to go there regularly; but I suppose it will give us, in conversation, a kind of hold on Mrs. Church, eh? I guess we want something of that kind. Well," Mr. Ruck continued, "I stepped in at the banker's to see if there wasn't something, and they handed me out a Herald."

"I hope the Herald is full of good news," I said.

"Can't say it is. D-d bad news."

"Political," I inquired, "or commercial?"

"Oh, hang politics! It's business, sir. There ain't any business. It's all gone to,"—and Mr. Ruck became profane. "Nine failures in one day. What do you say-to that?"

"I hope they haven't injured you," I said.

"Well, they haven't helped me much. So many houses on fire, that's all. If they happen to take place in your own street, they don't increase the value of your property. When mine catches, I suppose they'll write and tell me—one of these days, when they've got nothing else to do. I didn't get a blessed letter this morning; I suppose they think I'm having such a good time over here it's a pity to disturb me. If I could attend to business for about half an hour, I'd find out something. But I can't, and it's no use talking. The state of my health was never so unsatisfactory as it was about five o'clock this morning."

"I am very sorry to hear that," I said, "and I recommend you strongly not to think of business."

"I don't," Mr. Ruck replied. "I'm thinking of cathedrals; I'm thinking of the beauties of nature. Come," he went on, turning round on the bench and leaning his elbow on the parapet, "I'll think of those mountains over there; they ARE pretty, certainly. Can't you get over there?"

"Over where?"

"Over to those hills. Don't they run a train right up?"

"You can go to Chamouni," I said. "You can go to Grindelwald and Zermatt and fifty other places. You can't go by rail, but you can drive."

"All right, we'll drive—and not in a one-horse concern, either. Yes, Chamouni is one of the places we put down. I hope there are a few nice shops in Chamouni." Mr. Ruck spoke with a certain quickened emphasis, and in a tone more explicitly humorous than he commonly employed. I thought he was excited, and yet he had not the appearance of excitement. He looked like a man who has simply taken, in the face of disaster, a sudden, somewhat imaginative, resolution not to "worry." He presently twisted himself about on his bench again and began to watch for his companions. "Well, they ARE walking round," he resumed; "I guess they've hit on something, somewhere. And they've got a carriage waiting outside of that archway too. They seem to do a big business in archways here, don't they. They like to have a carriage to carry home the things—those ladies of mine. Then they're sure they've got them." The ladies, after this, to do them justice, were not very long in appearing. They came toward us, from under the archway to which Mr. Ruck had somewhat invidiously alluded, slowly and with a rather exhausted step and expression. My companion looked at them a moment, as they advanced. "They're tired," he said softly. "When they're tired, like that, it's very expensive."

"Well," said Mrs. Ruck, "I'm glad you've had some company." Her husband looked at her, in silence, through narrowed eyelids, and I suspected that this gracious observation on the lady's part was prompted by a restless conscience.

Miss Sophy glanced at me with her little straightforward air of defiance. "It would have been more proper if WE had had the company. Why didn't you come after us, instead of sitting there?" she asked of Mr. Ruck's companion.

"I was told by your father," I explained, "that you were engaged in sacred rites." Miss Ruck was not gracious, though I doubt whether it was because her conscience was better than her mother's.

"Well, for a gentleman there is nothing so sacred as ladies' society," replied Miss Ruck, in the manner of a person accustomed to giving neat retorts.

"I suppose you refer to the Cathedral," said her mother. "Well, I must say, we didn't go back there. I don't know what it may be of a Sunday, but it gave me a chill."

"We discovered the loveliest little lace-shop," observed the young girl, with a serenity that was superior to bravado.

Her father looked at her a while; then turned about again, leaning on the parapet, and gazed away at the "hills."

"Well, it was certainly cheap," said Mrs. Ruck, also contemplating the Alps.

"We are going to Chamouni," said her husband. "You haven't any occasion for lace at Chamouni."

"Well, I'm glad to hear you have decided to go somewhere," rejoined his wife. "I don't want to be a fixture at a boarding-house."

"You can wear lace anywhere," said Miss Ruck, "if you pat it on right. That's the great thing, with lace. I don't think they know how to wear lace in Europe. I know how I mean to wear mine; but I mean to keep it till I get home."

Her father transferred his melancholy gaze to her elaborately-appointed little person; there was a great deal of very new-looking detail in Miss Ruck's appearance. Then, in a tone of voice quite out of consonance with his facial despondency, "Have you purchased a great deal?" he inquired.

"I have purchased enough for you to make a fuss about."

"He can't make a fuss about that," said Mrs. Ruck.

"Well, you'll see!" declared the young girl with a little sharp laugh.

But her father went on, in the same tone: "Have you got it in your pocket? Why don't you put it on—why don't you hang it round you?"

"I'll hang it round YOU, if you don't look out!" cried Miss Sophy.

"Don't you want to show it to this gentleman?" Mr. Ruck continued.

"Mercy, how you do talk about that lace!" said his wife.

"Well, I want to be lively. There's every reason for it; we're going to Chamouni."

"You're restless; that's what's the matter with you." And Mrs. Ruck got up.

"No, I ain't," said her husband. "I never felt so quiet; I feel as peaceful as a little child."

Mrs. Ruck, who had no sense whatever of humour, looked at her daughter and at me. "Well, I hope you'll improve," she said.

"Send in the bills," Mr. Ruck went on, rising to his feet. "Don't hesitate, Sophy. I don't care what you do now. In for a penny, in for a pound."

Miss Ruck joined her mother, with a little toss of her head, and we followed the ladies to the carriage. "In your place," said Miss Sophy to her father, "I wouldn't talk so much about pennies and pounds before strangers."

Poor Mr. Ruck appeared to feel the force of this observation, which, in the consciousness of a man who had never been "mean," could hardly fail to strike a responsive chord. He coloured a little, and he was silent; his companions got into their vehicle, the front seat of which was adorned with a large parcel. Mr. Ruck gave the parcel a little poke with his umbrella, and then, turning to me with a rather grimly penitential smile, "After all," he said, "for the ladies that's the principal interest."

CHAPTER VII.

Old M. Pigeonneau had more than once proposed to me to take a walk, but I had hitherto been unable to respond to so alluring an invitation. It befell, however, one afternoon, that I perceived him going forth upon a desultory stroll, with a certain lonesomeness of demeanour that attracted my sympathy. I hastily overtook him, and passed my hand into his venerable arm, a proceeding which produced in the good old man so jovial a sense of comradeship that he ardently proposed we should bend our steps to the English Garden; no locality less festive was worthy of the occasion. To the English Garden, accordingly, we went; it lay beyond the bridge, beside the lake. It was very pretty and very animated; there was a band playing in the middle, and a considerable number of persons sitting under the small trees, on benches and little chairs, or strolling beside the blue water. We joined the strollers, we observed our companions, and conversed on obvious topics. Some of these last, of course, were the pretty women who embellished the scene, and who, in the light of M. Pigeonneau's comprehensive criticism, appeared surprisingly numerous. He seemed bent upon our making up our minds as to which was the prettiest, and as this was an innocent game I consented to play at it.

Suddenly M. Pigeonneau stopped, pressing my arm with the liveliest emotion. "La voila, la voila, the prettiest!" he quickly murmured, "coming toward us, in a blue dress, with the other." It was at the other I was looking, for the other, to my surprise, was our interesting fellow-pensioner, the daughter of a vigilant mother. M. Pigeonneau, meanwhile, had redoubled his exclamations; he had recognised Miss Sophy Ruck. "Oh, la belle rencontre, nos aimables convives; the prettiest girl in the world, in effect!"

We immediately greeted and joined the young ladies, who, like ourselves, were walking arm in arm and enjoying the scene.

"I was citing you with admiration to my friend even before I had recognised you," said M. Pigeonneau to Miss Ruck.

"I don't believe in French compliments," remarked this young lady, presenting her back to the smiling old man.

"Are you and Miss Ruck walking alone?" I asked of her companion. "You had better accept of M. Pigeonneau's gallant protection, and of mine."

Aurora Church had taken her hand out of Miss Ruck's arm; she looked at me, smiling, with her head a little inclined, while, upon her shoulder, she made her open parasol revolve. "Which is most improper—to walk alone or to walk with gentlemen? I wish to do what is most improper."

"What mysterious logic governs your conduct?" I inquired.

"He thinks you can't understand him when he talks like that," said Miss Ruck. "But I do understand you, always!"

"So I have always ventured to hope, my dear Miss Ruck."

"Well, if I didn't, it wouldn't be much loss," rejoined this young lady.

"Allons, en marche!" cried M. Pigeonneau, smiling still, and undiscouraged by her inhumanity. "Let us make together the tour of the garden." And he imposed his society upon Miss Ruck with a respectful, elderly grace which was evidently unable to see anything in her reluctance but modesty, and was sublimely conscious of a mission to place modesty at its ease. This ill-assorted couple walked in front, while Aurora Church and I strolled along together.

"I am sure this is more improper," said my companion; "this is delightfully improper. I don't say that as a compliment to you," she added. "I would say it to any man, no matter how stupid."

"Oh, I am very stupid," I answered, "but this doesn't seem to me wrong."

"Not for you, no; only for me. There is nothing that a man can do that is wrong, is there? En morale, you know, I mean. Ah, yes, he can steal; but I think there is nothing else, is there?"

"I don't know. One doesn't know those things until after one has done them. Then one is enlightened."

"And you mean that you have never been enlightened? You make yourself out very good."

"That is better than making one's self out bad, as you do."

The young girl glanced at me a moment, and then, with her charming smile, "That's one of the consequences of a false position."

"Is your position false?" I inquired, smiling too at this large formula.

"Distinctly so."

"In what way?"

"Oh, in every way. For instance, I have to pretend to be a jeune fille. I am not a jeune fille; no American girl is a jeune fille; an American girl is an intelligent, responsible creature. I have to pretend to be very innocent, but I am not very innocent."

"You don't pretend to be very innocent; you pretend to be—what shall I call it?—very wise."

"That's no pretence. I am wise."

"You are not an American girl," I ventured to observe.

My companion almost stopped, looking at me; there was a little flush in her cheek. "Voilà!" she said. "There's my false position. I want to be an American girl, and I'm not."

"Do you want me to tell you?" I went on. "An American girl wouldn't talk as you are talking now."

"Please tell me," said Aurora Church, with expressive eagerness.

"How would she talk?"

"I can't tell you all the things an American girl would say, but I think I can tell you the things she wouldn't say. She wouldn't reason out her conduct, as you seem to me to do."

Aurora gave me the most flattering attention. "I see. She would be simpler. To do very simple things that are not at all simple—that is the American girl!"

I permitted myself a small explosion of hilarity. "I don't know whether you are a French girl, or what you are," I said, "but you are very witty."

"Ah, you mean that I strike false notes!" cried Aurora Church, sadly.

"That's just what I want to avoid. I wish you would always tell me."

The conversational union between Miss Ruck and her neighbour, in front of us, had evidently not become a close one. The young lady suddenly turned round to us with a question: "Don't you want some ice-cream?"

"SHE doesn't strike false notes," I murmured.

There was a kind of pavilion or kiosk, which served as a cafe, and at which the delicacies procurable at such an establishment were dispensed. Miss Ruck pointed to the little green tables and chairs which were set out on the gravel; M. Pigeonneau, fluttering with a sense of dissipation, seconded the proposal, and we presently sat down and gave our order to a nimble attendant. I managed again to place myself next to Aurora Church; our companions were on the other side of the table.

My neighbour was delighted with our situation. "This is best of all," she said. "I never believed I should come to a cafe with two strange men! Now, you can't persuade me this isn't wrong."

"To make it wrong we ought to see your mother coming down that path."

"Ah, my mother makes everything wrong," said the young girl, attacking with a little spoon in the shape of a spade the apex of a pink ice. And then she returned to her idea of a moment before: "You must promise to tell me—to warn me in some way—whenever I strike a false note. You must give a little cough, like that—ahem!"

"You will keep me very busy, and people will think I am in a consumption."

"Voyons," she continued, "why have you never talked to me more? Is that a false note? Why haven't you been 'attentive?' That's what American girls call it; that's what Miss Ruck calls it."

I assured myself that our companions were out of earshot, and that Miss Ruck was much occupied with a large vanilla cream. "Because you are always entwined with that young lady. There is no getting near you."

Aurora looked at her friend while the latter devoted herself to her ice. "You wonder why I like her so much, I suppose. So does mamma; elle s'y perd. I don't like her particularly; je n'en suis pas folle. But she gives me information; she tells me about America. Mamma has always tried to prevent my knowing anything about it, and I am all the more curious. And then Miss Ruck is very fresh."

"I may not be so fresh as Miss Ruck," I said, "but in future, when you want information, I recommend you to come to me for it."

"Our friend offers to take me to America; she invites me to go back with her, to stay with her. You couldn't do that, could you?" And the young girl looked at me a moment. "Bon, a false note I can see it by your face; you remind me of a maitre de piano."

"You overdo the character—the poor American girl," I said. "Are you going to stay with that delightful family?"

"I will go and stay with any one that will take me or ask me. It's a real nostalgia. She says that in New York—in Thirty-Seventh Street— I should have the most lovely time."

"I have no doubt you would enjoy it."

"Absolute liberty to begin with."

"It seems to me you have a certain liberty here," I rejoined.

"Ah, THIS? Oh, I shall pay for this. I shall be punished by mamma, and I shall be lectured by Madame Galopin."

"The wife of the pasteur?"

"His digne epouse. Madame Galopin, for mamma, is the incarnation of European opinion. That's what vexes me with mamma, her thinking so much of people like Madame Galopin."

Going to see Madame Galopin—mamma calls that being in European society. European society! I'm so sick of that expression; I have heard it since I was six years old. Who is Madame Galopin—who thinks anything of her here? She is nobody; she is perfectly third-rate. If I like America better than mamma, I also know Europe better."

"But your mother, certainly," I objected, a trifle timidly, for my young lady was excited, and had a charming little passion in her eye—"your mother has a great many social relations all over the Continent."

"She thinks so, but half the people don't care for us. They are not so good as we, and they know it—I'll do them that justice—and they wonder why we should care for them. When we are polite to them, they think the less of us; there are plenty of people like that. Mamma thinks so much of them simply because they are foreigners. If I could tell you all the dull, stupid, second-rate people I have had to talk to, for no better reason than that they were *de leur pays!*—Germans, French, Italians, Turks, everything. When I complain, mamma always says that at any rate it's practice in the language. And she makes so much of the English, too; I don't know what that's practice in."

Before I had time to suggest an hypothesis, as regards this latter point, I saw something that made me rise, with a certain solemnity, from my chair. This was nothing less than the neat little figure of Mrs. Church—a perfect model of the *femme comme il faut*—approaching our table with an impatient step, and followed most unexpectedly in her advance by the pre-eminent form of Mr. Ruck. She had evidently come in quest of her daughter, and if she had commanded this gentleman's attendance, it had been on no softer ground than that of his unenvied paternity to her guilty child's accomplice. My movement had given the alarm, and Aurora Church and M. Pigeonneau got up; Miss Ruck alone did not, in the local phrase, *derange herself*. Mrs. Church, beneath her modest little bonnet, looked very serious, but not at all fluttered; she came straight to her daughter, who received her with a smile, and then she looked all round at the rest of us, very fixedly and tranquilly, without bowing. I must do both these ladies the justice to mention that neither of them made the least little "scene."

"I have come for you, dearest," said the mother.

"Yes, dear mamma."

"Come for you—come for you," Mrs. Church repeated, looking down at the relics of our little feast. "I was obliged to ask Mr. Ruck's assistance. I was puzzled; I thought a long time."

"Well, Mrs. Church, I was glad to see you puzzled once in your life!" said Mr. Ruck, with friendly jocosity. "But you came pretty straight for all that. I had hard work to keep up with you."

"We will take a cab, Aurora," Mrs. Church went on, without heeding this pleasantry—"a closed one. Come, my daughter."

"Yes, dear mamma." The young girl was blushing, yet she was still smiling; she looked round at us all, and, as her eyes met mine, I thought she was beautiful. "Good-bye," she said to us. "I have had a **LOVELY TIME**."

"We must not linger," said her mother; "it is five o'clock. We are to dine, you know, with Madame Galopin."

"I had quite forgotten," Aurora declared. "That will be charming."

"Do you want me to assist you to carry her back, *ma am?*" asked Mr. Ruck.

Mrs. Church hesitated a moment, with her serene little gaze. "Do you prefer, then, to leave your daughter to finish the evening with these gentlemen?"

Mr. Ruck pushed back his hat and scratched the top of his head.

"Well, I don't know. How would you like that, Sophy?"

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Sophy, as Mrs. Church marched off with her daughter.

CHAPTER VIII.

I had half expected that Mrs. Church would make me feel the weight of her disapproval of my own share in that little act of revelry in the English Garden. But she maintained her claim to being a highly reasonable woman—I could not but admire the justice of this pretension—by recognising my irresponsibility. I had taken her daughter as I found her, which was, according to Mrs. Church's view, in a very equivocal position. The natural instinct of a young man, in such a situation, is not to protest but to profit; and it was clear to Mrs. Church that I had had nothing to do with Miss Aurora's appearing in public under the insufficient chaperonage of Miss Ruck. Besides, she liked to converse, and she apparently did me the honour to believe that of all the members of the Pension Beaurepas I had the most cultivated understanding. I found her in the salon a couple of evenings after the incident I have just narrated, and I approached her with a view of making my peace with her, if this should prove necessary. But Mrs. Church was as gracious as I could have desired; she put her marker into her book, and folded her plump little hands on the cover. She made no specific allusion to the English Garden; she embarked, rather, upon those general considerations in which her refined intellect was so much at home.

"Always at your studies, Mrs. Church," I ventured to observe.

"Que voulez-vous? To say studies is to say too much; one doesn't study in the parlour of a boarding-house. But I do what I can; I have always done what I can. That is all I have ever claimed."

"No one can do more, and you seem to have done a great deal."

"Do you know my secret?" she asked, with an air of brightening confidence. And she paused a moment before she imparted her secret— "To care only for the BEST! To do the best, to know the best—to have, to desire, to recognise, only the best. That's what I have always done, in my quiet little way. I have gone through Europe on my devoted little errand, seeking, seeing, heeding, only the best. And it has not been for myself alone; it has been for my daughter. My daughter has had the best. We are not rich, but I can say that."

"She has had you, madam," I rejoined finely.

"Certainly, such as I am, I have been devoted. We have got something everywhere; a little here, a little there. That's the real secret— to get something everywhere; you always can if you are devoted. Sometimes it has been a little music, sometimes a little deeper insight into the history of art; every little counts you know. Sometimes it has been just a glimpse, a view, a lovely landscape, an impression. We have always been on the look-out. Sometimes it has been a valued friendship, a delightful social tie."

"Here comes the 'European society,' the poor daughter's bugbear," I said to myself.

"Certainly," I remarked aloud—I admit, rather perversely—"if you have lived a great deal in pensions, you must have got acquainted with lots of people."

Mrs. Church dropped her eyes a moment; and then, with considerable gravity, "I think the European pension system in many respects remarkable, and in some satisfactory. But of the friendships that we have formed, few have been contracted in establishments of this kind."

"I am sorry to hear that!" I said, laughing.

"I don't say it for you, though I might say it for some others. We have been interested in European homes."

"Oh, I see!"

"We have the entree of the old Genevese society I like its tone. I prefer it to that of Mr. Ruck," added Mrs. Church, calmly; "to that of Mrs. Ruck and Miss Ruck—of Miss Ruck especially."

"Ah, the poor Rucks haven't any tone at all," I said "Don't take them more seriously than they take themselves."

"Tell me this," my companion rejoined, "are they fair examples?"

"Examples of what?"

"Of our American tendencies."

"'Tendencies' is a big word, dear lady; tendencies are difficult to calculate. And you shouldn't abuse those good Rucks, who have been very kind to your daughter. They have invited her to go and stay with them in Thirty-Seventh Street."

"Aurora has told me. It might be very serious."

"It might be very droll," I said.

"To me," declared Mrs. Church, "it is simply terrible. I think we shall have to leave the Pension Beaurepas. I shall go back to Madame Chamousset."

"On account of the Rucks?" I asked.

"Pray, why don't they go themselves? I have given them some excellent addresses—written down the very hours of the trains. They were going to Appenzell; I thought it was arranged."

"They talk of Chamouni now," I said; "but they are very helpless and undecided."

"I will give them some Chamouni addresses. Mrs. Ruck will send a chaise a porteurs; I will give her the name of a man who lets them lower than you get them at the hotels. After that they MUST go."

"Well, I doubt," I observed, "whether Mr. Ruck will ever really be seen on the Mer de Glace—in a high hat. He's not like you; he doesn't value his European privileges. He takes no interest. He regrets Wall Street, acutely. As his wife says, he is very restless, but he has no curiosity about Chamouni. So you must not depend too much on the effect of your addresses."

"Is it a frequent type?" asked Mrs. Church, with an air of self-control.

"I am afraid so. Mr. Ruck is a broken-down man of business. He is broken down in health, and I suspect he is broken down in fortune. He has spent his whole life in buying and selling; he knows how to do nothing else. His wife and daughter have spent their lives, not in selling, but in buying; and they, on their side, know how to do nothing else. To get something in a shop that they can put on their backs—that is their one idea; they haven't another in their heads. Of course they spend no end of money, and they do it with an implacable persistence, with a mixture of audacity and of cunning. They do it in his teeth and they do it behind his back; the mother protects the daughter, and the daughter eggs on the mother. Between them they are bleeding him to death."

"Ah, what a picture!" murmured Mrs. Church. "I am afraid they are very-uncultivated."

"I share your fears. They are perfectly ignorant; they have no resources. The vision of fine clothes occupies their whole imagination. They have not an idea—even a worse one—to compete with it. Poor Mr. Ruck, who is extremely good-natured and soft, seems to me a really tragic figure. He is getting bad news every day from home; his business is going to the dogs. He is unable to stop it; he has to stand and watch his fortunes ebb. He has been used to doing things in a big way, and he feels mean, if he makes a fuss about bills. So the ladies keep sending them in."

"But haven't they common sense? Don't they know they are ruining themselves?"

"They don't believe it. The duty of an American husband and father is to keep them going. If he asks them how, that's his own affair. So, by way of not being mean, of being a good American husband and father, poor Ruck stands staring at bankruptcy."

Mrs. Church looked at me a moment, in quickened meditation. "Why, if Aurora were to go to stay with them, she might not even be properly fed!"

"I don't, on the whole, recommend," I said, laughing, "that your daughter should pay a visit to Thirty-Seventh Street."

"Why should I be subjected to such trials—so sadly eprouvee? Why should a daughter of mine like that dreadful girl?"

"DOES she like her?"

"Pray, do you mean," asked my companion, softly, "that Aurora is a hypocrite?"

I hesitated a moment. "A little, since you ask me. I think you have forced her to be."

Mrs. Church answered this possibly presumptuous charge with a tranquil, candid exultation. "I never force my daughter!"

"She is nevertheless in a false position," I rejoined. "She hungers and thirsts to go back to her own country; she wants 'to come' out in New York, which is certainly, socially speaking, the El Dorado of young ladies. She likes any one, for the moment, who will talk to her of that, and serve as a connecting-link with her native shores. Miss Ruck performs this agreeable office."

"Your idea is, then, that if she were to go with Miss Ruck to America she would drop her afterwards."

I complimented Mrs. Church upon her logical mind, but I repudiated this cynical supposition. "I can't imagine her—when it should come to the point—embarking with the famille Ruck. But I wish she might go, nevertheless."

Mrs. Church shook her head serenely, and smiled at my inappropriate zeal. "I trust my poor child may never be guilty of so fatal a mistake. She is completely in error; she is wholly unadapted to the peculiar conditions of American life. It would not please her. She would not sympathise. My daughter's ideal is not the ideal of the class of young women to which Miss Ruck belongs. I fear they are very numerous; they give the tone—they give the tone."

"It is you that are mistaken," I said; "go home for six months and see."

"I have not, unfortunately, the means to make costly experiments. My daughter has had great advantages—rare advantages—and I should be very sorry to believe that au fond she does not appreciate them. One thing is certain: I must remove her from this pernicious influence. We must part company with this deplorable family. If Mr. Ruck and his ladies cannot be induced to go to Chamouni—a journey that no traveller with the smallest self-respect would omit—my daughter and I shall be obliged to retire. We shall go to Dresden."

"To Dresden?"

"The capital of Saxony. I had arranged to go there for the autumn, but it will be simpler to go immediately. There are several works in the gallery with which my daughter has not, I think, sufficiently familiarised herself; it is especially strong in the seventeenth century schools."

As my companion offered me this information I perceived Mr. Ruck come lounging in, with his hands in his pockets, and his elbows making acute angles. He had his usual anomalous appearance of both seeking and avoiding society, and he wandered obliquely toward Mrs. Church, whose last words he had overheard. "The seventeenth century schools," he said, slowly, as if he were weighing some very small object in a very large-pair of scales. "Now, do you suppose they HAD schools at that period?"

Mrs. Church rose with a good deal of precision, making no answer to this incongruous jest. She clasped her large volume to her neat little bosom, and she fixed a gentle, serious eye upon Mr. Ruck.

"I had a letter this morning from Chamouni," she said.

"Well," replied Mr. Ruck, "I suppose you've got friends all over."

"I have friends at Chamouni, but they are leaving. To their great regret." I had got up, too; I listened to this statement, and I wondered. I am almost ashamed to mention the subject of my agitation. I asked myself whether this was a sudden improvisation, consecrated by maternal devotion; but this point has never been elucidated. "They are giving up some charming rooms; perhaps you would like them. I would suggest your telegraphing. The weather is glorious," continued Mrs. Church, "and the highest peaks are now perceived with extraordinary distinctness."

Mr. Ruck listened, as he always listened, respectfully. "Well," he said, "I don't know as I want to go up Mount Blank. That's the principal attraction, isn't it?"

"There are many others. I thought I would offer you an—an exceptional opportunity."

"Well," said Mr. Ruck, "you're right down friendly. But I seem to have more opportunities than I know what to do with. I don't seem able to take hold."

"It only needs a little decision," remarked Mrs. Church, with an air which was an admirable example of this virtue. "I wish you good-night, sir." And she moved noiselessly away.

Mr. Ruck, with his long legs apart, stood staring after her; then he transferred his perfectly quiet eyes to me. "Does she own a hotel over there?" he asked. "Has she got any stock in Mount Blank?"

CHAPTER IX.

The next day Madame Beaurepas handed me, with her own elderly fingers, a missive, which proved to be a telegram. After glancing at it, I informed her that it was apparently a signal for my departure; my brother had arrived in England, and proposed to me to meet him there; he had come on business, and was to spend but three weeks in Europe. "But my house empties itself!" cried the old woman. "The famille Ruck talks of leaving me, and Madame Church nous fait la reverence."

"Mrs. Church is going away?"

"She is packing her trunk; she is a very extraordinary person. Do you know what she asked me this morning? To invent some combination by which the famille Ruck should move away. I informed her that I was not an inventor. That poor famille Ruck! 'Oblige me by getting rid of them,' said Madame Church, as she would have asked Celestine to remove a dish of

cabbage. She speaks as if the world were made for Madame Church. I intimated to her that if she objected to the company there was a very simple remedy; and at present elle fait ses paquets."

"She really asked you to get the Rucks out of the house?"

"She asked me to tell them that their rooms had been let, three months ago, to another family. She has an APLOMB!"

Mrs. Church's aplomb caused me considerable diversion; I am not sure that it was not, in some degree, to laugh over it at my leisure that I went out into the garden that evening to smoke a cigar. The night was dark and not particularly balmy, and most of my fellow-pensioners, after dinner, had remained in-doors. A long straight walk conducted from the door of the house to the ancient grille that I have described, and I stood here for some time, looking through the iron bars at the silent empty street. The prospect was not entertaining, and I presently turned away. At this moment I saw, in the distance, the door of the house open and throw a shaft of lamplight into the darkness. Into the lamplight there stepped the figure of a female, who presently closed the door behind her. She disappeared in the dusk of the garden, and I had seen her but for an instant, but I remained under the impression that Aurora Church, on the eve of her departure, had come out for a meditative stroll.

I lingered near the gate, keeping the red tip of my cigar turned toward the house, and before long a young lady emerged from among the shadows of the trees and encountered the light of a lamp that stood just outside the gate. It was in fact Aurora Church, but she seemed more bent upon conversation than upon meditation. She stood a moment looking at me, and then she said, -

"Ought I to retire—to return to the house?"

"If you ought, I should be very sorry to tell you so," I answered.

"But we are all alone; there is no one else in the garden."

"It is not the first time that I have been alone with a young lady. I am not at all terrified."

"Ah, but I?" said the young girl. "I have never been alone—" then, quickly, she interrupted herself. "Good, there's another false note!"

"Yes, I am obliged to admit that one is very false."

She stood looking at me. "I am going away to-morrow; after that there will be no one to tell me."

CHAPTER X.

"That will matter little," I presently replied. "Telling you will do no good."

"Ah, why do you say that?" murmured Aurora Church.

I said it partly because it was true; but I said it for other reasons as well, which it was hard to define. Standing there bare-headed, in the night air, in the vague light, this young lady looked extremely interesting; and the interest of her appearance was not diminished by a suspicion on my own part that she had come into the garden knowing me to be there. I thought her a charming girl, and I felt very sorry for her; but, as I looked at her, the terms in which Madame Beaurepas had ventured to characterise her recurred to me with a certain force. I had professed a contempt for them at the time, but it now came into my head that perhaps this unfortunately situated, this insidiously mutinous young creature, was looking out for a preserver. She was certainly not a girl to throw herself at a man's head, but it was possible

that in her intense—her almost morbid-desire to put into effect an ideal which was perhaps after all charged with as many fallacies as her mother affirmed, she might do something reckless and irregular—something in which a sympathetic compatriot, as yet unknown, would find his profit. The image, unshaped though it was, of this sympathetic compatriot, filled me with a sort of envy. For some moments I was silent, conscious of these things, and then I answered her question. "Because some things—some differences are felt, not learned. To you liberty is not natural; you are like a person who has bought a repeater, and, in his satisfaction, is constantly making it sound. To a real American girl her liberty is a very vulgarly-ticking old clock."

"Ah, you mean, then," said the poor girl, "that my mother has ruined me?"

"Ruined you?"

"She has so perverted my mind, that when I try to be natural I am necessarily immodest."

"That again is a false note," I said, laughing.

She turned away. "I think you are cruel."

"By no means," I declared; "because, for my own taste, I prefer you as—as—"

I hesitated, and she turned back. "As what?"

"As you are."

She looked at me a while again, and then she said, in a little reasoning voice that reminded me of her mother's, only that it was conscious and studied, "I was not aware that I am under any particular obligation to please you!" And then she gave a clear laugh, quite at variance with her voice.

"Oh, there is no obligation," I said, "but one has preferences. I am very sorry you are going away."

"What does it matter to you? You are going yourself."

"As I am going in a different direction that makes all the greater separation."

She answered nothing; she stood looking through the bars of the tall gate at the empty, dusky street. "This grille is like a cage," she said, at last.

"Fortunately, it is a cage that will open." And I laid my hand on the lock.

"Don't open it," and she pressed the gate back. "If you should open it I would go out—and never return."

"Where should you go?"

"To America."

"Straight away?"

"Somehow or other. I would go to the American consul. I would beg him to give me money—to help me."

I received this assertion without a smile; I was not in a smiling humour. On the contrary, I felt singularly excited, and I kept my hand on the lock of the gate. I believed (or I thought I believed) what my companion said, and I had—absurd as it may appear—an irritated vision of her throwing herself upon consular sympathy. It seemed to me, for a moment, that to pass out of that gate with this yearning, straining, young creature, would be to pass into some

mysterious felicity. If I were only a hero of romance, I would offer, myself, to take her to America.

In a moment more, perhaps, I should have persuaded myself that I was one, but at this juncture I heard a sound that was not romantic. It proved to be the very realistic tread of Celestine, the cook, who stood grinning at us as we turned about from our colloquy.

"I ask bien pardon," said Celestine. "The mother of Mademoiselle desires that Mademoiselle should come in immediately. M. le Pasteur Galopin has come to make his adieux to ces dames."

Aurora gave me only one glance, but it was a touching one. Then she slowly departed with Celestine.

The next morning, on coming into the garden, I found that Mrs. Church and her daughter had departed. I was informed of this fact by old M. Pigeonneau, who sat there under a tree, having his coffee at a little green table.

"I have nothing to envy you," he said; "I had the last glimpse of that charming Miss Aurora."

"I had a very late glimpse," I answered, "and it was all I could possibly desire."

"I have always noticed," rejoined M. Pigeonneau, "That your desires are more moderate than mine. *Que voulez-vous?* I am of the old school. *Je crois que la race se perd.* I regret the departure of that young girl: she had an enchanting smile. *Ce sera une femme d'esprit.* For the mother, I can console myself. I am not sure that SHE was a *femme d'esprit*, though she wished to pass for one. Round, rosy, *potelee*, she yet had not the temperament of her appearance; she was a *femme austere*. I have often noticed that contradiction in American ladies. You see a plump little woman, with a speaking eye, and the contour and complexion of a ripe peach, and if you venture to conduct yourself in the smallest degree in accordance with these indices, you discover a species of Methodist—of what do you call it?—of Quakeress. On the other hand, you encounter a tall, lean, angular person, without colour, without grace, all elbows and knees, and you find it's a nature of the tropics! The women of duty look like coquettes, and the others look like alpenstocks! However, we have still the handsome Madame Ruck—a real *femme de Rubens*, *celle-la*. It is very true that to talk to her one must know the Flemish tongue!"

I had determined, in accordance with my brother's telegram, to go away in the afternoon; so that, having various duties to perform, I left M. Pigeonneau to his international comparisons. Among other things, I went in the course of the morning to the banker's, to draw money for my journey, and there I found Mr. Ruck, with a pile of crumpled letters in his lap, his chair tipped back, and his eyes gloomily fixed on the fringe of the green plush table-cloth. I timidly expressed the hope that he had got better news from home; whereupon he gave me a look in which, considering his provocation, the absence of irritation was conspicuous.

He took up his letters in his large hand, and crushing them together, held it out to me. "That epistolary matter," he said, "is worth about five cents. But I guess," he added, rising, "I have taken it in by this time." When I had drawn my money I asked him to come and breakfast with me at the little brasserie, much favoured by students, to which I used to resort in the old town. "I couldn't eat, sir," he said, "I—couldn't eat. Bad news takes away the appetite. But I guess I'll go with you, so that I needn't go to table down there at the pension. The old woman down there is always accusing me of turning up my nose at her food. Well, I guess I shan't turn up my nose at anything now."

We went to the little brasserie, where poor Mr. Ruck made the lightest possible breakfast. But if he ate very little, he talked a great deal; he talked about business, going into a hundred

details in which I was quite unable to follow him. His talk was not angry nor bitter; it was a long, meditative, melancholy monologue; if it had been a trifle less incoherent I should almost have called it philosophic. I was very sorry for him; I wanted to do something for him, but the only thing I could do was, when we had breakfasted, to see him safely back to the Pension Beaurepas. We went across the Treille and down the Corrairie, out of which we turned into the Rue du Rhone. In this latter street, as all the world knows, are many of those brilliant jewellers' shops for which Geneva is famous. I always admired their glittering windows, and never passed them without a lingering glance. Even on this occasion, pre-occupied as I was with my impending departure, and with my companion's troubles, I suffered my eyes to wander along the precious tiers that flashed and twinkled behind the huge clear plates of glass. Thanks to this inveterate habit, I made a discovery. In the largest and most brilliant of these establishments I perceived two ladies, seated before the counter with an air of absorption, which sufficiently proclaimed their identity. I hoped my companion would not see them, but as we came abreast of the door, a little beyond, we found it open to the warm summer air. Mr. Ruck happened to glance in, and he immediately recognised his wife and daughter. He slowly stopped, looking at them; I wondered what he would do. The salesman was holding up a bracelet before them, on its velvet cushion, and flashing it about in an irresistible manner.

Mr. Ruck said nothing, but he presently went in, and I did the same.

"It will be an opportunity," I remarked, as cheerfully as possible, "for me to bid good-bye to the ladies."

They turned round when Mr. Ruck came in, and looked at him without confusion. "Well, you had better go home to breakfast," remarked his wife. Miss Sophy made no remark, but she took the bracelet from the attendant and gazed at it very fixedly. Mr. Ruck seated himself on an empty stool and looked round the shop.

"Well, you have been here before," said his wife; "you were here the first day we came."

Miss Ruck extended the precious object in her hands towards me.

"Don't you think that sweet?" she inquired.

I looked at it a moment. "No, I think it's ugly."

She glanced at me a moment, incredulous. "Well, I don't believe you have any taste."

"Why, sir, it's just lovely," said Mrs. Ruck.

"You'll see it some day on me, any way," her daughter declared.

"No, he won't," said Mr. Ruck, quietly.

"It will be his own fault, then," Miss Sophy observed.

"Well, if we are going to Chamouni we want to get something here," said Mrs. Ruck. "We may not have another chance."

Mr. Ruck was still looking round the shop, whistling in a very low tone. "We ain't going to Chamouni. We are going to New York city, straight."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that," said Mrs. Ruck. "Don't you suppose we want to take something home?"

"If we are going straight back I must have that bracelet," her daughter declared, "Only I don't want a velvet case; I want a satin case."

"I must bid you good-bye," I said to the ladies. "I am leaving Geneva in an hour or two."

"Take a good look at that bracelet, so you'll know it when you see it," said Miss Sophy.

"She's bound to have something," remarked her mother, almost proudly.

Mr. Ruck was still vaguely inspecting the shop; he was still whistling a little. "I am afraid he is not at all well," I said, softly, to his wife.

She twisted her head a little, and glanced at him.

"Well, I wish he'd improve!" she exclaimed.

"A satin case, and a nice one!" said Miss Ruck to the shopman.

I bade Mr. Ruck good-bye. "Don't wait for me," he said, sitting there on his stool, and not meeting my eye. "I've got to see this thing through."

I went back to the Pension Beaurepas, and when, an hour later, I left it with my luggage, the family had not returned.

The Diary of a Man of Fifty

Florence, *April 5th*, 1874.—They told me I should find Italy greatly changed; and in seven-and-twenty years there is room for changes. But to me everything is so perfectly the same that I seem to be living my youth over again; all the forgotten impressions of that enchanting time come back to me. At the moment they were powerful enough; but they afterwards faded away. What in the world became of them? Whatever becomes of such things, in the long intervals of consciousness? Where do they hide themselves away? in what unvisited cupboards and crannies of our being do they preserve themselves? They are like the lines of a letter written in sympathetic ink; hold the letter to the fire for a while and the grateful warmth brings out the invisible words. It is the warmth of this yellow sun of Florence that has been restoring the text of my own young romance; the thing has been lying before me today as a clear, fresh page. There have been moments during the last ten years when I have felt so portentously old, so fagged and finished, that I should have taken as a very bad joke any intimation that this present sense of juvenility was still in store for me. It won't last, at any rate; so I had better make the best of it. But I confess it surprises me. I have led too serious a life; but that perhaps, after all, preserves one's youth. At all events, I have travelled too far, I have worked too hard, I have lived in brutal climates and associated with tiresome people. When a man has reached his fifty-second year without being, materially, the worse for wear—when he has fair health, a fair fortune, a tidy conscience and a complete exemption from embarrassing relatives—I suppose he is bound, in delicacy, to write himself happy. But I confess I shirk this obligation. I have not been miserable; I won't go so far as to say that—or at least as to write it. But happiness—positive happiness—would have been something different. I don't know that it would have been better, by all measurements—that it would have left me better off at the present time. But it certainly would have made this difference—that I should not have been reduced, in pursuit of pleasant images, to disinter a buried episode of more than a quarter of a century ago. I should have found entertainment more—what shall I call it?—more contemporaneous. I should have had a wife and children, and I should not be in the way of making, as the French say, infidelities to the present. Of course it's a great gain to have had an escape, not to have committed an act of thumping folly; and I suppose that, whatever serious step one might have taken at twenty-five, after a struggle, and with a violent effort, and however one's conduct might appear to be justified by events, there would always remain a certain element of regret; a certain sense of loss lurking in the sense of gain; a tendency to wonder, rather wishfully, what *might* have been. What might have been, in this case, would, without doubt, have been very sad, and what has been has been very cheerful and comfortable; but there are nevertheless two or three questions I might ask myself. Why, for instance, have I never married—why have I never been able to care for any woman as I cared for that one? Ah, why are the mountains blue and why is the sunshine warm? Happiness mitigated by impertinent conjectures—that's about my ticket.

6th.—I knew it wouldn't last; it's already passing away. But I have spent a delightful day; I have been strolling all over the place. Everything reminds me of something else, and yet of itself at the same time; my imagination makes a great circuit and comes back to the starting-point. There is that well-remembered odour of spring in the air, and the flowers, as they used to be, are gathered into great sheaves and stacks, all along the rugged base of the Strozzi Palace. I wandered for an hour in the Boboli Gardens; we went there several times together. I remember all those days individually; they seem to me as yesterday. I found the corner where she always chose to sit—the bench of sun-warmed marble, in front of the screen of ilex, with that exuberant statue of Pomona just beside it. The place is exactly the same,

except that poor Pomona has lost one of her tapering fingers. I sat there for half an hour, and it was strange how near to me she seemed. The place was perfectly empty—that is, it was filled with *her*. I closed my eyes and listened; I could almost hear the rustle of her dress on the gravel. Why do we make such an ado about death? What is it, after all, but a sort of refinement of life? She died ten years ago, and yet, as I sat there in the sunny stillness, she was a palpable, audible presence. I went afterwards into the gallery of the palace, and wandered for an hour from room to room. The same great pictures hung in the same places, and the same dark frescoes arched above them. Twice, of old, I went there with her; she had a great understanding of art. She understood all sorts of things. Before the Madonna of the Chair I stood a long time. The face is not a particle like hers, and yet it reminded me of her. But everything does that. We stood and looked at it together once for half an hour; I remember perfectly what she said.

8th.—Yesterday I felt blue—blue and bored; and when I got up this morning I had half a mind to leave Florence. But I went out into the street, beside the Arno, and looked up and down—looked at the yellow river and the violet hills, and then decided to remain—or rather, I decided nothing. I simply stood gazing at the beauty of Florence, and before I had gazed my fill I was in good-humour again, and it was too late to start for Rome. I strolled along the quay, where something presently happened that rewarded me for staying. I stopped in front of a little jeweller's shop, where a great many objects in mosaic were exposed in the window; I stood there for some minutes—I don't know why, for I have no taste for mosaic. In a moment a little girl came and stood beside me—a little girl with a frowsy Italian head, carrying a basket. I turned away, but, as I turned, my eyes happened to fall on her basket. It was covered with a napkin, and on the napkin was pinned a piece of paper, inscribed with an address. This address caught my glance—there was a name on it I knew. It was very legibly written—evidently by a scribe who had made up in zeal what was lacking in skill. *Contessa Salvi-Scarabelli, Via Ghibellina*—so ran the superscription; I looked at it for some moments; it caused me a sudden emotion. Presently the little girl, becoming aware of my attention, glanced up at me, wondering, with a pair of timid brown eyes.

“Are you carrying your basket to the Countess Salvi?” I asked.

The child stared at me. “To the Countess Scarabelli.”

“Do you know the Countess?”

“Know her?” murmured the child, with an air of small dismay.

“I mean, have you seen her?”

“Yes, I have seen her.” And then, in a moment, with a sudden soft smile—“*E bella!*” said the little girl. She was beautiful herself as she said it.

“Precisely; and is she fair or dark?”

The child kept gazing at me. “*Bionda—bionda,*” she answered, looking about into the golden sunshine for a comparison.

“And is she young?”

“She is not young—like me. But she is not old like—like—”

“Like me, eh? And is she married?”

The little girl began to look wise. “I have never seen the Signor Conte.”

“And she lives in Via Ghibellina?”

“*Sicuro*. In a beautiful palace.”

I had one more question to ask, and I pointed it with certain copper coins. “Tell me a little—is she good?”

The child inspected a moment the contents of her little brown fist. “It’s you who are good,” she answered.

“Ah, but the Countess?” I repeated.

My informant lowered her big brown eyes, with an air of conscientious meditation that was inexpressibly quaint. “To me she appears so,” she said at last, looking up.

“Ah, then, she must be so,” I said, “because, for your age, you are very intelligent.” And having delivered myself of this compliment I walked away and left the little girl counting her *soldi*.

I walked back to the hotel, wondering how I could learn something about the Contessa Salvi-Scarabelli. In the doorway I found the innkeeper, and near him stood a young man whom I immediately perceived to be a compatriot, and with whom, apparently, he had been in conversation.

“I wonder whether you can give me a piece of information,” I said to the landlord. “Do you know anything about the Count Salvi-Scarabelli?”

The landlord looked down at his boots, then slowly raised his shoulders, with a melancholy smile. “I have many regrets, dear sir—”

“You don’t know the name?”

“I know the name, assuredly. But I don’t know the gentleman.”

I saw that my question had attracted the attention of the young Englishman, who looked at me with a good deal of earnestness. He was apparently satisfied with what he saw, for he presently decided to speak.

“The Count Scarabelli is dead,” he said, very gravely.

I looked at him a moment; he was a pleasing young fellow. “And his widow lives,” I observed, “in Via Ghibellina?”

“I daresay that is the name of the street.” He was a handsome young Englishman, but he was also an awkward one; he wondered who I was and what I wanted, and he did me the honour to perceive that, as regards these points, my appearance was reassuring. But he hesitated, very properly, to talk with a perfect stranger about a lady whom he knew, and he had not the art to conceal his hesitation. I instantly felt it to be singular that though he regarded me as a perfect stranger, I had not the same feeling about him. Whether it was that I had seen him before, or simply that I was struck with his agreeable young face—at any rate, I felt myself, as they say here, in sympathy with him. If I have seen him before I don’t remember the occasion, and neither, apparently, does he; I suppose it’s only a part of the feeling I have had the last three days about everything. It was this feeling that made me suddenly act as if I had known him a long time.

“Do you know the Countess Salvi?” I asked.

He looked at me a little, and then, without resenting the freedom of my question—“The Countess Scarabelli, you mean,” he said.

“Yes,” I answered; “she’s the daughter.”

“The daughter is a little girl.”

“She must be grown up now. She must be—let me see—close upon thirty.”

My young Englishman began to smile. “Of whom are you speaking?”

“I was speaking of the daughter,” I said, understanding his smile. “But I was thinking of the mother.”

“Of the mother?”

“Of a person I knew twenty-seven years ago—the most charming woman I have ever known. She was the Countess Salvi—she lived in a wonderful old house in Via Ghibellina.”

“A wonderful old house!” my young Englishman repeated.

“She had a little girl,” I went on; “and the little girl was very fair, like her mother; and the mother and daughter had the same name—Bianca.” I stopped and looked at my companion, and he blushed a little. “And Bianca Salvi,” I continued, “was the most charming woman in the world.” He blushed a little more, and I laid my hand on his shoulder. “Do you know why I tell you this? Because you remind me of what I was when I knew her—when I loved her.” My poor young Englishman gazed at me with a sort of embarrassed and fascinated stare, and still I went on. “I say that’s the reason I told you this—but you’ll think it a strange reason. You remind me of my younger self. You needn’t resent that—I was a charming young fellow. The Countess Salvi thought so. Her daughter thinks the same of you.”

Instantly, instinctively, he raised his hand to my arm. “Truly?”

“Ah, you are wonderfully like me!” I said, laughing. “That was just my state of mind. I wanted tremendously to please her.” He dropped his hand and looked away, smiling, but with an air of ingenuous confusion which quickened my interest in him. “You don’t know what to make of me,” I pursued. “You don’t know why a stranger should suddenly address you in this way and pretend to read your thoughts. Doubtless you think me a little cracked. Perhaps I am eccentric; but it’s not so bad as that. I have lived about the world a great deal, following my profession, which is that of a soldier. I have been in India, in Africa, in Canada, and I have lived a good deal alone. That inclines people, I think, to sudden bursts of confidence. A week ago I came into Italy, where I spent six months when I was your age. I came straight to Florence—I was eager to see it again, on account of associations. They have been crowding upon me ever so thickly. I have taken the liberty of giving you a hint of them.” The young man inclined himself a little, in silence, as if he had been struck with a sudden respect. He stood and looked away for a moment at the river and the mountains. “It’s very beautiful,” I said.

“Oh, it’s enchanting,” he murmured.

“That’s the way I used to talk. But that’s nothing to you.”

He glanced at me again. “On the contrary, I like to hear.”

“Well, then, let us take a walk. If you too are staying at this inn, we are fellow-travellers. We will walk down the Arno to the Cascine. There are several things I should like to ask of you.”

My young Englishman assented with an air of almost filial confidence, and we strolled for an hour beside the river and through the shady alleys of that lovely wilderness. We had a great deal of talk: it’s not only myself, it’s my whole situation over again.

“Are you very fond of Italy?” I asked.

He hesitated a moment. “One can’t express that.”

“Just so; I couldn’t express it. I used to try—I used to write verses. On the subject of Italy I was very ridiculous.”

“So am I ridiculous,” said my companion.

“No, my dear boy,” I answered, “we are not ridiculous; we are two very reasonable, superior people.”

“The first time one comes—as I have done—it’s a revelation.”

“Oh, I remember well; one never forgets it. It’s an introduction to beauty.”

“And it must be a great pleasure,” said my young friend, “to come back.”

“Yes, fortunately the beauty is always here. What form of it,” I asked, “do you prefer?”

My companion looked a little mystified; and at last he said, “I am very fond of the pictures.”

“So was I. And among the pictures, which do you like best?”

“Oh, a great many.”

“So did I; but I had certain favourites.”

Again the young man hesitated a little, and then he confessed that the group of painters he preferred, on the whole, to all others, was that of the early Florentines.

I was so struck with this that I stopped short. “That was exactly my taste!” And then I passed my hand into his arm and we went our way again.

We sat down on an old stone bench in the Cascine, and a solemn blank-eyed Hermes, with wrinkles accentuated by the dust of ages, stood above us and listened to our talk.

“The Countess Salvi died ten years ago,” I said.

My companion admitted that he had heard her daughter say so.

“After I knew her she married again,” I added. “The Count Salvi died before I knew her—a couple of years after their marriage.”

“Yes, I have heard that.”

“And what else have you heard?”

My companion stared at me; he had evidently heard nothing.

“She was a very interesting woman—there are a great many things to be said about her. Later, perhaps, I will tell you. Has the daughter the same charm?”

“You forget,” said my young man, smiling, “that I have never seen the mother.”

“Very true. I keep confounding. But the daughter—how long have you known her?”

“Only since I have been here. A very short time.”

“A week?”

For a moment he said nothing. “A month.”

“That’s just the answer I should have made. A week, a month—it was all the same to me.”

“I think it is more than a month,” said the young man.

“It’s probably six. How did you make her acquaintance?”

“By a letter—an introduction given me by a friend in England.”

“The analogy is complete,” I said. “But the friend who gave me my letter to Madame de Salvi died many years ago. He, too, admired her greatly. I don’t know why it never came into my mind that her daughter might be living in Florence. Somehow I took for granted it was all over. I never thought of the little girl; I never heard what had become of her. I walked past the palace yesterday and saw that it was occupied; but I took for granted it had changed hands.”

“The Countess Scarabelli,” said my friend, “brought it to her husband as her marriage-portion.”

“I hope he appreciated it! There is a fountain in the court, and there is a charming old garden beyond it. The Countess’s sitting-room looks into that garden. The staircase is of white marble, and there is a medallion by Luca della Robbia set into the wall at the place where it makes a bend. Before you come into the drawing-room you stand a moment in a great vaulted place hung round with faded tapestry, paved with bare tiles, and furnished only with three chairs. In the drawing-room, above the fireplace, is a superb Andrea del Sarto. The furniture is covered with pale sea-green.”

My companion listened to all this.

“The Andrea del Sarto is there; it’s magnificent. But the furniture is in pale red.”

“Ah, they have changed it, then—in twenty-seven years.”

“And there’s a portrait of Madame de Salvi,” continued my friend.

I was silent a moment. “I should like to see that.”

He too was silent. Then he asked, “Why don’t you go and see it? If you knew the mother so well, why don’t you call upon the daughter?”

“From what you tell me I am afraid.”

“What have I told you to make you afraid?”

I looked a little at his ingenuous countenance. “The mother was a very dangerous woman.”

The young Englishman began to blush again. “The daughter is not,” he said.

“Are you very sure?”

He didn’t say he was sure, but he presently inquired in what way the Countess Salvi had been dangerous.

“You must not ask me that,” I answered “for after all, I desire to remember only what was good in her.” And as we walked back I begged him to render me the service of mentioning my name to his friend, and of saying that I had known her mother well, and that I asked permission to come and see her.

9th.—I have seen that poor boy half a dozen times again, and a most amiable young fellow he is. He continues to represent to me, in the most extraordinary manner, my own young identity; the correspondence is perfect at all points, save that he is a better boy than I. He is evidently acutely interested in his Countess, and leads quite the same life with her that I led with Madame de Salvi. He goes to see her every evening and stays half the night; these Florentines keep the most extraordinary hours. I remember, towards 3 A.M., Madame de Salvi used to turn me out.—“Come, come,” she would say, “it’s time to go. If you were to stay later people might talk.” I don’t know at what time he comes home, but I suppose his evening seems as short as mine did. Today he brought me a message from his Contessa—a very gracious little speech. She remembered often to have heard her mother speak of me—

she called me her English friend. All her mother's friends were dear to her, and she begged I would do her the honour to come and see her. She is always at home of an evening. Poor young Stanmer (he is of the Devonshire Stanmers—a great property) reported this speech verbatim, and of course it can't in the least signify to him that a poor grizzled, battered soldier, old enough to be his father, should come to call upon his *inammorata*. But I remember how it used to matter to me when other men came; that's a point of difference. However, it's only because I'm so old. At twenty-five I shouldn't have been afraid of myself at fifty-two. Camerino was thirty-four—and then the others! She was always at home in the evening, and they all used to come. They were old Florentine names. But she used to let me stay after them all; she thought an old English name as good. What a transcendent coquette! . . . But *basta così* as she used to say. I meant to go tonight to Casa Salvi, but I couldn't bring myself to the point. I don't know what I'm afraid of; I used to be in a hurry enough to go there once. I suppose I am afraid of the very look of the place—of the old rooms, the old walls. I shall go tomorrow night. I am afraid of the very echoes.

10th.—She has the most extraordinary resemblance to her mother. When I went in I was tremendously startled; I stood staring at her. I have just come home; it is past midnight; I have been all the evening at Casa Salvi. It is very warm—my window is open—I can look out on the river gliding past in the starlight. So, of old, when I came home, I used to stand and look out. There are the same cypresses on the opposite hills.

Poor young Stanmer was there, and three or four other admirers; they all got up when I came in. I think I had been talked about, and there was some curiosity. But why should I have been talked about? They were all youngish men—none of them of my time. She is a wonderful likeness of her mother; I couldn't get over it. Beautiful like her mother, and yet with the same faults in her face; but with her mother's perfect head and brow and sympathetic, almost pitying, eyes. Her face has just that peculiarity of her mother's, which, of all human countenances that I have ever known, was the one that passed most quickly and completely from the expression of gaiety to that of repose. Repose in her face always suggested sadness; and while you were watching it with a kind of awe, and wondering of what tragic secret it was the token, it kindled, on the instant, into a radiant Italian smile. The Countess Scarabelli's smiles tonight, however, were almost uninterrupted. She greeted me—divinely, as her mother used to do; and young Stanmer sat in the corner of the sofa—as I used to do—and watched her while she talked. She is thin and very fair, and was dressed in light, vaporous black that completes the resemblance. The house, the rooms, are almost absolutely the same; there may be changes of detail, but they don't modify the general effect. There are the same precious pictures on the walls of the salon—the same great dusky fresco in the concave ceiling. The daughter is not rich, I suppose, any more than the mother. The furniture is worn and faded, and I was admitted by a solitary servant, who carried a twinkling taper before me up the great dark marble staircase.

“I have often heard of you,” said the Countess, as I sat down near her; “my mother often spoke of you.”

“Often?” I answered. “I am surprised at that.”

“Why are you surprised? Were you not good friends?”

“Yes, for a certain time—very good friends. But I was sure she had forgotten me.”

“She never forgot,” said the Countess, looking at me intently and smiling. “She was not like that.”

“She was not like most other women in any way,” I declared.

“Ah, she was charming,” cried the Countess, rattling open her fan. “I have always been very curious to see you. I have received an impression of you.”

“A good one, I hope.”

She looked at me, laughing, and not answering this: it was just her mother’s trick.

“‘My Englishman,’ she used to call you—*‘il mio Inglese.’*”

“I hope she spoke of me kindly,” I insisted.

The Countess, still laughing, gave a little shrug balancing her hand to and fro. “So-so; I always supposed you had had a quarrel. You don’t mind my being frank like this—eh?”

“I delight in it; it reminds me of your mother.”

“Every one tells me that. But I am not clever like her. You will see for yourself.”

“That speech,” I said, “completes the resemblance. She was always pretending she was not clever, and in reality—”

“In reality she was an angel, eh? To escape from dangerous comparisons I will admit, then, that I am clever. That will make a difference. But let us talk of you. You are very—how shall I say it?—very eccentric.”

“Is that what your mother told you?”

“To tell the truth, she spoke of you as a great original. But aren’t all Englishmen eccentric? All except that one!” and the Countess pointed to poor Stanmer, in his corner of the sofa.

“Oh, I know just what he is,” I said.

“He’s as quiet as a lamb—he’s like all the world,” cried the Countess.

“Like all the world—yes. He is in love with you.”

She looked at me with sudden gravity. “I don’t object to your saying that for all the world—but I do for him.”

“Well,” I went on, “he is peculiar in this: he is rather afraid of you.”

Instantly she began to smile; she turned her face toward Stanmer. He had seen that we were talking about him; he coloured and got up—then came toward us.

“I like men who are afraid of nothing,” said our hostess.

“I know what you want,” I said to Stanmer. “You want to know what the Signora Contessa says about you.”

Stanmer looked straight into her face, very gravely. “I don’t care a straw what she says.”

“You are almost a match for the Signora Contessa,” I answered. “She declares she doesn’t care a pin’s head what you think.”

“I recognise the Countess’s style!” Stanmer exclaimed, turning away.

“One would think,” said the Countess, “that you were trying to make a quarrel between us.”

I watched him move away to another part of the great saloon; he stood in front of the Andrea del Sarto, looking up at it. But he was not seeing it; he was listening to what we might say. I often stood there in just that way. “He can’t quarrel with you, any more than I could have quarrelled with your mother.”

“Ah, but you did. Something painful passed between you.”

“Yes, it was painful, but it was not a quarrel. I went away one day and never saw her again. That was all.”

The Countess looked at me gravely. “What do you call it when a man does that?”

“It depends upon the case.”

“Sometimes,” said the Countess in French, “it’s a *lâcheté*.”

“Yes, and sometimes it’s an act of wisdom.”

“And sometimes,” rejoined the Countess, “it’s a mistake.”

I shook my head. “For me it was no mistake.”

She began to laugh again. “Caro Signore, you’re a great original. What had my poor mother done to you?”

I looked at our young Englishman, who still had his back turned to us and was staring up at the picture. “I will tell you some other time,” I said.

“I shall certainly remind you; I am very curious to know.” Then she opened and shut her fan two or three times, still looking at me. What eyes they have! “Tell me a little,” she went on, “if I may ask without indiscretion. Are you married?”

“No, Signora Contessa.”

“Isn’t that at least a mistake?”

“Do I look very unhappy?”

She dropped her head a little to one side. “For an Englishman—no!”

“Ah,” said I, laughing, “you are quite as clever as your mother.”

“And they tell me that you are a great soldier,” she continued; “you have lived in India. It was very kind of you, so far away, to have remembered our poor dear Italy.”

“One always remembers Italy; the distance makes no difference. I remembered it well the day I heard of your mother’s death!”

“Ah, that was a sorrow!” said the Countess. “There’s not a day that I don’t weep for her. But *che vuole?* She’s a saint in its paradise.”

“*Sicuro*,” I answered; and I looked some time at the ground. “But tell me about yourself, dear lady,” I asked at last, raising my eyes. “You have also had the sorrow of losing your husband.”

“I am a poor widow, as you see. *Che vuole?* My husband died after three years of marriage.”

I waited for her to remark that the late Count Scarabelli was also a saint in paradise, but I waited in vain.

“That was like your distinguished father,” I said.

“Yes, he too died young. I can’t be said to have known him; I was but of the age of my own little girl. But I weep for him all the more.”

Again I was silent for a moment.

“It was in India too,” I said presently, “that I heard of your mother’s second marriage.”

The Countess raised her eyebrows.

“In India, then, one hears of everything! Did that news please you?”

“Well, since you ask me—no.”

“I understand that,” said the Countess, looking at her open fan. “I shall not marry again like that.”

“That’s what your mother said to me,” I ventured to observe.

She was not offended, but she rose from her seat and stood looking at me a moment. Then—“You should not have gone away!” she exclaimed. I stayed for another hour; it is a very pleasant house.

Two or three of the men who were sitting there seemed very civil and intelligent; one of them was a major of engineers, who offered me a profusion of information upon the new organisation of the Italian army. While he talked, however, I was observing our hostess, who was talking with the others; very little, I noticed, with her young *Inglese*. She is altogether charming—full of frankness and freedom, of that inimitable *disinvoltura* which in an Englishwoman would be vulgar, and which in her is simply the perfection of apparent spontaneity. But for all her spontaneity she’s as subtle as a needle-point, and knows tremendously well what she is about. If she is not a consummate coquette . . . What had she in her head when she said that I should not have gone away?—Poor little Stanmer didn’t go away. I left him there at midnight.

12th.—I found him today sitting in the church of Santa Croce, into which I wandered to escape from the heat of the sun.

In the nave it was cool and dim; he was staring at the blaze of candles on the great altar, and thinking, I am sure, of his incomparable Countess. I sat down beside him, and after a while, as if to avoid the appearance of eagerness, he asked me how I had enjoyed my visit to Casa Salvi, and what I thought of the *padrona*.

“I think half a dozen things,” I said, “but I can only tell you one now. She’s an enchantress. You shall hear the rest when we have left the church.”

“An enchantress?” repeated Stanmer, looking at me askance.

He is a very simple youth, but who am I to blame him?

“A charmer,” I said “a fascinatress!”

He turned away, staring at the altar candles.

“An artist—an actress,” I went on, rather brutally.

He gave me another glance.

“I think you are telling me all,” he said.

“No, no, there is more.” And we sat a long time in silence.

At last he proposed that we should go out; and we passed in the street, where the shadows had begun to stretch themselves.

“I don’t know what you mean by her being an actress,” he said, as we turned homeward.

“I suppose not. Neither should I have known, if any one had said that to me.”

“You are thinking about the mother,” said Stanmer. “Why are you always bringing *her* in?”

“My dear boy, the analogy is so great it forces itself upon me.”

He stopped and stood looking at me with his modest, perplexed young face. I thought he was going to exclaim—"The analogy be hanged!"—but he said after a moment—

"Well, what does it prove?"

"I can't say it proves anything; but it suggests a great many things."

"Be so good as to mention a few," he said, as we walked on.

"You are not sure of her yourself," I began.

"Never mind that—go on with your analogy."

"That's a part of it. You *are* very much in love with her."

"That's a part of it too, I suppose?"

"Yes, as I have told you before. You are in love with her, and yet you can't make her out; that's just where I was with regard to Madame de Salvi."

"And she too was an enchantress, an actress, an artist, and all the rest of it?"

"She was the most perfect coquette I ever knew, and the most dangerous, because the most finished."

"What you mean, then, is that her daughter is a finished coquette?"

"I rather think so."

Stanmer walked along for some moments in silence.

"Seeing that you suppose me to be a—a great admirer of the Countess," he said at last, "I am rather surprised at the freedom with which you speak of her."

I confessed that I was surprised at it myself. "But it's on account of the interest I take in you."

"I am immensely obliged to you!" said the poor boy.

"Ah, of course you don't like it. That is, you like my interest—I don't see how you can help liking that; but you don't like my freedom. That's natural enough; but, my dear young friend, I want only to help you. If a man had said to me—so many years ago—what I am saying to you, I should certainly also, at first, have thought him a great brute. But after a little, I should have been grateful—I should have felt that he was helping me."

"You seem to have been very well able to help yourself," said Stanmer. "You tell me you made your escape."

"Yes, but it was at the cost of infinite perplexity—of what I may call keen suffering. I should like to save you all that."

"I can only repeat—it is really very kind of you."

"Don't repeat it too often, or I shall begin to think you don't mean it."

"Well," said Stanmer, "I think this, at any rate—that you take an extraordinary responsibility in trying to put a man out of conceit of a woman who, as he believes, may make him very happy."

I grasped his arm, and we stopped, going on with our talk like a couple of Florentines.

"Do you wish to marry her?"

He looked away, without meeting my eyes. "It's a great responsibility," he repeated.

“Before Heaven,” I said, “I would have married the mother! You are exactly in my situation.”

“Don’t you think you rather overdo the analogy?” asked poor Stanmer.

“A little more, a little less—it doesn’t matter. I believe you are in my shoes. But of course if you prefer it, I will beg a thousand pardons and leave them to carry you where they will.”

He had been looking away, but now he slowly turned his face and met my eyes. “You have gone too far to retreat; what is it you know about her?”

“About this one—nothing. But about the other—”

“I care nothing about the other!”

“My dear fellow,” I said, “they are mother and daughter—they are as like as two of Andrea’s Madonnas.”

“If they resemble each other, then, you were simply mistaken in the mother.”

I took his arm and we walked on again; there seemed no adequate reply to such a charge. “Your state of mind brings back my own so completely,” I said presently. “You admire her—you adore her, and yet, secretly, you mistrust her. You are enchanted with her personal charm, her grace, her wit, her everything; and yet in your private heart you are afraid of her.”

“Afraid of her?”

“Your mistrust keeps rising to the surface; you can’t rid yourself of the suspicion that at the bottom of all things she is hard and cruel, and you would be immensely relieved if some one should persuade you that your suspicion is right.”

Stanmer made no direct reply to this; but before we reached the hotel he said—“What did you ever know about the mother?”

“It’s a terrible story,” I answered.

He looked at me askance. “What did she do?”

“Come to my rooms this evening and I will tell you.”

He declared he would, but he never came. Exactly the way I should have acted!

14th.—I went again, last evening, to Casa Salvi, where I found the same little circle, with the addition of a couple of ladies. Stanmer was there, trying hard to talk to one of them, but making, I am sure, a very poor business of it. The Countess—well, the Countess was admirable. She greeted me like a friend of ten years, toward whom familiarity should not have engendered a want of ceremony; she made me sit near her, and she asked me a dozen questions about my health and my occupations.

“I live in the past,” I said. “I go into the galleries, into the old palaces and the churches. Today I spent an hour in Michael Angelo’s chapel at San Loreozo.”

“Ah yes, that’s the past,” said the Countess. “Those things are very old.”

“Twenty-seven years old,” I answered.

“Twenty-seven? *Altro!*”

“I mean my own past,” I said. “I went to a great many of those places with your mother.”

“Ah, the pictures are beautiful,” murmured the Countess, glancing at Stanmer.

“Have you lately looked at any of them?” I asked. “Have you gone to the galleries with *him*?”

She hesitated a moment, smiling. “It seems to me that your question is a little impertinent. But I think you are like that.”

“A little impertinent? Never. As I say, your mother did me the honour, more than once, to accompany me to the Uffizzi.”

“My mother must have been very kind to you.”

“So it seemed to me at the time.”

“At the time only?”

“Well, if you prefer, so it seems to me now.”

“Eh,” said the Countess, “she made sacrifices.”

“To what, *cara Signora*? She was perfectly free. Your lamented father was dead—and she had not yet contracted her second marriage.”

“If she was intending to marry again, it was all the more reason she should have been careful.”

I looked at her a moment; she met my eyes gravely, over the top of her fan. “Are *you* very careful?” I said.

She dropped her fan with a certain violence. “Ah, yes, you are impertinent!”

“Ah no,” I said. “Remember that I am old enough to be your father; that I knew you when you were three years old. I may surely ask such questions. But you are right; one must do your mother justice. She was certainly thinking of her second marriage.”

“You have not forgiven her that!” said the Countess, very gravely.

“Have you?” I asked, more lightly.

“I don’t judge my mother. That is a mortal sin. My stepfather was very kind to me.”

“I remember him,” I said; “I saw him a great many times—your mother already received him.”

My hostess sat with lowered eyes, saying nothing; but she presently looked up.

“She was very unhappy with my father.”

“That I can easily believe. And your stepfather—is he still living?”

“He died—before my mother.”

“Did he fight any more duels?”

“He was killed in a duel,” said the Countess, discreetly.

It seems almost monstrous, especially as I can give no reason for it—but this announcement, instead of shocking me, caused me to feel a strange exhilaration. Most assuredly, after all these years, I bear the poor man no resentment. Of course I controlled my manner, and simply remarked to the Countess that as his fault had been so was his punishment. I think, however, that the feeling of which I speak was at the bottom of my saying to her that I hoped that, unlike her mother’s, her own brief married life had been happy.

“If it was not,” she said, “I have forgotten it now.”—I wonder if the late Count Scarabelli was also killed in a duel, and if his adversary . . . Is it on the books that his adversary, as well,

shall perish by the pistol? Which of those gentlemen is he, I wonder? Is it reserved for poor little Stanmer to put a bullet into him? No; poor little Stanmer, I trust, will do as I did. And yet, unfortunately for him, that woman is consummately plausible. She was wonderfully nice last evening; she was really irresistible. Such frankness and freedom, and yet something so soft and womanly; such graceful gaiety, so much of the brightness, without any of the stiffness, of good breeding, and over it all something so picturesquely simple and southern. She is a perfect Italian. But she comes honestly by it. After the talk I have just jotted down she changed her place, and the conversation for half an hour was general. Stanmer indeed said very little; partly, I suppose, because he is shy of talking a foreign tongue. Was I like that—was I so constantly silent? I suspect I was when I was perplexed, and Heaven knows that very often my perplexity was extreme. Before I went away I had a few more words *tête-à-tête* with the Countess.

“I hope you are not leaving Florence yet,” she said; “you will stay a while longer?”

I answered that I came only for a week, and that my week was over.

“I stay on from day to day, I am so much interested.”

“Eh, it’s the beautiful moment. I’m glad our city pleases you!”

“Florence pleases me—and I take a paternal interest to our young friend,” I added, glancing at Stanmer. “I have become very fond of him.”

“*Bel tipo inglese,*” said my hostess. “And he is very intelligent; he has a beautiful mind.”

She stood there resting her smile and her clear, expressive eyes upon me.

“I don’t like to praise him too much,” I rejoined, “lest I should appear to praise myself; he reminds me so much of what I was at his age. If your beautiful mother were to come to life for an hour she would see the resemblance.”

She gave me a little amused stare.

“And yet you don’t look at all like him!”

“Ah, you didn’t know me when I was twenty-five. I was very handsome! And, moreover, it isn’t that, it’s the mental resemblance. I was ingenuous, candid, trusting, like him.”

“Trusting? I remember my mother once telling me that you were the most suspicious and jealous of men!”

“I fell into a suspicious mood, but I was, fundamentally, not in the least addicted to thinking evil. I couldn’t easily imagine any harm of any one.”

“And so you mean that Mr. Stanmer is in a suspicious mood?”

“Well, I mean that his situation is the same as mine.”

The Countess gave me one of her serious looks. “Come,” she said, “what was it—this famous situation of yours? I have heard you mention it before.”

“Your mother might have told you, since she occasionally did me the honour to speak of me.”

“All my mother ever told me was that you were—a sad puzzle to her.”

At this, of course, I laughed out—I laugh still as I write it.

“Well, then, that was my situation—I was a sad puzzle to a very clever woman.”

“And you mean, therefore, that I am a puzzle to poor Mr. Stanmer?”

“He is racking his brains to make you out. Remember it was you who said he was intelligent.”

She looked round at him, and as fortune would have it, his appearance at that moment quite confirmed my assertion. He was lounging back in his chair with an air of indolence rather too marked for a drawing-room, and staring at the ceiling with the expression of a man who has just been asked a conundrum. Madame Scarabelli seemed struck with his attitude.

“Don’t you see,” I said, “he can’t read the riddle?”

“You yourself,” she answered, “said he was incapable of thinking evil. I should be sorry to have him think any evil of *me*.”

And she looked straight at me—seriously, appealingly—with her beautiful candid brow.

I inclined myself, smiling, in a manner which might have meant—“How could that be possible?”

“I have a great esteem for him,” she went on; “I want him to think well of me. If I am a puzzle to him, do me a little service. Explain me to him.”

“Explain you, dear lady?”

“You are older and wiser than he. Make him understand me.”

She looked deep into my eyes for a moment, and then she turned away.

26th.—I have written nothing for a good many days, but meanwhile I have been half a dozen times to Casa Salvi. I have seen a good deal also of my young friend—had a good many walks and talks with him. I have proposed to him to come with me to Venice for a fortnight, but he won’t listen to the idea of leaving Florence. He is very happy in spite of his doubts, and I confess that in the perception of his happiness I have lived over again my own. This is so much the case that when, the other day, he at last made up his mind to ask me to tell him the wrong that Madame de Salvi had done me, I rather checked his curiosity. I told him that if he was bent upon knowing I would satisfy him, but that it seemed a pity, just now, to indulge in painful imagery.

“But I thought you wanted so much to put me out of conceit of our friend.”

“I admit I am inconsistent, but there are various reasons for it. In the first place—it’s obvious—I am open to the charge of playing a double game. I profess an admiration for the Countess Scarabelli, for I accept her hospitality, and at the same time I attempt to poison your mind; isn’t that the proper expression? I can’t exactly make up my mind to that, though my admiration for the Countess and my desire to prevent you from taking a foolish step are equally sincere. And then, in the second place, you seem to me, on the whole, so happy! One hesitates to destroy an illusion, no matter how pernicious, that is so delightful while it lasts. These are the rare moments of life. To be young and ardent, in the midst of an Italian spring, and to believe in the moral perfection of a beautiful woman—what an admirable situation! Float with the current; I’ll stand on the brink and watch you.”

“Your real reason is that you feel you have no case against the poor lady,” said Stanmer. “You admire her as much as I do.”

“I just admitted that I admired her. I never said she was a vulgar flirt; her mother was an absolutely scientific one. Heaven knows I admired that! It’s a nice point, however, how much one is hound in honour not to warn a young friend against a dangerous woman because one also has relations of civility with the lady.”

“In such a case,” said Stanmer, “I would break off my relations.”

I looked at him, and I think I laughed.

“Are you jealous of me, by chance?”

He shook his head emphatically.

“Not in the least; I like to see you there, because your conduct contradicts your words.”

“I have always said that the Countess is fascinating.”

“Otherwise,” said Stanmer, “in the case you speak of I would give the lady notice.”

“Give her notice?”

“Mention to her that you regard her with suspicion, and that you propose to do your best to rescue a simple-minded youth from her wiles. That would be more loyal.” And he began to laugh again.

It is not the first time he has laughed at me; but I have never minded it, because I have always understood it.

“Is that what you recommend me to say to the Countess?” I asked.

“Recommend you!” he exclaimed, laughing again; “I recommend nothing. I may be the victim to be rescued, but I am at least not a partner to the conspiracy. Besides,” he added in a moment, “the Countess knows your state of mind.”

“Has she told you so?”

Stanmer hesitated.

“She has begged me to listen to everything you may say against her. She declares that she has a good conscience.”

“Ah,” said I, “she’s an accomplished woman!”

And it is indeed very clever of her to take that tone. Stanmer afterwards assured me explicitly that he has never given her a hint of the liberties I have taken in conversation with—what shall I call it?—with her moral nature; she has guessed them for herself. She must hate me intensely, and yet her manner has always been so charming to me! She is truly an accomplished woman!

May 4th.—I have stayed away from Casa Salvi for a week, but I have lingered on in Florence, under a mixture of impulses. I have had it on my conscience not to go near the Countess again—and yet from the moment she is aware of the way I feel about her, it is open war. There need be no scruples on either side. She is as free to use every possible art to entangle poor Stanmer more closely as I am to clip her fine-spun meshes. Under the circumstances, however, we naturally shouldn’t meet very cordially. But as regards her meshes, why, after all, should I clip them? It would really be very interesting to see Stanmer swallowed up. I should like to see how he would agree with her after she had devoured him—(to what vulgar imagery, by the way, does curiosity reduce a man!) Let him finish the story in his own way, as I finished it in mine. It is the same story; but why, a quarter of a century later, should it have the same *dénoûment*? Let him make his own *dénoûment*.

5th.—Hang it, however, I don’t want the poor boy to be miserable.

6th.—Ah, but did my *dénoûment* then prove such a happy one?

7th.—He came to my room late last night; he was much excited.

“What was it she did to you?” he asked.

I answered him first with another question. "Have you quarrelled with the Countess?"

But he only repeated his own. "What was it she did to you?"

"Sit down and I'll tell you." And he sat there beside the candle, staring at me. "There was a man always there—Count Camerino."

"The man she married?"

"The man she married. I was very much in love with her, and yet I didn't trust her. I was sure that she lied; I believed that she could be cruel. Nevertheless, at moments, she had a charm which made it pure pedantry to be conscious of her faults; and while these moments lasted I would have done anything for her. Unfortunately they didn't last long. But you know what I mean; am I not describing the Scarabelli?"

"The Countess Scarabelli never lied!" cried Stanmer.

"That's just what I would have said to any one who should have made the insinuation! But I suppose you are not asking me the question you put to me just now from dispassionate curiosity."

"A man may want to know!" said the innocent fellow.

I couldn't help laughing out. "This, at any rate, is my story. Camerino was always there; he was a sort of fixture in the house. If I had moments of dislike for the divine Bianca, I had no moments of liking for him. And yet he was a very agreeable fellow, very civil, very intelligent, not in the least disposed to make a quarrel with me. The trouble, of course, was simply that I was jealous of him. I don't know, however, on what ground I could have quarrelled with him, for I had no definite rights. I can't say what I expected—I can't say what, as the matter stood, I was prepared to do. With my name and my prospects, I might perfectly have offered her my hand. I am not sure that she would have accepted it—I am by no means clear that she wanted that. But she wanted, wanted keenly, to attach me to her; she wanted to have me about. I should have been capable of giving up everything—England, my career, my family—simply to devote myself to her, to live near her and see her every day."

"Why didn't you do it, then?" asked Stanmer.

"Why don't you?"

"To be a proper rejoinder to my question," he said, rather neatly, "yours should be asked twenty-five years hence."

"It remains perfectly true that at a given moment I was capable of doing as I say. That was what she wanted—a rich, susceptible, credulous, convenient young Englishman established near her *en permanence*. And yet," I added, "I must do her complete justice. I honestly believe she was fond of me." At this Stanmer got up and walked to the window; he stood looking out a moment, and then he turned round. "You know she was older than I," I went on. "Madame Scarabelli is older than you. One day in the garden, her mother asked me in an angry tone why I disliked Camerino; for I had been at no pains to conceal my feeling about him, and something had just happened to bring it out. 'I dislike him,' I said, 'because you like him so much.' 'I assure you I don't like him,' she answered. 'He has all the appearance of being your lover,' I retorted. It was a brutal speech, certainly, but any other man in my place would have made it. She took it very strangely; she turned pale, but she was not indignant. 'How can he be my lover after what he has done?' she asked. 'What has he done?' She hesitated a good while, then she said: 'He killed my husband.' 'Good heavens!' I cried, 'and you receive him!' Do you know what she said? She said, '*Che vuole?*'"

“Is that all?” asked Stanmer.

“No; she went on to say that Camerino had killed Count Salvi in a duel, and she admitted that her husband’s jealousy had been the occasion of it. The Count, it appeared, was a monster of jealousy—he had led her a dreadful life. He himself, meanwhile, had been anything but irreproachable; he had done a mortal injury to a man of whom he pretended to be a friend, and this affair had become notorious. The gentleman in question had demanded satisfaction for his outraged honour; but for some reason or other (the Countess, to do her justice, did not tell me that her husband was a coward), he had not as yet obtained it. The duel with Camerino had come on first; in an access of jealous fury the Count had struck Camerino in the face; and this outrage, I know not how justly, was deemed expiable before the other. By an extraordinary arrangement (the Italians have certainly no sense of fair play) the other man was allowed to be Camerino’s second. The duel was fought with swords, and the Count received a wound of which, though at first it was not expected to be fatal, he died on the following day. The matter was hushed up as much as possible for the sake of the Countess’s good name, and so successfully that it was presently observed that, among the public, the other gentleman had the credit of having put his blade through M. de Salvi. This gentleman took a fancy not to contradict the impression, and it was allowed to subsist. So long as he consented, it was of course in Camerino’s interest not to contradict it, as it left him much more free to keep up his intimacy with the Countess.”

Stanmer had listened to all this with extreme attention. “Why didn’t *she* contradict it?”

I shrugged my shoulders. “I am bound to believe it was for the same reason. I was horrified, at any rate, by the whole story. I was extremely shocked at the Countess’s want of dignity in continuing to see the man by whose hand her husband had fallen.”

“The husband had been a great brute, and it was not known,” said Stanmer.

“Its not being known made no difference. And as for Salvi having been a brute, that is but a way of saying that his wife, and the man whom his wife subsequently married, didn’t like him.”

Stanmer hooked extremely meditative; his eyes were fixed on mine. “Yes, that marriage is hard to get over. It was not becoming.”

“Ah,” said I, “what a long breath I drew when I heard of it! I remember the place and the hour. It was at a hill-station in India, seven years after I had left Florence. The post brought me some English papers, and in one of them was a letter from Italy, with a lot of so-called ‘fashionable intelligence.’ There, among various scandals in high life, and other delectable items, I read that the Countess Bianca Salvi, famous for some years as the presiding genius of the most agreeable seen in Florence, was about to bestow her hand upon Count Camerino, a distinguished Bolognese. Ah, my dear boy, it was a tremendous escape! I had been ready to marry the woman who was capable of that! But my instinct had warned me, and I had trusted my instinct.”

“‘Instinct’s everything,’ as Falstaff says!” And Stanmer began to laugh. “Did you tell Madame de Salvi that your instinct was against her?”

“No; I told her that she frightened me, shocked me, horrified me.”

“That’s about the same thing. And what did she say?”

“She asked me what I would have? I called her friendship with Camerino a scandal, and she answered that her husband had been a brute. Besides, no one knew it; therefore it was no scandal. Just *your* argument! I retorted that this was odious reasoning, and that she had no

moral sense. We had a passionate argument, and I declared I would never see her again. In the heat of my displeasure I left Florence, and I kept my vow. I never saw her again.”

“You couldn’t have been much in love with her,” said Stanmer.

“I was not—three months after.”

“If you had been you would have come back—three days after.”

“So doubtless it seems to you. All I can say is that it was the great effort of my life. Being a military man, I have had on various occasions to face time enemy. But it was not then I needed my resolution; it was when I left Florence in a post-chaise.”

Stanmer turned about the room two or three times, and then he said: “I don’t understand! I don’t understand why she should have told you that Camerino had killed her husband. It could only damage her.”

“She was afraid it would damage her more that I should think he was her lover. She wished to say the thing that would most effectually persuade me that he was not her lover—that he could never be. And then she wished to get the credit of being very frank.”

“Good heavens, how you must have analysed her!” cried my companion, staring.

“There is nothing so analytic as disillusionment. But there it is. She married Camerino.”

“Yes, I don’t lime that,” said Stanmer. He was silent a while, and then he added—“Perhaps she wouldn’t have done so if you had remained.”

He has a little innocent way! “Very likely she would have dispensed with the ceremony,” I answered, drily.

“Upon my word,” he said, “you *have* analysed her!”

“You ought to be grateful to me. I have done for you what you seem unable to do for yourself.”

“I don’t see any Camerino in my case,” he said.

“Perhaps among those gentlemen I can find one for you.”

“Thank you,” he cried; “I’ll take care of that myself!” And he went away—satisfied, I hope.

10th.—He’s an obstinate little wretch; it irritates me to see him sticking to it. Perhaps he is looking for his Camerino. I shall leave him, at any rate, to his fate; it is growing insupportably hot.

11th.—I went this evening to bid farewell to the Scarabelli. There was no one there; she was alone in her great dusky drawing-room, which was lighted only by a couple of candles, with the immense windows open over the garden. She was dressed in white; she was deucedly pretty. She asked me, of course, why I had been so long without coming.

“I think you say that only for form,” I answered. “I imagine you know.”

“*Chè!* what have I done?”

“Nothing at all. You are too wise for that.”

She looked at me a while. “I think you are a little crazy.”

“Ah no, I am only too sane. I have too much reason rather than too little.”

“You have, at any rate, what we call a fixed idea.”

“There is no harm in that so long as it’s a good one.”

“But yours is abominable!” she exclaimed, with a laugh.

“Of course you can’t like me or my ideas. All things considered, you have treated me with wonderful kindness, and I thank you and kiss your hands. I leave Florence tomorrow.”

“I won’t say I’m sorry!” she said, laughing again. “But I am very glad to have seen you. I always wondered about you. You are a curiosity.”

“Yes, you must find me so. A man who can resist your charms! The fact is, I can’t. This evening you are enchanting; and it is the first time I have been alone with you.”

She gave no heed to this; she turned away. But in a moment she came back, and stood looking at me, and her beautiful solemn eyes seemed to shine in the dimness of the room.

“How *could* you treat my mother so?” she asked.

“Treat her so?”

“How could you desert the most charming woman in the world?”

“It was not a case of desertion; and if it had been it seems to me she was consoled.”

At this moment there was the sound of a step in the ante-chamber, and I saw that the Countess perceived it to be Stanmer’s.

“That wouldn’t have happened,” she murmured. “My poor mother needed a protector.”

Stanmer came in, interrupting our talk, and looking at me, I thought, with a little air of bravado. He must think me indeed a tiresome, meddlesome bore; and upon my word, turning it all over, I wonder at his docility. After all, he’s five-and-twenty—and yet I *must* add, it *does* irritate me—the way he sticks! He was followed in a moment by two or three of the regular Italians, and I made my visit short.

“Good-bye, Countess,” I said; and she gave me her hand in silence. “Do you need a protector?” I added, softly.

She looked at me from head to foot, and then, almost angrily—“Yes, Signore.”

But, to deprecate her anger, I kept her hand an instant, and then bent my venerable head and kissed it. I think I appeased her.

BOLOGNA, 14th.—I left Florence on the 11th, and have been here these three days. Delightful old Italian town—but it lacks the charm of my Florentine secret.

I wrote that last entry five days ago, late at night, after coming back from Casa Salsi. I afterwards fell asleep in my chair; the night was half over when I woke up. Instead of going to bed, I stood a long time at the window, looking out at the river. It was a warm, still night, and the first faint streaks of sunrise were in the sky. Presently I heard a slow footstep beneath my window, and looking down, made out by the aid of a street lamp that Stanmer was but just coming home. I called to him to come to my rooms, and, after an interval, he made his appearance.

“I want to bid you good-bye,” I said; “I shall depart in the morning. Don’t go to the trouble of saying you are sorry. Of course you are not; I must have bullied you immensely.”

He made no attempt to say he was sorry, but he said he was very glad to have made my acquaintance.

“Your conversation,” he said, with his little innocent air, “has been very suggestive.”

“Have you found Camerino?” I asked, smiling.

“I have given up the search.”

“Well,” I said, “some day when you find that you have made a great mistake, remember I told you so.”

He looked for a minute as if he were trying to anticipate that day by the exercise of his reason.

“Has it ever occurred to you that *you* may have made a great mistake?”

“Oh yes; everything occurs to one sooner or later.”

That’s what I said to him; but I didn’t say that the question, pointed by his candid young countenance, had, for the moment, a greater force than it had ever had before.

And then he asked me whether, as things had turned out, I myself had been so especially happy.

PARIS, *December* 17th.—A note from young Stanmer, whom I saw in Florence—a remarkable little note, dated Rome, and worth transcribing.

“My dear General—I have it at heart to tell you that I was married a week ago to the Countess Salvi-Scarabelli. You talked me into a great muddle; but a month after that it was all very clear. Things that involve a risk are like the Christian faith; they must be seen from the inside.—Yours ever, E. S.

“P. S.—A fig for analogies unless you can find an analogy for my happiness!”

His happiness makes him very clever. I hope it will last—I mean his cleverness, not his happiness.

LONDON, *April* 19th, 1877.—Last night, at Lady H---’s, I met Edmund Stanmer, who married Bianca Salvi’s daughter. I heard the other day that they had come to England. A handsome young fellow, with a fresh contented face. He reminded me of Florence, which I didn’t pretend to forget; but it was rather awkward, for I remember I used to disparage that woman to him. I had a complete theory about her. But he didn’t seem at all stiff; on the contrary, he appeared to enjoy our encounter. I asked him if his wife were there. I had to do that.

“Oh yes, she’s in one of the other rooms. Come and make her acquaintance; I want you to know her.”

“You forget that I do know her.”

“Oh no, you don’t; you never did.” And he gave a little significant laugh.

I didn’t feel like facing the *ci-devant* Scarabelli at that moment; so I said that I was leaving the house, but that I would do myself the honour of calling upon his wife. We talked for a minute of something else, and then, suddenly breaking off and looking at me, he laid his hand on my arm. I must do him the justice to say that he looks felicitous.

“Depend upon it you were wrong!” he said.

“My dear young friend,” I answered, “imagine the alacrity with which I concede it.”

Something else again was spoken of, but in an instant he repeated his movement.

“Depend upon it you were wrong.”

“I am sure the Countess has forgiven me,” I said, “and in that case you ought to bear no grudge. As I have had the honour to say, I will call upon her immediately.”

“I was not alluding to my wife,” he answered. “I was thinking of your own story.”

“My own story?”

“So many years ago. Was it not rather a mistake?”

I looked at him a moment; he’s positively rosy.

“That’s not a question to solve in a London crush.”

And I turned away.

22d.—I haven’t yet called on the *ci-devant*; I am afraid of finding her at home. And that boy’s words have been thrumming in my ears—“Depend upon it you were wrong. Wasn’t it rather a mistake?” *Was* I wrong—*was* it a mistake? Was I too cautious—too suspicious—too logical? Was it really a protector she needed—a man who might have helped her? Would it have been for his benefit to believe in her, and was her fault only that I had forsaken her? Was the poor woman very unhappy? God forgive me, how the questions come crowding in! If I marred her happiness, I certainly didn’t make my own. And I might have made it—eh? That’s a charming discovery for a man of my age!

A Bundle Of Letters

CHAPTER I

FROM MISS MIRANDA MOPE, IN PARIS, TO MRS. ABRAHAM C. MOPE, AT BANGOR, MAINE.

September 5th, 1879.

My dear mother—I have kept you posted as far as Tuesday week last, and, although my letter will not have reached you yet, I will begin another before my news accumulates too much. I am glad you show my letters round in the family, for I like them all to know what I am doing, and I can't write to every one, though I try to answer all reasonable expectations. But there are a great many unreasonable ones, as I suppose you know—not yours, dear mother, for I am bound to say that you never required of me more than was natural. You see you are reaping your reward: I write to you before I write to any one else.

There is one thing, I hope—that you don't show any of my letters to William Platt. If he wants to see any of my letters, he knows the right way to go to work. I wouldn't have him see one of these letters, written for circulation in the family, for anything in the world. If he wants one for himself, he has got to write to me first. Let him write to me first, and then I will see about answering him. You can show him this if you like; but if you show him anything more, I will never write to you again.

I told you in my last about my farewell to England, my crossing the Channel, and my first impressions of Paris. I have thought a great deal about that lovely England since I left it, and all the famous historic scenes I visited; but I have come to the conclusion that it is not a country in which I should care to reside. The position of woman does not seem to me at all satisfactory, and that is a point, you know, on which I feel very strongly. It seems to me that in England they play a very faded-out part, and those with whom I conversed had a kind of depressed and humiliated tone; a little dull, tame look, as if they were used to being snubbed and bullied, which made me want to give them a good shaking. There are a great many people—and a great many things, too—over here that I should like to perform that operation upon. I should like to shake the starch out of some of them, and the dust out of the others. I know fifty girls in Bangor that come much more up to my notion of the stand a truly noble woman should take, than those young ladies in England. But they had a most lovely way of speaking (in England), and the men are *remarkably handsome*. (You can show this to William Platt, if you like.)

I gave you my first impressions of Paris, which quite came up to my expectations, much as I had heard and read about it. The objects of interest are extremely numerous, and the climate is remarkably cheerful and sunny. I should say the position of woman here was considerably higher, though by no means coming up to the American standard. The manners of the people are in some respects extremely peculiar, and I feel at last that I am indeed in *foreign parts*. It is, however, a truly elegant city (very superior to New York), and I have spent a great deal of time in visiting the various monuments and palaces. I won't give you an account of all my wanderings, though I have been most indefatigable; for I am keeping, as I told you before, a most *exhaustive* journal, which I will allow you the *privilege* of reading on my return to Bangor. I am getting on remarkably well, and I must say I am sometimes surprised at my universal good fortune. It only shows what a little energy and common-sense will accomplish. I have discovered none of these objections to a young lady travelling in Europe

by herself of which we heard so much before I left, and I don't expect I ever shall, for I certainly don't mean to look for them. I know what I want, and I always manage to get it.

I have received a great deal of politeness—some of it really most pressing, and I have experienced no drawbacks whatever. I have made a great many pleasant acquaintances in travelling round (both ladies and gentlemen), and had a great many most interesting talks. I have collected a great deal of information, for which I refer you to my journal. I assure you my journal is going to be a splendid thing. I do just exactly as I do in Bangor, and I find I do perfectly right; and at any rate, I don't care if I don't. I didn't come to Europe to lead a merely conventional life; I could do that at Bangor. You know I never *would* do it at Bangor, so it isn't likely I am going to make myself miserable over here. So long as I accomplish what I desire, and make my money hold out, I shall regard the thing as a success. Sometimes I feel rather lonely, especially in the evening; but I generally manage to interest myself in something or in some one. In the evening I usually read up about the objects of interest I have visited during the day, or I post up my journal. Sometimes I go to the theatre; or else I play the piano in the public parlour. The public parlour at the hotel isn't much; but the piano is better than that fearful old thing at the Sebago House. Sometimes I go downstairs and talk to the lady who keeps the books—a French lady, who is remarkably polite. She is very pretty, and always wears a black dress, with the most beautiful fit; she speaks a little English; she tells me she had to learn it in order to converse with the Americans who come in such numbers to this hotel. She has given me a great deal of information about the position of woman in France, and much of it is very encouraging. But she has told me at the same time some things that I should not like to write to you (I am hesitating even about putting them into my journal), especially if my letters are to be handed round in the family. I assure you they appear to talk about things here that we never think of mentioning at Bangor, or even of thinking about. She seems to think she can tell me everything, because I told her I was travelling for general culture. Well, I *do* want to know so much that it seems sometimes as if I wanted to know everything; and yet there are some things that I think I don't want to know. But, as a general thing, everything is intensely interesting; I don't mean only everything that this French lady tells me, but everything I see and hear for myself. I feel really as if I should gain all I desire.

I meet a great many Americans, who, as a general thing, I must say, are not as polite to me as the people over here. The people over here—especially the gentlemen—are much more what I should call *attentive*. I don't know whether Americans are more *sincere*; I haven't yet made up my mind about that. The only drawback I experience is when Americans sometimes express surprise that I should be travelling round alone; so you see it doesn't come from Europeans. I always have my answer ready; "For general culture, to acquire the languages, and to see Europe for myself;" and that generally seems to satisfy them. Dear mother, my money holds out very well, and it *is* real interesting.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

September 16th.

Since I last wrote to you I have left that hotel, and come to live in a French family. It's a kind of boarding-house combined with a kind of school; only it's not like an American boarding-house, nor like an American school either. There are four or five people here that have come to learn the language—not to take lessons, but to have an opportunity for conversation. I was very glad to come to such a place, for I had begun to realise that I was not making much progress with the French. It seemed to me that I should feel ashamed to have spent two

months in Paris, and not to have acquired more insight into the language. I had always heard so much of French conversation, and I found I was having no more opportunity to practise it than if I had remained at Bangor. In fact, I used to hear a great deal more at Bangor, from those French Canadians that came down to cut the ice, than I saw I should ever hear at that hotel. The lady that kept the books seemed to want so much to talk to me in English (for the sake of practice, too, I suppose), that I couldn't bear to let her know I didn't like it. The chambermaid was Irish, and all the waiters were German, so that I never heard a word of French spoken. I suppose you might hear a great deal in the shops; only, as I don't buy anything—I prefer to spend my money for purposes of culture—I don't have that advantage.

I have been thinking some of taking a teacher, but I am well acquainted with the grammar already, and teachers always keep you bothering over the verbs. I was a good deal troubled, for I felt as if I didn't want to go away without having, at least, got a general idea of French conversation. The theatre gives you a good deal of insight, and as I told you in my last, I go a good deal to places of amusement. I find no difficulty whatever in going to such places alone, and am always treated with the politeness which, as I told you before, I encounter everywhere. I see plenty of other ladies alone (mostly French), and they generally seem to be enjoying themselves as much as I. But at the theatre every one talks so fast that I can scarcely make out what they say; and, besides, there are a great many vulgar expressions which it is unnecessary to learn. But it was the theatre, nevertheless, that put me on the track. The very next day after I wrote to you last I went to the Palais Royal, which is one of the principal theatres in Paris. It is very small, but it is very celebrated, and in my guide-book it is marked with *two stars*, which is a sign of importance attached only to *first-class* objects of interest. But after I had been there half an hour I found I couldn't understand a single word of the play, they gabbled it off so fast, and they made use of such peculiar expressions. I felt a good deal disappointed and troubled—I was afraid I shouldn't gain all I had come for. But while I was thinking it over—thinking what I *should* do—I heard two gentlemen talking behind me. It was between the acts, and I couldn't help listening to what they said. They were talking English, but I guess they were Americans.

“Well,” said one of them, “it all depends on what you are after. I'm French; that's what I'm after.”

“Well,” said the other, “I'm after Art.”

“Well,” said the first, “I'm after Art too; but I'm after French most.”

Then, dear mother, I am sorry to say the second one swore a little. He said, “Oh, damn French!”

“No, I won't damn French,” said his friend. “I'll acquire it—that's what I'll do with it. I'll go right into a family.”

“What family'll you go into?”

“Into some French family. That's the only way to do—to go to some place where you can talk. If you're after Art, you want to stick to the galleries; you want to go right through the Louvre, room by room; you want to take a room a day, or something of that sort. But, if you want to acquire French, the thing is to look out for a family. There are lots of French families here that take you to board and teach you. My second cousin—that young lady I told you about—she got in with a crowd like that, and they booked her right up in three months. They just took her right in and they talked to her. That's what they do to you; they set you right down and they talk *at* you. You've got to understand them; you can't help yourself. That family my cousin was with has moved away somewhere, or I should try and get in with

them. They were very smart people, that family; after she left, my cousin corresponded with them in French. But I mean to find some other crowd, if it takes a lot of trouble!”

I listened to all this with great interest, and when he spoke about his cousin I was on the point of turning around to ask him the address of the family that she was with; but the next moment he said they had moved away; so I sat still. The other gentleman, however, didn't seem to be affected in the same way as I was.

“Well,” he said, “you may follow up that if you like; I mean to follow up the pictures. I don't believe there is ever going to be any considerable demand in the United States for French; but I can promise you that in about ten years there'll be a big demand for Art! And it won't be temporary either.”

That remark may be very true, but I don't care anything about the demand; I want to know French for its own sake. I don't want to think I have been all this while without having gained an insight . . . The very next day, I asked the lady who kept the books at the hotel whether she knew of any family that could take me to board and give me the benefit of their conversation. She instantly threw up her hands, with several little shrill cries (in their French way, you know), and told me that her dearest friend kept a regular place of that kind. If she had known I was looking out for such a place she would have told me before; she had not spoken of it herself, because she didn't wish to injure the hotel by being the cause of my going away. She told me this was a charming family, who had often received American ladies (and others as well) who wished to follow up the language, and she was sure I should be delighted with them. So she gave me their address, and offered to go with me to introduce me. But I was in such a hurry that I went off by myself; and I had no trouble in finding these good people. They were delighted to receive me, and I was very much pleased with what I saw of them. They seemed to have plenty of conversation, and there will be no trouble about that.

I came here to stay about three days ago, and by this time I have seen a great deal of them. The price of board struck me as rather high; but I must remember that a quantity of conversation is thrown in. I have a very pretty little room—without any carpet, but with seven mirrors, two clocks, and five curtains. I was rather disappointed after I arrived to find that there are several other Americans here for the same purpose as myself. At least there are three Americans and two English people; and also a German gentleman. I am afraid, therefore, our conversation will be rather mixed, but I have not yet time to judge. I try to talk with Madame de Maisonrouge all I can (she is the lady of the house, and the *real* family consists only of herself and her two daughters). They are all most elegant, interesting women, and I am sure we shall become intimate friends. I will write you more about them in my next. Tell William Platt I don't care what he does.

CHAPTER III

FROM MISS VIOLET RAY, IN PARIS, TO MISS AGNES RICH, IN NEW YORK.

September 21st.

We had hardly got here when father received a telegram saying he would have to come right back to New York. It was for something about his business—I don't know exactly what; you know I never understand those things, never want to. We had just got settled at the hotel, in some charming rooms, and mother and I, as you may imagine, were greatly annoyed. Father is extremely fussy, as you know, and his first idea, as soon as he found he should have to go back, was that we should go back with him. He declared he would never leave us in Paris alone, and that we must return and come out again. I don't know what he thought would happen to us; I suppose he thought we should be too extravagant. It's father's theory that we

are always running up bills, whereas a little observation would show him that we wear the same old *rags* FOR MONTHS. But father has no observation; he has nothing but theories. Mother and I, however, have, fortunately, a great deal of *practice*, and we succeeded in making him understand that we wouldn't budge from Paris, and that we would rather be chopped into small pieces than cross that dreadful ocean again. So, at last, he decided to go back alone, and to leave us here for three months. But, to show you how fussy he is, he refused to let us stay at the hotel, and insisted that we should go into a *family*. I don't know what put such an idea into his head, unless it was some advertisement that he saw in one of the American papers that are published here.

There are families here who receive American and English people to live with them, under the pretence of teaching them French. You may imagine what people they are—I mean the families themselves. But the Americans who choose this peculiar manner of seeing Paris must be actually just as bad. Mother and I were horrified, and declared that main force should not remove us from the hotel. But father has a way of arriving at his ends which is more efficient than violence. He worries and fusses; he “nags,” as we used to say at school; and, when mother and I are quite worn out, his triumph is assured. Mother is usually worn out more easily than I, and she ends by siding with father; so that, at last, when they combine their forces against poor little me, I have to succumb. You should have heard the way father went on about this “family” plan; he talked to every one he saw about it; he used to go round to the banker's and talk to the people there—the people in the post-office; he used to try and exchange ideas about it with the waiters at the hotel. He said it would be more safe, more respectable, more economical; that I should perfect my French; that mother would learn how a French household is conducted; that he should feel more easy, and five hundred reasons more. They were none of them good, but that made no difference. It's all humbug, his talking about economy, when every one knows that business in America has completely recovered, that the prostration is all over, and that immense fortunes are being made. We have been economising for the last five years, and I supposed we came abroad to reap the benefits of it.

As for my French, it is quite as perfect as I want it to be. (I assure you I am often surprised at my own fluency, and, when I get a little more practice in the genders and the idioms, I shall do very well in this respect.) To make a long story short, however, father carried his point, as usual; mother basely deserted me at the last moment, and, after holding out alone for three days, I told them to do with me what they pleased! Father lost three steamers in succession by remaining in Paris to argue with me. You know he is like the schoolmaster in Goldsmith's “Deserted Village”—“e'en though vanquished, he would argue still.” He and mother went to look at some seventeen families (they had got the addresses somewhere), while I retired to my sofa, and would have nothing to do with it. At last they made arrangements, and I was transported to the establishment from which I now write you. I write you from the bosom of a Parisian ménage—from the depths of a second-rate boarding-house.

Father only left Paris after he had seen us what he calls comfortably settled here, and had informed Madame de Maisonrouge (the mistress of the establishment—the head of the “family”) that he wished my French pronunciation especially attended to. The pronunciation, as it happens, is just what I am most at home in; if he had said my genders or my idioms there would have been some sense. But poor father has no tact, and this defect is especially marked since he has been in Europe. He will be absent, however, for three months, and mother and I shall breathe more freely; the situation will be less intense. I must confess that we breathe more freely than I expected, in this place, where we have been for about a week. I was sure, before we came, that it would prove to be an establishment of the *lowest description*; but I must say that, in this respect, I am agreeably disappointed. The French are

so clever that they know even how to manage a place of this kind. Of course it is very disagreeable to live with strangers, but as, after all, if I were not staying with Madame de Maisonrouge I should not be living in the Faubourg St. Germain, I don't know that from the point of view of exclusiveness it is any great loss to be here.

Our rooms are very prettily arranged, and the table is remarkably good. Mamma thinks the whole thing—the place and the people, the manners and customs—very amusing; but mamma is very easily amused. As for me, you know, all that I ask is to be let alone, and not to have people's society forced upon me. I have never wanted for society of my own choosing, and, so long as I retain possession of my faculties, I don't suppose I ever shall. As I said, however, the place is very well managed, and I succeed in doing as I please, which, you know, is my most cherished pursuit. Madame de Maisonrouge has a great deal of tact—much more than poor father. She is what they call here a *belle femme*, which means that she is a tall, ugly woman, with style. She dresses very well, and has a great deal of talk; but, though she is a very good imitation of a lady, I never see her behind the dinner-table, in the evening, smiling and bowing, as the people come in, and looking all the while at the dishes and the servants, without thinking of a *dame de comptoir* blooming in a corner of a shop or a restaurant. I am sure that, in spite of her fine name, she was once a *dame de comptoir*. I am also sure that, in spite of her smiles and the pretty things she says to every one, she hates us all, and would like to murder us. She is a hard, clever Frenchwoman, who would like to amuse herself and enjoy her Paris, and she must be bored to death at passing all her time in the midst of stupid English people who mumble broken French at her. Some day she will poison the soup or the *vin rouge*; but I hope that will not be until after mother and I shall have left her. She has two daughters, who, except that one is decidedly pretty, are meagre imitations of herself.

The “family,” for the rest, consists altogether of our beloved compatriots, and of still more beloved Englishmen. There is an Englishman here, with his sister, and they seem to be rather nice people. He is remarkably handsome, but excessively affected and patronising, especially to us Americans; and I hope to have a chance of biting his head off before long. The sister is very pretty, and, apparently, very nice; but, in costume, she is Britannia incarnate. There is a very pleasant little Frenchman—when they are nice they are charming—and a German doctor, a big blonde man, who looks like a great white bull; and two Americans, besides mother and me. One of them is a young man from Boston,—an æsthetic young man, who talks about its being “a real Corot day,” etc., and a young woman—a girl, a female, I don't know what to call her—from Vermont, or Minnesota, or some such place. This young woman is the most extraordinary specimen of artless Yankeeism that I ever encountered; she is really too horrible. I have been three times to Clémentine about your underskirt, etc.

CHAPTER IV

FROM LOUIS LEVERETT, IN PARIS, TO HARVARD TREMONT, IN BOSTON.

September 25th.

My dear Harvard—I have carried out my plan, of which I gave you a hint in my last, and I only regret that I should not have done it before. It is human nature, after all, that is the most interesting thing in the world, and it only reveals itself to the truly earnest seeker. There is a want of earnestness in that life of hotels and railroad trains, which so many of our countrymen are content to lead in this strange Old World, and I was distressed to find how far I, myself; had been led along the dusty, beaten track. I had, however, constantly wanted to turn aside into more unfrequented ways; to plunge beneath the surface and see what I should discover. But the opportunity had always been missing; somehow, I never meet those

opportunities that we hear about and read about—the things that happen to people in novels and biographies. And yet I am always on the watch to take advantage of any opening that may present itself; I am always looking out for experiences, for sensations—I might almost say for adventures.

The great thing is to *live*, you know—to feel, to be conscious of one's possibilities; not to pass through life mechanically and insensibly, like a letter through the post-office. There are times, my dear Harvard, when I feel as if I were really capable of everything—capable *de tout*, as they say here—of the greatest excesses as well as the greatest heroism. Oh, to be able to say that one has lived—*qu'on a vécu*, as they say here—that idea exercises an indefinable attraction for me. You will, perhaps, reply, it is easy to say it; but the thing is to make people believe you! And, then, I don't want any second-hand, spurious sensations; I want the knowledge that leaves a trace—that leaves strange scars and stains and reveries behind it! But I am afraid I shock you, perhaps even frighten you.

If you repeat my remarks to any of the West Cedar Street circle, be sure you tone them down as your discretion will suggest. For yourself; you will know that I have always had an intense desire to see something of *real French life*. You are acquainted with my great sympathy with the French; with my natural tendency to enter into the French way of looking at life. I sympathise with the artistic temperament; I remember you used sometimes to hint to me that you thought my own temperament too artistic. I don't think that in Boston there is any real sympathy with the artistic temperament; we tend to make everything a matter of right and wrong. And in Boston one can't *live*—*on ne peut pas vivre*, as they say here. I don't mean one can't reside—for a great many people manage that; but one can't live æsthetically—I may almost venture to say, sensuously. This is why I have always been so much drawn to the French, who are so æsthetic, so sensuous. I am so sorry that Théophile Gautier has passed away; I should have liked so much to go and see him, and tell him all that I owe him. He was living when I was here before; but, you know, at that time I was travelling with the Johnsons, who are not æsthetic, and who used to make me feel rather ashamed of my artistic temperament. If I had gone to see the great apostle of beauty, I should have had to go clandestinely—*en cachette*, as they say here; and that is not my nature; I like to do everything frankly, freely, *naïvement, au grand jour*. That is the great thing—to be free, to be frank, to be *naïf*. Doesn't Matthew Arnold say that somewhere—or is it Swinburne, or Pater?

When I was with the Johnsons everything was superficial; and, as regards life, everything was brought down to the question of right and wrong. They were too didactic; art should never be didactic; and what is life but an art? Pater has said that so well, somewhere. With the Johnsons I am afraid I lost many opportunities; the tone was gray and cottony, I might almost say woolly. But now, as I tell you, I have determined to take right hold for myself; to look right into European life, and judge it without Johnsonian prejudices. I have taken up my residence in a French family, in a real Parisian house. You see I have the courage of my opinions; I don't shrink from carrying out my theory that the great thing is to *live*.

You know I have always been intensely interested in Balzac, who never shrank from the reality, and whose almost *lurid* pictures of Parisian life have often haunted me in my wanderings through the old wicked-looking streets on the other side of the river. I am only sorry that my new friends—my French family—do not live in the old city—*au coeur du vieux Paris*, as they say here. They live only in the Boulevard Haussman, which is less picturesque; but in spite of this they have a great deal of the Balzac tone. Madame de Maisonrouge belongs to one of the oldest and proudest families in France; but she has had reverses which have compelled her to open an establishment in which a limited number of travellers, who are weary of the beaten track, who have the sense of local colour—she

explains it herself; she expresses it so well—in short, to open a sort of boarding-house. I don't see why I should not, after all, use that expression, for it is the correlative of the term *pension bourgeoise*, employed by Balzac in the *Père Goriot*. Do you remember the *pension bourgeoise* of Madame Vauquer *née de Conflans*? But this establishment is not at all like that: and indeed it is not at all *bourgeois*; there is something distinguished, something aristocratic, about it. The Pension Vauquer was dark, brown, sordid, *graisseuse*; but this is in quite a different tone, with high, clear, lightly-draped windows, tender, subtle, almost morbid, colours, and furniture in elegant, studied, reed-like lines. Madame de Maisonrouge reminds me of Madame Hulot—do you remember “la belle Madame Hulot?”—in *Les Barents Pauvres*. She has a great charm; a little artificial, a little fatigued, with a little suggestion of hidden things in her life; but I have always been sensitive to the charm of fatigue, of duplicity.

I am rather disappointed, I confess, in the society I find here; it is not so local, so characteristic, as I could have desired. Indeed, to tell the truth, it is not local at all; but, on the other hand, it is cosmopolitan, and there is a great advantage in that. We are French, we are English, we are American, we are German; and, I believe, there are some Russians and Hungarians expected. I am much interested in the study of national types; in comparing, contrasting, seizing the strong points, the weak points, the point of view of each. It is interesting to shift one's point of view—to enter into strange, exotic ways of looking at life.

The American types here are not, I am sorry to say, so interesting as they might be, and, excepting myself; are exclusively feminine. We are *thin*, my dear Harvard; we are pale, we are sharp. There is something meagre about us; our line is wanting in roundness, our composition in richness. We lack temperament; we don't know how to live; *nous ne savons pas vivre*, as they say here. The American temperament is represented (putting myself aside, and I often think that my temperament is not at all American) by a young girl and her mother, and another young girl without her mother—without her mother or any attendant or appendage whatever. These young girls are rather curious types; they have a certain interest, they have a certain grace, but they are disappointing too; they don't go far; they don't keep all they promise; they don't satisfy the imagination. They are cold, slim, sexless; the physique is not generous, not abundant; it is only the drapery, the skirts and furbelows (that is, I mean in the young lady who has her mother) that are abundant. They are very different: one of them all elegance, all expensiveness, with an air of high fashion, from New York; the other a plain, pure, clear-eyed, straight-waisted, straight-stepping maiden from the heart of New England. And yet they are very much alike too—more alike than they would care to think themselves for they eye each other with cold, mistrustful, deprecating looks. They are both specimens of the emancipated young American girl—practical, positive, passionless, subtle, and knowing, as you please, either too much or too little. And yet, as I say, they have a certain stamp, a certain grace; I like to talk with them, to study them.

The fair New Yorker is, sometimes, very amusing; she asks me if every one in Boston talks like me—if every one is as “intellectual” as your poor correspondent. She is for ever throwing Boston up at me; I can't get rid of Boston. The other one rubs it into me too; but in a different way; she seems to feel about it as a good Mahommedan feels toward Mecca, and regards it as a kind of focus of light for the whole human race. Poor little Boston, what nonsense is talked in thy name! But this New England maiden is, in her way, a strange type: she is travelling all over Europe alone—“to see it,” she says, “for herself.” For herself! What can that stiff slim self of hers do with such sights, such visions! She looks at everything, goes everywhere, passes her way, with her clear quiet eyes wide open; skirting the edge of obscene abysses without suspecting them; pushing through brambles without tearing her robe; exciting, without knowing it, the most injurious suspicions; and always holding her course,

passionless, stainless, fearless, charmless! It is a little figure in which, after all, if you can get the right point of view, there is something rather striking.

By way of contrast, there is a lovely English girl, with eyes as shy as violets, and a voice as sweet! She has a sweet Gainsborough head, and a great Gainsborough hat, with a mighty plume in front of it, which makes a shadow over her quiet English eyes. Then she has a sage-green robe, "mystic, wonderful," all embroidered with subtle devices and flowers, and birds of tender tint; very straight and tight in front, and adorned behind, along the spine, with large, strange, iridescent buttons. The revival of taste, of the sense of beauty, in England, interests me deeply; what is there in a simple row of spinal buttons to make one dream—to *donnor à rêver*, as they say here? I think that a great æsthetic renaissance is at hand, and that a great light will be kindled in England, for all the world to see. There are spirits there that I should like to commune with; I think they would understand me.

This gracious English maiden, with her clinging robes, her amulets and girdles, with something quaint and angular in her step, her carriage something mediæval and Gothic, in the details of her person and dress, this lovely Evelyn Vane (isn't it a beautiful name?) is deeply, delightfully picturesque. She is much a woman—*elle est bien femme*, as they say here; simpler, softer, rounder, richer than the young girls I spoke of just now. Not much talk—a great, sweet silence. Then the violet eye—the very eye itself seems to blush; the great shadowy hat, making the brow so quiet; the strange, clinging, clutching, pictured raiment! As I say, it is a very gracious, tender type. She has her brother with her, who is a beautiful, fair-haired, gray-eyed young Englishman. He is purely objective; and he, too, is very plastic.

CHAPTER V

FROM MIRANDA HOPE TO HER MOTHER.

September 26th.

You must not be frightened at not hearing from me oftener; it is not because I am in any trouble, but because I am getting on so well. If I were in any trouble I don't think I should write to you; I should just keep quiet and see it through myself. But that is not the case at present and, if I don't write to you, it is because I am so deeply interested over here that I don't seem to find time. It was a real providence that brought me to this house, where, in spite of all obstacles, I am able to do much good work. I wonder how I find the time for all I do; but when I think that I have only got a year in Europe, I feel as if I wouldn't sacrifice a single hour.

The obstacles I refer to are the disadvantages I have in learning French, there being so many persons around me speaking English, and that, as you may say, in the very bosom of a French family. It seems as if you heard English everywhere; but I certainly didn't expect to find it in a place like this. I am not discouraged, however, and I talk French all I can, even with the other English boarders. Then I have a lesson every day from Miss Maisonrouge (the elder daughter of the lady of the house), and French conversation every evening in the salon, from eight to eleven, with Madame herself, and some friends of hers that often come in. Her cousin, Mr. Verdier, a young French gentleman, is fortunately staying with her, and I make a point of talking with him as much as possible. I have *extra private lessons* from him, and I often go out to walk with him. Some night, soon, he is to accompany me to the opera. We have also a most interesting plan of visiting all the galleries in Paris together. Like most of the French, he converses with great fluency, and I feel as if I should really gain from him. He is remarkably handsome, and extremely polite—paying a great many compliments, which, I am afraid, are not always *sincere*. When I return to Bangor I will tell you some of the things

he has said to me. I think you will consider them extremely curious, and very beautiful *in their way*.

The conversation in the parlour (from eight to eleven) is often remarkably brilliant, and I often wish that you, or some of the Bangor folks, could be there to enjoy it. Even though you couldn't understand it I think you would like to hear the way they go on; they seem to express so much. I sometimes think that at Bangor they don't express enough (but it seems as if over there, there was less to express). It seems as if; at Bangor, there were things that folks never *tried* to say; but here, I have learned from studying French that you have no idea what you *can* say, before you try. At Bangor they seem to give it up beforehand; they don't make any effort. (I don't say this in the least for William Platt, *in particular*.)

I am sure I don't know what they will think of me when I get back. It seems as if; over here, I had learned to come out with everything. I suppose they will think I am not sincere; but isn't it more sincere to come out with things than to conceal them? I have become very good friends with every one in the house—that is (you see, I *am* sincere), with *almost* every one. It is the most interesting circle I ever was in. There's a girl here, an American, that I don't like so much as the rest; but that is only because she won't let me. I should like to like her, ever so much, because she is most lovely and most attractive; but she doesn't seem to want to know me or to like me. She comes from New York, and she is remarkably pretty, with beautiful eyes and the most delicate features; she is also remarkably elegant—in this respect would bear comparison with any one I have seen over here. But it seems as if she didn't want to recognise me or associate with me; as if she wanted to make a difference between us. It is like people they call “haughty” in books. I have never seen any one like that before—any one that wanted to make a difference; and at first I was right down interested, she seemed to me so like a proud young lady in a novel. I kept saying to myself all day, “haughty, haughty,” and I wished she would keep on so. But she did keep on; she kept on too long; and then I began to feel hurt. I couldn't think what I have done, and I can't think yet. It's as if she had got some idea about me, or had heard some one say something. If some girls should behave like that I shouldn't make any account of it; but this one is so refined, and looks as if she might be so interesting if I once got to know her, that I think about it a good deal. I am bound to find out what her reason is—for of course she has got some reason; I am right down curious to know.

I went up to her to ask her the day before yesterday; I thought that was the best way. I told her I wanted to know her better, and would like to come and see her in her room—they tell me she has got a lovely room—and that if she had heard anything against me, perhaps she would tell me when I came. But she was more distant than ever, and she just turned it off; said that she had never heard me mentioned, and that her room was too small to receive visitors. I suppose she spoke the truth, but I am sure she has got some reason, all the same. She has got some idea, and I am bound to find out before I go, if I have to ask everybody in the house. I *am* right down curious. I wonder if she doesn't think me refined—or if she had ever heard anything against Bangor? I can't think it is that. Don't you remember when Clara Barnard went to visit New York, three years ago, how much attention she received? And you know Clara *is* Bangor, to the soles of her shoes. Ask William Platt—so long as he isn't a native—if he doesn't consider Clara Barnard refined.

Apropos, as they say here, of refinement, there is another American in the house—a gentleman from Boston—who is just crowded with it. His name is Mr. Louis Leverett (such a beautiful name, I think), and he is about thirty years old. He is rather small, and he looks pretty sick; he suffers from some affection of the liver. But his conversation is remarkably interesting, and I delight to listen to him—he has such beautiful ideas. I feel as if it were

hardly right, not being in French; but, fortunately, he uses a great many French expressions. It's in a different style from the conversation of Mr. Verdier—not so complimentary, but more intellectual. He is intensely fond of pictures, and has given me a great many ideas about them which I should never have gained without him; I shouldn't have known where to look for such ideas. He thinks everything of pictures; he thinks we don't make near enough of them. They seem to make a good deal of them here; but I couldn't help telling him the other day that in Bangor I really don't think we do.

If I had any money to spend I would buy some and take them back, to hang up. Mr. Leverett says it would do them good—not the pictures, but the Bangor folks. He thinks everything of the French, too, and says we don't make nearly enough of *them*. I couldn't help telling him the other day that at any rate they make enough of themselves. But it is very interesting to hear him go on about the French, and it is so much gain to me, so long as that is what I came for. I talk to him as much as I dare about Boston, but I do feel as if this were right down wrong—a stolen pleasure.

I can get all the Boston culture I want when I go back, if I carry out my plan, my happy vision, of going there to reside. I ought to direct all my efforts to European culture now, and keep Boston to finish off. But it seems as if I couldn't help taking a peep now and then, in advance—with a Bostonian. I don't know when I may meet one again; but if there are many others like Mr. Leverett there, I shall be certain not to want when I carry out my dream. He is just as full of culture as he can live. But it seems strange how many different sorts there are.

There are two of the English who I suppose are very cultivated too; but it doesn't seem as if I could enter into theirs so easily, though I try all I can. I do love their way of speaking, and sometimes I feel almost as if it would be right to give up trying to learn French, and just try to learn to speak our own tongue as these English speak it. It isn't the things they say so much, though these are often rather curious, but it is in the way they pronounce, and the sweetness of their voice. It seems as if they must *try* a good deal to talk like that; but these English that are here don't seem to try at all, either to speak or do anything else. They are a young lady and her brother. I believe they belong to some noble family. I have had a good deal of intercourse with them, because I have felt more free to talk to them than to the Americans—on account of the language. It seems as if in talking with them I was almost learning a new one.

I never supposed, when I left Bangor, that I was coming to Europe to learn *English*! If I do learn it, I don't think you will understand me when I get back, and I don't think you'll like it much. I should be a good deal criticised if I spoke like that at Bangor. However, I verily believe Bangor is the most critical place on earth; I have seen nothing like it over here. Tell them all I have come to the conclusion that they are *a great deal too fastidious*. But I was speaking about this English young lady and her brother. I wish I could put them before you. She is lovely to look at; she seems so modest and retiring. In spite of this, however, she dresses in a way that attracts great attention, as I couldn't help noticing when one day I went out to walk with her. She was ever so much looked at; but she didn't seem to notice it, until at last I couldn't help calling attention to it. Mr. Leverett thinks everything of it; he calls it the “costume of the future.” I should call it rather the costume of the past—you know the English have such an attachment to the past. I said this the other day to Madame do Maisonrouge—that Miss Vane dressed in the costume of the past. *De l'an passé, vous voulez dire?* said Madame, with her little French laugh (you can get William Platt to translate this, he used to tell me he knew so much French).

You know I told you, in writing some time ago, that I had tried to get some insight into the position of woman in England, and, being here with Miss Vane, it has seemed to me to be a

good opportunity to get a little more. I have asked her a great deal about it; but she doesn't seem able to give me much information. The first time I asked her she told me the position of a lady depended upon the rank of her father, her eldest brother, her husband, etc. She told me her own position was very good, because her father was some relation—I forget what—to a lord. She thinks everything of this; and that proves to me that the position of woman in her country cannot be satisfactory; because, if it were, it wouldn't depend upon that of your relations, even your nearest. I don't know much about lords, and it does try my patience (though she is just as sweet as she can live) to hear her talk as if it were a matter of course that I should.

I feel as if it were right to ask her as often as I can if she doesn't consider every one equal; but she always says she doesn't, and she confesses that she doesn't think she is equal to "Lady Something-or-other," who is the wife of that relation of her father. I try and persuade her all I can that she is; but it seems as if she didn't want to be persuaded; and when I ask her if Lady So-and-so is of the same opinion (that Miss Vane isn't her equal), she looks so soft and pretty with her eyes, and says, "Of course she is!" When I tell her that this is right down bad for Lady So-and-so, it seems as if she wouldn't believe me, and the only answer she will make is that Lady So-and-so is "extremely nice." I don't believe she is nice at all; if she were nice, she wouldn't have such ideas as that. I tell Miss Vane that at Bangor we think such ideas vulgar; but then she looks as though she had never heard of Bangor. I often want to shake her, though she *is* so sweet. If she isn't angry with the people who make her feel that way, I am angry for her. I am angry with her brother too, for she is evidently very much afraid of him, and this gives me some further insight into the subject. She thinks everything of her brother, and thinks it natural that she should be afraid of him, not only physically (for this *is* natural, as he is enormously tall and strong, and has very big fists), but morally and intellectually. She seems unable, however, to take in any argument, and she makes me realise what I have often heard—that if you are timid nothing will reason you out of it.

Mr. Vane, also (the brother), seems to have the same prejudices, and when I tell him, as I often think it right to do, that his sister is not his subordinate, even if she does think so, but his equal, and, perhaps in some respects his superior, and that if my brother, in Bangor, were to treat me as he treats this poor young girl, who has not spirit enough to see the question in its true light, there would be an indignation, meeting of the citizens to protest against such an outrage to the sanctity of womanhood—when I tell him all this, at breakfast or dinner, he bursts out laughing so loud that all the plates clatter on the table.

But at such a time as this there is always one person who seems interested in what I say—a German gentleman, a professor, who sits next to me at dinner, and whom I must tell you more about another time. He is very learned, and has a great desire for information; he appreciates a great many of my remarks, and after dinner, in the salon, he often comes to me to ask me questions about them. I have to think a little, sometimes, to know what I did say, or what I do think. He takes you right up where you left off; and he is almost as fond of discussing things as William Platt is. He is splendidly educated, in the German style, and he told me the other day that he was an "intellectual broom." Well, if he is, he sweeps clean; I told him that. After he has been talking to me I feel as if I hadn't got a speck of dust left in my mind anywhere. It's a most delightful feeling. He says he's an observer; and I am sure there is plenty over here to observe. But I have told you enough for to-day. I don't know how much longer I shall stay here; I am getting on so fast that it sometimes seems as if I shouldn't need all the time I have laid out. I suppose your cold weather has promptly begun, as usual; it sometimes makes me envy you. The fall weather here is very dull and damp, and I feel very much as if I should like to be braced up.

CHAPTER VI

FROM MISS EVELYN VANE, IN PARIS, TO THE LADY AUGUSTA FLEMING, AT BRIGHTON.

Paris, September 30th.

Dear Lady Augusta—I am afraid I shall not be able to come to you on January 7th, as you kindly proposed at Homburg. I am so very, very sorry; it is a great disappointment to me. But I have just heard that it has been settled that mamma and the children are coming abroad for a part of the winter, and mamma wishes me to go with them to Hyères, where Georgina has been ordered for her lungs. She has not been at all well these three months, and now that the damp weather has begun she is very poorly indeed; so that last week papa decided to have a consultation, and he and mamma went with her up to town and saw some three or four doctors. They all of them ordered the south of France, but they didn't agree about the place; so that mamma herself decided for Hyères, because it is the most economical. I believe it is very dull, but I hope it will do Georgina good. I am afraid, however, that nothing will do her good until she consents to take more care of herself; I am afraid she is very wild and wilful, and mamma tells me that all this month it has taken papa's positive orders to make her stop in-doors. She is very cross (mamma writes me) about coming abroad, and doesn't seem at all to mind the expense that papa has been put to—talks very ill-naturedly about losing the hunting, etc. She expected to begin to hunt in December, and wants to know whether anybody keeps hounds at Hyères. Fancy a girl wanting to follow the hounds when her lungs are so bad! But I daresay that when she gets there she will be glad enough to keep quiet, as they say that the heat is intense. It may cure Georgina, but I am sure it will make the rest of us very ill.

Mamma, however, is only going to bring Mary and Gus and Fred and Adelaide abroad with her; the others will remain at Kingscote until February (about the 3d), when they will go to Eastbourne for a month with Miss Turnover, the new governess, who has turned out such a very nice person. She is going to take Miss Travers, who has been with us so long, but who is only qualified for the younger children, to Hyères, and I believe some of the Kingscote servants. She has perfect confidence in Miss T.; it is only a pity she has such an odd name. Mamma thought of asking her if she would mind taking another when she came; but papa thought she might object. Lady Battledown makes all her governesses take the same name; she gives £5 more a year for the purpose. I forget what it is she calls them; I think it's Johnson (which to me always suggests a lady's maid). Governesses shouldn't have too pretty a name; they shouldn't have a nicer name than the family.

I suppose you heard from the Desmonds that I did not go back to England with them. When it began to be talked about that Georgina should be taken abroad, mamma wrote to me that I had better stop in Paris for a month with Harold, so that she could pick me up on their way to Hyères. It saves the expense of my journey to Kingscote and back, and gives me the opportunity to "finish" a little in French.

You know Harold came here six weeks ago, to get up his French for those dreadful examinations that he has to pass so soon. He came to live with some French people that take in young men (and others) for this purpose; it's a kind of coaching place, only kept by women. Mamma had heard it was very nice; so she wrote to me that I was to come and stop here with Harold. The Desmonds brought me and made the arrangement, or the bargain, or whatever you call it. Poor Harold was naturally not at all pleased; but he has been very kind, and has treated me like an angel. He is getting on beautifully with his French; for though I don't think the place is so good as papa supposed, yet Harold is so immensely clever that he

can scarcely help learning. I am afraid I learn much less, but, fortunately, I have not to pass an examination—except if mamma takes it into her head to examine me. But she will have so much to think of with Georgina that I hope this won't occur to her. If it does, I shall be, as Harold says, in a dreadful funk.

This is not such a nice place for a girl as for a young man, and the Desmonds thought it *exceedingly odd* that mamma should wish me to come here. As Mrs. Desmond said, it is because she is so very unconventional. But you know Paris is so very amusing, and if only Harold remains good-natured about it, I shall be content to wait for the caravan (that's what he calls mamma and the children). The person who keeps the establishment, or whatever they call it, is rather odd, and *exceedingly foreign*; but she is wonderfully civil, and is perpetually sending to my door to see if I want anything. The servants are not at all like English servants, and come bursting in, the footman (they have only one) and the maids alike, at all sorts of hours, in the *most sudden way*. Then when one rings, it is half an hour before they come. All this is very uncomfortable, and I daresay it will be worse at Hyères. There, however, fortunately, we shall have our own people.

There are some very odd Americans here, who keep throwing Harold into fits of laughter. One is a dreadful little man who is always sitting over the fire, and talking about the colour of the sky. I don't believe he ever saw the sky except through the window—pane. The other day he took hold of my frock (that green one you thought so nice at Homburg) and told me that it reminded him of the texture of the Devonshire turf. And then he talked for half an hour about the Devonshire turf; which I thought such a very extraordinary subject. Harold says he is mad. It is very strange to be living in this way with people one doesn't know. I mean that one doesn't know as one knows them in England.

The other Americans (beside the madman) are two girls, about my own age, one of whom is rather nice. She has a mother; but the mother is always sitting in her bedroom, which seems so very odd. I should like mamma to ask them to Kingscote, but I am afraid mamma wouldn't like the mother, who is rather vulgar. The other girl is rather vulgar too, and is travelling about quite alone. I think she is a kind of schoolmistress; but the other girl (I mean the nicer one, with the mother) tells me she is more respectable than she seems. She has, however, the most extraordinary opinions—wishes to do away with the aristocracy, thinks it wrong that Arthur should have Kingscote when papa dies, etc. I don't see what it signifies to her that poor Arthur should come into the property, which will be so delightful—except for papa dying. But Harold says she is mad. He chaffs her tremendously about her radicalism, and he is so immensely clever that she can't answer him, though she is rather clever too.

There is also a Frenchman, a nephew, or cousin, or something, of the person of the house, who is extremely nasty; and a German professor, or doctor, who eats with his knife and is a great bore. I am so very sorry about giving up my visit. I am afraid you will never ask me again.

CHAPTER VII

FROM LÉON VERDIER, IN PARIS, TO PROSPER GOBAIN, AT LILLE.

September 28th.

My Dear Prosper—It is a long time since I have given you of my news, and I don't know what puts it into my head to-night to recall myself to your affectionate memory. I suppose it is that when we are happy the mind reverts instinctively to those with whom formerly we shared our exaltations and depressions, and *je t'eu ai trop dit, dans le bon temps, mon gros Prosper*, and you always listened to me too imperturbably, with your pipe in your mouth, your waistcoat unbuttoned, for me not to feel that I can count upon your sympathy to-

day. *Nous en sommes nous flanquées des confidences*—in those happy days when my first thought in seeing an adventure *poindre à l'horizon* was of the pleasure I should have in relating it to the great Prosper. As I tell thee, I am happy; decidedly, I am happy, and from this affirmation I fancy you can construct the rest. Shall I help thee a little? Take three adorable girls . . . three, my good Prosper—the mystic number—neither more nor less. Take them and place thy insatiable little Léon in the midst of them! Is the situation sufficiently indicated, and do you apprehend the motives of my felicity?

You expected, perhaps, I was going to tell you that I had made my fortune, or that the Uncle Blondeau had at last decided to return into the breast of nature, after having constituted me his universal legatee. But I needn't remind you that women are always for something in the happiness of him who writes to thee—for something in his happiness, and for a good deal more in his misery. But don't let me talk of misery now; time enough when it comes; *ces demoiselles* have gone to join the serried ranks of their amiable predecessors. Excuse me—I comprehend your impatience. I will tell you of whom *ces demoiselles* consist.

You have heard me speak of my *cousine* de Maisonrouge, that grande *belle femme*, who, after having married, *en secondes nocés*—there had been, to tell the truth, some irregularity about her first union—a venerable relic of the old noblesse of Poitou, was left, by the death of her husband, complicated by the indulgence of expensive tastes on an income of 17,000 francs, on the pavement of Paris, with two little demons of daughters to bring up in the path of virtue. She managed to bring them up; my little cousins are rigidly virtuous. If you ask me how she managed it, I can't tell you; it's no business of mine, and, *à fortiori* none of yours. She is now fifty years old (she confesses to thirty-seven), and her daughters, whom she has never been able to marry, are respectively twenty-seven and twenty-three (they confess to twenty and to seventeen). Three years ago she had the thrice-blessed idea of opening a sort of *pension* for the entertainment and instruction of the blundering barbarians who come to Paris in the hope of picking up a few stray particles of the language of Voltaire—or of Zola. The idea *lui a porté bonheur*; the shop does a very good business. Until within a few months ago it was carried on by my cousins alone; but lately the need of a few extensions and embellishments has caused itself to be felt. My cousin has undertaken them, regardless of expense; she has asked me to come and stay with her—board and lodging gratis—and keep an eye on the grammatical eccentricities of her *pensionnaires*. I am the extension, my good Prosper; I am the embellishment! I live for nothing, and I straighten up the accent of the prettiest English lips. The English lips are not all pretty, heaven knows, but enough of them are so to make it a gaining bargain for me.

Just now, as I told you, I am in daily conversation with three separate pairs. The owner of one of them has private lessons; she pays extra. My cousin doesn't give me a sou of the money; but I make bold, nevertheless, to say that my trouble is remunerated. But I am well, very well, with the proprietors of the two other pairs. One of them is a little Anglaise, of about twenty—a little *figure de keepsake*; the most adorable miss that you ever, or at least that I ever beheld. She is decorated all over with beads and bracelets and embroidered dandelions; but her principal decoration consists of the softest little gray eyes in the world, which rest upon you with a profundity of confidence—a confidence that I really feel some compunction in betraying. She has a tint as white as this sheet of paper, except just in the middle of each cheek, where it passes into the purest and most transparent, most liquid, carmine. Occasionally this rosy fluid overflows into the rest of her face—by which I mean that she blushes—as softly as the mark of your breath on the window-pane.

Like every Anglaise, she is rather pinched and prim in public; but it is very easy to see that when no one is looking *elle ne demande qu'à se laisser aller!* Whenever she wants it I am

always there, and I have given her to understand that she can count upon me. I have reason to believe that she appreciates the assurance, though I am bound in honesty to confess that with her the situation is a little less advanced than with the others. *Que voulez-vous?* The English are heavy, and the Anglaises move slowly, that's all. The movement, however, is perceptible, and once this fact is established I can let the pottage simmer. I can give her time to arrive, for I am over-well occupied with her *concurrentes*. *Celles-ci* don't keep me waiting, *par exemple!*

These young ladies are Americans, and you know that it is the national character to move fast. "All right—go ahead!" (I am learning a great deal of English, or, rather, a great deal of American.) They go ahead at a rate that sometimes makes it difficult for me to keep up. One of them is prettier than the other; but this latter (the one that takes the private lessons) is really *une file prodigieuse*. *Ah, par exemple, elle brûle ses vais-seux cella-la!* She threw herself into my arms the very first day, and I almost owed her a grudge for having deprived me of that pleasure of gradation, of carrying the defences, one by one, which is almost as great as that of entering the place.

Would you believe that at the end of exactly twelve minutes she gave me a rendezvous? It is true it was in the Galerie d'Apollon, at the Louvre; but that was respectable for a beginning, and since then we have had them by the dozen; I have ceased to keep the account. *Non, c'est une file qui me dépasse.*

The little one (she has a mother somewhere, out of sight, shut up in a closet or a trunk) is a good deal prettier, and, perhaps, on that account *elle y met plus de façons*. She doesn't knock about Paris with me by the hour; she contents herself with long interviews in the *petit salon*, with the curtains half-drawn, beginning at about three o'clock, when every one is *à la promenade*. She is admirable, this little one; a little too thin, the bones rather accentuated, but the detail, on the whole, most satisfactory. And you can say anything to her. She takes the trouble to appear not to understand, but her conduct, half an hour afterwards, reassures you completely—oh, completely!

However, it is the tall one, the one of the private lessons, that is the most remarkable. These private lessons, my good Prosper, are the most brilliant invention of the age, and a real stroke of genius on the part of Miss Miranda! They also take place in the *petit salon*, but with the doors tightly closed, and with explicit directions to every one in the house that we are not to be disturbed. And we are not, my good Prosper; we are not! Not a sound, not a shadow, interrupts our felicity. My *cousine* is really admirable; the shop deserves to succeed. Miss Miranda is tall and rather flat; she is too pale; she hasn't the adorable *rougeurs* of the little Anglaise. But she has bright, keen, inquisitive eyes, superb teeth, a nose modelled by a sculptor, and a way of holding up her head and looking every one in the face, which is the most finished piece of impertinence I ever beheld. She is making the *tour du monde* entirely alone, without even a soubrette to carry the ensign, for the purpose of seeing for herself *à quoi s'en tenir sur les hommes et les choses—on les hommes* particularly. *Dis donc*, Prosper, it must be a *drôle de pays* over there, where young persons animated by this ardent curiosity are manufactured! If we should turn the tables, some day, thou and I, and go over and see it for ourselves. It is as well that we should go and find them *chez elles*, as that they should come out here after us. *Dis donc, mon gras Prosper . . .*

CHAPTER VIII

FROM DR. RUDOLF STAUB, IN PARIS, TO DR. JULIUS HIRSCH, AT GÖTTINGEN.

My dear brother in Science—I resume my hasty notes, of which I sent you the first instalment some weeks ago. I mentioned then that I intended to leave my hotel, not finding it

sufficiently local and national. It was kept by a Pomeranian, and the waiters, without exception, were from the Fatherland. I fancied myself at Berlin, Unter den Linden, and I reflected that, having taken the serious step of visiting the head-quarters of the Gallic genius, I should try and project myself; as much as possible, into the circumstances which are in part the consequence and in part the cause of its irrepressible activity. It seemed to me that there could be no well-grounded knowledge without this preliminary operation of placing myself in relations, as slightly as possible modified by elements proceeding from a different combination of causes, with the spontaneous home-life of the country.

I accordingly engaged a room in the house of a lady of pure French extraction and education, who supplements the shortcomings of an income insufficient to the ever-growing demands of the Parisian system of sense-gratification, by providing food and lodging for a limited number of distinguished strangers. I should have preferred to have my room alone in the house, and to take my meals in a brewery, of very good appearance, which I speedily discovered in the same street; but this arrangement, though very lucidly proposed by myself; was not acceptable to the mistress of the establishment (a woman with a mathematical head), and I have consoled myself for the extra expense by fixing my thoughts upon the opportunity that conformity to the customs of the house gives me of studying the table-manners of my companions, and of observing the French nature at a peculiarly physiological moment, the moment when the satisfaction of the *taste*, which is the governing quality in its composition, produces a kind of exhalation, an intellectual transpiration, which, though light and perhaps invisible to a superficial spectator, is nevertheless appreciable by a properly adjusted instrument.

I have adjusted my instrument very satisfactorily (I mean the one I carry in my good square German head), and I am not afraid of losing a single drop of this valuable fluid, as it condenses itself upon the plate of my observation. A prepared surface is what I need, and I have prepared my surface.

Unfortunately here, also, I find the individual native in the minority. There are only four French persons in the house—the individuals concerned in its management, three of whom are women, and one a man. This preponderance of the feminine element is, however, in itself characteristic, as I need not remind you what an abnormally—developed part this sex has played in French history. The remaining figure is apparently that of a man, but I hesitate to classify him so superficially. He appears to me less human than simian, and whenever I hear him talk I seem to myself to have paused in the street to listen to the shrill clatter of a hand-organ, to which the gambols of a hairy *homunculus* form an accompaniment.

I mentioned to you before that my expectation of rough usage, in consequence of my German nationality, had proved completely unfounded. No one seems to know or to care what my nationality is, and I am treated, on the contrary, with the civility which is the portion of every traveller who pays the bill without scanning the items too narrowly. This, I confess, has been something of a surprise to me, and I have not yet made up my mind as to the fundamental cause of the anomaly. My determination to take up my abode in a French interior was largely dictated by the supposition that I should be substantially disagreeable to its inmates. I wished to observe the different forms taken by the irritation that I should naturally produce; for it is under the influence of irritation that the French character most completely expresses itself. My presence, however, does not appear to operate as a stimulus, and in this respect I am materially disappointed. They treat me as they treat every one else; whereas, in order to be treated differently, I was resigned in advance to be treated worse. I have not, as I say, fully explained to myself this logical contradiction; but this is the explanation to which I tend. The French are so exclusively occupied with the idea of themselves, that in spite of the

very definite image the German personality presented to them by the war of 1870, they have at present no distinct apprehension of its existence. They are not very sure that there are any Germans; they have already forgotten the convincing proofs of the fact that were presented to them nine years ago. A German was something disagreeable, which they determined to keep out of their conception of things. I therefore think that we are wrong to govern ourselves upon the hypothesis of the *revanche*; the French nature is too shallow for that large and powerful plant to bloom in it.

The English-speaking specimens, too, I have not been willing to neglect the opportunity to examine; and among these I have paid special attention to the American varieties, of which I find here several singular examples. The two most remarkable are a young man who presents all the characteristics of a period of national decadence; reminding me strongly of some diminutive Hellenised Roman of the third century. He is an illustration of the period of culture in which the faculty of appreciation has obtained such a preponderance over that of production that the latter sinks into a kind of rank sterility, and the mental condition becomes analogous to that of a malarious bog. I learn from him that there is an immense number of Americans exactly resembling him, and that the city of Boston, indeed, is almost exclusively composed of them. (He communicated this fact very proudly, as if it were greatly to the credit of his native country; little perceiving the truly sinister impression it made upon me.)

What strikes one in it is that it is a phenomenon to the best of my knowledge—and you know what my knowledge is—unprecedented and unique in the history of mankind; the arrival of a nation at an ultimate stage of evolution without having passed through the mediate one; the passage of the fruit, in other words, from crudity to rottenness, without the interposition of a period of useful (and ornamental) ripeness. With the Americans, indeed, the crudity and the rottenness are identical and simultaneous; it is impossible to say, as in the conversation of this deplorable young man, which is one and which is the other; they are inextricably mingled. I prefer the talk of the French *homunculus*; it is at least more amusing.

It is interesting in this manner to perceive, so largely developed, the germs of extinction in the so-called powerful Anglo-Saxon family. I find them in almost as recognisable a form in a young woman from the State of Maine, in the province of New England, with whom I have had a good deal of conversation. She differs somewhat from the young man I just mentioned, in that the faculty of production, of action, is, in her, less inanimate; she has more of the freshness and vigour that we suppose to belong to a young civilisation. But unfortunately she produces nothing but evil, and her tastes and habits are similarly those of a Roman lady of the lower Empire. She makes no secret of them, and has, in fact, elaborated a complete system of licentious behaviour. As the opportunities she finds in her own country do not satisfy her, she has come to Europe “to try,” as she says, “for herself.” It is the doctrine of universal experience professed with a cynicism that is really most extraordinary, and which, presenting itself in a young woman of considerable education, appears to me to be the judgment of a society.

Another observation which pushes me to the same induction—that of the premature vitiation of the American population—is the attitude of the Americans whom I have before me with regard to each other. There is another young lady here, who is less abnormally developed than the one I have just described, but who yet bears the stamp of this peculiar combination of incompleteness and effete-ness. These three persons look with the greatest mistrust and aversion upon each other; and each has repeatedly taken me apart and assured me, secretly, that he or she only is the real, the genuine, the typical American. A type that has lost itself before it has been fixed—what can you look for from this?

Add to this that there are two young Englishers in the house, who hate all the Americans in a lump, making between them none of the distinctions and favourable comparisons which they insist upon, and you will, I think, hold me warranted in believing that, between precipitate decay and internecine enmities, the English-speaking family is destined to consume itself; and that with its decline the prospect of general pervasiveness, to which I alluded above, will brighten for the deep-lunged children of the Fatherland!

CHAPTER IX

MIRANDA HOPE TO HER MOTHER.

October 22d

Dear Mother—I am off in a day or two to visit some new country; I haven't yet decided which. I have satisfied myself with regard to France, and obtained a good knowledge of the language. I have enjoyed my visit to Madame de Maisonrouge deeply, and feel as if I were leaving a circle of real friends. Everything has gone on beautifully up to the end, and every one has been as kind and attentive as if I were their own sister, especially Mr. Verdier, the French gentleman, from whom I have gained more than I ever expected (in six weeks), and with whom I have promised to correspond. So you can imagine me dashing off the most correct French letters; and, if you don't believe it, I will keep the rough draft to show you when I go back.

The German gentleman is also more interesting, the more you know him; it seems sometimes as if I could fairly drink in his ideas. I have found out why the young lady from New York doesn't like me! It is because I said one day at dinner that I admired to go to the Louvre. Well, when I first came, it seemed as if I *did* admire everything!

Tell William Platt his letter has come. I knew he would have to write, and I was bound I would make him! I haven't decided what country I will visit yet; it seems as if there were so many to choose from. But I shall take care to pick out a good one, and to meet plenty of fresh experiences.

Dearest mother, my money holds out, and it *is* most interesting!

The Point of View

I.

FROM MISS AURORA CHURCH, AT SEA, TO MISS WHITESIDE, IN PARIS.

. . . My dear child, the bromide of sodium (if that's what you call it) proved perfectly useless. I don't mean that it did me no good, but that I never had occasion to take the bottle out of my bag. It might have done wonders for me if I had needed it; but I didn't, simply because I have been a wonder myself. Will you believe that I have spent the whole voyage on deck, in the most animated conversation and exercise? Twelve times round the deck make a mile, I believe; and by this measurement I have been walking twenty miles a day. And down to every meal, if you please, where I have displayed the appetite of a fish-wife. Of course the weather has been lovely; so there's no great merit. The wicked old Atlantic has been as blue as the sapphire in my only ring (a rather good one), and as smooth as the slippery floor of Madame Galopin's dining-room. We have been for the last three hours in sight of land, and we are soon to enter the Bay of New York, which is said to be exquisitely beautiful. But of course you recall it, though they say that everything changes so fast over here. I find I don't remember anything, for my recollections of our voyage to Europe, so many years ago, are exceedingly dim; I only have a painful impression that mamma shut me up for an hour every day in the state-room, and made me learn by heart some religious poem. I was only five years old, and I believe that as a child I was extremely timid; on the other hand, mamma, as you know, was dreadfully severe. She is severe to this day; only I have become indifferent; I have been so pinched and pushed—morally speaking, *bien entendu*. It is true, however, that there are children of five on the vessel today who have been extremely conspicuous—ranging all over the ship, and always under one's feet. Of course they are little compatriots, which means that they are little barbarians. I don't mean that all our compatriots are barbarous; they seem to improve, somehow, after their first communion. I don't know whether it's that ceremony that improves them, especially as so few of them go in for it; but the women are certainly nicer than the little girls; I mean, of course, in proportion, you know. You warned me not to generalise, and you see I have already begun, before we have arrived. But I suppose there is no harm in it so long as it is favourable. Isn't it favourable when I say that I have had the most lovely time? I have never had so much liberty in my life, and I have been out alone, as you may say, every day of the voyage. If it is a foretaste of what is to come, I shall take to that very kindly. When I say that I have been out alone, I mean that we have always been two. But we two were alone, so to speak, and it was not like always having mamma, or Madame Galopin, or some lady in the *pension*, or the temporary cook. Mamma has been very poorly; she is so very well on land, it's a wonder to see her at all taken down. She says, however, that it isn't the being at sea; it's, on the contrary, approaching the land. She is not in a hurry to arrive; she says that great disillusionments await us. I didn't know that she had any illusions—she's so stern, so philosophic. She is very serious; she sits for hours in perfect silence, with her eyes fixed on the horizon. I heard her say yesterday to an English gentleman—a very odd Mr. Antrobus, the only person with whom she converses—that she was afraid she shouldn't like her native land, and that she shouldn't like not liking it. But this is a mistake—she will like that immensely (I mean not liking it). If it should prove at all agreeable, mamma will be furious, for that will go against her system. You know all about mamma's system; I have explained that so often. It goes against her system that we should come back at all; that was *my* system—I have had at last to invent one! She consented to come only because she saw that, having no *dot*, I should never marry in Europe; and I pretended to be immensely pre-occupied with this idea, in order to make her start. In

reality *cela m'est parfaitement égal*. I am only afraid I shall like it too much (I don't mean marriage, of course, but one's native land). Say what you will, it's a charming thing to go out alone, and I have given notice to mamma that I mean to be always *en course*. When I tell her that, she looks at me in the same silence; her eye dilates, and then she slowly closes it. It's as if the sea were affecting her a little, though it's so beautifully calm. I ask her if she will try my bromide, which is there in my bag; but she motions me off, and I begin to walk again, tapping my little boot-soles upon the smooth clean deck. This allusion to my boot-soles, by the way, is not prompted by vanity; but it's a fact that at sea one's feet and one's shoes assume the most extraordinary importance, so that we should take the precaution to have nice ones. They are all you seem to see as the people walk about the deck; you get to know them intimately, and to dislike some of them so much. I am afraid you will think that I have already broken loose; and for aught I know, I am writing as a *demoiselle bien-elevée* should not write. I don't know whether it's the American air; if it is, all I can say is that the American air is very charming. It makes me impatient and restless, and I sit scribbling here because I am so eager to arrive, and the time passes better if I occupy myself. I am in the saloon, where we have our meals, and opposite to me is a big round porthole, wide open, to let in the smell of the land. Every now and then I rise a little and look through it, to see whether we are arriving. I mean in the Bay, you know, for we shall not come up to the city till dark. I don't want to lose the Bay; it appears that it's so wonderful. I don't exactly understand what it contains, except some beautiful islands; but I suppose you will know all about that. It is easy to see that these are the last hours, for all the people about me are writing letters to put into the post as soon as we come up to the dock. I believe they are dreadful at the custom-house, and you will remember how many new things you persuaded mamma that (with my pre-occupation of marriage) I should take to this country, where even the prettiest girls are expected not to go unadorned. We ruined ourselves in Paris (that is part of mamma's solemnity); *mais au moins je serai belle!* Moreover, I believe that mamma is prepared to say or to do anything that may be necessary for escaping from their odious duties; as she very justly remarks, she can't afford to be ruined twice. I don't know how one approaches these terrible *douaniers*, but I mean to invent something very charming. I mean to say, "*Voyons, Messieurs*, a young girl like me, brought up in the strictest foreign traditions, kept always in the background by a very superior mother—*la voilà*; you can see for yourself!—what is it possible that she should attempt to smuggle in? Nothing but a few simple relics of her convent!" I won't tell them that my convent was called the *Magasin du Bon Marché*. Mamma began to scold me three days ago for insisting on so many trunks, and the truth is that, between us, we have not fewer than seven. For relics, that's a good many! We are all writing very long letters—or at least we are writing a great number. There is no news of the Bay as yet. Mr. Antrobus, mamma's friend, opposite to me, is beginning on his ninth. He is an Honourable, and a Member of Parliament; he has written, during the voyage, about a hundred letters, and he seems greatly alarmed at the number of stamps he will have to buy when he arrives. He is full of information; but he has not enough, for he asks as many questions as mamma when she goes to hire apartments. He is going to "look into" various things; he speaks as if they had a little hole for the purpose. He walks almost as much as I, and he has very big shoes. He asks questions even of me, and I tell him again and again that I know nothing about America. But it makes no difference; he always begins again, and, indeed, it is not strange that he should find my ignorance incredible. "Now, how would it be in one of your South-Western States?"—that's his favourite way of opening conversation. Fancy me giving an account of the South-Western States! I tell him he had better ask mamma—a little to tease that lady, who knows no more about such places than I. Mr. Antrobus is very big and black; he speaks with a sort of brogue; he has a wife and ten children; he is not very romantic. But he has lots of letters to people *là-bas* (I forget that we

are just arriving), and mamma, who takes an interest in him in spite of his views (which are dreadfully advanced, and not at all like mamma's own), has promised to give him the *entrée* to the best society. I don't know what she knows about the best society over here today, for we have not kept up our connections at all, and no one will know (or, I am afraid, care) anything about us. She has an idea that we shall be immensely recognised; but really, except the poor little Rucks, who are bankrupt, and, I am told, in no society at all, I don't know on whom we can count. *C'est égal*. Mamma has an idea that, whether or not we appreciate America ourselves, we shall at least be universally appreciated. It's true that we have begun to be, a little; you would see that by the way that Mr. Cockerel and Mr. Louis Leverett are always inviting me to walk. Both of these gentlemen, who are Americans, have asked leave to call upon me in New York, and I have said, *Mon Dieu, oui*, if it's the custom of the country. Of course I have not dared to tell this to mamma, who flatters herself that we have brought with us in our trunks a complete set of customs of our own, and that we shall only have to shake them out a little and put them on when we arrive. If only the two gentlemen I just spoke of don't call at the same time, I don't think I shall be too much frightened. If they do, on the other hand, I won't answer for it. They have a particular aversion to each other, and they are ready to fight about poor little me. I am only the pretext, however; for, as Mr. Leverett says, it's really the opposition of temperaments. I hope they won't cut each other's throats, for I am not crazy about either of them. They are very well for the deck of a ship, but I shouldn't care about them in a *salon*; they are not at all distinguished. They think they are, but they are not; at least Mr. Louis Leverett does; Mr. Cockerel doesn't appear to care so much. They are extremely different (with their opposed temperaments), and each very amusing for a while; but I should get dreadfully tired of passing my life with either. Neither has proposed that, as yet; but it is evidently what they are coming to. It will be in a great measure to spite each other, for I think that *au fond* they don't quite believe in me. If they don't, it's the only point on which they agree. They hate each other awfully; they take such different views. That is, Mr. Cockerel hates Mr. Leverett—he calls him a sickly little ass; he says that his opinions are half affectation, and the other half dyspepsia. Mr. Leverett speaks of Mr. Cockerel as a “strident savage,” but he declares he finds him most diverting. He says there is nothing in which we can't find a certain entertainment, if we only look at it in the right way, and that we have no business with either hating or loving; we ought only to strive to understand. To understand is to forgive, he says. That is very pretty, but I don't like the suppression of our affections, though I have no desire to fix mine upon Mr. Leverett. He is very artistic, and talks like an article in some review, he has lived a great deal in Paris, and Mr. Cockerel says that is what has made him such an idiot. That is not complimentary to you, dear Louisa, and still less to your brilliant brother; for Mr. Cockerel explains that he means it (the bad effect of Paris) chiefly of the men. In fact, he means the bad effect of Europe altogether. This, however, is compromising to mamma; and I am afraid there is no doubt that (from what I have told him) he thinks mamma also an idiot. (I am not responsible, you know—I have always wanted to go home.) If mamma knew him, which she doesn't, for she always closes her eyes when I pass on his arm, she would think him disgusting. Mr. Leverett, however, tells me he is nothing to what we shall see yet. He is from Philadelphia (Mr. Cockerel); he insists that we shall go and see Philadelphia, but mamma says she saw it in 1855, and it was then *affreux*. Mr. Cockerel says that mamma is evidently not familiar with the march of improvement in this country; he speaks of 1855 as if it were a hundred years ago. Mamma says she knows it goes only too fast—it goes so fast that it has time to do nothing well; and then Mr. Cockerel, who, to do him justice, is perfectly good-natured, remarks that she had better wait till she has been ashore and seen the improvements. Mamma rejoins that she sees them from here, the improvements, and that they give her a sinking of the heart. (This little exchange of ideas is carried on through me; they have never spoken to

each other.) Mr. Cockerel, as I say, is extremely good-natured, and he carries out what I have heard said about the men in America being very considerate of the women. They evidently listen to them a great deal; they don't contradict them, but it seems to me that this is rather negative. There is very little gallantry in not contradicting one; and it strikes me that there are some things the men don't express. There are others on the ship whom I've noticed. It's as if they were all one's brothers or one's cousins. But I promised you not to generalise, and perhaps there will be more expression when we arrive. Mr. Cockerel returns to America, after a general tour, with a renewed conviction that this is the only country. I left him on deck an hour ago looking at the coast-line with an opera-glass, and saying it was the prettiest thing he had seen in all his tour. When I remarked that the coast seemed rather low, he said it would be all the easier to get ashore; Mr. Leverett doesn't seem in a hurry to get ashore; he is sitting within sight of me in a corner of the saloon—writing letters, I suppose, but looking, from the way he bites his pen and rolls his eyes about, as if he were composing a sonnet and waiting for a rhyme. Perhaps the sonnet is addressed to me; but I forget that he suppresses the affections! The only person in whom mamma takes much interest is the great French critic, M. Lejaune, whom we have the honour to carry with us. We have read a few of his works, though mamma disapproves of his tendencies and thinks him a dreadful materialist. We have read them for the style; you know he is one of the new Academicians. He is a Frenchman like any other, except that he is rather more quiet; and he has a gray mustache and the ribbon of the Legion of Honour. He is the first French writer of distinction who has been to America since De Tocqueville; the French, in such matters, are not very enterprising. Also, he has the air of wondering what he is doing *dans cette galère*. He has come with his *beau-frère*, who is an engineer, and is looking after some mines, and he talks with scarcely any one else, as he speaks no English, and appears to take for granted that no one speaks French. Mamma would be delighted to assure him of the contrary; she has never conversed with an Academician. She always makes a little vague inclination, with a smile, when he passes her, and he answers with a most respectful bow; but it goes no farther, to mamma's disappointment. He is always with the *beau-frère*, a rather untidy, fat, bearded man, decorated, too, always smoking and looking at the feet of the ladies, whom mamma (though she has very good feet) has not the courage to *aborder*. I believe M. Lejaune is going to write a book about America, and Mr. Leverett says it will be terrible. Mr. Leverett has made his acquaintance, and says M. Lejaune will put him into his book; he says the movement of the French intellect is superb. As a general thing, he doesn't care for Academicians, but he thinks M. Lejaune is an exception, he is so living, so personal. I asked Mr. Cockerel what he thought of M. Lejaune's plan of writing a book, and he answered that he didn't see what it mattered to him that a Frenchman the more should make a monkey of himself. I asked him why he hadn't written a book about Europe, and he said that, in the first place, Europe isn't worth writing about, and, in the second, if he said what he thought, people would think it was a joke. He said they are very superstitious about Europe over here; he wants people in America to behave as if Europe didn't exist. I told this to Mr. Leverett, and he answered that if Europe didn't exist America wouldn't, for Europe keeps us alive by buying our corn. He said, also, that the trouble with America in the future will be that she will produce things in such enormous quantities that there won't be enough people in the rest of the world to buy them, and that we shall be left with our productions—most of them very hideous—on our hands. I asked him if he thought corn a hideous production, and he replied that there is nothing more unbeautiful than too much food. I think that to feed the world too well, however, that will be, after all, a *beau rôle*. Of course I don't understand these things, and I don't believe Mr. Leverett does; but Mr. Cockerel seems to know what he is talking about, and he says that America is complete in herself. I don't know exactly what he means, but he speaks as if human affairs had somehow moved over to this side of the world. It may be a very good place for them, and Heaven

knows I am extremely tired of Europe, which mamma has always insisted so on my appreciating; but I don't think I like the idea of our being so completely cut off. Mr. Cockerel says it is not we that are cut off, but Europe, and he seems to think that Europe has deserved it somehow. That may be; our life over there was sometimes extremely tiresome, though mamma says it is now that our real fatigues will begin. I like to abuse those dreadful old countries myself, but I am not sure that I am pleased when others do the same. We had some rather pretty moments there, after all; and at Piacenza we certainly lived on four francs a day. Mamma is already in a terrible state of mind about the expenses here; she is frightened by what people on the ship (the few that she has spoken to) have told her. There is one comfort, at any rate—we have spent so much money in coming here that we shall have none left to get away. I am scribbling along, as you see, to occupy me till we get news of the islands. Here comes Mr. Cockerel to bring it. Yes, they are in sight; he tells me that they are lovelier than ever, and that I must come right up right away. I suppose you will think that I am already beginning to use the language of the country. It is certain that at the end of a month I shall speak nothing else. I have picked up every dialect, wherever we have travelled; you have heard my Platt-Deutsch and my Neapolitan. But, *voyons un peu* the Bay! I have just called to Mr. Leverett to remind him of the islands. "The islands—the islands? Ah, my dear young lady, I have seen Capri, I have seen Ischia!" Well, so have I, but that doesn't prevent . . . (*A little later.*)—I have seen the islands; they are rather queer.

II.

MRS. CHURCH, IN NEW YORK, TO MADAME GALOPIN, AT GENEVA.

October 17, 1880.

If I felt far away from you in the middle of that deplorable Atlantic, *chère* Madame, how do I feel now, in the heart of this extraordinary city? We have arrived,—we have arrived, dear friend; but I don't know whether to tell you that I consider that an advantage. If we had been given our choice of coming safely to land or going down to the bottom of the sea, I should doubtless have chosen the former course; for I hold, with your noble husband, and in opposition to the general tendency of modern thought, that our lives are not our own to dispose of, but a sacred trust from a higher power, by whom we shall be held responsible. Nevertheless, if I had foreseen more vividly some of the impressions that awaited me here, I am not sure that, for my daughter at least, I should not have preferred on the spot to hand in our account. Should I not have been less (rather than more) guilty in presuming to dispose of *her* destiny, than of my own? There is a nice point for dear M. Galopin to settle—one of those points which I have heard him discuss in the pulpit with such elevation. We are safe, however, as I say; by which I mean that we are physically safe. We have taken up the thread of our familiar pension-life, but under strikingly different conditions. We have found a refuge in a boarding-house which has been highly recommended to me, and where the arrangements partake of that barbarous magnificence which in this country is the only alternative from primitive rudeness. The terms, per week, are as magnificent as all the rest. The landlady wears diamond ear-rings; and the drawing-rooms are decorated with marble statues. I should indeed be sorry to let you know how I have allowed myself to be *rançonnée*; and I—should be still more sorry that it should come to the ears of any of my good friends in Geneva, who know me less well than you and might judge me more harshly. There is no wine given for dinner, and I have vainly requested the person who conducts the establishment to garnish her table more liberally. She says I may have all the wine I want if I will order it at the merchant's, and settle the matter with him. But I have never, as you know, consented to regard our modest allowance of *eau rougie* as an extra; indeed, I remember that it is largely to your excellent advice that I have owed my habit of being firm on this point. There are, however, greater difficulties than the question of what we shall drink for

dinner, *chère* Madame. Still, I have never lost courage, and I shall not lose courage now. At the worst, we can re-embark again, and seek repose and refreshment on the shores of your beautiful lake. (There is absolutely no scenery here!) We shall not, perhaps, in that case have achieved what we desired, but we shall at least have made an honourable retreat. What we desire—I know it is just this that puzzles you, dear friend; I don't think you ever really comprehended my motives in taking this formidable step, though you were good enough, and your magnanimous husband was good enough, to press my hand at parting in a way that seemed to say that you would still be with me, even if I was wrong. To be very brief, I wished to put an end to the reclamations of my daughter. Many Americans had assured her that she was wasting her youth in those historic lands which it was her privilege to see so intimately, and this unfortunate conviction had taken possession of her. "Let me at least see for myself," she used to say; "if I should dislike it over there as much as you promise me, so much the better for you. In that case we will come back and make a new arrangement at Stuttgart." The experiment is a terribly expensive one; but you know that my devotion never has shrunk from an ordeal. There is another point, moreover, which, from a mother to a mother, it would be affectation not to touch upon. I remember the just satisfaction with which you announced to me the betrothal of your charming Cécile. You know with what earnest care my Aurora has been educated,—how thoroughly she is acquainted with the principal results of modern research. We have always studied together; we have always enjoyed together. It will perhaps surprise you to hear that she makes these very advantages a reproach to me,—represents them as an injury to herself. "In this country," she says, "the gentlemen have not those accomplishments; they care nothing for the results of modern research; and it will not help a young person to be sought in marriage that she can give an account of the last German theory of Pessimism." That is possible; and I have never concealed from her that it was not for this country that I had educated her. If she marries in the United States it is, of course, my intention that my son-in-law shall accompany us to Europe. But, when she calls my attention more and more to these facts, I feel that we are moving in a different world. This is more and more the country of the many; the few find less and less place for them; and the individual—well, the individual has quite ceased to be recognised. He is recognised as a voter, but he is not recognised as a gentleman—still less as a lady. My daughter and I, of course, can only pretend to constitute a *few*! You know that I have never for a moment remitted my pretensions as an individual, though, among the agitations of pension-life, I have sometimes needed all my energy to uphold them. "Oh, yes, I may be poor," I have had occasion to say, "I may be unprotected, I may be reserved, I may occupy a small apartment in the *quatrième*, and be unable to scatter unscrupulous bribes among the domestics; but at least I am a *person*, with personal rights." In this country the people have rights, but the person has none. You would have perceived that if you had come with me to make arrangements at this establishment. The very fine lady who condescends to preside over it kept me waiting twenty minutes, and then came sailing in without a word of apology. I had sat very silent, with my eyes on the clock; Aurora amused herself with a false admiration of the room,—a wonderful drawing-room, with magenta curtains, frescoed walls, and photographs of the landlady's friends—as if one cared anything about her friends! When this exalted personage came in, she simply remarked that she had just been trying on a dress—that it took so long to get a skirt to hang. "It seems to take very long indeed!" I answered. "But I hope the skirt is right at last. You might have sent for us to come up and look at it!" She evidently didn't understand, and when I asked her to show us her rooms, she handed us over to a negro as *dégingandé* as herself. While we looked at them I heard her sit down to the piano in the drawing-room; she began to sing an air from a comic opera. I began to fear we had gone quite astray; I didn't know in what house we could be, and was only reassured by seeing a Bible in every room. When we came down our musical hostess expressed no hope that the rooms had pleased us,

and seemed quite indifferent to our taking them. She would not consent, moreover, to the least diminution, and was inflexible, as I told you, on the subject of wine. When I pushed this point, she was so good as to observe that she didn't keep a *cabaret*. One is not in the least considered; there is no respect for one's privacy, for one's preferences, for one's reserves. The familiarity is without limits, and I have already made a dozen acquaintances, of whom I know, and wish to know, nothing. Aurora tells me that she is the "belle of the boarding-house." It appears that this is a great distinction. It brings me back to my poor child and her prospects. She takes a very critical view of them herself: she tells me that I have given her a false education, and that no one will marry her today. No American will marry her, because she is too much of a foreigner, and no foreigner will marry her because she is too much of an American. I remind her that scarcely a day passes that a foreigner, usually of distinction, doesn't select an American bride, and she answers me that in these cases the young lady is not married for her fine eyes. Not always, I reply; and then she declares that she would marry no foreigner who should not be one of the first of the first. You will say, doubtless, that she should content herself with advantages that have not been deemed insufficient for Cécile; but I will not repeat to you the remark she made when I once made use of this argument. You will doubtless be surprised to hear that I have ceased to argue; but it is time I should tell you that I have at last agreed to let her act for herself. She is to live for three months à *l'Américaine*, and I am to be a mere spectator. You will feel with me that this is a cruel position for a *cœur de mère*. I count the days till our three months are over, and I know that you will join with me in my prayers. Aurora walks the streets alone. She goes out in the tramway; a *voiture de place* costs five francs for the least little *course*. (I beseech you not to let it be known that I have sometimes had the weakness . . .) My daughter is sometimes accompanied by a gentleman—by a dozen gentlemen; she remains out for hours, and her conduct excites no surprise in this establishment. I know but too well the emotions it will excite in your quiet home. If you betray us, *chère* Madame, we are lost; and why, after all, should any one know of these things in Geneva? Aurora pretends that she has been able to persuade herself that she doesn't care who knows them; but there is a strange expression in her face, which proves that her conscience is not at rest. I watch her, I let her go, but I sit with my hands clasped. There is a peculiar custom in this country—I shouldn't know how to express it in Genevese—it is called "being attentive," and young girls are the object of the attention. It has not necessarily anything to do with projects of marriage—though it is the privilege only of the unmarried, and though, at the same time (fortunately, and this may surprise you) it has no relation to other projects. It is simply an invention by which young persons of the two sexes pass their time together. How shall I muster courage to tell you that Aurora is now engaged in this *délassement*, in company with several gentlemen? Though it has no relation to marriage, it happily does not exclude it, and marriages have been known to take place in consequence (or in spite) of it. It is true that even in this country a young lady may marry but one husband at a time, whereas she may receive at once the attentions of several gentlemen, who are equally entitled "admirers." My daughter, then, has admirers to an indefinite number. You will think I am joking, perhaps, when I tell you that I am unable to be exact—I who was formerly *l'exactitude même*. Two of these gentlemen are, to a certain extent, old friends, having been passengers on the steamer which carried us so far from you. One of them, still young, is typical of the American character, but a respectable person, and a lawyer in considerable practice. Every one in this country follows a profession; but it must be admitted that the professions are more highly remunerated than *chez vous*. Mr. Cockerel, even while I write you, is in complete possession of my daughter. He called for her an hour ago in a "boghey,"—a strange, unsafe, rickety vehicle, mounted on enormous wheels, which holds two persons very near together; and I watched her from the window take her place at his side. Then he whirled her away, behind two little horses with terribly thin legs; the whole

equipage—and most of all her being in it—was in the most questionable taste. But she will return, and she will return very much as she went. It is the same when she goes down to Mr. Louis Leverett, who has no vehicle, and who merely comes and sits with her in the front *salon*. He has lived a great deal in Europe, and is very fond of the arts, and though I am not sure I agree with him in his views of the relation of art to life and life to art, and in his interpretation of some of the great works that Aurora and I have studied together, he seems to me a sufficiently serious and intelligent young man. I do not regard him as intrinsically dangerous; but on the other hand, he offers absolutely no guarantees. I have no means whatever of ascertaining his pecuniary situation. There is a vagueness on these points which is extremely embarrassing, and it never occurs to young men to offer you a reference. In Geneva I should not be at a loss; I should come to you, *chère* Madame, with my little inquiry, and what you should not be able to tell me would not be worth knowing. But no one in New York can give me the smallest information about the *état de fortune* of Mr. Louis Leverett. It is true that he is a native of Boston, where most of his friends reside; I cannot, however, go to the expense of a journey to Boston simply to learn, perhaps, that Mr. Leverett (the young Louis) has an income of five thousand francs. As I say, however, he does not strike me as dangerous. When Aurora comes back to me, after having passed an hour with the young Louis, she says that he has described to her his emotions on visiting the home of Shelley, or discussed some of the differences between the Boston Temperament and that of the Italians of the Renaissance. You will not enter into these *rapprochements*, and I can't blame you. But you won't betray me, *chère* Madame?

III.

FROM MISS STURDY, AT NEWPORT, TO MRS. DRAPER, IN FLORENCE.

September 30.

I promised to tell you how I like it, but the truth is, I have gone to and fro so often that I have ceased to like and dislike. Nothing strikes me as unexpected; I expect everything in its order. Then, too, you know, I am not a critic; I have no talent for keen analysis, as the magazines say; I don't go into the reasons of things. It is true I have been for a longer time than usual on the wrong side of the water, and I admit that I feel a little out of training for American life. They are breaking me in very fast, however. I don't mean that they bully me; I absolutely decline to be bullied. I say what I think, because I believe that I have, on the whole, the advantage of knowing what I think—when I think anything—which is half the battle. Sometimes, indeed, I think nothing at all. They don't like that over here; they like you to have impressions. That they like these impressions to be favourable appears to me perfectly natural; I don't make a crime to them of that; it seems to me, on the contrary, a very amiable quality. When individuals have it, we call them sympathetic; I don't see why we shouldn't give nations the same benefit. But there are things I haven't the least desire to have an opinion about. The privilege of indifference is the dearest one we possess, and I hold that intelligent people are known by the way they exercise it. Life is full of rubbish, and we have at least our share of it over here. When you wake up in the morning you find that during the night a cartload has been deposited in your front garden. I decline, however, to have any of it in my premises; there are thousands of things I want to know nothing about. I have outlived the necessity of being hypocritical; I have nothing to gain and everything to lose. When one is fifty years old—single, stout, and red in the face—one has outlived a good many necessities. They tell me over here that my increase of weight is extremely marked, and though they don't tell me that I am coarse, I am sure they think me so. There is very little coarseness here—not quite enough, I think—though there is plenty of vulgarity, which is a very different thing. On the whole, the country is becoming much more agreeable. It isn't that the people are charming, for that they always were (the best of them, I mean, for it isn't true

of the others), but that places and things as well have acquired the art of pleasing. The houses are extremely good, and they look so extraordinarily fresh and clean. European interiors, in comparison, seem musty and gritty. We have a great deal of taste; I shouldn't wonder if we should end by inventing something pretty; we only need a little time. Of course, as yet, it's all imitation, except, by the way, these piazzas. I am sitting on one now; I am writing to you with my portfolio on my knees. This broad light *loggia* surrounds the house with a movement as free as the expanded wings of a bird, and the wandering airs come up from the deep sea, which murmurs on the rocks at the end of the lawn. Newport is more charming even than you remember it; like everything else over here, it has improved. It is very exquisite today; it is, indeed, I think, in all the world, the only exquisite watering-place, for I detest the whole genus. The crowd has left it now, which makes it all the better, though plenty of talkers remain in these large, light, luxurious houses, which are planted with a kind of Dutch definiteness all over the green carpet of the cliff. This carpet is very neatly laid and wonderfully well swept, and the sea, just at hand, is capable of prodigies of blue. Here and there a pretty woman strolls over one of the lawns, which all touch each other, you know, without hedges or fences; the light looks intense as it plays upon her brilliant dress; her large parasol shines like a silver dome. The long lines of the far shores are soft and pure, though they are places that one hasn't the least desire to visit. Altogether the effect is very delicate, and anything that is delicate counts immensely over here; for delicacy, I think, is as rare as coarseness. I am talking to you of the sea, however, without having told you a word of my voyage. It was very comfortable and amusing; I should like to take another next month. You know I am almost offensively well at sea—that I breast the weather and brave the storm. We had no storm fortunately, and I had brought with me a supply of light literature; so I passed nine days on deck in my sea-chair, with my heels up, reading Tauchnitz novels. There was a great lot of people, but no one in particular, save some fifty American girls. You know all about the American girl, however, having been one yourself. They are, on the whole, very nice, but fifty is too many; there are always too many. There was an inquiring Briton, a radical M.P., by name Mr. Antrobus, who entertained me as much as any one else. He is an excellent man; I even asked him to come down here and spend a couple of days. He looked rather frightened, till I told him he shouldn't be alone with me, that the house was my brother's, and that I gave the invitation in his name. He came a week ago; he goes everywhere; we have heard of him in a dozen places. The English are very simple, or at least they seem so over here. Their old measurements and comparisons desert them; they don't know whether it's all a joke, or whether it's too serious by half. We are quicker than they, though we talk so much more slowly. We think fast, and yet we talk as deliberately as if we were speaking a foreign language. They toss off their sentences with an air of easy familiarity with the tongue, and yet they misunderstand two-thirds of what people say to them. Perhaps, after all, it is only *our* thoughts they think slowly; they think their own often to a lively tune enough. Mr. Antrobus arrived here at eight o'clock in the morning; I don't know how he managed it; it appears to be his favourite hour; wherever we have heard of him he has come in with the dawn. In England he would arrive at 5.30 p.m. He asks innumerable questions, but they are easy to answer, for he has a sweet credulity. He made me rather ashamed; he is a better American than so many of us; he takes us more seriously than we take ourselves. He seems to think that an oligarchy of wealth is growing up here, and he advised me to be on my guard against it. I don't know exactly what I can do, but I promised him to look out. He is fearfully energetic; the energy of the people here is nothing to that of the inquiring Briton. If we should devote half the energy to building up our institutions that they devote to obtaining information about them, we should have a very satisfactory country. Mr. Antrobus seemed to think very well of us, which surprised me, on the whole, because, say what one will, it's not so agreeable as England. It's very horrid that this should be; and it's delightful, when one

thinks of it, that some things in England are, after all, so disagreeable. At the same time, Mr. Antrobus appeared to be a good deal pre-occupied with our dangers. I don't understand, quite, what they are; they seem to me so few, on a Newport piazza, on this bright, still day. But, after all, what one sees on a Newport piazza is not America; it's the back of Europe! I don't mean to say that I haven't noticed any dangers since my return; there are two or three that seem to me very serious, but they are not those that Mr. Antrobus means. One, for instance, is that we shall cease to speak the English language, which I prefer so much to any other. It's less and less spoken; American is crowding it out. All the children speak American, and as a child's language it's dreadfully rough. It's exclusively in use in the schools; all the magazines and newspapers are in American. Of course, a people of fifty millions, who have invented a new civilisation, have a right to a language of their own; that's what they tell me, and I can't quarrel with it. But I wish they had made it as pretty as the mother-tongue, from which, after all, it is more or less derived. We ought to have invented something as noble as our country. They tell me it's more expressive, and yet some admirable things have been said in the Queen's English. There can be no question of the Queen over here, of course, and American no doubt is the music of the future. Poor dear future, how "expressive" you'll be! For women and children, as I say, it strikes one as very rough; and moreover, they don't speak it well, their own though it be. My little nephews, when I first came home, had not gone back to school, and it distressed me to see that, though they are charming children, they had the vocal inflections of little news-boys. My niece is sixteen years old; she has the sweetest nature possible; she is extremely well-bred, and is dressed to perfection. She chatters from morning till night; but it isn't a pleasant sound! These little persons are in the opposite case from so many English girls, who know how to speak, but don't know how to talk. My niece knows how to talk, but doesn't know how to speak. *A propos* of the young people, that is our other danger; the young people are eating us up,—there is nothing in America but the young people. The country is made for the rising generation; life is arranged for them; they are the destruction of society. People talk of them, consider them, defer to them, bow down to them. They are always present, and whenever they are present there is an end to everything else. They are often very pretty; and physically, they are wonderfully looked after; they are scoured and brushed, they wear hygienic clothes, they go every week to the dentist's. But the little boys kick your shins, and the little girls offer to slap your face! There is an immense literature entirely addressed to them, in which the kicking of shins and the slapping of faces is much recommended. As a woman of fifty, I protest. I insist on being judged by my peers. It's too late, however, for several millions of little feet are actively engaged in stamping out conversation, and I don't see how they can long fail to keep it under. The future is theirs; maturity will evidently be at an increasing discount. Longfellow wrote a charming little poem called "The Children's Hour," but he ought to have called it "The Children's Century." And by children, of course, I don't mean simple infants; I mean everything of less than twenty. The social importance of the young American increases steadily up to that age, and then it suddenly stops. The young girls, of course, are more important than the lads; but the lads are very important too. I am struck with the way they are known and talked about; they are little celebrities; they have reputations and pretensions; they are taken very seriously. As for the young girls, as I said just now, there are too many. You will say, perhaps, that I am jealous of them, with my fifty years and my red face. I don't think so, because I don't suffer; my red face doesn't frighten people away, and I always find plenty of talkers. The young girls themselves, I believe, like me very much; and as for me, I delight in the young girls. They are often very pretty; not so pretty as people say in the magazines, but pretty enough. The magazines rather overdo that; they make a mistake. I have seen no great beauties, but the level of prettiness is high, and occasionally one sees a woman completely handsome. (As a general thing, a pretty person here means a person with

a pretty face. The figure is rarely mentioned, though there are several good ones.) The level of prettiness is high, but the level of conversation is low; that's one of the signs of its being a young ladies' country. There are a good many things young ladies can't talk about; but think of all the things they can, when they are as clever as most of these. Perhaps one ought to content one's self with that measure, but it's difficult if one has lived for a while by a larger one. This one is decidedly narrow; I stretch it sometimes till it cracks. Then it is that they call me coarse, which I undoubtedly am, thank Heaven! People's talk is of course much more *châtiée* over here than in Europe; I am struck with that wherever I go. There are certain things that are never said at all, certain allusions that are never made. There are no light stories, no propos *risqués*. I don't know exactly what people talk about, for the supply of scandal is small, and it's poor in quality. They don't seem, however, to lack topics. The young girls are always there; they keep the gates of conversation; very little passes that is not innocent. I find we do very well without wickedness; and, for myself, as I take my ease, I don't miss my liberties. You remember what I thought of the tone of your table in Florence, and how surprised you were when I asked you why you allowed such things. You said they were like the courses of the seasons; one couldn't prevent them; also that to change the tone of your table you would have to change so many other things. Of course, in your house one never saw a young girl; I was the only spinster, and no one was afraid of me! Of course, too, if talk is more innocent in this country, manners are so, to begin with. The liberty of the young people is the strongest proof of it. The young girls are let loose in the world, and the world gets more good of it than *ces demoiselles* get harm. In your world—excuse me, but you know what I mean—this wouldn't do at all. Your world is a sad affair, and the young ladies would encounter all sorts of horrors. Over here, considering the way they knock about, they remain wonderfully simple, and the reason is that society protects them instead of setting them traps. There is almost no gallantry, as you understand it; the flirtations are child's play. People have no time for making love; the men, in particular, are extremely busy. I am told that sort of thing consumes hours; I have never had any time for it myself. If the leisure class should increase here considerably, there may possibly be a change; but I doubt it, for the women seem to me in all essentials exceedingly reserved. Great superficial frankness, but an extreme dread of complications. The men strike me as very good fellows. I think that at bottom they are better than the women, who are very subtle, but rather hard. They are not so nice to the men as the men are to them; I mean, of course, in proportion, you know. But women are not so nice as men, "anyhow," as they say here. The men, of course, are professional, commercial; there are very few gentlemen pure and simple. This personage needs to be very well done, however, to be of great utility; and I suppose you won't pretend that he is always well done in your countries. When he's not, the less of him the better. It's very much the same, however, with the system on which the young girls in this country are brought up. (You see, I have to come back to the young girls.) When it succeeds, they are the most charming possible; when it doesn't, the failure is disastrous. If a girl is a very nice girl, the American method brings her to great completeness—makes all her graces flower; but if she isn't nice, it makes her exceedingly disagreeable—elaborately and fatally perverts her. In a word, the American girl is rarely negative, and when she isn't a great success she is a great warning. In nineteen cases out of twenty, among the people who know how to live—I won't say what *their* proportion is—the results are highly satisfactory. The girls are not shy, but I don't know why they should be, for there is really nothing here to be afraid of. Manners are very gentle, very humane; the democratic system deprives people of weapons that every one doesn't equally possess. No one is formidable; no one is on stilts; no one has great pretensions or any recognised right to be arrogant. I think there is not much wickedness, and there is certainly less cruelty than with you. Every one can sit; no one is kept standing. One is much less liable to be snubbed, which you will say is a pity. I think it is to a certain extent;

but, on the other hand, folly is less fatuous, in form, than in your countries; and as people generally have fewer revenges to take, there is less need of their being stamped on in advance. The general good nature, the social equality, deprive them of triumphs on the one hand, and of grievances on the other. There is extremely little impertinence; there is almost none. You will say I am describing a terrible society,—a society without great figures or great social prizes. You have hit it, my dear; there are no great figures. (The great prize, of course, in Europe, is the opportunity to be a great figure.) You would miss these things a good deal,—you who delight to contemplate greatness; and my advice to you, of course, is never to come back. You would miss the small people even more than the great; every one is middle-sized, and you can never have that momentary sense of tallness which is so agreeable in Europe. There are no brilliant types; the most important people seem to lack dignity. They are very *bourgeois*; they make little jokes; on occasion they make puns; they have no form; they are too good-natured. The men have no style; the women, who are fidgety and talk too much, have it only in their *coiffure*, where they have it superabundantly. But I console myself with the greater *bonhomie*. Have you ever arrived at an English country-house in the dusk of a winter's day? Have you ever made a call in London, when you knew nobody but the hostess? People here are more expressive, more demonstrative and it is a pleasure, when one comes back (if one happens, like me, to be no one in particular), to feel one's social value rise. They attend to you more; they have you on their mind; they talk to you; they listen to you. That is, the men do; the women listen very little—not enough. They interrupt; they talk too much; one feels their presence too much as a sound. I imagine it is partly because their wits are quick, and they think of a good many things to say; not that they always say such wonders. Perfect repose, after all, is not *all* self-control; it is also partly stupidity. American women, however, make too many vague exclamations—say too many indefinite things. In short, they have a great deal of nature. On the whole, I find very little affectation, though we shall probably have more as we improve. As yet, people haven't the assurance that carries those things off; they know too much about each other. The trouble is that over here we have all been brought up together. You will think this a picture of a dreadfully insipid society; but I hasten to add that it's not all so tame as that. I have been speaking of the people that one meets socially; and these are the smallest part of American life. The others—those one meets on a basis of mere convenience—are much more exciting; they keep one's temper in healthy exercise. I mean the people in the shops, and on the railroads; the servants, the hackmen, the labourers, every one of whom you buy anything or have occasion to make an inquiry. With them you need all your best manners, for you must always have enough for two. If you think we are *too* democratic, taste a little of American life in these walks, and you will be reassured. This is the region of inequality, and you will find plenty of people to make your courtesy to. You see it from below—the weight of inequality is on your own back. You asked me to tell you about prices; they are simply dreadful.

IV.

FROM THE HONOURABLE EDWARD ANTROBUS, M.P., IN BOSTON, TO THE HONOURABLE MRS. ANTROBUS.

October 17.

My dear Susan—I sent you a post-card on the 13th and a native newspaper yesterday; I really have had no time to write. I sent you the newspaper partly because it contained a report—extremely incorrect—of some remarks I made at the meeting of the Association of the Teachers of New England; partly because it is so curious that I thought it would interest you and the children. I cut out some portions which I didn't think it would be well for the children to see; the parts remaining contain the most striking features. Please point out to the children the peculiar orthography, which probably will be adopted in England by the time they are

grown up; the amusing oddities of expression, etc. Some of them are intentional; you will have heard of the celebrated American humour, etc. (remind me, by the way, on my return to Thistleton, to give you a few examples of it); others are unconscious, and are perhaps on that account the more diverting. Point out to the children the difference (in so far as you are sure that you yourself perceive it). You must excuse me if these lines are not very legible; I am writing them by the light of a railway lamp, which rattles above my left ear; it being only at odd moments that I can find time to look into everything that I wish to. You will say that this is a very odd moment, indeed, when I tell you that I am in bed in a sleeping-car. I occupy the upper berth (I will explain to you the arrangement when I return), while the lower forms the couch—the jolts are fearful—of an unknown female. You will be very anxious for my explanation; but I assure you that it is the custom of the country. I myself am assured that a lady may travel in this manner all over the Union (the Union of States) without a loss of consideration. In case of her occupying the upper berth I presume it would be different; but I must make inquiries on this point. Whether it be the fact that a mysterious being of another sex has retired to rest behind the same curtains, or whether it be the swing of the train, which rushes through the air with very much the same movement as the tail of a kite, the situation is, at any rate, so anomalous that I am unable to sleep. A ventilator is open just over my head, and a lively draught, mingled with a drizzle of cinders, pours in through this ingenious orifice. (I will describe to you its form on my return.) If I had occupied the lower berth I should have had a whole window to myself, and by drawing back the blind (a safe proceeding at the dead of night), I should have been able, by the light of an extraordinary brilliant moon, to see a little better what I write. The question occurs to me, however,—Would the lady below me in that case have ascended to the upper berth? (You know my old taste for contingent inquiries.) I incline to think (from what I have seen) that she would simply have requested me to evacuate my own couch. (The ladies in this country ask for anything they want.) In this case, I suppose, I should have had an extensive view of the country, which, from what I saw of it before I turned in (while the lady beneath me was going to bed), offered a rather ragged expanse, dotted with little white wooden houses, which looked in the moonshine like pasteboard boxes. I have been unable to ascertain as precisely as I should wish by whom these modest residences are occupied; for they are too small to be the homes of country gentlemen, there is no peasantry here, and (in New England, for all the corn comes from the far West) there are no yeomen nor farmers. The information that one receives in this country is apt to be rather conflicting, but I am determined to sift the mystery to the bottom. I have already noted down a multitude of facts bearing upon the points that interest me most—the operation of the school-boards, the co-education of the sexes, the elevation of the tone of the lower classes, the participation of the latter in political life. Political life, indeed, is almost wholly confined to the lower middle class, and the upper section of the lower class. In some of the large towns, indeed, the lowest order of all participates considerably—a very interesting phrase, to which I shall give more attention. It is very gratifying to see the taste for public affairs pervading so many social strata; but the indifference of the gentry is a fact not to be lightly considered. It may be objected, indeed, that there are no gentry; and it is very true that I have not yet encountered a character of the type of Lord Bottomley,—a type which I am free to confess I should be sorry to see disappear from our English system, if system it may be called, where so much is the growth of blind and incoherent forces. It is nevertheless obvious that an idle and luxurious class exists in this country, and that it is less exempt than in our own from the reproach of preferring inglorious ease to the furtherance of liberal ideas. It is rapidly increasing, and I am not sure that the indefinite growth of the dilettante spirit, in connection with large and lavishly-expended wealth, is an unmixed good, even in a society in which freedom of development has obtained so many interesting triumphs. The fact that this body is not represented in the governing class, is perhaps as much the result of the jealousy

with which it is viewed by the more earnest workers as of its own—I dare not, perhaps, apply a harsher term than—levity. Such, at least, is the impression I have gathered in the Middle States and in New England; in the South-west, the North-west, and the far West, it will doubtless be liable to correction. These divisions are probably new to you; but they are the general denomination of large and flourishing communities, with which I hope to make myself at least superficially acquainted. The fatigue of traversing, as I habitually do, three or four hundred miles at a bound, is, of course, considerable; but there is usually much to inquire into by the way. The conductors of the trains, with whom I freely converse, are often men of vigorous and original minds, and even of some social eminence. One of them, a few days ago, gave me a letter of introduction to his brother-in-law, who is president of a Western University. Don't have any fear, therefore, that I am not in the best society! The arrangements for travelling are, as a general thing, extremely ingenious, as you will probably have inferred from what I told you above; but it must at the same time be conceded that some of them are more ingenious than happy. Some of the facilities, with regard to luggage, the transmission of parcels, etc., are doubtless very useful when explained, but I have not yet succeeded in mastering the intricacies. There are, on the other hand, no cabs and no porters, and I have calculated that I have myself carried my *impedimenta*—which, you know, are somewhat numerous, and from which I cannot bear to be separated—some seventy, or eighty miles. I have sometimes thought it was a great mistake not to bring Plummeridge; he would have been useful on such occasions. On the other hand, the startling question would have presented itself—Who would have carried Plummeridge's portmanteau? He would have been useful, indeed, for brushing and packing my clothes, and getting me my tub; I travel with a large tin one—there are none to be obtained at the inns—and the transport of this receptacle often presents the most insoluble difficulties. It is often, too, an object of considerable embarrassment in arriving at private houses, where the servants have less reserve of manner than in England; and to tell you the truth, I am by no means certain at the present moment that the tub has been placed in the train with me. “On board” the train is the consecrated phrase here; it is an allusion to the tossing and pitching of the concatenation of cars, so similar to that of a vessel in a storm. As I was about to inquire, however, Who would get Plummeridge *his* tub, and attend to his little comforts? We could not very well make our appearance, on coming to stay with people, with *two* of the utensils I have named; though, as regards a single one, I have had the courage, as I may say, of a life-long habit. It would hardly be expected that we should both use the same; though there have been occasions in my travels, as to which I see no way of blinking the fact, that Plummeridge would have had to sit down to dinner with me. Such a contingency would completely have unnerved him; and, on the whole, it was doubtless the wiser part to leave him respectfully touching his hat on the tender in the Mersey. No one touches his hat over here, and though it is doubtless the sign of a more advanced social order, I confess that when I see poor Plummeridge again, this familiar little gesture—familiar, I mean, only in the sense of being often seen—will give me a measurable satisfaction. You will see from what I tell you that democracy is not a mere word in this country, and I could give you many more instances of its universal reign. This, however, is what we come here to look at, and, in so far as there seems to be proper occasion, to admire; though I am by no means sure that we can hope to establish within an appreciable time a corresponding change in the somewhat rigid fabric of English manners. I am not even prepared to affirm that such a change is desirable; you know this is one of the points on which I do not as yet see my way to going as far as Lord B—. I have always held that there is a certain social ideal of inequality as well as of equality, and if I have found the people of this country, as a general thing, quite equal to each other, I am not sure that I am prepared to go so far as to say that, as a whole, they are equal to—excuse that dreadful blot! The movement of the train and the precarious nature of the light—it is close to my nose, and most

offensive—would, I flatter myself, long since have got the better of a less resolute diarist! What I was not prepared for was the very considerable body of aristocratic feeling that lurks beneath this republican simplicity. I have on several occasions been made the confidant of these romantic but delusive vagaries, of which the stronghold appears to be the Empire City,—a slang name for New York. I was assured in many quarters that that locality, at least, is ripe for a monarchy, and if one of the Queen’s sons would come and talk it over, he would meet with the highest encouragement. This information was given me in strict confidence, with closed doors, as it were; it reminded me a good deal of the dreams of the old Jacobites, when they whispered their messages to the king across the water. I doubt, however, whether these less excusable visionaries will be able to secure the services of a Pretender, for I fear that in such a case he would encounter a still more fatal Culloden. I have given a good deal of time, as I told you, to the educational system, and have visited no fewer than one hundred and forty-three schools and colleges. It is extraordinary, the number of persons who are being educated in this country; and yet, at the same time, the tone of the people is less scholarly than one might expect. A lady, a few days since, described to me her daughter as being always “on the go,” which I take to be a jocular way of saying that the young lady was very fond of paying visits. Another person, the wife of a United States senator, informed me that if I should go to Washington in January, I should be quite “in the swim.” I inquired the meaning of the phrase, but her explanation made it rather more than less ambiguous. To say that I am on the go describes very accurately my own situation. I went yesterday to the Pognanuc High School, to hear fifty-seven boys and girls recite in unison a most remarkable ode to the American flag, and shortly afterward attended a ladies’ lunch, at which some eighty or ninety of the sex were present. There was only one individual in trousers—his trousers, by the way, though he brought a dozen pair, are getting rather seedy. The men in America do not partake of this meal, at which ladies assemble in large numbers to discuss religions, political, and social topics. These immense female symposia (at which every delicacy is provided) are one of the most striking features of American life, and would seem to prove that men are not so indispensable in the scheme of creation as they sometimes suppose. I have been admitted on the footing of an Englishman—“just to show you some of our bright women,” the hostess yesterday remarked. (“Bright” here has the meaning of *intellectual*.) I perceived, indeed, a great many intellectual foreheads. These curious collations are organised according to age. I have also been present as an inquiring stranger at several “girls’ lunches,” from which married ladies are rigidly excluded, but where the fair revellers are equally numerous and equally bright. There is a good deal I should like to tell you about my study of the educational question, but my position is somewhat cramped, and I must dismiss it briefly. My leading impression is that the children in this country are better educated than the adults. The position of a child is, on the whole, one of great distinction. There is a popular ballad of which the refrain, if I am not mistaken, is “Make me a child again, just for to-night!” and which seems to express the sentiment of regret for lost privileges. At all events they are a powerful and independent class, and have organs, of immense circulation, in the press. They are often extremely “bright.” I have talked with a great many teachers, most of them lady-teachers, as they are called in this country. The phrase does not mean teachers of ladies, as you might suppose, but applies to the sex of the instructress, who often has large classes of young men under her control. I was lately introduced to a young woman of twenty-three, who occupies the chair of Moral Philosophy and Belles-Lettres in a Western college, and who told me with the utmost frankness that she was adored by the undergraduates. This young woman was the daughter of a petty trader in one of the South western States, and had studied at Amanda College, in Missouri, an institution at which young people of the two sexes pursue their education together. She was very pretty and modest, and expressed a great desire to see something of English country life, in consequence of which I made her promise to come

down to Thistleton in the event of her crossing the Atlantic. She is not the least like Gwendolen or Charlotte, and I am not prepared to say how they would get on with her; the boys would probably do better. Still, I think her acquaintance would be of value to Miss Bumpus, and the two might pass their time very pleasantly in the school-room. I grant you freely that those I have seen here are much less comfortable than the school-room at Thistleton. Has Charlotte, by the way, designed any more texts for the walls? I have been extremely interested in my visit to Philadelphia, where I saw several thousand little red houses with white steps, occupied by intelligent artizans, and arranged (in streets) on the rectangular system. Improved cooking-stoves, rosewood pianos, gas, and hot water, æsthetic furniture, and complete sets of the British Essayists. A tramway through every street; every block of equal length; blocks and houses scientifically lettered and numbered. There is absolutely no loss of time, and no need of looking for anything, or, indeed, at anything. The mind always on one's object; it is very delightful.

V.

FROM LOUIS LEVERETT, IN BOSTON, TO HARVARD TREMONT, IN PARIS.

November.

The scales have turned, my sympathetic Harvard, and the beam that has lifted you up has dropped me again on this terribly hard spot. I am extremely sorry to have missed you in London, but I received your little note, and took due heed of your injunction to let you know how I got on. I don't get on at all, my dear Harvard—I am consumed with the love of the farther shore. I have been so long away that I have dropped out of my place in this little Boston world, and the shallow tides of New England life have closed over it. I am a stranger here, and I find it hard to believe that I ever was a native. It is very hard, very cold, very vacant. I think of your warm, rich Paris; I think of the Boulevard St. Michel on the mild spring evenings. I see the little corner by the window (of the Café de la Jeunesse)—where I used to sit; the doors are open, the soft deep breath of the great city comes in. It is brilliant, yet there is a kind of tone, of body, in the brightness; the mighty murmur of the ripest civilisation in the world comes in; the dear old *peuple de Paris*, the most interesting people in the world, pass by. I have a little book in my pocket; it is exquisitely printed, a modern Elzevir. It is a lyric cry from the heart of young France, and is full of the sentiment of form. There is no form here, dear Harvard; I had no idea how little form there was. I don't know what I shall do; I feel so undraped, so uncurtained, so uncushioned; I feel as if I were sitting in the centre of a mighty "reflector." A terrible crude glare is over everything; the earth looks peeled and excoriated; the raw heavens seem to bleed with the quick hard light. I have not got back my rooms in West Cedar Street; they are occupied by a mesmeric healer. I am staying at an hotel, and it is very dreadful. Nothing for one's self; nothing for one's preferences and habits. No one to receive you when you arrive; you push in through a crowd, you edge up to a counter; you write your name in a horrible book, where every one may come and stare at it and finger it. A man behind the counter stares at you in silence; his stare seems to say to you, "What the devil do *you* want?" But after this stare he never looks at you again. He tosses down a key at you; he presses a bell; a savage Irishman arrives. "Take him away," he seems to say to the Irishman; but it is all done in silence; there is no answer to your own speech,— "What is to be done with me, please?" "Wait and you will see," the awful silence seems to say. There is a great crowd around you, but there is also a great stillness; every now and then you hear some one expectorate. There are a thousand people in this huge and hideous structure; they feed together in a big white-walled room. It is lighted by a thousand gas-jets, and heated by cast-iron screens, which vomit forth torrents of scorching air. The temperature is terrible; the atmosphere is more so; the furious light and heat seem to intensify the dreadful definiteness. When things are so ugly, they should not be so definite; and they are terribly

ugly here. There is no mystery in the corners; there is no light and shade in the types. The people are haggard and joyless; they look as if they had no passions, no tastes, no senses. They sit feeding in silence, in the dry hard light; occasionally I hear the high firm note of a child. The servants are black and familiar; their faces shine as they shuffle about; there are blue tones in their dark masks. They have no manners; they address you, but they don't answer you; they plant themselves at your elbow (it rubs their clothes as you eat), and watch you as if your proceedings were strange. They deluge you with iced water; it's the only thing they will bring you; if you look round to summon them, they have gone for more. If you read the newspaper—which I don't, gracious Heaven! I can't—they hang over your shoulder and peruse it also. I always fold it up and present it to them; the newspapers here are indeed for an African taste. There are long corridors defended by gusts of hot air; down the middle swoops a pale little girl on parlour skates. "Get out of my way!" she shrieks as she passes; she has ribbons in her hair and frills on her dress; she makes the tour of the immense hotel. I think of Puck, who put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes, and wonder what he said as he flitted by. A black waiter marches past me, bearing a tray, which he thrusts into my spine as he goes. It is laden with large white jugs; they tinkle as he moves, and I recognise the unconsoling fluid. We are dying of iced water, of hot air, of gas. I sit in my room thinking of these things—this room of mine which is a chamber of pain. The walls are white and bare, they shine in the rays of a horrible chandelier of imitation bronze, which depends from the middle of the ceiling. It flings a patch of shadow on a small table covered with white marble, of which the genial surface supports at the present moment the sheet of paper on which I address you; and when I go to bed (I like to read in bed, Harvard) it becomes an object of mockery and torment. It dangles at inaccessible heights; it stares me in the face; it flings the light upon the covers of my book, but not upon the page—the little French Elzevir that I love so well. I rise and put out the gas, and then my room becomes even lighter than before. Then a crude illumination from the hall, from the neighbouring room, pours through the glass openings that surmount the two doors of my apartment. It covers my bed, where I toss and groan; it beats in through my closed lids; it is accompanied by the most vulgar, though the most human, sounds. I spring up to call for some help, some remedy; but there is no bell, and I feel desolate and weak. There is only a strange orifice in the wall, through which the traveller in distress may transmit his appeal. I fill it with incoherent sounds, and sounds more incoherent yet come back to me. I gather at last their meaning; they appear to constitute a somewhat stern inquiry. A hollow impersonal voice wishes to know what I want, and the very question paralyses me. I want everything—yet I want nothing—nothing this hard impersonality can give! I want my little corner of Paris; I want the rich, the deep, the dark Old World; I want to be out of this horrible place. Yet I can't confide all this to that mechanical tube; it would be of no use; a mocking laugh would come up from the office. Fancy appealing in these sacred, these intimate moments, to an "office"; fancy calling out into indifferent space for a candle, for a curtain! I pay incalculable sums in this dreadful house, and yet I haven't a servant to wait upon me. I fling myself back on my couch, and for a long time afterward the orifice in the wall emits strange murmurs and rumblings. It seems unsatisfied, indignant; it is evidently scolding me for my vagueness. My vagueness, indeed, dear Harvard! I loathe their horrible arrangements; isn't that definite enough? You asked me to tell you whom I see, and what I think of my friends. I haven't very many; I don't feel at all *en rapport*. The people are very good, very serious, very devoted to their work; but there is a terrible absence of variety of type. Every one is Mr. Jones, Mr. Brown; and every one looks like Mr. Jones and Mr. Brown. They are thin; they are diluted in the great tepid bath of Democracy! They lack completeness of identity; they are quite without modelling. No, they are not beautiful, my poor Harvard; it must be whispered that they are not beautiful. You may say that they are as beautiful as the French, as the Germans; but I can't agree with you there.

The French, the Germans, have the greatest beauty of all—the beauty of their ugliness—the beauty of the strange, the grotesque. These people are not even ugly; they are only plain. Many of the girls are pretty; but to be only pretty is (to my sense) to be plain. Yet I have had some talk. I have seen a woman. She was on the steamer, and I afterward saw her in New York—a peculiar type, a real personality; a great deal of modelling, a great deal of colour, and yet a great deal of mystery. She was not, however, of this country; she was a compound of far-off things. But she was looking for something here—like me. We found each other, and for a moment that was enough. I have lost her now; I am sorry, because she liked to listen to me. She has passed away; I shall not see her again. She liked to listen to me; she almost understood!

VI.

FROM M. GUSTAVE LEJAUNE, OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY, TO M. ADOLPHE BOUCHE, IN PARIS.

Washington, October 5.

I give you my little notes; you must make allowances for haste, for bad inns, for the perpetual scramble, for ill-humour. Everywhere the same impression—the platitude of unbalanced democracy intensified by the platitude of the spirit of commerce. Everything on an immense scale—everything illustrated by millions of examples. My brother-in-law is always busy; he has appointments, inspections, interviews, disputes. The people, it appears, are incredibly sharp in conversation, in argument; they wait for you in silence at the corner of the road, and then they suddenly discharge their revolver. If you fall, they empty your pockets; the only chance is to shoot them first. With that, no amenities, no preliminaries, no manners, no care for the appearance. I wander about while my brother is occupied; I lounge along the streets; I stop at the corners; I look into the shops; *je regarde passer les femmes*. It's an easy country to see; one sees everything there is; the civilisation is skin deep; you don't have to dig. This positive, practical, pushing *bourgeoisie* is always about its business; it lives in the street, in the hotel, in the train; one is always in a crowd—there are seventy-five people in the tramway. They sit in your lap; they stand on your toes; when they wish to pass they simply push you. Everything in silence; they know that silence is golden, and they have the worship of gold. When the conductor wishes your fare he gives you a poke, very serious, without a word. As for the types—but there is only one—they are all variations of the same—the *commis-voyageur* minus the gaiety. The women are often pretty; you meet the young ones in the streets, in the trains, in search of a husband. They look at you frankly, coldly, judicially, to see if you will serve; but they don't want what you might think (*du moins on me l'assure*); they only want the husband. A Frenchman may mistake; he needs to be sure he is right, and I always make sure. They begin at fifteen; the mother sends them out; it lasts all day (with an interval for dinner at a pastry-cook's); sometimes it goes on for ten years. If they haven't found the husband then, they give it up; they make place for the *cadettes*, as the number of women is enormous. No *salons*, no society, no conversation; people don't receive at home; the young girls have to look for the husband where they can. It is no disgrace not to find him—several have never done so. They continue to go about unmarried—from the force of habit, from the love of movement, without hopes, without regret—no imagination, no sensibility, no desire for the convent. We have made several journeys—few of less than three hundred miles. Enormous trains, enormous *waggons*, with beds and lavatories, and negroes who brush you with a big broom, as if they were grooming a horse. A bounding movement, a roaring noise, a crowd of people who look horribly tired, a boy who passes up and down throwing pamphlets and sweetmeats into your lap—that is an American journey. There are windows in the *waggons*—enormous, like everything else; but there is nothing to see. The country is a void—no features, no objects, no details, nothing to show you that you are in one

place more than another. *Aussi*, you are not in one place, you are everywhere, anywhere; the train goes a hundred miles an hour. The cities are all the same; little houses ten feet high, or else big ones two hundred; tramways, telegraph-poles, enormous signs, holes in the pavement, oceans of mud, *commis-voyageurs*, young ladies looking for the husband. On the other hand, no beggars and no *cocottes*—*none*, at least, that you see. A colossal mediocrity, except (my brother-in-law tells me) in the machinery, which is magnificent. Naturally, no architecture (they make houses of wood and of iron), no art, no literature, no theatre. I have opened some of the books; *mais ils ne se laissent pas lire*. No form, no matter, no style, no general ideas! they seem to be written for children and young ladies. The most successful (those that they praise most) are the facetious; they sell in thousands of editions. I have looked into some of the most *vantés*; but you need to be forewarned, to know that they are amusing; *des plaisanteries de croquemort*. They have a novelist with pretensions to literature, who writes about the chase for the husband and the adventures of the rich Americans in our corrupt old Europe, where their primæval candour puts the Europeans to shame. *C'est proprement écrit*; but it's terribly pale. What isn't pale is the newspapers—enormous, like everything else (fifty columns of advertisements), and full of the *commérages* of a continent. And such a tone, *grand Dieu!* The amenities, the personalities, the recriminations, are like so many *coups de revolver*. Headings six inches tall; correspondences from places one never heard of; telegrams from Europe about Sarah Bernhardt; little paragraphs about nothing at all; the *menu* of the neighbour's dinner; articles on the European situation *à pouffer de rire*; all the *tripotage* of local politics. The *reportage* is incredible; I am chased up and down by the interviewers. The matrimonial infelicities of M. and Madame X. (they give the name), *tout au long*, with every detail—not in six lines, discreetly veiled, with an art of insinuation, as with us; but with all the facts (or the fictions), the letters, the dates, the places, the hours. I open a paper at hazard, and I find *au beau milieu*, *à propos* of nothing, the announcement—"Miss Susan Green has the longest nose in Western New York." Miss Susan Green (*je me renseigne*) is a celebrated authoress; and the Americans have the reputation of spoiling their women. They spoil them *à coups de poing*. We have seen few interiors (no one speaks French); but if the newspapers give an idea of the domestic *mœurs*, the *mœurs* must be curious. The passport is abolished, but they have printed my *signalement* in these sheets,—perhaps for the young ladies who look for the husband. We went one night to the theatre; the piece was French (they are the only ones), but the acting was American—too American; we came out in the middle. The want of taste is incredible. An Englishman whom I met tells me that even the language corrupts itself from day to day; an Englishman ceases to understand. It encourages me to find that I am not the only one. There are things every day that one can't describe. Such is Washington, where we arrived this morning, coming from Philadelphia. My brother-in-law wishes to see the Bureau of Patents, and on our arrival he went to look at his machines, while I walked about the streets and visited the Capitol! The human machine is what interests me most. I don't even care for the political—for that's what they call their Government here—"the machine." It operates very roughly, and some day, evidently, it will explode. It is true that you would never suspect that they have a government; this is the principal seat, but, save for three or four big buildings, most of them *affreux*, it looks like a settlement of negroes. No movement, no officials, no authority, no embodiment of the state. Enormous streets, *comme toujours*, lined with little red houses where nothing ever passes but the tramway. The Capitol—a vast structure, false classic, white marble, iron and stucco, which has *assez grand air*—must be seen to be appreciated. The goddess of liberty on the top, dressed in a bear's skin; their liberty over here is the liberty of bears. You go into the Capitol as you would into a railway station; you walk about as you would in the Palais Royal. No functionaries, no door-keepers, no officers, no uniforms, no badges, no restrictions, no authority—nothing but a crowd of shabby people circulating in a labyrinth of spittoons. We

are too much governed, perhaps, in France; but at least we have a certain incarnation of the national conscience, of the national dignity. The dignity is absent here, and I am told that the conscience is an abyss. “*L’état c’est moi*” even—I like that better than the spittoons. These implements are architectural, monumental; they are the only monuments. *En somme*, the country is interesting, now that we too have the Republic; it is the biggest illustration, the biggest warning. It is the last word of democracy, and that word is—flatness. It is very big, very rich, and perfectly ugly. A Frenchman couldn’t live here; for life with us, after all, at the worst is a sort of appreciation. Here, there is nothing to appreciate. As for the people, they are the English *minus* the conventions. You can fancy what remains. The women, *pourtant*, are sometimes—rather well turned. There was one at Philadelphia—I made her acquaintance by accident—whom it is probable I shall see again. She is not looking for the husband; she has already got one. It was at the hotel; I think the husband doesn’t matter. A Frenchman, as I have said, may mistake, and he needs to be sure he is right. *Aussi*, I always make sure!

VII.

FROM MARCELLUS COCKEREL, IN WASHINGTON, TO MRS. COOLER, NEE COCKEREL, AT OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA.

October 25.

I ought to have written to you long before this, for I have had your last excellent letter for four months in my hands. The first half of that time I was still in Europe; the last I have spent on my native soil. I think, therefore, my silence is owing to the fact that over there I was too miserable to write, and that here I have been too happy. I got back the 1st of September—you will have seen it in the papers. Delightful country, where one sees everything in the papers—the big, familiar, vulgar, good-natured, delightful papers, none of which has any reputation to keep up for anything but getting the news! I really think that has had as much to do as anything else with my satisfaction at getting home—the difference in what they call the “tone of the press.” In Europe it’s too dreary—the sapience, the solemnity, the false respectability, the verbosity, the long disquisitions on superannuated subjects. Here the newspapers are like the railroad trains, which carry everything that comes to the station, and have only the religion of punctuality. As a woman, however, you probably detest them; you think they are (the great word) vulgar. I admitted it just now, and I am very happy to have an early opportunity to announce to you that that idea has quite ceased to have any terrors for me. There are some conceptions to which the female mind can never rise. Vulgarity is a stupid, superficial, question-begging accusation, which has become today the easiest refuge of mediocrity. Better than anything else, it saves people the trouble of thinking, and anything which does that, succeeds. You must know that in these last three years in Europe I have become terribly vulgar myself; that’s one service my travels have rendered me. By three years in Europe I mean three years in foreign parts altogether, for I spent several months of that time in Japan, India, and the rest of the East. Do you remember when you bade me good-bye in San Francisco, the night before I embarked for Yokohama? You foretold that I should take such a fancy to foreign life that America would never see me more, and that if *you* should wish to see me (an event you were good enough to regard as possible), you would have to make a rendezvous in Paris or in Rome. I think we made one (which you never kept), but I shall never make another for those cities. It was in Paris, however, that I got your letter; I remember the moment as well as if it were (to my honour) much more recent. You must know that, among many places I dislike, Paris carries the palm. I am bored to death there; it’s the home of every humbug. The life is full of that false comfort which is worse than discomfort, and the small, fat, irritable people, give me the shivers. I had been making these reflections even more devoutly than usual one very tiresome evening toward the beginning of last summer, when, as I re-entered my hotel at ten o’clock, the little reptile of a

portress handed me your gracious lines. I was in a villainous humour. I had been having an over-dressed dinner in a stuffy restaurant, and had gone from there to a suffocating theatre, where, by way of amusement, I saw a play in which blood and lies were the least of the horrors. The theatres over there are insupportable; the atmosphere is pestilential. People sit with their elbows in your sides; they squeeze past you every half-hour. It was one of my bad moments; I have a great many in Europe. The conventional perfunctory play, all in falsetto, which I seemed to have seen a thousand times; the horrible faces of the people; the pushing, bullying *ouvreuse*, with her false politeness, and her real rapacity, drove me out of the place at the end of an hour; and, as it was too early to go home, I sat down before a *café* on the Boulevard, where they served me a glass of sour, watery beer. There on the Boulevard, in the summer night, life itself was even uglier than the play, and it wouldn't do for me to tell you what I saw. Besides, I was sick of the Boulevard, with its eternal grimace, and the deadly sameness of the *article de Paris*, which pretends to be so various—the shop-windows a wilderness of rubbish, and the passers-by a procession of manikins. Suddenly it came over me that I was supposed to be amusing myself—my face was a yard long—and that you probably at that moment were saying to your husband: “He stays away so long! What a good time he must be having!” The idea was the first thing that had made me smile for a month; I got up and walked home, reflecting, as I went, that I was “seeing Europe,” and that, after all, one *must* see Europe. It was because I had been convinced of this that I came out, and it is because the operation has been brought to a close that I have been so happy for the last eight weeks. I was very conscientious about it, and, though your letter that night made me abominably homesick, I held out to the end, knowing it to be once for all. I sha'n't trouble Europe again; I shall see America for the rest of my days. My long delay has had the advantage that now, at least, I can give you my impressions—I don't mean of Europe; impressions of Europe are easy to get—but of this country, as it strikes the re-instated exile. Very likely you'll think them queer; but keep my letter, and twenty years hence they will be quite commonplace. They won't even be vulgar. It was very deliberate, my going round the world. I knew that one ought to see for one's self, and that I should have eternity, so to speak, to rest. I travelled energetically; I went everywhere and saw everything; took as many letters as possible, and made as many acquaintances. In short, I held my nose to the grindstone. The upshot of it all is that I have got rid of a superstition. We have so many, that one the less—perhaps the biggest of all—makes a real difference in one's comfort. The superstition in question—of course you have it—is that there is no salvation but through Europe. Our salvation is here, if we have eyes to see it, and the salvation of Europe into the bargain; that is, if Europe is to be saved, which I rather doubt. Of course you'll call me a bird of freedom, a braggart, a waver of the stars and stripes; but I'm in the delightful position of not minding in the least what any one calls me. I haven't a mission; I don't want to preach; I have simply arrived at a state of mind; I have got Europe off my back. You have no idea how it simplifies things, and how jolly it makes me feel. Now I can live; now I can talk. If we wretched Americans could only say once for all, “Oh, Europe be hanged!” we should attend much better to our proper business. We have simply to live our life, and the rest will look after itself. You will probably inquire what it is that I like better over here, and I will answer that it's simply—life. Disagreeables for disagreeables, I prefer our own. The way I have been bored and bullied in foreign parts, and the way I have had to say I found it pleasant! For a good while this appeared to be a sort of congenital obligation, but one fine day it occurred to me that there was no obligation at all, and that it would ease me immensely to admit to myself that (for me, at least) all those things had no importance. I mean the things they rub into you in Europe; the tiresome international topics, the petty politics, the stupid social customs, the baby-house scenery. The vastness and freshness of this American world, the great scale and great pace of our development, the good sense and good nature of the people,

console me for there being no cathedrals and no Titians. I hear nothing about Prince Bismarck and Gambetta, about the Emperor William and the Czar of Russia, about Lord Beaconsfield and the Prince of Wales. I used to get so tired of their Mumbo-Jumbo of a Bismarck, of his secrets and surprises, his mysterious intentions and oracular words. They revile us for our party politics; but what are all the European jealousies and rivalries, their armaments and their wars, their rapacities and their mutual lies, but the intensity of the spirit of party? what question, what interest, what idea, what need of mankind, is involved in any of these things? Their big, pompous armies, drawn up in great silly rows, their gold lace, their salaams, their hierarchies, seem a pastime for children; there's a sense of humour and of reality over here that laughs at all that. Yes, we are nearer the reality—we are nearer what they will all have to come to. The questions of the future are social questions, which the Bismarcks and Beaconsfields are very much afraid to see settled; and the sight of a row of supercilious potentates holding their peoples like their personal property, and bristling all over, to make a mutual impression, with feathers and sabres, strikes us as a mixture of the grotesque and the abominable. What do we care for the mutual impressions of potentates who amuse themselves with sitting on people? Those things are their own affair, and they ought to be shut up in a dark room to have it out together. Once one feels, over here, that the great questions of the future are social questions, that a mighty tide is sweeping the world to democracy, and that this country is the biggest stage on which the drama can be enacted, the fashionable European topics seem petty and parochial. They talk about things that we have settled ages ago, and the solemnity with which they propound to you their little domestic embarrassments makes a heavy draft on one's good nature. In England they were talking about the Hares and Rabbits Bill, about the extension of the County Franchise, about the Dissenters' Burials, about the Deceased Wife's Sister, about the abolition of the House of Lords, about heaven knows what ridiculous little measure for the propping-up of their ridiculous little country. And they call *us* provincial! It is hard to sit and look respectable while people discuss the utility of the House of Lords, and the beauty of a State Church, and it's only in a dowdy musty civilisation that you'll find them doing such things. The lightness and clearness of the social air, that's the great relief in these parts. The gentility of bishops, the propriety of parsons, even the impressiveness of a restored cathedral, give less of a charm to life than that. I used to be furious with the bishops and parsons, with the humbuggery of the whole affair, which every one was conscious of, but which people agreed not to expose, because they would be compromised all round. The convenience of life over here, the quick and simple arrangements, the absence of the spirit of routine, are a blessed change from the stupid stiffness with which I struggled for two long years. There were people with swords and cockades, who used to order me about; for the simplest operation of life I had to kootoo to some bloated official. When it was a question of my doing a little differently from others, the bloated official gasped as if I had given him a blow on the stomach; he needed to take a week to think of it. On the other hand, it's impossible to take an American by surprise; he is ashamed to confess that he has not the wit to do a thing that another man has had the wit to think of. Besides being as good as his neighbour, he must therefore be as clever—which is an affliction only to people who are afraid he may be cleverer. If this general efficiency and spontaneity of the people—the union of the sense of freedom with the love of knowledge—isn't the very essence of a high civilisation, I don't know what a high civilisation is. I felt this greater ease on my first railroad journey—felt the blessing of sitting in a train where I could move about, where I could stretch my legs, and come and go, where I had a seat and a window to myself, where there were chairs, and tables, and food, and drink. The villainous little boxes on the European trains, in which you are stuck down in a corner, with doubled-up knees, opposite to a row of people—often most offensive types, who stare at you for ten hours on end—these were part of my two years' ordeal. The large free way of doing things

here is everywhere a pleasure. In London, at my hotel, they used to come to me on Saturday to make me order my Sunday's dinner, and when I asked for a sheet of paper, they put it into the bill. The meagreness, the stinginess, the perpetual expectation of a sixpence, used to exasperate me. Of course, I saw a great many people who were pleasant; but as I am writing to you, and not to one of them, I may say that they were dreadfully apt to be dull. The imagination among the people I see here is more flexible; and then they have the advantage of a larger horizon. It's not bounded on the north by the British aristocracy, and on the south by the *scrutin de liste*. (I mix up the countries a little, but they are not worth the keeping apart.) The absence of little conventional measurements, of little cut-and-dried judgments, is an immense refreshment. We are more analytic, more discriminating, more familiar with realities. As for manners, there are bad manners everywhere, but an aristocracy is bad manners organised. (I don't mean that they may not be polite among themselves, but they are rude to every one else.) The sight of all these growing millions simply minding their business, is impressive to me,—more so than all the gilt buttons and padded chests of the Old World; and there is a certain powerful type of "practical" American (you'll find him chiefly in the West) who doesn't brag as I do (I'm not practical), but who quietly feels that he has the Future in his vitals—a type that strikes me more than any I met in your favourite countries. Of course you'll come back to the cathedrals and Titians, but there's a thought that helps one to do without them—the thought that though there's an immense deal of plainness, there's little misery, little squalor, little degradation. There is no regular wife-beating class, and there are none of the stultified peasants of whom it takes so many to make a European noble. The people here are more conscious of things; they invent, they act, they answer for themselves; they are not (I speak of social matters) tied up by authority and precedent. We shall have all the Titians by and by, and we shall move over a few cathedrals. You had better stay here if you want to have the best. Of course, I am a roaring Yankee; but you'll call me that if I say the least, so I may as well take my ease, and say the most. Washington's a most entertaining place; and here at least, at the seat of government, one isn't overgoverned. In fact, there's no government at all to speak of; it seems too good to be true. The first day I was here I went to the Capitol, and it took me ever so long to figure to myself that I had as good a right there as any one else—that the whole magnificent pile (it *is* magnificent, by the way) was in fact my own. In Europe one doesn't rise to such conceptions, and my spirit had been broken in Europe. The doors were gaping wide—I walked all about; there were no door-keepers, no officers, nor flunkys—not even a policeman to be seen. It seemed strange not to see a uniform, if only as a patch of colour. But this isn't government by livery. The absence of these things is odd at first; you seem to miss something, to fancy the machine has stopped. It hasn't, though; it only works without fire and smoke. At the end of three days this simple negative impression—the fact is, that there are no soldiers nor spies, nothing but plain black coats—begins to affect the imagination, becomes vivid, majestic, symbolic. It ends by being more impressive than the biggest review I saw in Germany. Of course, I'm a roaring Yankee; but one has to take a big brush to copy a big model. The future is here, of course; but it isn't only that—the present is here as well. You will complain that I don't give you any personal news; but I am more modest for myself than for my country. I spent a month in New York, and while I was there I saw a good deal of a rather interesting girl who came over with me in the steamer, and whom for a day or two I thought I should like to marry. But I shouldn't. She has been spoiled by Europe!

VIII.

FROM MISS AURORA CHURCH, IN NEW YORK, TO MISS WHITESIDE, IN PARIS.

January 9.

I told you (after we landed) about my agreement with mamma—that I was to have my liberty for three months, and if at the end of this time I shouldn't have made a good use of it, I was to give it back to her. Well, the time is up today, and I am very much afraid I haven't made a good use of it. In fact, I haven't made any use of it at all—I haven't got married, for that is what mamma meant by our little bargain. She has been trying to marry me in Europe, for years, without a *dot*, and as she has never (to the best of my knowledge) even come near it, she thought at last that, if she were to leave it to me, I might do better. I couldn't certainly do worse. Well, my dear, I have done very badly—that is, I haven't done at all. I haven't even tried. I had an idea that this affair came of itself over here; but it hasn't come to me. I won't say I am disappointed, for I haven't, on the whole, seen any one I should like to marry. When you marry people over here, they expect you to love them, and I haven't seen any one I should like to love. I don't know what the reason is, but they are none of them what I have thought of. It may be that I have thought of the impossible; and yet I have seen people in Europe whom I should have liked to marry. It is true, they were almost always married to some one else. What I *am* disappointed in is simply having to give back my liberty. I don't wish particularly to be married; and I do wish to do as I like—as I have been doing for the last month. All the same, I am sorry for poor mamma, as nothing has happened that she wished to happen. To begin with, we are not appreciated, not even by the Rucks, who have disappeared, in the strange way in which people over here seem to vanish from the world. We have made no sensation; my new dresses count for nothing (they all have better ones); our philological and historical studies don't show. We have been told we might do better in Boston; but, on the other hand, mamma hears that in Boston the people only marry their cousins. Then mamma is out of sorts because the country is exceedingly dear and we have spent all our money. Moreover, I have neither eloped, nor been insulted, nor been talked about, nor—so far as I know—deteriorated in manners or character; so that mamma is wrong in all her previsions. I think she would have rather liked me to be insulted. But I have been insulted as little as I have been adored. They don't adore you over here; they only make you think they are going to. Do you remember the two gentlemen who were on the ship, and who, after we arrived here, came to see me *à tour de rôle*? At first I never dreamed they were making love to me, though mamma was sure it must be that; then, as it went on a good while, I thought perhaps it *was* that; and I ended by seeing that it wasn't anything! It was simply conversation; they are very fond of conversation over here. Mr. Leverett and Mr. Cockerel disappeared one fine day, without the smallest pretension to having broken my heart, I am sure, though it only depended on me to think they had! All the gentlemen are like that; you can't tell what they mean; everything is very confused; society appears to consist of a sort of innocent jilting. I think, on the whole, I *am* a little disappointed—I don't mean about one's not marrying; I mean about the life generally. It seems so different at first, that you expect it will be very exciting; and then you find that, after all, when you have walked out for a week or two by yourself, and driven out with a gentleman in a buggy, that's about all there is of it, as they say here. Mamma is very angry at not finding more to dislike; she admitted yesterday that, once one has got a little settled, the country has not even the merit of being hateful. This has evidently something to do with her suddenly proposing three days ago that we should go to the West. Imagine my surprise at such an idea coming from mamma! The people in the pension—who, as usual, wish immensely to get rid of her—have talked to her about the West, and she has taken it up with a kind of desperation. You see, we must do something; we can't simply remain here. We are rapidly being ruined, and we are not—so to speak—getting married. Perhaps it will be easier in the West; at any rate, it will be cheaper, and the country will have the advantage of being more hateful. It is a question between that and returning to Europe, and for the moment mamma is balancing. I say nothing: I am really indifferent; perhaps I shall marry a pioneer. I am just thinking how I shall give back my liberty. It really

won't be possible; I haven't got it any more; I have given it away to others. Mamma may recover it, if she can, from *them*! She comes in at this moment to say that we must push farther—she has decided for the West. Wonderful mamma! It appears that my real chance is for a pioneer—they have sometimes millions. But, fancy us in the West!

The Siege of London

I

That solemn piece of upholstery the curtain of the Comédie Française had fallen upon the first act of the piece, and our two Americans had taken advantage of the interval to pass out of the huge hot theatre in company with the other occupants of the stalls. But they were among the first to return, and they beguiled the rest of the intermission with looking at the house, which had lately been cleansed of its historic cobwebs and ornamented with frescoes illustrative of the classic drama. In the month of September the audience at the Théâtre Français is comparatively thin, and on this occasion the drama—*L'Aventurière* of Emile Augier—had no pretensions to novelty. Many of the boxes were empty, others were occupied by persons of provincial or nomadic appearance. The boxes are far from the stage, near which our spectators were placed; but even at a distance Rupert Waterville was able to appreciate details. He was fond of appreciating details, and when he went to the theatre he looked about him a good deal, making use of a dainty but remarkably powerful glass. He knew that such a course was wanting in true distinction and that it was indelicate to level at a lady an instrument often only less injurious in effect than a double-barrelled pistol; but he was always very curious, and was sure, in any case, that at that moment, at that antiquated play—so he was pleased to qualify the masterpiece of a contemporary—he shouldn't be observed by any one he knew. Standing up therefore with his back to the stage he made the circuit of the boxes while several other persons near him performed the operation with even greater coolness.

“Not a single pretty woman,” he remarked at last to his friend; an observation which Littlemore, sitting in his place and staring with a bored expression at the new-looking curtain, received in perfect silence. He rarely indulged in these optical excursions; he had been a great deal in Paris and had ceased to vibrate more than a few times a day; he believed the French capital could have no more surprises for him, though it had had a good many in former days. Waterville was still in the stage of surprise; he suddenly expressed this emotion. “By Jove, I beg your pardon, I beg *her* pardon! There *is* after all a woman who may be called”—he paused a little, inspecting her—“an approach to a beauty!”

“How near an approach?” Littlemore responded.

“An unusual kind—an indescribable kind.” Littlemore was not heeding his answer, but presently heard himself appealed to. “I say, I wish very much you'd do me a favour.”

“I did you a favour in coming here,” said Littlemore. “It's insufferably hot, and the play's like a dinner that has been dressed by the kitchen-maid. The actors are all *doublures*.”

“It's simply to answer me this: *is she* respectable now?” Waterville demanded, inattentive to his friend's epigram.

Littlemore gave a groan, without turning his head. “You're always wanting to know if they're respectable. What on earth can it matter?”

“I've made such mistakes—I've lost all confidence,” said poor Waterville, to whom European civilisation had not ceased to be a novelty and who during the last six months had found himself confronted with problems for which his training had little prepared him. Whenever he encountered a very nice-looking woman he was sure to discover that she belonged to the class represented by the heroine of M. Augier's drama; and whenever his

attention rested upon a person of a florid style of attraction there was the strongest probability that she would turn out a countess. The countesses often looked so unnaturally cheap and the others unnaturally expensive. Littlemore distinguished at a glance; he never made mistakes.

“Simply for looking at them it doesn’t matter, I suppose,” Waterville ingenuously sighed.

“You stare at them all alike,” Littlemore went on, still without moving; “except indeed when I tell you they *aren’t* decent—then your eyes, my dear man, grow as large as saucers.”

“If your judgement’s against this lady I promise never to look at her again. I mean the one in the third box from the passage, in white, with the red flowers,” the younger man said as Littlemore slowly rose and stood beside him. “The fellow with her is leaning forward. It’s he who makes me doubt. Will you have the glass?”

Littlemore looked about him without concentration. “No, thank you, I can see without staring. The young man’s a very good young man,” he presently reported.

“Very indeed, but he’s several years younger than she. Wait till she turns her head.”

She turned it very soon—she apparently had been speaking to the *ouvreuse*, at the door of the box—and presented her face to the public; a fair harmonious face, with smiling eyes, smiling lips, a low brow ornamented with delicate rings of black hair and ears marked by the sparkle of diamonds sufficiently large to be seen across the Théâtre Français. Littlemore looked at her, then started and held out his hand. “The glass, please!”

“Do you know her?” his friend asked as he directed the little instrument.

He made no answer; he only looked in silence; then he gave the glass back. “No, she’s not respectable.” And he dropped again into his seat. As Waterville remained standing he added: “Please sit down; I think she saw me.”

“Don’t you want her to see you?” pursued the interrogator, promptly complying.

Littlemore hesitated. “I don’t want to spoil her game.” By this time the *entr’acte* was at an end and the curtain going up.

It had been Waterville’s idea that they should go to the theatre. Littlemore, who was always for not going anywhere, had recommended that, the evening being lovely, they should simply sit and smoke at the door of the Grand Café in comparatively pensive isolation. Nevertheless Waterville enjoyed the second act even less than he had done the first, which he thought heavy. He began to wonder whether his companion would wish to stay to the end; a useless line of speculation, for now that he had got to the theatre Littlemore’s aversion to change would certainly keep him from moving. Waterville also wondered what he knew about the lady in the box. Once or twice he glanced at his friend, and then was sure the latter wasn’t following the play. He was thinking of something else; he was thinking of that woman. When the curtain fell again he sat in his place, making way for his neighbours, as usual, to edge past him, grinding his knees—his legs were long—with their own protuberances. When the two men were alone in the stalls he spoke. “I think I should like to see her again, after all.” He spoke in fact as if Waterville might have known all about her. Waterville was conscious of not doing so, but as there was evidently a good deal to know he recognised he should lose nothing by exerting some art. So for the moment he asked no question; he only said: “Well, here’s the glass.”

Littlemore gave him a glance of good-natured compassion. “I don’t mean I want to keep letting *that* off at her. I mean I should rather like to see her as I used to.”

“And how did you use to?” asked Waterville with no art now.

“On the back piazza at San Pablo.” And as his comrade, in receipt of this information, only stared he went on: “Come out where we can breathe and I’ll tell you more.”

They made their way to the low and narrow door, more worthy of a rabbit-hutch than of a great theatre, by which you pass from the stalls of the Comédie to the lobby, and as Littlemore went by first his ingenuous friend behind him could see that he glanced up at the box in the occupants of which they were interested. The more interesting of these had her back to the house; she was apparently just leaving the box, after her companion; but as she hadn’t put on her mantle it was evident they weren’t quitting the theatre. Littlemore’s pursuit of fresh air didn’t lead him to the street; he had passed his arm into Waterville’s and when they reached the fine frigid staircase that ascends to the public foyer he began silently to mount it. Littlemore was averse to active pleasures, but his friend reflected that now at least he had launched himself—he was going to look for the lady whom, with a monosyllable, he appeared to have classified. The young man resigned himself for the moment to asking no questions, and the two strolled together into the shining saloon where Houdon’s admirable statue of Voltaire, reflected in a dozen mirrors, is gaped at by visitors too obviously less acute than the genius expressed in those living features. Waterville knew that Voltaire was witty; he had read *Candide* and had already had several opportunities of appreciating the statue. The foyer was not crowded; only a dozen groups were scattered over the polished floor, several others having passed out to the balcony which overhangs the square of the Palais Royal. The windows were open, the myriad lights of Paris made the dull summer evening look like an anniversary or a revolution; a murmur of voices seemed to come up, and even in the foyer one heard the slow click of the horses and the rumble of the crookedly-driven fiacres on the hard smooth street-surface. A lady and a gentleman, their backs to our friends, stood before the image of the *genius loci*; the lady was dressed in white, including a white bonnet. Littlemore felt in the scene, as so many persons feel it just there, something of the finest essence of France, and he gave a significant laugh.

“It seems comical to see her here! The last time was in New Mexico.”

“In New Mexico?”

“At San Pablo.”

“Oh on the back piazza,” said Waterville, putting things together. He had not been aware of the position of San Pablo, for if on the occasion of his lately being appointed to a subordinate diplomatic post in London he had been paying a good deal of attention to European geography he had rather neglected that of his own country.

They hadn’t spoken loud and weren’t standing near her, but suddenly, as if she had heard them, the lady in white turned round. Her eye caught Waterville’s first, and in that glance he saw that if she was aware of something it wasn’t because they had exceeded but because she had extraordinary quickness of ear. There was no prompt recognition in it—none even when it rested lightly on George Littlemore. But recognition flashed out a moment later, accompanied with a delicate increase of colour and a quick extension of her settled smile. She had turned completely round; she stood there in sudden friendliness, with parted lips; with a hand, gloved to the elbow, almost imperiously offered. She was even prettier than at a distance. “Well, I declare!” she cried; so loud that every one in the room appeared to feel personally addressed. Waterville was surprised; he hadn’t been prepared, even after the mention of the back piazza, to find her of so unmistakable race. Her companion turned round as she spoke; he was a fresh lean young man in evening dress; he kept his hands in his pockets; Waterville was sure he was of race quite other. He looked very grave—for such a fair festive young man—and gave our two friends, though his height was not superior to

theirs, a narrow vertical glance. Then he turned back to the statue of Voltaire as if it had been among his premonitions, after all, that the lady he was attending would recognise people he didn't know and didn't even perhaps care to know. This possibly confirmed slightly Littlemore's assertion that she wasn't respectable. The young man was that at least; consummately so. "Where in the world did you drop from?" the lady inquired.

"I've been here for some time," Littlemore said, going forward rather deliberately to shake hands with her. He took it alertly, yet was more serious than she, keeping his eye on her own as if she had been just a trifle dangerous. Such was the manner in which a duly discreet person would have approached some glossy graceful animal which had an occasional trick of biting.

"Here in Paris, do you mean?"

"No; here and there—in Europe generally."

"Well, it's queer I haven't met you."

"Better late than never!" said Littlemore. His smile was a little fixed.

"Well, you look very natural," the lady went on.

"So do you—or very charming—it's the same thing," he answered, laughing and evidently wishing to be easy. It was as if, face to face and after a considerable lapse of time, he had found her more imposing than he expected when, in the stalls below, he determined to come and meet her. As he spoke the young man who was with her gave up his inspection of Voltaire and faced about listlessly, without looking at his companion's acquaintances.

"I want to introduce you to my friend," she went on. "Sir Arthur Demesne—Mr. Littlemore. Mr. Littlemore—Sir Arthur Demesne. Sir Arthur Demesne's an Englishman—Mr. Littlemore's a countryman of mine, an old friend. I haven't seen him for years. For how long? Don't let's count—I wonder you knew me," she continued, addressing this recovered property. "I'm fearfully changed." All this was said in a clear gay tone which was the more audible as she spoke with an odd sociable slowness. The two men, to do honour to her introduction, silently exchanged a glance; the Englishman perhaps coloured a little. He was very conscious of his companion. "I haven't introduced you to many people yet," she dropped.

"Oh I don't mind," said Sir Arthur Demesne.

"Well, it's queer to see you!" she pursued, with her charming eyes still on Littlemore. "You've changed, too—I can see that."

"Not where you're concerned."

"That's what I want to find out. Why don't you introduce your friend? I see he's dying to know me!" And then when he had proceeded with this ceremony, which he reduced to its simplest elements, merely glancing at Rupert Waterville and murmuring his name, "Ah, you don't tell him who *I* am!" the lady cried while the young secretary made her a formal salutation. "I hope you haven't forgotten!"

Littlemore showed her a face intended to express more than what he had hitherto permitted himself; if its meaning had been put into words these would have been: "Ah, but by which name?"

She answered the unspoken question, putting out her hand as she had done to Littlemore. "Happy to make your acquaintance, Mr. Waterville. I'm Mrs. Headway—perhaps you've heard of me. If you've ever been in America you must have heard of

me. Not so much in New York, but in the Western cities. You *are* an American? Well then we're all compatriots—except Sir Arthur Demesne. Let me introduce you to Sir Arthur. Sir Arthur Demesne, Mr. Waterville—Mr. Waterville, Sir Arthur Demesne. Sir Arthur Demesne's a member of Parliament: don't he look young?" She waited for no judgement on this appeal, but suddenly made another as she moved her bracelets back over long loose gloves. "Well, Mr. Littlemore, what are you thinking of?"

He was thinking that he must indeed have forgotten her name, for the one she had pronounced awakened no association. But he could hardly tell her that. "I'm thinking of San Pablo."

"The back piazza at my sister's? Oh don't; it was too horrid. She has left now. I believe every one has left." The member of Parliament drew out his watch with the air of a man who could take no part in these domestic reminiscences; he appeared to combine a generic self-possession with a degree of individual shyness. He said something about its being time they should go back to their seats, but Mrs. Headway paid no attention to the remark. Waterville wished her to linger and indeed felt almost as free to examine her as he had to walk, in a different spirit, round the statue of the author of *Candide*. Her low-growing hair, with its fine dense undulations, was of a shade of blackness that has now become rare; her complexion had the bloom of a white flower; her profile, when she turned her head, was as pure and fine as the outline of a cameo. "You know this is their first theatre," she continued, as if to rise to the occasion. "And this is Voltaire, the celebrated writer."

"I'm devoted to the Comédie Française"—Waterville rose as well.

"Dreadfully bad house; we didn't hear a word," said Sir Arthur Demesne.

"Ah, yes, the sad far boxes!" murmured Waterville.

"I'm rather disappointed," Mrs. Headway went on. "But I want to see what becomes of that woman."

"Doña Clorinde? Oh I suppose they'll shoot her. They generally shoot the women in French plays," Littlemore said.

"It will remind me of San Pablo!" cried Mrs. Headway.

"Ah, at San Pablo the women did the shooting."

"They don't seem to have killed *you*!" she returned archly.

"No, but I'm riddled with wounds."

"Well, this is very remarkable"—the lady reverted to Houdon's statue. "It's beautifully modelled."

"You're perhaps reading M. de Voltaire," Littlemore suggested.

"No; but I've purchased his works."

"They're not proper reading for ladies," said the young Englishman severely, offering his arm to his charge.

"Ah, you might have told me before I had bought them!" she exclaimed in exaggerated dismay.

"I couldn't imagine you'd buy a hundred and fifty volumes."

"A hundred and fifty? I've only bought two."

"Perhaps two won't hurt you!" Littlemore hopefully contributed.

She darted him a reproachful ray. "I know what you mean—that I'm too bad already! Well, bad as I am you must come and see me." And she threw him the name of her hotel as she walked away with her Englishman. Waterville looked after the latter with a certain interest; he had heard of him in London and had seen his portrait in *Vanity Fair*.

It was not yet time to go down, in spite of this gentleman's saying so, and Littlemore and his friend passed out to the balcony of the foyer. "Headway—Headway? Where the deuce did she get that name?" Littlemore asked as they looked down into the flaring dusk.

"From her husband I suppose," his friend suggested.

"From her husband? From which? The last was named Beck."

"How many has she had?" the younger man inquired, anxious to hear how it was Mrs. Headway wasn't respectable.

"I haven't the least idea. But it wouldn't be difficult to find out, as I believe they're all living. She was Mrs. Beck—Nancy Beck—when I knew her."

"Nancy Beck!" cried Waterville, aghast. He was thinking of her delicate profile, like that of a pretty Roman empress. There was a great deal to be explained.

Littlemore explained it in a few words before they returned to their places, admitting indeed that he wasn't yet able to clear up her present appearance. She was a memory of his Western days; he had seen her last some six years before. He had known her very well and in several places; the circle of her activity was chiefly the South-west. This activity had been during that time of a vague character, except in the sense that it was exclusively social. She was supposed to have a husband, one Philadelphia Beck, the editor of a Democratic newspaper, the *Dakota Sentinel*; but Littlemore had never seen him—the pair were living apart—and it had been the impression at San Pablo that matrimony, for Mr. and Mrs. Beck, was about played out. He remembered now to have heard afterwards that she was getting a divorce. She got divorces very easily, she was so taking in court. She had got one or two before from a man whose name he couldn't remember, and there was a legend that even these were not the first. She had been enormously divorced! When he first met her in California she called herself Mrs. Grenville, which he had been given to understand was not an appellation acquired by matrimony, but her parental name, resumed after the dissolution of an unfortunate union. She had had these episodes—her unions were all unfortunate—and had borne half-a-dozen names. She was a charming woman, especially for New Mexico; but she had been divorced too often—it was a tax on one's credulity: she must have repudiated more husbands than she had married.

At San Pablo she was staying with her sister, whose actual spouse—she too had been divorced—the principal man of the place, kept a bank (with the aid of a six-shooter), and who had never suffered Nancy to want for a home during her unattached periods. Nancy had begun very young; she must be about thirty-seven to-day. That was all he meant by her not being respectable. Her chronology was rather mixed; her sister at least had once told him that there was one winter when she didn't know herself who was Nancy's husband. She had gone in mainly for editors—she esteemed the journalistic profession. They must all have been dreadful ruffians, for her own amiability was manifest. It was well known that whatever she had done she had done in self-defence. In fine she had done things—that was the main point now. She had been as pretty as could still be seen, and as good-natured and as clever as could likewise be yet measured; she had been quite the best company in those parts. She was a genuine product of the wild West—a flower of the Pacific slope; ignorant, absurd, crude, but full of pluck and spirit, of natural intelligence and of a certain intermittent haphazard felicity of impulse. She used to sigh that she only wanted a chance—apparently she had

found that now. At one time, without her, he didn't see how he could have put up with the life. He had started a cattle-ranch, to which San Pablo was the nearest town, and he used to ride over to see her. Sometimes he stayed there a week; then he went to see her every evening. It was infernally hot; they used to sit on the back piazza. She was always as attractive and very nearly as well-dressed as they had just beheld her. As far as appearance went she might have been transplanted at an hour's notice from that dusty old settlement to the city by the Seine.

"Some of those barbaric women are wonderful," Littlemore said. "Like her, they only want a chance."

He hadn't been in love with her—there never was anything of that sort between them. There might have been of course, but as happened there wasn't. Headway would have been then the successor of Beck; perhaps there had been others between. She was in no sort of "society"; she only had a local reputation ("the well-known Texan belle," the newspapers called her—the other editors, to whom she wasn't married), though indeed in that spacious civilisation the locality was large. She knew nothing of the East and to the best of his belief at that period had never seen New York. Various things might have happened in those six years, however; no doubt she had "come up." The West was sending us everything (Littlemore spoke as a New Yorker); no doubt it would send us at last our brilliant women. The well-known Texan belle used to look quite over the head of New York; even in those days she thought and talked of Paris, which there was no prospect of her knowing: that was the way she had got on in New Mexico. She had had her ambition, her presentiments; she had known she was meant for better things. Even at San Pablo she had prefigured her member of Parliament; every now and then a wandering Englishman came within her range. They weren't all Sir Arthurs, like her present acquisition, but they were usually a change from the editors. What she was doing with her present acquisition Littlemore was curious to see. She was certainly—if he had any capacity for that state of mind, which was not too apparent—making the gentleman happy. She looked very splendid; Headway had probably made a "pile," an achievement not to be imputed to any of the others. She didn't accept money—he was sure she didn't accept money. With all of which, on their way back to their seats, Littlemore, whose tone had been humorous, but with that strain of the pensive which is inseparable from retrospect, suddenly burst into audible laughter. "The modelling of statues and the works of Voltaire!" he broke out, recurring to two or three things she had said. "It's touching to hear her attempt those flights, for in New Mexico she knew nothing about modelling."

"She didn't strike me as affected," Waterville demurred, feeling a vague impulse to view her in becoming lights.

"Oh no; she's only—as she says—fearfully changed."

They were in their places before the play went on again, and they both gave another glance at Mrs. Headway's box. She now was leaning back behind the slow movements of her fan and evidently watching Littlemore as if she had waited to see him come in. Sir Arthur Demesne sat beside her, rather gloomily resting a round pink chin upon a high stiff collar; neither of them seemed to speak.

"Are you sure she makes him happy?" Waterville asked.

"Yes—that's the way those people show it."

"But does she go about alone with him at that rate? Where's her husband?"

"I suppose she has divorced him."

“And does she want to marry the Baronet?” Waterville went on as if his companion was omniscient.

It amused Littlemore for the moment to appear so. “He wants to marry *her*, I guess.”

“And be divorced like the others?”

“Oh no; this time she has got what she wants,” said Littlemore as the curtain rose.

He suffered three days to elapse before he called at the Hôtel Meurice, which she had designated, and we may occupy this interval in adding a few words to the story we have taken from his lips. George Littlemore’s residence in the Far West had been of the usual tentative sort—he had gone there to replenish a pocket depleted by youthful extravagance. His first attempts had failed; the days had pretty well passed when a fortune was to be picked up even by a young man who might be supposed to have inherited from an honourable father, lately removed, some of those fine abilities, mainly dedicated to the importation of tea, to which the elder Mr. Littlemore was indebted for the power of leaving his son markedly at ease. Littlemore had dissipated his patrimony and was not quick to discover his talents, which, restricted chiefly to an unlimited faculty for smoking and horse-breaking, appeared to lie in the direction of none of the professions called liberal. He had been sent to Harvard to have them cultivated, but here they had taken such a form that repression had been found more necessary than stimulus—repression embodied in an occasional sojourn in one of the lovely villages of the Connecticut Valley. Rustication saved him perhaps in the sense that it detached him; it undermined his ambitions, which had been foolish. At the age of thirty he had mastered none of the useful arts, unless we include in the number the great art of indifference. But he was roused from too consistent an application of it by a stroke of good luck. To oblige a luckless friend, even in more pressing need of cash than himself, he had purchased for a moderate sum—the proceeds of a successful game of poker—a share in a silver-mine which the disposer of it, with unusual candour, admitted to be destitute of metal. Littlemore looked into his mine and recognised the truth of the contention, which, however, was demolished some two years later by a sudden revival of curiosity on the part of one of the other shareholders. This gentleman, convinced that a silver-mine without silver is as rare as an effect without a cause, discovered the sparkle of the precious element deep down in the reasons of things. The discovery was agreeable to Littlemore, and was the beginning of a fortune which, through several dull years and in many rough places, he had repeatedly despaired of, and which a man whose purpose had never been very keen, nor his aim very high, didn’t perhaps altogether deserve.

It was before he saw himself successful that he had made the acquaintance of the lady now established at the Hôtel Meurice. To-day he owned the largest share in his mine, which had remained perversely productive and enabled him to buy, among other things, in Montana, a cattle-ranch of higher type than the dry acres near San Pablo. Ranches and mines encourage security, and the consciousness of not having to watch the sources of his income too anxiously—a tax on ideal detachment which spoils the idea—now added itself to his usual coolness. It was not that this same coolness hadn’t been considerably tried. To take only one—the principal—instance: he had lost his wife after only a twelvemonth of marriage, some three years before the date at which we meet him. He had been turned thirty-eight when he distinguished and wooed and won an ardent girl of twenty-three, who, like himself, had consulted all the probabilities in expecting a succession of happy years. She had left him a small daughter, now entrusted to the care of his only sister, the wife of an English squire and mistress of a dull park in Hampshire. This lady, Mrs. Dolphin by name, had captivated her landowner during a journey in which Mr. Dolphin had promised himself to examine the institutions of the United States. The institution on which he had reported most favourably

was the pretty girls of the larger towns, and he had returned to New York a year or two later to marry Miss Littlemore, who, unlike her brother, had not wasted her patrimony. Her sister-in-law, married several years later and coming to Europe on this occasion, had died in London—where she had flattered herself the doctors were infallible—a week after the birth of her little girl; and poor Littlemore, though relinquishing his child for the moment, had lingered on the scene of his deep disconcertment to be within call of the Hampshire nursery. He was a presence to attract admiring attention, especially since his hair and moustache had turned to so fine a silver. Tall and clean-limbed, with a good figure and a bad carriage, he looked capable but indolent, and was exposed to imputations of credit and renown, those attaching to John Gilpin, of which he was far from being either conscious or desirous. His eye was at once keen and quiet, his smile dim and dilatory, but perfectly sincere. His principal occupation to-day was doing nothing, and he did it with a beautiful consistency. This exercise excited real envy on the part of Rupert Waterville, who was ten years younger and who had too many ambitions and anxieties—none of them very important, but making collectively a considerable incubus—to be able to wait for inspiration. He thought of it as the last social grace, he hoped some day to arrive at it; it made a man so independent—he had his resources within his own breast. Littlemore could sit for a whole evening without utterance or movement, smoking cigars and looking absently at his finger-nails. As every one knew him for a good fellow who had made his fortune this free and even surface offered by him to contact couldn't be attributed to stupidity or moroseness. It seemed to imply a fund of reminiscence, an experience of life that had left him hundreds of things to think about. Waterville felt that if he himself could make a good use of these present years and keep a sharp lookout for experience he too at forty-four might have time to look at his finger-nails. He cultivated the conceit that such contemplations—not of course in their literal but in their symbolic intensity—were a sign of a man of the world. Waterville, reckoning possibly without an ungrateful Department of State, also nursed the fond fancy that he had embraced the diplomatic career. He was the junior of the two secretaries who render the *personnel* of the United States Legation in London exceptionally numerous, and was at present enjoying his annual leave of absence. It became a diplomatist to be inscrutable, and though he had by no means, as a whole, taken Littlemore for his model—there were much better ones in the diplomatic body accredited to the Court of Saint James's—he thought the right effect of fine ease suggested when of an evening, in Paris, after one had been asked what one would like to do, one replied that one would like to do nothing, and simply sat for an interminable time in front of the Grand Café on the Boulevard de la Madeleine (one was very fond of cafés) ordering a succession of *demi-tasses*. It was seldom Littlemore cared even to go to the theatre, and the visit to the Comédie Française, which we have described, had been undertaken at Waterville's instance. He had seen *Le Demi-Monde* a few nights before and had been told that *L'Aventurière* would show him a particular treatment of the same subject—the justice to be meted out to compromised women who attempt to thrust themselves into honourable families. It seemed to him that in both of these cases the ladies had deserved their fate, but he wished it might have been brought about by a little less lying on the part of the representatives of honour. Littlemore and he, without being intimate, were very good friends and spent much of their time together. As it turned out Littlemore was grateful for the chance that had led him to a view of this new incarnation of Nancy Beck.

II

His delay in going to see her was nevertheless calculated; there were more reasons for it than we need at once go into. When he did go, however, Mrs. Headway was at home and he was scarce surprised to find Sir Arthur Demesne in her sitting-room. There was something in the air that spoke of the already ample stretch of this gentleman's visit. Littlemore thought

probable that, given the circumstances, he would now bring it to a close; he must have learned from their hostess that this welcomed compatriot was an old and familiar friend. He might of course have definite rights—he had every appearance of it, but the more they were rooted the more gracefully he could afford to waive them. Littlemore made these reflexions while the friend in possession faced him without sign of departure. Mrs. Headway was very gracious—she had ever the manner of having known you a hundred years; she scolded Littlemore extravagantly for not having been to see her sooner, but this was only a form of the gracious. By daylight she looked a little faded, but there was a spirit in her that rivalled the day. She had the best rooms in the hotel and an air of extreme opulence and prosperity; her courier sat outside, in the antechamber, and she evidently knew how to live. She attempted to include Sir Arthur in the conversation, but though the young man remained in his place he failed to grasp the offered perch. He followed but as from the steep bank of the stream, where yet he was evidently not at his ease. The conversation therefore remained superficial—a quality that of old had by no means belonged to Mrs. Headway's interviews with her friends. The Englishman hovered with a distant air which Littlemore at first, with a good deal of private amusement, simply attributed to jealousy.

But after a time Mrs. Headway spoke to the point. "My dear Sir Arthur, I wish very much you'd go."

The member of Parliament got up and took his hat. "I thought I should oblige you by staying."

"To defend me against Mr. Littlemore? I've known him since I was a baby—I know the worst he can do." She fixed her charming smile on her retreating visitor and added with much unexpectedness: "I want to talk to him about my past!"

"That's just what I want to hear," said Sir Arthur, with his hand on the door.

"We're going to talk American; you wouldn't understand us! He speaks in the English style," she explained in her little sufficient way as the Baronet, who announced that at all events he would come back in the evening, let himself out.

"He doesn't know about your past?" Littlemore inquired, trying not to make the question sound impertinent.

"Oh yes; I've told him everything; but he doesn't understand. One has to hold an Englishman by the head, you know, and kind of force it down. He has never heard of a woman being—" But here Mrs. Headway checked herself, while Littlemore filled out the blank. "What are you laughing at? It doesn't matter," she went on; "there are more things in the world than those people have heard of. However, I like them very much; at least I like *him*. He's such a regular gentleman; do you know what I mean? Only, as he stays too long and he ain't amusing, I'm very glad to see you for a change."

"Do you mean I'm not a regular gentleman?" Littlemore asked.

"No indeed; you used to be out there. I think you were the only one—and I hope you are still. That's why I recognised you the other night—I might have cut you, you know."

"You can still, if you like. It's not too late."

"Oh no, that's not what I want. I want you to help me."

"To help you?"

Mrs. Headway fixed her eyes for a moment on the door. "Do you suppose that man is there still?"

“The member of Parliament?”

“No, I mean Max. Max is my courier,” said Mrs. Headway with some impressiveness.

“I haven’t the least idea. I’ll see if you like.”

“No—in that case I should have to give him an order, and I don’t know what in the world to ask him to do. He sits there for hours; with my simple habits I afford him no employment. I’m afraid I’ve no grand imagination.”

“The burden of grandeur!” said Littlemore.

“Oh yes, I’m very grand for clothes and things. But on the whole I like it. I’m only afraid he’ll hear. I talk so very loud. That’s another thing I’m trying to get over.”

“Why do you want to be different?”

“Well, because everything else is so,” Mrs. Headway bravely pleaded. “Did you hear that I had lost my husband?” she went on abruptly.

“Do you mean—a—Mr.—?” and Littlemore paused with an effect that didn’t seem to come home to her.

“I mean Mr. Headway,” she said with dignity. “I’ve been through a good deal since you saw me last: marriage and death and trouble and all sorts of things.”

“You had been through a good deal of marriage before that,” her old friend ventured to observe.

She rested her eyes on him with extravagant intensity and without a change of colour. “Not so much, not so much!—”

“Not so much as might have been thought?”

“Not so much as was reported. I forget whether I was married when I saw you last.”

“It was one of the reports,” said Littlemore. “But I never saw Mr. Beck.”

“You didn’t lose much; he was too mean to live. I’ve done certain things in my life that I’ve never understood; no wonder others can’t do much with them. But that’s all over! Are you sure Max doesn’t hear?” she asked quickly.

“Not at all sure. But if you suspect him of listening at the keyhole I’d send him away.”

“I don’t think he does that. I’m always rushing to the door.”

“Then he doesn’t hear. I had no idea you had so many secrets. When I parted with you Mr. Headway was in the future.”

“Well, now he’s in the past. He was a pleasant man—I can understand my doing that. But he only lived a year. He had neuralgia of the heart; he left me very well off.” She mentioned these various facts as if they were quite of the same order.

“I’m glad to hear *that*. You used to have expensive tastes.”

“I’ve plenty of money,” said Mrs. Headway. “Mr. Headway had property at Denver, which has increased immensely in value. After his death I tried New York. But I don’t take much stock in New York.” Littlemore’s hostess spoke these last words in a tone that reeked of some strong experience. “I mean to live in Europe. I guess I can do with Europe,” she stated; and the manner of it had the touch of prophecy, as the other proposition had had the echo of history.

Littlemore was much struck with all this; he was greatly enlivened by Mrs. Headway. “Then you’re travelling with that young man?” he pursued, with the coolness of a person who wishes to make his entertainment go as far as possible.

She folded her arms as she leaned back in her chair. “Look here, Mr. Littlemore; I’m about as sweet-tempered as I used to be in America, but I know a great deal more. Of course I ain’t travelling with that young man. He’s only a good friend.”

“He isn’t a good lover?” Littlemore ventured.

“Do people travel—publicly—with their lovers? I don’t want you to laugh at me—I want you to help me.” Her appeal might, in its almost childish frankness, have penetrated; she recognised his wisdom. “As I tell you, I’ve taken a great fancy to this grand old Europe; I feel as if I should never go back. But I want to see something of the life. I think it would suit me—if I could get started a little. George Littlemore,” she added in a moment—“I may as well be *real*, for I ain’t at all ashamed. I want to get into society. That’s what I’m after!”

He settled himself in his chair with the feeling of a man who, knowing that he will have to pull, seeks to obtain a certain leverage. It was in a tone of light jocosity, almost of encouragement, however, that he repeated: “Into society? It seems to me you’re in it already, with the big people over here for your adorers.”

“That’s just what I want to know—if they *are* big,” she promptly said. “Is a Baronet much?”

“So they’re apt to think. But I know very little about it.”

“Ain’t you in society yourself?”

“I? Never in the world! Where did you get that idea? I care no more about society than about Max’s buttons.”

Mrs. Headway’s countenance assumed for a moment a look of extreme disappointment, and Littlemore could see that, having heard of his silver-mine and his cattle-ranch, and knowing that he was living in Europe, she had hoped to find him eminent in the world of fashion. But she speedily took heart. “I don’t believe a word of it. You know you’re a real gentleman—you can’t help yourself.”

“I may be a gentleman, but I’ve none of the habits of one.” Littlemore had a pause and then added: “I guess I’ve sat too much on back piazzas.”

She flushed quickly; she instantly understood—understood even more than he had meant to say. But she wished to make use of him, and it was of more importance that she should appear forgiving—especially as she had the happy consciousness of being so—than that she should punish a cruel speech. She would be wise, however, to recognise everything. “That makes no difference—a gentleman’s always a gentleman.”

“Ah, not the way a lady’s always a lady!” he laughed.

“Well, talking of ladies, it’s unnatural that, through your sister, you shouldn’t know something about European society,” said Mrs. Headway.

At the mention of his sister, made with a studied lightness of reference which he caught as it passed, Littlemore was unable to repress a start. “What in the world have you to do with my sister?” he would have liked to say. The introduction of this relative was disagreeable to him; she belonged quite to another order of ideas, and it was out of the question Mrs. Headway should ever make her acquaintance—if this was what, as the latter would have said, she was “after.” But he took advantage of a side issue. “What do you mean by European society? One can’t talk about that. It’s an empty phrase.”

“Well, I mean English society; I mean the society your sister lives in; that’s what I mean,” said his hostess, who was quite prepared to be definite. “I mean the people I saw in London last May—the people I saw at the opera and in the park, the people who go to the Queen’s drawing-rooms. When I was in London I stayed at that hotel on the corner of Piccadilly—the one looking straight down Saint James’s Street—and I spent hours together at the window there looking at the people in the carriages. I had a carriage of my own, and when I wasn’t at my window I was riding all around. I was all alone; I saw every one, but I knew no one—I had no one to tell me. I didn’t know Sir Arthur then—I only met him a month ago at Homburg. He followed me to Paris—that’s how he came to be my guest.” Serenely, prosaically, without a breath of the inflation of vanity, she made this last assertion: it was as if she were used to being followed or as if a gentleman one met at Homburg would inevitably follow. In the same tone she went on: “I attracted a good deal of attention in London—I could easily see that.”

“You’ll do that wherever you go,” Littlemore said—insufficiently enough, as he felt.

“I don’t want to attract so much; I think it’s vulgar.” She spoke as if she liked to use the word. She was evidently open to new sources of pleasure.

“Every one was looking at you the other night at the theatre,” Littlemore continued. “How can you hope to escape notice?”

“I don’t want to escape notice. People have always looked at me and I guess they always will. But there are different ways of being looked at, and I know the way I want. I mean to have it too!” Mrs. Headway prettily shrilled. Yes, she was full of purpose.

He sat there face to face with her and for some time said nothing. He had a mixture of feelings, and the memory of other places, other hours, was stealing over him. There had been of old a very considerable absence of interposing surfaces between these two—he had known her as one knew people only amid the civilisation of big tornadoes and back piazzas. He had liked her extremely in a place where it would have been ridiculous to be difficult to please. But his sense of this fact was somehow connected with other and such now alien facts; his liking for Nancy Beck was an emotion of which the sole setting was a back piazza. She presented herself here on a new basis—she appeared to want to be classified afresh. Littlemore said to himself that this was too much trouble; he had taken her at the great time in that way—he couldn’t begin at this late hour to take her in another way. He asked himself if she were going to be a real bore. It wasn’t easy to suppose her bent on ravage, but she might become tiresome if she were too disposed to be different. It made him rather afraid when she began to talk about European society, about his sister, to pronounce things vulgar. Littlemore was naturally merciful and decently just; but there was in his composition an element of the indolent, the sceptical, perhaps even the brutal, which made him decidedly prefer the simplicity of their former terms of intercourse. He had no particular need to see a woman rise again, as the mystic process was called; he didn’t believe in women’s rising again. He believed in their not going down, thought it perfectly possible and eminently desirable; but held it was much better for society that the divisions, the categories, the differing values, should be kept clear. He didn’t believe in bridging the chasms, in muddling the kinds. In general he didn’t pretend to say what was good for society—society seemed to him rather in a bad way; but he had a conviction on this particular point. Nancy Beck going in for the great prizes, that spectacle might be entertaining for a simple spectator; but it would be a nuisance, an embarrassment, from the moment anything more than detached “fun” should represent his share. He had no wish to be “mean,” but it might be well to show her he wasn’t to be humbugged.

“Oh if there’s anything you want you’ll have it,” he said in answer to her last remark. “You’ve always had what you want.”

“Well, I want something new this time. Does your sister reside in London?”

“My dear lady, what do you know about my sister?” Littlemore asked. “She’s not a woman you’d care in the least for.”

His old friend had a marked pause. “You don’t really respect me!” she then abruptly and rather gaily cried. It had one of her “Texan” effects of drollery; so that, yes, evidently, if he wished to preserve the simplicity of their former intercourse she was willing to humour him.

“Ah, my dear Mrs. Beck—!” he vaguely protested, using her former name quite by accident. At San Pablo he—and apparently she—had never thought whether he respected her or not. That never came up.

“That’s a proof of it—calling me by that hateful name! Don’t you believe I’m married? I haven’t been fortunate in my names,” she pensively added.

“You make it very awkward when you say such mad things. My sister lives most of the year in the country; she’s very simple, rather dull, perhaps a trifle narrow-minded. You’re very clever, very lively, and as large and loose and free as all creation. That’s why I think you wouldn’t like her.”

“You ought to be ashamed to run down your sister!” Mrs. Headway made prompt answer. “You told me once—at San Pablo—that she was the nicest woman you knew. I made a note of that, you see. And you told me she was just my age. So that makes it rather inglorious for you if you won’t introduce me!” With which she gave a laugh that perhaps a little heralded danger. “I’m not in the least afraid of her being dull. It’s all right, it’s just refined and nice, to be dull. I’m ever so much too exciting.”

“You are indeed, ever so much! But nothing is more easy than to know my sister,” said Littlemore, who knew perfectly that what he said was untrue. And then as a diversion from this delicate topic he brought out: “Are you going to marry Sir Arthur?”

“Don’t you think I’ve been married about enough?”

“Possibly; but this is a new line, it would be different. An Englishman—that’s a new sensation.”

“If I *should* marry it would be a European,” she said judiciously.

“Your chance is very good—they’re all marrying Americans.”

“He would have to be some one fine, the man I should marry now. I have a good deal to make up, you know. That’s what I want to learn about Sir Arthur. All this time you haven’t told me.”

“I’ve nothing in the world to tell—I’ve never heard of him. Hasn’t he told you himself?”

“Nothing at all; he’s very modest. He doesn’t brag nor ‘blow’ nor make himself out anything great. That’s what I like him for: I think it’s in such good taste. I do love good taste!” said Mrs. Headway. “But all this time,” she added, “you haven’t told me you’d help me.”

“How can I help you? I’m no one here, you know—I’ve no power.”

“You can help me by not preventing me. I want you to promise not to prevent me.” She continued to give him her charming conscious eyes, which seemed to look far into his own.

“Good Lord, how could I prevent you?”

“Well, I’m not quite sure of how. But you might try.”

“Oh I’m too lazy and too stupid,” Littlemore said.

“Yes,” she replied, musing as she still looked at him. “I think you’re too stupid. But I think you’re also too kind,” she added more graciously. She was almost irresistible when she said such a thing as that.

They talked for a quarter of an hour longer, and at last—as if she had had scruples—she spoke to him of his own marriage, of the death of his wife, matters to which she alluded more felicitously (as he thought) than to some other points. “If you’ve a little girl you ought to be very happy; that’s what I should like to have. Lord, I should make her a nice woman! Not like me—in another style!” When he rose to leave her she made a great point of his coming again—she was to be some weeks longer in Paris. And he must bring Mr. Waterville.

“Your English friend won’t like that—our coming very often,” Littlemore reminded her as he stood with his hand on the door.

But she met this without difficulty. “I don’t know what he has to do with it.”

“Neither do I. Only he must be in love with you.”

“That doesn’t give him any right. Mercy, if I had had to put myself out for all the men that have been in love with me!”

“Of course you’d have had a terrible life. Even doing as you please you’ve had rather an agitated one,” Littlemore pursued. “But your young Englishman’s sentiments appear to give him the right to sit there, after one comes in, looking blighted and bored. That might become very tiresome.”

“The moment he becomes tiresome I send him away. You can trust me for that.”

“Oh it doesn’t matter after all.” Our friend was perfectly conscious that nothing would suit him less than to have undisturbed possession of Mrs. Headway.

She came out with him into the antechamber. Mr. Max, the courier, was fortunately not there. She lingered a little; she appeared to have more to say. “On the contrary he likes you to come,” she then continued; “he wants to study my friends.”

“To study them?”

“He wants to find out about me, and he thinks they may tell him something. Some day he’ll ask you right out ‘What sort of a woman is she anyway?’”

“Hasn’t he found out yet?”

“He doesn’t understand me,” said Mrs. Headway, surveying the front of her dress. “He has never seen any one like me.”

“I should imagine not!”

“So he’ll just try to find out from you.”

“Well then he *shall* find out,” Littlemore returned. “I’ll just tell him you’re the most charming woman in Europe.”

“That ain’t a description! Besides, he knows it. He wants to know if I’m respectable.”

“Why should he fuss about it?” Littlemore asked—not at once.

She grew a little pale; she seemed to be watching his lips. "Well, mind you tell him all right," she went on, with her wonderful gay glare, the strain of which yet brought none of her colour back.

"Respectable? I'll tell him you're adorable!"

She stood a moment longer. "Ah, you're no use!" she rather harshly wailed. And she suddenly turned away and passed back into her sitting-room, with the heavy rustle of her far-trailing skirts.

III

"Elle ne doute de rien!" Littlemore said to himself as he walked away from the hotel; and he repeated the phrase in talking about her to Waterville. "She wants to be right," he added; "but she'll never really succeed. She has begun too late, she'll never get on the true middle of the note. However, she won't know when she's wrong, so it doesn't signify!" And he more or less explained what he meant by this discrimination. She'd remain in certain essentials incurable. She had no delicacy; no discretion; no shading; she was a woman who suddenly said to you, "You don't really respect me!" As if that were a thing for a woman to say!

"It depends upon what she meant by it." Waterville could always imagine alternatives.

"The more she meant by it the less she ought to say it!" Littlemore declared.

But he returned to the Hôtel Meurice and on the next occasion took this companion with him. The secretary of legation, who had not often been in close quarters with pretty women whose respectability, or whose lack of it, was so frankly discussable, was prepared to find the well-known Texan belle a portentous type. He was afraid there might be danger in her, but on the whole he felt armed. The object of his devotion at present was his country, or at least the Department of State; he had no intention of being diverted from that allegiance. Besides, he had his ideal of the attractive woman—a person pitched in a very much lower key than this shining, smiling, rustling, chattering daughter of the Territories. The woman he should care for would have repose, a sense of the private in life, and the implied, even the withheld, in talk; would sometimes let one alone. Mrs. Headway was personal, familiar, intimate, perpetually appealing or accusing, demanding explanations and pledges, saying things one had to answer. All this was accompanied with a hundred smiles and radiations and other natural graces, but the general effect was distinctly fatiguing. She had certainly a great deal of charm, an immense desire to please, and a wonderful collection of dresses and trinkets; but she was eager and clamorous, and it was hard for other people to be put to serve her appetite. If she wanted to get into society there was no reason why those of her visitors who had the luck to be themselves independent, to be themselves placed, and to be themselves by the same token critical, should wish to see her there; for it was this absence of common social encumbrances made her drawing-room attractive. There was no doubt whatever that she was several women in one, and she ought to content herself with that sort of numerical triumph. Littlemore said to Waterville that it was stupid of her to wish to scale the heights; she ought to know how much more she was in her element scouring the plain. She appeared vaguely to irritate him; even her fluttering attempts at self-culture—she had become a great judge of books and pictures and plays, and pronounced off-hand—constituted a vague invocation, an appeal for sympathy onerous to a man who disliked the trouble of revising old decisions consecrated by a certain amount of reminiscence that might be called tender. She exerted, however, effectively enough one of the arts of solicitation—she often startled and surprised. Even Waterville felt a touch of the unexpected, though not indeed an excess of it, to belong to his conception of the woman who should have an ideal repose. Of course there

were two kinds of surprises, and only one of them thoroughly pleasant, though Mrs. Headway dealt impartially in both. She had the sudden delights, the odd exclamations, the queer curiosities of a person who has grown up in a country where everything is new and many things ugly, and who, with a natural turn for the arts and amenities of life, makes a tardy acquaintance with some of the finer usages, the higher pleasures. She was provincial; it was easy to see how she embodied that term; it took no great cleverness. But what was Parisian enough—if to be Parisian was the measure of success—was the way she picked up ideas and took a hint from every circumstance. “Only give me time and I guess I’ll come out all right,” she said to Littlemore, who watched her progress with a mixture of admiration and regret. She delighted to speak of herself as a poor little barbarian grubbing up crumbs of knowledge, and this habit borrowed beautiful relief from her delicate face, her so highly developed dress and the free felicity of her manners.

One of her surprises was, that after that first visit she said no more to Littlemore about Mrs. Dolphin. He did her perhaps the grossest injustice, but he had quite expected her to bring up this lady whenever they met. “If she’ll only leave Agnes alone she may do what she will,” he said to Waterville, expressing his satisfaction. “My sister would never look at her, and it would be very awkward to have to tell her so.” She counted on aid; she made him feel this simply by the way she looked at him; but for the moment she demanded no definite service. She held her tongue but waited, and her patience itself was a deeper admonition. In the way of society, it had to be noted, her privileges were meagre, Sir Arthur Demesne and her two compatriots being, so far as the latter could discover, her only visitors. She might have had other friends, but she held her head very high and liked better to see no one than not to see the best company. She went in, clearly, for producing the effect of being by no means so neglected as fastidious. There were plenty of Americans in Paris, but in this direction she failed to extend her acquaintance; the nice people wouldn’t come to her, and nothing would have induced her to receive the others. She had a perfect and inexorable view of those she wished to avoid. Littlemore expected her every day to ask why he didn’t bring some of his friends—as to which he had his answer ready. It was rather a poor one, for it consisted but of the “academic” assurance that he wished to keep her for himself. She would be sure to retort that this was “too thin,” as indeed it was; yet the days went by without her calling him to account. The little American colony in Paris abounded in amiable women, but there were none to whom Littlemore could make up his mind to say that it would be a favour to him they should call on Mrs. Headway. He shouldn’t like them the better for doing so, and he wished to like those of whom he might ask a favour. Except, therefore, that he occasionally spoke of her as a full-blown flower of the West, still very pretty, but of not at all orthodox salon scent, who had formerly been a great chum of his, she remained unknown in the circles of the Avenue Gabriel and the streets that encircle the Arch of Triumph. To ask the men to go see her without asking the ladies would only accentuate the fact that he didn’t ask the ladies; so he asked no one at all. Besides, it was true—just a little—that he wished to keep her to himself, and he was fatuous enough to believe she really cared more for him than for any outsider. Of course, however, he would never dream of marrying her, whereas her Englishman apparently was capable of that quaintness. She hated her old past; she often made that point, talking of this “dark backward” as if it were an appendage of the same order as a thieving cook or a noisy bedroom or even an inconvenient protrusion of drapery. Therefore, as Littlemore was part of the very air of the previous it might have been supposed she would hate him too and wish to banish him, with all the images he recalled, from her sight. But she made an exception in his favour, and if she disliked their early relations as a chapter of her own history she seemed still to like them as a chapter of his. He felt how she clung to him, how she believed he could make a great and blest difference for

her and in the long run would. It was to the long run that she appeared little by little to have attuned herself.

She succeeded perfectly in maintaining harmony between Sir Arthur Demesne and her American visitors, who spent much less time in her drawing-room. She had easily persuaded him that there were no grounds for jealousy and that they had no wish, as she said, to crowd him out; for it was ridiculous to be jealous of two persons at once, and Rupert Waterville, after he had learned the way to her favour and her fireside, presented himself as often as his original introducer. The two indeed usually came together and they ended by relieving their competitor of a part of the weight of his problem. This amiable and earnest but slightly fatuous young man, who had not yet made up his mind, was sometimes rather oppressed with the magnitude of the undertaking, and when alone with Mrs. Headway occasionally found the tension of his thoughts quite painful. He was very slim and straight and looked taller than his height; he had the prettiest silkiest hair, which waved away from a large white forehead, and he was endowed with a nose of the so-called Roman model. He looked, in spite of these attributes, younger than his years, partly on account of the delicacy of his complexion and the almost child-like candour of his round blue eyes. He was diffident and self-conscious; there were certain letters he couldn't pronounce. At the same time he carried himself as one brought up to fill a considerable place in the world, with whom confidence had become a duty and correctness a habit, and who, though he might occasionally be a little awkward about small things, would be sure to acquit himself honourably in great ones. He was very simple and believed himself very serious; he had the blood of a score of Warwickshire squires in his veins, mingled in the last instance with the somewhat paler fluid still animating the long-necked daughter of a banker who, after promising himself high glories as a father-in-law, had by the turn of events been reduced to looking for them in Sir Baldwin Demesne. The boy who was the only fruit of that gentleman's marriage had come into his title at five years of age; his mother, who was somehow parentally felt to have a second time broken faith with expectation by not having better guarded the neck of her husband, broken in the hunting-field, watched over him with a tenderness that burned as steadily as a candle shaded by a transparent hand. She never admitted even to herself that he was not the cleverest of men; but it took all her own cleverness, which was much greater, to maintain this appearance. Fortunately he wasn't wild, so that he would never marry an actress or a governess, like two or three of the young men who had been at Eton with him. With this ground of nervousness the less Lady Demesne awaited with a proud patience his appointment to some high office. He represented in Parliament the Conservative instincts and vote of a red-roofed market town, and, sending regularly to his bookseller for the new publications on economical subjects, was determined his political development should have a massive statistical basis. He was not conceited; he was only misinformed—misinformed, I mean, about himself. He thought himself essential to the propriety of things—not as an individual, but as an institution. This conviction indeed was too sacred to betray itself by vulgar assumptions. If he was a little man in a big place he never strutted nor talked loud; he merely felt it as a luxury that he had a large social circumference. It was like sleeping in a big bed; practically one didn't toss about the more, but one felt a greater freshness.

He had never seen anything like Mrs. Headway; he hardly knew by what standard to measure her. She was not at all the English lady—not one of those with whom he had been accustomed to converse; yet it was impossible not to make out in her a temper and a tone. He might have been sure she was provincial, but as he was much under her charm he compromised by pronouncing her only foreign. It was of course provincial to be foreign; but this was after all a peculiarity which she shared with a great many nice people. He wasn't wild, and his mother had flattered herself that in this all-important matter he wouldn't be

perverse; yet it was far from regular that he should have taken a fancy to an American widow, five years older than himself, who knew no one and who sometimes didn't appear to understand exactly who he was. Though he believed in no alternative to the dignity of the British consciousness, it was precisely her foreignness that pleased him; she seemed as little as possible of his own race and creed; there wasn't a touch of Warwickshire in her composition. She was like an Hungarian or a Pole, with the difference that he could almost make out her speech. The unfortunate young man was engulfed even while not admitting that he had done more than estimate his distance to the brink. He would love wisely—one might even so love agreeably. He had intelligently arranged his life; he had determined to marry at thirty-two. A long line of ancestors was watching him; he hardly knew what they would think of Mrs. Headway. He hardly knew what he thought himself; the only thing he was absolutely sure of was that she made the time pass as it passed in no other pursuit. That, indeed, rather worried him; he was by no means sure anything so precious should be so little accounted for. There was nothing so to account but the fragments of Mrs. Headway's conversation, the peculiarities of her accent, the sallies of her wit, the audacities of her fancy, the odd echoes of her past. Of course he knew she had had a past; she wasn't a young girl, she was a widow—and widows were essentially the expression of an accomplished fact. He was not jealous of her antecedents, but he would have liked a little to piece them together, and it was here the difficulty occurred. The subject was illumined with fitful flashes, but never placed itself before him as a general picture. He asked her various questions, but her answers were so startling that, like sudden luminous points, they seemed to intensify the darkness round their edges. She had apparently spent her life in a remote province of a barbarous country, but it didn't follow from this that she herself had been low. She had been a lily among thistles, and there was something romantic possibly in the interest taken by a man of his position in a woman of hers. It pleased Sir Arthur to believe he was romantic; that had been the case with several of his ancestors, who supplied a precedent without which he would scarce perhaps have ventured to trust himself. He was the victim of perplexities from which a single spark of direct perception would have saved him. He took everything in the literal sense; a grain of humour or of imagination would have saved him, but such things were never so far from him as when he had begun to stray helplessly in the realm of wonder. He sat there vaguely waiting for something to happen and not committing himself by rash declarations. If he was in love it was in his own way, reflectively, inexpressibly, obstinately. He was waiting for the formula which would justify his conduct and Mrs. Headway's peculiarities. He hardly knew where it would come from; you might have thought from his manner that he would discover it in one of the elaborate *entreés* that were served to the pair when she consented to dine with him at Bignon's or the Café Anglais; or in one of the luxurious band-boxes that arrived from the Rue de la Paix and from which she often lifted the lid in the presence of her admirer. There were moments when he got weary of waiting in vain, and at these moments the arrival of her American friends—he often asked himself why she had so few—seemed to lift the mystery from his shoulders and give him a chance to rest. This apology for a plan she herself might yet scarce contribute to, since she couldn't know how much ground it was expected to cover. She talked about her past because she thought it the best thing to do; she had a shrewd conviction that it was somehow better made use of and confessed to, even in a manner presented or paraded, than caused to stretch behind her as a mere nameless desert. She could at least a little irrigate and plant the waste. She had to have some geography, though the beautiful blank rose-coloured map-spaces of unexplored countries were what she would have preferred. She had no objection to telling fibs, but now that she was taking a new departure wished to indulge only in such as were imperative. She would have been delighted might she have squeezed through with none at all. A few, verily, were indispensable, and we needn't attempt to scan too critically the

more or less adventurous excursions into poetry and fable with which she entertained and mystified Sir Arthur. She knew of course that as a product of fashionable circles she was nowhere, but she might have great success as a child of nature.

IV

Rupert Waterville, in the midst of intercourse in which every one perhaps had a good many mental reserves, never forgot that he was in a representative position, that he was official and responsible; and he asked himself more than once how far he was sure it was right, as they said in Boston, to countenance Mrs. Headway's claim to the character even of the American lady thrown to the surface by the late inordinate spread of excavation. In his own way as puzzled as poor Sir Arthur, he indeed flattered himself he was as particular as any Englishman could be. Suppose that after all this free association the well-known Texan belle should come over to London and ask at the Legation to be presented to the Queen? It would be so awkward to refuse her—of course they would have to refuse her—that he was very careful to make no tacit promises. She might construe anything as a tacit promise—he knew how the smallest gestures of diplomatists were studied and interpreted. It was his effort, therefore, to be really diplomatic in his relations with this attractive but dangerous woman. The party of four used often to dine together—Sir Arthur pushed his confidence so far—and on these occasions their fair friend, availing herself of one of the privileges of a *femme du monde* even at the most expensive restaurant, used to wipe her glasses with her napkin. One evening when after polishing a goblet she held it up to the light, giving it, with her head on one side, the least glimmer of a wink, he noted as he watched her that she looked like a highly modern bacchante. He observed at this moment that the Baronet was gazing at her too, and wondered if the same idea had come to him. He often wondered what the Baronet thought; he had devoted first and last a good deal of attention to the psychology of the English “great land-owning” consciousness. Littlemore, alone, at this moment, was characteristically detached; he never appeared to watch Mrs. Headway, though she so often watched him. Waterville asked himself among other things why Sir Arthur hadn't brought his own friends to see her, for Paris during the several weeks that now elapsed abounded in English visitors. He guessed at her having asked him and his having refused; he would have liked particularly to know if she had asked him. He explained his curiosity to Littlemore, who, however, took very little interest in it. Littlemore expressed nevertheless the conviction that she *would* have asked him; she never would be deterred by false delicacy.

“She has been very delicate with *you*,” Waterville returned to this. “She hasn't been at all pressing of late.”

“It's only because she has given me up. She thinks I'm a brute.”

“I wonder what she thinks of me,” Waterville pensively said.

“Oh, she counts upon you to introduce her to the American Minister at the Court of Saint James's,” Littlemore opined without mercy. “It's lucky for you our representative here's absent.”

“Well, the Minister has settled two or three difficult questions and I suppose can settle this one. I shall do nothing but by the orders of my chief.” He was very fond of alluding to his chief.

“She does me injustice,” Littlemore added in a moment. “I've spoken to several people about her.”

“Oh, but what have you told them?”

“That she lives at the Hôtel Meurice and wants to know nice people.”

“They’re flattered, I suppose, at your thinking them nice, but they don’t go,” said Waterville.

“I spoke of her to Mrs. Bagshaw, and Mrs. Bagshaw has promised to go.”

“Ah,” Waterville murmured; “you don’t call Mrs. Bagshaw nice! Mrs. Headway won’t take up with Mrs. Bagshaw.”

“Well, then, that’s exactly what she wants—to be able to cut some one!”

Waterville had a theory that Sir Arthur was keeping Mrs. Headway as a surprise—he meant perhaps to produce her during the next London season. He presently, however, learned as much about the matter as he could have desired to know. He had once offered to accompany his beautiful compatriot to the Museum of the Luxembourg and tell her a little about the modern French school. She had not examined this collection, in spite of her resolve to see everything remarkable—she carried her “Murray” in her lap even when she went to see the great tailor in the Rue de la Paix, to whom, as she said, she had given no end of points—for she usually went to such places with Sir Arthur, who was indifferent to the modern painters of France. “He says there are much better men in England. I must wait for the Royal Academy next year. He seems to think one can wait for anything, but I’m not so good at waiting as he. I can’t afford to wait—I’ve waited long enough.” So much as this Mrs. Headway said on the occasion of her arranging with Rupert Waterville that they should some day visit the Luxembourg together. She alluded to the Englishman as if he were her husband or her brother, her natural protector and companion.

“I wonder if she knows how that sounds?” Waterville again throbbingly brooded. “I don’t believe she would do it if she knew how it sounds.” And he also drew the moral that when one was a well-known Texan belle there was no end to the things one had to learn: so marked was the difference between being well-known and being well-bred. Clever as she was, Mrs. Headway was right in saying she couldn’t afford to wait. She must learn, she must live quickly. She wrote to Waterville one day to propose that they should go to the Museum on the morrow; Sir Arthur’s mother was in Paris, on her way to Cannes, where she was to spend the winter. She was only passing through, but she would be there three days, and he would naturally give himself up to her. She appeared to have the properest ideas as to what a gentleman would propose to do for his mother. She herself, therefore, should be free, and she named the hour at which she should expect him to call for her. He was punctual to the appointment, and they drove across the river in a large high-hung barouche in which she constantly rolled about Paris. With Mr. Max on the box—the courier sported enormous whiskers—this vehicle had an appearance of great respectability, though Sir Arthur assured her (what she repeated to her other friends) that in London next year they would do the thing much better for her. It struck her other friends, of course, that this backer was prepared to go very far; which on the whole was what Waterville would have expected of him. Littlemore simply remarked that at San Pablo she drove herself about in a ramshackle buggy with muddy wheels and a mule very often in the shafts. Waterville throbbed afresh as he asked himself if the mother of a Tory M.P. would really consent to know her. She must of course be aware that it was a woman who was keeping her son in Paris at a season when English gentlemen were most naturally employed in shooting partridges.

“She’s staying at the Hôtel du Rhin, and I’ve made him feel that he mustn’t leave her while she’s here,” Mrs. Headway said as they drove up the narrow Rue de Seine. “Her name’s Lady Demesne, but her full title’s the Honourable Lady Demesne, as she’s a Baron’s daughter. Her father used to be a banker, but he did something or other for the Government—the Tories, you know they call them—and so he was raised to the peerage. So you see one *can* be raised! She has a lady with her as a companion.” Waterville’s neighbour

gave him this information with a seriousness that made him smile; he tried to measure the degree to which it wouldn't have occurred to her that he didn't know how a Baron's daughter was addressed. In that she was truly provincial; she had a way of exaggerating the value of her intellectual acquisitions and of assuming that others had shared her darkness. He noted, too, that she had ended by suppressing poor Sir Arthur's name altogether and designating him only by a sort of conjugal pronoun. She had been so much and so easily married that she was full of these misleading references to gentlemen.

V

They walked through the gallery of the Luxembourg, and, except that Mrs. Headway directed her beautiful gold *face-à-main* to everything at once and to nothing long enough, talked, as usual, rather too loud and bestowed too much attention on the bad copies and strange copyists that formed a circle round several indifferent pictures, she was an agreeable companion and a grateful recipient of "tips." She was quick to understand, and Waterville was sure that before she left the gallery she had made herself mistress of a new subject and was quite prepared to compare the French school critically with the London exhibitions of the following year. As he had remarked more than once with Littlemore, she did alternate in the rummest stripes. Her conversation, her personality, were full of little joints and seams, all of them very visible, where the old and the new had been pieced and white-threaded together. When they had passed through the different rooms of the palace Mrs. Headway proposed that instead of returning directly they should take a stroll in the adjoining gardens, which she wished very much to see and was sure she should like. She had quite seized the difference between the old Paris and the new, and felt the force of the romantic associations of the Latin quarter as perfectly as if she had enjoyed all the benefits of modern culture. The autumn sun was warm in the alleys and terraces of the Luxembourg; the masses of foliage above them, clipped and squared, rusty with ruddy patches, shed a thick lacework over the white sky, which was streaked with the palest blue. The beds of flowers near the palace were of the vividest yellow and red, and the sunlight rested on the smooth grey walls of those parts of its basement that looked south; in front of which, on the long green benches, a row of brown-cheeked nurses, in white caps and white aprons, sat yielding sustenance to as many bundles of white drapery. There were other white caps wandering in the broad paths, attended by little brown French children; the small straw-seated chairs were piled and stacked in some places and disseminated in others. An old lady in black, with white hair fastened over each of her temples by a large black comb, sat on the edge of a stone bench (too high for her delicate length) motionless, staring straight before her and holding a large door-key; under a tree a priest was reading—you could see his lips move at a distance; a young soldier, dwarfish and red-legged, strolled past with his hands in his pockets, which were very much distended. Waterville sat down with Mrs. Headway on the straw-bottomed chairs and she presently said: "I like this—it's even better than the pictures in the gallery. It's more of a picture."

"Everything in France is a picture—even things that are ugly," Waterville replied. "Everything makes a subject."

"Well, I like France!" she summed up with a small incongruous sigh. Then suddenly, from an impulse more conceivably allied to such a sound, she added: "He asked me to go and see her, but I told him I wouldn't. She may come and see me if she likes." This was so abrupt that Waterville was slightly confounded; then he saw she had returned by a short cut to Sir Arthur Demesne and his honourable mother. Waterville liked to know about other people's affairs, yet didn't like this taste to be imputed to him; and therefore, though much desiring to see how the old lady, as he called her, would treat his companion, he was rather displeased

with the latter for being so confidential. He had never assumed he was so intimate with her as that. Mrs. Headway, however, had a manner of taking intimacy for granted—a manner Sir Arthur's mother at least wouldn't be sure to like. He showed for a little no certainty of what she was talking about, but she scarcely explained. She only went on through untraceable transitions. "The least she can do is to come. I've been very kind to her son. That's not a reason for my going to her—it's a reason for her coming to me. Besides, if she doesn't like what I've done she can leave me alone. I want to get into European society, but I want to do so in my own way. I don't want to run after people; I want them to run after me. I guess they will, some day!" Waterville listened to this with his eyes on the ground; he felt himself turn very red. There was something in such crudities on the part of the ostensibly refined that shocked and mortified him, and Littlemore had been right in speaking of her lack of the *nuance*. She was terribly distinct; her motives, her impulses, her desires glared like the lighted signs of cafés-concerts. She needed to keep on view, to hand about, like a woman with things to sell on an hotel-terrace, her precious intellectual wares. Vehement thought, with Mrs. Headway, was inevitably speech, though speech was not always thought, and now she had suddenly become vehement. "If she does once come—then, ah then, I shall be too perfect with her; I shan't let her go! But she must take the first step. I confess I hope she'll be nice."

"Perhaps she won't," said Waterville perversely.

"Well, I don't care if she ain't. He has never told me anything about her; never a word about any of his own belongings. If I wished I might believe he's ashamed of them."

"I don't think it's that."

"I know it ain't. I know what it is. It's just regular European refinement. He doesn't want to show off; he's too much of a gentleman. He doesn't want to dazzle me—he wants me to like him for himself. Well, I do like him," she added in a moment. "But I shall like him still better if he brings his mother. They shall know that in America."

"Do you think it will make an impression in America?" Waterville amusedly asked.

"It will show I'm visited by the British aristocracy. They won't love that."

"Surely they grudge you no innocent pleasure," the young man laughed.

"They grudged me common politeness—when I was in New York! Did you ever hear how they treated me when I came on from my own section?"

Waterville stared; this episode was quite new to him. His companion had turned toward him; her pretty head was tossed back like a flower in the wind; there was a flush in her cheek, a more questionable charm in her eye. "Ah, my dear New Yorkers, they're incapable of rudeness!" he cried.

"You're one of them, I see. But I don't speak of the men. The men were well enough—though they did allow it."

"Allow what, Mrs. Headway?" He was quite thrillingly in the dark.

She wouldn't answer at once; her eyes, glittering a little, were fixed on memories still too vivid. "What did you hear about me over there? Don't pretend you heard nothing."

He had heard nothing at all; there had not been a word about Mrs. Headway in New York. He couldn't pretend and he was obliged to tell her this. "But I've been away," he added, "and in America I didn't go out. There's nothing to go out for in New York—only insipid boys and girls."

“There are plenty of spicy old women, who settled I was a bad bold thing. They found out I was in the ‘gay’ line. They discovered I was known to the authorities. I *am* very well known all out West—I’m known from Chicago to San Francisco; if not personally, at least by reputation. I’m known to all classes. People can tell you out there. In New York they decided I wasn’t good enough. Not good enough for New York! What do you say to that?”—it rang out for derision. Whether she had struggled with her pride before making her avowal her confidant of this occasion never knew. The strange want of dignity, as he felt, in her grievance seemed to indicate that she had no pride, and yet there was a sore spot, really a deep wound, in her heart which, touched again, renewed its ache. “I took a house for the winter—one of the handsomest houses in the place—but I sat there all alone. They thought me ‘gay,’ *me* gay there on Fifty-Eighth Street without so much as a cat!”

Waterville was embarrassed; diplomatist as he was he hardly knew what line to take. He couldn’t see the need or the propriety of her overflow; though the incident appeared to have been most curious and he was glad to know the facts on the best authority. It was the first he did know of this remarkable woman’s having spent a winter in his native city—which was virtually a proof of her having come and gone in complete obscurity. It was vain for him to pretend he had been a good deal away, for he had been appointed to his post in London only six months before, and Mrs. Headway’s social failure ante-dated that event. In the midst of these reflexions he had an inspiration. He attempted neither to question, to explain nor to apologise; he ventured simply to lay his hand for an instant on her own and to exclaim as gallantly as possible: “I wish *I* had known!”

“I had plenty of men—but men don’t count. If they’re not a positive help they’re a hindrance, so that the more you have the worse it looks. The women simply turned their backs.”

“They were afraid of you—they were jealous,” the young man produced.

“It’s very good of you to try and patch it up; all I know is that not one of them crossed my threshold. No, you needn’t try and tone it down; I know perfectly how the case stands. In New York, if you please, I didn’t go.”

“So much the worse for New York!” cried Waterville, who, as he afterwards said to Littlemore, had got quite worked up.

“And now you know why I want to get into society over here?” She jumped up and stood before him; with a dry hard smile she looked down at him. Her smile itself was an answer to her question; it expressed a sharp vindictive passion. There was an abruptness in her movements which left her companion quite behind; but as he still sat there returning her glance he felt he at last in the light of that smile, the flash of that almost fierce demand, understood Mrs. Headway.

She turned away to walk to the gate of the garden, and he went with her, laughing vaguely and uneasily at her tragic tone. Of course she expected him to serve, all obligingly, all effectively, her rancour; but his female relations, his mother and his sisters, his innumerable cousins, had been a party to the slight she had suffered, and he reflected as he walked along that after all they had been right. They had been right in not going to see a woman who could chatter that way about her social wrongs; whether she were respectable or not they had had the true assurance she’d be vulgar. European society might let her in, but European society had its limpness. New York, Waterville said to himself with a glow of civic pride, was quite capable of taking a higher stand in such a matter than London. They went some distance without speaking; at last he said, expressing honestly the thought at that moment uppermost in his mind: “I hate that phrase, ‘getting into society.’ I don’t think one ought to attribute to

one's self that sort of ambition. One ought to assume that one's *in* the confounded thing—that one *is* society—and to hold that if one has good manners one has, from the social point of view, achieved the great thing. 'The best company's where I am,' any lady or gentleman should feel. The rest can take care of itself."

For a moment she appeared not to understand, then she broke out: "Well, I suppose I haven't good manners; at any rate I'm not satisfied! Of course I don't talk right—I know that very well. But let me get where I want to first—then I'll look after the details. If I once get there I shall be perfect!" she cried with a tremor of passion. They reached the gate of the garden and stood a moment outside, opposite the low arcade of the Odéon, lined with bookstalls, at which Waterville cast a slightly wistful glance, waiting for Mrs. Headway's carriage, which had drawn up at a short distance. The whiskered Max had seated himself within and, on the tense elastic cushions, had fallen into a doze. The carriage got into motion without his waking; he came to his senses only as it stopped again. He started up staring and then without confusion proceeded to descend.

"I've learned it in Italy—they call it the *siesta*," he remarked with an agreeable smile, holding the door open to Mrs. Headway.

"Well, I should think you had and they might!" this lady replied, laughing amicably as she got into the vehicle, where Waterville placed himself beside her. It was not a surprise to him that she spoiled her courier; she naturally would spoil her courier. But civilisation begins at home, he brooded; and the incident threw an ironic light on her desire to get into society. It failed, however, to divert her thoughts from the subject she was discussing with her friend, for as Max ascended the box and the carriage went on its way she threw out another note of defiance. "If once I'm all right over here I guess I can make New York do something! You'll see the way those women will squirm."

Waterville was sure his mother and sisters wouldn't squirm; but he felt afresh, as the carriage rolled back to the Hôtel Meurice, that now he understood Mrs. Headway. As they were about to enter the court of the hotel a closed carriage passed before them, and while a few moments later he helped his companion to alight he saw that Sir Arthur Demesne had stepped from the other vehicle. Sir Arthur perceived Mrs. Headway and instantly gave his hand to a lady seated in the coupé. This lady emerged with a certain slow impressiveness, and as she stood before the door of the hotel—a woman still young and fair, with a good deal of height, gentle, tranquil, plainly dressed, yet distinctly imposing—it came over our young friend that the Tory member had brought *his* principal female relative to call on Nancy Beck. Mrs. Headway's triumph had begun; the dowager Lady Demesne had taken the first step. Waterville wondered whether the ladies in New York, notified by some magnetic wave, were beginning to be convulsed. Mrs. Headway, quickly conscious of what had happened, was neither too prompt to appropriate the visit nor too slow to acknowledge it. She just paused, smiling at Sir Arthur.

"I should like to introduce my mother—she wants very much to know you." He approached Mrs. Headway; the lady had taken his arm. She was at once simple and circumspect; she had every resource of the English matron.

Mrs. Headway, without advancing a step, put out a hand as if to draw her quickly closer. "I declare you're too sweet!" Waterville heard her say.

He was turning away, as his own business was over; but the young Englishman, who had surrendered his companion, not to say his victim, to the embrace, as it might now almost be called, of their hostess, just checked him with a friendly gesture. "I daresay I shan't see you again—I'm going away."

“Good-bye then,” said Waterville. “You return to England?”

“No—I go to Cannes with my mother.”

“You remain at Cannes?”

“Till Christmas very likely.”

The ladies, escorted by Mr. Max, had passed into the hotel, and Waterville presently concluded this exchange. He smiled as he walked away, making it analytically out that poor Sir Arthur had obtained a concession, in the domestic sphere, only at the price of a concession.

The next morning he looked up Littlemore, from whom he had a standing invitation to breakfast, and who, as usual, was smoking a cigar and turning over a dozen newspapers. Littlemore had a large apartment and an accomplished cook; he got up late and wandered about his rooms all the morning, stopping from time to time to look out of his windows, which overhung the Place de la Madeleine. They had not been seated many minutes at breakfast when the visitor mentioned that Mrs. Headway was about to be abandoned by her friend, who was going to Cannes.

But once more he was to feel how little he might ever enlighten this comrade. “He came last night to bid me good-bye,” Littlemore said.

Again Waterville wondered. “Very civil of him, then, all of a sudden.”

“He didn’t come from civility—he came from curiosity. Having dined here he had a pretext for calling.”

“I hope his curiosity was satisfied,” our young man generously dropped.

“Well, I suspect not. He sat here some time, but we talked only about what he didn’t want to know.”

“And what *did* he want to know?”

“Whether I know anything against Nancy Beck.”

Waterville stared. “Did he call her Nancy Beck?”

“We never mentioned her; but I saw what he was after and that he quite yearned to lead up to her. I wouldn’t do it.”

“Ah, poor man!” Waterville sighed.

“I don’t see why you pity him,” said Littlemore. “Mrs. Beck’s admirers were never pitied.”

“Well, of course he wants to marry her.”

“Let him do it then. I’ve nothing to say to it.”

“He believes there’s something about her, somewhere in time or space, that may make a pretty big mouthful.”

“Let him leave it alone then.”

“How can he if he’s really hit?”—Waterville spoke as from sad experience.

“Ah, my dear fellow, he must settle it himself. He has no right at any rate to put me such a question. There was a moment, just as he was going, when he had it on his tongue’s end. He stood there in the doorway, he couldn’t leave me—he was going to plump out with it. He looked at me straight, and I looked straight at him; we remained that way for almost a minute. Then he decided not, on the whole, to risk it and took himself off.”

Waterville assisted at this passage with intense interest. "And if he had asked you, what would you have said?"

"What do you think?"

"Well, I suppose you'd have said that his question wasn't fair."

"That would have been tantamount to admitting the worst."

"Yes," Waterville brooded again, "you couldn't do that. On the other hand if he had put it to you on your honour whether she's a woman to marry it would have been very awkward."

"Awkward enough. Luckily he has no business to put things to me on my honour. Moreover, nothing has passed between us to give him the right to ask me *any* questions about Mrs. Headway. As she's a great friend of mine he can't pretend to expect me to give confidential information."

"You don't think she's a woman to marry, all the same," Waterville returned. "And if a man were to try to corner you on it you might knock him down, but it wouldn't be an answer."

"It would have to serve," said Littlemore. "There are cases where a man must lie nobly," he added.

Waterville looked grave. "What cases?"

"Well, where a woman's honour's at stake."

"I see what you mean. That's of course if he has been himself concerned with her."

"Himself or another. It doesn't matter."

"I think it does matter. I don't like false swearing," said Waterville. "It's a delicate question."

They were interrupted by the arrival of the servant with a second course, and Littlemore gave a laugh as he helped himself. "It would be a lark to see her married to that superior being!"

"It would be a great responsibility."

"Responsibility or not, it would be very amusing."

"Do you mean, then, to give her a leg up?"

"Heaven forbid! But I mean to bet on her."

Waterville gave his companion a serious glance; he thought him strangely superficial. The alternatives looked all formidable, however, and he sighed as he laid down his fork.

VI

The Easter holidays that year were unusually genial; mild watery sunshine assisted the progress of the spring. The high dense hedges, in Warwickshire, were like walls of hawthorn embedded in banks of primrose, and the finest trees in England, springing out of them with a regularity which suggested conservative principles, began more densely and downily to bristle. Rupert Waterville, devoted to his duties and faithful in attendance at the Legation, had had little time to enjoy the rural hospitality that shows the English, as he had promptly learned to say, at their best. Freshly yet not wildly exotic he had repeatedly been invited to grace such scenes, but had had hitherto to practise with reserve the great native art of "staying." He cultivated method and kept the country-houses in reserve; he would take them up in their order, after he should have got a little more used to London. Without hesitation, however, he had accepted the appeal from Longlands; it had come to him in a simple and

familiar note from Lady Demesne, with whom he had no acquaintance. He knew of her return from Cannes, where she had spent the whole winter, for he had seen it related in a Sunday newspaper; yet it was with a certain surprise that he heard from her in these informal terms. "Dear Mr. Waterville, my son tells me you will perhaps be able to come down here on the seventeenth to spend two or three days. If you can it will give us much pleasure. We can promise you the society of your charming countrywoman Mrs. Headway."

He had seen Mrs. Headway; she had written him, a fortnight before from an hotel in Cork Street, to say she had arrived in London for the season and should be happy to see him. He had called on her, trembling with the fear that she would break ground about her presentation at Court; but he was agreeably surprised by her overlooking for the hour this topic. She had spent the winter in Rome, travelling directly from that city to England, with just a little stop in Paris to buy a few clothes. She had taken much satisfaction in Rome, where she had made many friends; she assured him she knew half the Roman nobility. "They're charming people; they've only one fault, they stay too long," she said. And in answer to his always slower process, "I mean when they come to see you," she explained. "They used to come every evening and then wanted to stay till the next day. They were all princes and counts. I used to give them cigars and cocktails—nobody else did. I knew as many people as I wanted," she added in a moment, feeling perhaps again in her visitor the intimate intelligence with which six months before he had listened to her account of her discomfiture in New York. "There were lots of English; I knew all the English and I mean to visit them here. The Americans waited to see what the English would do, so as to do the opposite. Thanks to that I was spared some precious specimens. There are, you know, some fearful ones. Besides, in Rome society doesn't matter if you've a feeling for the ruins and the Campagna; I found I had an immense feeling for the Campagna. I was always mooning round in some damp old temple. It reminded me a good deal of the country round San Pablo—if it hadn't been for the temples. I liked to think it all over when I was riding round; I was always brooding over the past." At this moment, nevertheless, Mrs. Headway had dismissed the past; she was prepared to give herself up wholly to the actual. She wished Waterville to advise her as to how she should live—what she should do. Should she stay at an hotel or should she take a house? She guessed she had better take a house if she could find a nice one. Max wanted to look for one, and she didn't know but what she'd let him; he got her such a nice one in Rome. She said nothing about Sir Arthur Demesne, who, it seemed to Waterville, would have been her natural guide and sponsor; he wondered whether her relations with the Tory member had come to an end. Waterville had met him a couple of times since the opening of Parliament, and they had exchanged twenty words, none of which, however, had had reference to Mrs. Headway. Our young man, the previous autumn, had been recalled to London just after the incident of which he found himself witness in the court of the Hôtel Meurice; and all he knew of its consequence was what he had learned from Littlemore, who, proceeding to America, where he had suddenly been advised of reasons for his spending the winter, passed through the British capital. Littlemore had then reported that Mrs. Headway was enchanted with Lady Demesne and had no words to speak of her kindness and sweetness. "She told me she liked to know her son's friends, and I told her I liked to know my friends' mothers," dear Nancy had reported. "I should be willing to be old if I could be like that," she had added, forgetting for the moment that the crown of the maturer charm dangled before her at a diminishing distance. The mother and son, at any rate, had retired to Cannes together, and at this moment Littlemore had received letters from home which caused him to start for Arizona. Mrs. Headway had accordingly been left to her own devices, and he was afraid she had bored herself, though Mrs. Bagshaw had called upon her. In November she had travelled to Italy, not by way of Cannes.

“What do you suppose she’s up to in Rome?” Waterville had asked; his imagination failing him here, as he was not yet in possession of that passage.

“I haven’t the least idea. And I don’t care!” Littlemore had added in a moment. Before leaving London he had further mentioned that Mrs. Headway, on his going to take leave of her in Paris, had made another and rather an unexpected attack. “About the society business—she said I must really do something: she couldn’t go on that way. And she appealed to me in the name—I don’t think I quite know how to say it.”

“I should be ever so glad if you’d try,” Waterville had earnestly said, constantly reminding himself that Americans in Europe were after all, in a degree, to a man in his position, as the sheep to the shepherd.

“Well, in the name of the affection we had formerly entertained for each other.”

“The affection?”

“So she was good enough to call it. But I deny it all. If one had to have an affection for every woman one used to sit up ‘evenings’ with—!” And Littlemore had paused, not defining the result of such an obligation. Waterville had tried to imagine what it would be; while his friend had embarked for New York without telling him how, in the event, he had resisted Mrs. Headway’s attack.

At Christmas Waterville knew of Sir Arthur’s return to England and believed he also knew that the Baronet hadn’t gone down to Rome. He had a theory that Lady Demesne was a very clever woman—clever enough to make her son do what she preferred and yet also make him think it his own choice. She had been politic, accommodating, on the article of the one civility rendered the American lady; but, having seen and judged that heroine, had determined to stop short and to make her son, if possible, stop. She had been sweet and kind, as Mrs. Headway said, because for the moment this was easiest; but she had paid her last visit on the same occasion as her first. She had been sweet and kind, but she had set her face as a stone, and if poor Nancy, camping on this new field, expected to find any vague promises redeemed, she would taste of the bitterness of shattered hopes. He had made up his mind that, shepherd as he was, and Mrs. Headway one of his sheep, it was none of his present duty to run about after her, especially as she could be trusted not to stray too far. He saw her a second time, and she still said nothing about Sir Arthur. Waterville, who always had a theory, made sure she was watching the clock, that this proved admirer was behind the hour. She was also getting into a house; her courier had found her in Chesterfield Street a little gem, which was to cost her only what jewels cost. After all this our young man caught his breath at Lady Demesne’s note, and he went down to Longlands with much the same impatience with which, in Paris, he would have gone, had he been able, to the first night of a new comedy. It seemed to him that through a sudden stroke of good fortune he had received a *billet d’auteur*.

It was agreeable to him to arrive at an English country-house at the close of the day. He liked the drive from the station in the twilight, the sight of the fields and copses and cottages, vague and lonely in contrast to his definite lighted goal; the sound of the wheels on the long avenue, which turned and wound repeatedly without bringing him to what he reached however at last—the wide grey front with a glow in its scattered windows and a sweep of still firmer gravel up to the door. The front at Longlands, which was of this sober complexion, had a grand pompous air; it was attributed to the genius of Sir Christopher Wren. There were wings curving forward in a semi-circle, with statues placed at intervals on the cornice; so that in the flattering dusk it suggested a great Italian villa dropped by some monstrous hand in an English park. He had taken a late train, which left him but twenty

minutes to dress for dinner. He prided himself considerably on the art of dressing both quickly and well; but this process left him no time to wonder if the apartment to which he had been assigned befitted his diplomatic dignity. On emerging from his room he found there was an ambassador in the house, and this discovery was a check to unrest. He tacitly assumed that he should have had a better room if it hadn't been for the ambassador, who was of course counted first. The large brilliant house gave an impression of the last century and of foreign taste, of light colours, high vaulted ceilings with pale mythological frescoes, gilded doors surmounted by old French panels, faded tapestries and delicate damasks, stores of ancient china among which great jars of pink roses were conspicuous. The company had assembled for dinner in the principal hall, which was animated by a fire of great logs, and the muster was so large that Waterville feared he was last. Lady Demesne gave him a smile and a touch of her hand; she lacked effusiveness and, saying nothing in particular, treated him as if he had been a common guest. He wasn't sure whether he liked or hated that; but these alternatives mattered equally little to his hostess, who looked at her friends as if to verify a catalogue. The master of the house was talking to a lady before the fire; when he caught sight of Waterville across the room he waved "How d'ye do" with an air of being delighted to see him. He had never had that air in Paris, and Waterville had a chance to observe, what he had often heard, to how much greater advantage the English appear in their country-houses. Lady Demesne turned to him again with the sweet vague smile that could somehow present a view without making a point.

"We're waiting for Mrs. Headway."

"Ah, she has arrived?" Waterville had quite forgotten this attraction.

"She came at half-past five. At six she went to dress. She has had two hours."

"Let us hope the results will be proportionate," the young man laughed.

"Oh the results—I don't know!" Lady Demesne murmured without looking at him; and in these simple words he found the confirmation of his theory that she was playing a deep game. He weighed the question of whom he should sit next to at dinner, and hoped, with due deference to Mrs. Headway's charms, that he might abut on a less explored province. The results of a toilet she had protracted through two hours were presently visible. She appeared on the staircase which descended to the hall and which, for three minutes, as she came down rather slowly, facing the people beneath, placed her in considerable relief. Waterville, as he watched her, felt the great importance of the moment for her: it represented her entrance into English society. Well, she entered English society in good shape, as Nancy Beck would have said; with a brave free smile, suggestive of no flutter, on her lips, and with the trophies of the Rue de la Paix trailing behind her. She made a portentous rumour as she moved. People turned their eyes to her; there was soon a perceptible diminution of talk; though talk hadn't been particularly audible. She looked very much alone, and it seemed rather studied of her to come down last, though possibly, before her glass, she had but been unable to please herself. For she evidently felt the importance of the occasion, and Waterville was sure her heart beat fast. She showed immense pluck, however; she smiled more intensely and advanced like a woman acquainted with every social drawback of beauty. She had at any rate the support of these inconveniences; for nothing on this occasion was wanting to her lustre, and the determination to succeed, which might have made her hard, was veiled in the virtuous consciousness that she had neglected nothing. Lady Demesne went forward to meet her; Sir Arthur took no notice of her; and presently Waterville found himself proceeding to dinner with the wife of an ecclesiastic, to whom his hostess had presented him in the desolation of the almost empty hall, when the other couples had flourished away. The rank of this ecclesiastic in the hierarchy he learned early on the morrow; but in the meantime it seemed to

him somehow strange that in England ecclesiastics should have wives. English life even at the end of a year was full of those surprises. The lady, however, was very easily accounted for; she was in no sense a violent exception, and there had been no need of the Reformation and the destruction of a hundred abbeys to produce her. Her name was Mrs. April; she was wrapped in a large lace shawl; to eat her dinner she removed but one glove, and the other gave Waterville an odd impression that the whole repast, in spite of its great completeness, was something of the picnic order.

Mrs. Headway was opposite, at a little distance; she had been taken in, as Waterville learned from his neighbour, by a General, a gentleman with a lean aquiline face and a cultivated whisker, and she had on the other side a smart young man of an identity less definite. Poor Sir Arthur sat between two ladies much older than himself, whose names, redolent of history, Waterville had often heard and had associated with figures more romantic. Mrs. Headway gave her countryman no greeting; she evidently hadn't seen him till they were seated at table, when she stared at him with a violence of surprise that was like the interruption of a lively tune. It was a copious and well-ordered banquet, but as he looked up and down the table he sought to appraise the contributed lustre, the collective *scintillae*, that didn't proceed from silver, porcelain, glass or shining damask. Presently renouncing the effort, however, he became conscious he was judging the affair much more from Mrs. Headway's point of view than from his own. He knew no one but Mrs. April, who, displaying an almost motherly desire to give him information, told him the names of many of their companions; in return for which he explained to her that he was not in that set. Mrs. Headway got on in perfection with her warrior; Waterville noticed her more than he showed; he saw how that officer, evidently a cool hand, was drawing her out. Waterville hoped she would be careful. He was capable, in his way, of frolic thought, and as he compared her with the rest of the company said to himself that she was a very plucky little woman and that her present undertaking had a touch of the heroic. She was alone against many, and her opponents were a serried phalanx; those who were there represented a thousand others. Her type so violated every presumption blooming there that to the eye of the imagination she stood very much on her merits. Such people seemed so completely made up, so unconscious of effort, so surrounded with things to rest upon; the men with their clean complexions, their well-hung chins, their cold pleasant eyes, their shoulders set back, their absence of gesture; the women, several very handsome, half-strangled in strings of pearls, with smooth plain tresses, seeming to look at nothing in particular, supporting silence as if it were as becoming as candle-light, yet talking a little sometimes in fresh rich voices. They were all wrapped in a community of ideas, of traditions; they understood each other's accent, even each other's deviations. Mrs. Headway, with all her prettiness, exceeded these licences. She was foreign, exaggerated, she had too much expression; she might have been engaged for the evening. Waterville remarked, moreover, that English society was always clutching at amusement and that the business was transacted on a cash basis. If Mrs. Headway should sufficiently amuse she would succeed, and her fortune—if fortune there was—would be no hindrance.

In the drawing-room, after dinner, he went up to her, but she gave him no greeting. She only faced him with an expression he had never seen before—a strange bold expression of displeasure. It made her fearfully common. “Why have you come down here?” she asked. “Have you come to watch me?”

Waterville coloured to the roots of his hair. He knew it was terribly little like a diplomatist, but he was unable to control his heat. He was justly shocked, he was angry and in addition he was mystified. “I came because I was asked.”

“Who asked you?”

“The same person who asked you, I suppose—Lady Demesne.”

“She’s an old cat!” And Nancy Beck turned away from him.

He turned from her as well. He didn’t know what he had done to deserve such treatment. It was a complete surprise; he had never seen her like that before. She was a very vulgar woman; that was the way people dealt with each other, he supposed, on hideous back piazzas. He threw himself almost passionately into contact with the others, who all seemed to him, possibly a little by contrast, extraordinarily genial and friendly. He had not, however, the consolation of seeing Mrs. Headway punished for her rudeness—she wasn’t in the least neglected. On the contrary, in the part of the room where she sat the group was denser and repeatedly broke into gusts of unanimous laughter. Yes, if she should amuse them she might doubtless get anywhere and do anything, and evidently she was amusing them.

VII

If she was strange, at any rate he hadn’t come to the end of her strangeness. The next day was a Sunday and uncommonly fine; he was down before breakfast and took a walk in the park, stopping to gaze at the thin-legged deer on the remoter slopes, who reminded him of small pin-cushions turned upside down, and wandering along the edge of a large sheet of ornamental water which had a temple in imitation of that of Vesta on an island in the middle. He thought at this time no more of Mrs. Headway; he only reflected that these stately objects had for at least a hundred years furnished a background to a great deal of heavy history. Further reflexion would perhaps have suggested to him that she might yet become a feature in the record that so spread itself. Two or three ladies failed to appear at breakfast; the well-known Texan belle was one of them.

“She tells me she never leaves her room till noon,” he heard Lady Demesne say to the General, her companion of the previous evening, who had asked about her. “She takes three hours to dress.”

“She’s a monstrous clever woman!” the General declared.

“To do it in three hours?”

“No, I mean the way she keeps her wits about her.”

“Yes; I think she’s very clever,” said Lady Demesne on a system in which our young man flattered himself he saw more meaning than the General could. There was something in this tall straight deliberate woman, who seemed at once to yearn and to retire, that Waterville admired. With her delicate surface, her conventional mildness, he made out she was strong; she had set her patience upon a height and carried it like a diadem. She had the young American little visibly on her mind, but every now and then she indulged in some vague demonstration that showed she had not forgotten him. Sir Arthur himself was apparently in excellent spirits, though he too never bustled nor overflowed; he only went about looking very fresh and fair, as if he took a bath every hour or two, and very secure against the unexpected. Waterville had exchanged even fewer remarks with him than with his mother; but the master of the house had found occasion to say the night before, in the smoking-room, that he was delighted this friend had been able to come, and that if he was fond of real English scenery there were several things about that he should like very much to show him.

“You must give me an hour or two before you go, you know; I really think there are some things you’ll care for.”

Sir Arthur spoke as if Waterville would be very fastidious; he seemed to wish to do the right thing by him. On the Sunday morning after breakfast he inquired if he should care to go to

church; most of the ladies and several of the men were going. "It's just as you please, you know; but there's rather a pretty walk across the fields and a curious little church—they say of King Stephen's time."

Waterville knew what this meant; it was already a treasure. Besides, he liked going to church, above all when he sat in the Squire's pew, which was sometimes as big as a boudoir and all fadedly upholstered to match. So he replied that he should be delighted. Then he added without explaining his reason: "Is Mrs. Headway going?"

"I really don't know," said his host with an abrupt change of tone—as if he inquired into the movements of the housekeeper.

"The English are awfully queer!" Waterville consoled himself with secretly exclaiming; to which wisdom, since his arrival among them, he had had recourse whenever he encountered a gap in the consistency of things. The church was even a rarer treasure than Sir Arthur's description of it, and Waterville felt Mrs. Headway had been a fool not to come. He knew what she was after—she wished to study English life so that she might take possession of it; and to pass in among a hedge of bobbing rustics and sit among the monuments of the old Demesnes would have told her a great deal about English life. If she wished to fortify herself for the struggle she had better come to that old church. When he returned to Longlands—he had walked back across the meadows with the archdeacon's lady, who was a vigorous pedestrian—it wanted half an hour of luncheon and he was unwilling to go indoors. He remembered he had not yet seen the gardens, and wandered away in search of them. They were on a scale that enabled him to find them without difficulty, and they looked as if they had been kept up unremittingly for a century or two. He hadn't advanced very far between their blooming borders when he heard a voice that he recognised, and a moment after, at the turn of an alley, came upon Mrs. Headway, who was attended by the master of the scene. She was bareheaded beneath her parasol, which she flung back, stopping short as she beheld her compatriot.

"Oh it's Mr. Waterville come to spy me out as usual!" It was with this remark she greeted the slightly-embarrassed young man.

"Hallo, you've come home from church?" Sir Arthur said, pulling out his watch.

Waterville was struck with his coolness. He admired it; for, after all, he noted, it must have been disagreeable to him to be interrupted. He felt rather an ass, and wished he had kept hold of Mrs. April, to give him the air of having come for her sake. Mrs. Headway was looking adorably fresh in attire that Waterville, who had his ideas on such matters, felt sure wouldn't be regarded as the proper thing for a Sunday morning in an English country-house: a *négligé* of white flounces and frills interspersed with yellow ribbons—a garment Madame de Pompadour might have sported to receive Louis XV., but probably wouldn't have worn for a public airing. The sight of this costume gave the finishing touch to his impression that she knew on the whole what she was about. She would take a line of her own; she wouldn't be too accommodating. She wouldn't come down to breakfast; she wouldn't go to church; she would wear on Sunday mornings little elaborately informal dresses and look dreadfully un-British and un-Protestant. Perhaps after all this was best. She began to talk with a certain volubility.

"Isn't this too lovely? I walked all the way from the house. I'm not much at walking, but the grass in this place is like a parlour. The whole thing's driving me wild. Sir Arthur, you ought to go and look after the Ambassador; it's shameful the way I've kept you. You don't trouble about the Ambassador? You said just now you had scarcely spoken to him, and you must make that right up. I never saw such a way of neglecting your guests. Is it the usual

style over here? Go and take him out to ride or make him play a game of billiards. Mr. Waterville will take me home; besides, I want to scold him for spying on me.”

Our young man sharply resented her charge. “I had no idea whatever you were here.”

“We weren’t hiding,” said Sir Arthur quietly. “Perhaps you’ll see Mrs. Headway back to the house. I think I ought to look after old Davidoff. I believe luncheon’s at two.”

He left them, and Waterville wandered through the gardens with Mrs. Headway. She at once sought again to learn if he had come there to “dog” her; but this inquiry wasn’t accompanied, to his surprise, with the acrimony she had displayed the night before. He was determined not to let that pass, however; when people had treated him in that way they shouldn’t be allowed to forget it.

“Do you suppose I’m always thinking of you?” he derisively demanded. “You’re out of my mind *sometimes*. I came this way to look at the gardens, and if you hadn’t spoken to me should have passed on.”

Mrs. Headway was perfectly good-natured; she appeared not even to hear his defence. “He has got two other places,” she simply rejoined. “That’s just what I wanted to know.”

He wouldn’t nevertheless be turned from his grievance. That mode of reparation to a person whom you had insulted which consisted in forgetting you had done so was doubtless largely in use on back piazzas; but a creature of any spirit required a different form. “What did you mean last night by accusing me of having come down here to watch you? Pardon me if I tell you I think you grossly rude.” The sting of the imputation lay in the fact that there was a certain amount of truth in it; yet for a moment Mrs. Headway, looking very blank, failed to recover it. “She’s a barbarian, after all,” thought Waterville. “She thinks a woman may slap a man’s face and run away!”

“Oh,” she cried suddenly, “I remember—I was angry with you! I didn’t expect to see you. But I didn’t really mind about it at all. Every now and then I get mad like that and work it off on any one that’s handy. But it’s over in three minutes and I never think of it again. I confess I was mad last night; I could have shot the old woman.”

“The old woman?”

“Sir Arthur’s mother. She has no business here anyway. In this country when the husband dies they’re expected to clear out. She has a house of her own ten miles from here and another in Portman Square; so she ain’t in want of good locations. But she sticks—she sticks to him like a strong plaster. It came over me as I kind of analysed that she didn’t invite me here because she liked me, but because she suspects me. She’s afraid we’ll make a match and she thinks I ain’t good enough for her son. She must think I’m in a great hurry to make him mine. I never went after him, he came after me. I should never have thought of anything if it hadn’t been for him. He began it last summer at Homburg; he wanted to know why I didn’t come to England; he told me I should have great success. He doesn’t know much about it anyway; he hasn’t got much gumption. But he’s a very nice man all the same; it’s very pleasant to see him surrounded by his—” And Mrs. Headway paused a moment, her appreciation ranging: “Surrounded by all his old heirlooms. I like the old place,” she went on; “it’s beautifully mounted; I’m quite satisfied with what I’ve seen. I thought Lady Demesne well-impressed; she left a card on me in London and very soon after wrote to me to ask me here. But I’m very quick; I sometimes see things in a flash. I saw something yesterday when she came to speak to me at dinner-time. She saw I looked pretty and refined, and it made her blue with rage; she hoped I’d be some sort of a horror. I’d like very much to oblige her, but what can one do? Then I saw she had asked me only because he

insisted. He didn't come to see me when I first arrived—he never came near me for ten days. She managed to prevent him; she got him to make some promise. But he changed his mind after a little, and then he had to do something really polite. He called three days in succession, and he made her come. She's one of those women who holds out as long as she can and then seems to give in while she's really fussing more than ever. She hates me as if I knew something about her—when I don't even know what she thinks I've done myself. She's very underhand; she's a regular old cat. When I saw you last night at dinner I thought she had got you here to help her."

"To help her?" Waterville echoed.

"To tell her about me. To give her information she can make use of against me. You may give her all you like!"

Waterville was almost breathless with the attention he had paid this extraordinary burst of confidence, and now he really felt faint. He stopped short; Mrs. Headway went on a few steps and then, stopping too, turned and shone at him in the glow of her egotism. "You're the most unspeakable woman!" he wailed. She seemed to him indeed a barbarian.

She laughed at him—he felt she was laughing at his expression of face—and her laugh rang through the stately gardens. "What sort of a woman's that?"

"You've got no delicacy"—he'd keep it up.

She coloured quickly, though, strange to say, without further irritation. "No delicacy?"

"You ought to keep those things to yourself."

"Oh I know what you mean; I talk about everything. When I'm excited I've got to talk. But I must do things in my own way. I've got plenty of delicacy when people are nice to me. Ask Arthur Demesne if I ain't delicate—ask George Littlemore if I ain't. Don't stand there all day; come on to lunch!" And Mrs. Headway resumed her walk while her companion, having balanced, slowly overtook her. "Wait till I get settled; then I'll be delicate," she pursued. "You can't be delicate when you're trying to save your life. It's very well for *you* to talk, with the whole State Department to back you. Of course I'm excited. I've got right hold of this thing, and I don't mean to let go!" Before they reached the house she let him know why he had been invited to Longlands at the same time as herself. Waterville would have liked to believe his personal attractions sufficiently explained the fact, but she took no account of this supposition. Mrs. Headway preferred to see herself in an element of ingenious machination, where everything that happened referred to her and was aimed at her. Waterville had been asked then because he represented, however modestly, the American Legation, and their host had a friendly desire to make it appear that his pretty American visitor, of whom no one knew anything, was under the protection of that establishment. "It would start me better," the lady in question complacently set forth. "You can't help yourself—you've helped to start me. If he had known the Minister he'd have asked him—or the first secretary. But he don't know them."

They reached the house by the time she had developed her idea, which gave Waterville a pretext more than sufficient for detaining her in the portico. "Do you mean to say Sir Arthur has told you this?" he inquired almost sternly.

"Told me? Of course not! Do you suppose I'd let him take the tone with me that I need any favours? I'd like to hear him tell me I'm in want of assistance!"

"I don't see why he shouldn't—at the pace you go yourself. You say it to every one."

“To every one? I say it to you and to George Littlemore—when I get nervous. I say it to you because I like you, and to him because I’m afraid of him. I’m not in the least afraid of you, by the way. I’m all alone—I haven’t got any one. I must have some comfort, mustn’t I? Sir Arthur scolded me for putting you off last night—he noticed it; and that was what made me guess his idea.”

“I’m much obliged to him,” said Waterville rather bewildered.

“So mind you answer for me. Don’t you want me to take your arm to go in?”

“You’re a most extraordinary combination!” he gave to all the winds as she stood smiling at him.

“Oh come, don’t *you* fall in love with me!” she cried with a laugh; and, without taking his arm, she passed in before him.

That evening, before he went to dress for dinner, he wandered into the library, where he felt certain he should find some superior bindings. There was no one in the room and he spent a happy half-hour among treasures of old reading and triumphs of old morocco. He had a great esteem for good literature, he held that it should have handsome covers. The daylight had begun to wane, but whenever, in the rich-looking dimness, he made out the glimmer of a well-gilded back, he took down the volume and carried it to one of the deep-set windows. He had just finished the inspection of a delightfully fragrant folio, and was about to carry it back to its niche, when he found himself face to face with Lady Demesne. He was sharply startled, for her tall slim figure, her preserved fairness, which looked white in the high brown room, and the air of serious intention with which she presented herself, all gave something spectral to her presence. He saw her countenance dimly light, however, and heard her say with the vague despair of her neutrality: “Are you looking at our books? I’m afraid they’re rather dull.”

“Dull? Why they’re as bright as the day they were bound.” And he turned on her the glittering panels of his folio.

“I’m afraid I haven’t looked at them for a long time,” she murmured, going nearer to the window, where she stood looking out. Beyond the clear pane the park stretched away, the menace of night already mantling the great limbs of the oaks. The place appeared cold and empty, and the trees had an air of conscious importance, as if Nature herself had been bribed somehow to take the side of county families. Her ladyship was no easy person for talk; spontaneity had never come to her, and to express herself might have been for her modesty like some act of undressing in public. Her very simplicity was conventional, though it was rather a noble convention. You might have pitied her for the sense of her living tied so tight, with consequent moral cramps, to certain rigid ideals. This made her at times seem tired, like a person who had undertaken too much. She said nothing for a moment, and there was an appearance of design in her silence, as if she wished to let him know she had appealed to him without the trouble of announcing it. She had been accustomed to expect people would suppose things, to save her questions and explanations. Waterville made some haphazard remark about the beauty of the evening—in point of fact the weather had changed for the worse—to which she vouchsafed no reply. But she presently said with her usual gentleness: “I hoped I should find you here—I should like to ask you something.”

“Anything I can tell you—I shall be delighted!” the young man declared.

She gave him a pleading look that seemed to say: “Please be very simple—very simple indeed.” Then she glanced about her as if there had been other people in the room; she didn’t wish to appear closeted with him or to have come on purpose. There she was at any rate, and

she proceeded. "When my son told me he should ask you to come down I was very glad. I mean of course we were delighted—" And she paused a moment. But she next went on: "I want to ask you about Mrs. Headway."

"Ah, here it is!" cried Waterville within himself. But he could show no wincing. "Ah yes, I see!"

"Do you mind my asking you? I hope you don't mind. I haven't any one else to ask."

"Your son knows her much better than I do." He said this without intention of malice, simply to escape from the difficulties of the situation, but after he had spoken was almost frightened by his mocking sound.

"I don't think he knows her. She knows *him*—which is very different. When I ask him about her he merely tells me she's fascinating. She *is* fascinating," said her ladyship with inimitable dryness.

"So I think, myself. I like her very much," Waterville returned cheerfully.

"You're in all the better position to speak of her then."

"To speak well of her," the young man smiled.

"Of course—if you can. I should be delighted to hear you do that. That's what I wish—to hear some good of her."

It might have seemed after this that nothing could have remained but for our friend to break out in categorical praise of his fellow guest; but he was no more to be tempted into that danger than into another. "I can only say I like her," he repeated. "She has been very kind to me."

"Every one seems to like her," said Lady Demesne with an unstudied effect of pathos. "She's certainly very amusing."

"She's very good-natured. I think she has no end of good intentions."

"What do you mean by good intentions?" asked Lady Demesne very sweetly.

"Well, it strikes me she wants to be friendly and pleasant."

"Indeed she does! But of course you have to defend her. She's your countrywoman."

"To defend her I must wait till she's attacked," Waterville laughed.

"That's very true. I needn't call your attention to the fact that I'm not attacking her," his hostess observed. "I should never attack a person staying in this house. I only want to know something about her, and if you can't tell me perhaps at least you can mention some one who will."

"She'll tell you herself. Tell you by the hour!"

"What she has told my son? I shouldn't understand it. My son doesn't understand it." She had a full pause, a profusion of patience; then she resumed disappointedly: "It's very strange. I rather hoped you might explain it."

He turned the case over. "I'm afraid I can't explain Mrs. Headway," he concluded.

"I see you admit she's very peculiar."

Even to this, however, he hesitated to commit himself. "It's too great a responsibility to answer you." He allowed he was very disobliging; he knew exactly what Lady Demesne wished him to say. He was unprepared to blight the reputation of Mrs. Headway to accommodate her; and yet, with his cultivated imagination, he could enter perfectly into the

feelings of this tender formal serious woman who—it was easy to see—had looked for her own happiness in the observance of duty and in extreme constancy to two or three objects of devotion chosen once for all. She must indeed have had a conception of life in the light of which Nancy Beck would show both for displeasing and for dangerous. But he presently became aware she had taken his last words as a concession in which she might find help.

“You know why I ask you these things then?”

“I think I’ve an idea,” said Waterville, persisting in irrelevant laughter. His laugh sounded foolish in his own ears.

“If you know that, I think you ought to assist me.” Her tone changed now; there was a quick tremor in it; he could feel the confession of distress. The distress verily was deep; it had pressed her hard before she made up her mind to speak to him. He was sorry for her and determined to be very serious.

“If I could help you I would. But my position’s very difficult.”

“It’s not so difficult as mine!” She was going all lengths; she was really appealing to him. “I don’t imagine you under obligations to Mrs. Headway. You seem to me so different,” she added.

He was not insensible to any discrimination that told in his favour; but these words shocked him as if they had been an attempt at bribery. “I’m surprised you don’t like her,” he ventured to bring out.

She turned her eyes through the window. “I don’t think you’re really surprised, though possibly you try to be. I don’t like her at any rate, and I can’t fancy why my son should. She’s very pretty and appears very clever; but I don’t trust her. I don’t know what has taken possession of him; it’s not usual in his family to marry people like that. Surely she’s of *no* breeding. The person I should propose would be so very different—perhaps you can see what I mean. There’s something in her history we don’t understand. My son understands it no better than I. If you could throw any light on it, that might be a help. If I treat you with such confidence the first time I see you it’s because I don’t know where to turn. I’m exceedingly anxious.”

It was plain enough she was anxious; her manner had become more vehement; her eyes seemed to shine in the thickening dusk. “Are you very sure there’s danger?” Waterville asked. “Has he proposed to her and has she jumped at him?”

“If I wait till they settle it all it will be too late. I’ve reason to believe that my son’s not engaged, but I fear he’s terribly entangled. At the same time he’s very uneasy, and that may save him yet. He has a great sense of honour. He’s not satisfied about her past life; he doesn’t know what to think of what we’ve been told. Even what she admits is so strange. She has been married four or five times. She has been divorced again and again. It seems so extraordinary. She tells him that in America it’s different, and I dare say you haven’t our ideas; but really there’s a limit to everything. There must have been great irregularities—I’m afraid great scandals. It’s dreadful to have to accept such things. He hasn’t told me all this, but it’s not necessary he should tell me. I know him well enough to guess.”

“Does he know you’re speaking to me?” Waterville asked.

“Not in the least. But I must tell you I shall repeat to him anything you may say against her.”

“I had better say nothing then. It’s very delicate. Mrs. Headway’s quite undefended. One may like her or not, of course. I’ve seen nothing of her that isn’t perfectly correct,” our young man wound up.

“And you’ve heard nothing?”

He remembered Littlemore’s view that there were cases in which a man was bound in honour to tell an untruth, and he wondered if this were such a one. Lady Demesne imposed herself, she made him believe in the reality of her grievance, and he saw the gulf that divided her from a pushing little woman who had lived with Western editors. She was right to wish not to be connected with Mrs. Headway. After all, there had been nothing in his relations with that lady to hold him down to lying for her. He hadn’t sought her acquaintance, she had sought his; she had sent for him to come and see her. And yet he couldn’t give her away—that stuck in his throat. “I’m afraid I really can’t say anything. And it wouldn’t matter. Your son won’t give her up because I happen not to like her.”

“If he were to believe she had done wrong he’d give her up.”

“Well, I’ve no right to say so,” said Waterville.

Lady Demesne turned away; he indeed disappointed her and he feared she was going to break out: “Why then do you suppose I asked you here?” She quitted her place near the window and prepared apparently to leave the room. But she stopped short. “You know something against her, but you won’t say it.”

He hugged his folio and looked awkward. “You attribute things to me. I shall never say anything.”

“Of course you’re perfectly free. There’s some one else who knows, I think—another American—a gentleman who was in Paris when my son was there. I’ve forgotten his name.”

“A friend of Mrs. Headway’s? I suppose you mean George Littlemore.”

“Yes—Mr. Littlemore. He has a sister whom I’ve met; I didn’t know she was his sister till to-day. Mrs. Headway spoke of her, but I find she doesn’t know her. That itself is a proof, I think. Do you think *he* would help me?” Lady Demesne asked very simply.

“I doubt it, but you can try.”

“I wish he had come with you. Do you think he’d come?”

“He’s in America at this moment, but I believe he soon comes back.”

She took this in with interest. “I shall go to his sister; I shall ask her to bring him to see me. She’s extremely nice; I think she’ll understand. Unfortunately there’s very little time.”

Waterville bethought himself. “Don’t count too much on George Littlemore,” he said gravely.

“You men have no pity,” she grimly sighed.

“Why should we pity you? How can Mrs. Headway hurt such a person as you?” he asked.

Lady Demesne cast about. “It hurts me to hear her voice.”

“Her voice is very liquid.” He liked his word.

“Possibly. But she’s horrible!”

This was too much, it seemed to Waterville; Nancy Beck was open to criticism, and he himself had declared she was a barbarian. Yet she wasn't horrible. "It's for your son to pity you. If he doesn't how can you expect it of others?"

"Oh but he does!" And with a majesty that was more striking even than her logic his hostess moved to the door.

Waterville advanced to open it for her, and as she passed out he said: "There's one thing you can do—try to like her!"

She shot him a woeful glance. "That would be—worst of all!"

VIII

George Littlemore arrived in London on the twentieth of May, and one of the first things he did was to go and see Waterville at the Legation, where he mentioned that he had taken for the rest of the season a house at Queen Anne's Gate, so that his sister and her husband, who, under the pressure of diminished rents, had let their own town residence, might come up and spend a couple of months with him.

"One of the consequences of your having a house will be that you'll have to entertain the Texan belle," our young man said.

Littlemore sat there with his hands crossed on his stick; he looked at his friend with an eye that failed to kindle at the mention of this lady's name. "Has she got into European society?" he rather languidly inquired.

"Very much, I should say. She has a house and a carriage and diamonds and everything handsome. She seems already to know a lot of people; they put her name in the *Morning Post*. She has come up very quickly; she's almost famous. Every one's asking about her—you'll be plied with questions."

Littlemore listened gravely. "How did she get in?"

"She met a large party at Longlands and made them all think her great fun. They must have taken her up; she only wanted a start."

Her old friend rallied after a moment to the interest of this news, marking his full appreciation of it by a burst of laughter. "To think of Nancy Beck! The people here do beat the Dutch! There's no one they won't go after. They wouldn't touch her in New York."

"Oh New York's quite old-fashioned and rococo," said Waterville; and he announced to Littlemore that Lady Demesne was very eager for his arrival and wanted his aid to prevent her son's bringing such a person into the family. Littlemore was apparently not alarmed at her ladyship's projects, and intimated, in the manner of a man who thought them rather impertinent, that he could trust himself to keep out of her way. "It isn't a proper marriage at any rate," the second secretary urged.

"Why not if he loves her?"

"Oh if that's all you want!"—which seemed a degree of cynicism startling to his companion.

"Would you marry her yourself?"

"Certainly if I were in love with her."

"You took care not to be that."

"Yes, I did—and so Demesne had better have done. However, since he's bitten—!" But Littlemore let the rest of his sentence too indifferently drop.

Waterville presently asked him how he would manage, in view of his sister's advent, about asking Mrs. Headway to his house; and he replied that he would manage by simply not asking her. On this Waterville pronounced him highly inconsistent; to which Littlemore rejoined that it was very possible. But he asked whether they couldn't talk about something else than Mrs. Headway. He couldn't enter into the young man's interest in her—they were sure to have enough of her later without such impatience.

Waterville would have been sorry to give a false idea of his interest in the wonderful woman; he knew too well the feeling had definite limits. He had been two or three times to see her, but it was a relief to be able to believe her quite independent of him. There had been no revival of those free retorts which had marked their stay at Longlands. She could dispense with assistance now; she knew herself in the current of success. She pretended to be surprised at her good fortune, especially at its rapidity; but she was really surprised at nothing. She took things as they came and, being essentially a woman of action, wasted almost as little time in elation as she would have done in despondence. She talked a great deal about Lord Edward and Lady Margaret and such others of that "standing" as had shown a desire for her acquaintance; professing to measure perfectly the sources of a growing popularity. "They come to laugh at me," she said; "they come simply to get things to repeat. I can't open my mouth but they burst into fits. It's a settled thing that I'm a grand case of the American funny woman; if I make the least remark they begin to roar. I must express myself somehow; and indeed when I hold my tongue they think me funnier than ever. They repeat what I say to a great person, and a great person told some of them the other night that he wanted to hear me for himself. I'll do for him what I do for the others; no better and no worse. I don't know how I do it; I talk the only way I can. They tell me it isn't so much the things I say as the way I say them. Well, they're very easy to please. They don't really care for me, you know—they don't love me for myself and the way I want to be loved; it's only to be able to repeat Mrs. Headway's 'last.' Every one wants to have it first; it's a regular race." When she found what was expected of her she undertook to supply the article in abundance—the poor little woman worked hard at the vernacular. If the taste of London lay that way she would do her best to gratify it; it was only a pity she hadn't known before: she would have made more extensive preparations. She had thought it a disadvantage of old to live in Arizona, in Dakotah, in the newly-admitted States; but now she saw that, as she phrased it to herself, this was the best thing that ever had happened to her. She tried to recover the weird things she had heard out there, and keenly regretted she hadn't taken them down in writing; she drummed up the echoes of the Rocky Mountains and practised the intonations of the Pacific slope. When she saw her audience in convulsions she argued that this was success: she inferred that had she only come five years sooner she might have married a Duke. That would have been even a greater attraction for the London world than the actual proceedings of Sir Arthur Demesne, who, however, lived sufficiently in the eye of society to justify the rumour that there were bets about town as to the issue of his already protracted courtship. It was food for curiosity to see a young man of his pattern—one of the few "earnest" young men of the Tory side, with an income sufficient for tastes more vivid than those by which he was known—make up to a lady several years older than himself, whose fund of Texan slang was even larger than her stock of dollars. Mrs. Headway had got a good many new ideas since her arrival in London, but she had also not lost her grasp of several old ones. The chief of these—it was now a year old—was that Sir Arthur was the very most eligible and, shrewdly considered, taking one thing with another, most valuable young man in the world. There were of course a good many things he wasn't. He wasn't amusing; he wasn't insinuating; he wasn't of an absolutely irrepressible ardour. She believed he was constant, but he was certainly not eager. With these things, however, she could perfectly dispense; she had in particular quite outlived the need of being amused. She

had had a very exciting life, and her vision of happiness at present was to be magnificently bored. The idea of complete and uncriticised respectability filled her soul with satisfaction; her imagination prostrated itself in the presence of this virtue. She was aware she had achieved it but ill in her own person; but she could now at least connect herself with it by sacred ties. She could prove in that way what was her deepest feeling. This was a religious appreciation of Sir Arthur's great quality—his smooth and rounded, his blooming lily-like exemption from social flaws.

She was at home when Littlemore went to see her and surrounded by several visitors to whom she was giving a late cup of tea and to whom she introduced her tall compatriot. He stayed till they dispersed, in spite of the manoeuvres of a gentleman who evidently desired to outlinger him, but who, whatever might have been his happy fortune on former visits, received on this occasion no encouragement from their hostess. He looked at Littlemore slowly, beginning with his boots and travelling up as if to discover the reason of so unexpected a preference, and then, with no salutation to him, left the pair face to face.

"I'm curious to see what you'll do for me now you've got your sister with you," Mrs. Headway presently remarked, having heard of this circumstance from Rupert Waterville. "I realise you'll have to do something, you know. I'm sorry for you, but I don't see how you can get off. You might ask me to dine some day when she's dining out. I'd come even then, I think, because I want to keep on the right side of you."

"I call that the wrong side," said Littlemore.

"Yes, I see. It's your sister that's on the right side. You're in rather a bad fix, ain't you? You've got to be 'good' and mean, or you've got to be kind with a little courage. However, you take those things very quietly. There's something in you that exasperates me. What does your sister think of me? Does she hate me?" Nancy persisted.

"She knows nothing about you."

"Have you told her nothing?"

"Never a word."

"Hasn't she asked you? That shows how she hates me. She thinks I ain't creditable to America. I know *that* way of doing it. She wants to show people over here that, however they may be taken in by me, she knows much better. But she'll have to ask you about me; she can't go on for ever. Then what'll you say?"

"That you're the biggest 'draw' in Europe."

"Oh shucks!" she cried, out of her repertory.

"Haven't you got into European society?"

"Maybe I have, maybe I haven't. It's too soon to see. I can't tell this season. Every one says I've got to wait till next, to see if it's the same. Sometimes they take you right up for a few weeks and then just drop you anywhere. You've got to make it a square thing somehow—to drive in a nail."

"You speak as if it were your coffin," said Littlemore.

"Well, it *is* a kind of coffin. I'm burying my past!"

He winced at this—he was tired to death of her past. He changed the subject and turned her on to London, a topic as to which her freshness of view and now unpremeditated art of notation were really interesting, displayed as they were at the expense of most of her new acquaintances and of some of the most venerable features of the great city. He

himself looked at England from the outside as much as it was possible to do; but in the midst of her familiar allusions to people and things known to her only since yesterday he was struck with the truth that she would never really be initiated. She buzzed over the surface of things like a fly on a window-pane. This surface immensely pleased her; she was flattered, encouraged, excited; she dropped her confident judgements as if she were scattering flowers, talked about her intentions, her prospects, her discoveries, her designs. But she had really learnt no more about English life than about the molecular theory. The words in which he had described her of old to Waterville came back to him: "*Elle ne doute de rien!*" Suddenly she jumped up; she was going out to dine and it was time to dress. "Before you leave I want you to promise me something," she said off-hand, but with a look he had seen before and that pressed on the point—oh so intensely! "You'll be sure to be questioned about me." And then she paused.

"How do people know I know you?"

"You haven't 'blown' about it? Is that what you mean? You can be a brute when you try. They do know it at any rate. Possibly I may have told them. They'll come to you to ask about me. I mean from Lady Demesne. She's in an awful state. She's so afraid of it—of the way he wants me."

In himself too, after all, she could still press the spring of careless mirth. "*I'm* not afraid, if you haven't yet brought it off."

"Well, he can't make up his mind. I appeal to him so, yet he can't quite place me where he'd have to have me." Her lucidity and her detachment were both grotesque and touching.

"He must be a poor creature if he won't take you as you are. I mean for the sweet sake of what you are," Littlemore added.

This wasn't a very gallant form, but she made the best of it. "Well—he wants to be very careful, and so he ought!"

"If he asks too many questions he's not worth marrying," Littlemore rather cheaply opined.

"I beg your pardon—he's worth marrying whatever he does; he's worth marrying for *me*. And I want to marry him—that's what I want to do."

Her old friend had a pause of some blankness. "Is he waiting for me to settle it?"

"He's waiting for I don't know what—for some one to come and tell him that I'm the sweetest of the sweet. Then he'll believe it. Some one who has been out there and knows all about me. Of course you're the man, you're created on purpose. Don't you remember how I told you in Paris he wanted to ask you? He was ashamed and gave it up; he tried to forget me. But now it's all on again—only meanwhile his mother has been at him. She works night and day, like a weasel in a hole, to persuade him that I'm too much beneath him. He's very fond of her and very open to influence; I mean from her—not from any one else. Except me of course. Oh I've influenced him, I've explained everything fifty times over. But some memories, you know, are like those lumpish or pointed things you can't get into your trunk—they won't pack anyway; and he keeps coming back to them. He wants every little speck explained. He won't come to you himself, but his mother will, or she'll send some of her people. I guess she'll send the lawyer—the family solicitor they call him. She wanted to send him out to America to make inquiries, only she didn't know where to send. Of course I couldn't be expected to give the places—they've got to find *them* out the best way they can. She knows all about you and has made up to your sister; a big proof, as she never makes up to any one. So you see how much I know. She's waiting for you; she means to hold you with her glittering eye. She has an idea she *can*—can make you say what'll meet her

views. Then she'll lay it before Sir Arthur. So you'll be so good as to have none—not a view.”

Littlemore had, however disguisedly, given her every attention; but the conclusion left him all too consciously staring. “You don't mean that anything I can say will make a difference?”

“Don't be affected! You know it will as well as I.”

“You make him out not only a laggard in love but almost a dastard in war.”

“Never mind what I make him out. I guess if I can understand him you can accept him. And I appeal to you solemnly. You can save me or you can lose me. If you lose me you'll be a coward. And if you say a word against me I'll be lost.”

“Go and dress for dinner—that's your salvation,” Littlemore returned as he quitted her at the head of the stairs.

IX

It was very well for him to take that tone; but he felt as he walked home that he should scarcely know what to say to people who were determined, as she put it, to hold him with glittering eyes. She had worked a certain spell; she had succeeded in making him feel responsible. The sight of her success, however, rather hardened his heart; he might have pitied her if she had “muffed” it, as they said, but he just sensibly resented her heavy scoring. He dined alone that evening while his sister and her husband, who had engagements every day for a month, partook of their repast at the expense of friends. Mrs. Dolphin, however, came home rather early and immediately sought admittance to the small apartment at the foot of the staircase which was already spoken of as her brother's den. Reggie had gone on to a “squash” somewhere, and she had returned in her eagerness to the third member of their party. She was too impatient even to wait for morning. She looked impatient; she was very unlike George Littlemore. “I want you to tell me about Mrs. Headway,” she at once began, while he started slightly at the coincidence of this remark with his own thoughts. He was just making up his mind at last to speak to her. She unfastened her cloak and tossed it over a chair, then pulled off her long tight black gloves, which were not so fine as those Mrs. Headway wore; all this as if she were preparing herself for an important interview. She was a fair neat woman, who had once been pretty, with a small thin voice, a finished manner and a perfect knowledge of what it was proper to do on every occasion in life. She always did it, and her conception of it was so definite that failure would have left her without excuse. She was usually not taken for an American, but she made a point of being one, because she flattered herself that she was of a type which under that banner borrowed distinction from rarity. She was by nature a great conservative and had ended by figuring as a better Tory than her husband; to the effect of being thought by some of her old friends to have changed immensely since her marriage. She knew English society as if she had compiled a red-covered handbook of the subject; had a way of looking prepared for far-reaching social action; had also thin lips and pretty teeth; and was as positive as she was amiable. She told her brother that Mrs. Headway had given out that he was her most intimate friend; whereby she thought it rather odd he had never spoken of her “at home.” Littlemore admitted, on this, that he had known her a long time, referred to the conditions in which the acquaintance had sprung up, and added that he had seen her that afternoon. He sat there smoking his cigar and looking up at the cornice while Mrs. Dolphin delivered herself of a series of questions. Was it true that he liked her so much, was it true he thought her a possible woman to marry, was it true that her antecedents had not been most peculiar?

“I may as well tell you I've a letter from Lady Demesne,” his visitor went on. “It came to me just before I went out, and I have it in my pocket.”

She drew forth the missive, which she evidently wished to read him; but he gave her no invitation to proceed. He knew she had come to him to extract a declaration adverse to Mrs. Headway's projects, and however little edification he might find in this lady's character he hated to be arraigned or prodded. He had a great esteem for Mrs. Dolphin, who, among other Hampshire notions, had picked up that of the major weight of the male members of any family, so that she treated him with a consideration which made his having an English sister rather a luxury. Nevertheless he was not, on the subject of his old Texan friend, very accommodating. He admitted once for all that she hadn't behaved properly—it wasn't worth while to split hairs about that; but he couldn't see that she was much worse than lots of other women about the place—women at once less amusing and less impugned; and he couldn't get up much feeling about her marrying or not marrying. Moreover, it was none of his business, and he intimated that it was none of Mrs. Dolphin's.

“One surely can't resist the claims of common humanity!” his sister replied; and she added that he was very inconsistent. He didn't respect Mrs. Headway, he knew the most dreadful things about her, he didn't think her fit company for his own flesh and blood. And yet he was willing not to save poor Arthur Demesne.

“Perfectly willing!” Littlemore returned. “I've nothing to do with saving others. All I've got to do is not to marry her myself.”

“Don't you think then we've any responsibilities, any duties to society?”

“I don't know what you mean. Society can look after itself. If she can bring it off she's welcome. It's a splendid sight in its way.”

“How do you mean splendid?”

“Why she has run up the tree as if she were a squirrel!”

“It's very true she has an assurance *à toute épreuve*. But English society has become scandalously easy. I never saw anything like the people who are taken up. Mrs. Headway has had only to appear to succeed. If they can only make out big *enough* spots in you they'll find you attractive. It's like the decadence of the Roman Empire. You can see to look at this person that she's not a lady. She's pretty, very pretty, but she might be a dissipated dressmaker. She wouldn't go down for a minute in New York. I've seen her three times—she apparently goes everywhere. I didn't speak of her—I was wanting to see what you'd do. I judged you meant to do nothing, then this letter decided me. It's written on purpose to be shown you; it's what the poor lady—*such* a nice woman herself—wants you to do. She wrote to me before I came to town, and I went to see her as soon as I arrived. I think it very important. I told her that if she'd draw up a little statement I'd put it before you as soon as we should get settled. She's in real distress. I think you ought to feel for her. You ought to communicate the facts exactly as they stand. A woman has no right to do such things as Mrs. Headway and come and ask to be accepted. She may make it up with her conscience, but she can't make it up with society. Last night at Lady Dovedale's I was afraid she'd know who I was and get somehow at me. I believe she'd really have been capable of it, and I got so frightened I went away. If Sir Arthur wishes to marry her for what she is, of course he's welcome. But at least he ought to know.”

Mrs. Dolphin was neither agitated nor voluble; she moved from point to point with the temper and method of a person accustomed to preside at committees and to direct them. She deeply desired, however, that Mrs. Headway's triumphant career should be checked; such a person had sufficiently abused a tolerance already so overstrained. Herself a party to an international marriage, Mrs. Dolphin naturally desired the class to which she belonged to close its ranks and carry its standard high.

“It seems to me she’s quite as good as the poor young man himself,” said Littlemore, lighting another cigar.

“As good? What do you mean by ‘good’? No one has ever breathed a word against him.”

“Very likely. But he’s a nonentity of the first water, and she at least a positive quantity, not to say a positive force. She’s a person, and a very clever one. Besides, she’s quite as good as the women lots of them have married. It’s new to me that your alliances have been always so august.”

“I know nothing about other cases,” Mrs. Dolphin said, “I only know about this one. It so happens that I’ve been brought near it, and that an appeal has been made to me. The English are very romantic—the most romantic people in the world, if that’s what you mean. They do the strangest things from the force of passion—even those of whom you would least expect it. They marry their cooks, they marry their coachmen, and their romances always have the most miserable end. I’m sure this one would be wretched. How can you pretend that such a flaming barbarian can be worked into *any* civilisation? What I see is a fine old race—one of the oldest and most honourable in England, people with every tradition of good conduct and high principle—and a dreadful disreputable vulgar little woman, who hasn’t an idea of what such things are, trying to force her way into it. I hate to see such things—I want to go to the rescue!”

“Well, I don’t,” Littlemore returned at his leisure. “I don’t care a pin for the fine old race.”

“Not from interested motives, of course, any more than I. But surely on artistic grounds, on grounds of decency?”

“Mrs. Headway isn’t indecent—you go too far. You must remember that she’s an old friend of mine.” He had become rather stern; Mrs. Dolphin was forgetting the consideration due, from an English point of view, to brothers.

She forgot it even a little more. “Oh if you’re in love with her too!” she quite wailed, turning away.

He made no answer to this, and the words had no sting for him. But at last, to finish the affair, he asked what in the world the old lady wanted him to do. Did she want him to go out into Piccadilly and announce to the passers-by that there had been one winter when even Mrs. Headway’s sister didn’t know who was her husband?

Mrs. Dolphin’s reply was to read out Lady Demesne’s letter, which her brother, as she folded it up again, pronounced one of the most extraordinary communications he had ever listened to. “It’s very sad—it’s a cry of distress,” she declared. “The whole meaning of it is that she wishes you’d come and see her. She doesn’t say it in so many words, but I can read between the lines. Besides, she told me she’d give anything to see you. Let me assure you it’s your duty to go.”

“To go and abuse Nancy Beck?”

“Go and rave about her if you like!” This was very clever of Mrs. Dolphin, but her brother was not so easily beguiled. He didn’t take that view of his duty, and he declined to cross her ladyship’s threshold. “Then she’ll come and see you,” said his visitor with decision.

“If she does I’ll tell her Nancy’s an angel.”

“If you can say so conscientiously she’ll be delighted to hear it.” And she gathered up her cloak and gloves.

Meeting Rupert Waterville the next day, as he often did, at the Saint George's Club, which offers a much-appreciated hospitality to secretaries of legation and to the natives of the countries they assist in representing, Littlemore let him know that his prophecy had been fulfilled and that Lady Demesne had been making proposals for an interview. "My sister read me a desperate letter from her."

Our young man was all critical attention again. "'Desperate'?"

"The letter of a woman so scared that she'll do anything. I may be a great brute, but her scare amuses me."

"You're in the position of Olivier de Jalin in *Le Demi-Monde*," Waterville remarked.

"In *Le Demi-Monde*?" Littlemore was not quick at catching literary allusions.

"Don't you remember the play we saw in Paris? Or like Don Fabrice in *L'Aventurière*. A bad woman tries to marry an honourable man, who doesn't know how bad she is, and they who do know step in and push her back."

"Yes, it comes to me. There was a good deal of lying," Littlemore recalled, "all round."

"They prevented the marriage, however—which is the great thing."

"The great thing if your heart's set! One of the active parties was the intimate friend of the man in love, the other was his son. Demesne's nothing at all to me."

"He's a very good fellow," said Waterville.

"Then go and talk to him."

"Play the part of Olivier de Jalin? Oh I can't. I'm not Olivier. But I think I do wish he'd corner me of himself. Mrs. Headway oughtn't really to be allowed to pass."

"I wish to heaven they'd let me alone," Littlemore murmured ruefully and staring a while out of the window.

"Do you still hold to that theory you propounded in Paris? Are you willing to commit perjury?" Waterville asked.

"Assuredly I can refuse to answer questions—even that one."

"As I told you before, that will amount to a condemnation."

Longmore frowningly debated. "It may amount to what it pleases. I guess I'll go back to Paris."

"That will be the same as not answering. But it's quite the best thing you can do. I've really been thinking it out," Waterville continued, "and I don't hold that from the point of view of social good faith she's an article we ought to contribute—!" He looked at the matter clearly now from a great elevation; his tone, the expression of his face, betrayed this lofty flight; the effect of which, as he glanced down at his didactic young friend, Littlemore found peculiarly irritating.

He shifted about. "No, after all, hanged if they shall drive me away!" he exclaimed abruptly; and he walked off while his companion wondered.

X

The morning after this the elder man received a note from Mrs. Headway—a short and simple note, consisting merely of the words: "I shall be at home this afternoon; will you come and

see me at five? I've something particular to say to you." He sent no answer to the question, but went to the little house in Chesterfield Street at the hour its mistress had proposed.

"I don't believe you know what sort of a woman I *am!*" she began as soon as he stood before her.

"Oh Lord!" Littlemore groaned as he dropped into a chair. Then he added: "Please don't strike up *that* air!"

"Ah, but it's exactly what I've wanted to say. It's very important. You don't know me—you don't understand me. You think you do—but you don't."

"It isn't for the want of your having told me—many many times!" And Littlemore had a hard critical smile, irritated as he was at so austere a prospect. The last word of all was decidedly that Mrs. Headway was a dreadful bore. It was always the last word about such women, who never really deserved to be spared.

She glared at him a little on this; her face was no longer the hospitable inn-front with the showy sign of the Smile. The sign had come down; she looked sharp and strained, almost old; the change was complete. It made her serious as he had never seen her—having seen her always only either too pleased or too disgusted. "Yes, I know; men are so stupid. They know nothing about women but what women tell them. And women tell them things on purpose to see how stupid they can be. I've told you things like that just for amusement when it was dull. If you believed them it was your own fault. But now I want you really to know."

"I don't want to know. I know enough."

"How do you mean you know enough?" she cried with all her sincerity. "What business have you to know anything?" The poor little woman, in her passionate purpose, was not obliged to be consistent, and the loud laugh with which Littlemore greeted this must have seemed to her unduly harsh. "You shall know what I want you to know, however. You think me a bad woman—you don't respect me; I told you that in Paris. I've done things I don't understand, myself, to-day; that I admit as fully as you please. But I've completely changed, and I want to change everything. You ought to enter into that, you ought to see what I want. I hate everything that has happened to me before this; I loathe it, I despise it. I went on that way trying—trying one thing and another. But now I've got what I want. Do you expect me to go down on my knees to you? I believe I will, I'm so anxious. You can help me—no one else can do a thing; they're only waiting to see if *he'll* do it. I told you in Paris you could help me, and it's just as true now. Say a good word for me for Christ's sake! You haven't lifted your little finger, or I should know it by this time. It will just make the difference. Or if your sister would come and see me I should be all right. Women are pitiless, pitiless, and you're pitiless too. It isn't that Mrs. Dolphin's anything so great, most of my friends are better than that!—but she's the one woman who *knows*, and every one seems to know she knows. *He* knows it, and he knows she doesn't come. So she kills me—she kills me! I understand perfectly what he wants—I'll do everything, be anything, I'll be the most perfect wife. The old woman will adore me when she knows me—it's too stupid of her not to see. Everything in the past's over; it has all fallen away from me; it's the life of another woman. This was what I wanted; I knew I should find it some day. I knew I should be at home in the best—and with the highest. What could I do in those horrible places? I had to take what I could. But now I've got nice surroundings. I want you to do me justice. You've never done me justice. That's what I sent for you for."

Littlemore had suddenly ceased to be bored, but a variety of feelings had taken the place of that one. It was impossible not to be touched; she really meant what she said. People don't

change their nature, but they change their desires, their ideal, their effort. This incoherent passionate plea was an assurance that she was literally panting to be respectable. But the poor woman, whatever she did, was condemned, as he had said of old, in Paris, to Waterville, to be only half right. The colour rose to her visitor's face as he listened to her outpouring of anxiety and egotism; she hadn't managed her early life very well, but there was no need of her going down on her knees. "It's very painful to me to hear all this. You're under no obligation to say such things to me. You entirely misconceive my attitude—my influence."

"Oh yes, you shirk it—you only wish to shirk it!" she cried, flinging away fiercely the sofa-cushion on which she had been resting.

"Marry whom you damn please!" Littlemore quite shouted, springing to his feet.

He had hardly spoken when the door was thrown open and the servant announced Sir Arthur Demesne. This shy adventurer entered with a certain briskness, but stopped short on seeing Mrs. Headway engaged with another guest. Recognising Littlemore, however, he gave a light exclamation which might have passed for a greeting. Mrs. Headway, who had risen as he came in, looked with wonderful eyes from one of the men to the other; then, like a person who had a sudden inspiration, she clasped her hands together and cried out: "I'm so glad you've met. If I had arranged it it couldn't be better!"

"If you had arranged it?" said Sir Arthur, crinkling a little his high white forehead, while the conviction rose before Littlemore that she had indeed arranged it.

"I'm going to do something very queer"—and her extravagant manner confirmed her words.

"You're excited, I'm afraid you're ill." Sir Arthur stood there with his hat and his stick; he was evidently much annoyed.

"It's an excellent opportunity; you must forgive me if I take advantage." And she flashed a tender touching ray at the Baronet. "I've wanted this a long time—perhaps you've seen I wanted it. Mr. Littlemore has known me from far back; he's an old old friend. I told you that in Paris, don't you remember? Well he's my only one, and I want him to speak for me." Her eyes had turned now to Littlemore; they rested upon him with a sweetness that only made the whole proceeding more audacious. She had begun to smile again, though she was visibly trembling. "He's my only one," she continued; "it's a great pity, you ought to have known others. But I'm very much alone and must make the best of what I have. I want so much that some one else than myself should speak for me. Women usually can ask that service of a relative or of another woman. I can't; it's a great pity, but it's not my fault, it's my misfortune. None of my people are here—I'm terribly alone in the world. But Mr. Littlemore will tell you; he'll say he has known me for ever so long. He'll tell you if he knows any reason—if there's anything against me. He has been wanting the chance—he thought he couldn't begin himself. You see I treat you as an old friend, dear Mr. Littlemore. I'll leave you with Sir Arthur. You'll both excuse me." The expression of her face, turned towards Littlemore as she delivered herself of this singular proposal, had the intentness of a magician who wishes to work a spell. She darted at Sir Arthur another pleading ray and then swept out of the room.

The two men remained in the extraordinary position she had created for them; neither of them moved even to open the door for her. She closed it behind her, and for a moment there was a deep portentous silence. Sir Arthur Demesne, very pale, stared hard at the carpet.

"I'm placed in an impossible situation," Littlemore said at last, "and I don't imagine you accept it any more than I do." His fellow-visitor kept the same attitude, neither looking up nor answering. Littlemore felt a sudden gush of pity for him. Of course he couldn't accept

the situation, but all the same he was half-sick with anxiety to see how this nondescript American, who was both so precious and so superfluous, so easy and so abysmal, would consider Mrs. Headway's challenge. "Have you any question to ask me?" Littlemore went on. At which Sir Arthur looked up. The other had seen the look before; he had described it to Waterville after Mrs. Headway's admirer came to call on him in Paris. There were other things mingled with it now—shame, annoyance, pride; but the great thing, the intense desire to *know*, was paramount. "Good God, how can I tell him?" seemed to hum in Littlemore's ears.

Sir Arthur's hesitation would have been of the briefest; but his companion heard the tick of the clock while it lasted. "Certainly I've no question to ask," the young man said in a voice of cool almost insolent surprise.

"Good-day then, confound you."

"The same to you!"

But Littlemore left him in possession. He expected to find Mrs. Headway at the foot of the staircase; but he quitted the house without interruption.

On the morrow, after luncheon, as he was leaving the vain retreat at Queen Anne's Gate, the postman handed him a letter. Littlemore opened and read it on the steps, an operation which took but a moment.

Dear Mr. Littlemore—It will interest you to know that I'm engaged to be married to Sir Arthur Demesne and that our marriage is to take place as soon as their stupid old Parliament rises. But it's not to come out for some days, and I'm sure I can trust meanwhile to your complete discretion.

Yours very sincerely,
Nancy H.

P.S.—He made me a terrible scene for what I did yesterday, but he came back in the evening and we fixed it all right. That's how the thing comes to be settled. He won't tell me what passed between you—he requested me never to allude to the subject. I don't care—I was bound you should speak!

Littlemore thrust this epistle into his pocket and marched away with it. He had come out on various errands, but he forgot his business for the time and before he knew it had walked into Hyde Park. He left the carriages and riders to one side and followed the Serpentine into Kensington Gardens, of which he made the complete circuit. He felt annoyed, and more disappointed than he understood—than he would have understood if he had tried. Now that Nancy Beck had succeeded her success was an irritation, and he was almost sorry he hadn't said to Sir Arthur: "Oh well, she was pretty bad, you know." However, now they were at one they would perhaps leave him alone. He walked the irritation off and before he went about his original purposes had ceased to think of Mrs. Headway. He went home at six o'clock, and the servant who admitted him informed him in doing so that Mrs. Dolphin had requested he should be told on his return that she wished to see him in the drawing-room. "It's another trap!" he said to himself instinctively; but in spite of this reflexion he went upstairs. On entering his sister's presence he found she had a visitor. This visitor, to all appearance on the point of departing, was a tall elderly woman, and the two ladies stood together in the middle of the room.

"I'm so glad you've come back," said Mrs. Dolphin without meeting her brother's eye. "I want so much to introduce you to Lady Demesne that I hoped you'd come in. Must you really go—won't you stay a little?" she added, turning to her companion; and without waiting

for an answer went on hastily: "I must leave you a moment—excuse me. I'll come back!" Before he knew it Littlemore found himself alone with her ladyship and understood that since he hadn't been willing to go and see her she had taken upon herself to make an advance. It had the queerest effect, all the same, to see his sister playing the same tricks as Nancy Beck!

"Ah, she must be in a fidget!" he said to himself as he stood before Lady Demesne. She looked modest and aloof, even timid, as far as a tall serene woman who carried her head very well could look so; and she was such a different type from Mrs. Headway that his present vision of Nancy's triumph gave her by contrast something of the dignity of the vanquished. It made him feel as sorry for her as he had felt for her son. She lost no time; she went straight to the point. She evidently felt that in the situation in which she had placed herself her only advantage could consist in being simple and business-like.

"I'm so fortunate as to catch you. I wish so much to ask you if you can give me any information about a person you know and about whom I have been in correspondence with Mrs. Dolphin. I mean Mrs. Headway."

"Won't you sit down?" asked Littlemore.

"No, thank you. I've only a moment."

"May I ask you why you make this inquiry?"

"Of course I must give you my reason. I'm afraid my son will marry her."

Littlemore was puzzled—then saw she wasn't yet aware of the fact imparted to him in Mrs. Headway's note. "You don't like her?" he asked, exaggerating, in spite of himself, the interrogative inflexion.

"Not at all," said Lady Demesne, smiling and looking at him. Her smile was gentle, without rancour; he thought it almost beautiful.

"What would you like me to say?" he asked.

"Whether you think her respectable."

"What good will that do you? How can it possibly affect the event?"

"It will do me no good, of course, if your opinion's favourable. But if you tell me it's not I shall be able to say to my son that the one person in London who has known her more than six months thinks so and so of her."

This speech, on Lady Demesne's clear lips, evoked no protest from her listener. He had suddenly become conscious of the need to utter the simple truth with which he had answered Rupert Waterville's first question at the Théâtre Français. He brought it out. "I don't think Mrs. Headway respectable."

"I was sure you would say that." She seemed to pant a little.

"I can say nothing more—not a word. That's my opinion. I don't think it will help you."

"I think it will. I wanted to have it from your own lips. That makes all the difference," said Lady Demesne. "I'm exceedingly obliged to you." And she offered him her hand; after which he accompanied her in silence to the door.

He felt no discomfort, no remorse, at what he had said; he only felt relief—presumably because he believed it would make no difference. It made a difference only in what was at the bottom of all things—his own sense of fitness. He only wished he had driven it home that Mrs. Headway would probably be for her son a capital wife. But that at least would make no

difference. He requested his sister, who had wondered greatly at the brevity of his interview with her friend, to spare him all questions on the subject; and Mrs. Dolphin went about for some days in the happy faith that there were to be no dreadful Americans in English society compromising her native land.

Her faith, however, was short-lived. Nothing had made any difference; it was perhaps too late. The London world heard in the first days of July, not that Sir Arthur Demesne was to marry Mrs. Headway, but that the pair had been privately and, it was to be hoped as regards Mrs. Headway on this occasion, indissolubly united. His mother gave neither sign nor sound; she only retired to the country.

“I think you might have done differently,” said Mrs. Dolphin, very pale, to her brother. “But of course everything will come out now.”

“Yes, and make her more the fashion than ever!” Littlemore answered with cynical laughter. After his little interview with the elder Lady Demesne he didn’t feel at liberty to call again on the younger; and he never learned—he never even wished to know—whether in the pride of her success she forgave him.

Waterville—it was very strange—was positively scandalised at this success. He held that Mrs. Headway ought never to have been allowed to marry a confiding gentleman, and he used in speaking to Littlemore the same words as Mrs. Dolphin. He thought Littlemore might have done differently. But he spoke with such vehemence that Littlemore looked at him hard—hard enough to make him blush. “Did you want to marry her yourself?” his friend inquired. “My dear fellow, you’re in love with her! That’s what’s the matter with you.”

This, however, blushing still more, Waterville indignantly denied. A little later he heard from New York that people were beginning to ask who in the world Lady Demesne “had been.”

Lady Barbarina

I

It is well known that there are few sights in the world more brilliant than the main avenues of Hyde Park of a fine afternoon in June. This was quite the opinion of two persons who on a beautiful day at the beginning of that month, four years ago, had established themselves under the great trees in a couple of iron chairs—the big ones with arms, for which, if I mistake not, you pay twopence—and sat there with the slow procession of the Drive behind them while their faces were turned to the more vivid agitation of the Row. Lost in the multitude of observers they belonged, superficially at least, to that class of persons who, wherever they may be, rank rather with the spectators than with the spectacle. They were quiet simple elderly, of aspect somewhat neutral; you would have liked them extremely but would scarcely have noticed them. It is to them, obscure in all that shining host, that we must nevertheless give our attention. On which the reader is begged to have confidence; he is not asked to make vain concessions. It was indicated touchingly in the faces of our friends that they were growing old together and were fond enough of each other's company not to object—since it was a condition—even to that. The reader will have guessed that they were husband and wife; and perhaps while he is about it will further have guessed that they were of that nationality for which Hyde Park at the height of the season is most completely illustrative. They were native aliens, so to speak, and people at once so initiated and so detached could only be Americans. This reflexion indeed you would have made only after some delay; for it must be allowed that they bristled with none of those modern signs that carry out the tradition of the old indigenous war-paint and feathers. They had the American turn of mind, but that was very secret; and to your eye—if your eye had cared about it—they might have been either intimately British or more remotely foreign. It was as if they studied, for convenience, to be superficially colourless; their colour was all in their talk. They were not in the least verdant; they were grey rather, of monotonous hue. If they were interested in the riders, the horses, the walkers, the great exhibition of English wealth and health, beauty, luxury and leisure, it was because all this referred itself to other impressions, because they had the key to almost everything that needed an answer—because, in a word, they were able to compare. They had not arrived, they had only returned; and recognition much more than surprise was expressed in their quiet eyes. Dexter Freer and his wife belonged in fine to that great company of Americans who are constantly “passing through” London. Enjoyers of a fortune of which, from any standpoint, the limits were plainly visible, they were unable to treat themselves to that commonest form of ease, the ease of living at home. They found it much more possible to economise at Dresden or Florence than at Buffalo or Minneapolis. The saving was greater and the strain was less. From Dresden, from Florence, moreover, they constantly made excursions that wouldn't have been possible with an excess of territory; and it is even to be feared they practised some eccentricities of thrift. They came to London to buy their portmanteaus, their toothbrushes, their writing-paper; they occasionally even recrossed the Atlantic westward to assure themselves that westward prices were still the same. They were eminently a social pair; their interests were mainly personal. Their curiosity was so invidiously human that they were supposed to be too addicted to gossip, and they certainly kept up their acquaintance with the affairs of other people. They had friends in every country, in every town; and it was not their fault if people told them their secrets. Dexter Freer was a tall lean man, with an interested eye and a nose that rather drooped than aspired, yet was salient withal. He brushed his hair, which was streaked with white, forward over his ears and into those locks represented in the portraits of

clean-shaven gentlemen who flourished fifty years ago and wore an old-fashioned neckcloth and gaiters. His wife, a small plump person, rather polished than naturally fresh, with a white face and hair still evenly black, smiled perpetually, but had never laughed since the death of a son whom she had lost ten years after her marriage. Her husband, on the other hand, who was usually quite grave, indulged on great occasions in resounding mirth. People confided in her less than in him, but that mattered little, as she confided much in herself. Her dress, which was always black or dark grey, was so harmoniously simple that you could see she was fond of it; it was never smart by accident or by fear. She was full of intentions of the most judicious sort and, though perpetually moving about the world, had the air of waiting for every one else to pass. She was celebrated for the promptitude with which she made her sitting-room at an inn, where she might be spending a night or two, appear a real temple of memory. With books, flowers, photographs, draperies, rapidly distributed—she had even a way, for the most part, of not failing of a piano—the place seemed almost hereditary. The pair were just back from America, where they had spent three months, and now were able to face the world with something of the elation of people who have been justified of a stiff conviction. They had found their native land quite ruinous.

“There he is again!” said Mr. Freer, following with his eyes a young man who passed along the Row, riding slowly. “That’s a beautiful thoroughbred!”

Mrs. Freer asked idle questions only when she wanted time to think. At present she had simply to look and see who it was her husband meant. “The horse is too big,” she remarked in a moment.

“You mean the rider’s too small,” her husband returned. “He’s mounted on his millions.”

“Is it really millions?”

“Seven or eight, they tell me.”

“How disgusting!” It was so that Mrs. Freer usually spoke of the large fortunes of the day. “I wish he’d see us,” she added.

“He does see us, but he doesn’t like to look at us. He’s too conscious. He isn’t easy.”

“Too conscious of his big horse?”

“Yes and of his big fortune. He’s rather ashamed of that.”

“This is an odd place to hang one’s head in,” said Mrs. Freer.

“I’m not so sure. He’ll find people here richer than himself, and other big horses in plenty, and that will cheer him up. Perhaps too he’s looking for that girl.”

“The one we heard about? He can’t be such a fool.”

“He isn’t a fool,” said Dexter Freer. “If he’s thinking of her he has some good reason.”

“I wonder what Mary Lemon would say,” his wife pursued.

“She’d say it was all right if he should do it. She thinks he can do no wrong. He’s immensely fond of her.”

“I shan’t be sure of that,” said Mrs. Freer, “if he takes home a wife who’ll despise her.”

“Why should the girl despise her? She’s a delightful woman.”

“The girl will never know it—and if she should it would make no difference: she’ll despise everything.”

“I don’t believe it, my dear; she’ll like some things very much. Every one will be very nice to her.”

“She’ll despise them all the more. But we’re speaking as if it were all arranged. I don’t believe in it at all,” said Mrs. Freer.

“Well, something of the sort—in this case or in some other—is sure to happen sooner or later,” her husband replied, turning round a little toward the back-water, as it were, formed, near the entrance to the Park, by the confluence of the two great vistas of the Drive and the Row.

Our friends had turned their backs, as I have said, to the solemn revolution of wheels and the densely-packed mass of spectators who had chosen that aspect of the show. These spectators were now agitated by a unanimous impulse: the pushing-back of chairs, the shuffle of feet, the rustle of garments and the deepening murmur of voices sufficiently expressed it. Royalty was approaching—royalty was passing—royalty had passed. Mr. Freer turned his head and his ear a little, but failed to alter his position further, and his wife took no notice of the flurry. They had seen royalty pass, all over Europe, and they knew it passed very quickly. Sometimes it came back; sometimes it didn’t; more than once they had seen it pass for the last time. They were veteran tourists and they knew as perfectly as regular attendants at complicated church-services when to get up and when to remain seated. Mr. Freer went on with his proposition. “Some young fellow’s certain to do it, and one of these girls is certain to take the risk. They must take risks over here more and more.”

“The girls, I’ve no doubt, will be glad enough; they have had very little chance as yet. But I don’t want Jackson to begin.”

“Do you know I rather think I do,” said Dexter Freer. “It will be so very amusing.”

“For us perhaps, but not for him. He’ll repent of it and be wretched. He’s too good for that.”

“Wretched never! He has no capacity for wretchedness, and that’s why he can afford to risk it.”

“He’ll have to make great concessions,” Mrs. Freer persisted.

“He won’t make one.”

“I should like to see.”

“You admit, then, that it will be amusing: all I contend for,” her husband replied. “But, as you say, we’re talking as if it were settled, whereas there’s probably nothing in it after all. The best stories always turn out false. I shall be sorry in this case.”

They relapsed into silence while people passed and repassed them—continuous successive mechanical, with strange facial, strange expressional, sequences and contrasts. They watched the procession, but no one heeded them, though every one was there so admittedly to see what was to be seen. It was all striking, all pictorial, and it made a great composition. The wide long area of the Row, its red-brown surface dotted with bounding figures, stretched away into the distance and became suffused and misty in the bright thick air. The deep dark English verdure that bordered and overhung it looked rich and old, revived and refreshed though it was by the breath of June. The mild blue of the sky was spotted with great silvery clouds, and the light drizzled down in heavenly shafts over the quieter spaces of the Park, as one saw them beyond the Row. All this, however, was only a background, for the scene was before everything personal; quite splendidly so, and full of the gloss and lustre, the contrasted tones, of a thousand polished surfaces. Certain things were salient, pervasive—the shining flanks of the perfect horses, the twinkle of bits and spurs, the smoothness of fine cloth

adjusted to shoulders and limbs, the sheen of hats and boots, the freshness of complexions, the expression of smiling talking faces, the flash and flutter of rapid gallops. Faces were everywhere, and they were the great effect—above all the fair faces of women on tall horses, flushed a little under their stiff black hats, with figures stiffened, in spite of much definition of curve, by their tight-fitting habits. Their well-secured helmets, their neat compact heads, their straight necks, their firm tailor-made armour, their frequent hardy bloom, all made them look singularly like amazons about to ride a charge. The men, with their eyes before them, with hats of undulating brim, good profiles, high collars, white flowers on their chests, long legs and long feet, had an air more elaboratively decorative, as they jolted beside the ladies, always out of step. These were the younger types; but it was not all youth, for many a saddle sustained a richer rotundity, and ruddy faces with short white whiskers or with matronly chins looked down comfortably from an equilibrium that seemed moral as well as physical. The walkers differed from the riders only in being on foot and in looking at the riders more than these looked at them; for they would have done as well in the saddle and ridden as the others ride. The women had tight little bonnets and still tighter little knots of hair; their round chins rested on a close swathing of lace or in some cases on throttling silver chains and circlets. They had flat backs and small waists, they walked slowly, with their elbows out, carrying vast parasols and turning their heads very little to the right or the left. They were amazons unmounted, quite ready to spring into the saddle. There was a great deal of beauty and a diffused look of happy expansion, all limited and controlled, which came from clear quiet eyes and well-cut lips, rims of stout vessels that didn't overflow and on which syllables were liquid and sentences brief. Some of the young men, as well as the women, had the happiest proportions and oval faces—faces in which line and colour were pure and fresh and the idea of the moment far from intense.

“They're often very good-looking,” said Mr. Freer at the end of ten minutes. “They're on the whole the finest whites.”

“So long as they remain white they do very well; but when they venture upon colour!” his wife replied. She sat with her eyes at the level of the skirts of the ladies who passed her, and she had been following the progress of a green velvet robe enriched with ornaments of steel and much gathered up in the hands of its wearer, who, herself apparently in her teens, was accompanied by a young lady draped in scant pink muslin, a tissue embroidered esthetically with flowers that simulated the iris.

“All the same, in a crowd, they're wonderfully well turned out,” Dexter Freer went on—“lumping men and women and horses and dogs together. Look at that big fellow on the light chestnut: what could be more perfect? By the way, it's Lord Canterville,” he added in a moment and as if the fact were of some importance.

Mrs. Freer recognised its importance to the degree of raising her glass to look at Lord Canterville. “How do you know it's he?” she asked with that implement still up.

“I heard him say something the night I went to the House of Lords. It was very few words, but I remember him. A man near me mentioned who he was.”

“He's not so handsome as you,” said Mrs. Freer, dropping her glass.

“Ah, you're too difficult!” her husband murmured. “What a pity the girl isn't with him,” he went on. “We might see something.”

It appeared in a moment, however, that the girl was with him. The nobleman designated had ridden slowly forward from the start, then just opposite our friends had pulled up to look back as if waiting for some one. At the same moment a gentleman in the Walk engaged his attention, so that he advanced to the barrier which protects the pedestrians and halted there,

bending a little from his saddle and talking with his friend, who leaned against the rail. Lord Canterville was indeed perfect, as his American admirer had said. Upwards of sixty and of great stature and great presence, he was a thoroughly splendid apparition. In capital preservation he had the freshness of middle life—he would have been young indeed to the eye if his large harmonious spread hadn't spoken of the lapse of years. He was clad from head to foot in garments of a radiant grey, and his fine florid countenance was surmounted with a white hat of which the majestic curves were a triumph of good form. Over his mighty chest disposed itself a beard of the richest growth and of a colour, in spite of a few streaks vaguely grizzled, to which the coat of his admirable horse appeared to be a perfect match. It left no opportunity in his uppermost button-hole for the customary orchid; but this was of comparatively little consequence, since the vegetation of the beard itself was tropical. Astride his great steed, with his big fist, gloved in pearl-grey, on his swelling thigh, his face lighted up with good-humoured indifference and all his magnificent surface reflecting the mild sunshine, he was, strikingly, a founded and builded figure, such as could only represent to the public gaze some Institution, some Exhibition or some Industry, in a word some unquenchable Interest. People quite lingered to look up at him as they passed. His halt was brief, however, for he was almost immediately joined by two handsome girls, who were as well turned-out, in Dexter Freer's phrase, as himself. They had been detained a moment at the entrance to the Row and now advanced side by side, their groom close behind them. One was noticeably taller and older than the other, and it was plain at a glance that they were sisters. Between them, with their charming shoulders, their contracted waists and their skirts that hung without a wrinkle, like plates of zinc, they represented in a singularly complete form the pretty English girl in the position in which she is prettiest.

"Of course they're his daughters," said Dexter Freer as these young ladies rode away with Lord Canterville; "and in that case one of them must be Jackson Lemon's sweetheart. Probably the bigger; they said it was the eldest. She's evidently a fine creature."

"She'd hate it over there," Mrs. Freer returned for all answer to this cluster of inductions.

"You know I don't admit that. But granting she should, it would do her good to have to accommodate herself."

"She wouldn't accommodate herself."

"She looks so confoundedly fortunate, perched up on that saddle," he went on without heed of his wife's speech.

"Aren't they supposed to be very poor?"

"Yes, they look it!" And his eyes followed the eminent trio while, with the groom, as eminent in his way as any of them, they started on a canter.

The air was full of sound, was low and economised; and when, near our friends, it became articulate the words were simple and few. "It's as good as the circus, isn't it, Mrs. Freer?" These words correspond to that description, but they pierced the dense medium more effectually than any our friends had lately heard. They were uttered by a young man who had stopped short in the path, absorbed by the sight of his compatriots. He was short and stout, he had a round kind face and short stiff-looking hair, which was reproduced in a small bristling beard. He wore a double-breasted walking-coat, which was not, however, buttoned, and on the summit of his round head was perched a hat of exceeding smallness and of the so-called "pot" category. It evidently fitted him, but a hatter himself wouldn't have known why. His hands were encased in new gloves of a dark-brown colour, and these masquerading members hung consciously, quite ruefully, at his sides. He sported neither umbrella nor

stick. He offered one of his stuffed gloves almost with eagerness to Mrs. Freer, blushing a little as he measured his precipitation.

“Oh Doctor Feeder!”—she smiled at him. Then she repeated to her husband, “Doctor Feeder, my dear!” and her husband said, “Oh Doctor, how d’ye do?” I have spoken of the composition of the young man’s appearance, but the items were not perceived by these two. They saw but one thing, his delightful face, which was both simple and clever and, as if this weren’t enough, showed a really tasteless overheaping of the cardinal virtues. They had lately made the voyage from New York in his company, and he was clearly a person who would shine at sea with an almost intolerable blandness. After he had stood in front of them a moment a chair beside Mrs. Freer became vacant; on which he took possession of it and sat there telling her what he thought of the Park and how he liked London. As she knew every one she had known many of his people at home, and while she listened to him she remembered how large their contribution had been to the moral worth of Cincinnati. Mrs. Freer’s social horizon included even that city; she had had occasion to exercise an amused recognition of several families from Ohio and was acquainted with the position of the Feeders there. This family, very numerous, was interwoven into an enormous cousinship. She stood off herself from any Western promiscuity, but she could have told you whom Doctor Feeder’s great-grandfather had married. Every one indeed had heard of the good deeds of the descendants of this worthy, who were generally physicians, excellent ones, and whose name expressed not inaptly their numerous acts of charity. Sidney Feeder, who had several cousins of this name established in the same line at Cincinnati, had transferred himself and his ambition to New York, where his practice had at the end of three years begun to grow. He had studied his profession at Vienna and was saturated with German science; had he only worn spectacles he might indeed perfectly, while he watched the performers in Rotten Row as if their proceedings were a successful demonstration, have passed for some famously “materialistic” young German. He had come over to London to attend a medical congress which met this year in the British capital, for his interest in the healing art was by no means limited to the cure of his patients. It embraced every form of experiment, and the expression of his honest eyes would almost have reconciled you to vivisection. This was his first time of looking into the Park; for social experiments he had little leisure. Being aware, however, that it was a very typical and, as might be, symptomatic sight, he had conscientiously reserved an afternoon and dressed himself carefully for the occasion. “It’s quite a brilliant show,” he said to Mrs. Freer; “it makes me wish I had a mount.” Little as he resembled Lord Canterville he rode, as he would have gaily said, first-rate.

“Wait till Jackson Lemon passes again and you can stop him and make him let you take a turn.” This was the jocular suggestion of Dexter Freer.

“Why, is he here? I’ve been looking out for him and should like to see him.”

“Doesn’t he go to your medical congress?” asked Mrs. Freer.

“Well yes, he attends—but isn’t very regular. I guess he goes out a good deal.”

“I guess he does,” said Mr. Freer; “and if he isn’t very regular I guess he has a good reason. A beautiful reason, a charming reason,” he went on, bending forward to look down toward the beginning of the Row. “Dear me, what a lovely reason!”

Doctor Feeder followed the direction of his eyes and after a moment understood his allusion. Little Jackson Lemon passed, on his big horse, along the avenue again, riding beside one of the bright creatures who had come that way shortly before under escort of Lord Canterville. His lordship followed in conversation with the other, his younger daughter. As they advanced Jackson Lemon turned his eyes to the multitude under the trees, and it so

happened that they rested on the Dexter Freers. He smiled, he raised his hat with all possible friendliness, and his three companions turned to see whom he so frankly greeted. As he settled his hat on his head he espied the young man from Cincinnati, whom he had at first overlooked; whereupon he laughed for the luck of it and waved Sidney Feeder an airy salutation with his hand, reining in a little at the same time just for an instant, as if he half-expected this apparition to come and speak to him. Seeing him with strangers, none the less, Sidney Feeder hung back, staring a little as he rode away.

It is open to us to know that at this moment the young lady by whose side he was riding put him the free question: "Who are those people you bowed to?"

"Some old friends of mine—Americans," said Jackson Lemon.

"Of course they're Americans; there's nothing anywhere but Americans now."

"Oh yes, our turn's coming round!" laughed the young man.

"But that doesn't say who they are," his companion continued. "It's so difficult to say who Americans are," she added before he had time to answer her.

"Dexter Freer and his wife—there's nothing difficult about that. Every one knows them," Jackson explained.

"I never heard of them," said the English girl.

"Ah, that's your fault and your misfortune. I assure you everybody knows them."

"And does everybody know the little man with the fat face to whom you kissed your hand?"

"I didn't kiss my hand, but I would if I had thought of it. He's a great chum of mine—a fellow-student at Vienna."

"And what's *his* name?"

"Doctor Feeder."

Jackson Lemon's companion had a dandling pause. "Are *all* your friends doctors?"

"No—some of them are in other businesses."

"Are they all in some business?"

"Most of them—save two or three like Dexter Freer."

"Dexter' Freer? I thought you said Doctor Freer."

The young man gave a laugh. "You heard me wrong. You've got doctors on the brain, Lady Barb."

"I'm rather glad," said Lady Barb, giving the rein to her horse, who bounded away.

"Well yes, she's very handsome, the reason," Doctor Feeder remarked as he sat under the trees.

"Is he going to marry her?" Mrs. Freer inquired.

"Marry her? I hope not."

"Why do you hope not?"

"Because I know nothing about her. I want to know something about the woman that man marries."

"I suppose you'd like him to marry in Cincinnati," Mrs. Freer not unadventurously threw out.

“Well, I’m not particular where it is; but I want to know her first.” Doctor Feeder was very sturdy.

“We were in hopes you’d know all about it,” said his other entertainer.

“No, I haven’t kept up with him there.”

“We’ve heard from a dozen people that he has been always with her for the last month—and that kind of thing, in England, is supposed to mean something. Hasn’t he spoken of her when you’ve seen him?”

“No, he has only talked about the new treatment of spinal meningitis. He’s very much interested in spinal meningitis.”

“I wonder if he talks about it to Lady Barb,” said Mrs. Freer.

“Who is she anyway?” the young man wanted to know.

Well, his companions both let him. “Lady Barb Clement.”

“And who’s Lady Barb Clement?”

“The daughter of Lord Canterville.”

“And who’s Lord Canterville?”

“Dexter must tell you that,” said Mrs. Freer.

And Dexter accordingly told him that the Marquis of Canterville had been in his day a great sporting nobleman and an ornament to English society, and had held more than once a high post in her Majesty’s household. Dexter Freer knew all these things—how his lordship had married a daughter of Lord Treherne, a very serious intelligent and beautiful woman who had redeemed him from the extravagance of his youth and presented him in rapid succession with a dozen little tenants for the nurseries at Pasterns—this being, as Mr. Freer also knew, the name of the principal seat of the Cantervilles. The head of that house was a Tory, but not a particular dunce for a Tory, and very popular in society at large; good-natured, good-looking, knowing how to be rather remarkably free and yet remain a *grand seigneur*, clever enough to make an occasional telling speech and much associated with the fine old English pursuits as well as with many of the new improvements—the purification of the Turf, the opening of the museums on Sunday, the propagation of coffee-taverns, the latest ideas on sanitary reform. He disapproved of the extension of the suffrage but had positively drainage on the brain. It had been said of him at least once—and, if this historian is not mistaken, in print—that he was just the man to convey to the popular mind the impression that the British aristocracy is still a living force. He was unfortunately not very rich—for a man who had to exemplify such truths—and of his twelve children no less than seven were daughters. Lady Barb, Jackson Lemon’s friend, was the second; the eldest had married Lord Beauchemin. Mr. Freer had caught quite the right pronunciation of this name, which he successfully sounded as Bitumen. Lady Lucretia had done very well, for her husband was rich and she had brought him nothing to speak of; but it was hardly to be expected they would all achieve such flights. Happily the younger girls were still in the schoolroom, and before they had come up, Lady Canterville, who was a woman of bold resource, would have worked off the two that were out. It was Lady Agatha’s first season; she wasn’t so pretty as her sister, but was thought to be cleverer. Half-a-dozen people had spoken to him of Jackson Lemon’s being a great deal at the Cantervilles. He was supposed to be enormously rich.

“Well, so he is,” said Sidney Feeder, who had listened to Mr. Freer’s report with attention, with eagerness even, but, for all its lucidity, with an air of imperfect apprehension.

“Yes, but not so rich as they probably think.”

“Do they want his money? Is that what they’re after?”

“You go straight to the point!” Mrs. Freer rang out.

“I haven’t the least idea,” said her husband. “He’s a very good sort in himself.”

“Yes, but he’s a doctor,” Mrs. Freer observed.

“What have they got against that?” asked Sidney Feeder.

“Why, over here, you know, they only call them in to prescribe,” said his other friend. “The profession isn’t—a—what you’d call aristocratic.”

“Well, I don’t know it, and I don’t know that I want to know it. How do you mean, aristocratic? What profession is? It would be rather a curious one. Professions are meant to do the work of professions; and what work’s done without your sleeves rolled up? Many of the gentlemen at the congress there are quite charming.”

“I like doctors very much,” said Mrs. Freer; “my father was a doctor. But they don’t marry the daughters of marquises.”

“I don’t believe Jackson wants to marry that one,” Sidney Feeder calmly argued.

“Very possibly not—people are such asses,” said Dexter Freer. “But he’ll have to decide. I wish you’d find out, by the way. You can if you will.”

“I’ll ask him—up at the congress; I can do that. I suppose he has got to marry some one.” The young man added in a moment: “And she may be a good thing.”

“She’s said to be charming.”

“Very well then, it won’t hurt him. I must say, however, I’m not sure I like all that about her family.”

“What I told you? It’s all to their honour and glory,” said Mr. Freer.

“Are they quite on the square? It’s like those people in Thackeray.”

“Oh if Thackeray could have done *this!*” And Mrs. Freer yearned over the lost hand.

“You mean all this scene?” asked the young man.

“No; the marriage of a British noblewoman and an American doctor. It would have been a subject for a master of satire.”

“You see you do want it, my dear,” said her husband quietly.

“I want it as a story, but I don’t want it for Doctor Lemon.”

“Does he call himself ‘Doctor’ still?” Mr. Freer asked of young Feeder.

“I suppose he does—I call him so. Of course he doesn’t practise. But once a doctor always a doctor.”

“That’s doctrine for Lady Barb!”

Sidney Feeder wondered. “Hasn’t *she* got a title too? What would she expect him to be? President of the United States? He’s a man of real ability—he might have stood at the head of his profession. When I think of that I want to swear. What did his father want to go and make all that money for?”

“It must certainly be odd to them to see a ‘medical man’ with six or eight millions,” Mr. Freer conceded.

“They use much the same term as the Choctaws,” said his wife.

“Why, some of their own physicians make immense fortunes,” Sidney Feeder remarked.

“Couldn’t he,” she went on, “be made a baronet by the Queen?”

“Yes, then he’d be aristocratic,” said the young man. “But I don’t see why he should want to marry over here; it seems to me to be going out of his way. However, if he’s happy I don’t care. I like him very much; he has ‘A1’ ability. If it hadn’t been for his father he’d have made a splendid doctor. But, as I say, he takes a great interest in medical science and I guess he means to promote it all he can—with his big fortune. He’ll be sure to keep up his interest in research. He thinks we *do* know something and is bound we shall know more. I hope she won’t lower him, the young marchioness—is that her rank? And I hope they’re really good people. He ought to be very useful. I should want to know a good deal about the foreign family I was going to marry into.”

“He looked to me, riding there, as if he knew a good deal about the Clements,” Dexter Freer said, getting to his feet as his wife suggested they ought to be going; “and he looked to me pleased with the knowledge. There they come down the other side. Will you walk away with us or will you stay?”

“Stop him and ask him, and then come and tell us—in Jermyn Street.” This was Mrs. Freer’s parting injunction to Sidney Feeder.

“He ought to come himself—tell him that,” her husband added.

“Well, I guess I’ll stay,” said the young man as his companions merged themselves in the crowd that now was tending toward the gates. He went and stood by the barrier and saw Doctor Lemon and his friends pull up at the entrance to the Row, where they apparently prepared to separate. The separation took some time and Jackson’s colleague became interested. Lord Canterville and his younger daughter lingered to talk with two gentlemen, also mounted, who looked a good deal at the legs of Lady Agatha’s horse. Doctor Lemon and Lady Barb were face to face, very near each other, and she, leaning forward a little, stroked the overlapping neck of his glossy bay. At a distance he appeared to be talking and she to be listening without response. “Oh yes, he’s making love to her,” thought Sidney Feeder. Suddenly her father and sister turned away to leave the Park, and she joined them and disappeared while Jackson came up on the left again as for a final gallop. He hadn’t gone far before he perceived his comrade, who awaited him at the rail; and he repeated the gesture Lady Barb had described as a kiss of the hand, though it had not to his friend’s eyes that full grace. When he came within hail he pulled up.

“If I had known you were coming here I’d have given you a mount,” he immediately and bountifully cried. There was not in his person that irradiation of wealth and distinction which made Lord Canterville glow like a picture; but as he sat there with his neat little legs stuck out he looked very bright and sharp and happy, wearing in his degree the aspect of one of Fortune’s favourites. He had a thin keen delicate face, a nose very carefully finished, a quick eye, a trifle hard in expression, and a fine dark moustache, a good deal cultivated. He was not striking, but he had his intensity, and it was easy to see that he had his purposes.

“How many horses have you got—about forty?” his compatriot inquired in response to his greeting.

“About five hundred,” said Jackson Lemon.

“Did you mount your friends—the three you were riding with?”

“Mount them? They’ve got the best horses in England.”

“Did they sell you this one?” Sidney Feeder continued in the same humorous strain.

“What do you think of him?” said his friend without heed of this question.

“Well, he’s an awful old screw. I wonder he can carry you.”

“Where did you get your hat?” Jackson asked both as a retort and as a relevant criticism.

“I got it in New York. What’s the matter with it?”

“It’s very beautiful. I wish I had brought over one like it.”

“The head’s the thing—not the hat. I don’t mean yours—I mean mine,” Sidney Feeder laughed. “There’s something very deep in your question. I must think it over.”

“Don’t—don’t,” said Jackson Lemon; “you’ll never get to the bottom of it. Are you having a good time?”

“A glorious time. Have you been up to-day?”

“Up among the doctors? No—I’ve had a lot of things to do,” Jackson was obliged to plead.

“Well”—and his friend richly recovered it—“we had a very interesting discussion. I made a few remarks.”

“You ought to have told me. What were they about?”

“About the intermarriage of races from the point of view—” And Sidney Feeder paused a moment, occupied with the attempt to scratch the nose of the beautiful horse.

“From the point of view of the progeny, I suppose?”

“Not at all. From the point of view of the old friends.”

“Damn the old friends!” Doctor Lemon exclaimed with jocular crudity.

“Is it true that you’re going to marry a young marchioness?”

The face of the speaker in the saddle became just a trifle rigid, and his firm eyes penetrated the other. “Who has played that on you?”

“Mr. and Mrs. Freer, whom I met just now.”

“Mr. and Mrs. Freer be hanged too. And who told *them*?”

“Ever so many fashionable people. I don’t know who.”

“Gad, how things are tattled!” cried Jackson Lemon with asperity.

“I can see it’s true by the way you say that,” his friend ingenuously stated.

“Do Freer and his wife believe it?” Jackson went on impatiently.

“They want you to go and see them. You can judge for yourself.”

“I’ll go and see them and tell them to mind their business.”

“In Jermyn Street; but I forget the number. I’m sorry the marchioness isn’t one of ours,” Doctor Feeder continued.

“If I should marry her she *would* be quick enough. But I don’t see what difference it can make to you,” said Jackson.

“Why, she’ll look down on the profession, and I don’t like that from your wife.”

“That will touch me more than you.”

“Then it *is* true?” Doctor Feeder cried with a finer appeal.

“She won’t look down. I’ll answer for that.”

“You won’t care. You’re out of it all now.”

“No, I’m not. I mean to do no end of work.”

“I’ll believe that when I see it,” said Sidney Feeder, who was by no means perfectly incredulous, but who thought it salutary to take that tone. “I’m not sure you’ve any right to work—you oughtn’t to have everything; you ought to leave the field to us, not take the bread out of our mouths and get the *kudos*. You must pay the penalty of being bloated. You’d have been celebrated if you had continued to practise—more celebrated than any one. But you won’t be now—you can’t be any way you fix it. Some one else is going to be in your place.”

Jackson Lemon listened to this, but without meeting the eyes of the prophet; not, however, as if he were avoiding them, but as if the long stretch of the Ride, now less and less obstructed, irresistibly drew him off again and made his companion’s talk retarding. Nevertheless he answered deliberately and kindly enough. “I hope it will be you, old boy.” And he bowed to a lady who rode past.

“Very likely it will. I hope I make you feel mean. That’s what I’m trying to do.”

“Oh awfully!” Jackson cried. “All the more that I’m not in the least engaged.”

“Well, that’s good. Won’t you come up to-morrow?” Doctor Feeder went on.

“I’ll try, my dear fellow. I can’t be sure. By-bye!”

“Oh you’re lost anyway!” sighed Sidney Feeder as the other started away.

II

It was Lady Marmaduke, wife of Sir Henry of that clan, who had introduced the amusing young American to Lady Beauchemin; after which Lady Beauchemin had made him acquainted with her mother and sisters. Lady Marmaduke too was of outland strain, remaining for her conjugal baronet the most ponderable consequence of a tour in the United States. At present, by the end of ten years, she knew her London as she had never known her New York, so that it had been easy for her to be, as she called herself, Jackson’s social godmother. She had views with regard to his career, and these views fitted into a scheme of high policy which, if our space permitted, I should be glad to lay before the reader in its magnitude. She wished to add an arch or two to the bridge on which she had effected her transit from America; and it was her belief that Doctor Lemon might furnish the materials. This bridge, as yet a somewhat sketchy and rickety structure, she saw—in the future—boldly stretch from one solid pier to another. It could but serve both ways, for reciprocity was the keynote of Lady Marmaduke’s plan. It was her belief that an ultimate fusion was inevitable and that those who were the first to understand the situation would enjoy the biggest returns from it. The first time the young man had dined with her he met Lady Beauchemin, who was her intimate friend. Lady Beauchemin was remarkably gracious, asking him to come and see her as if she really meant it. He in fact presented himself and in her drawing-room met her mother, who happened to be calling at the same moment. Lady Canterville, not less friendly than her daughter, invited him down to Pasterns for Eastertide, and before a month had passed it struck him that, though he was not what he would have called intimate at any house in London, the door of the house of Clement opened to him

pretty often. This seemed no small good fortune, for it always opened upon a charming picture. The inmates were a blooming and beautiful race, and their interior had an aspect of the ripest comfort. It was not the splendour of New York—as New York had lately begun to appear to the young man—but an appearance and a set of conditions, of factors as he used to say, not to be set in motion in that city by any power of purchase. He himself had a great deal of money, and money was good even when it was new; but old money was somehow *more* to the shilling and the pound. Even after he learned that Lord Canterville's fortune was less present than past it was still the positive golden glow that struck him. It was Lady Beauchemin who had told him her father wasn't rich; having told him furthermore many surprising things—things both surprising in themselves and surprising on her lips. This was to come home to him afresh that evening—the day he met Sidney Feeder in the Park. He dined out in the company of Lady Beauchemin, and afterwards, as she was alone—her husband had gone down to listen to a debate—she offered to “take him on.” She was going to several places, at some of which he must be due. They compared notes, and it was settled they should proceed together to the Trumpingtons', whither, it appeared at eleven o'clock, all the world was proceeding, with the approach to the house choked for half a mile with carriages. It was a close muggy night; Lady Beauchemin's chariot, in its place in the rank, stood still for long periods. In his corner beside her, through the open window, Jackson Lemon, rather hot, rather oppressed, looked out on the moist greasy pavement, over which was flung, a considerable distance up and down, the flare of a public-house. Lady Beauchemin, however, was not impatient, for she had a purpose in her mind, and now she could say what she wished.

“Do you really love her?” That was the first thing she said.

“Well, I guess so,” Jackson Lemon answered as if he didn't recognise the obligation to be serious.

She looked at him a moment in silence; he felt her gaze and, turning his eyes, saw her face, partly shadowed, with the aid of a street-lamp. She was not so pretty as Lady Barb; her features had a certain sharpness; her hair, very light in colour and wonderfully frizzled, almost covered her eyes, the expression of which, however, together with that of her pointed nose and the glitter of several diamonds, emerged from the gloom. What she next said seemed somehow to fall in with that. “You don't seem to know. I never saw a man in so vague a state.”

“You push me a little too much; I must have time to think of it,” the young man returned. “You know in my country they allow us plenty of time.” He had several little oddities of expression, of which he was perfectly conscious and which he found convenient, for they guarded him in a society condemning a lonely New Yorker who proceeded by native inspiration to much exposure; they ensured him the profit corresponding with sundry sacrifices. He had no great assortment of vernacular drolleries, conscious or unconscious, to draw upon; but the occasional use of one, discreetly chosen, made him appear simpler than he really was, and reasons determined his desiring this result. He was not simple; he was subtle, circumspect, shrewd—perfectly aware that he might make mistakes. There was a danger of his making one now—a mistake that might gravely count. He was resolved only to succeed. It is true that for a great success he would take a certain risk; but the risk was to be considered, and he gained time while he multiplied his guesses and talked about his country.

“You may take ten years if you like,” said Lady Beauchemin. “I'm in no hurry whatever to make you my brother-in-law. Only you must remember that you spoke to me first.”

“What did I say?”

“You spoke to me of Barb as the finest girl you had seen in England.”

“Oh I’m willing to stand by that.” And he had another try, which would have been transparent to a compatriot. “I guess I like her type.”

“I should think you might!”

“I like her all round—with all her peculiarities.”

“What do you mean by her peculiarities?”

“Well, she has some peculiar ideas,” said Jackson Lemon in a tone of the sweetest reasonableness, “and she has a peculiar way of speaking.”

“Ah, you can’t expect us to speak so well as you!” cried Lady Beauchemin.

“I don’t see why not.” He was perfectly candid. “You do some things much better.”

“We’ve our own ways at any rate, and we think them the best in the world—as they mostly are!” laughed Lady Beauchemin. “One of them’s not to let a gentleman devote himself to a girl for so long a time without some sense of responsibility. If you don’t wish to marry my sister you ought to go away.”

“I ought never to have come,” said Jackson Lemon.

“I can scarcely agree to that,” her ladyship good-naturedly replied, “as in that case I should have lost the pleasure of knowing you.”

“It would have spared you this duty, which you dislike very much.”

“Asking you about your intentions? Oh I don’t dislike it at all!” she cried. “It amuses me extremely.”

“Should you like your sister to marry me?” asked Jackson with great simplicity.

If he expected to take her by surprise he was disappointed: she was perfectly prepared to commit herself. “I should like it particularly. I think English and American society ought to be but one. I mean the best of each. A great whole.”

“Will you allow me to ask whether Lady Marmaduke suggested that to you?” he at once inquired.

“We’ve often talked of it.”

“Oh yes, that’s her aim.”

“Well, it’s my aim too. I think there’s a lot to be done.”

“And you’d like me to do it?”

“To begin it, precisely. Don’t you think we ought to see more of each other? I mean,” she took the precaution to explain, “just the best in each country.”

Jackson Lemon appeared to weigh it. “I’m afraid I haven’t any general ideas. If I should marry an English girl it wouldn’t be for the good of the species.”

“Well, we want to be mixed a little. That I’m sure of,” Lady Beauchemin said.

“You certainly got that from Lady Marmaduke,” he commented.

“It’s too tiresome, your not consenting to be serious! But my father will make you so,” she went on with her pleasant assurance. “I may as well let you know that he intends in a day or two to ask you your intentions. That’s all I wished to say to you. I think you ought to be prepared.”

“I’m much obliged to you. Lord Canterville will do quite right,” the young man allowed.

There was to his companion something really unfathomable in this little American doctor whom she had taken up on grounds of large policy and who, though he was assumed to have sunk the medical character, was neither handsome nor distinguished, but only immensely rich and quite original—since he wasn’t strictly insignificant. It was unfathomable to begin with that a medical man should be so rich, or that so rich a man should be medical; it was even, to an eye always gratified by suitability and, for that matter, almost everywhere recognising it, rather irritating. Jackson Lemon himself could have explained the anomaly better than any one else, but this was an explanation one could scarcely ask for. There were other things: his cool acceptance of certain situations; his general indisposition to make comprehension easy, let alone to guess it, with all his guessing, so much hindered; his way of taking refuge in jokes which at times had not even the merit of being American; his way too of appearing to be a suitor without being an aspirant. Lady Beauchemin, however, was, like her puzzling friend himself, prepared to run a certain risk. His reserves made him slippery, but that was only when one pressed. She flattered herself she could handle people lightly. “My father will be sure to act with perfect tact,” she said; “though of course if you shouldn’t care to be questioned you can go out of town.” She had the air of really wishing to act with the most natural delicacy.

“I don’t want to go out of town; I’m enjoying it far too much here,” Jackson cried. “And wouldn’t your father have a right to ask me what I should mean by that?”

Lady Beauchemin thought—she really wondered. But in a moment she exclaimed: “He’s incapable of saying anything vulgar!”

She hadn’t definitely answered his inquiry, and he was conscious of this; but he was quite ready to say to her a little later, as he guided her steps from the brougham to the strip of carpet which, beneath a rickety border of striped cloth and between a double row of waiting footmen, policemen and dingy amateurs of both sexes, stretched from the curbstone to the portal of the Trumpingtons: “Of course I shan’t wait for Lord Canterville to speak to me.”

He had been expecting some such announcement as this from Lady Beauchemin and really judged her father would do no more than his duty. He felt he should be prepared with an answer to the high challenge so prefigured, and he wondered at himself for still not having come to the point. Sidney Feeder’s question in the Park had made him feel rather pointless; it was the first direct allusion as yet made to his possible marriage by any one but Lady Beauchemin. None of his own people were in London; he was perfectly independent, and even if his mother had been within reach he couldn’t quite have consulted her on the subject. He loved her dearly, better than any one; but she wasn’t a woman to consult, for she approved of whatever he did: the fact of his doing it settled the case for it. He had been careful not to be too serious when he talked with Lady Barb’s relative; but he was very serious indeed as he thought over the matter within himself, which he did even among the diversions of the next half-hour, while he squeezed, obliquely and with tight arrests, through the crush in the Trumpingtons’ drawing-room. At the end of the half-hour he came away, and at the door he found Lady Beauchemin, from whom he had separated on entering the house and who, this time with a companion of her own sex, was awaiting her carriage and still “going on.” He gave her his arm to the street, and as she entered the vehicle she repeated that she hoped he’d just go out of town.

“Who then would tell me what to do?” he returned, looking at her through the window.

She might tell him what to do, but he felt free all the same; and he was determined this should continue. To prove it to himself he jumped into a hansom and drove back to Brook Street

and to his hotel instead of proceeding to a bright-windowed house in Portland Place where he knew he should after midnight find Lady Canterville and her daughters. He recalled a reference to that chance during his ride with Lady Barb, who would probably expect him; but it made him taste his liberty not to go, and he liked to taste his liberty. He was aware that to taste it in perfection he ought to “turn in”; but he didn’t turn in, he didn’t even take off his hat. He walked up and down his sitting-room with his head surmounted by this ornament, a good deal tipped back, and with his hands in his pockets. There were various cards stuck into the frame of the mirror over his chimney-piece, and every time he passed the place he seemed to see what was written on one of them—the name of the mistress of the house in Portland Place, his own name and in the lower left-hand corner “A small Dance.” Of course, now, he must make up his mind; he’d make it up by the next day: that was what he said to himself as he walked up and down; and according to his decision he’d speak to Lord Canterville or would take the night-express to Paris. It was better meanwhile he shouldn’t see Lady Barb. It was vivid to him, as he occasionally paused with fevered eyes on the card in the chimney-glass, that he had come pretty far; and he had come so far because he was under the spell—yes, he was under the spell, or whatever it was, of Lady Barb. There was no doubt whatever of this; he had a faculty for diagnosis and he knew perfectly what was the matter with him. He wasted no time in musing on the mystery of his state; in wondering if he mightn’t have escaped such a seizure by a little vigilance at first, or if it would abate should he go away. He accepted it frankly for the sake of the pleasure it gave him—the girl was the delight of most of his senses—and confined himself to considering how it would square with his general situation to marry her. The squaring wouldn’t at all necessarily follow from the fact that he was in love; too many other things would come in between. The most important of these was the change not only of the geographical but of the social standpoint for his wife, and a certain readjustment that it would involve in his own relation to things. He wasn’t inclined to readjustments, and there was no reason why he should be: his own position was in most respects so advantageous. But the girl tempted him almost irresistibly, satisfying his imagination both as a lover and as a student of the human organism; she was so blooming, so complete, of a type so rarely encountered in that degree of perfection. Jackson Lemon was no Anglomaniac, but he took peculiar pleasure in certain physical facts of the English—their complexion, their temperament, their tissue; and Lady Barb had affected him from the first as in flexible virginal form a wonderful compendium of these elements. There was something simple and robust in her beauty; it had the quietness of an old Greek statue, without the vulgarity of the modern simper or of contemporary prettiness. Her head was antique, and though her conversation was quite of the present period Jackson told himself that some primitive sincerity of soul couldn’t but match with the cast of her brow, of her bosom, of the back of her neck, and with the high carriage of her head, which was at once so noble and so easy. He saw her as she might be in the future, the beautiful mother of beautiful children in whom the appearance of “race” should be conspicuous. He should like his children to have the appearance of race as well as other signs of good stuff, and wasn’t unaware that he must take his precautions accordingly. A great many people in England had these indications, and it was a pleasure to him to see them, especially as no one had them so unmistakably as the second daughter of the Cantervilles. It would be a great luxury to call a creature so constituted one’s own; nothing could be more evident than that, because it made no difference that she wasn’t strikingly clever. Striking cleverness wasn’t one of the signs, nor a mark of the English complexion in general; it was associated with the modern simper, which was a result of modern nerves. If Jackson had wanted a wife all fiddlestrings of course he could have found her at home; but this tall fair girl, whose character, like her figure, appeared mainly to have been formed by riding across country, was differently put together. All the same would it suit his book, as they said in London, to marry her and transport her to New

York? He came back to this question; came back to it with a persistency which, had she been admitted to a view of it, would have tried the patience of Lady Beauchemin. She had been irritated more than once at his appearing to attach himself so exclusively to that horn of the dilemma—as if it could possibly fail to be a good thing for a little American doctor to marry the daughter of an English peer. It would have been more becoming in her ladyship's eyes that he should take this for granted a little more and take the consent of her ladyship's—of their ladyships'—family a little less. They looked at the matter so differently! Jackson Lemon was conscious that if he should propose for the young woman who so strongly appealed to him it would be because it suited him, and not because it suited his possible sisters-in-law. He believed himself to act in all things by his own faculty of choice and volition, a feature of his outfit in which he had the highest confidence.

It would have seemed, indeed, that just now this part of his inward machine was not working very regularly, since, though he had come home to go to bed, the stroke of half-past twelve saw him jump not into his sheets but into a hansom which the whistle of the porter had summoned to the door of his hotel and in which he rattled off to Portland Place. Here he found—in a very large house—an assembly of five hundred persons and a band of music concealed in a bower of azaleas. Lady Canterville had not arrived; he wandered through the rooms and assured himself of that. He also discovered a very good conservatory, where there were banks and pyramids of azaleas. He watched the top of the staircase, but it was a long time before he saw what he was looking for, and his impatience grew at last extreme. The reward, however, when it came, was all he could have desired. It consisted of a clear smile from Lady Barb, who stood behind her mother while the latter extended vague finger-tips to the hostess. The entrance of this charming woman and her beautiful daughters—always a noticeable incident—was effected with a certain spread of commotion, and just now it was agreeable to Jackson to feel this produced impression concern him probably more than any one else in the house. Tall, dazzling, indifferent, looking about her as if she saw very little, Lady Barb was certainly a figure round which a young man's fancy might revolve. Very rare, yet very quiet and very simple, she had little manner and little movement; but her detachment was not a vulgar art. She appeared to efface herself, to wait till, in the natural course, she should be attended to; and in this there was evidently no exaggeration, for she was too proud not to have perfect confidence. Her sister, quite another affair, with a little surprised smile which seemed to say that in her extreme innocence she was still prepared for anything, having heard, indirectly, such extraordinary things about society, was much more impatient and more expressive, and had always projected across a threshold the pretty radiance of her eyes and teeth before her mother's name was announced. Lady Canterville was by many persons more admired and more championed than her daughters; she had kept even more beauty than she had given them, and it was a beauty which had been called intellectual. She had extraordinary sweetness, without any definite professions; her manner was mild almost to tenderness; there was even in it a degree of thoughtful pity, of human comprehension. Moreover her features were perfect, and nothing could be more gently gracious than a way she had of speaking, or rather of listening, to people with her head inclined a little to one side. Jackson liked her without trepidation, and she had certainly been “awfully nice” to him. He approached Lady Barb as soon as he could do so without an appearance of rushing up; he remarked to her that he hoped very much she wouldn't dance. He was a master of the art which flourishes in New York above every other, and had guided her through a dozen waltzes with a skill which, as she felt, left absolutely nothing to be desired. But dancing was not his business to-night. She smiled without scorn at the expression of his hope.

“That’s what mamma has brought us here for,” she said; “she doesn’t like it if we don’t dance.”

“How does she know whether she likes it or not? You always have danced.”

“Oh, once there was a place where I didn’t,” said Lady Barb.

He told her he would at any rate settle it with her mother, and persuaded her to wander with him into the conservatory, where coloured lights were suspended among the plants and a vault of verdure arched above. In comparison with the other rooms this retreat was far and strange. But they were not alone; half a-dozen other couples appeared to have had reasons as good as theirs. The gloom, none the less, was rosy with the slopes of azalea and suffused with mitigated music, which made it possible to talk without consideration of one’s neighbours. In spite of this, though it was only in looking back on the scene later that Lady Barb noted the fact, these dispersed couples were talking very softly. She didn’t look at them; she seemed to take it that virtually she was alone with the young American. She said something about the flowers, about the fragrance of the air; for all answer to which he asked her, as he stood there before her, a question that might have startled her by its suddenness.

“How do people who marry in England ever know each other before marriage? They have no chance.”

“I’m sure I don’t know,” she returned. “I never was married.”

“It’s very different in my country. There a man may see much of a girl; he may freely call on her, he may be constantly alone with her. I wish you allowed that over here.”

Lady Barb began to examine the less ornamental side of her fan as if it had never invited her before. “It must be so very odd, America,” she then concluded.

“Well, I guess in that matter we’re right. Over here it’s a leap in the dark.”

“I’m sure I don’t know,” she again made answer. She had folded her fan; she stretched out her arm mechanically and plucked a sprig of azalea.

“I guess it doesn’t signify after all,” Jackson however proceeded. “Don’t you know they say that love’s blind at the best?” His keen young face was bent upon hers; his thumbs were in the pockets of his trousers; he smiled with a slight strain, showing his fine teeth. She said nothing, only pulling her azalea to pieces. She was usually so quiet that this small movement was striking.

“This is the first time I’ve seen you in the least without a lot of people,” he went on.

“Yes, it’s very tiresome.”

“I’ve been sick of it. I didn’t want even to come here to-night.”

She hadn’t met his eyes, though she knew they were seeking her own. But now she looked at him straight. She had never objected to his appearance, and in this respect had no repugnance to surmount. She liked a man to be tall and handsome, and Jackson Lemon was neither; but when she was sixteen, and as tall herself as she was to be at twenty, she had been in love—for three weeks—with one of her cousins, a little fellow in the Hussars, who was shorter even than the American, was of inches markedly fewer than her own. This proved that distinction might be independent of stature—not that she had ever reasoned it out. Doctor Lemon’s facial spareness and his bright ocular attention, which had a fine edge and a marked scale, unfolded and applied rule-fashion, affected her as original, and she thought of them as rather formidable to a good many people, which would do very well in a husband of hers. As she made this reflexion it of course never occurred to her that she herself might suffer true

measurement, for she was not a sacrificial lamb. She felt sure his features expressed a mind—a mind immensely useful, like a good hack or whatever, and that he knew how to employ. She would never have supposed him a doctor; though indeed when all was said this was very negative and didn't account for the way he imposed himself.

“Why, then, did you come?” she asked in answer to his last speech.

“Because it seems to me after all better to see you this way than not to see you at all. I want to know you better.”

“I don't think I ought to stay here,” she said as she looked round her.

“Don't go till I've told you I love you,” the young man distinctly replied.

She made no exclamation, indulged in no start; he couldn't see even that she changed colour. She took his request with a noble simplicity, her head erect and her eyes lowered. “I don't think you've quite a right to tell me that.”

“Why not?” Jackson demanded. “I want to claim the right. I want you to give it to me.”

“I can't—I don't know you. You've said that yourself.”

“Can't you have a little faith?” he at once asked, speaking as fast as if he were not even a little afraid to urge the pace. “That will help us to know each other better. It's disgusting, the want of opportunity; even at Pasterns I could scarcely get a walk with you. But I've the most absolute trust of you. I *know* I love you, and I couldn't do more than that at the end of six months. I love your beauty, I love your nature, I love you from head to foot. Don't move, please don't move.” He lowered his tone now, but it went straight to her ear and we must believe conveyed a certain eloquence. For himself, after he had heard himself say these words, all his being was in a glow. It was a luxury to speak to her of her beauty; it brought him nearer to her than he had ever been. But the colour had come into her face and seemed to remind him that her beauty wasn't all. “Everything about you is true and sweet and grand,” he went on; “everything's dear to me. I'm sure you're good. I don't know what you think of me; I asked Lady Beauchemin to tell me, and she told me to judge for myself. Well, then, I judge you like me. Haven't I a right to assume that till the contrary's proved? May I speak to your father? That's what I want to know. I've been waiting, but now what should I wait for longer? I want to be able to tell him you've given me hope. I suppose I ought to speak to him first. I meant to, to-morrow, but meanwhile, to-night, I thought I'd just put this in. In my country it wouldn't matter particularly. You must see all that over there for yourself. If you should tell me not to speak to your father I wouldn't—I'd wait. But I like better to ask your leave to speak to him than ask his to speak to you.”

His voice had sunk almost to a whisper, but, though it trembled, the fact of his pleading gave it intensity. He had the same attitude, his thumbs in his trousers, his neat attentive young head, his smile, which was a matter of course; no one would have imagined what he was saying. She had listened without moving and at the end she raised her eyes. They rested on his own a moment, and he remembered for a long time the look, the clear effluence of splendid maidenhood, as deep as a surrender, that passed her lids.

Disconcertingly, however, there was no surrender in what she answered. “You may say anything you please to my father, but I don't wish to hear any more. You've said too much, considering how little idea you've given me before.”

“I was watching you,” said Jackson Lemon.

She held her head higher, still looking straight at him. Then quite seriously, “I don't like to be watched,” she returned.

“You shouldn’t be so beautiful then. Won’t you give me a word of hope?”

“I’ve never supposed I should marry a foreigner,” said Lady Barb.

“Do you call me a foreigner?”

“I think your ideas are very different and your country different. You’ve told me so yourself.”

“I should like to show it to you. I would make you like it.”

“I’m not sure what you’d make me do,” she went on very honestly.

“Nothing you don’t want.”

“I’m sure you’d try,” she smiled as for more accommodation.

“Well,” said Jackson Lemon, “I’m after all trying now.”

To this she returned that she must go to her mother, and he was obliged to lead her out of the place. Lady Canterville was not immediately found, so that he had time to keep it up a little as they went. “Now that I’ve spoken I’m very happy.”

“Perhaps you’re happy too soon.”

“Ah, don’t say that, Lady Barb,” he tenderly groaned.

“Of course I must think of it.”

“Of course you must!” Jackson abundantly concurred. “I’ll speak to your father to-morrow.”

“I can’t fancy what he’ll say.”

“How can he dislike me? But I guess he doesn’t!” the young man cried in a tone which Lady Beauchemin, had she heard him, would have felt connected with his general retreat upon the quaint. What Lady Beauchemin’s sister thought of it is not recorded; but there is perhaps a clue to her opinion in the answer she made him after a moment’s silence: “Really, you know, you *are* a foreigner!” With this she turned her back, for she was already in her mother’s hands. Jackson Lemon said a few words to Lady Canterville; they were chiefly about its being very hot. She gave him her vague sweet attention, as if he were saying something ingenious but of which she missed the point. He could see she was thinking of the ways of her daughter Agatha, whose attitude toward the contemporary young man was wanting in the perception of differences—a madness too much without method; she was evidently not occupied with Lady Barb, who was more to be depended on. This young woman never met her suitor’s eyes again; she let her own rest rather ostentatiously on other objects. At last he was going away without a glance from her. Her mother had asked him to luncheon for the morrow, and he had said he would come if she would promise him he should see his lordship. “I can’t pay you another visit till I’ve had some talk with him.”

“I don’t see why not, but if I speak to him I daresay he will be at home,” she returned.

“It will be worth his while!” At this he almost committed himself; and he left the house reflecting that as he had never proposed to a girl before he couldn’t be expected to know how women demean themselves in this emergency. He had heard indeed that Lady Barb had had no end of offers; and though he supposed the number probably overstated, as it always is, he had to infer that her way of appearing suddenly to have dropped him was but the usual behaviour for the occasion.

III

At her mother's the next day she was absent from luncheon, and Lady Canterville mentioned to him—he didn't ask—that she had gone to see a dear old great-aunt who was also her godmother and who lived at Roehampton. Lord Canterville was not present, but Jackson learned from his hostess that he had promised her he would come in exactly at three o'clock. Our young man lunched with her ladyship and the children, who appeared in force at this repast, all the younger girls being present, and two little boys, the juniors of the two sons who were in their teens. Doctor Lemon, who was fond of children and thought these absolutely the finest in the world—magnificent specimens of a magnificent brood, such as it would be so satisfactory in future days to see about his own knee—Doctor Lemon felt himself treated as one of the family, but was not frightened by what he read into the privilege of his admission. Lady Canterville showed no sense whatever of his having mooted the question of becoming her son-in-law, and he believed the absent object of his attentions hadn't told her of their evening's talk. This idea gave him pleasure; he liked to think Lady Barb was judging him for herself. Perhaps indeed she was taking counsel of the old lady at Roehampton: he saw himself the sort of lover of whom a godmother would approve. Godmothers, in his mind, were mainly associated with fairy-tales—he had had no baptismal sponsors of his own; and that point of view would be favourable to a young man with a great deal of gold who had suddenly arrived from a foreign country—an apparition surely in a proper degree elfish. He made up his mind he should like Lady Canterville as a mother-in-law; she would be too well-bred to meddle. Her husband came in at three o'clock, just after they had risen, and observed that it was very good in him to have waited.

"I haven't waited," Jackson replied with his watch in his hand; "you're punctual to the minute."

I know not how Lord Canterville may have judged his young friend, but Jackson Lemon had been told more than once in his life that he would have been all right if he hadn't been so literal. After he had lighted a cigarette in his lordship's "den," a large brown apartment on the ground-floor, which partook at once of the nature of an office and of that of a harness-room—it couldn't have been called in any degree a library or even a study—he went straight to the point in these terms: "Well now, Lord Canterville, I feel I ought to let you know without more delay that I'm in love with Lady Barb and that I should like to make her my wife." So he spoke, puffing his cigarette, with his conscious but unextenuating eyes fixed on his host.

No man, as I have intimated, bore better being looked at than this noble personage; he seemed to bloom in the envious warmth of human contemplation and never appeared so faultless as when most exposed. "My dear fellow, my dear fellow," he murmured almost in disparagement, stroking his ambrosial beard from before the empty fireplace. He lifted his eyebrows, but looked perfectly good-natured.

"Are you surprised, sir?" Jackson asked.

"Why I suppose a fellow's surprised at any one's wanting one of his children. He sometimes feels the weight of that sort of thing so much, you know. He wonders what use on earth another man can make of them." And Lord Canterville laughed pleasantly through the copious fringe of his lips.

"I only want one of them," said his guest, laughing too, but with a lighter organ.

"Polygamy would be rather good for the parents. However, Luke told me the other night she knew you to be looking the way you speak of."

"Yes, I mentioned to Lady Beauchemin that I love Lady Barb, and she seemed to think it natural."

“Oh I suppose there’s no want of nature in it! But, my dear fellow, I really don’t know what to say,” his lordship added.

“Of course you’ll have to think of it.” In saying which Jackson felt himself make the most liberal concession to the point of view of his interlocutor; being perfectly aware that in his own country it wasn’t left much to the parents to think of.

“I shall have to talk it over with my wife.”

“Well, Lady Canterville has been very kind to me; I hope she’ll continue.”

Lord Canterville passed a large fair hand, as for inspiration, over his beard. “My dear fellow, we’re excellent friends. No one could appreciate you more than Lady Canterville. Of course we can only consider such a question on the—a—the highest grounds. You’d never want to marry without knowing—as it were—exactly what you’re doing. I, on my side, naturally, you know, am bound to do the best I can for my own poor child. At the same time, of course, we don’t want to spend our time in—a—walking round the horse. We want to get at the truth about him.” It was settled between them after a little that the truth about Lemon’s business was that he knew to a certainty the state of his affections and was in a position to pretend to the hand of a young lady who, Lord Canterville might say without undue swagger, had a right to expect to do as well as any girl about the place.

“I should think she had,” Doctor Lemon said. “She’s a very rare type.”

His entertainer had a pleasant blank look. “She’s a clever well-grown girl and she takes her fences like a grasshopper. Does she know all this, by the way?”

“Oh yes, I told her last night.”

Again Lord Canterville had the air, unusual with him, of sounding, at some expense of precious moments, the expression of face of a visitor so unacquainted with shyness. “I’m not sure you ought to have done that, you know.”

“I couldn’t have spoken to you first—I couldn’t,” said Jackson Lemon. “I meant to; but it stuck in my crop.”

“They don’t in your country, I guess,” his lordship amicably laughed.

“Well, not as a general thing. However, I find it very pleasant to have the whole thing out with you now.” And in truth it was very pleasant. Nothing could be easier, friendlier, more informal, than Lord Canterville’s manner, which implied all sorts of equality, especially that of age and fortune, and made our young man feel at the end of three minutes almost as if he too were a beautifully-preserved and somewhat straitened nobleman of sixty, with the views of a man of the world about his own marriage. Jackson perceived that Lord Canterville waived the point of his having spoken first to the girl herself, and saw in this indulgence a just concession to the ardour of young affection. For his lordship seemed perfectly to appreciate the sentimental side—at least so far as it was embodied in his visitor—when he said without deprecation: “Did she give you any encouragement?”

“Well, she didn’t box my ears. She told me she’d think of it, but that I must speak to you. Naturally, however, I shouldn’t have said what I did if I hadn’t made up my mind during the last fortnight that I’m not disagreeable to her.”

“Ah, my dear young man, women are odd fish!” this parent exclaimed rather unexpectedly. “But of course you know all that,” he added in an instant; “you take the general risk.”

“I’m perfectly willing to take the general risk. The particular risk strikes me as small.”

“Well, upon my honour I don’t really know my girls. You see a man’s time in England is tremendously taken up; but I daresay it’s the same in your country. Their mother knows them—I think I had better send for their mother. If you don’t mind,” Lord Canterville wound up, “I’ll just suggest that she join us here.”

“I’m rather afraid of you both together, but if it will settle it any quicker—!” Jackson said. His companion rang the bell and, when a servant appeared, despatched him with a message to her ladyship. While they were waiting the young man remembered how easily he could give a more definite account of his pecuniary basis. He had simply stated before that he was abundantly able to marry; he shrank from putting himself forward as a monster of money. With his excellent taste he wished to appeal to Lord Canterville primarily as a gentleman. But now that he had to make a double impression he bethought himself of his millions, for millions were always impressive. “It strikes me as only fair to let you know that my fortune’s really considerable.”

“Yes, I daresay you’re beastly rich,” said Lord Canterville with a natural and visible faith.

“Well, I represent, all told, some seven millions.”

“Seven millions?”

“I count in dollars. Upwards of a million and a half sterling.”

Lord Canterville looked at him from head to foot, exhaling with great promptitude an air of cheerful resignation to a form of grossness threatening to become common. Then he said with a touch of that inconsequence of which he had already given a glimpse: “What the deuce in that case possessed you to turn doctor?”

Jackson Lemon coloured a little and demurred, but bethought himself of his best of reasons. “Why, my having simply the talent for it.”

“Of course I don’t for a moment doubt your ability. But don’t you,” his lordship candidly asked, “find it rather a bore?”

“I don’t practise much. I’m rather ashamed to say that.”

“Ah well, of course in your country it’s different. I daresay you’ve got a door-plate, eh?”

“Oh yes, and a tin sign tied to the balcony!” Jackson laughed.

Here the joke was beyond his friend, who but went on: “What on earth did your father say to it?”

“To my going into medicine? He said he’d be hanged if he’d take any of my doses. He didn’t think I should succeed; he wanted me to go into the house.”

“Into the House—a—?” Lord Canterville just wondered. “That would be into your Congress?”

“Ah no, not so bad as that. Into the store,” Jackson returned with that refinement of the ingenuous which he reserved for extreme cases.

His host stared, not venturing even for the moment to hazard an interpretation; and before a solution had presented itself Lady Canterville was on the scene.

“My dear, I thought we had better see you. Do you know he wants to marry our second girl?” It was in these simple and lucid terms that her husband acquainted her with the question.

She expressed neither surprise nor elation; she simply stood there smiling, her head a little inclined to the side and her beautiful benevolence well to the front. Her charming eyes rested on Doctor Lemon's; and, though they showed a shade of anxiety for a matter of such importance, his own discovered in them none of the coldness of calculation. "Are you talking about dear Barb?" she asked in a moment and as if her thoughts had been far away.

Of course they were talking about dear Barb, and Jackson repeated to her what he had said to her noble spouse. He had thought it all over and his mind was quite made up. Moreover, he had spoken to the young woman.

"Did she tell you that, my dear?" his lordship asked while he lighted another cigar.

She gave no heed to this inquiry, which had been vague and accidental on the speaker's part; she simply remarked to their visitor that the thing was very serious and that they had better sit down a moment. In an instant he was near her on the sofa on which she had placed herself and whence she still smiled up at her husband with her air of luxurious patience.

"Barb has told me nothing," she dropped, however, after a little.

"That proves how much she cares for me!" Jackson declared with instant lucidity.

Lady Canterville looked as if she thought this really too ingenious, almost as professional as if their talk were a consultation; but her husband went, all gaily, straighter to the point. "Ah well, if she cares for you I don't object."

This was a little ambiguous; but before the young man had time to look into it his hostess put a bland question. "Should you expect her to live in America?"

"Oh yes. That's my home, you know."

"Shouldn't you be living sometimes in England?"

"Oh yes—we'll come over and see you." He was in love, he wanted to marry, he wanted to be genial and to commend himself to the family; yet it was in his nature not to accept conditions save in so far as they met his taste, not to tie himself or, as they said in New York, give himself away. He preferred in any transaction his own terms to those of any one else, so that the moment Lady Canterville gave signs of wishing to extract a promise he was on his guard.

"She'll find it very different; perhaps she won't like it," her ladyship suggested.

"If she likes me she'll like my country," Jackson Lemon returned with decision.

"He tells me he has a plate on his door," Lord Canterville put in for the right pleasant tone.

"We must talk to her of course; we must understand how she feels"—and his wife looked, though still gracious, more nobly responsible.

"Please don't discourage her, Lady Canterville," Jackson firmly said; "and give me a chance to talk to her a little more myself. You haven't given me much chance, you know."

"We don't offer our daughters to people, however amiable, Mr. Lemon." Her charming grand manner rather quickened.

"She isn't like some women in London, you know," Lord Canterville helpfully explained; "you see we rather stave off the evil day: we like to be together." And Jackson certainly, if the idea had been presented to him, would have said that No, decidedly, Lady Barb hadn't been thrown at him.

“Of course not,” he declared in answer to her mother’s remark. “But you know you mustn’t decline overtures too much either; you mustn’t make a poor fellow wait too long. I admire her, I love her, more than I can say; I give you my word of honour for that.”

“He seems to think that settles it,” said Lord Canterville, shining richly down at the young American from his place before the cold chimney-piece.

“Certainly that’s what we desire, Philip,” her ladyship returned with an equal grace.

“Lady Barb believes it; I’m sure she does!” Jackson exclaimed with spirit. “Why should I pretend to be in love with her if I’m not?”

Lady Canterville received this appeal in silence, and her husband, with just the least air in the world of repressed impatience, began to walk up and down the room. He was a man of many engagements, and he had been closeted for more than a quarter of an hour with the young American doctor. “Do you imagine you should come often to England?” Lady Canterville asked as if to think of everything.

“I’m afraid I can’t tell you that; of course we shall do whatever seems best.” He was prepared to suppose they should cross the Atlantic every summer—that prospect was by no means displeasing to him; but he wasn’t prepared to tie himself, as he would have said, up to it, nor up to anything in particular. It was in his mind not as an overt pretension but as a tacit implication that he should treat with the parents of his presumed bride on a footing of perfect equality; and there would somehow be nothing equal if he should begin to enter into engagements that didn’t belong to the essence of the matter. They were to give their daughter and he was to take her: in this arrangement there would be as much on one side as on the other. But beyond it he had nothing to ask of them; there was nothing he was calling on them to promise, and his own pledges therefore would have no equivalent. Whenever his wife should wish it she should come over and see her people. Her home was to be in New York; but he was tacitly conscious that on the question of absences he should be very liberal, and there was meanwhile something in the very grain of his character that forbade he should be eagerly yielding about times and dates.

Lady Canterville looked at her spouse, but he was now not attentive; he was taking a peep at his watch. In a moment, however, he threw out a remark to the effect that he thought it a capital thing the two countries should become more united, and there was nothing that would bring it about better than a few of the best people on both sides pairing-off together. The English indeed had begun it; a lot of fellows had brought over a lot of pretty girls, and it was quite fair play that the Americans should take their pick. They were all one race, after all; and why shouldn’t they make one society—the best of both sides, of course? Jackson Lemon smiled as he recognised Lady Marmaduke’s great doctrine, and he was pleased to think Lady Beauchemin had some influence with her father; for he was sure the great old boy, as he mentally designated his host, had got all this from her, though he expressed himself less happily than the cleverest of his daughters. Our hero had no objection to make to it, especially if there were aught in it that would really help his case. But it was not in the least on these high grounds he had sought the hand of Lady Barb. He wanted her not in order that her people and his—the best on both sides!—should make one society; he wanted her simply because he wanted her. Lady Canterville smiled, but she seemed to have another thought.

“I quite appreciate what my husband says, but I don’t see why poor Barb should be the one to begin.”

“I daresay she’ll like it,” said his lordship as if he were attempting a short cut. “They say you spoil your women awfully.”

“She’s not one of their women yet,” Lady Canterville remarked in the sweetest tone in the world; and then she added without Jackson Lemon’s knowing exactly what she meant: “It seems so strange.”

He was slightly irritated, and these vague words perhaps added to the feeling. There had been no positive opposition to his suit, and both his entertainers were most kind; but he felt them hold back a little, and though he hadn’t expected them to throw themselves on his neck he was rather disappointed—his pride was touched. Why should they hesitate? He knew himself such a good *parti*. It was not so much his noble host—it was Lady Canterville. As he saw her lord and master look covertly and a second time at his watch he could have believed him glad to settle the matter on the spot. Lady Canterville seemed to wish their aspirant to come forward more, to give certain assurances and pledges. He felt he was ready to say or do anything that was a matter of proper form, but he couldn’t take the tone of trying to purchase her ladyship’s assent, penetrated as he was with the conviction that such a man as he could be trusted to care for his wife rather more than an impecunious British peer and *his* wife could be supposed—with the lights he had acquired on English society—to care even for the handsomest of a dozen children. It was a mistake on the old lady’s part not to recognise that. He humoured this to the extent of saying just a little dryly: “My wife shall certainly have everything she wants.”

“He tells me he’s disgustingly rich,” Lord Canterville added, pausing before their companion with his hands in his pockets.

“I’m glad to hear it; but it isn’t so much that,” she made answer, sinking back a little on her sofa. If it wasn’t that she didn’t say what it was, though she had looked for a moment as if she were going to. She only raised her eyes to her husband’s face, she asked for inspiration. I know not whether she found it, but in a moment she said to Jackson Lemon, seeming to imply that it was quite another point: “Do you expect to continue your profession?”

He had no such intention, so far as his profession meant getting up at three o’clock in the morning to assuage the ills of humanity; but here, as before, the touch of such a question instantly stiffened him. “Oh, my profession! I rather wince at that grand old name. I’ve neglected my work so scandalously that I scarce know on what terms with it I shall be—though hoping for the best when once I’m right there again.”

Lady Canterville received these remarks in silence, fixing her eyes once more upon her husband’s. But his countenance really rather failed her; still with his hands in his pockets, save when he needed to remove his cigar from his lips, he went and looked out of the window. “Of course we know you don’t practise, and when you’re a married man you’ll have less time even than now. But I should really like to know if they call you Doctor over there.”

“Oh yes, universally. We’re almost as fond of titles as your people.”

“I don’t call that a title,” her ladyship smiled.

“It’s not so good as duke or marquis, I admit; but we have to take what we’ve got.”

“Oh bother, what does it signify?” his lordship demanded from his place at the window. “I used to have a horse named Doctor, and a jolly good one too.”

“Don’t you call bishops Doctors? Well, then, call me Bishop!” Jackson laughed.

Lady Canterville visibly didn’t follow. “I don’t care for *any* titles,” she nevertheless observed. “I don’t see why a gentleman shouldn’t be called Mr.”

It suddenly appeared to her young friend that there was something helpless, confused and even slightly comical in her state. The impression was mollifying, and he too, like Lord Canterville, had begun to long for a short cut. He relaxed a moment and, leaning toward his hostess with a smile and his hands on his little knees, he said softly: "It seems to me a question of no importance. All I desire is that you should call me your son-in-law."

She gave him her hand and he pressed it almost affectionately. Then she got up, remarking that before anything was decided she must see her child, must learn from her own lips the state of her feelings. "I don't like at all her not having spoken to me already," she added.

"Where has she gone—to Roehampton? I daresay she has told it all to her godmother," said Lord Canterville.

"She won't have much to tell, poor girl!" Jackson freely commented. "I must really insist on seeing with more freedom the person I wish to marry."

"You shall have all the freedom you want in two or three days," said Lady Canterville. She irradiated all her charity; she appeared to have accepted him and yet still to be making tacit assumptions. "Aren't there certain things to be talked of first?"

"Certain things, dear lady?"

She looked at her husband, and though he was still at his window he felt it this time in her silence and had to come away and speak. "Oh she means settlements and that kind of thing." This was an allusion that came with a much better grace from the father.

Jackson turned from one of his companions to the other; he coloured a little and his self-control was perhaps a trifle strained. "Settlements? We don't make them in my country. You may be sure I shall make a proper provision for my wife."

"My dear fellow, over here—in our class, you know—it's the custom," said Lord Canterville with a truer ease in his face at the thought that the discussion was over.

"I've my own ideas," Jackson returned with even greater confidence.

"It seems to me it's a question for the solicitors to discuss," Lady Canterville suggested.

"They may discuss it as much as they please"—the young man showed amusement. He thought he saw his solicitors discussing it! He had indeed his own ideas. He opened the door for his hostess and the three passed out of the room together, walking into the hall in a silence that expressed a considerable awkwardness. A note had been struck which grated and scratched a little. A pair of shining footmen, at their approach, rose from a bench to a great altitude and stood there like sentinels presenting arms. Jackson stopped, looking for a moment into the interior of his hat, which he had in his hand. Then raising his keen eyes he fixed them a moment on those of Lady Canterville, addressing her instinctively rather than his other critic. "I guess you and Lord Canterville had better leave it to me!"

"We have our traditions, Mr. Lemon," said her ladyship with a firm grace. "I imagine you don't know—!" she gravely breathed.

Lord Canterville laid his hand on their visitor's shoulder. "My dear boy, those fellows will settle it in three minutes."

"Very likely they will!" said Jackson Lemon. Then he asked of Lady Canterville when he might see Lady Barb.

She turned it spacioously over. "I'll write you a note."

One of the tall footmen at the end of the impressive vista had opened wide the portals, as if even he were aware of the dignity to which the small strange gentleman had virtually been raised. But Jackson lingered; he was visibly unsatisfied, though apparently so little conscious he was unsatisfying. "I don't think you understand me."

"Your ideas are certainly different," said Lady Canterville.

His lordship, however, made comparatively light of it. "If the girl understands you that's enough!"

"Mayn't *she* write to me?" Jackson asked of her mother. "I certainly must write to her, you know, if you won't let me see her."

"Oh yes, you may write to her, Mr. Lemon."

There was a point, for a moment, in the look he returned on this, while he said to himself that if necessary he would transmit his appeal through the old lady at Roehampton. "All right—good-bye. You know what I want at any rate." Then as he was going he turned and added: "You needn't be afraid I won't always bring her over in the hot weather!"

"In the hot weather?" Lady Canterville murmured with vague visions of the torrid zone. Jackson however quitted the house with the sense he had made great concessions.

His host and hostess passed into a small morning-room and—Lord Canterville having taken up his hat and stick to go out again—stood there a moment, face to face. Then his lordship spoke in a summary manner. "It's clear enough he wants her."

"There's something so odd about him," Lady Canterville answered. "Fancy his speaking so about settlements!"

"You had better give him his head. He'll go much quieter."

"He's so obstinate—very obstinate; it's easy to see that. And he seems to think," she went on, "that a girl in your daughter's position can be married from one day to the other—with a ring and a new frock—like a housemaid."

"Well that, of course, over there is the kind of thing. But he seems really to have a most extraordinary fortune, and every one does say they give their women *carte blanche*."

"*Carte blanche* is not what Barb wants; she wants a settlement. She wants a definite income," said Lady Canterville; "she wants to be safe."

He looked at her rather straight. "Has she told you so? I thought you said—" And then he stopped. "I beg your pardon," he added.

She didn't explain her inconsequence; she only remarked that American fortunes were notoriously insecure; one heard of nothing else; they melted away like smoke. It was their own duty to their child to demand that something should be fixed.

Well, he met this in his way. "He has a million and a half sterling. I can't make out what he does with it."

She rose to it without a flutter. "Our child should have, then, something very handsome."

"I agree, my dear; but you must manage it; you must consider it; you must send for Hardman. Only take care you don't put him off; it may be a very good opening, you know. There's a great deal to be done out there; I believe in all that," Lord Canterville went on in the tone of a conscientious parent.

"There's no doubt that he *is* a doctor—in some awful place," his wife brooded.

“He may be a pedlar for all I care.”

“If they should go out I think Agatha might go with them,” her ladyship continued in the same tone, but a little disconnectedly.

“You may send them all out if you like. Goodbye!”

The pair embraced, but her hand detained him a moment. “Don’t you think he’s greatly in love?”

“Oh yes, he’s very bad—but he’s a sharp little beggar.”

“She certainly quite likes him,” Lady Canterville stated rather formally as they separated.

IV

Jackson Lemon had said to Dr. Feeder in the Park that he would call on Mr. and Mrs. Freer; but three weeks were to elapse before he knocked at their door in Jermyn Street. In the meantime he had met them at dinner and Mrs. Freer had told him how much she hoped he would find time to come and see her. She had not reproached him nor shaken her finger at him, and her clemency, which was calculated and very characteristic of her, touched him so much—for he was in fault, she was one of his mother’s oldest and best friends—that he very soon presented himself. It was on a fine Sunday afternoon, rather late, and the region of Jermyn Street looked forsaken and inanimate; the native dulness of the brick scenery reigned undisputed. Mrs. Freer, however, was at home, resting on a lodging-house sofa—an angular couch draped in faded chintz—before she went to dress for dinner. She made the young man very welcome; she told him again how much she had been thinking of him; she had longed so for a chance to talk with him. He immediately guessed what she had in her mind, and he then remembered that Sidney Feeder had named to him what it was this pair took upon themselves to say. This had provoked him at the time, but he had forgotten it afterward; partly because he became aware that same night of his wanting to make the “young marchioness” his own and partly because since then he had suffered much greater annoyance. Yes, the poor young man, so conscious of liberal intentions, of a large way of looking at the future, had had much to irritate and disgust him. He had seen the mistress of his affections but three or four times, and had received a letter from Mr. Hardman, Lord Canterville’s solicitor, asking him, in terms the most obsequious it was true, to designate some gentleman of the law with whom the preliminaries of his marriage to Lady Barbarina Clement might be arranged. He had given Mr. Hardman the name of such a functionary, but he had written by the same post to his own solicitor—for whose services in other matters he had had much occasion, Jackson Lemon being distinctly contentious—instructing him that he was at liberty to meet that gentleman, but not at liberty to entertain any proposals as to the odious English idea of a settlement. If marrying Jackson Lemon wasn’t settlement enough the house of Canterville had but to alter their point of view. It was quite out of the question he should alter his. It would perhaps be difficult to explain the strong dislike he entertained to the introduction into his prospective union of this harsh diplomatic element; it was as if they mistrusted him and suspected him; as if his hands were to be tied so that he shouldn’t be able to handle his own fortune as he thought best. It wasn’t the idea of parting with his money that displeased him, for he flattered himself he had plans of expenditure for his wife beyond even the imagination of her distinguished parents. It struck him even that they were fools not to have felt subtly sure they should make a much better thing of it by leaving him perfectly free. This intervention of the solicitor was a nasty little English tradition—totally at variance with the large spirit of American habits—to which he wouldn’t submit. It wasn’t his way to submit when he disapproved: why should he change his way on this occasion when the matter lay so near him?

These reflexions and a hundred more had flowed freely through his mind for several days before his call in Jermyn Street, and they had engendered a lively indignation and a bitter sense of wrong. They had even introduced, as may be imagined, a certain awkwardness into his relations with the house of Canterville, of which indeed it may be said that these amenities were for the moment virtually suspended. His first interview with Lady Barb after his conference with the old couple, as he called her august elders, had been as frank, had been as sweet, as he could have desired. Lady Canterville had at the end of three days sent him an invitation—five words on a card—asking him to dine with them on the morrow quite *en famille*. This had been the only formal intimation that his engagement to her daughter was recognised; for even at the family banquet, which included half a dozen guests of pleasant address but vague affiliation, there had been no reference on the part either of his host or his hostess to the subject of their converse in Lord Canterville's den. The only allusion was a wandering ray, once or twice, in Lady Barb's own fine eyes. When, however, after dinner, she strolled away with him into the music-room, which was lighted and empty, to play for him something out of "Carmen," of which he had spoken at table, and when the young couple were allowed to enjoy for upwards of an hour, unmolested, the comparative privacy of that elegant refuge, he felt Lady Canterville definitely to count on him. She didn't believe in any serious difficulties. Neither did he then; and that was why it was not to be condoned that there should be a vain appearance of them. The arrangements, he supposed her ladyship would have said, were pending, and indeed they were; for he had already given orders in Bond Street for the setting of an extraordinary number of diamonds. Lady Barb, at any rate, during that hour he spent with her, had had nothing to say about arrangements; and it had been an hour of pure satisfaction. She had seated herself at the piano and had played perpetually, in a soft incoherent manner, while he leaned over the instrument, very close to her, and said everything that came into his head. She was braver and handsomer than ever and looked at him as if she liked him out and out.

This was all he expected of her, for it didn't belong to the cast of her beauty to betray a vulgar infatuation. That beauty was clearly all he had believed it from the first, and with something now thrown in, something ever so touching and stirring, which seemed to stamp her from that moment as his precious possession. He felt more than ever her intimate value and the great social outlay it had taken to produce such a mixture. Simple and girlish as she was, and not particularly quick in the give and take of conversation, she seemed to him to have a part of the history of England in her blood; she was the fine flower of generations of privileged people and of centuries of rich country-life. Between these two of course was no glance at the question which had been put into the hands of Mr. Hardman, and the last thing that occurred to Jackson was that Lady Barb had views as to his settling a fortune upon her before their marriage. It may appear odd, but he hadn't asked himself whether his money operated on her in any degree as a bribe; and this was because, instinctively, he felt such a speculation idle—the point was essentially not to be ascertained—and because he was quite ready to take it for agreeable to her to continue to live in luxury. It was eminently agreeable to him to have means to enable her to do so. He was acquainted with the mingled character of human motives and glad he was rich enough to pretend to the hand of a young woman who, for the best of reasons, would be very expensive. After the good passage in the music-room he had ridden with her twice, but hadn't found her otherwise accessible. She had let him know the second time they rode that Lady Canterville had directed her to make, for the moment, no further appointment with him; and on his presenting himself more than once at the house he had been told that neither the mother nor the daughter was at home: it had been added that Lady Barb was staying at Roehampton. In touching on that restriction she had launched at him just a distinguishable mute reproach—there was always a certain superior dumbness in her eyes—as if he were exposing her to an annoyance she ought to be spared, or

taking an eccentric line on a question that all well-bred people treated in the conventional way.

His induction from this was not that she wished to be secure about his money, but that, like a dutiful English daughter, she received her opinions—on points that were indifferent to her—ready-made from a mamma whose fallibility had never been exposed. He knew by this that his solicitor had answered Mr. Hardman's letter and that Lady Canterville's coolness was the fruit of the correspondence. The effect of it was not in the least to make him come round, as he phrased it; he had not the smallest intention of doing that. Lady Canterville had spoken of the traditions of her family; but he had no need to go to his family for his own. They resided within himself; anything he had once undiscussably made up his mind to acquire in three minutes the force, and with that the due dignity of a tradition. Meanwhile he was in the detestable position of not knowing whether or no he were engaged. He wrote to Lady Barb to clear it up, to smooth it down—it being so strange she shouldn't receive him; and she addressed him in return a very pretty little letter, which had to his mind a fine by-gone quality, an old-fashioned, a last-century freshness that might have flowed, a little thinly, from the pen of Clarissa or Sophia. She professed that she didn't in the least understand the situation; that of course she would never give him up; that her mother had said there were the best reasons for their not going too fast; that, thank God, she was yet young and could wait as long as he would; but that she begged he wouldn't write her about money-matters: she had never been able to count even on her fingers. He felt in no danger whatever of making this last mistake; he only noted how Lady Barb thought it natural there should be a discussion; and this made it vivid to him afresh that he had got hold of a daughter of the Crusaders. His ingenious mind could appreciate this hereditary assumption at the very same time that, to lighten his own footsteps, it remained entirely modern. He believed—or he thought he believed—that in the end he should marry his gorgeous girl on his own terms; but in the interval there was a sensible indignity in being challenged and checked. One effect of it indeed was to make him desire the young woman more intensely. When she wasn't before his eyes in the flesh she hovered before him as an image, and this image had reasons of its own for making him at hours fairly languid with love.

There were moments, however, when he wearied of the mere enshrined memory—it was too impalpable and too thankless. Then it befell that Jackson Lemon for the first time in his life dropped and gave way—gave way, that is, to the sense of sadness. He felt alone in London, and very much out of it, in spite of all the acquaintances he had made and the bills he had paid; he felt the need of a greater intimacy than any he had formed—save of course in the case of Lady Barb. He wanted to vent his disgust, to relieve himself, from the New York point of view. He felt that in engaging in a contest with the great house of Canterville he was after all rather single. That singleness was of course in a great measure an inspiration; but it pinched him hard at moments. Then it would have pleased him could his mother have been near; he used to talk of his affairs a great deal with this delightful parent, who had a delicate way of advising him in the sense he liked best. He had even gone so far as to wish he had never laid eyes on Lady Barb, but had fallen in love instead with some one or other of the rarer home-products. He presently came back of course to the knowledge that in the United States there was—and there could be—nothing nearly so rare as the young lady who had in fact appealed to him so straight, for was it not precisely as a high resultant of the English climate and the British constitution that he valued her? He had relieved himself, from his New York point of view, by speaking his mind to Lady Beauchemin, who confessed that she was infinitely vexed with her parents. She agreed with him that they had made a great mistake; they ought to have left him free; and she expressed her confidence that such freedom could only have been, in him, for her family, like the silence of the sage, golden. He must let

them down easily, must remember that what was asked of him had been their custom for centuries. She didn't mention her authority as to the origin of customs, but she promised him she would say three words to her father and mother which would make it all right. Jackson answered that customs were all very well, but that really intelligent people recognised at sight, and then indeed quite enjoyed, the right occasion for departing from them; and with this he awaited the result of Lady Beauchemin's remonstrance. It had not as yet been perceptible, and it must be said that this charming woman was herself not quite at ease.

When on her venturing to hint to her mother that she thought a wrong line had been taken with regard to her sister's *prétendant*, Lady Canterville had replied that Mr. Lemon's unwillingness to settle anything was in itself a proof of what they had feared, the unstable nature of his fortune—since it was useless to talk (this gracious lady could be very decided) as if there could be any serious reason but that one—on meeting this argument, as I say, Jackson's protectress felt considerably baffled. It was perhaps true, as her mother said, that if they didn't insist upon proper pledges Barbarina might be left in a few years with nothing but the stars and stripes—this odd phrase was a quotation from Mr. Lemon—to cover her withal. Lady Beauchemin tried to reason it out with Lady Marmaduke; but these were complications unforeseen by Lady Marmaduke in her project of an Anglo-American society. She was obliged to confess that Mr. Lemon's fortune couldn't have the solidity of long-established things; it was a very new fortune indeed. His father had made the greater part of it all in a lump, a few years before his death, in the extraordinary way in which people made money in America; that of course was why the son had those singular professional attributes. He had begun to study to be a doctor very young, before his expectations were so great. Then he had found he was very clever and very fond of it, and had kept on because after all, in America, where there were no country gentlemen, a young man had to have something to do, don't you know? And Lady Marmaduke, like an enlightened woman, intimated that in such a case she thought it in much better taste not to try to sink anything. "Because in America, don't you see?" she reasoned, "you can't sink it—nothing *will* sink. Everything's floating about—in the newspapers." And she tried to console her friend by remarking that if Mr. Lemon's fortune was precarious it was at all events so big. That was just the trouble for Lady Beauchemin, it was so big and yet they were going to lose it. He was as obstinate as a mule; she was sure he would never come round. Lady Marmaduke declared he really *would* come round; she even offered to bet a dozen pair of *gants de Suède* on it; and she added that this consummation lay quite in the hands of Barbarina. Lady Beauchemin promised herself to contend with her sister, as it was not for nothing she had herself caught the glamour of her friend's international scheme.

Jackson Lemon, to dissipate his chagrin, had returned to the sessions of the medical congress, where, inevitably, he had fallen into the hands of Sidney Feeder, who enjoyed in this disinterested assembly the highest esteem. It was Dr. Feeder's earnest desire that his old friend should share his credit—all the more easily that the medical congress was, as the young physician observed, a perpetual symposium. Jackson entertained the entire body at dinner—entertained it profusely and in a manner befitting one of the patrons of science rather than the humbler votaries; but these dissipations made him forget but for the hour the arrest of his relations with the house of Canterville. It punctually came back to him that he was disconcerted, and Dr. Feeder saw it stamped on his brow. Jackson Lemon, with his acute inclination to open himself, was on the point more than once of taking this sturdy friend into his confidence. His colleague gave him easy occasion—asked him what it was he was thinking of all the time and whether the young marchioness had concluded she couldn't swallow a doctor. These forms of speech were displeasing to our baffled aspirant, whose fastidiousness was nothing new; but he had even deeper reasons for saying to himself that in

such complicated cases as his there was no assistance in the Sidney Feeders. To understand his situation one must know the world, and the children of Cincinnati, prohibitively provincial, didn't know the world—at least the world with which this son of New York was now concerned.

“Is there a hitch in your marriage? Just tell me that,” Sidney Feeder had said, taking things for granted in a manner that of itself testified to an innocence abysmal. It is true he had added that he supposed he had no business to ask; but he had been anxious about it ever since hearing from Mr. and Mrs. Freer that the British aristocracy was down on the medical profession. “Do they want you to give it up? Is that what the hitch is about? Don't desert your colours, Jackson. The suppression of pain, the mitigation of misery, constitute surely the noblest profession in the world.”

“My dear fellow, you don't know what you're talking about,” Jackson could only observe in answer to this. “I haven't told any one I was going to be married—still less have I told any one that any one objects to my profession. I should like to see any one do it. I've rather got out of the swim, but I don't regard myself as the sort of person that people object to. And I do expect to do something yet.”

“Come home, then, and do it. And don't crush me with grandeur if I say that the facilities for getting married are much greater over there.”

“You don't seem to have found them very great,” Jackson sniffed.

“I've never had time really to go into them. But wait till my next vacation and you'll see.”

“The facilities over there are too great. Nothing's worth while but what's difficult,” said Jackson with a sententious ring that quite distressed his mate.

“Well, they've got their backs up, I can see that. I'm glad you like it. Only if they despise your profession what will they say to that of your friends? If they think you're queer what would they think of me?” asked Sidney Feeder, whose spirit was not as a general thing in the least bitter, but who was pushed to this sharpness by a conviction that—in spite of declarations which seemed half an admission and half a denial—his friend was suffering worry, or really perhaps something almost like humiliation, for the sake of a good that might be gathered at home on every bush.

“My dear fellow, all that's 'rot'!” This had been Jackson's retort, which expressed, however, not half his feeling. The other half was inexpressible, or almost, springing as it did from his depth of displeasure at its having struck even so genial a mind as Sidney Feeder's that in proposing to marry a daughter of the highest civilisation he was going out of his way—departing from his natural line. Was he then so ignoble, so pledged to inferior things, that when he saw a girl who—putting aside the fact that she hadn't genius, which was rare, and which, though he prized rarity, he didn't want—seemed to him the most naturally and functionally founded and seated feminine subject he had known, he was to think himself too different, too incongruous, to mate with her? He would mate with whom he “damn pleased”; that was the upshot of Jackson Lemon's passion. Several days elapsed during which everybody—even the pure-minded, like poor Sidney—seemed to him very abject.

All of which is recorded to show how he, in going to see Mrs. Freer, was prepared much less to be angry with people who, like her husband and herself a month before, had given it out that he was engaged to a peer's daughter, than to resent the insinuation that there were obstacles to such a prospect. He sat with the lady of Jermyn Street alone for half an hour in the sabbatical stillness. Her husband had gone for a walk in the Park—he always walked in the Park of a Sunday. All the world might have been there and Jackson and Mrs. Freer in

sole possession of the district of Saint James's. This perhaps had something to do with making him at last so confidential; they had such a margin for easy egotism and spreading sympathy. Mrs. Freer was ready for anything—in the critical, the “real” line; she treated him as a person she had known from the age of ten; asked his leave to continue recumbent; talked a great deal about his mother and seemed almost, for a while, to perform the earnest functions of that lady. It had been wise of her from the first not to allude, even indirectly, to his having neglected so long to call; her silence on this point was in the best taste. Jackson had forgotten how it was a habit with her, and indeed a high accomplishment, never to reproach people with these omissions. You might have left her alone for months or years, her greeting was always the same; she never was either too delighted to see you or not delighted enough. After a while, however, he felt her silence to be in some measure an allusion; she appeared to take for granted his devoting all his hours to a certain young lady. It came over him for a moment that his compatriots took a great deal for granted; but when Mrs. Freer, rather abruptly sitting up on her sofa, said to him half-simply, half-solemnly: “And now, my dear Jackson, I want you to tell me something!”—he saw that, after all, she kept within bounds and didn't pretend to know more about his business than he himself did. In the course of a quarter of an hour—so appreciatively she listened—he had given her much information. It was the first time he had said so much to any one, and the process relieved him even more than he would have supposed. There were things it made clear to him by bringing them to a point—above all, the fact that he had been wronged. He made no mention whatever of its being out of the usual way that, as an American doctor, he should sue for the hand of a marquis's daughter; and this reserve was not voluntary, it was quite unconscious. His mind was too full of the sudden rudeness of the Cantervilles and the sordid side of their want of confidence.

He couldn't imagine that while he talked to Mrs. Freer—and it amazed him afterwards that he should have chattered so; he could account for it but by the state of his nerves—she should be thinking only of the strangeness of the situation he sketched for her. She thought Americans as good as other people, but she didn't see where, in American life, the daughter of a marquis would, as she phrased it, work in. To take a simple instance—they coursed through Mrs. Freer's mind with extraordinary speed—wouldn't she always expect to go in to dinner first? As a novelty and for a change, over there, they might like to see her do it—there might be even a pressure for places at the show. But with the increase of every kind of sophistication that was taking place in America the humorous view to which she would owe her immediate ease mightn't continue to be taken; and then where would poor Lady Barb be? This was in truth a scant instance; but Mrs. Freer's vivid imagination—much as she had lived in Europe she knew her native land so well—saw a host of others massing themselves behind it. The consequence of all of which was that after listening to her young friend in the most engaging silence she raised her clasped hands, pressed them against her breast, lowered her voice to a tone of entreaty and, with all the charming cheer of her wisdom, uttered three words: “My dear Jackson, don't—don't—don't.”

“Don't what?” He took it at first coldly.

“Don't neglect the chance you have of getting out of it. You see it would never do.”

He knew what she meant by his chance of getting out of it; he had in his many meditations of course not overlooked that. The ground the old couple had taken about settlements—and the fact that Lady Beauchemin hadn't come back to him to tell him, as she promised, that she had moved them, proved how firmly they were rooted—would have offered an all-sufficient pretext to a man who should have repented of his advances. Jackson knew this, but knew at the same time that he had not repented. The old couple's want of imagination didn't in the

least alter the fact that the girl was, in her perfection, as he had told her father, one of the rarest of types. Therefore he simply said to Mrs. Freer that he didn't in the least wish to get out of it; he was as much in it as ever and intended to remain in it. But what did she mean, he asked in a moment, by her statement that it would never do? Why wouldn't it do? Mrs. Freer replied by another question—should he really like her to tell him? It wouldn't do because Lady Barb wouldn't be satisfied with her place at dinner. She wouldn't be content—in a society of commoners—with any but the best; and the best she couldn't expect (and it was to be supposed he didn't expect her) always grossly to monopolise; as people of her sort, for that matter, did so successfully grab it in England.

“What do you mean by commoners?” Jackson rather grimly demanded.

“I mean you and me and my poor husband and Dr. Feeder,” said Mrs. Freer.

“I don't see how there can be commoners where there aren't lords. It's the lord that makes the commoner, and *vice versa*.”

“Won't a lady do as well? Our Lady Barb—a single English girl—can make a million inferiors.”

“She will be, before anything else, my wife; and she won't on the whole think it any less vulgar to talk about inferiors than I do myself.”

“I don't know what she'll talk about, my dear Jackson, but she'll think; and her thoughts won't be pleasant—I mean for others. Do you expect to sink her to your own rank?”

Dr. Lemon's bright little eyes rested more sharply on his hostess. “I don't understand you and don't think you understand yourself.” This was not absolutely candid, for he did understand Mrs. Freer to a certain extent; it has been related that before he asked Lady Barb's hand of her parents there had been moments when he himself doubted if a flower only to be described as of the social hothouse, that is of aristocratic air, would flourish in American earth. But an intimation from another person that it was beyond his power to pass off his wife—whether she were the daughter of a peer or of a shoemaker—set all his blood on fire. It quenched on the instant his own perception of difficulties of detail and made him feel only that he was dishonoured—he the heir of all the ages—by such insinuations. It was his belief—though he had never before had occasion to put it forward—that his position, one of the best in the world, had about it the felicity that makes everything possible. He had had the best education the age could offer, for if he had rather wasted his time at Harvard, where he entered very young, he had, as he believed, been tremendously serious at Heidelberg and at Vienna. He had devoted himself to one of the noblest of professions—a profession recognised as such everywhere but in England—and had inherited a fortune far beyond the expectation of his earlier years, the years when he cultivated habits of work which alone (or rather in combination with talents that he neither exaggerated nor undervalued) would have conduced to distinction. He was one of the most fortunate inhabitants of an immense fresh rich country, a country whose future was admitted to be incalculable, and he moved with perfect ease in a society in which he was not overshadowed by others. It seemed to him, therefore, beneath his dignity to wonder whether he could afford, socially speaking, to marry according to his taste. He pretended to general strength, and what was the use of strength if you weren't prepared to undertake things timid people might find difficult? It was his plan to marry the woman he desired and not be afraid of her afterward. The effect of Mrs. Freer's doubt of his success was to represent to him that his own character wouldn't cover his wife's; she couldn't have made him feel worse if she had told him that he was marrying beneath him and would have to ask for indulgence. “I don't believe you know how much I think that any woman who marries me will be doing very well,” he promptly added.

“I’m very sure of that; but it isn’t so simple—one’s being an American,” Mrs. Freer rejoined with a small philosophic sigh.

“It’s whatever one chooses to make it.”

“Well, you’ll make it what no one has done yet if you take that young lady to America and make her happy there.”

“Do you think our country, then, such a very dreadful place?”

His hostess had a pause. “It’s not a question of what I think, but of what she will.”

Jackson rose from his chair and took up his hat and stick. He had actually turned a little pale with the force of his emotion; there was a pang of wrath for him in this fact that his marriage to Lady Barbarina might be looked at as too high a flight. He stood a moment leaning against the mantelpiece and very much tempted to say to Mrs. Freer that she was a vulgar-minded old woman. But he said something that was really more to the point. “You forget that she’ll have her consolations.”

“Don’t go away or I shall think I’ve offended you. You can’t console an injured noblewoman.”

“How will she be injured? People will be charming to her.”

“They’ll be charming to her—charming to her!” These words fell from the lips of Dexter Freer, who had opened the door of the room and stood with the knob in his hand, putting himself into relation to his wife’s talk with their visitor. This harmony was achieved in an instant. “Of course I know whom you mean,” he said while he exchanged greetings with Jackson. “My wife and I—naturally we’re great busybodies—have talked of your affair and we differ about it completely. She sees only the dangers, while I see all the advantages.”

“By the advantages he means the fun for us,” Mrs. Freer explained, settling her sofa-cushions.

Jackson looked with a certain sharp blankness from one of these disinterested judges to the other; even yet they scarce saw how their misdirected freedom wrought on him. It was hardly more agreeable to him to know that the husband wished to see Lady Barb in America than to know that the wife waved away such a vision. There was that in Dexter Freer’s face which seemed to forecast the affair as taking place somehow for the benefit of the spectators. “I think you both see too much—a great deal too much—in the whole thing,” he rather coldly returned.

“My dear young man, at my age I may take certain liberties,” said Dexter Freer. “*Do* what you’ve planned—I beseech you to do it; it has never been done before.” And then as if Jackson’s glance had challenged this last assertion he went on: “Never, I assure you, this particular thing. Young female members of the British aristocracy have married coachmen and fishmongers and all that sort of thing; but they’ve never married you and me.”

“They certainly haven’t married the ‘likes’ of either of you!” said Mrs. Freer.

“I’m much obliged to you for your advice.” It may be thought that Jackson Lemon took himself rather seriously, and indeed I’m afraid that if he hadn’t done so there would have been no occasion even for this summary report of him. But it made him almost sick to hear his engagement spoken of as a curious and ambiguous phenomenon. He might have his own ideas about it—one always had about one’s engagement; but the ideas that appeared to have peopled the imagination of his friends ended by kindling a small hot expanse in each of his

cheeks. "I'd rather not talk any more about my little plans," he added to his host. "I've been saying all sorts of absurd things to Mrs. Freer."

"They've been most interesting and most infuriating," that lady declared. "You've been very stupidly treated."

"May she tell me when you go?" her husband asked of the young man.

"I'm going now—she may tell you whatever she likes."

"I'm afraid we've displeased you," she went on; "I've said too much what I think. You must pardon me—it's all for your mother."

"It's she whom I want Lady Barb to see!" Jackson exclaimed with the inconsequence of filial affection.

"Deary me!" Mrs. Freer gently wailed.

"We shall go back to America to see how you get on," her husband said; "and if you succeed it will be a great precedent."

"Oh I shall succeed!" And with this he took his departure. He walked away with the quick step of a man labouring under a certain excitement; walked up to Piccadilly and down past Hyde Park Corner. It relieved him to measure these distances, for he was thinking hard, under the influence of irritation, and it was as if his movement phrased his passion. Certain lights flashed on him in the last half-hour turned to fire in him; the more that they had a representative value and were an echo of the common voice. If his prospects wore that face to Mrs. Freer they would probably wear it to others; so he felt a strong sharp need to show such others that they took a mean measure of his position. He walked and walked till he found himself on the highway of Hammersmith. I have represented him as a young man with a stiff back, and I may appear to undermine this plea when I note that he wrote that evening to his solicitor that Mr. Hardman was to be informed he would agree to any proposals for settlements that this worthy should make. Jackson's stiff back was shown in his deciding to marry Lady Barbarina on any terms. It had come over him through the action of this desire to prove he wasn't afraid—so odious was the imputation—that terms of any kind were very superficial things. What was fundamental and of the essence of the matter would be to secure the grand girl and *then* carry everything out.

V

"On Sundays now you might be at home," he said to his wife in the following month of March—more than six months after his marriage.

"Are the people any nicer on Sundays than they are on other days?" Lady Barb asked from the depths of her chair and without looking up from a stiff little book.

He waited ever so briefly before answering. "I don't know whether they are, but I think you might be."

"I'm as nice as I know how to be. You must take me as I am. You knew when you married me that I wasn't American."

Jackson stood before the fire toward which his wife's face was turned and her feet extended; stood there some time with his hands behind him and his eyes dropped a little obliquely on Lady Barb's bent head and richly-draped figure. It may be said without delay that he was sore of soul, and it may be added that he had a double cause. He knew himself on the verge of the first crisis that had occurred between himself and his wife—the reader will note that it had occurred rather promptly—and he was annoyed at his annoyance. A glimpse of his state

of mind before his marriage has been given the reader, who will remember that at that period our young man had believed himself lifted above possibilities of irritation. When one was strong one wasn't fidgety, and a union with a species of calm goddess would of course be a source of repose. Lady Barb was a calm, was an even calmer goddess still, and he had a much more intimate view of her divinity than on the day he had led her to the altar; but I'm not sure he felt either as firm or as easy.

"How do you know what people are?" he said in a moment. "You've seen so few; you're perpetually denying yourself. If you should leave New York to-morrow you'd know wonderfully little about it."

"It's all just the same," she pleaded. "The people are all exactly alike. There's only one sort."

"How can you tell? You never see them."

"Didn't I go out every night for the first two months we were here?"

"It was only to about a dozen houses—those, I agree, always the same; people, moreover, you had already met in London. You've got no general impressions."

She raised her beautiful blank face. "That's just what I *have* got; I had them before I came. I see no difference whatever. They've just the same names—just the same manners."

Again for an instant Jackson hung fire; then he said with that practised flat candour of which mention has already been made and which he sometimes used in London during his courtship: "Don't you like it over here?"

Lady Barb had returned to her book, but she looked up again. "Did you expect me to like it?"

"I hoped you would, of course. I think I told you so."

"I don't remember. You said very little about it; you seemed to make a kind of mystery. I knew of course you expected me to live here, but I didn't know you expected me to like it."

"You thought I asked of you the sacrifice, as it were."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Lady Barb. She got up from her chair and tossed her unconsolatory volume into the empty seat. "I recommend you to read that book," she added.

"Is it interesting?"

"It's an American novel."

"I never read novels."

"You had really better look at that one. It will show you the kind of people you want me to know."

"I've no doubt it's very vulgar," Jackson said. "I don't see why you read it."

"What else can I do? I can't always be riding in the Park. I hate the Park," she quite rang out.

"It's just as good as your own," said her husband.

She glanced at him with a certain quickness, her eyebrows slightly lifted. "Do you mean the park at Pasterns?"

"No; I mean the park in London."

"Oh I don't care about London. One was only in London a few weeks." She had a horrible lovely ease.

Yet he but wanted to help her to turn round. "I suppose you miss the country," he suggested. It was his idea of life that he shouldn't be afraid of anything, not be afraid, in any situation, of knowing the worst that was to be known about it; and the demon of a courage with which discretion was not properly commingled prompted him to take soundings that were perhaps not absolutely necessary for safety and yet that revealed unmistakable rocks. It was useless to know about rocks if he couldn't avoid them; the only thing was to trust to the wind.

"I don't know what I miss. I think I miss everything!" This was his wife's answer to his too-curious inquiry. It wasn't peevish, for that wasn't the tone of a calm goddess; but it expressed a good deal—a good deal more than Lady Barb, who was rarely eloquent, had expressed before. Nevertheless, though his question had been precipitate, Jackson said to himself that he might take his time to think over what her fewness of words enclosed; he couldn't help seeing that the future would give him plenty of chance. He was in no hurry to ask himself whether poor Mrs. Freer, in Jermyn Street, mightn't after all have been right in saying that when it came to marrying an English caste-product it wasn't so simple to be an American doctor—it might avail little even in such a case to be the heir of all the ages. The transition was complicated, but in his bright mind it was rapid, from the brush of a momentary contact with such ideas to certain considerations which led him to go on after an instant: "Should you like to go down into Connecticut?"

"Into Connecticut?"

"That's one of our States. It's about as large as Ireland. I'll take you there if you like."

"What does one do there?"

"We can try and get some hunting."

"You and I alone?"

"Perhaps we can get a party to join us."

"The people in the State?"

"Yes—we might propose it to them."

"The tradespeople in the towns?"

"Very true—they'll have to mind their shops," Jackson said. "But we might hunt alone."

"Are there any foxes?"

"No, but there are a few old cows."

Lady Barb had already noted that her husband sought the relief of a laugh at her expense, and she was aware that this present opportunity was neither worse nor better than some others. She didn't mind that trick in him particularly now, though in England it would have disgusted her; she had the consciousness of virtue, an immense comfort, and flattered herself she had learned the lesson of an altered standard of fitness—besides which there were so many more disagreeable things in America than being laughed at by one's husband. But she pretended not to like it because this made him stop, and above all checked discussion, which with Jackson was habitually so facetious and consequently so tiresome. "I only want to be left alone," she said in answer—though indeed it hadn't the style of an answer—to his speech about the cows. With this she wandered away to one of the windows that looked out on the Fifth Avenue. She was very fond of these windows and had taken a great fancy to the Fifth Avenue, which, in the high-pitched winter weather, when everything sparkled, was bright and funny and foreign. It will be seen that she was not wholly unjust to her adoptive country: she

found it delightful to look out of the window. This was a pleasure she had enjoyed in London only in the most furtive manner; it wasn't the kind of thing that girls in England did. Besides, in London, in Hill Street, there was nothing particular to see; whereas in the Fifth Avenue everything and every one went by, and observation was made consistent with dignity by the quantities of brocade and lace dressing the embrasure, which somehow wouldn't have been tidy in England and which made an ambush without concealing the brilliant day. Hundreds of women—the queer women of New York, who were unlike any that Lady Barb had hitherto seen—passed the house every hour; and her ladyship was infinitely entertained and mystified by the sight of their clothes. She spent more time than she was aware of in this recreation, and had she been addicted to returning upon herself, to asking herself for an account of her conduct—an inquiry she didn't indeed completely neglect, but made no great form of—she must have had a wan smile for this proof of what she appeared mainly to have come to America for, conscious though she was that her tastes were very simple and that so long as she didn't hunt it didn't much matter what she did.

Her husband turned about to the fire, giving a push with his foot to a log that had fallen out of its place. Then he said—and the connexion with the words she had just uttered was direct enough—“You really must manage to be at home on Sundays, you know. I used to like that so much in London. All the best women here do it. You had better begin to-day. I'm going to see my mother. If I meet any one I'll tell them to come.”

“Tell them not to talk so much,” said Lady Barb among her lace curtains.

“Ah, my dear,” Jackson returned, “it isn't every one who has your concision.” And he went and stood behind her in the window, putting his arm round her waist. It was as much of a satisfaction to him as it had been six months before, at the time the solicitors were settling the matter, that this flower of an ancient stem should be worn upon his own breast; he still thought its fragrance a thing quite apart, and it was as clear as day to him that his wife was the handsomest woman in New York. He had begun, after their arrival, by telling her this very often; but the assurance brought no colour to her cheek, no light to her eyes: to be the handsomest woman in New York, now that she was acquainted with that city, plainly failed to strike her as a position in life. The reader may, moreover, be informed that, oddly enough, Lady Barb didn't particularly believe this assertion. There were some very pretty women in New York, and without in the least wishing to be like them—she had seen no woman in America whom she desired to resemble—she envied them some of their peculiar little freshnesses. It's probable that her own finest points were those of which she was most unconscious. But Jackson was intensely aware of all of them; nothing could exceed the minuteness of his appreciation of his wife. It was a sign of this that after he had stood behind her a moment he kissed her very tenderly. “Have you any message for my mother?” he asked.

“Please give her my love. And you might take her that book.”

“What book?”

“That nasty one I've been reading.”

“Oh bother your books!” he cried with a certain irritation as he went out of the room.

There had been a good many things in her life in New York that cost her an effort, but sending her love to her mother-in-law was not one of these. She liked Mrs. Lemon better than any one she had seen in America; she was the only person who seemed to Lady Barb really simple, as she herself understood that quality. Many people had struck her as homely and rustic and many others as pretentious and vulgar; but in Jackson's mother she had found the golden mean of a discretion, of a native felicity and modesty and decency, which, as she

would have said, were really nice. Her sister, Lady Agatha, was even fonder of Mrs. Lemon; but then Lady Agatha had taken the most extraordinary fancy to every one and everything, and talked as if America were the most delightful country in the world. She was having a lovely time—she already spoke the most beautiful American—and had been, during the bright winter just drawing to a close, the most prominent girl in New York. She had gone out at first with her elder; but for some weeks past Lady Barb had let so many occasions pass that Agatha threw herself into the arms of Mrs. Lemon, who found her unsurpassably quaint and amusing and was delighted to take her into society. Mrs. Lemon, as an old woman, had given up such vanities; but she only wanted a motive, and in her good nature she ordered a dozen new caps and sat smiling against the wall while her little English maid, on polished floors, to the sound of music, cultivated the American step as well as the American tone. There was no trouble in New York about going out, and the winter wasn't half over before the little English maid found herself an accomplished diner, finding her way without any chaperon at all to feasts where she could count on a bouquet at her plate. She had had a great deal of correspondence with her own female parent on this point, and Lady Canterville had at last withdrawn her protest, which in the meantime had been perfectly useless. It was ultimately Lady Canterville's feeling that if she had married the handsomest of her daughters to an American doctor she might let another become a professional *raconteuse*—Agatha had written to her that she was expected to talk so much—strange as such a destiny seemed for a girl of nineteen. Mrs. Lemon had even a higher simplicity than Lady Barb imputed to her; for she hadn't noticed that Lady Agatha danced much oftener with Herman Longstraw than with any one else. Jackson himself, though he went little to balls, had discovered this truth, and he looked slightly preoccupied when, after he had sat five minutes with his mother on the Sunday afternoon through which I have invited the reader to trace so much more than—I am afraid—is easily apparent of the progress of this simple story, he learned that his sister-in-law was entertaining Mr. Longstraw in the library. That young man had called half an hour before, and she had taken him into the other room to show him the seal of the Cantervilles, which she had fastened to one of her numerous trinkets—she was adorned with a hundred bangles and chains—and the proper exhibition of which required a taper and a stick of wax. Apparently he was examining it very carefully, for they had been absent a good while. Mrs. Lemon's simplicity was further shown by the fact that she had not measured their absence; it was only when Jackson questioned her that she remembered.

Herman Longstraw was a young Californian who had turned up in New York the winter before and who travelled on his moustache, as they were understood to say in his native State. This moustache and some of its accompanying features were greatly admired; several ladies in New York had been known to declare that they were as beautiful as a dream. Taken in connexion with his tall stature, his familiar good nature and his remarkable Western vocabulary they constituted his only social capital; for of the two great divisions, the rich Californians and the poor Californians, it was well known to which he belonged. Doctor Lemon had viewed him as but a slightly mitigated cowboy, and was somewhat vexed at his own parent, though also aware that she could scarcely figure to herself what an effect such a form of speech as this remarkably straight echo of the prairie would produce in the halls of Canterville. He had no desire whatever to play a trick on the house to which he was allied, and knew perfectly that Lady Agatha hadn't been sent to America to become entangled with a Californian of the wrong denomination. He had been perfectly willing to bring her; he thought, a little vindictively, that this would operate as a hint to her progenitors on what he might have imagined doing if they hadn't been so stupidly bent on Mr. Hardman. Herman Longstraw, according to the legend, had been a trapper, a squatter, a miner, a pioneer—had been everything that one could be in the desperate parts of America, and had accumulated masses of experience before the age of thirty. He had shot bears in the Rockies and buffaloes

on the plains; and it was even believed that he had brought down animals of a still more dangerous kind among the haunts of men. There had been a story that he owned a cattle-ranch in Arizona; but a later and apparently more authentic version of it, though representing him as looking after the cattle, didn't depict him as their proprietor.

Many of the stories told about him were false; but there was no doubt his moustache, his native ease and his native accent were the best of their kind. He danced very badly; but Lady Agatha had frankly told several persons that that was nothing new to her, and in short she delighted—this, however, she didn't tell—in Mr. Herman Longstraw. What she enjoyed in America was the revelation of freedom, and there was no such proof of freedom as absolutely unrestricted discourse with a gentleman who dressed in crude skins when not in New York and who, in his usual pursuits, carried his life—as well as that of other persons—in his hand. A gentleman whom she had sat next to at dinner in the early part of her visit had remarked to her that the United States were the paradise of women and of mechanics; and this had seemed to her at the time very abstract, for she wasn't conscious as yet of belonging to either class. In England she had been only a girl, and the principal idea connected with that was simply that for one's misfortune one wasn't a boy. But she presently herself found the odd American world a true sojourn of the youthful blest; and this helped her to know that she must be one of the people mentioned in the axiom of her neighbour—people who could do whatever they wanted, had a voice in everything and made their taste and their ideas felt. She saw what fun it was to be a woman in America, and that this was the best way to enjoy the New York winter—the wonderful brilliant New York winter, the queer long-shaped glittering city, the heterogeneous hours among which you couldn't tell the morning from the afternoon or the night from either of them, the perpetual liberties and walks, the rushings-out and the droppings-in, the intimacies, the endearments, the comicalities, the sleigh-bells, the cutters, the sunsets on the snow, the ice-parties in the frosty clearness, the bright hot velvety houses, the bouquets, the bonbons, the little cakes, the big cakes, the irrepressible inspirations of shopping, the innumerable luncheons and dinners offered to youth and innocence, the quantities of chatter of quantities of girls, the perpetual motion of the “German,” the suppers at restaurants after the play, the way in which life was pervaded by Delmonico and Delmonico by the sense that though one's hunting was lost, and this therefore so different, it was very nearly as good. In all, through all, flowed a suffusion of loud unmodulated friendly sound which reminded her of an endless tuning of rather bad fiddles.

Lady Agatha was at present staying for a little change with Mrs. Lemon, and such adventures as that were part of the pleasure of her American season. The house was too close, but physically the girl could bear anything, and it was all she had to complain of; for Mrs. Lemon, as we know, thought her a weird little specimen, and had none of those old-world scruples in regard to spoiling young people to which Lady Agatha herself now knew she must in the past have been unduly sacrificed. In her own way—it was not at all her sister's way—she liked to be of importance; and this was assuredly the case when she saw that Mrs. Lemon had apparently nothing in the world to do, after spending a part of the morning with her servants, but invent little distractions—many of them of the edible sort—for her guest. She appeared to have several friends, but she had no society to speak of, and the people who entered her house came principally to see Lady Agatha. This, as we have noted, was strikingly the case with Herman Longstraw. The whole situation gave the young stranger a great feeling of success—success of a new and unexpected kind. Of course in England she had been born successful, as it might be called, through her so emerging in one of the most beautiful rooms at Pasterns; but her present triumph was achieved more by her own effort—not that she had tried very hard—and by her merit. It wasn't so much what she said—since she could never equal for quantity the girls of New York—as the spirit of enjoyment that

played in her fresh young face, with its pointless curves, and shone in her grey English eyes. She enjoyed everything, even the street-cars, of which she made liberal use; and more than everything she enjoyed Mr. Longstraw and his talk about buffaloes and bears. Mrs. Lemon promised to be very careful as soon as her son had begun to warn her; and this time she had a certain understanding of what she promised. She thought people ought to make the matches they liked; she had given proof of this in her late behaviour to Jackson, whose own union was, to her sense, marked with all the arbitrariness of pure love. Nevertheless she could see that Herman Longstraw would probably be thought rough in England; and it wasn't simply that he was so inferior to Jackson, for, after all, certain things were not to be expected. Jackson was not oppressed with his mother-in-law, having taken his precautions against such a danger; but he was certain he should give Lady Canterville a permanent advantage over him if her third daughter should while in America attach herself to a mere moustache.

It was not always, as I have hinted, that Mrs. Lemon entered completely into the views of her son, though in form she never failed to subscribe to them devoutly. She had never yet, for instance, apprehended his reason for marrying poor Lady Barb. This was a great secret, and she was determined, in her gentleness, that no one should ever know it. For herself, she was sure that to the end of time she shouldn't discover Jackson's reason. She might never ask about it, for that of course would betray her. From the first she had told him she was delighted, there being no need of asking for explanations then, as the young lady herself, when she should come to know her, would explain. But the young lady hadn't yet explained and after this evidently never would. She was very tall, very handsome, she answered exactly to Mrs. Lemon's prefigurement of the daughter of a lord, and she wore her clothes, which were peculiar, but to one of her shape remarkably becoming, very well. But she didn't elucidate; we know ourselves that there was very little that was explanatory about Lady Barb. So Mrs. Lemon continued to wonder, to ask herself, "Why that one, more than so many others who'd have been more natural?" The choice struck her, as I have said, as quite arbitrary. She found Lady Barb very different from other girls she had known, and this led her almost immediately to feel sorry for her daughter-in-law. She felt how the girl was to be pitied if she found her husband's people as peculiar as his mother found *her*, since the result of that would be to make her very lonesome. Lady Agatha was different, because she seemed to keep nothing back; you saw all there was of her, and she was evidently not homesick. Mrs. Lemon could see that Barbarina was ravaged by this last ailment and was also too haughty to show it. She even had a glimpse of the ultimate truth; namely, that Jackson's wife had not the comfort of crying, because that would have amounted to a confession that she had been idiotic enough to believe in advance that, in an American town, in the society of doctors, she should escape such pangs. Mrs. Lemon treated her with studied consideration—all the indulgence that was due to a young woman in the unfortunate position of having been married one couldn't tell why.

The world, to the elder lady's view, contained two great departments, that of people and that of things; and she believed you must take an interest either in one or the other. The true incomprehensible in Lady Barb was that she cared for neither side of the show. Her house apparently inspired her with no curiosity and no enthusiasm, though it had been thought magnificent enough to be described in successive columns of the native newspapers; and she never spoke of her furniture or her domestics, though she had a prodigious show of such possessions. She was the same with regard to her acquaintance, which was immense, inasmuch as every one in the place had called on her. Mrs. Lemon was the least critical woman in the world, but it had occasionally ruffled her just a little that her daughter-in-law should receive every one in New York quite in the same automatic manner. There were

differences, Mrs. Lemon knew, and some of them of the highest importance; but poor Lady Barb appeared never to suspect them. She accepted every one and everything and asked no questions. She had no curiosity about her fellow-citizens, and as she never assumed it for a moment she gave Mrs. Lemon no opportunity to enlighten her. Lady Barb was a person with whom you could do nothing unless she left you an opening; and nothing would have been more difficult than to “post” her, as her mother-in-law would have said, against her will. Of course she picked up a little knowledge, but she confounded and transposed American attributes in the most extraordinary way. She had a way of calling every one Doctor; and Mrs. Lemon could scarcely convince her that this distinction was too precious to be so freely bestowed. She had once said to that supporter that in New York there was nothing to know people by, their names were so very monotonous; and Mrs. Lemon had entered into this enough to see that there was something that stood out a good deal in Barbarina’s own prefix. It is probable that during her short period of domestication complete justice was not done Lady Barb; she never—as an instance—got credit for repressing her annoyance at the poverty of the nominal signs and styles, a deep desolation. That little speech to her husband’s mother was the most reckless sign she gave of it; and there were few things that contributed more to the good conscience she habitually enjoyed than her self-control on this particular point.

Doctor Lemon was engaged in professional researches just now, which took up a great deal of his time; and for the rest he passed his hours unreservedly with his wife. For the last three months, therefore, he had seen his other nearest relative scarcely more than once a week. In spite of researches, in spite of medical societies, where Jackson, to her knowledge, read papers, Lady Barb had more of her husband’s company than she had counted on at the time she married. She had never known a married pair to be so much together as she and Jackson; he appeared to expect her to sit with him in the library in the morning. He had none of the occupations of gentlemen and noblemen in England, for the element of politics appeared to be as absent as the element of the chase. There were politics in Washington, she had been told, and even at Albany, and Jackson had proposed to introduce her to these cities; but the proposal, made to her once at dinner, before several people, had excited such cries of horror that it fell dead on the spot. “We don’t want you to see anything of that kind,” one of the ladies had said, and Jackson had appeared to be discouraged—that is if in regard to Jackson she could really tell.

“Pray what is it you want me to see?” Lady Barb had asked on this occasion.

“Well, New York and Boston (Boston if you want to very much, but not otherwise), and then Niagara. But more than anything Newport.”

She was tired of their eternal Newport; she had heard of it a thousand times and felt already as if she had lived there half her life; she was sure, moreover, that she should hate the awful little place. This is perhaps as near as she came to having a lively conviction on any American subject. She asked herself whether she was then to spend her life in the Fifth Avenue with alternations of a city of villas—she detested villas—and wondered if that was all the great American country had to offer her. There were times when she believed she should like the backwoods and that the Far West might be a resource; for she had analysed her feelings just deep enough to discover that when she had—hesitating a good deal—turned over the question of marrying Jackson Lemon it was not in the least of American barbarism she was afraid; her dread had been all of American civilisation. She judged the little lady I have just quoted a goose, but that didn’t make New York any more interesting. It would be reckless to say that she suffered from an overdose of Jackson’s company, since she quite felt him her most important social resource. She could talk to him about England, about her own

England, and he understood more or less what she wished to say—when she wished to say anything, which was not frequent. There were plenty of other people who talked about England; but with them the range of allusion was always the hotels, of which she knew nothing, and the shops and the opera and the photographs: they had the hugest appetite for photographs. There were other people who were always wanting her to tell them about Pasterns and the manner of life there and the parties; but if there was one thing Lady Barb disliked more than another it was describing Pasterns. She had always lived with people who knew of themselves what such a place would be, without demanding these pictorial efforts, proper only, as she vaguely felt, to persons belonging to the classes whose trade was the arts of expression. Lady Barb of course had never gone into it; but she knew that in her own class the business was not to express but to enjoy, not to represent but to be represented—though indeed this latter liability might involve offence; for it may be noted that even for an aristocrat Jackson Lemon's wife was aristocratic.

Lady Agatha and her visitor came back from the library in course of time, and Jackson Lemon felt it his duty to be rather cold to Herman Longstraw. It wasn't clear to him what sort of a husband his sister-in-law would do well to look for in America—if there were to be any question of husbands; but as to that he wasn't bound to be definite provided he should rule out Mr. Longstraw. This gentleman, however, was not given to noticing shades of manner; he had little observation, but very great confidence.

"I think you had better come home with me," Jackson said to Lady Agatha; "I guess you've stayed here long enough."

"Don't let him say that, Mrs. Lemon!" the girl cried. "I like being with you so awfully."

"I try to make it pleasant," said Mrs. Lemon. "I should really miss you now; but perhaps it's your mother's wish." If it was a question of defending her guest from ineligible suitors Mrs. Lemon felt of course that her son was more competent than she; though she had a lurking kindness for Herman Longstraw and a vague idea that he was a gallant genial specimen of unsophisticated young America.

"Oh mamma wouldn't see any difference!" Lady Agatha returned with pleading blue eyes on her brother-in-law. "Mamma wants me to see every one; you know she does. That's what she sent me to America for; she knows—for we've certainly told her enough—that it isn't like England. She wouldn't like it if I didn't sometimes stay with people; she always wanted us to stay at other houses. And she knows all about you, Mrs. Lemon, and she likes you immensely. She sent you a message the other day and I'm afraid I forgot to give it you—to thank you for being so kind to me and taking such a lot of trouble. Really she did, but I forgot it. If she wants me to see as much as possible of America it's much better I should be here than always with Barb—it's much less like one's own country. I mean it's much nicer—for a girl," said Lady Agatha affectionately to Mrs. Lemon, who began also to look at Jackson under the influence of this uttered sweetness which was like some quaint little old air, she thought, played upon a faded spinet with two girlish fingers.

"If you want the genuine thing you ought to come out on the plains," Mr. Longstraw interposed with bright sincerity. "I guess that was your mother's idea. Why don't you all come out?" He had been looking intently at Lady Agatha while the remarks I have just repeated succeeded each other on her lips—looking at her with a fascinated approbation, for all the world as if he had been a slightly slow-witted English gentleman and the girl herself a flower of the West, a flower that knew the celebrated language of flowers. Susceptible even as Mrs. Lemon was he made no secret of the fact that Lady Agatha's voice was music to him, his ear being much more accessible than his own inflexions would have indicated. To Lady

Agatha those inflexions were not displeasing, partly because, like Mr. Herman himself in general, she had not a perception of shades; and partly because it never occurred to her to compare them with any other tones. He seemed to her to speak a foreign language altogether—a romantic dialect through which the most comical meanings gleamed here and there.

“I should like it above all things,” she said in answer to his last observation.

“The scenery’s ahead of anything round here,” Mr. Longstraw went on.

Mrs. Lemon, as we have gathered, was the mildest of women; but, as an old New Yorker, she had no patience with some of the new fashions. Chief among these was the perpetual reference, which had become common only within a few years, to the outlying parts of the country, the States and Territories of which children, in her time, used to learn the names, in their order, at school, but which no one ever thought of going to or talking about. Such places, in her opinion, belonged to the geography-books, or at most to the literature of newspapers, but neither to society nor to conversation; and the change—which, so far as it lay in people’s talk, she thought at bottom a mere affectation—threatened to make her native land appear vulgar and vague. For this amiable daughter of Manhattan the normal existence of man, and still more of women, had been “located,” as she would have said, between Trinity Church and the beautiful Reservoir at the top of the Fifth Avenue—monuments of which she was personally proud; and if we could look into the deeper parts of her mind I am afraid we should discover there an impression that both the countries of Europe and the remainder of her own continent were equally far from the centre and the light.

“Well, scenery isn’t everything,” she made soft answer to Mr. Longstraw; “and if Lady Agatha should wish to see anything of that kind all she has got to do is to take the boat up the Hudson.” Mrs. Lemon’s recognition of this river, I should say, was all it need have been; she held the Hudson existed for the purpose of supplying New Yorkers with poetical feelings, helping them to face comfortably occasions like the present and, in general, meet foreigners with confidence—part of the oddity of foreigners being their conceit about their own places.

“That’s a good idea, Lady Agatha; let’s take the boat,” said Mr. Longstraw. “I’ve had great times on the boats.”

Lady Agatha fixed on her *amoroso* her singular charming eyes, eyes of which it was impossible to say at any moment whether they were the shyest or the frankest in the world; and she was not aware while this contemplation lasted that her brother-in-law was observing her. He was thinking of certain things while he did so, of things he had heard about the English; who still, in spite of his having married into a family of that nation, appeared to him very much through the medium of hearsay. They were more passionate than the Americans, and they did things that would never have been expected; though they seemed steadier and less excitable there was much social evidence to prove them more wildly impulsive.

“It’s so very kind of you to propose that,” Lady Agatha said in a moment to Mrs. Lemon. “I think I’ve never been in a ship—except of course coming from England. I’m sure mamma would wish me to see the Hudson. We used to go in immensely for boating in England.”

“Did you boat in a ship?” Herman Longstraw asked, showing his teeth hilariously and pulling his moustaches.

“Lots of my mother’s people have been in the navy.” Lady Agatha perceived vaguely and good-naturedly that she had said something the odd Americans thought odd and that she must justify herself. Something most unnatural was happening to her standard of oddity.

“I really think you had better come back to us,” Jackson repeated: “your sister’s very lonely without you.”

“She’s much more lonely *with* me. We’re perpetually having differences. Barb’s dreadfully vexed because I like America instead of—instead of—” And Lady Agatha paused a moment; for it just occurred to her that this might be treacherous.

“Instead of what?” Jackson inquired.

“Instead of perpetually wanting to go to England, as she does,” she went on, only giving her phrase a little softer turn; for she felt the next moment that Barb could have nothing to hide and must of course have the courage of her opinions. “Of course England’s best, but I daresay I like to be bad,” the girl said artlessly.

“Oh there’s no doubt you’re awfully bad,” Mr. Longstraw broke out, with joyous eagerness. Naturally he couldn’t know that what she had principally in mind was an exchange of opinions that had taken place between her sister and herself just before she came to stay with Mrs. Lemon. This incident, of which he himself was the occasion, might indeed have been called a discussion, for it had carried them quite into the cold air of the abstract. Lady Barb had said she didn’t see how Agatha could look at such a creature as that—an odious familiar vulgar being who had not about him the rudiments of a gentleman. Lady Agatha had replied that Mr. Longstraw was familiar and rough and that he had a twang and thought it amusing to talk to her as “the Princess”; but that he was a gentleman for all that and was tremendous fun whatever one called him—it didn’t seem to matter what one called any one or anything there. Her sister had returned to this that if he was rough and familiar he couldn’t be a gentleman, inasmuch as that was just what a gentleman meant—a man who was civil and well-bred and well-born. Lady Agatha had argued that such a point was just where she differed; that a man might perfectly be a gentleman and yet be rough, and even ignorant, so long as he was really nice. The only thing was that he should be really nice, which was the case with Mr. Longstraw, who, moreover, was quite extraordinarily civil—as civil as a man could be. And then Lady Agatha herself made the strongest point she had ever made in her life (she had never been so inspired) in saying that Mr. Longstraw was rough perhaps, but not rude—a distinction altogether wasted on her sister, who declared that she hadn’t come to America, of all places, to learn what a gentleman was. The discussion in short had been a trifle grim. I know not whether it was the tonic effect on them too, alien organisms as they were, of the fine winter weather, or that of Lady Barb’s being bored and having nothing else to do; but Lord Canterville’s daughters went into the question with the moral earnestness of a pair of approved Bostonians. It was part of Lady Agatha’s view of her admirer that he after all much resembled other tall people with smiling eyes and tawny moustaches who had ridden a good deal in rough countries and whom she had seen in other places. If he was more familiar he was also more alert; still, the difference was not in himself, but in the way she saw him—the way she saw everybody in America. If she should see the others in the same way no doubt they’d be quite the same; and Lady Agatha sighed a little over the possibilities of life; for this peculiar way, especially regarded in connexion with gentlemen, had become very pleasant to her.

She had betrayed her sister more than she thought, even though Jackson didn’t particularly show it in the tone in which he commented: “Of course she knows she’s going to see your mother in the summer.” His tone was rather that of irritation at so much harping on the very obvious.

“Oh it isn’t only mamma,” the girl said.

“I know she likes a cool house,” Mrs. Lemon contributed.

“When she goes you had better bid her good-bye,” Lady Agatha went on.

“Of course I shall bid her good-bye,” said Mrs. Lemon, to whom apparently this remark was addressed.

“I’ll never bid *you* good-bye, Princess,” Herman Longstraw interposed. “You can bet your life on that.”

“Oh it doesn’t matter about me, for of course I shall come back; but if Barb once gets to England she never will.”

“Oh my dear child!” Mrs. Lemon wailed, addressing her young visitor, but looking at her son, who on his side looked at the ceiling, at the floor, looked above all very conscious.

“I hope you don’t mind my saying that, Jackson dear,” Lady Agatha said to him, for she was very fond of her brother-in-law.

“Ah well then, she shan’t go there,” he threw off in a moment with a small strange dry laugh that attached his mother’s eyes in shy penetration to his face.

“But you promised mamma, you know,” said the girl with the confidence of her affection.

Jackson’s countenance expressed to her none even of his very moderate hilarity. “Your mother, then, must bring her back.”

“Get some of your navy people to supply an ironclad!” cried Mr. Longstraw.

“It would be very pleasant if the Marchioness could come over,” said Mrs. Lemon.

“Oh she’d hate it more than poor Barb,” Lady Agatha quickly replied. It didn’t at all suit her to find a marchioness inserted into her field of vision.

“Doesn’t she feel interested from what you’ve told her?” Lady Agatha’s admirer inquired. But Jackson didn’t heed his sister-in-law’s answer—he was thinking of something else. He said nothing more, however, about the subject of his thought, and before ten minutes were over took his departure, having meanwhile neglected also to revert to the question of Lady Agatha’s bringing her visit to his mother to a close. It wasn’t to speak to him of this—for, as we know, she wished to keep the girl and somehow couldn’t bring herself to be afraid of Herman Longstraw—that when her son took leave she went with him to the door of the house, detaining him a little while she stood on the steps, as people had always done in New York in her time, though it was another of the new fashions she didn’t like, the stiffness of not coming out of the parlour. She placed her hand on his arm to keep him on the “stoop” and looked up and down into the lucid afternoon and the beautiful city—its chocolate-coloured houses so extraordinarily smooth—in which it seemed to her that even the most fastidious people ought to be glad to live. It was useless to attempt to conceal it: his marriage had made a difference and a worry, had put a barrier that she was yet under the painful obligation of trying to seem not to notice. It had brought with it a problem much more difficult than his old problem of how to make his mother feel herself still, as she had been in his childhood, the dispenser of his rewards. The old problem had been easily solved, the new was a great tax. Mrs. Lemon was sure her daughter-in-law didn’t take her seriously, and that was a part of the barrier. Even if Barbarina liked her better than any one else this was mostly because she liked every one else so little. Mrs. Lemon had in her nature no grain of resentment, and it wasn’t to feed a sense of wrong that she permitted herself to criticise her son’s wife. She couldn’t help feeling that his marriage wasn’t altogether fortunate if his wife didn’t take his mother seriously. She knew she wasn’t otherwise remarkable than as being his mother; but that position, which was no merit of hers—the merit was all Jackson’s in being her son—affected her as one which, familiar as Lady Barb appeared to have been in

England with positions of various kinds, would naturally strike the girl as very high and to be accepted as freely as a fine morning. If she didn't think of his mother as an indivisible part of him perhaps she didn't think of other things either; and Mrs. Lemon vaguely felt that, remarkable as Jackson was, he was made up of parts, and that it would never do that these should be rated lower one by one, since there was no knowing what that might end in. She feared that things were rather cold for him at home when he had to explain so much to his wife—explain to her, for instance, all the sources of happiness that were to be found in New York. This struck her as a new kind of problem altogether for a husband. She had never thought of matrimony without a community of feeling in regard to religion and country; one took those great conditions for granted just as one assumed that one's food was to be cooked; and if Jackson should have to discuss them with his wife he might, in spite of his great abilities, be carried into regions where he would get entangled and embroiled—from which even possibly he wouldn't come back at all. Mrs. Lemon had a horror of losing him in some way, and this fear was in her eyes as she stood by the doorway of her house and, after she had glanced up and down the street, eyed him a moment in silence. He simply kissed her again and said she would take cold.

"I'm not afraid of that—I've a shawl!" Mrs. Lemon, who was very small and very fair, with pointed features and an elaborate cap, passed her life in a shawl, and owed to this habit her reputation for being an invalid—an idea she scorned, naturally enough, inasmuch as it was precisely her shawl that, as she believed, kept every ill at bay. "Is it true Barbarina won't come back?" she then asked.

"I don't know that we shall ever find out; I don't know that I shall take her to England," Jackson distinctly returned.

She looked more anxious still. "Didn't you promise, dear?"

"I don't know that I promised—not absolutely."

"But you wouldn't keep her here against her will?" quavered Mrs. Lemon.

"I guess she'll get used to it," he returned with a levity that misrepresented the state of his nerves.

Mrs. Lemon looked up and down the street again and gave a little sigh. "What a pity she isn't American!" She didn't mean this as a reproach, a hint of what might have been; it was simply embarrassment resolved into speech.

"She couldn't have been American," said Jackson with decision.

"Couldn't she, dear?" His mother spoke with conscientious respect; she felt there were imperceptible reasons in this.

"It was just as she is that I wanted her," Jackson added.

"Even if she won't come back?" Mrs. Lemon went on with wonder.

"Oh she has got to come back!" Jackson said as he went down the steps.

VI

Lady Barb, after this, didn't decline to see her New York acquaintances on Sunday afternoons, though she refused for the present to enter into a project of her husband's, who thought it would be pleasant she should entertain his friends on the evening of that day. Like all good Americans, Doctor Lemon devoted much consideration to the great question of how, in his native land, society was to be brought into being. It seemed to him it would help on the good cause, for which so many Americans are ready to lay down their lives, if his wife

should, as he jocularly called it, open a saloon. He believed, or tried to believe, the *salon* now possible in New York on condition of its being reserved entirely for adults; and in having taken a wife out of a country in which social traditions were rich and ancient he had done something toward qualifying his own house—so splendidly qualified in all strictly material respects—to be the scene of such an effort. A charming woman accustomed only to the best on each side, as Lady Beauchemin said, what mightn't she achieve by being at home—always to adults only—in an easy early inspiring comprehensive way and on the evening of the seven when worldly engagements were least numerous? He laid this philosophy before Lady Barb in pursuance of a theory that if she disliked New York on a short acquaintance she couldn't fail to like it on a long. Jackson believed in the New York mind—not so much indeed in its literary artistic philosophic or political achievements as in its general quickness and nascent adaptability. He clung to this belief, for it was an indispensable neat block in the structure he was attempting to rear. The New York mind would throw its glamour over Lady Barb if she would only give it a chance; for it was thoroughly bright responsive and sympathetic. If she would only set up by the turn of her hand a blest snug social centre, a temple of interesting talk in which this charming organ might expand and where she might inhale its fragrance in the most convenient and luxurious way, without, as it were, getting up from her chair; if she would only just try this graceful good-natured experiment—which would make every one like *her* so much too—he was sure all the wrinkles in the gilded scroll of his fate would be smoothed out. But Lady Barb didn't rise at all to his conception and hadn't the least curiosity about the New York mind. She thought it would be extremely disagreeable to have a lot of people tumbling in on Sunday evening without being invited; and altogether her husband's sketch of the Anglo-American saloon seemed to her to suggest crude familiarity, high vociferation—she had already made a remark to him about “screeching women”—and random extravagant laughter. She didn't tell him—for this somehow it wasn't in her power to express, and, strangely enough, he never completely guessed it—that she was singularly deficient in any natural or indeed acquired understanding of what a saloon might be. She had never seen or dreamed of one—and for the most part was incapable of imagining a thing she hadn't seen. She had seen great dinners and balls and meets and runs and races; she had seen garden-parties and bunches of people, mainly women—who, however, didn't screech—at dull stuffy teas, and distinguished companies collected in splendid castles; but all this gave her no clue to a train of conversation, to any idea of a social agreement that the interest of talk, its continuity, its accumulations from season to season, shouldn't be lost. Conversation, in Lady Barb's experience, had never been continuous; in such a case it would surely have been a bore. It had been occasional and fragmentary, a trifle jerky, with allusions that were never explained; it had a dread of detail—it seldom pursued anything very far or kept hold of it very long.

There was something else she didn't say to her husband in reference to his visions of hospitality, which was that if she should open a saloon—she had taken up the joke as well, for Lady Barb was eminently good-natured—Mrs. Vanderdecken would straightway open another, and Mrs. Vanderdecken's would be the more successful of the two. This lady, for reasons Lady Barb had not yet explored, passed for the great personage of New York; there were legends of her husband's family having behind them a fabulous antiquity. When this was alluded to it was spoken of as something incalculable and lost in the dimness of time. Mrs. Vanderdecken was young, pretty, clever, incredibly pretentious, Lady Barb thought, and had a wonderfully artistic house. Ambition was expressed, further, in every rustle of her garments; and if she was the first lady in America, “bar none”—this had an immense sound—it was plain she intended to retain the character. It was not till after she had been several months in New York that Lady Barb began to perceive this easy mistress of the field, crying out, gracious goodness, before she was hurt, to have flung down the glove; and

when the idea presented itself, lighted up by an incident I have no space to report, she simply blushed a little (for Mrs. Vanderdecken) and held her tongue. She hadn't come to America to bandy words about "precedence" with such a woman as that. She had ceased to think of that convenience—of course one was obliged to think in England; though an instinct of self-preservation, old and deep-seated, led her not to expose herself to occasions on which her imputed claim might be tested. This had at bottom much to do with her having, very soon after the first flush of the honours paid her on her arrival and which seemed to her rather grossly overdone, taken the line of scarcely going out. "They can't keep *that* up!" she had said to herself; and in short she would stay, less boringly both for herself and for others, at home. She had a sense that whenever and wherever she might go forth she should meet Mrs. Vanderdecken, who would withhold or deny or contest or even magnanimously concede something—poor Lady Barb could never imagine what. She didn't try to, and gave little thought to all this; for she wasn't prone to confess to herself fears, especially fears from which terror was absent. What in the world *had* Mrs. Vanderdecken that she, Barbarina Lemon (what a name!), could want? But, as I have said, it abode within her as a presentiment that if she should set up a drawing-room in the foreign style (based, that is, on the suppression of prattling chits and hobbledehoys) this sharp skirmisher would be beforehand with her. The continuity of conversation, oh that she would certainly go in for—there was no one so continuous as Mrs. Vanderdecken. Lady Barb, as I have related, didn't give her husband the surprise of confiding to him these thoughts, though she had given him some other surprises. He would have been decidedly astonished, and perhaps after a bit a little encouraged, at finding her liable to any marked form of exasperation.

On the Sunday afternoon she was visible; and at one of these junctures, going into her drawing-room late, he found her entertaining two ladies and a gentleman. The gentleman was Sidney Feeder and one of the ladies none other than Mrs. Vanderdecken, whose ostensible relations with her were indeed of the most cordial nature. Intending utterly to crush her—as two or three persons, not perhaps conspicuous for a narrow accuracy, gave out that she privately declared—Mrs. Vanderdecken yet wished at least to study the weak points of the invader, to penetrate herself with the character of the English girl. Lady Barb verily appeared to have for the representative of the American patriciate a mysterious fascination. Mrs. Vanderdecken couldn't take her eyes off her victim and, whatever might be her estimate of her importance, at least couldn't let her alone. "Why does she come to see me?" poor Lady Barb asked herself. "I'm sure I don't want to see her; she has done enough for civility long ago." Mrs. Vanderdecken had her own reasons, one of which was simply the pleasure of looking at the Doctor's wife, as she habitually called the daughter of the Cantervilles. She wasn't guilty of the rashness of depreciating the appearance of so markedly fine a young woman, but professed a positive unbounded admiration for it, defending it on many occasions against those of the superficial and stupid who pronounced her "left nowhere" by the best of the home-grown specimens. Whatever might have been Lady Barb's weak points, they included neither the curve of her cheek and chin, the setting of her head on her throat, nor the quietness of her deep eyes, which were as beautiful as if they had been blank, like those of antique busts. "The head's enchanting—perfectly enchanting," Mrs. Vanderdecken used to say irrelevantly and as if there were only one head in the place. She always used to ask about the Doctor—which was precisely another reason why she came. She dragged in the Doctor at every turn, asking if he were often called up at night; found it the greatest of luxuries, in a word, to address Lady Barb as the wife of a medical man and as more or less *au courant* of her husband's patients. The other lady, on this Sunday afternoon, was a certain little Mrs. Chew, who had the appearance of a small but very expensive doll and was always asking Lady Barb about England, which Mrs. Vanderdecken never did. The latter discoursed on a purely American basis and with that continuity of

which mention has already been made, while Mrs. Chew engaged Sidney Feeder on topics equally local. Lady Barb liked Sidney Feeder; she only hated his name, which was constantly in her ears during the half-hour the ladies sat with her, Mrs. Chew having, like so many persons in New York, the habit, which greatly annoyed her, of re-apostrophising and re-designating every one present.

Lady Barb's relations with Mrs. Vanderdecken consisted mainly in wondering, while she talked, what she wanted of her, and in looking, with her sculptured eyes, at her visitor's clothes, in which there was always much to examine. "Oh Doctor Feeder!" "Now Doctor Feeder!" "Well Doctor Feeder"—these exclamations, on Mrs. Chew's lips, were an undertone in Lady Barb's consciousness. When we say she liked her husband's confrère, as he never failed to describe himself, we understand that she smiled on his appearance and gave him her hand, and asked him if he would have tea. There was nothing nasty, as they so analytically said in London, about Lady Barb, and she would have been incapable of inflicting a deliberate snub on a man who had the air of standing up so squarely to any purpose he might have in hand. But she had nothing of her own at all to say to Sidney Feeder. He apparently had the art of making her shy, more shy than usual—since she was always a little so; she discouraged him, discouraged him completely and reduced him to naught. He wasn't a man who wanted drawing out, there was nothing of that in him, he was remarkably copious; but she seemed unable to follow him in any direction and half the time evidently didn't know what he was saying. He tried to adapt his conversation to her needs; but when he spoke of the world, of what was going on in society, she was more at sea even than when he spoke of hospitals and laboratories and the health of the city and the progress of science. She appeared indeed after her first smile when he came in, which was always charming, scarcely to see him—looking past him and above him and below him, everywhere but at him, till he rose to go again, when she gave him another smile, as expressive of pleasure and of casual acquaintance as that with which she had greeted his entry: it seemed to imply that they had been having delightful communion. He wondered what the deuce Jackson Lemon could find interesting in such a woman, and he believed his perverse, though gifted, colleague not destined to feel her in the long run enrich or illuminate his life. He pitied Jackson, he saw that Lady Barb, in New York, would neither assimilate nor be assimilated; and yet he was afraid, for very compassion, to betray to the poor man how the queer step he had taken—now so dreadfully irrevocable—might be going to strike most others. Sidney Feeder was a man of a strenuous conscience, who did loyal duty overmuch and from the very fear he mightn't do it enough. In order not to appear to he called upon Lady Barb heroically, in spite of pressing engagements and week after week, enjoying his virtue himself as little as he made it fruitful for his hostess, who wondered at last what she had done to deserve this extremity of appreciation.

She spoke of it to her husband, who wondered also what poor Sidney had in his head and yet naturally shrank from damping too brutally his zeal. Between the latter's wish not to let Jackson see his marriage had made a difference and Jackson's hesitation to reveal to him that his standard of friendship was too high, Lady Barb passed a good many of those numerous hours during which she asked herself if they were the "sort of thing" she had come to America for. Very little had ever passed between her and her husband on the subject of the most regular of her bores, a clear instinct warning her that if they were ever to have scenes she must choose the occasion well, and this odd person not being an occasion. Jackson had tacitly admitted that his "confrère" was anything she chose to think him; he was not a man to be guilty in a discussion of the disloyalty of damning a real friend with praise that was faint. If Lady Agatha had been less of an absentee from her sister's fireside, meanwhile, Doctor Feeder would have been better entertained; for the younger of the English pair prided

herself, after several months of New York, on understanding everything that was said, on interpreting every sound, no matter from what lips the monstrous mystery fell. But Lady Agatha was never at home; she had learned to describe herself perfectly by the time she wrote her mother that she was always on the go. None of the innumerable victims of old-world tyranny welcomed to the land of freedom had yet offered more lavish incense to that goddess than this emancipated London debutante. She had enrolled herself in an amiable band known by the humorous name of “the Tearers”—a dozen young ladies of agreeable appearance, high spirits and good wind, whose most general characteristic was that, when wanted, they were to be sought anywhere in the world but under the roof supposed to shelter them. They browsed far from the fold; and when Sidney Feeder, as sometimes happened, met Lady Agatha at other houses, she was in the hands of the irrepressible Longstraw. She had come back to her sister, but Mr. Longstraw had followed her to the door. As to passing it, he had received direct discouragement from her brother-in-law; but he could at least hang about and wait for her. It may be confided to the reader at the risk of discounting the effect of the only passage in this very level narrative formed to startle that he never had to wait very long.

When Jackson Lemon came in his wife’s visitors were on the point of leaving her; and he didn’t even ask his colleague to remain, for he had something particular to say to Lady Barb.

“I haven’t put to you half the questions I wanted—I’ve been talking so much to Doctor Feeder,” the dressy Mrs. Chew said, holding the hand of her hostess in one of her own and toying at one of Lady Barb’s ribbons with the other.

“I don’t think I’ve anything to tell you; I think I’ve told people everything,” Lady Barb answered rather wearily.

“You haven’t told *me* much!” Mrs. Vanderdecken richly radiated.

“What could one tell you? You know everything,” Jackson impatiently laughed.

“Ah no—there are some things that are great mysteries for me!” this visitor promptly pronounced. “I hope you’re coming to me on the seventeenth,” she added to Lady Barb.

“On the seventeenth? I believe we go somewhere.”

“Do go to Mrs. Vanderdecken’s,” said Mrs. Chew; “you’ll see the cream of the cream.”

“Oh gracious!” Mrs. Vanderdecken vaguely cried.

“Well, I don’t care; she will, won’t she, Doctor Feeder?—the very pick of American society.” Mrs. Chew stuck to her point.

“Oh I’ve no doubt Lady Barb will have a good time,” said Sidney Feeder. “I’m afraid you miss the bran,” he went on with irrelevant jocosity to Jackson’s bride. He always tried the jocose when other elements had failed.

“The bran?” Jackson’s bride couldn’t think.

“Where you used to ride—in the Park.”

“My dear fellow, you speak as if we had met at the circus,” her husband interposed. “I haven’t married a mountebank!”

“Well, they put some stuff on the road,” Sidney Feeder explained, not holding much to his joke.

“You must miss a great many things,” said Mrs. Chew tenderly.

“I don’t see what,” Mrs. Vanderdecken tinkled, “except the fogs and the Queen. New York’s getting more and more like London. It’s a pity—you ought to have known us thirty years ago.”

“*You’re* the queen here,” said Jackson Lemon, “but I don’t know what you know about thirty years ago.”

“Do you think she doesn’t go back?—she goes back to the last century!” cried Mrs. Chew.

“I daresay I should have liked that,” said Lady Barb; “but I can’t imagine.” And she looked at her husband—a look she often had—as if she vaguely wished him to do something.

He was not called upon, however, to take any violent steps, for Mrs. Chew presently said, “Well, Lady Barb, good-bye”; Mrs. Vanderdecken glared genially and as for excess of meaning at her hostess and addressed a farewell, accompanied very audibly with his title, to her host; and Sidney Feeder made a joke about stepping on the trains of the ladies’ dresses as he accompanied them to the door. Mrs. Chew had always a great deal to say at the last; she talked till she was in the street and then she addressed that prospect. But at the end of five minutes Jackson Lemon was alone with his wife, to whom he then announced a piece of news. He prefaced it, however, by an inquiry as he came back from the hall.

“Where’s Agatha, my dear?”

“I haven’t the least idea. In the streets somewhere, I suppose.”

“I think you ought to know a little more.”

“How can I know about things here? I’ve given her up. I can do nothing with her. I don’t care what she does.”

“She ought to go back to England,” Jackson said after a pause.

“She ought never to have come.”

“It was not my proposal, God knows!” he sharply returned.

“Mamma could never know what it really is,” his wife more quietly noted.

“No, it hasn’t been as yet what your mother supposed! The man Longstraw wants to marry her and has made a formal proposal. I met him half an hour ago in Madison Avenue, and he asked me to come with him into the Columbia Club. There, in the billiard-room, which to-day is empty, he opened himself—thinking evidently that in laying the matter before me he was behaving with extraordinary propriety. He tells me he’s dying of love and that she’s perfectly willing to go and live in Arizona.”

“So she is,” said Lady Barb. “And what did you tell him?”

“I told him I was convinced it would never do and that at any rate I could have nothing to say to it. I told him explicitly in short what I had told him virtually before. I said we should send Aggie straight back to England, and that if they had the courage they must themselves broach the question over there.”

“When shall you send her back?” asked Lady Barb.

“Immediately—by the very first steamer.”

“Alone, like an American girl?”

“Don’t be rough, Barb,” Jackson replied. “I shall easily find some people—lots of them are sailing now.”

“I must take her myself,” Lady Barb observed in a moment. “I brought her out—so I must restore her to my mother’s hands.”

He had expected this and believed he was prepared for it, but when it came he found his preparation not complete. He had no answer to make—none at least that seemed to him to go to the point. During these last weeks it had come over him with a quiet irresistible unmerciful force that Mrs. Dexter Freer had been right in saying to him that Sunday afternoon in Jermyn Street, the summer before, that he would find it wasn’t so simple to be an American. Such a character was complicated in just the measure that she had foretold by the difficulty of domesticating any wife at all liberally chosen. The difficulty wasn’t dissipated by his having taken a high tone about it; it pinched him from morning till night, it hurt him like a misfitting shoe. His high tone had given him courage when he took the great step; but he began to perceive that the highest tone in the world couldn’t change the nature of things. His ears tingled as he inwardly noted that if the Dexter Freers, whom he had thought alike abject in their hopes and their fears, had been by ill luck spending the winter in New York, they would have found his predicament as good fun as they could wish. Drop by drop the conviction had entered his mind—the first drop had come in the form of a word from Lady Agatha—that if his wife should return to England she would never again later recross the Atlantic. That word from the competent source had been the touch from the outside at which often a man’s fear crystallises. What she would do, how she would resist—this he wasn’t yet prepared to tell himself; but he felt every time he looked at her that the beautiful woman he had adored was filled with a dumb insuperable ineradicable purpose. He knew that if she should plant herself firm no power on earth would move her; and her blooming antique beauty and the general loftiness of her breeding came fast to seem to him but the magnificent expression of a dense patient ponderous power to resist. She wasn’t light, she wasn’t supple, and after six months of marriage he had made up his mind that she wasn’t intelligent—in spite of all which she would elude him. She had married him, she had come into his fortune and his consideration—for who was she after all? he was on occasion so angry as to ask himself, remembering that in England Lady Claras and Lady Florences were as thick as blackberries—but she would have nothing to do, if she could help it, with his country. She had gone in to dinner first in every house in the place, but this hadn’t satisfied her. It *had* been simple to be an American in the good and easy sense that no one else in New York had made any difficulties; the difficulties had sprung from the very, the consummate, make of her, which were after all what he had married her for, thinking they would be a fine temperamental heritage for his brood. So they would, doubtless, in the coming years and after the brood should have appeared; but meanwhile they interfered with the best heritage of all—the nationality of his possible children. She would do indeed nothing violent; he was tolerably certain of that. She wouldn’t return to England without his consent; only when she should return it would be once for all. His one possible line, then, was not to take her back—a position replete with difficulties, since he had in a manner given his word; she herself giving none at all beyond the formal promise murmured at the altar. She had been general, but he had been specific; the settlements he had made were a part of that. His difficulties were such as he couldn’t directly face. He must tack in approaching so uncertain a coast. He said to his wife presently that it would be very inconvenient for him to leave New York at that moment: she must remember their plans had been laid for a later move. He couldn’t think of letting her make the voyage without him, and on the other hand they must pack her sister off without delay. He would therefore make instant inquiry for a chaperon, and he relieved his irritation by cursing the name and every other attribute of Herman Longstraw.

Lady Barb didn't trouble herself to denounce this gentleman; her manner was that of having for a long time expected the worst. She simply remarked after having listened to her husband for some minutes in silence: "I'd quite as lief she should marry Doctor Feeder!"

The day after this he closeted himself for an hour with his sister-in-law, taking great pains to set forth to her the reasons why she shouldn't marry her Californian. Jackson was kind, he was affectionate; he kissed her and put his arm round her waist, he reminded her that he and she were the best of friends and that she had always been awfully nice to him: therefore he counted on her. She'd break her mother's heart, she'd deserve her father's curse, and she'd get him, Jackson, into a pickle from which no human power might ever disembroil him. Lady Agatha listened and cried, she returned his kiss very affectionately and admitted that her father and mother would never consent to such a marriage; and when he told her that he had made arrangements that she should sail for Liverpool, with some charming people, the next day but one, she embraced him again and assured him she could never thank him enough for all the trouble he had taken about her. He flattered himself he had convinced and in some degree comforted her, and he reflected with complacency that even should his wife take it into her head Barb would never get ready to embark for her native land between a Monday and a Wednesday. The next morning Lady Agatha failed to appear at breakfast, though as she usually rose very late her absence excited no immediate alarm. She hadn't rung her bell and was supposed still to be sleeping. But she had never yet slept later than mid-day; and as this hour approached her sister went to her room. Lady Barb then discovered that she had left the house at seven o'clock in the morning and had gone to meet Mr. Longstraw at a neighbouring corner. A little note on the table explained it very succinctly, and put beyond the power of the Jackson Lemons to doubt that by the time this news reached them their wayward sister had been united to the man of her preference as closely as the laws of the State of New York could bind her. Her little note set forth that as she knew she should never be permitted to marry him she had resolved to marry him without permission, and that directly after the ceremony, which would be of the simplest kind, they were to take a train for the Far West.

Our record is concerned only with the remote consequences of this affair, which made of course a great deal of trouble for poor Jackson. He pursued the fugitives to remote rocky fastnesses and finally overtook them in California; but he hadn't the boldness to propose to them to separate, for he promptly made out that Herman Longstraw was at least as well married as himself. Lady Agatha was already popular in the new States, where the history of her elopement, emblazoned in enormous capitals, was circulated in a thousand newspapers. This question of the newspapers had been for our troubled friend one of the most definite results of his sister-in-law's *coup de tête*. His first thought had been of the public prints and his first exclamation a prayer that they shouldn't get hold of the story. They had, however, got hold of it with a myriad wildly-waved hands and were scattering it broadcast over the world. Lady Barb never caught them in the act—she succeeded perfectly in not seeing what she needn't; but an affectionate friend of the family, travelling at that time in the United States, made a parcel of some of the leading journals, and sent them to Lord Canterville. This missive elicited from her ladyship a letter, addressed to her son-in-law, which shook the young man's position to the base. The phials of a rank vulgarity had been opened on the house of Canterville, and the noble matron demanded that in compensation for the affronts and injuries heaped upon her family, and bereaved and dishonoured as she was, she should at least be allowed to look on the face of her second daughter. "I suppose you'll not, for very pity, be deaf to such a prayer as that," said Lady Barb; and though loth to record a second act of weakness on the part of a man with pretensions to be strong, I may not disguise the fact that poor Jackson, who blushed dreadfully over the newspapers and felt

afresh as he read them the force of Mrs. Freer's terrible axiom, poor Jackson paid a visit to the office of the Cunarders. He said to himself later on that it was the newspapers that had done it; he couldn't decently appear to be on their side: they made it so hard to deny that the country was impossible at a time when one was in need of all one's arguments. Lady Barb, before sailing, definitely refused to mention any week or month as the date of their prearranged return to New York. Very many weeks and months have elapsed since then, and she gives no sign of coming back. She will never fix a date. She is much missed by Mrs. Vanderdecken, who still alludes to her—still says the line of the shoulders was superb; putting the statement pensively in the past tense. Lady Beauchemin and Lady Marmaduke are much disconcerted; the international project has not, in their view, received an impetus.

Jackson Lemon has a house in London and he rides in the Park with his wife, who is as beautiful as the day and who a year ago presented him with a little girl exhibiting features that he already scans for the look of race—whether in hope or in fear to-day is more than my muse has revealed. He has occasional scenes with Lady Barb during which the look of race is very clear in her own countenance; but they never terminate in a visit to the Cunarders. He's exceedingly restless and is constantly crossing to the Continent; but he returns with a certain abruptness, for he hates meeting the Dexter Freers, who seem to pervade the more comfortable parts of Europe. He dodges them in every town. Sidney Feeder feels very badly about him; it's months since Jackson has sent him any "results." The excellent fellow goes very often, in a consolatory spirit, to see Mrs. Lemon, but has not yet been able to answer her standing question—"Why that girl more than another?" Lady Agatha Longstraw and her husband arrived a year ago in England, and Mr. Longstraw's personality had immense success during the last London season. It's not exactly known what they live on, though perfectly known that he's looking for something to do. Meanwhile it's as good as known that their really quite responsible brother-in-law supports them.

Pandora

I

It has long been the custom of the North German Lloyd steamers, which convey passengers from Bremen to New York, to anchor for several hours in the pleasant port of Southampton, where their human cargo receives many additions. An intelligent young German, Count Otto Vogelstein, hardly knew a few years ago whether to condemn this custom or approve it. He leaned over the bulwarks of the *Donau* as the American passengers crossed the plank—the travellers who embark at Southampton are mainly of that nationality—and curiously, indifferently, vaguely, through the smoke of his cigar, saw them absorbed in the huge capacity of the ship, where he had the agreeable consciousness that his own nest was comfortably made. To watch from such a point of vantage the struggles of those less fortunate than ourselves—of the uninformed, the unprovided, the belated, the bewildered—is an occupation not devoid of sweetness, and there was nothing to mitigate the complacency with which our young friend gave himself up to it; nothing, that is, save a natural benevolence which had not yet been extinguished by the consciousness of official greatness. For Count Vogelstein was official, as I think you would have seen from the straightness of his back, the lustre of his light elegant spectacles, and something discreet and diplomatic in the curve of his moustache, which looked as if it might well contribute to the principal function, as cynics say, of the lips—the active concealment of thought. He had been appointed to the secretaryship of the German legation at Washington and in these first days of the autumn was about to take possession of his post. He was a model character for such a purpose—serious civil ceremonious curious stiff, stuffed with knowledge and convinced that, as lately rearranged, the German Empire places in the most striking light the highest of all the possibilities of the greatest of all the peoples. He was quite aware, however, of the claims to economic and other consideration of the United States, and that this quarter of the globe offered a vast field for study.

The process of inquiry had already begun for him, in spite of his having as yet spoken to none of his fellow-passengers; the case being that Vogelstein inquired not only with his tongue, but with his eyes—that is with his spectacles—with his ears, with his nose, with his palate, with all his senses and organs. He was a highly upright young man, whose only fault was that his sense of comedy, or of the humour of things, had never been specifically disengaged from his several other senses. He vaguely felt that something should be done about this, and in a general manner proposed to do it, for he was on his way to explore a society abounding in comic aspects. This consciousness of a missing measure gave him a certain mistrust of what might be said of him; and if circumspection is the essence of diplomacy our young aspirant promised well. His mind contained several millions of facts, packed too closely together for the light breeze of the imagination to draw through the mass. He was impatient to report himself to his superior in Washington, and the loss of time in an English port could only incommode him, inasmuch as the study of English institutions was no part of his mission. On the other hand the day was charming; the blue sea, in Southampton Water, pricked all over with light, had no movement but that of its infinite shimmer. Moreover he was by no means sure that he should be happy in the United States, where doubtless he should find himself soon enough disembarked. He knew that this was not an important question and that happiness was an unscientific term, such as a man of his education should be ashamed to use even in the silence of his thoughts. Lost none the less in the inconsiderate crowd and feeling himself neither in his own country nor in that to which he was in a manner

accredited, he was reduced to his mere personality; so that during the hour, to save his importance, he cultivated such ground as lay in sight for a judgement of this delay to which the German steamer was subjected in English waters. Mightn't it be proved, facts, figures and documents—or at least watch—in hand, considerably greater than the occasion demanded?

Count Vogelstein was still young enough in diplomacy to think it necessary to have opinions. He had a good many indeed which had been formed without difficulty; they had been received ready-made from a line of ancestors who knew what they liked. This was of course—and under pressure, being candid, he would have admitted it—an unscientific way of furnishing one's mind. Our young man was a stiff conservative, a Junker of Junkers; he thought modern democracy a temporary phase and expected to find many arguments against it in the great Republic. In regard to these things it was a pleasure to him to feel that, with his complete training, he had been taught thoroughly to appreciate the nature of evidence. The ship was heavily laden with German emigrants, whose mission in the United States differed considerably from Count Otto's. They hung over the bulwarks, densely grouped; they leaned forward on their elbows for hours, their shoulders kept on a level with their ears; the men in furred caps, smoking long-bowled pipes, the women with babies hidden in remarkably ugly shawls. Some were yellow Germans and some were black, and all looked greasy and matted with the sea-damp. They were destined to swell still further the huge current of the Western democracy; and Count Vogelstein doubtless said to himself that they wouldn't improve its quality. Their numbers, however, were striking, and I know not what he thought of the nature of this particular evidence.

The passengers who came on board at Southampton were not of the greasy class; they were for the most part American families who had been spending the summer, or a longer period, in Europe. They had a great deal of luggage, innumerable bags and rugs and hampers and sea-chairs, and were composed largely of ladies of various ages, a little pale with anticipation, wrapped also in striped shawls, though in prettier ones than the nursing mothers of the steerage, and crowned with very high hats and feathers. They darted to and fro across the gangway, looking for each other and for their scattered parcels; they separated and reunited, they exclaimed and declared, they eyed with dismay the occupants of the forward quarter, who seemed numerous enough to sink the vessel, and their voices sounded faint and far as they rose to Vogelstein's ear over the latter's great tarred sides. He noticed that in the new contingent there were many young girls, and he remembered what a lady in Dresden had once said to him—that America was the country of the Mädchen. He wondered whether he should like that, and reflected that it would be an aspect to study, like everything else. He had known in Dresden an American family in which there were three daughters who used to skate with the officers, and some of the ladies now coming on board struck him as of that same habit, except that in the Dresden days feathers weren't worn quite so high.

At last the ship began to creak and slowly bridge, and the delay at Southampton came to an end. The gangway was removed and the vessel indulged in the awkward evolutions that were to detach her from the land. Count Vogelstein had finished his cigar, and he spent a long time in walking up and down the upper deck. The charming English coast passed before him, and he felt this to be the last of the old world. The American coast also might be pretty—he hardly knew what one would expect of an American coast; but he was sure it would be different. Differences, however, were notoriously half the charm of travel, and perhaps even most when they couldn't be expressed in figures, numbers, diagrams or the other merely useful symbols. As yet indeed there were very few among the objects presented to sight on the steamer. Most of his fellow-passengers appeared of one and the same persuasion, and that persuasion the least to be mistaken. They were Jews and commercial to a man. And by

this time they had lighted their cigars and put on all manner of seafaring caps, some of them with big ear-lappets which somehow had the effect of bringing out their peculiar facial type. At last the new voyagers began to emerge from below and to look about them, vaguely, with that suspicious expression of face always to be noted in the newly embarked and which, as directed to the receding land, resembles that of a person who begins to perceive himself the victim of a trick. Earth and ocean, in such glances, are made the subject of a sweeping objection, and many travellers, in the general plight, have an air at once duped and superior, which seems to say that they could easily go ashore if they would.

It still wanted two hours of dinner, and by the time Vogelstein's long legs had measured three or four miles on the deck he was ready to settle himself in his sea-chair and draw from his pocket a Tauchnitz novel by an American author whose pages, he had been assured, would help to prepare him for some of the oddities. On the back of his chair his name was painted in rather large letters, this being a precaution taken at the recommendation of a friend who had told him that on the American steamers the passengers—especially the ladies—thought nothing of pilfering one's little comforts. His friend had even hinted at the correct reproduction of his coronet. This marked man of the world had added that the Americans are greatly impressed by a coronet. I know not whether it was scepticism or modesty, but Count Vogelstein had omitted every pictured plea for his rank; there were others of which he might have made use. The precious piece of furniture which on the Atlantic voyage is trusted never to flinch among universal concussions was emblazoned simply with his title and name. It happened, however, that the blazonry was huge; the back of the chair was covered with enormous German characters. This time there can be no doubt: it was modesty that caused the secretary of legation, in placing himself, to turn this portion of his seat outward, away from the eyes of his companions—to present it to the balustrade of the deck. The ship was passing the Needles—the beautiful uttermost point of the Isle of Wight. Certain tall white cones of rock rose out of the purple sea; they flushed in the afternoon light and their vague rosiness gave them a human expression in face of the cold expanse toward which the prow was turned; they seemed to say farewell, to be the last note of a peopled world. Vogelstein saw them very comfortably from his place and after a while turned his eyes to the other quarter, where the elements of air and water managed to make between them so comparatively poor an opposition. Even his American novelist was more amusing than that, and he prepared to return to this author. In the great curve which it described, however, his glance was arrested by the figure of a young lady who had just ascended to the deck and who paused at the mouth of the companionway.

This was not in itself an extraordinary phenomenon; but what attracted Vogelstein's attention was the fact that the young person appeared to have fixed her eyes on him. She was slim, brightly dressed, rather pretty; Vogelstein remembered in a moment that he had noticed her among the people on the wharf at Southampton. She was soon aware he had observed her; whereupon she began to move along the deck with a step that seemed to indicate a purpose of approaching him. Vogelstein had time to wonder whether she could be one of the girls he had known at Dresden; but he presently reflected that they would now be much older than that. It was true they were apt to advance, like this one, straight upon their victim. Yet the present specimen was no longer looking at him, and though she passed near him it was now tolerably clear she had come above but to take a general survey. She was a quick handsome competent girl, and she simply wanted to see what one could think of the ship, of the weather, of the appearance of England, from such a position as that; possibly even of one's fellow-passengers. She satisfied herself promptly on these points, and then she looked about, while she walked, as if in keen search of a missing object; so that Vogelstein finally arrived at a conviction of her real motive. She passed near him again and this time almost stopped, her

eyes bent upon him attentively. He thought her conduct remarkable even after he had gathered that it was not at his face, with its yellow moustache, she was looking, but at the chair on which he was seated. Then those words of his friend came back to him—the speech about the tendency of the people, especially of the ladies, on the American steamers to take to themselves one's little belongings. Especially the ladies, he might well say; for here was one who apparently wished to pull from under him the very chair he was sitting on. He was afraid she would ask him for it, so he pretended to read, systematically avoiding her eye. He was conscious she hovered near him, and was moreover curious to see what she would do. It seemed to him strange that such a nice-looking girl—for her appearance was really charming—should endeavour by arts so flagrant to work upon the quiet dignity of a secretary of legation. At last it stood out that she was trying to look round a corner, as it were—trying to see what was written on the back of his chair. “She wants to find out my name; she wants to see who I am!” This reflexion passed through his mind and caused him to raise his eyes. They rested on her own—which for an appreciable moment she didn't withdraw. The latter were brilliant and expressive, and surmounted a delicate aquiline nose, which, though pretty, was perhaps just a trifle too hawk-like. It was the oddest coincidence in the world; the story Vogelstein had taken up treated of a flighty forward little American girl who plants herself in front of a young man in the garden of an hotel. Wasn't the conduct of this young lady a testimony to the truthfulness of the tale, and wasn't Vogelstein himself in the position of the young man in the garden? That young man—though with more, in such connexions in general, to go upon—ended by addressing himself to his aggressor, as she might be called, and after a very short hesitation Vogelstein followed his example. “If she wants to know who I am she's welcome,” he said to himself; and he got out of the chair, seized it by the back and, turning it round, exhibited the superscription to the girl. She coloured slightly, but smiled and read his name, while Vogelstein raised his hat.

“I'm much obliged to you. That's all right,” she remarked as if the discovery had made her very happy.

It affected him indeed as all right that he should be Count Otto Vogelstein; this appeared even rather a flippant mode of disposing of the fact. By way of rejoinder he asked her if she desired of him the surrender of his seat.

“I'm much obliged to you; of course not. I thought you had one of our chairs, and I didn't like to ask you. It looks exactly like one of ours; not so much now as when you sit in it. Please sit down again. I don't want to trouble you. We've lost one of ours, and I've been looking for it everywhere. They look so much alike; you can't tell till you see the back. Of course I see there will be no mistake about yours,” the young lady went on with a smile of which the serenity matched her other abundance. “But we've got such a small name—you can scarcely see it,” she added with the same friendly intention. “Our name's just Day—you mightn't think it *was* a name, might you? if we didn't make the most of it. If you see that on anything, I'd be so obliged if you'd tell me. It isn't for myself, it's for my mother; she's so dependent on her chair, and that one I'm looking for pulls out so beautifully. Now that you sit down again and hide the lower part it does look just like ours. Well, it must be somewhere. You must excuse me; I wouldn't disturb you.”

This was a long and even confidential speech for a young woman, presumably unmarried, to make to a perfect stranger; but Miss Day acquitted herself of it with perfect simplicity and self-possession. She held up her head and stepped away, and Vogelstein could see that the foot she pressed upon the clean smooth deck was slender and shapely. He watched her disappear through the trap by which she had ascended, and he felt more than ever like the young man in his American tale. The girl in the present case was older and not so pretty, as

he could easily judge, for the image of her smiling eyes and speaking lips still hovered before him. He went back to his book with the feeling that it would give him some information about her. This was rather illogical, but it indicated a certain amount of curiosity on the part of Count Vogelstein. The girl in the book had a mother, it appeared, and so had this young lady; the former had also a brother, and he now remembered that he had noticed a young man on the wharf—a young man in a high hat and a white overcoat—who seemed united to Miss Day by this natural tie. And there was some one else too, as he gradually recollected, an older man, also in a high hat, but in a black overcoat—in black altogether—who completed the group and who was presumably the head of the family. These reflexions would indicate that Count Vogelstein read his volume of Tauchnitz rather interruptedly. Moreover they represented but the loosest economy of consciousness; for wasn't he to be afloat in an oblong box for ten days with such people, and could it be doubted he should see at least enough of them?

It may as well be written without delay that he saw a great deal of them. I have sketched in some detail the conditions in which he made the acquaintance of Miss Day, because the event had a certain importance for this fair square Teuton; but I must pass briefly over the incidents that immediately followed it. He wondered what it was open to him, after such an introduction, to do in relation to her, and he determined he would push through his American tale and discover what the hero did. But he satisfied himself in a very short time that Miss Day had nothing in common with the heroine of that work save certain signs of habitat and climate—and save, further, the fact that the male sex wasn't terrible to her. The local stamp sharply, as he gathered, impressed upon her he estimated indeed rather in a borrowed than in a natural light, for if she was native to a small town in the interior of the American continent one of their fellow-passengers, a lady from New York with whom he had a good deal of conversation, pronounced her "atrociously" provincial. How the lady arrived at this certitude didn't appear, for Vogelstein observed that she held no communication with the girl. It was true she gave it the support of her laying down that certain Americans could tell immediately who other Americans were, leaving him to judge whether or no she herself belonged to the critical or only to the criticised half of the nation. Mrs. Dangerfield was a handsome confidential insinuating woman, with whom Vogelstein felt his talk take a very wide range indeed. She convinced him rather effectually that even in a great democracy there are human differences, and that American life was full of social distinctions, of delicate shades, which foreigners often lack the intelligence to perceive. Did he suppose every one knew every one else in the biggest country in the world, and that one wasn't as free to choose one's company there as in the most monarchical and most exclusive societies? She laughed such delusions to scorn as Vogelstein tucked her beautiful furred coverlet—they reclined together a great deal in their elongated chairs—well over her feet. How free an American lady was to choose her company she abundantly proved by not knowing any one on the steamer but Count Otto.

He could see for himself that Mr. and Mrs. Day had not at all her grand air. They were fat plain serious people who sat side by side on the deck for hours and looked straight before them. Mrs. Day had a white face, large cheeks and small eyes: her forehead was surrounded with a multitude of little tight black curls; her lips moved as if she had always a lozenge in her mouth. She wore entwined about her head an article which Mrs. Dangerfield spoke of as a "nuby," a knitted pink scarf concealing her hair, encircling her neck and having among its convolutions a hole for her perfectly expressionless face. Her hands were folded on her stomach, and in her still, swathed figure her little bead-like eyes, which occasionally changed their direction, alone represented life. Her husband had a stiff grey beard on his chin and a bare spacious upper lip, to which constant shaving had imparted a hard glaze. His eyebrows were thick and his nostrils wide, and when he was uncovered, in the saloon, it was visible that

his grizzled hair was dense and perpendicular. He might have looked rather grim and truculent hadn't it been for the mild familiar accommodating gaze with which his large light-coloured pupils—the leisurely eyes of a silent man—appeared to consider surrounding objects. He was evidently more friendly than fierce, but he was more diffident than friendly. He liked to have you in sight, but wouldn't have pretended to understand you much or to classify you, and would have been sorry it should put you under an obligation. He and his wife spoke sometimes, but seldom talked, and there was something vague and patient in them, as if they had become victims of a wrought spell. The spell however was of no sinister cast; it was the fascination of prosperity, the confidence of security, which sometimes makes people arrogant, but which had had such a different effect on this simple satisfied pair, in whom further development of every kind appeared to have been happily arrested.

Mrs. Dangerfield made it known to Count Otto that every morning after breakfast, the hour at which he wrote his journal in his cabin, the old couple were guided upstairs and installed in their customary corner by Pandora. This she had learned to be the name of their elder daughter, and she was immensely amused by her discovery. "Pandora"—that was in the highest degree typical; it placed them in the social scale if other evidence had been wanting; you could tell that a girl was from the interior, the mysterious interior about which Vogelstein's imagination was now quite excited, when she had such a name as that. This young lady managed the whole family, even a little the small beflounged sister, who, with bold pretty innocent eyes, a torrent of fair silky hair, a crimson fez, such as is worn by male Turks, very much askew on top of it, and a way of galloping and straddling about the ship in any company she could pick up—she had long thin legs, very short skirts and stockings of every tint—was going home, in elegant French clothes, to resume an interrupted education. Pandora overlooked and directed her relatives; Vogelstein could see this for himself, could see she was very active and decided, that she had in a high degree the sentiment of responsibility, settling on the spot most of the questions that could come up for a family from the interior.

The voyage was remarkably fine, and day after day it was possible to sit there under the salt sky and feel one's self rounding the great curves of the globe. The long deck made a white spot in the sharp black circle of the ocean and in the intense sea-light, while the shadow of the smoke-streamers trembled on the familiar floor, the shoes of fellow-passengers, distinctive now, and in some cases irritating, passed and repassed, accompanied, in the air so tremendously "open," that rendered all voices weak and most remarks rather flat, by fragments of opinion on the run of the ship. Vogelstein by this time had finished his little American story and now definitely judged that Pandora Day was not at all like the heroine. She was of quite another type; much more serious and strenuous, and not at all keen, as he had supposed, about making the acquaintance of gentlemen. Her speaking to him that first afternoon had been, he was bound to believe, an incident without importance for herself; in spite of her having followed it up the next day by the remark, thrown at him as she passed, with a smile that was almost fraternal: "It's all right, sir! I've found that old chair." After this she hadn't spoken to him again and had scarcely looked at him. She read a great deal, and almost always French books, in fresh yellow paper; not the lighter forms of that literature, but a volume of Sainte-Beuve, of Renan or at the most, in the way of dissipation, of Alfred de Musset. She took frequent exercise and almost always walked alone, apparently not having made many friends on the ship and being without the resource of her parents, who, as has been related, never budged out of the cosy corner in which she planted them for the day.

Her brother was always in the smoking-room, where Vogelstein observed him, in very tight clothes, his neck encircled with a collar like a palisade. He had a sharp little face, which was

not disagreeable; he smoked enormous cigars and began his drinking early in the day: but his appearance gave no sign of these excesses. As regards euchre and poker and the other distractions of the place he was guilty of none. He evidently understood such games in perfection, for he used to watch the players, and even at moments impartially advise them; but Vogelstein never saw the cards in his hand. He was referred to as regards disputed points, and his opinion carried the day. He took little part in the conversation, usually much relaxed, that prevailed in the smoking-room, but from time to time he made, in his soft flat youthful voice, a remark which every one paused to listen to and which was greeted with roars of laughter. Vogelstein, well as he knew English, could rarely catch the joke; but he could see at least that these must be choice specimens of that American humour admired and practised by a whole continent and yet to be rendered accessible to a trained diplomatist, clearly, but by some special and incalculable revelation. The young man, in his way, was very remarkable, for, as Vogelstein heard some one say once after the laughter had subsided, he was only nineteen. If his sister didn't resemble the dreadful little girl in the tale already mentioned, there was for Vogelstein at least an analogy between young Mr. Day and a certain small brother—a candy-loving Madison, Hamilton or Jefferson—who was, in the Tauchnitz volume, attributed to that unfortunate maid. This was what the little Madison would have grown up to at nineteen, and the improvement was greater than might have been expected.

The days were long, but the voyage was short, and it had almost come to an end before Count Otto yielded to an attraction peculiar in its nature and finally irresistible, and, in spite of Mrs. Dangerfield's emphatic warning, sought occasion for a little continuous talk with Miss Pandora. To mention that this impulse took effect without mentioning sundry other of his current impressions with which it had nothing to do is perhaps to violate proportion and give a false idea; but to pass it by would be still more unjust. The Germans, as we know, are a transcendental people, and there was at last an irresistible appeal for Vogelstein in this quick bright silent girl who could smile and turn vocal in an instant, who imparted a rare originality to the filial character, and whose profile was delicate as she bent it over a volume which she cut as she read, or presented it in musing attitudes, at the side of the ship, to the horizon they had left behind. But he felt it to be a pity, as regards a possible acquaintance with her, that her parents should be heavy little burghers, that her brother should not correspond to his conception of a young man of the upper class, and that her sister should be a Daisy Miller *en herbe*. Repeatedly admonished by Mrs. Dangerfield, the young diplomatist was doubly careful as to the relations he might form at the beginning of his sojourn in the United States. That lady reminded him, and he had himself made the observation in other capitals, that the first year, and even the second, is the time for prudence. One was ignorant of proportions and values; one was exposed to mistakes and thankful for attention, and one might give one's self away to people who would afterwards be as a millstone round one's neck: Mrs. Dangerfield struck and sustained that note, which resounded in the young man's imagination. She assured him that if he didn't "look out" he would be committing himself to some American girl with an impossible family. In America, when one committed one's self, there was nothing to do but march to the altar, and what should he say for instance to finding himself a near relation of Mr. and Mrs. P. W. Day?—since such were the initials inscribed on the back of the two chairs of that couple. Count Otto felt the peril, for he could immediately think of a dozen men he knew who had married American girls. There appeared now to be a constant danger of marrying the American girl; it was something one had to reckon with, like the railway, the telegraph, the discovery of dynamite, the Chassepôt rifle, the Socialistic spirit: it was one of the complications of modern life.

It would doubtless be too much to say that he feared being carried away by a passion for a young woman who was not strikingly beautiful and with whom he had talked, in all, but ten

minutes. But, as we recognise, he went so far as to wish that the human belongings of a person whose high spirit appeared to have no taint either of fastness, as they said in England, or of subversive opinion, and whose mouth had charming lines, should not be a little more distinguished. There was an effect of drollery in her behaviour to these subjects of her zeal, whom she seemed to regard as a care, but not as an interest; it was as if they had been entrusted to her honour and she had engaged to convey them safe to a certain point; she was detached and inadvertent, and then suddenly remembered, repented and came back to tuck them into their blankets, to alter the position of her mother's umbrella, to tell them something about the run of the ship. These little offices were usually performed deftly, rapidly, with the minimum of words, and when their daughter drew near them Mr. and Mrs. Day closed their eyes after the fashion of a pair of household dogs who expect to be scratched.

One morning she brought up the Captain of the ship to present to them; she appeared to have a private and independent acquaintance with this officer, and the introduction to her parents had the air of a sudden happy thought. It wasn't so much an introduction as an exhibition, as if she were saying to him: "This is what they look like; see how comfortable I make them. Aren't they rather queer and rather dear little people? But they leave me perfectly free. Oh I can assure you of that. Besides, you must see it for yourself." Mr. and Mrs. Day looked up at the high functionary who thus unbent to them with very little change of countenance; then looked at each other in the same way. He saluted, he inclined himself a moment; but Pandora shook her head, she seemed to be answering for them; she made little gestures as if in explanation to the good Captain of some of their peculiarities, as for instance that he needn't expect them to speak. They closed their eyes at last; she appeared to have a kind of mesmeric influence on them, and Miss Day walked away with the important friend, who treated her with evident consideration, bowing very low, for all his importance, when the two presently after separated. Vogelstein could see she was capable of making an impression; and the moral of our little matter is that in spite of Mrs. Dangerfield, in spite of the resolutions of his prudence, in spite of the limits of such acquaintance as he had momentarily made with her, in spite of Mr. and Mrs. Day and the young man in the smoking-room, she had fixed his attention.

It was in the course of the evening after the scene with the Captain that he joined her, awkwardly, abruptly, irresistibly, on the deck, where she was pacing to and fro alone, the hour being auspiciously mild and the stars remarkably fine. There were scattered talkers and smokers and couples, unrecognisable, that moved quickly through the gloom. The vessel dipped with long regular pulsations; vague and spectral under the low stars, its swaying pinnacles spotted here and there with lights, it seemed to rush through the darkness faster than by day. Count Otto had come up to walk, and as the girl brushed past him he distinguished Pandora's face—with Mrs. Dangerfield he always spoke of her as Pandora—under the veil worn to protect it from the sea-damp. He stopped, turned, hurried after her, threw away his cigar—then asked her if she would do him the honour to accept his arm. She declined his arm but accepted his company, and he allowed her to enjoy it for an hour. They had a great deal of talk, and he was to remember afterwards some of the things she had said. There was now a certainty of the ship's getting into dock the next morning but one, and this prospect afforded an obvious topic. Some of Miss Day's expressions struck him as singular, but of course, as he was aware, his knowledge of English was not nice enough to give him a perfect measure.

"I'm not in a hurry to arrive; I'm very happy here," she said. "I'm afraid I shall have such a time putting my people through."

"Putting them through?"

“Through the Custom-House. We’ve made so many purchases. Well, I’ve written to a friend to come down, and perhaps he can help us. He’s very well acquainted with the head. Once I’m chalked I don’t care. I feel like a kind of blackboard by this time anyway. We found them awful in Germany.”

Count Otto wondered if the friend she had written to were her lover and if they had plighted their troth, especially when she alluded to him again as “that gentleman who’s coming down.” He asked her about her travels, her impressions, whether she had been long in Europe and what she liked best, and she put it to him that they had gone abroad, she and her family, for a little fresh experience. Though he found her very intelligent he suspected she gave this as a reason because he was a German and she had heard the Germans were rich in culture. He wondered what form of culture Mr. and Mrs. Day had brought back from Italy, Greece and Palestine—they had travelled for two years and been everywhere—especially when their daughter said: “I wanted father and mother to see the best things. I kept them three hours on the Acropolis. I guess they won’t forget that!” Perhaps it was of Phidias and Pericles they were thinking, Vogelstein reflected, as they sat ruminating in their rugs. Pandora remarked also that she wanted to show her little sister everything while she was comparatively unformed (“comparatively!” he mutely gasped); remarkable sights made so much more impression when the mind was fresh: she had read something of that sort somewhere in Goethe. She had wanted to come herself when she was her sister’s age; but her father was in business then and they couldn’t leave Utica. The young man thought of the little sister frisking over the Parthenon and the Mount of Olives and sharing for two years, the years of the school-room, this extraordinary pilgrimage of her parents; he wondered whether Goethe’s dictum had been justified in this case. He asked Pandora if Utica were the seat of her family, if it were an important or typical place, if it would be an interesting city for him, as a stranger, to see. His companion replied frankly that this was a big question, but added that all the same she would ask him to “come and visit us at our home” if it weren’t that they should probably soon leave it.

“Ah, you’re going to live elsewhere?” Vogelstein asked, as if that fact too would be typical.

“Well, I’m working for New York. I flatter myself I’ve loosened them while we’ve been away,” the girl went on. “They won’t find in Utica the same charm; that was my idea. I want a big place, and of course Utica—!” She broke off as before a complex statement.

“I suppose Utica is inferior—?” Vogelstein seemed to see his way to suggest.

“Well no, I guess I can’t have you call Utica inferior. It isn’t supreme—that’s what’s the matter with it, and I hate anything middling,” said Pandora Day. She gave a light dry laugh, tossing back her head a little as she made this declaration. And looking at her askance in the dusk, as she trod the deck that vaguely swayed, he recognised something in her air and port that matched such a pronouncement.

“What’s her social position?” he inquired of Mrs. Dangerfield the next day. “I can’t make it out at all—it’s so contradictory. She strikes me as having much cultivation and much spirit. Her appearance, too, is very neat. Yet her parents are complete little burghers. That’s easily seen.”

“Oh, social position,” and Mrs. Dangerfield nodded two or three times portentously. “What big expressions you use! Do you think everybody in the world has a social position? That’s reserved for an infinitely small majority of mankind. You can’t have a social position at Utica any more than you can have an opera-box. Pandora hasn’t got one; where, if you please, should she have got it? Poor girl, it isn’t fair of you to make her the subject of such questions as that.”

“Well,” said Vogelstein, “if she’s of the lower class it seems to me very—very—” And he paused a moment, as he often paused in speaking English, looking for his word.

“Very what, dear Count?”

“Very significant, very representative.”

“Oh dear, she isn’t of the lower class,” Mrs. Dangerfield returned with an irritated sense of wasted wisdom. She liked to explain her country, but that somehow always required two persons.

“What is she then?”

“Well, I’m bound to admit that since I was at home last she’s a novelty. A girl like that with such people—it *is* a new type.”

“I like novelties”—and Count Otto smiled with an air of considerable resolution. He couldn’t however be satisfied with a demonstration that only begged the question; and when they disembarked in New York he felt, even amid the confusion of the wharf and the heaps of disembowelled baggage, a certain acuteness of regret at the idea that Pandora and her family were about to vanish into the unknown. He had a consolation however: it was apparent that for some reason or other—illness or absence from town—the gentleman to whom she had written had not, as she said, come down. Vogelstein was glad—he couldn’t have told you why—that this sympathetic person had failed her; even though without him Pandora had to engage single-handed with the United States Custom-House. Our young man’s first impression of the Western world was received on the landing-place of the German steamers at Jersey City—a huge wooden shed covering a wooden wharf which resounded under the feet, an expanse palisaded with rough-hewn piles that leaned this way and that, and bestrewn with masses of heterogeneous luggage. At one end; toward the town, was a row of tall painted palings, behind which he could distinguish a press of hackney-coachmen, who brandished their whips and awaited their victims, while their voices rose, incessant, with a sharp strange sound, a challenge at once fierce and familiar. The whole place, behind the fence, appeared to bristle and resound. Out there was America, Count Otto said to himself, and he looked toward it with a sense that he should have to muster resolution. On the wharf people were rushing about amid their trunks, pulling their things together, trying to unite their scattered parcels. They were heated and angry, or else quite bewildered and discouraged. The few that had succeeded in collecting their battered boxes had an air of flushed indifference to the efforts of their neighbours, not even looking at people with whom they had been fondly intimate on the steamer. A detachment of the officers of the Customs was in attendance, and energetic passengers were engaged in attempts to drag them toward their luggage or to drag heavy pieces toward them. These functionaries were good-natured and taciturn, except when occasionally they remarked to a passenger whose open trunk stared up at them, eloquent, imploring, that they were afraid the voyage had been “rather glassy.” They had a friendly leisurely speculative way of discharging their duty, and if they perceived a victim’s name written on the portmanteau they addressed him by it in a tone of old acquaintance. Vogelstein found however that if they were familiar they weren’t indiscreet. He had heard that in America all public functionaries were the same, that there wasn’t a different *tenue*, as they said in France, for different positions, and he wondered whether at Washington the President and ministers, whom he expected to see—to *have* to see—a good deal of, would be like that.

He was diverted from these speculations by the sight of Mr. and Mrs. Day seated side by side upon a trunk and encompassed apparently by the accumulations of their tour. Their faces expressed more consciousness of surrounding objects than he had hitherto recognised, and

there was an air of placid expansion in the mysterious couple which suggested that this consciousness was agreeable. Mr. and Mrs. Day were, as they would have said, real glad to get back. At a little distance, on the edge of the dock, our observer remarked their son, who had found a place where, between the sides of two big ships, he could see the ferry-boats pass; the large pyramidal low-laden ferry-boats of American waters. He stood there, patient and considering, with his small neat foot on a coil of rope, his back to everything that had been disembarked, his neck elongated in its polished cylinder, while the fragrance of his big cigar mingled with the odour of the rotting piles, and his little sister, beside him, hugged a huge post and tried to see how far she could crane over the water without falling in. Vogelstein's servant was off in search of an examiner; Count Otto himself had got his things together and was waiting to be released, fully expecting that for a person of his importance the ceremony would be brief.

Before it began he said a word to young Mr. Day, raising his hat at the same time to the little girl, whom he had not yet greeted and who dodged his salute by swinging herself boldly outward to the dangerous side of the pier. She was indeed still unformed, but was evidently as light as a feather.

"I see you're kept waiting like me. It's very tiresome," Count Otto said.

The young American answered without looking behind him. "As soon as we're started we'll go all right. My sister has written to a gentleman to come down."

"I've looked for Miss Day to bid her good-bye," Vogelstein went on; "but I don't see her."

"I guess she has gone to meet that gentleman; he's a great friend of hers."

"I guess he's her lover!" the little girl broke out. "She was always writing to him in Europe."

Her brother puffed his cigar in silence a moment. "That was only for this. I'll tell on you, sis," he presently added.

But the younger Miss Day gave no heed to his menace; she addressed herself only, though with all freedom, to Vogelstein. "This is New York; I like it better than Utica."

He had no time to reply, for his servant had arrived with one of the dispensers of fortune; but as he turned away he wondered, in the light of the child's preference, about the towns of the interior. He was naturally exempt from the common doom. The officer who took him in hand, and who had a large straw hat and a diamond breastpin, was quite a man of the world, and in reply to the Count's formal declarations only said, "Well, I guess it's all right; I guess I'll just pass you," distributing chalk-marks as if they had been so many love-pats. The servant had done some superfluous unlocking and unbuckling, and while he closed the pieces the officer stood there wiping his forehead and conversing with Vogelstein. "First visit to our country, sir?—quite alone—no ladies? Of course the ladies are what we're most after." It was in this manner he expressed himself, while the young diplomatist wondered what he was waiting for and whether he ought to slip something into his palm. But this representative of order left our friend only a moment in suspense; he presently turned away with the remark quite paternally uttered, that he hoped the Count would make quite a stay; upon which the young man saw how wrong he should have been to offer a tip. It was simply the American manner, which had a finish of its own after all. Vogelstein's servant had secured a porter with a truck, and he was about to leave the place when he saw Pandora Day dart out of the crowd and address herself with much eagerness to the functionary who had just liberated him. She had an open letter in her hand which she gave him to read and over which he cast his eyes, thoughtfully stroking his beard. Then she led him away to where her parents sat on their luggage. Count Otto sent off his servant with the porter and followed Pandora, to whom

he really wished to address a word of farewell. The last thing they had said to each other on the ship was that they should meet again on shore. It seemed improbable however that the meeting would occur anywhere but just here on the dock; inasmuch as Pandora was decidedly not in society, where Vogelstein would be of course, and as, if Utica—he had her sharp little sister’s word for it—was worse than what was about him there, he’d be hanged if he’d go to Utica. He overtook Pandora quickly; she was in the act of introducing the representative of order to her parents, quite in the same manner in which she had introduced the Captain of the ship. Mr. and Mrs. Day got up and shook hands with him and they evidently all prepared to have a little talk. “I should like to introduce you to my brother and sister,” he heard the girl say, and he saw her look about for these appendages. He caught her eye as she did so, and advanced with his hand outstretched, reflecting the while that evidently the Americans, whom he had always heard described as silent and practical, rejoiced to extravagance in the social graces. They dawdled and chattered like so many Neapolitans.

“Good-bye, Count Vogelstein,” said Pandora, who was a little flushed with her various exertions but didn’t look the worse for it. “I hope you’ll have a splendid time and appreciate our country.”

“I hope you’ll get through all right,” Vogelstein answered, smiling and feeling himself already more idiomatic.

“That gentleman’s sick that I wrote to,” she rejoined; “isn’t it too bad? But he sent me down a letter to a friend of his—one of the examiners—and I guess we won’t have any trouble. Mr. Lansing, let me make you acquainted with Count Vogelstein,” she went on, presenting to her fellow-passenger the wearer of the straw hat and the breastpin, who shook hands with the young German as if he had never seen him before. Vogelstein’s heart rose for an instant to his throat; he thanked his stars he hadn’t offered a tip to the friend of a gentleman who had often been mentioned to him and who had also been described by a member of Pandora’s family as Pandora’s lover.

“It’s a case of ladies this time,” Mr. Lansing remarked to him with a smile which seemed to confess surreptitiously, and as if neither party could be eager, to recognition.

“Well, Mr. Bellamy says you’ll do anything for *him*,” Pandora said, smiling very sweetly at Mr. Lansing. “We haven’t got much; we’ve been gone only two years.”

Mr. Lansing scratched his head a little behind, with a movement that sent his straw hat forward in the direction of his nose. “I don’t know as I’d do anything for him that I wouldn’t do for you,” he responded with an equal geniality. “I guess you’d better open that one”—and he gave a little affectionate kick to one of the trunks.

“Oh mother, isn’t he lovely? It’s only your sea-things,” Pandora cried, stooping over the coffer with the key in her hand.

“I don’t know as I like showing them,” Mrs. Day modestly murmured.

Vogelstein made his German salutation to the company in general, and to Pandora he offered an audible good-bye, which she returned in a bright friendly voice, but without looking round as she fumbled at the lock of her trunk.

“We’ll try another, if you like,” said Mr. Lansing good-humouredly.

“Oh no it has got to be this one! Good-bye, Count Vogelstein. I hope you’ll judge us correctly!”

The young man went his way and passed the barrier of the dock. Here he was met by his English valet with a face of consternation which led him to ask if a cab weren’t forthcoming.

“They call ’em ’acks ’ere, sir,” said the man, “and they’re beyond everything. He wants thirty shillings to take you to the inn.”

Vogelstein hesitated a moment. “Couldn’t you find a German?”

“By the way he talks he *is* a German!” said the man; and in a moment Count Otto began his career in America by discussing the tariff of hackney-coaches in the language of the fatherland.

II

He went wherever he was asked, on principle, partly to study American society and partly because in Washington pastimes seemed to him not so numerous that one could afford to neglect occasions. At the end of two winters he had naturally had a good many of various kinds—his study of American society had yielded considerable fruit. When, however, in April, during the second year of his residence, he presented himself at a large party given by Mrs. Bonnycastle and of which it was believed that it would be the last serious affair of the season, his being there (and still more his looking very fresh and talkative) was not the consequence of a rule of conduct. He went to Mrs. Bonnycastle’s simply because he liked the lady, whose receptions were the pleasantest in Washington, and because if he didn’t go there he didn’t know what he should do; that absence of alternatives having become familiar to him by the waters of the Potomac. There were a great many things he did because if he didn’t do them he didn’t know what he should do. It must be added that in this case even if there had been an alternative he would still have decided to go to Mrs. Bonnycastle’s. If her house wasn’t the pleasantest there it was at least difficult to say which was pleasanter; and the complaint sometimes made of it that it was too limited, that it left out, on the whole, more people than it took in, applied with much less force when it was thrown open for a general party. Toward the end of the social year, in those soft scented days of the Washington spring when the air began to show a southern glow and the Squares and Circles (to which the wide empty avenues converged according to a plan so ingenious, yet so bewildering) to flush with pink blossom and to make one wish to sit on benches—under this magic of expansion and condonation Mrs. Bonnycastle, who during the winter had been a good deal on the defensive, relaxed her vigilance a little, became whimsically wilful, vernaly reckless, as it were, and ceased to calculate the consequences of an hospitality which a reference to the back files or even to the morning’s issue of the newspapers might easily prove a mistake. But Washington life, to Count Otto’s apprehension, was paved with mistakes; he felt himself in a society founded on fundamental fallacies and triumphant blunders. Little addicted as he was to the sportive view of existence, he had said to himself at an early stage of his sojourn that the only way to enjoy the great Republic would be to burn one’s standards and warm one’s self at the blaze. Such were the reflexions of a theoretic Teuton who now walked for the most part amid the ashes of his prejudices.

Mrs. Bonnycastle had endeavoured more than once to explain to him the principles on which she received certain people and ignored certain others; but it was with difficulty that he entered into her discriminations. American promiscuity, goodness knew, had been strange to him, but it was nothing to the queerness of American criticism. This lady would discourse to him *à perte de vue* on differences where he only saw resemblances, and both the merits and the defects of a good many members of Washington society, as this society was interpreted to him by Mrs. Bonnycastle, he was often at a loss to understand. Fortunately she had a fund of good humour which, as I have intimated, was apt to come uppermost with the April blossoms and which made the people she didn’t invite to her house almost as amusing to her as those she did. Her husband was not in politics, though politics were much in him; but the couple had taken upon themselves the responsibilities of an active patriotism; they thought it right to

live in America, differing therein from many of their acquaintances who only, with some grimness, thought it inevitable. They had that burdensome heritage of foreign reminiscence with which so many Americans were saddled; but they carried it more easily than most of their country-people, and one knew they had lived in Europe only by their present exultation, never in the least by their regrets. Their regrets, that is, were only for their ever having lived there, as Mrs. Bonnycastle once told the wife of a foreign minister. They solved all their problems successfully, including those of knowing none of the people they didn't wish to, and of finding plenty of occupation in a society supposed to be meagrely provided with resources for that body which Vogelstein was to hear invoked, again and again, with the mixture of desire and of deprecation that might have attended the mention of a secret vice, under the name of a leisure-class. When as the warm weather approached they opened both the wings of their house-door, it was because they thought it would entertain them and not because they were conscious of a pressure. Alfred Bonnycastle all winter indeed chafed a little at the definiteness of some of his wife's reserves; it struck him that for Washington their society was really a little too good. Vogelstein still remembered the puzzled feeling—it had cleared up somewhat now—with which, more than a year before, he had heard Mr. Bonnycastle exclaim one evening, after a dinner in his own house, when every guest but the German secretary (who often sat late with the pair) had departed: “Hang it, there's only a month left; let us be vulgar and have some fun—let us invite the President.”

This was Mrs. Bonnycastle's carnival, and on the occasion to which I began my chapter by referring the President had not only been invited but had signified his intention of being present. I hasten to add that this was not the same august ruler to whom Alfred Bonnycastle's irreverent allusion had been made. The White House had received a new tenant—the old one was then just leaving it—and Count Otto had had the advantage, during the first eighteen months of his stay in America, of seeing an electoral campaign, a presidential inauguration and a distribution of spoils. He had been bewildered during those first weeks by finding that at the national capital in the houses he supposed to be the best, the head of the State was not a coveted guest; for this could be the only explanation of Mr. Bonnycastle's whimsical suggestion of their inviting him, as it were, in carnival. His successor went out a good deal for a President.

The legislative session was over, but this made little difference in the aspect of Mrs. Bonnycastle's rooms, which even at the height of the congressional season could scarce be said to overflow with the representatives of the people. They were garnished with an occasional Senator, whose movements and utterances often appeared to be regarded with a mixture of alarm and indulgence, as if they would be disappointing if they weren't rather odd and yet might be dangerous if not carefully watched. Our young man had come to entertain a kindness for these conscript fathers of invisible families, who had something of the toga in the voluminous folds of their conversation, but were otherwise rather bare and bald, with stony wrinkles in their faces, like busts and statues of ancient law-givers. There seemed to him something chill and exposed in their being at once so exalted and so naked; there were frequent lonesome glances in their eyes, as if in the social world their legislative consciousness longed for the warmth of a few comfortable laws ready-made. Members of the House were very rare, and when Washington was new to the inquiring secretary he used sometimes to mistake them, in the halls and on the staircases where he met them, for the functionaries engaged, under stress, to usher in guests and wait at supper. It was only a little later that he perceived these latter public characters almost always to be impressive and of that rich racial hue which of itself served as a livery. At present, however, such confounding figures were much less to be met than during the months of winter, and indeed they were never frequent at Mrs. Bonnycastle's. At present the social vistas of Washington, like the

vast fresh flatness of the lettered and numbered streets, which at this season seemed to Vogelstein more spacious and vague than ever, suggested but a paucity of political phenomena. Count Otto that evening knew every one or almost every one. There were often inquiring strangers, expecting great things, from New York and Boston, and to them, in the friendly Washington way, the young German was promptly introduced. It was a society in which familiarity reigned and in which people were liable to meet three times a day, so that their ultimate essence really became a matter of importance.

“I’ve got three new girls,” Mrs. Bonnycastle said. “You must talk to them all.”

“All at once?” Vogelstein asked, reversing in fancy a position not at all unknown to him. He had so repeatedly heard himself addressed in even more than triple simultaneity.

“Oh no; you must have something different for each; you can’t get off that way. Haven’t you discovered that the American girl expects something especially adapted to herself? It’s very well for Europe to have a few phrases that will do for any girl. The American girl isn’t *any* girl; she’s a remarkable specimen in a remarkable species. But you must keep the best this evening for Miss Day.”

“For Miss Day!”—and Vogelstein had a stare of intelligence. “Do you mean for Pandora?”

Mrs. Bonnycastle broke on her side into free amusement. “One would think you had been looking for her over the globe! So you know her already—and you call her by her pet name?”

“Oh no, I don’t know her; that is I haven’t seen her or thought of her from that day to this. We came to America in the same ship.”

“Isn’t she an American then?”

“Oh yes; she lives at Utica—in the interior.”

“In the interior of Utica? You can’t mean my young woman then, who lives in New York, where she’s a great beauty and a great belle and has been immensely admired this winter.”

“After all,” said Count Otto, considering and a little disappointed, “the name’s not so uncommon; it’s perhaps another. But has she rather strange eyes, a little yellow, but very pretty, and a nose a little arched?”

“I can’t tell you all that; I haven’t seen her. She’s staying with Mrs. Steuben. She only came a day or two ago, and Mrs. Steuben’s to bring her. When she wrote to me to ask leave she told me what I tell you. They haven’t come yet.”

Vogelstein felt a quick hope that the subject of this correspondence might indeed be the young lady he had parted from on the dock at New York, but the indications seemed to point another way, and he had no wish to cherish an illusion. It didn’t seem to him probable that the energetic girl who had introduced him to Mr. Lansing would have the entrée of the best house in Washington; besides, Mrs. Bonnycastle’s guest was described as a beauty and belonging to the brilliant city.

“What’s the social position of Mrs. Steuben?” it occurred to him to ask while he meditated. He had an earnest artless literal way of putting such a question as that; you could see from it that he was very thorough.

Mrs. Bonnycastle met it, however, but, with mocking laughter. “I’m sure I don’t know! What’s your own?”—and she left him to turn to her other guests, to several of whom she repeated his question. Could they tell her what was the social position of Mrs. Steuben? There was Count Vogelstein who wanted to know. He instantly became aware of

course that he oughtn't so to have expressed himself. Wasn't the lady's place in the scale sufficiently indicated by Mrs. Bonnycastle's acquaintance with her? Still there were fine degrees, and he felt a little unduly snubbed. It was perfectly true, as he told his hostess, that with the quick wave of new impressions that had rolled over him after his arrival in America the image of Pandora was almost completely effaced; he had seen innumerable things that were quite as remarkable in their way as the heroine of the *Donau*, but at the touch of the idea that he might see her and hear her again at any moment she became as vivid in his mind as if they had parted the day before: he remembered the exact shade of the eyes he had described to Mrs. Bonnycastle as yellow, the tone of her voice when at the last she expressed the hope he might judge America correctly. *Had* he judged America correctly? If he were to meet her again she doubtless would try to ascertain. It would be going much too far to say that the idea of such an ordeal was terrible to Count Otto; but it may at least be said that the thought of meeting Pandora Day made him nervous. The fact is certainly singular, but I shall not take on myself to explain it; there are some things that even the most philosophic historian isn't bound to account for.

He wandered into another room, and there, at the end of five minutes, he was introduced by Mrs. Bonnycastle to one of the young ladies of whom she had spoken. This was a very intelligent girl who came from Boston and showed much acquaintance with Spielhagen's novels. "Do you like them?" Vogelstein asked rather vaguely, not taking much interest in the matter, as he read works of fiction only in case of a sea-voyage. The young lady from Boston looked pensive and concentrated; then she answered that she liked *some* of them *very* much, but that there were others she didn't like—and she enumerated the works that came under each of these heads. Spielhagen is a voluminous writer, and such a catalogue took some time; at the end of it moreover Vogelstein's question was not answered, for he couldn't have told us whether she liked Spielhagen or not.

On the next topic, however, there was no doubt about her feelings. They talked about Washington as people talk only in the place itself, revolving about the subject in widening and narrowing circles, perching successively on its many branches, considering it from every point of view. Our young man had been long enough in America to discover that after half a century of social neglect Washington had become the fashion and enjoyed the great advantage of being a new resource in conversation. This was especially the case in the months of spring, when the inhabitants of the commercial cities came so far southward to escape, after the long winter, that final affront. They were all agreed that Washington was fascinating, and none of them were better prepared to talk it over than the Bostonians. Vogelstein originally had been rather out of step with them; he hadn't seized their point of view, hadn't known with what they compared this object of their infatuation. But now he knew everything; he had settled down to the pace; there wasn't a possible phase of the discussion that could find him at a loss. There was a kind of Hegelian element in it; in the light of these considerations the American capital took on the semblance of a monstrous mystical infinite *Werden*. But they fatigued Vogelstein a little, and it was his preference, as a general thing, not to engage the same evening with more than one newcomer, one visitor in the freshness of initiation. This was why Mrs. Bonnycastle's expression of a wish to introduce him to three young ladies had startled him a little; he saw a certain process, in which he flattered himself that he had become proficient, but which was after all tolerably exhausting, repeated for each of the damsels. After separating from his judicious Bostonian he rather evaded Mrs. Bonnycastle, contenting himself with the conversation of old friends, pitched for the most part in a lower and easier key.

At last he heard it mentioned that the President had arrived, had been some half-hour in the house, and he went in search of the illustrious guest, whose whereabouts at Washington

parties was never indicated by a cluster of courtiers. He made it a point, whenever he found himself in company with the President, to pay him his respects, and he had not been discouraged by the fact that there was no association of ideas in the eye of the great man as he put out his hand presidentially and said, "Happy to meet you, sir." Count Otto felt himself taken for a mere loyal subject, possibly for an office-seeker; and he used to reflect at such moments that the monarchical form had its merits it provided a line of heredity for the faculty of quick recognition. He had now some difficulty in finding the chief magistrate, and ended by learning that he was in the tea-room, a small apartment devoted to light refectation near the entrance of the house. Here our young man presently perceived him seated on a sofa and in conversation with a lady. There were a number of people about the table, eating, drinking, talking; and the couple on the sofa, which was not near it but against the wall, in a shallow recess, looked a little withdrawn, as if they had sought seclusion and were disposed to profit by the diverted attention of the others. The President leaned back; his gloved hands, resting on either knee, made large white spots. He looked eminent, but he looked relaxed, and the lady beside him ministered freely and without scruple, it was clear, to this effect of his comfortably unbending. Vogelstein caught her voice as he approached. He heard her say "Well now, remember; I consider it a promise." She was beautifully dressed, in rose-colour; her hands were clasped in her lap and her eyes attached to the presidential profile.

"Well, madam, in that case it's about the fiftieth promise I've given to-day."

It was just as he heard these words, uttered by her companion in reply, that Count Otto checked himself, turned away and pretended to be looking for a cup of tea. It wasn't usual to disturb the President, even simply to shake hands, when he was sitting on a sofa with a lady, and the young secretary felt it in this case less possible than ever to break the rule, for the lady on the sofa was none other than Pandora Day. He had recognised her without her appearing to see him, and even with half an eye, as they said, had taken in that she was now a person to be reckoned with. She had an air of elation, of success; she shone, to intensity, in her rose-coloured dress; she was extracting promises from the ruler of fifty millions of people. What an odd place to meet her, her old shipmate thought, and how little one could tell, after all, in America, who people were! He didn't want to speak to her yet; he wanted to wait a little and learn more; but meanwhile there was something attractive in the fact that she was just behind him, a few yards off, that if he should turn he might see her again. It was she Mrs. Bonnycastle had meant, it was she who was so much admired in New York. Her face was the same, yet he had made out in a moment that she was vaguely prettier; he had recognised the arch of her nose, which suggested a fine ambition. He took some tea, which he hadn't desired, in order not to go away. He remembered her *entourage* on the steamer; her father and mother, the silent senseless burghers, so little "of the world," her infant sister, so much of it, her humorous brother with his tall hat and his influence in the smoking-room. He remembered Mrs. Dangerfield's warnings—yet her perplexities too—and the letter from Mr. Bellamy, and the introduction to Mr. Lansing, and the way Pandora had stooped down on the dirty dock, laughing and talking, mistress of the situation, to open her trunk for the Customs. He was pretty sure she had paid no duties that day; this would naturally have been the purpose of Mr. Bellamy's letter. Was she still in correspondence with that gentleman, and had he got over the sickness interfering with their reunion? These images and these questions coursed through Count Otto's mind, and he saw it must be quite in Pandora's line to be mistress of the situation, for there was evidently nothing on the present occasion that could call itself her master. He drank his tea and as; he put down his cup heard the President, behind him, say: "Well, I guess my wife will wonder why I don't come home."

"Why didn't you bring her with you?" Pandora benevolently asked.

“Well, she doesn’t go out much. Then she has got her sister staying with her—Mrs. Runkle, from Natchez. She’s a good deal of an invalid, and my wife doesn’t like to leave her.”

“She must be a very kind woman”—and there was a high mature competence in the way the girl sounded the note of approval.

“Well, I guess she isn’t spoiled—yet.”

“I should like very much to come and see her,” said Pandora.

“Do come round. Couldn’t you come some night?” the great man responded.

“Well, I’ll come some time. And I shall remind you of your promise.”

“All right. There’s nothing like keeping it up. Well,” said the President, “I must bid good-bye to these bright folks.”

Vogelstein heard him rise from the sofa with his companion; after which he gave the pair time to pass out of the room before him. They did it with a certain impressive deliberation, people making way for the ruler of fifty millions and looking with a certain curiosity at the striking pink person at his side. When a little later he followed them across the hall, into one of the other rooms, he saw the host and hostess accompany the President to the door and two foreign ministers and a judge of the Supreme Court address themselves to Pandora Day. He resisted the impulse to join this circle: if he should speak to her at all he would somehow wish it to be in more privacy. She continued nevertheless to occupy him, and when Mrs. Bonnycastle came back from the hall he immediately approached her with an appeal. “I wish you’d tell me something more about that girl—that one opposite and in pink.”

“The lovely Day—that’s what they call her, I believe? I wanted you to talk with her.”

“I find she is the one I’ve met. But she seems to be so different here. I can’t make it out,” said Count Otto.

There was something in his expression that again moved Mrs. Bonnycastle to mirth. “How we do puzzle you Europeans! You look quite bewildered.”

“I’m sorry I look so—I try to hide it. But of course we’re very simple. Let me ask then a simple earnest childlike question. Are her parents also in society?”

“Parents in society? *D’où tombez-vous?* Did you ever hear of the parents of a triumphant girl in rose-colour, with a nose all her own, in society?”

“Is she then all alone?” he went on with a strain of melancholy in his voice.

Mrs. Bonnycastle launched at him all her laughter.

“You’re too pathetic. Don’t you know what she is? I supposed of course you knew.”

“It’s exactly what I’m asking you.”

“Why she’s the new type. It has only come up lately. They have had articles about it in the papers. That’s the reason I told Mrs. Steuben to bring her.”

“The new type? *What* new type, Mrs. Bonnycastle?” he returned pleadingly—so conscious was he that all types in America were new.

Her laughter checked her reply a moment, and by the time she had recovered herself the young lady from Boston, with whom Vogelstein had been talking, stood there to take leave. This, for an American type, was an old one, he was sure; and the process of parting between the guest and her hostess had an ancient elaboration. Count Otto waited a little; then he turned away and walked up to Pandora Day, whose group of interlocutors had now been

re-enforced by a gentleman who had held an important place in the cabinet of the late occupant of the presidential chair. He had asked Mrs. Bonnycastle if she were “all alone”; but there was nothing in her present situation to show her for solitary. She wasn’t sufficiently alone for our friend’s taste; but he was impatient and he hoped she’d give him a few words to himself. She recognised him without a moment’s hesitation and with the sweetest smile, a smile matching to a shade the tone in which she said: “I was watching you. I wondered if you weren’t going to speak to me.”

“Miss Day was watching him!” one of the foreign ministers exclaimed; “and we flattered ourselves that her attention was all with us.”

“I mean before,” said the girl, “while I was talking with the President.”

At which the gentlemen began to laugh, one of them remarking that this was the way the absent were sacrificed, even the great; while another put on record that he hoped Vogelstein was duly flattered.

“Oh I was watching the President too,” said Pandora. “I’ve got to watch *him*. He has promised me something.”

“It must be the mission to England,” the judge of the Supreme Court suggested. “A good position for a lady; they’ve got a lady at the head over there.”

“I wish they would send you to my country,” one of the foreign ministers suggested. “I’d immediately get recalled.”

“Why perhaps in your country I wouldn’t speak to you! It’s only because you’re here,” the ex-heroine of the *Donau* returned with a gay familiarity which evidently ranked with her but as one of the arts of defence. “You’ll see what mission it is when it comes out. But I’ll speak to Count Vogelstein anywhere,” she went on. “He’s an older friend than any right here. I’ve known him in difficult days.”

“Oh yes, on the great ocean,” the young man smiled. “On the watery waste, in the tempest!”

“Oh I don’t mean that so much; we had a beautiful voyage and there wasn’t any tempest. I mean when I was living in Utica. That’s a watery waste if you like, and a tempest there would have been a pleasant variety.”

“Your parents seemed to me so peaceful!” her associate in the other memories sighed with a vague wish to say something sympathetic.

“Oh you haven’t seen them ashore! At Utica they were very lively. But that’s no longer our natural home. Don’t you remember I told you I was working for New York? Well, I worked—I had to work hard. But we’ve moved.”

Count Otto clung to his interest. “And I hope they’re happy.”

“My father and mother? Oh they will be, in time. I must give them time. They’re very young yet, they’ve years before them. And you’ve been always in Washington?” Pandora continued. “I suppose you’ve found out everything about everything.”

“Oh no—there are some things I *can*’t find out.”

“Come and see me and perhaps I can help you. I’m very different from what I was in that phase. I’ve advanced a great deal since then.”

“Oh how was Miss Day in that phase?” asked a cabinet minister of the last administration.

“She was delightful of course,” Count Otto said.

“He’s very flattering; I didn’t open my mouth!” Pandora cried. “Here comes Mrs. Steuben to take me to some other place. I believe it’s a literary party near the Capitol. Everything seems so separate in Washington. Mrs. Steuben’s going to read a poem. I wish she’d read it here; wouldn’t it do as well?”

This lady, arriving, signified to her young friend the necessity of their moving on. But Miss Day’s companions had various things to say to her before giving her up. She had a vivid answer for each, and it was brought home to Vogelstein while he listened that this would be indeed, in her development, as she said, another phase. Daughter of small burghers as she might be she was really brilliant. He turned away a little and while Mrs. Steuben waited put her a question. He had made her half an hour before the subject of that inquiry to which Mrs. Bonnycastle returned so ambiguous an answer; but this wasn’t because he failed of all direct acquaintance with the amiable woman or of any general idea of the esteem in which she was held. He had met her in various places and had been at her house. She was the widow of a commodore, was a handsome mild soft swaying person, whom every one liked, with glossy bands of black hair and a little ringlet depending behind each ear. Some one had said that she looked like the *vieux jeu*, idea of the queen in *Hamlet*. She had written verses which were admired in the South, wore a full-length portrait of the commodore on her bosom and spoke with the accent of Savannah. She had about her a positive strong odour of Washington. It had certainly been very superfluous in our young man to question Mrs. Bonnycastle about her social position.

“Do kindly tell me,” he said, lowering his voice, “what’s the type to which that young lady belongs? Mrs. Bonnycastle tells me it’s a new one.”

Mrs. Steuben for a moment fixed her liquid eyes on the secretary of legation. She always seemed to be translating the prose of your speech into the finer rhythms with which her own mind was familiar. “Do you think anything’s really new?” she then began to flute. “I’m very fond of the old; you know that’s a weakness of we Southerners.” The poor lady, it will be observed, had another weakness as well. “What we often take to be the new is simply the old under some novel form. Were there not remarkable natures in the past? If you doubt it you should visit the South, where the past still lingers.”

Vogelstein had been struck before this with Mrs. Steuben’s pronunciation of the word by which her native latitudes were designated; transcribing it from her lips you would have written it (as the nearest approach) the Sooth. But at present he scarce heeded this peculiarity; he was wondering rather how a woman could be at once so copious and so uninforming. What did he care about the past or even about the Sooth? He was afraid of starting her again. He looked at her, discouraged and helpless, as bewildered almost as Mrs. Bonnycastle had found him half an hour before; looked also at the commodore, who, on her bosom, seemed to breathe again with his widow’s respirations. “Call it an old type then if you like,” he said in a moment. “All I want to know is what type it *is*! It seems impossible,” he gasped, “to find out.”

“You can find out in the newspapers. They’ve had articles about it. They write about everything now. But it isn’t true about Miss Day. It’s one of the first families. Her great-grandfather was in the Revolution.” Pandora by this time had given her attention again to Mrs. Steuben. She seemed to signify that she was ready to move on. “Wasn’t your great-grandfather in the Revolution?” the elder lady asked. “I’m telling Count Vogelstein about him.”

“Why are you asking about my ancestors?” the girl demanded of the young German with untempered brightness. “Is that the thing you said just now that you can’t find out? Well, if Mrs. Steuben will only be quiet you never will.”

Mrs. Steuben shook her head rather dreamily. “Well, it’s no trouble for we of the South to be quiet. There’s a kind of languor in our blood. Besides, we have to be to-day. But I’ve got to show some energy to-night. I’ve got to get you to the end of Pennsylvania Avenue.”

Pandora gave her hand to Count Otto and asked him if he thought they should meet again. He answered that in Washington people were always meeting again and that at any rate he shouldn’t fail to wait upon her. Hereupon, just as the two ladies were detaching themselves, Mrs. Steuben remarked that if the Count and Miss Day wished to meet again the picnic would be a good chance—the picnic she was getting up for the following Thursday. It was to consist of about twenty bright people, and they’d go down the Potomac to Mount Vernon. The Count answered that if Mrs. Steuben thought him bright enough he should be delighted to join the party; and he was told the hour for which the tryst was taken.

He remained at Mrs. Bonnycastle’s after every one had gone, and then he informed this lady of his reason for waiting. Would she have mercy on him and let him know, in a single word, before he went to rest—for without it rest would be impossible—what was this famous type to which Pandora Day belonged?

“Gracious, you don’t mean to say you’ve not found out that type yet!” Mrs. Bonnycastle exclaimed with a return of her hilarity. “What have you been doing all the evening? You Germans may be thorough, but you certainly are not quick!”

It was Alfred Bonnycastle who at last took pity on him. “My dear Vogelstein, she’s the latest freshest fruit of our great American evolution. She’s the self-made girl!”

Count Otto gazed a moment. “The fruit of the great American Revolution? Yes, Mrs. Steuben told me her great-grandfather—” but the rest of his sentence was lost in a renewed explosion of Mrs. Bonnycastle’s sense of the ridiculous. He bravely pushed his advantage, such as it was, however, and, desiring his host’s definition to be defined, inquired what the self-made girl might be.

“Sit down and we’ll tell you all about it,” Mrs. Bonnycastle said. “I like talking this way, after a party’s over. You can smoke if you like, and Alfred will open another window. Well, to begin with, the self-made girl’s a new feature. That, however, you know. In the second place she isn’t self-made at all. We all help to make her—we take such an interest in her.”

“That’s only after she’s made!” Alfred Bonnycastle broke in. “But it’s Vogelstein that takes an interest. What on earth has started you up so on the subject of Miss Day?”

The visitor explained as well as he could that it was merely the accident of his having crossed the ocean in the steamer with her; but he felt the inadequacy of this account of the matter, felt it more than his hosts, who could know neither how little actual contact he had had with her on the ship, how much he had been affected by Mrs. Dangerfield’s warnings, nor how much observation at the same time he had lavished on her. He sat there half an hour, and the warm dead stillness of the Washington night—nowhere are the nights so silent—came in at the open window, mingled with a soft sweet earthy smell, the smell of growing things and in particular, as he thought, of Mrs. Steuben’s South. Before he went away he had heard all about the self-made girl, and there was something in the picture that strongly impressed him. She was possible doubtless only in America; American life had smoothed the way for her. She was not fast, nor emancipated, nor crude, nor loud, and there wasn’t in her, of necessity at least, a grain of the stuff of which the adventuress is made. She was simply very

successful, and her success was entirely personal. She hadn't been born with the silver spoon of social opportunity; she had grasped it by honest exertion. You knew her by many different signs, but chiefly, infallibly, by the appearance of her parents. It was her parents who told her story; you always saw how little her parents could have made her. Her attitude with regard to them might vary in different ways. As the great fact on her own side was that she had lifted herself from a lower social plane, done it all herself, and done it by the simple lever of her personality, it was naturally to be expected that she would leave the authors of her mere material being in the shade. Sometimes she had them in her wake, lost in the bubbles and the foam that showed where she had passed; sometimes, as Alfred Bonnycastle said, she let them slide altogether; sometimes she kept them in close confinement, resorting to them under cover of night and with every precaution; sometimes she exhibited them to the public in discreet glimpses, in prearranged attitudes. But the general characteristic of the self-made girl was that, though it was frequently understood that she was privately devoted to her kindred, she never attempted to impose them on society, and it was striking that, though in some of her manifestations a bore, she was at her worst less of a bore than they. They were almost always solemn and portentous, and they were for the most part of a deathly respectability. She wasn't necessarily snobbish, unless it was snobbish to want the best. She didn't cringe, she didn't make herself smaller than she was; she took on the contrary a stand of her own and attracted things to herself. Naturally she was possible only in America—only in a country where whole ranges of competition and comparison were absent. The natural history of this interesting creature was at last completely laid bare to the earnest stranger, who, as he sat there in the animated stillness, with the fragrant breath of the Western world in his nostrils, was convinced of what he had already suspected, that conversation in the great Republic was more yearningly, not to say gropingly, psychological than elsewhere. Another thing, as he learned, that you knew the self-made girl by was her culture, which was perhaps a little too restless and obvious. She had usually got into society more or less by reading, and her conversation was apt to be garnished with literary allusions, even with familiar quotations. Vogelstein hadn't had time to observe this element as a developed form in Pandora Day; but Alfred Bonnycastle hinted that he wouldn't trust her to keep it under in a *tête-à-tête*. It was needless to say that these young persons had always been to Europe; that was usually the first place they got to. By such arts they sometimes entered society on the other side before they did so at home; it was to be added at the same time that this resource was less and less valuable, for Europe, in the American world, had less and less prestige and people in the Western hemisphere now kept a watch on that roundabout road. All of which quite applied to Pandora Day—the journey to Europe, the culture (as exemplified in the books she read on the ship), the relegation, the effacement, of the family. The only thing that was exceptional was the rapidity of her march; for the jump she had taken since he left her in the hands of Mr. Lansing struck Vogelstein, even after he had made all allowance for the abnormal homogeneity of the American mass, as really considerable. It took all her cleverness to account for such things. When she “moved” from Utica—mobilised her commissariat—the battle appeared virtually to have been gained.

Count Otto called the next day, and Mrs. Steuben's blackamoor informed him, in the communicative manner of his race, that the ladies had gone out to pay some visits and look at the Capitol. Pandora apparently had not hitherto examined this monument, and our young man wished he had known, the evening before, of her omission, so that he might have offered to be her initiator. There is too obvious a connexion for us to fail of catching it between his regret and the fact that in leaving Mrs. Steuben's door he reminded himself that he wanted a good walk, and that he thereupon took his way along Pennsylvania Avenue. His walk had become fairly good by the time he reached the great white edifice that unfolds its repeated colonnades and uplifts its isolated dome at the end of a long vista of saloons and tobacco-

shops. He slowly climbed the great steps, hesitating a little, even wondering why he had come. The superficial reason was obvious enough, but there was a real one behind it that struck him as rather wanting in the solidity which should characterise the motives of an emissary of Prince Bismarck. The superficial reason was a belief that Mrs. Steuben would pay her visit first—it was probably only a question of leaving cards—and bring her young friend to the Capitol at the hour when the yellow afternoon light would give a tone to the blankness of its marble walls. The Capitol was a splendid building, but it was rather wanting in tone. Vogelstein's curiosity about Pandora Day had been much more quickened than checked by the revelations made to him in Mrs. Bonnycastle's drawing-room. It was a relief to have the creature classified; but he had a desire, of which he had not been conscious before, to see really to the end how well, in other words how completely and artistically, a girl could make herself. His calculations had been just, and he had wandered about the rotunda for only ten minutes, looking again at the paintings, commemorative of the national annals, which occupy its lower spaces, and at the simulated sculptures, so touchingly characteristic of early American taste, which adorn its upper reaches, when the charming women he had been counting on presented themselves in charge of a licensed guide. He went to meet them and didn't conceal from them that he had marked them for his very own. The encounter was happy on both sides, and he accompanied them through the queer and endless interior, through labyrinths of bleak bare development, into legislative and judicial halls. He thought it a hideous place; he had seen it all before and asked himself what senseless game he was playing. In the lower House were certain bedaubed walls, in the basest style of imitation, which made him feel faintly sick, not to speak of a lobby adorned with artless prints and photographs of eminent defunct Congressmen that was all too serious for a joke and too comic for a Valhalla. But Pandora was greatly interested; she thought the Capitol very fine; it was easy to criticise the details, but as a whole it was the most impressive building she had ever seen. She proved a charming fellow tourist; she had constantly something to say, but never said it too much; it was impossible to drag in the wake of a *cicerone* less of a lengthening or an irritating chain. Vogelstein could see too that she wished to improve her mind; she looked at the historical pictures, at the uncanny statues of local worthies, presented by the different States—they were of different sizes, as if they had been "numbered," in a shop—she asked questions of the guide and in the chamber of the Senate requested him to show her the chairs of the gentlemen from New York. She sat down in one of them, though Mrs. Steuben told her *that* Senator (she mistook the chair, dropping into another State) was a horrid old thing.

Throughout the hour he spent with her Vogelstein seemed to see how it was she had made herself. They walked about, afterwards on the splendid terrace that surrounds the Capitol, the great marble floor on which it stands, and made vague remarks—Pandora's were the most definite—about the yellow sheen of the Potomac, the hazy hills of Virginia, the far-gleaming pediment of Arlington, the raw confused-looking country. Washington was beneath them, bristling and geometrical; the long lines of its avenues seemed to stretch into national futures. Pandora asked Count Otto if he had ever been to Athens and, on his admitting so much, sought to know whether the eminence on which they stood didn't give him an idea of the Acropolis in its prime. Vogelstein deferred the satisfaction of this appeal to their next meeting; he was glad—in spite of the appeal—to make pretexts for seeing her again. He did so on the morrow; Mrs. Steuben's picnic was still three days distant. He called on Pandora a second time, also met her each evening in the Washington world. It took very little of this to remind him that he was forgetting both Mrs. Dangerfield's warnings and the admonitions—long familiar to him—of his own conscience. Was he in peril of love? Was he to be sacrificed on the altar of the American girl, an altar at which those other poor fellows had poured out some of the bluest blood in Germany and he had himself taken oath he would

never seriously worship? He decided that he wasn't in real danger, that he had rather clinched his precautions. It was true that a young person who had succeeded so well for herself might be a great help to her husband; but this diplomatic aspirant preferred on the whole that his success should be his own: it wouldn't please him to have the air of being pushed by his wife. Such a wife as that would wish to push him, and he could hardly admit to himself that this was what fate had in reserve for him—to be propelled in his career by a young lady who would perhaps attempt to talk to the Kaiser as he had heard her the other night talk to the President. Would she consent to discontinue relations with her family, or would she wish still to borrow plastic relief from that domestic background? That her family was so impossible was to a certain extent an advantage; for if they had been a little better the question of a rupture would be less easy. He turned over these questions in spite of his security, or perhaps indeed because of it. The security made them speculative and disinterested.

They haunted him during the excursion to Mount Vernon, which took place according to traditions long established. Mrs. Steuben's confederates assembled on the steamer and were set afloat on the big brown stream which had already seemed to our special traveller to have too much bosom and too little bank. Here and there, however, he became conscious of a shore where there was something to look at, even though conscious at the same time that he had of old lost great opportunities of an idyllic cast in not having managed to be more "thrown with" a certain young lady on the deck of the North German Lloyd. The two turned round together to hang over Alexandria, which for Pandora, as she declared, was a picture of Old Virginia. She told Vogelstein that she was always hearing about it during the Civil War, ages before. Little girl as she had been at the time she remembered all the names that were on people's lips during those years of reiteration. This historic spot had a touch of the romance of rich decay, a reference to older things, to a dramatic past. The past of Alexandria appeared in the vista of three or four short streets sloping up a hill and lined with poor brick warehouses erected for merchandise that had ceased to come or go. It looked hot and blank and sleepy, down to the shabby waterside where tattered darkies dangled their bare feet from the edge of rotting wharves. Pandora was even more interested in Mount Vernon—when at last its wooded bluff began to command the river—than she had been in the Capitol, and after they had disembarked and ascended to the celebrated mansion she insisted on going into every room it contained. She "claimed for it," as she said—some of her turns were so characteristic both of her nationality and her own style—the finest situation in the world, and was distinct as to the shame of their not giving it to the President for his country-seat. Most of her companions had seen the house often, and were now coupling themselves in the grounds according to their sympathies, so that it was easy for Vogelstein to offer the benefit of his own experience to the most inquisitive member of the party. They were not to lunch for another hour, and in the interval the young man roamed with his first and fairest acquaintance. The breath of the Potomac, on the boat, had been a little harsh, but on the softly-curving lawn, beneath the clustered trees, with the river relegated to a mere shining presence far below and in the distance, the day gave out nothing but its mildness, the whole scene became noble and genial.

Count Otto could joke a little on great occasions, and the present one was worthy of his humour. He maintained to his companion that the shallow painted mansion resembled a false house, a "wing" or structure of daubed canvas, on the stage; but she answered him so well with certain economical palaces she had seen in Germany, where, as she said, there was nothing but china stoves and stuffed birds, that he was obliged to allow the home of Washington to be after all really *gemüthlich*. What he found so in fact was the soft texture of the day, his personal situation, the sweetness of his suspense. For suspense had decidedly

become his portion; he was under a charm that made him feel he was watching his own life and that his susceptibilities were beyond his control. It hung over him that things might take a turn, from one hour to the other, which would make them very different from what they had been yet; and his heart certainly beat a little faster as he wondered what that turn might be. Why did he come to picnics on fragrant April days with American girls who might lead him too far? Wouldn't such girls be glad to marry a Pomeranian count? And *would* they, after all, talk that way to the Kaiser? If he were to marry one of them he should have to give her several thorough lessons.

In their little tour of the house our young friend and his companion had had a great many fellow visitors, who had also arrived by the steamer and who had hitherto not left them an ideal privacy. But the others gradually dispersed; they circled about a kind of showman who was the authorised guide, a big slow genial vulgar heavily-bearded man, with a whimsical edifying patronising tone, a tone that had immense success when he stopped here and there to make his points—to pass his eyes over his listening flock, then fix them quite above it with a meditative look and bring out some ancient pleasantries as if it were a sudden inspiration. He made a cheerful thing, an echo of the platform before the booth of a country fair, even of a visit to the tomb of the *pater patriæ*. It is enshrined in a kind of grotto in the grounds, and Vogelstein remarked to Pandora that he was a good man for the place, but was too familiar. “Oh he'd have been familiar with Washington,” said the girl with the bright dryness with which she often uttered amusing things. Vogelstein looked at her a moment, and it came over him, as he smiled, that she herself probably wouldn't have been abashed even by the hero with whom history has taken fewest liberties. “You look as if you could hardly believe that,” Pandora went on. “You Germans are always in such awe of great people.” And it occurred to her critic that perhaps after all Washington would have liked her manner, which was wonderfully fresh and natural. The man with the beard was an ideal minister to American shrines; he played on the curiosity of his little band with the touch of a master, drawing them at the right moment away to see the classic ice-house where the old lady had been found weeping in the belief it was Washington's grave. While this monument was under inspection our interesting couple had the house to themselves, and they spent some time on a pretty terrace where certain windows of the second floor opened—a little rootless verandah which overhung, in a manner, obliquely, all the magnificence of the view; the immense sweep of the river, the artistic plantations, the last-century garden with its big box hedges and remains of old espaliers. They lingered here for nearly half an hour, and it was in this retirement that Vogelstein enjoyed the only approach to intimate conversation appointed for him, as was to appear, with a young woman in whom he had been unable to persuade himself that he was not absorbed. It's not necessary, and it's not possible, that I should reproduce this colloquy; but I may mention that it began—as they leaned against the parapet of the terrace and heard the cheerful voice of the showman wafted up to them from a distance—with his saying to her rather abruptly that he couldn't make out why they hadn't had more talk together when they crossed the Atlantic.

“Well, I can if you can't,” said Pandora. “I'd have talked quick enough if you had spoken to me. I spoke to you first.”

“Yes, I remember that”—and it affected him awkwardly.

“You listened too much to Mrs. Dangerfield.”

He feigned a vagueness. “To Mrs. Dangerfield?”

“That woman you were always sitting with; she told you not to speak to me. I’ve seen her in New York; she speaks to me now herself. She recommended you to have nothing to do with me.”

“Oh how can you say such dreadful things?” Count Otto cried with a very becoming blush.

“You know you can’t deny it. You weren’t attracted by my family. They’re charming people when you know them. I don’t have a better time anywhere than I have at home,” the girl went on loyally. “But what does it matter? My family are very happy. They’re getting quite used to New York. Mrs. Dangerfield’s a vulgar wretch—next winter she’ll call on me.”

“You are unlike any Mädchen I’ve ever seen—I don’t understand you,” said poor Vogelstein with the colour still in his face.

“Well, you never *will* understand me—probably; but what difference does it make?”

He attempted to tell her what difference, but I’ve no space to follow him here. It’s known that when the German mind attempts to explain things it doesn’t always reduce them to simplicity, and Pandora was first mystified, then amused, by some of the Count’s revelations. At last I think she was a little frightened, for she remarked irrelevantly, with some decision, that luncheon would be ready and that they ought to join Mrs. Steuben. Her companion walked slowly, on purpose, as they left the house together, for he knew the pang of a vague sense that he was losing her.

“And shall you be in Washington many days yet?” he appealed as they went.

“It will all depend. I’m expecting important news. What I shall do will be influenced by that.”

The way she talked about expecting news—and important!—made him feel somehow that she had a career, that she was active and independent, so that he could scarcely hope to stop her as she passed. It was certainly true that he had never seen any girl like her. It would have occurred to him that the news she was expecting might have reference to the favour she had begged of the President, if he hadn’t already made up his mind—in the calm of meditation after that talk with the Bonnycastles—that this favour must be a pleasantry. What she had said to him had a discouraging, a somewhat chilling effect; nevertheless it was not without a certain ardour that he inquired of her whether, so long as she stayed in Washington, he mightn’t pay her certain respectful attentions.

“As many as you like—and as respectful ones; but you won’t keep them up for ever!”

“You try to torment me,” said Count Otto.

She waited to explain. “I mean that I may have some of my family.”

“I shall be delighted to see them again.”

Again she just hung fire. “There are some you’ve never seen.”

In the afternoon, returning to Washington on the steamer, Vogelstein received a warning. It came from Mrs. Bonnycastle and constituted, oddly enough, the second juncture at which an officious female friend had, while sociably afloat with him, advised him on the subject of Pandora Day.

“There’s one thing we forgot to tell you the other night about the self-made girl,” said the lady of infinite mirth. “It’s never safe to fix your affections on her, because she has almost always an impediment somewhere in the background.”

He looked at her askance, but smiled and said: "I should understand your information—for which I'm so much obliged—a little better if I knew what you mean by an impediment."

"Oh I mean she's always engaged to some young man who belongs to her earlier phase."

"Her earlier phase?"

"The time before she had made herself—when she lived unconscious of her powers. A young man from Utica, say. They usually have to wait; he's probably in a store. It's a long engagement."

Count Otto somehow preferred to understand as little as possible. "Do you mean a betrothal—to take effect?"

"I don't mean anything German and moonstruck. I mean that piece of peculiarly American enterprise a premature engagement—to take effect, but too complacently, at the end of time."

Vogelstein very properly reflected that it was no use his having entered the diplomatic career if he weren't able to bear himself as if this interesting generalisation had no particular message for him. He did Mrs. Bonnycastle moreover the justice to believe that she wouldn't have approached the question with such levity if she had supposed she should make him wince. The whole thing was, like everything else, but for her to laugh at, and the betrayal moreover of a good intention. "I see, I see—the self-made girl has of course always had a past. Yes, and the young man in the store—from Utica—is part of her past."

"You express it perfectly," said Mrs. Bonnycastle. "I couldn't say it better myself."

"But with her present, with her future, when they change like this young lady's, I suppose everything else changes. How do you say it in America? She lets him slide."

"We don't say it at all!" Mrs. Bonnycastle cried. "She does nothing of the sort; for what do you take her? She sticks to him; that at least is what we *expect* her to do," she added with less assurance. "As I tell you, the type's new and the case under consideration. We haven't yet had time for complete study."

"Oh of course I hope she sticks to him," Vogelstein declared simply and with his German accent more audible, as it always was when he was slightly agitated.

For the rest of the trip he was rather restless. He wandered about the boat, talking little with the returning picnickers. Toward the last, as they drew near Washington and the white dome of the Capitol hung aloft before them, looking as simple as a suspended snowball, he found himself, on the deck, in proximity to Mrs. Steuben. He reproached himself with having rather neglected her during an entertainment for which he was indebted to her bounty, and he sought to repair his omission by a proper deference. But the only act of homage that occurred to him was to ask her as by chance whether Miss Day were, to her knowledge, engaged.

Mrs. Steuben turned her Southern eyes upon him with a look of almost romantic compassion. "To my knowledge? Why of course I'd know! I should think you'd know too. Didn't you know she was engaged? Why she has been engaged since she was sixteen."

Count Otto gazed at the dome of the Capitol. "To a gentleman from Utica?"

"Yes, a native of her place. She's expecting him soon."

"I'm so very glad to hear it," said Vogelstein, who decidedly, for his career, had promise. "And is she going to marry him?"

"Why what do people fall in love with each other *for*? I presume they'll marry when she gets round to it. Ah if she had only been from the South—!"

At this he broke quickly in: "But why have they never brought it off, as you say, in so many years?"

"Well, at first she was too young, and then she thought her family ought to see Europe—of course they could see it better *with* her—and they spent some time there. And then Mr. Bellamy had some business difficulties that made him feel as if he didn't want to marry just then. But he has given up business and I presume feels more free. Of course it's rather long, but all the while they've been engaged. It's a true, true love," said Mrs. Steuben, whose sound of the adjective was that of a feeble flute.

"Is his name Mr. Bellamy?" the Count asked with his haunting reminiscence. "D. F. Bellamy, so? And has he been in a store?"

"I don't know what kind of business it was: it was some kind of business in Utica. I think he had a branch in New York. He's one of the leading gentlemen of Utica and very highly educated. He's a good deal older than Miss Day. He's a very fine man—I presume a college man. He stands very high in Utica. I don't know why you look as if you doubted it."

Vogelstein assured Mrs. Steuben that he doubted nothing, and indeed what she told him was probably the more credible for seeming to him eminently strange. Bellamy had been the name of the gentleman who, a year and a half before, was to have met Pandora on the arrival of the German steamer; it was in Bellamy's name that she had addressed herself with such effusion to Bellamy's friend, the man in the straw hat who was about to fumble in her mother's old clothes. This was a fact that seemed to Count Otto to finish the picture of her contradictions; it wanted at present no touch to be complete. Yet even as it hung there before him it continued to fascinate him, and he stared at it, detached from surrounding things and feeling a little as if he had been pitched out of an overturned vehicle, till the boat bumped against one of the outstanding piles of the wharf at which Mrs. Steuben's party was to disembark. There was some delay in getting the steamer adjusted to the dock, during which the passengers watched the process over its side and extracted what entertainment they might from the appearance of the various persons collected to receive it. There were darkies and loafers and hackmen, and also vague individuals, the loosest and blankest he had ever seen anywhere, with tufts on their chins, toothpicks in their mouths, hands in their pockets, rumination in their jaws and diamond pins in their shirt-fronts, who looked as if they had sauntered over from Pennsylvania Avenue to while away half an hour, forsaking for that interval their various slanting postures in the porticoes of the hotels and the doorways of the saloons.

"Oh I'm so glad! How sweet of you to come down!" It was a voice close to Count Otto's shoulder that spoke these words, and he had no need to turn to see from whom it proceeded. It had been in his ears the greater part of the day, though, as he now perceived, without the fullest richness of expression of which it was capable. Still less was he obliged to turn to discover to whom it was addressed, for the few simple words I have quoted had been flung across the narrowing interval of water, and a gentleman who had stepped to the edge of the dock without our young man's observing him tossed back an immediate reply.

"I got here by the three o'clock train. They told me in K Street where you were, and I thought I'd come down and meet you."

"Charming attention!" said Pandora Day with the laugh that seemed always to invite the whole of any company to partake in it; though for some moments after this she and her interlocutor appeared to continue the conversation only with their eyes. Meanwhile Vogelstein's also were not idle. He looked at her visitor from head to foot, and he was aware that she was quite unconscious of his own proximity. The gentleman before him was tall,

good-looking, well-dressed; evidently he would stand well not only at Utica, but, judging from the way he had planted himself on the dock, in any position that circumstances might compel him to take up. He was about forty years old; he had a black moustache and he seemed to look at the world over some counter-like expanse on which he invited it all warily and pleasantly to put down first its idea of the terms of a transaction. He waved a gloved hand at Pandora as if, when she exclaimed "Gracious, ain't they long!" to urge her to be patient. She was patient several seconds and then asked him if he had any news. He looked at her briefly, in silence, smiling, after which he drew from his pocket a large letter with an official-looking seal and shook it jocosely above his head. This was discreetly, covertly done. No one but our young man appeared aware of how much was taking place—and poor Count Otto mainly felt it in the air. The boat was touching the wharf and the space between the pair inconsiderable.

"Department of State?" Pandora very prettily and soundlessly mouthed across at him.

"That's what they call it."

"Well, what country?"

"What's your opinion of the Dutch?" the gentleman asked for answer.

"Oh gracious!" cried Pandora.

"Well, are you going to wait for the return trip?" said the gentleman.

Our silent sufferer turned away, and presently Mrs. Steuben and her companion disembarked together. When this lady entered a carriage with Miss Day the gentleman who had spoken to the girl followed them; the others scattered, and Vogelstein, declining with thanks a "lift" from Mrs. Bonnycastle, walked home alone and in some intensity of meditation. Two days later he saw in a newspaper an announcement that the President had offered the post of Minister to Holland to Mr. D. F. Bellamy of Utica; and in the course of a month he heard from Mrs. Steuben that Pandora, a thousand other duties performed, had finally "got round" to the altar of her own nuptials. He communicated this news to Mrs. Bonnycastle, who had not heard it but who, shrieking at the queer face he showed her, met it with the remark that there was now ground for a new induction as to the self-made girl.

The Author of Beltraffio

I

Much as I wished to see him I had kept my letter of introduction three weeks in my pocket-book. I was nervous and timid about meeting him—conscious of youth and ignorance, convinced that he was tormented by strangers, and especially by my country-people, and not exempt from the suspicion that he had the irritability as well as the dignity of genius. Moreover, the pleasure, if it should occur—for I could scarcely believe it was near at hand—would be so great that I wished to think of it in advance, to feel it there against my breast, not to mix it with satisfactions more superficial and usual. In the little game of new sensations that I was playing with my ingenuous mind I wished to keep my visit to the author of “Beltraffio” as a trump-card. It was three years after the publication of that fascinating work, which I had read over five times and which now, with my riper judgement, I admire on the whole as much as ever. This will give you about the date of my first visit—of any duration—to England for you will not have forgotten the commotion, I may even say the scandal, produced by Mark Ambient’s masterpiece. It was the most complete presentation that had yet been made of the gospel of art; it was a kind of æsthetic war-cry. People had endeavoured to sail nearer to “truth” in the cut of their sleeves and the shape of their sideboards; but there had not as yet been, among English novels, such an example of beauty of execution and “intimate” importance of theme. Nothing had been done in that line from the point of view of art for art. That served me as a fond formula, I may mention, when I was twenty-five; how much it still serves I won’t take upon myself to say—especially as the discerning reader will be able to judge for himself. I had been in England, briefly, a twelve-month before the time to which I began by alluding, and had then learned that Mr. Ambient was in distant lands—was making a considerable tour in the East; so that there was nothing to do but to keep my letter till I should be in London again. It was of little use to me to hear that his wife had not left England and was, with her little boy, their only child, spending the period of her husband’s absence—a good many months—at a small place they had down in Surrey. They had a house in London, but actually in the occupation of other persons. All this I had picked up, and also that Mrs. Ambient was charming—my friend the American poet, from whom I had my introduction, had never seen her, his relations with the great man confined to the exchange of letters; but she wasn’t, after all, though she had lived so near the rose, the author of “Beltraffio,” and I didn’t go down into Surrey to call on her. I went to the Continent, spent the following winter in Italy, and returned to London in May. My visit to Italy had opened my eyes to a good many things, but to nothing more than the beauty of certain pages in the works of Mark Ambient. I carried his productions about in my trunk—they are not, as you know, very numerous, but he had precluded to “Beltraffio” by, some exquisite things—and I used to read them over in the evening at the inn. I used profoundly to reason that the man who drew those characters and wrote that style understood what he saw and knew what he was doing. This is my sole ground for mentioning my winter in Italy. He had been there much in former years—he was saturated with what painters call the “feeling” of that classic land. He expressed the charm of the old hill-cities of Tuscany, the look of certain lonely grass-grown places which, in the past, had echoed with life; he understood the great artists, he understood the spirit of the Renaissance; he understood everything. The scene of one of his earlier novels was laid in Rome, the scene of another in Florence, and I had moved through these cities in company with the figures he set so firmly on their feet. This is why I was now so much happier even than before in the prospect of making his acquaintance.

At last, when I had dallied with my privilege long enough, I despatched to him the missive of the American poet. He had already gone out of town; he shrank from the rigour of the London "season" and it was his habit to migrate on the first of June. Moreover I had heard he was this year hard at work on a new book, into which some of his impressions of the East were to be wrought, so that he desired nothing so much as quiet days. That knowledge, however, didn't prevent me—*cet âge est sans pitié*—from sending with my friend's letter a note of my own, in which I asked his leave to come down and see him for an hour or two on some day to be named by himself. My proposal was accompanied with a very frank expression of my sentiments, and the effect of the entire appeal was to elicit from the great man the kindest possible invitation. He would be delighted to see me, especially if I should turn up on the following Saturday and would remain till the Monday morning. We would take a walk over the Surrey commons, and I could tell him all about the other great man, the one in America. He indicated to me the best train, and it may be imagined whether on the Saturday afternoon I was punctual at Waterloo. He carried his benevolence to the point of coming to meet me at the little station at which I was to alight, and my heart beat very fast as I saw his handsome face, surmounted with a soft wide-awake and which I knew by a photograph long since enshrined on my mantel-shelf, scanning the carriage-windows as the train rolled up. He recognised me as infallibly as I had recognised himself; he appeared to know by instinct how a young American of critical pretensions, rash youth, would look when much divided between eagerness and modesty. He took me by the hand and smiled at me and said: "You must be—a—*you*, I think!" and asked if I should mind going on foot to his house, which would take but a few minutes. I remember feeling it a piece of extraordinary affability that he should give directions about the conveyance of my bag; I remember feeling altogether very happy and rosy, in fact quite transported, when he laid his hand on my shoulder as we came out of the station.

I surveyed him, askance, as we walked together; I had already, I had indeed instantly, seen him as all delightful. His face is so well known that I needn't describe it; he looked to me at once an English gentleman and a man of genius, and I thought that a happy combination. There was a brush of the Bohemian in his fineness; you would easily have guessed his belonging to the artist guild. He was addicted to velvet jackets, to cigarettes, to loose shirt-collars, to looking a little dishevelled. His features, which were firm but not perfectly regular, are fairly enough represented in his portraits; but no portrait I have seen gives any idea of his expression. There were innumerable things in it, and they chased each other in and out of his face. I have seen people who were grave and gay in quick alternation; but Mark Ambient was grave and gay at one and the same moment. There were other strange oppositions and contradictions in his slightly faded and fatigued countenance. He affected me somehow as at once fresh and stale, at once anxious and indifferent. He had evidently had an active past, which inspired one with curiosity; yet what was that compared to his obvious future? He was just enough above middle height to be spoken of as tall, and rather lean and long in the flank. He had the friendliest frankest manner possible, and yet I could see it cost him something. It cost him small spasms of the self-consciousness that is an Englishman's last and dearest treasure—the thing he pays his way through life by sacrificing small pieces of even as the gallant but moneyless adventurer in "Quentin Durward" broke off links of his brave gold chain. He had been thirty-eight years old at the time "Beltraffio" was published. He asked me about his friend in America, about the length of my stay in England, about the last news in London and the people I had seen there; and I remember looking for the signs of genius in the very form of his questions and thinking I found it. I liked his voice as if I were somehow myself having the use of it.

There was genius in his house too I thought when we got there; there was imagination in the carpets and curtains, in the pictures and books, in the garden behind it, where certain old brown walls were muffled in creepers that appeared to me to have been copied from a masterpiece of one of the pre-Raphaelites. That was the way many things struck me at that time, in England—as reproductions of something that existed primarily in art or literature. It was not the picture, the poem, the fictive page, that seemed to me a copy; these things were the originals, and the life of happy and distinguished people was fashioned in their image. Mark Ambient called his house a cottage, and I saw afterwards he was right for if it hadn't been a cottage it must have been a villa, and a villa, in England at least, was not a place in which one could fancy him at home. But it was, to my vision, a cottage glorified and translated; it was a palace of art, on a slightly reduced scale—and might besides have been the dearest haunt of the old English *genius loci*. It nestled under a cluster of magnificent beeches, it had little creaking lattices that opened out of, or into, pendent mats of ivy, and gables, and old red tiles, as well as a general aspect of being painted in water-colours and inhabited by people whose lives would go on in chapters and volumes. The lawn seemed to me of extraordinary extent, the garden-walls of incalculable height, the whole air of the place delightfully still, private, proper to itself. “My wife must be somewhere about,” Mark Ambient said as we went in. “We shall find her perhaps—we’ve about an hour before dinner. She may be in the garden. I’ll show you my little place.”

We passed through the house and into the grounds, as I should have called them, which extended into the rear. They covered scarce three or four acres, but, like the house, were very old and crooked and full of traces of long habitation, with inequalities of level and little flights of steps—mossy and cracked were these—which connected the different parts with each other. The limits of the place, cleverly dissimulated, were muffled in the great verdurous screens. They formed, as I remember, a thick loose curtain at the further end, in one of the folds of which, as it were, we presently made out from afar a little group. “Ah there she is!” said Mark Ambient; “and she has got the boy.” He noted that last fact in a slightly different tone from any in which he yet had spoken. I wasn't fully aware of this at the time, but it lingered in my ear and I afterwards understood it.

“Is it your son?” I inquired, feeling the question not to be brilliant.

“Yes, my only child. He’s always in his mother’s pocket. She coddles him too much.” It came back to me afterwards too—the sound of these critical words. They weren't petulant; they expressed rather a sudden coldness, a mechanical submission. We went a few steps further, and then he stopped short and called the boy, beckoning to him repeatedly.

“Dolcino, come and see your daddy!” There was something in the way he stood still and waited that made me think he did it for a purpose. Mrs. Ambient had her arm round the child’s waist, and he was leaning against her knee; but though he moved at his father’s call she gave no sign of releasing him. A lady, apparently a neighbour, was seated near her, and before them was a garden-table on which a tea-service had been placed.

Mark Ambient called again, and Dolcino struggled in the maternal embrace; but, too tightly held, he after two or three fruitless efforts jerked about and buried his head deep in his mother’s lap. There was a certain awkwardness in the scene; I thought it odd Mrs. Ambient should pay so little attention to her husband. But I wouldn't for the world have betrayed my thought, and, to conceal it, I began loudly to rejoice in the prospect of our having tea in the garden. “Ah she won't let him come!” said my host with a sigh; and we went our way till we reached the two ladies. He mentioned my name to his wife, and I noticed that he addressed her as “My dear,” very genially, without a trace of resentment at her detention of the child. The quickness of the transition made me vaguely ask myself if he were perchance

henpecked—a shocking surmise which I instantly dismissed. Mrs. Ambient was quite such a wife as I should have expected him to have; slim and fair, with a long neck and pretty eyes and an air of good breeding. She shone with a certain coldness and practised in intercourse a certain bland detachment, but she was clothed in gentleness as in one of those vaporous redundant scarves that muffle the heroines of Gainsborough and Romney. She had also a vague air of race, justified by my afterwards learning that she was “connected with the aristocracy.” I have seen poets married to women of whom it was difficult to conceive that they should gratify the poetic fancy—women with dull faces and glutinous minds, who were none the less, however, excellent wives. But there was no obvious disparity in Mark Ambient’s union. My hostess—so far as she could be called so—delicate and quiet, in a white dress, with her beautiful child at her side, was worthy of the author of a work so distinguished as “Beltraffio.” Round her neck she wore a black velvet ribbon, of which the long ends, tied behind, hung down her back, and to which, in front, was attached a miniature portrait of her little boy. Her smooth shining hair was confined in a net. She gave me an adequate greeting, and Dolcino—I thought this small name of endearment delightful—took advantage of her getting up to slip away from her and go to his father, who seized him in silence and held him high for a long moment, kissing him several times.

I had lost no time in observing that the child, not more than seven years old, was extraordinarily beautiful. He had the face of an angel—the eyes, the hair, the smile of innocence, the more than mortal bloom. There was something that deeply touched, that almost alarmed, in his beauty, composed, one would have said, of elements too fine and pure for the breath of this world. When I spoke to him and he came and held out his hand and smiled at me I felt a sudden strange pity for him—quite as if he had been an orphan or a changeling or stamped with some social stigma. It was impossible to be in fact more exempt from these misfortunes, and yet, as one kissed him, it was hard to keep from murmuring all tenderly “Poor little devil!” though why one should have applied this epithet to a living cherub is more than I can say. Afterwards indeed I knew a trifle better; I grasped the truth of his being too fair to live, wondering at the same time that his parents shouldn’t have guessed it and have been in proportionate grief and despair. For myself I had no doubt of his evanescence, having already more than once caught in the fact the particular infant charm that’s as good as a death-warrant.

The lady who had been sitting with Mrs. Ambient was a jolly ruddy personage in velveteen and limp feathers, whom I guessed to be the vicar’s wife—our hostess didn’t introduce me—and who immediately began to talk to Ambient about chrysanthemums. This was a safe subject, and yet there was a certain surprise for me in seeing the author of “Beltraffio” even in such superficial communion with the Church of England. His writings implied so much detachment from that institution, expressed a view of life so profane, as it were, so independent and so little likely in general to be thought edifying, that I should have expected to find him an object of horror to vicars and their ladies—of horror repaid on his own part by any amount of effortless derision. This proved how little I knew as yet of the English people and their extraordinary talent for keeping up their forms, as well as of some of the mysteries of Mark Ambient’s hearth and home. I found afterwards that he had, in his study, between nervous laughs and free cigar-puffs, some wonderful comparisons for his clerical neighbours; but meanwhile the chrysanthemums were a source of harmony, he and the vicaress were equally attached to them, and I was surprised at the knowledge they exhibited of this interesting plant. The lady’s visit, however, had presumably been long, and she presently rose for departure and kissed Mrs. Ambient. Mark started to walk with her to the gate of the grounds, holding Dolcino by the hand.

“Stay with me, darling,” Mrs. Ambient said to the boy, who had surrendered himself to his father.

Mark paid no attention to the summons but Dolcino turned and looked at her in shy appeal, “Can’t I go with papa?”

“Not when I ask you to stay with me.”

“But please don’t ask me, mamma,” said the child in his small clear new voice.

“I must ask you when I want you. Come to me, dearest.” And Mrs. Ambient, who had seated herself again, held out her long slender slightly too osseous hands.

Her husband stopped, his back turned to her, but without releasing the child. He was still talking to the vicaress, but this good lady, I think, had lost the thread of her attention. She looked at Mrs. Ambient and at Dolcino, and then looked at me, smiling in a highly amused cheerful manner and almost to a grimace.

“Papa,” said the child, “mamma wants me not to go with you.”

“He’s very tired—he has run about all day. He ought to be quiet till he goes to bed. Otherwise he won’t sleep.” These declarations fell successively and very distinctly from Mrs. Ambient’s lips.

Her husband, still without turning round, bent over the boy and looked at him in silence. The vicaress gave a genial irrelevant laugh and observed that he was a precious little pet. “Let him choose,” said Mark Ambient. “My dear little boy, will you go with me or will you stay with your mother?”

“Oh it’s a shame!” cried the vicar’s lady with increased hilarity.

“Papa, I don’t think I can choose,” the child answered, making his voice very low and confidential. “But I’ve been a great deal with mamma to-day,” he then added.

“And very little with papa! My dear fellow, I think you *have* chosen!” On which Mark Ambient walked off with his son, accompanied by re-echoing but inarticulate comments from my fellow-visitor.

His wife had seated herself again, and her fixed eyes, bent on the ground, expressed for a few moments so much mute agitation that anything I could think of to say would be but a false note. Yet she none the less quickly recovered herself, to express the sufficiently civil hope that I didn’t mind having had to walk from the station. I reassured her on this point, and she went on: “We’ve got a thing that might have gone for you, but my husband wouldn’t order it.” After which and another longish pause, broken only by my plea that the pleasure of a walk with our friend would have been quite what I would have chosen, she found for reply: “I believe the Americans walk very little.”

“Yes, we always run,” I laughingly allowed.

She looked at me seriously, yet with an absence in her pretty eyes. “I suppose your distances are so great.”

“Yes, but we break our marches! I can’t tell you the pleasure to me of finding myself here,” I added. “I’ve the greatest admiration for Mr. Ambient.”

“He’ll like that. He likes being admired.”

“He must have a very happy life, then. He has many worshippers.”

“Oh yes, I’ve seen some of them,” she dropped, looking away, very far from me, rather as if such a vision were before her at the moment. It seemed to indicate, her tone, that the sight was scarcely edifying, and I guessed her quickly enough to be in no great intellectual sympathy with the author of “Beltraffio.” I thought the fact strange, but somehow, in the glow of my own enthusiasm, didn’t think it important it only made me wish rather to emphasise that homage.

“For me, you know,” I returned—doubtless with a due *suffisance*—“he’s quite the greatest of living writers.”

“Of course I can’t judge. Of course he’s very clever,” she said with a patient cheer.

“He’s nothing less than supreme, Mrs. Ambient! There are pages in each of his books of a perfection classing them with the greatest things. Accordingly for me to see him in this familiar way, in his habit as he lives, and apparently to find the man as delightful as the artist—well, I can’t tell you how much too good to be true it seems and how great a privilege I think it.” I knew I was gushing, but I couldn’t help it, and what I said was a good deal less than what I felt. I was by no means sure I should dare to say even so much as this to the master himself, and there was a kind of rapture in speaking it out to his wife which was not affected by the fact that, as a wife, she appeared peculiar. She listened to me with her face grave again and her lips a little compressed, listened as if in no doubt, of course, that her husband was remarkable, but as if at the same time she had heard it frequently enough and couldn’t treat it as stirring news. There was even in her manner a suggestion that I was so young as to expose myself to being called forward—an imputation and a word I had always loathed; as well as a hinted reminder that people usually got over their early extravagance. “I assure you that for me this is a red-letter day,” I added.

She didn’t take this up, but after a pause, looking round her, said abruptly and a trifle dryly: “We’re very much afraid about the fruit this year.”

My eyes wandered to the mossy mottled garden-walls, where plum-trees and pears, flattened and fastened upon the rusty bricks, looked like crucified figures with many arms. “Doesn’t it promise well?”

“No, the trees look very dull. We had such late frosts.”

Then there was another pause. She addressed her attention to the opposite end of the grounds, kept it for her husband’s return with the child. “Is Mr. Ambient fond of gardening?” it occurred to me to ask, irresistibly impelled as I felt myself, moreover, to bring the conversation constantly back to him.

“He’s very fond of plums,” said his wife.

“Ah well, then, I hope your crop will be better than you fear. It’s a lovely old place,” I continued. “The whole impression’s that of certain places he has described. Your house is like one of his pictures.”

She seemed a bit frigidly amused at my glow. “It’s a pleasant little place. There are hundreds like it.”

“Oh it has his *tone*,” I laughed, but sounding my epithet and insisting on my point the more sharply that my companion appeared to see in my appreciation of her simple establishment a mark of mean experience.

It was clear I insisted too much. “His tone?” she repeated with a harder look at me and a slightly heightened colour.

“Surely he has a tone, Mrs. Ambient.”

“Oh yes, he has indeed! But I don’t in the least consider that I’m living in one of his books at all. I shouldn’t care for that in the least,” she went on with a smile that had in some degree the effect of converting her really sharp protest into an insincere joke. “I’m afraid I’m not very literary. And I’m not artistic,” she stated.

“I’m very sure you’re not ignorant, not stupid,” I ventured to reply, with the accompaniment of feeling immediately afterwards that I had been both familiar and patronising. My only consolation was in the sense that she had begun it, had fairly dragged me into it. She had thrust forward her limitations.

“Well, whatever I am I’m very different from my husband. If you like him you won’t like me. You needn’t say anything. Your liking me isn’t in the least necessary!”

“Don’t defy me!” I could but honourably make answer.

She looked as if she hadn’t heard me, which was the best thing she could do; and we sat some time without further speech. Mrs. Ambient had evidently the enviable English quality of being able to be mute without unrest. But at last she spoke—she asked me if there seemed many people in town. I gave her what satisfaction I could on this point, and we talked a little of London and of some of its characteristics at that time of the year. At the end of this I came back irrepressibly to Mark.

“Doesn’t he like to be there now? I suppose he doesn’t find the proper quiet for his work. I should think his things had been written for the most part in a very still place. They suggest a great stillness following on a kind of tumult. Don’t you think so?” I laboured on. “I suppose London’s a tremendous place to collect impressions, but a refuge like this, in the country, must be better for working them up. Does he get many of his impressions in London, should you say?” I proceeded from point to point in this malign inquiry simply because my hostess, who probably thought me an odious chattering person, gave me time; for when I paused—I’ve not represented my pauses—she simply continued to let her eyes wander while her long fair fingers played with the medallion on her neck. When I stopped altogether, however, she was obliged to say something, and what she said was that she hadn’t the least idea where her husband got his impressions. This made me think her, for a moment, positively disagreeable; delicate and proper and rather aristocratically fine as she sat there. But I must either have lost that view a moment later or been goaded by it to further aggression, for I remember asking her if our great man were in a good vein of work and when we might look for the appearance of the book on which he was engaged. I’ve every reason now to know that she found me insufferable.

She gave a strange small laugh as she said: “I’m afraid you think I know much more about my husband’s work than I do. I haven’t the least idea what he’s doing,” she then added in a slightly different, that is a more explanatory, tone and as if from a glimpse of the enormity of her confession. “I don’t read what he writes.”

She didn’t succeed, and wouldn’t even had she tried much harder, in making this seem to me anything less than monstrous. I stared at her and I think I blushed. “Don’t you admire his genius? Don’t you admire ‘Beltraffio’?”

She waited, and I wondered what she could possibly say. She didn’t speak, I could see, the first words that rose to her lips; she repeated what she had said a few minutes before. “Oh of course he’s very clever!” And with this she got up; our two absentees had reappeared.

II

Mrs. Ambient left me and went to meet them; she stopped and had a few words with her husband that I didn't hear and that ended in her taking the child by the hand and returning with him to the house. Her husband joined me in a moment, looking, I thought, the least bit conscious and constrained, and said that if I would come in with him he would show me my room. In looking back upon these first moments of my visit I find it important to avoid the error of appearing to have at all fully measured his situation from the first or made out the signs of things mastered only afterwards. This later knowledge throws a backward light and makes me forget that, at least on the occasion of my present reference—I mean that first afternoon—Mark Ambient struck me as only enviable. Allowing for this he must yet have failed of much expression as we walked back to the house, though I remember well the answer he made to a remark of mine on his small son.

“That’s an extraordinary little boy of yours. I’ve never seen such a child.”

“Why,” he asked while we went, “do you call him extraordinary?”

“He’s so beautiful, so fascinating. He’s like some perfect little work of art.”

He turned quickly in the passage, grasping my arm. “Oh don’t call him that, or you’ll—you’ll—!”

But in his hesitation he broke off suddenly, laughing at my surprise. Immediately afterwards, however, he added: “You’ll make his little future very difficult.”

I declared that I wouldn’t for the world take any liberties with his little future—it seemed to me to hang by threads of such delicacy. I should only be highly interested in watching it.

“You Americans are very keen,” he commented on this. “You notice more things than we do.”

“Ah if you want visitors who aren’t struck with you,” I cried, “you shouldn’t have asked me down here!”

He showed me my room, a little bower of chintz, with open windows where the light was green, and before he left me said irrelevantly: “As for my small son, you know, we shall probably kill him between us before we’ve done with him!” And he made this assertion as if he really believed it, without any appearance of jest, his fine near-sighted expressive eyes looking straight into mine.

“Do you mean by spoiling him?”

“No, by fighting for him!”

“You had better give him to me to keep for you,” I said. “Let me remove the apple of discord!”

It was my extravagance of course, but he had the air of being perfectly serious. “It would be quite the best thing we could do. I should be all ready to do it.”

“I’m greatly obliged to you for your confidence.”

But he lingered with his hands in his pockets. I felt as if within a few moments I had, morally speaking, taken several steps nearer to him. He looked weary, just as he faced me then, looked preoccupied and as if there were something one might do for him. I was terribly conscious of the limits of my young ability, but I wondered what such a service might be, feeling at bottom nevertheless that the only thing I could do for him was to like him. I suppose he guessed this and was grateful for what was in my mind, since he went on presently: “I haven’t the advantage of being an American, but I also notice a little, and I’ve an idea that”—here he smiled and laid his hand on my shoulder—“even counting out your

nationality you're not destitute of intelligence. I've only known you half an hour, but—!" For which again he pulled up. "You're very young, after all."

"But you may treat me as if I could understand you!" I said; and before he left me to dress for dinner he had virtually given me a promise that he would.

When I went down into the drawing-room—I was very punctual—I found that neither my hostess nor my host had appeared. A lady rose from a sofa, however, and inclined her head as I rather surprisedly gazed at her. "I daresay you don't know me," she said with the modern laugh. "I'm Mark Ambient's sister." Whereupon I shook hands with her, saluting her very low. Her laugh was modern—by which I mean that it consisted of the vocal agitation serving between people who meet in drawing-rooms as the solvent of social disparities, the medium of transitions; but her appearance was—what shall I call it?—medieval. She was pale and angular, her long thin face was inhabited by sad dark eyes and her black hair intertwined with golden fillets and curious clasps. She wore a faded velvet robe which clung to her when she moved and was "cut," as to the neck and sleeves, like the garments of old Italians. She suggested a symbolic picture, something akin even to Dürer's *Melancholia*, and was so perfect an image of a type which I, in my ignorance, supposed to be extinct, that while she rose before me I was almost as much startled as if I had seen a ghost. I afterwards concluded that Miss Ambient wasn't incapable of deriving pleasure from this weird effect, and I now believe that reflexion concerned in her having sunk again to her seat with her long lean but not ungraceful arms locked together in an archaic manner on her knees and her mournful eyes addressing me a message of intentness which foreshadowed what I was subsequently to suffer. She was a singular fatuous artificial creature, and I was never more than half to penetrate her motives and mysteries. Of one thing I'm sure at least: that they were considerably less insuperable than her appearance announced. Miss Ambient was a restless romantic disappointed spinster, consumed with the love of Michael-Angelesque attitudes and mystical robes; but I'm now convinced she hadn't in her nature those depths of unutterable thought which, when you first knew her, seemed to look out from her eyes and to prompt her complicated gestures. Those features in especial had a misleading eloquence; they lingered on you with a far-off dimness, an air of obstructed sympathy, which was certainly not always a key to the spirit of their owner; so that, of a truth, a young lady could scarce have been so dejected and disillusioned without having committed a crime for which she was consumed with remorse, or having parted with a hope that she couldn't sanely have entertained. She had, I believe, the usual allowance of rather vain motives: she wished to be looked at, she wished to be married, she wished to be thought original.

It costs me a pang to speak in this irreverent manner of one of Ambient's name, but I shall have still less gracious things to say before I've finished my anecdote, and moreover—I confess it—I owe the young lady a bit of a grudge. Putting aside the curious cast of her face she had no natural aptitude for an artistic development, had little real intelligence. But her affectations rubbed off on her brother's renown, and as there were plenty of people who darkly disapproved of him they could easily point to his sister as a person formed by his influence. It was quite possible to regard her as a warning, and she had almost compromised him with the world at large. He was the original and she the inevitable imitation. I suppose him scarce aware of the impression she mainly produced, beyond having a general idea that she made up very well as a Rossetti; he was used to her and was sorry for her, wishing she would marry and observing how she didn't. Doubtless I take her too seriously, for she did me no harm, though I'm bound to allow that I can only half-account for her. She wasn't so mystical as she looked, but was a strange indirect uncomfortable embarrassing woman. My story gives the reader at best so very small a knot to untie that I needn't hope to excite his curiosity by delaying to remark that Mrs. Ambient hated her sister-in-law. This I learned but

later on, when other matters came to my knowledge. I mention it, however, at once, for I shall perhaps not seem to count too much on having beguiled him if I say he must promptly have guessed it. Mrs. Ambient, a person of conscience, put the best face on her kinswoman, who spent a month with her twice a year; but it took no great insight to recognise the very different personal paste of the two ladies, and that the usual feminine hypocrisies would cost them on either side much more than the usual effort. Mrs. Ambient, smooth-haired, thin-lipped, perpetually fresh, must have regarded her crumpled and dishevelled visitor as an equivocal joke; she herself so the opposite of a Rossetti, she herself a Reynolds or a Lawrence, with no more far-fetched note in her composition than a cold ladylike candour and a well-starched muslin dress.

It was in a garment and with an expression of this kind that she made her entrance after I had exchanged a few words with Miss Ambient. Her husband presently followed her and, there being no other company, we went to dinner. The impressions I received at that repast are present to me still. The elements of oddity in the air hovered, as it were, without descending—to any immediate check of my delight. This came mainly, of course, from Ambient's talk, the easiest and richest I had ever heard. I mayn't say to-day whether he laid himself out to dazzle a rather juvenile pilgrim from over the sea; but that matters little—it seemed so natural to him to shine. His spoken wit or wisdom, or whatever, had thus a charm almost beyond his written; that is if the high finish of his printed prose be really, as some people have maintained, a fault. There was such a kindness in him, however, that I've no doubt it gave him ideas for me, or about me, to see me sit as open-mouthed as I now figure myself. Not so the two ladies, who not only were very nearly dumb from beginning to end of the meal, but who hadn't even the air of being struck with such an exhibition of fancy and taste. Mrs. Ambient, detached, and inscrutable, met neither my eye nor her husband's; she attended to her dinner, watched her servants, arranged the puckers in her dress, exchanged at wide intervals a remark with her sister-in-law and, while she slowly rubbed her lean white hands between the courses, looked out of the window at the first signs of evening—the long June day allowing us to dine without candles. Miss Ambient appeared to give little direct heed to anything said by her brother; but on the other hand she was much engaged in watching its effect upon me. Her “die-away” pupils continued to attach themselves to my countenance, and it was only her air of belonging to another century that kept them from being importunate. She seemed to look at me across the ages, and the interval of time diminished for me the inconvenience. It was as if she knew in a general way that he must be talking very well, but she herself was so at home among such allusions that she had no need to pick them up and was at liberty to see what would become of the exposure of a candid young American to a high æsthetic temperature.

The temperature was æsthetic certainly, but it was less so than I could have desired, for I failed of any great success in making our friend abound about himself. I tried to put him on the ground of his own genius, but he slipped through my fingers every time and shifted the saddle to one or other of his contemporaries. He talked about Balzac and Browning, about what was being done in foreign countries, about his recent tour in the East and the extraordinary forms of life to be observed in that part of the world. I felt he had reasons for holding off from a direct profession of literary faith, a full consistency or sincerity, and therefore dealt instead with certain social topics, treating them with extraordinary humour and with a due play of that power of ironic evocation in which his books abound. He had a deal to say about London as London appears to the observer who has the courage of some of his conclusions during the high-pressure time—from April to July—of its gregarious life. He flashed his faculty of playing with the caught image and liberating the wistful idea over the whole scheme of manners or conception of intercourse of his compatriots, among whom there

were evidently not a few types for which he had little love. London in short was grotesque to him, and he made capital sport of it; his only allusion that I can remember to his own work was his saying that he meant some day to do an immense and general, a kind of epic, social satire. Miss Ambient's perpetual gaze seemed to put to me: "Do you perceive how artistic, how very strange and interesting, we are? Frankly now is it possible to be *more* artistic, *more* strange and interesting, than this? You surely won't deny that we're remarkable." I was irritated by her use of the plural pronoun, for she had no right to pair herself with her brother; and moreover, of course, I couldn't see my way to—at all genially—include Mrs. Ambient. Yet there was no doubt they were, taken together, unprecedented enough, and, with all allowances, I had never been left, or condemned, to draw so many rich inferences.

After the ladies had retired my host took me into his study to smoke, where I appealingly brought him round, or so tried, to some disclosure of fond ideals. I was bent on proving I was worthy to listen to him, on repaying him for what he had said to me before dinner, by showing him how perfectly I understood. He liked to talk; he liked to defend his convictions and his honour (not that I attacked them); he liked a little perhaps—it was a pardonable weakness—to bewilder the youthful mind even while wishing to win it over. My ingenuous sympathy received at any rate a shock from three or four of his professions—he made me occasionally gasp and stare. He couldn't help forgetting, or rather couldn't know, how little, in another and drier clime, I had ever sat in the school in which he was master; and he promoted me as at a jump to a sense of its penetralia. My trepidations, however, were delightful; they were just what I had hoped for, and their only fault was that they passed away too quickly; since I found that for the main points I was essentially, I was quite constitutionally, on Mark Ambient's "side." This was the taken stand of the artist to whom every manifestation of human energy was a thrilling spectacle and who felt for ever the desire to resolve his experience of life into a literary form. On that high head of the passion for form the attempt at perfection, the quest for which was to his mind the real search for the holy grail—he said the most interesting, the most inspiring things. He mixed with them a thousand illustrations from his own life, from other lives he had known, from history and fiction, and above all from the annals of the time that was dear to him beyond all periods, the Italian cinque-cento. It came to me thus that in his books he had uttered but half his thought, and that what he had kept back from motives I deplored when I made them out later—was the finer and braver part. It was his fate to make a great many still more "prepared" people than me not inconsiderably wince; but there was no grain of bravado in his ripest things (I've always maintained it, though often contradicted), and at bottom the poor fellow, disinterested to his finger-tips and regarding imperfection not only as an æsthetic but quite also as a social crime, had an extreme dread of scandal. There are critics who regret that having gone so far he didn't go further; but I regret nothing—putting aside two or three of the motives I just mentioned—since he arrived at a noble rarity and I don't see how you can go beyond that. The hours I spent in his study—this first one and the few that followed it; they were not, after all, so numerous—seem to glow, as I look back on them, with a tone that is partly that of the brown old room, rich, under the shaded candle-light where we sat and smoked, with the dusky delicate bindings of valuable books; partly that of his voice, of which I still catch the echo, charged with the fancies and figures that came at his command. When we went back to the drawing-room we found Miss Ambient alone in possession and prompt to mention that her sister-in-law had a quarter of an hour before been called by the nurse to see the child, who appeared rather unwell—a little feverish.

"Feverish! how in the world comes he to be feverish?" Ambient asked. "He was perfectly right this afternoon."

“Beatrice says you walked him about too much—you almost killed him.”

“Beatrice must be very happy—she has an opportunity to triumph!” said my friend with a bright bitterness which was all I could have wished it.

“Surely not if the child’s ill,” I ventured to remark by way of pleading for Mrs. Ambient.

“My dear fellow, you aren’t married—you don’t know the nature of wives!” my host returned with spirit.

I tried to match it. “Possibly not; but I know the nature of mothers.”

“Beatrice is perfect as a mother,” sighed Miss Ambient quite tremendously and with her fingers interlaced on her embroidered knees.

“I shall go up and see my boy,” her brother went on. “Do you suppose he’s asleep?”

“Beatrice won’t let you see him, dear”—as to which our young lady looked at me, though addressing our companion.

“Do you call that being perfect as a mother?” Ambient asked.

“Yes, from her point of view.”

“Damn her point of view!” cried the author of “Beltraffio.” And he left the room; after which we heard him ascend the stairs.

I sat there for some ten minutes with Miss Ambient, and we naturally had some exchange of remarks, which began, I think, by my asking her what the point of view of her sister-in-law could be.

“Oh it’s so very odd. But we’re so very odd altogether. Don’t you find us awfully unlike others of our class?—which indeed mostly, in England, is awful. We’ve lived so much abroad. I adore ‘abroad.’ Have you people like us in America?”

“You’re not all alike, you interesting three—or, counting Dolcino, four—surely, surely; so that I don’t think I understand your question. We’ve no one like your brother—I may go so far as that.”

“You’ve probably more persons like his wife,” Miss Ambient desolately smiled.

“I can tell you that better when you’ve told me about her point of view.”

“Oh yes—oh yes. Well,” said my entertainer, “she doesn’t like his ideas. She doesn’t like them for the child. She thinks them undesirable.”

Being quite fresh from the contemplation of some of Mark Ambient’s *arcana* I was particularly in a position to appreciate this announcement. But the effect of it was to make me, after staring a moment, burst into laughter which I instantly checked when I remembered the indisposed child above and the possibility of parents nervously or fussily anxious.

“What has that infant to do with ideas?” I asked. “Surely he can’t tell one from another. Has he read his father’s novels?”

“He’s very precocious and very sensitive, and his mother thinks she can’t begin to guard him too early.” Miss Ambient’s head drooped a little to one side and her eyes fixed themselves on futurity. Then of a sudden came a strange alteration; her face lighted to an effect more joyless than any gloom, to that indeed of a conscious insincere grimace, and she added “When one has children what one writes becomes a great responsibility.”

“Children are terrible critics,” I prosaically answered. “I’m really glad I haven’t any.”

“Do you also write, then? And in the same style as my brother? And do you like that style? And do people appreciate it in America? I don’t write, but I think I feel.” To these and various other inquiries and observations my young lady treated me till we heard her brother’s step in the hall again and Mark Ambient reappeared. He was so flushed and grave that I supposed he had seen something symptomatic in the condition of his child. His sister apparently had another idea; she gazed at him from afar—as if he had been a burning ship on the horizon—and simply murmured “Poor old Mark!”

“I hope you’re not anxious,” I as promptly pronounced.

“No, but I’m disappointed. She won’t let me in. She has locked the door, and I’m afraid to make a noise.” I daresay there might have been a touch of the ridiculous in such a confession, but I liked my new friend so much that it took nothing for me from his dignity. “She tells me—from behind the door—that she’ll let me know if he’s worse.”

“It’s very good of her,” said Miss Ambient with a hollow sound.

I had exchanged a glance with Mark in which it’s possible he read that my pity for him was untinged with contempt, though I scarce know why he should have cared; and as his sister soon afterward got up and took her bedroom candlestick he proposed we should go back to his study. We sat there till after midnight; he put himself into his slippers and an old velvet jacket, he lighted an ancient pipe, but he talked considerably less than before. There were longish pauses in our communion, but they only made me feel we had advanced in intimacy. They helped me further to understand my friend’s personal situation and to imagine it by no means the happiest possible. When his face was quiet it was vaguely troubled, showing, to my increase of interest—if that was all that was wanted!—that for him too life was the same struggle it had been for so many another man of genius. At last I prepared to leave him, and then, to my ineffable joy, he gave me some of the sheets of his forthcoming book—which, though unfinished, he had indulged in the luxury, so dear to writers of deliberation, of having “set up,” from chapter to chapter, as he advanced. These early pages, the *prémices*, in the language of letters, of that new fruit of his imagination, I should take to my room and look over at my leisure. I was in the act of leaving him when the door of the study noiselessly opened and Mrs. Ambient stood before us. She observed us a moment, her candle in her hand, and then said to her husband that as she supposed he hadn’t gone to bed she had come down to let him know Dolcino was more quiet and would probably be better in the morning. Mark Ambient made no reply; he simply slipped past her in the doorway, as if for fear she might seize him in his passage, and bounded upstairs to judge for himself of his child’s condition. She looked so frankly discomfited that I for a moment believed her about to give him chase. But she resigned herself with a sigh and her eyes turned, ruefully and without a ray, to the lamplit room where various books at which I had been looking were pulled out of their places on the shelves and the fumes of tobacco hung in mid-air. I bade her good-night and then, without intention, by a kind of fatality, a perversity that had already made me address her overmuch on that question of her husband’s powers, I alluded to the precious proof-sheets with which Ambient had entrusted me and which I nursed there under my arm. “They’re the opening chapters of his new book,” I said. “Fancy my satisfaction at being allowed to carry them to my room!”

She turned away, leaving me to take my candlestick from the table in the hall; but before we separated, thinking it apparently a good occasion to let me know once for all since I was beginning, it would seem, to be quite “thick” with my host—that there was no fitness in my appealing to her for sympathy in such a case; before we separated, I say, she remarked to me with her quick fine well-bred inveterate curtness: “I daresay you attribute to me ideas I

haven't got. I don't take that sort of interest in my husband's proof-sheets. I consider his writings most objectionable!"

III

I had an odd colloquy the next morning with Miss Ambient, whom I found strolling in the garden before breakfast. The whole place looked as fresh and trim, amid the twitter of the birds, as if, an hour before, the housemaids had been turned into it with their dust-pans and feather-brushes. I almost hesitated to light a cigarette and was doubly startled when, in the act of doing so, I suddenly saw the sister of my host, who had, at the best, something of the weirdness of an apparition, stand before me. She might have been posing for her photograph. Her sad-coloured robe arranged itself in serpentine folds at her feet; her hands locked themselves listlessly together in front; her chin rested on a cinque-cento ruff. The first thing I did after bidding her good-morning was to ask her for news of her little nephew—to express the hope she had heard he was better. She was able to gratify this trust—she spoke as if we might expect to see him during the day. We walked through the shrubberies together and she gave me further light on her brother's household, which offered me an opportunity to repeat to her what his wife had so startled and distressed me with the night before. *Was* it the sorry truth that she thought his productions objectionable?

"She doesn't usually come out with that so soon!" Miss Ambient returned in answer to my breathlessness.

"Poor lady," I pleaded, "she saw I'm a fanatic."

"Yes, she won't like you for that. But you mustn't mind, if the rest of us like you! Beatrice thinks a work of art ought to have a 'purpose.' But she's a charming woman—don't you think her charming? I find in her quite the grand air."

"She's very beautiful," I produced with an effort; while I reflected that though it was apparently true that Mark Ambient was mismated it was also perceptible that his sister was perfidious. She assured me her brother and his wife had no other difference but this—one that she thought his writings immoral and his influence pernicious. It was a fixed idea; she was afraid of these things for the child. I answered that it was in all conscience enough, the trifle of a woman's regarding her husband's mind as a well of corruption, and she seemed much struck with the novelty of my remark. "But there hasn't been any of the sort of trouble that there so often is among married people," she said. "I suppose you can judge for yourself that Beatrice isn't at all—well, whatever they call it when a woman kicks over! And poor Mark doesn't make love to other people either. You might think he would, but I assure you he doesn't. All the same of course, from her point of view, you know, she has a dread of my brother's influence on the child on the formation of his character, his 'ideals,' poor little brat, his principles. It's as if it were a subtle poison or a contagion—something that would rub off on his tender sensibility when his father kisses him or holds him on his knee. If she could she'd prevent Mark from even so much as touching him. Every one knows it—visitors see it for themselves; so there's no harm in my telling you. Isn't it excessively odd? It comes from Beatrice's being so religious and so tremendously moral—so *à cheval* on fifty thousand *riguardi*. And then of course we mustn't forget," my companion added, a little unexpectedly, to this polyglot proposition, "that some of Mark's ideas are—well, really—rather impossible, don't you know?"

I reflected as we went into the house, where we found Ambient unfolding *The Observer* at the breakfast-table, that none of them were probably quite so "impossible, don't you know?" as his sister. Mrs. Ambient, a little "the worse," as was mentioned, for her ministrations, during the night, to Dolcino, didn't appear at breakfast. Her husband described her, however,

as hoping to go to church. I afterwards learnt that she did go, but nothing naturally was less on the cards than that we should accompany her. It was while the church-bell droned near at hand that the author of "Beltraffio" led me forth for the ramble he had spoken of in his note. I shall attempt here no record of where we went or of what we saw. We kept to the fields and copses and commons, and breathed the same sweet air as the nibbling donkeys and the browsing sheep, whose woolliness seemed to me, in those early days of acquaintance with English objects, but part of the general texture of the small dense landscape, which looked as if the harvest were gathered by the shears and with all nature bleating and braying for the violence. Everything was full of expression for Mark Ambient's visitor—from the big bandy-legged geese whose whiteness was a "note" amid all the tones of green as they wandered beside a neat little oval pool, the foreground of a thatched and whitewashed inn, with a grassy approach and a pictorial sign—from these humble wayside animals to the crests of high woods which let a gable or a pinnacle peep here and there and looked even at a distance like trees of good company, conscious of an individual profile. I admired the hedge-rows, I plucked the faint-hued heather, and I was for ever stopping to say how charming I thought the thread-like footpaths across the fields, which wandered in a diagonal of finer grain from one smooth stile to another. Mark Ambient was abundantly good-natured and was as much struck, dear man, with some of my observations as I was with the literary allusions of the landscape. We sat and smoked on stiles, broaching paradoxes in the decent English air; we took short cuts across a park or two where the bracken was deep and my companion nodded to the old woman at the gate; we skirted rank coverts which rustled here and there as we passed, and we stretched ourselves at last on a heathery hillside where if the sun wasn't too hot neither was the earth too cold, and where the country lay beneath us in a rich blue mist. Of course I had already told him what I thought of his new novel, having the previous night read every word of the opening chapters before I went to bed.

"I'm not without hope of being able to make it decent enough," he said as I went back to the subject while we turned up our heels to the sky. "At least the people who dislike my stuff—and there are plenty of them, I believe—will dislike this thing (if it does turn out well) most." This was the first time I had heard him allude to the people who couldn't read him—a class so generally conceived to sit heavy on the consciousness of the man of letters. A being organised for literature as Mark Ambient was must certainly have had the normal proportion of sensitiveness, of irritability; the artistic *ego*, capable in some cases of such monstrous development, must have been in his composition sufficiently erect and active. I won't therefore go so far as to say that he never thought of his detractors or that he had any illusions with regard to the number of his admirers—he could never so far have deceived himself as to believe he was popular, but I at least then judged (and had occasion to be sure later on) that stupidity ruffled him visibly but little, that he had an air of thinking it quite natural he should leave many simple folk, tasting of him, as simple as ever he found them, and that he very seldom talked about the newspapers, which, by the way, were always even abnormally vulgar about him. Of course he may have thought them over—the newspapers—night and day; the only point I make is that he didn't show it while at the same time he didn't strike one as a man actively on his guard. I may add that, touching his hope of making the work on which he was then engaged the best of his books, it was only partly carried out. That place belongs incontestably to "Beltraffio," in spite of the beauty of certain parts of its successor. I quite believe, however, that he had at the moment of which I speak no sense of having declined; he was in love with his idea, which was indeed magnificent, and though for him, as I suppose for every sane artist, the act of execution had in it as much torment as joy, he saw his result grow like the crescent of the young moon and promise to fill the disk. "I want to be truer than I've ever been," he said, settling himself on his back with his hands clasped behind his head; "I want to give the impression of life itself. No, you may say what you will, I've always

arranged things too much, always smoothed them down and rounded them off and tucked them in—done everything to them that life doesn't do. I've been a slave to the old superstitions."

"You a slave, my dear Mark Ambient? You've the freest imagination of our day!"

"All the more shame to me to have done some of the things I have! The reconciliation of the two women in 'Natalina,' for instance, which could never really have taken place. That sort of thing's ignoble—I blush when I think of it! This new affair must be a golden vessel, filled with the purest distillation of the actual; and oh how it worries me, the shaping of the vase, the hammering of the metal! I have to hammer it so fine, so smooth; I don't do more than an inch or two a day. And all the while I have to be so careful not to let a drop of the liquor escape! When I see the kind of things Life herself, the brazen hussy, does, I despair of ever catching her peculiar trick. She has an impudence, Life! If one risked a fiftieth part of the effects she risks! It takes ever so long to believe it. You don't know yet, my dear youth. It isn't till one has been watching her some forty years that one finds out half of what she's up to! Therefore one's earlier things must inevitably contain a mass of rot. And with what one sees, on one side, with its tongue in its cheek, defying one to be real enough, and on the other the *bonnes gens* rolling up their eyes at one's cynicism, the situation has elements of the ludicrous which the poor reproducer himself is doubtless in a position to appreciate better than any one else. Of course one mustn't worry about the *bonnes gens*," Mark Ambient went on while my thoughts reverted to his ladylike wife as interpreted by his remarkable sister.

"To sink your shaft deep and polish the plate through which people look into it—that's what your work consists of," I remember ingeniously observing.

"Ah polishing one's plate—that's the torment of execution!" he exclaimed, jerking himself up and sitting forward. "The effort to arrive at a surface, if you think anything of that decent sort necessary—some people don't, happily for them! My dear fellow, if you could see the surface I dream of as compared with the one with which I've to content myself. Life's really too short for art—one hasn't time to make one's shell ideally hard. Firm and bright, firm and bright is very well to say—the devilish thing has a way sometimes of being bright, and even of being hard, as mere tough frozen pudding is hard, without being firm. When I rap it with my knuckles it doesn't give the right sound. There are horrible sandy stretches where I've taken the wrong turn because I couldn't for the life of me find the right. If you knew what a dunce I am sometimes! Such things figure to me now base pimples and ulcers on the brow of beauty!"

"They're very bad, very bad," I said as gravely as I could.

"Very bad? They're the highest social offence I know; it ought—it absolutely ought; I'm quite serious—to be capital. If I knew I should be publicly thrashed else I'd manage to find the true word. The people who can't—some of them don't so much as know it when they see it—would shut their inkstands, and we shouldn't be deluged by this flood of rubbish!"

I shall not attempt to repeat everything that passed between us, nor to explain just how it was that, every moment I spent in his company, Mark Ambient revealed to me more and more the consistency of his creative spirit, the spirit in him that felt all life as plastic material. I could but envy him the force of that passion, and it was at any rate through the receipt of this impression that by the time we returned I had gained the sense of intimacy with him that I have noted. Before we got up for the homeward stretch he alluded to his wife's having once—or perhaps more than once—asked him whether he should like Dolcino to read "Beltraffio." He must have been unaware at the moment of all that this conveyed to me—as well doubtless of my extreme curiosity to hear what he had replied. He had said how much

he hoped Dolcino would read *all* his works—when he was twenty; he should like him to know what his father had done. Before twenty it would be useless; he wouldn't understand them.

“And meanwhile do you propose to hide them—to lock them up in a drawer?” Mrs. Ambient had proceeded.

“Oh no—we must simply tell him they're not intended for small boys. If you bring him up properly after that he won't touch them.”

To this Mrs. Ambient had made answer that it might be very awkward when he was about fifteen, say; and I asked her husband if it were his opinion in general, then, that young people shouldn't read novels.

“Good ones—certainly not!” said my companion. I suppose I had had other views, for I remember saying that for myself I wasn't sure it was bad for them if the novels were “good” to the right intensity of goodness. “Bad for *them*, I don't say so much!” my companion returned. “But very bad, I'm afraid, for the poor dear old novel itself.” That oblique accidental allusion to his wife's attitude was followed by a greater breadth of reference as we walked home. “The difference between us is simply the opposition between two distinct ways of looking at the world, which have never succeeded in getting on together, or in making any kind of common household, since the beginning of time. They've borne all sorts of names, and my wife would tell you it's the difference between Christian and Pagan. I may be a pagan, but I don't like the name; it sounds sectarian. She thinks me at any rate no better than an ancient Greek. It's the difference between making the most of life and making the least, so that you'll get another better one in some other time and place. Will it be a sin to make the most of that one, too, I wonder; and shall we have to be bribed off in the future state as well as in the present? Perhaps I care too much for beauty—I don't know, I doubt if a poor devil *can*; I delight in it, I adore it, I think of it continually, I try to produce it, to reproduce it. My wife holds that we shouldn't cultivate or enjoy it without extraordinary precautions and reserves. She's always afraid of it, always on her guard. I don't know what it can ever have done to her, what grudge it owes her or what resentment rides. And she's so pretty, too, herself! Don't you think she's lovely? She was at any rate when we married. At that time I wasn't aware of that difference I speak of—I thought it all came to the same thing: in the end, as they say. Well, perhaps it will in the end. I don't know what the end will be. Moreover, I care for seeing things as they are; that's the way I try to show them in any professed picture. But you mustn't talk to Mrs. Ambient about things as they are. She has a mortal dread of things as they are.”

“She's afraid of them for Dolcino,” I said: surprised a moment afterwards at being in a position—thanks to Miss Ambient—to be so explanatory; and surprised even now that Mark shouldn't have shown visibly that he wondered what the deuce I knew about it. But he didn't; he simply declared with a tenderness that touched me: “Ah nothing shall ever hurt *him*!”

He told me more about his wife before we arrived at the gate of home, and if he be judged to have aired overmuch his grievance I'm afraid I must admit that he had some of the foibles as well as the gifts of the artistic temperament; adding, however, instantly that hitherto, to the best of my belief, he had rarely let this particular cat out of the bag. “She thinks me immoral—that's the long and short of it,” he said as we paused outside a moment and his hand rested on one of the bars of his gate; while his conscious expressive perceptive eyes—the eyes of a foreigner, I had begun to account them, much more than of the usual Englishman—viewing me now evidently as quite a familiar friend, took part in the

declaration. "It's very strange when one thinks it all over, and there's a grand comicality in it that I should like to bring out. She's a very nice woman, extraordinarily well-behaved, upright and clever and with a tremendous lot of good sense about a good many matters. Yet her conception of a novel—she has explained it to me once or twice, and she doesn't do it badly as exposition—is a thing so false that it makes me blush. It's a thing so hollow, so dishonest, so lying, in which life is so blinked and blinded, so dodged and disfigured, that it makes my ears burn. It's two different ways of looking at the whole affair," he repeated, pushing open the gate. "And they're irreconcilable!" he added with a sigh. We went forward to the house, but on the walk, half-way to the door, he stopped and said to me: "If you're going into this kind of thing there's a fact you should know beforehand; it may save you some disappointment. There's a hatred of art, there's a hatred of literature—I mean of the genuine kinds. Oh the shams—those they'll swallow by the bucket!" I looked up at the charming house, with its genial colour and crookedness, and I answered with a smile that those evil passions might exist, but that I should never have expected to find them there. "Ah it doesn't matter after all," he a bit nervously laughed; which I was glad to hear, for I was reproaching myself with having worked him up.

If I had it soon passed off, for at luncheon he was delightful; strangely delightful considering that the difference between himself and his wife was, as he had said, irreconcilable. He had the art, by his manner, by his smile, by his natural amenity, of reducing the importance of it in the common concerns of life; and Mrs. Ambient, I must add, lent herself to this transaction with a very good grace. I watched her at table for further illustrations of that fixed idea of which Miss Ambient had spoken to me; for in the light of the united revelations of her sister-in-law and her husband she had come to seem to me almost a sinister personage. Yet the signs of a sombre fanaticism were not more immediately striking in her than before; it was only after a while that her air of incorruptible conformity, her tapering monosyllabic correctness, began to affect me as in themselves a cold thin flame. Certainly, at first, she resembled a woman with as few passions as possible; but if she had a passion at all it would indeed be that of Philistinism. She might have been (for there are guardian-spirits, I suppose, of all great principles) the very angel of the pink of propriety—putting the pink for a principle, though I'd rather put some dismal cold blue. Mark Ambient, apparently, ten years before, had simply and quite inevitably taken her for an angel, without asking himself of what. He had been right in calling my attention to her beauty. In looking for some explanation of his original surrender to her I saw more than before that she was, physically speaking, a wonderfully cultivated human plant—that he might well have owed her a brief poetic inspiration. It was impossible to be more propped and pencilled, more delicately tinted and petalled.

If I had had it in my heart to think my host a little of a hypocrite for appearing to forget at table everything he had said to me in our walk, I should instantly have cancelled such a judgement on reflecting that the good news his wife was able to give him about their little boy was ground enough for any optimistic reaction. It may have come partly, too, from a certain compunction at having breathed to me at all harshly on the cool fair lady who sat there—a desire to prove himself not after all so mismated. Dolcino continued to be much better, and it had been promised him he should come downstairs after his dinner. As soon as we had risen from our own meal Mark slipped away, evidently for the purpose of going to his child; and no sooner had I observed this than I became aware his wife had simultaneously vanished. It happened that Miss Ambient and I, both at the same moment, saw the tail of her dress whisk out of a doorway; an incident that led the young lady to smile at me as if I now knew all the secrets of the Ambients. I passed with her into the garden and we sat down on a dear old bench that rested against the west wall of the house. It was a perfect spot for the

middle period of a Sunday in June, and its felicity seemed to come partly from an antique sun-dial which, rising in front of us and forming the centre of a small intricate parterre, measured the moments ever so slowly and made them safe for leisure and talk. The garden bloomed in the suffused afternoon, the tall beeches stood still for an example, and, behind and above us, a rose tree of many seasons, clinging to the faded grain of the brick, expressed the whole character of the scene in a familiar exquisite smell. It struck me as a place to offer genius every favour and sanction—not to bristle with challenges and checks. Miss Ambient asked me if I had enjoyed my walk with her brother and whether we had talked of many things.

“Well, of most things,” I freely allowed, though I remembered we hadn’t talked of Miss Ambient.

“And don’t you think some of his theories are very peculiar?”

“Oh I guess I agree with them all.” I was very particular, for Miss Ambient’s entertainment, to guess.

“Do you think art’s everything?” she put to me in a moment.

“In art, of course I do!”

“And do you think beauty’s everything?”

“Everything’s a big word, which I think we should use as little as possible. But how can we not want beauty?”

“Ah there you are!” she sighed, though I didn’t quite know what she meant by it. “Of course it’s difficult for a woman to judge how far to go,” she went on. “I adore everything that gives a charm to life. I’m intensely sensitive to form. But sometimes I draw back—don’t you see what I mean?—I don’t quite see where I shall be landed. I only want to be quiet, after all,” Miss Ambient continued as if she had long been baffled of this modest desire. “And one must be good, at any rate, must not one?” she pursued with a dubious quaver—an intimation apparently that what I might say one way or the other would settle it for her. It was difficult for me to be very original in reply, and I’m afraid I repaid her confidence with an unblushing platitude. I remember, moreover, attaching to it an inquiry, equally destitute of freshness and still more wanting perhaps in tact, as to whether she didn’t mean to go to church, since that was an obvious way of being good. She made answer that she had performed this duty in the morning, and that for her, of Sunday afternoons, supreme virtue consisted in answering the week’s letters. Then suddenly and without transition she brought out: “It’s quite a mistake about Dolcino’s being better. I’ve seen him and he’s not at all right.”

I wondered, and somehow I think I scarcely believed. “Surely his mother would know, wouldn’t she?”

She appeared for a moment to be counting the leaves on one of the great beeches. “As regards most matters one can easily say what, in a given situation, my sister-in-law will, or would, do. But in the present case there are strange elements at work.”

“Strange elements? Do you mean in the constitution of the child?”

“No, I mean in my sister-in-law’s feelings.”

“Elements of affection of course; elements of anxiety,” I concurred. “But why do you call them strange?”

She repeated my words. “Elements of affection, elements of anxiety. She’s very anxious.”

Miss Ambient put me indescribably ill at ease; she almost scared me, and I wished she would go and write her letters. "His father will have seen him now," I said, "and if he's not satisfied he will send for the doctor."

"The doctor ought to have been here this morning," she promptly returned. "He lives only two miles away."

I reflected that all this was very possibly but a part of the general tragedy of Miss Ambient's view of things; yet I asked her why she hadn't urged that view on her sister-in-law. She answered me with a smile of extraordinary significance and observed that I must have very little idea of her "peculiar" relations with Beatrice; but I must do her the justice that she re-enforced this a little by the plea that any distinguishable alarm of Mark's was ground enough for a difference of his wife's. He was always nervous about the child, and as they were predestined by nature to take opposite views, the only thing for the mother was to cultivate a false optimism. In Mark's absence and that of his betrayed fear she would have been less easy. I remembered what he had said to me about their dealings with their son—that between them they'd probably put an end to him; but I didn't repeat this to Miss Ambient: the less so that just then her brother emerged from the house, carrying the boy in his arms. Close behind him moved his wife, grave and pale; the little sick face was turned over Ambient's shoulder and toward the mother. We rose to receive the group, and as they came near us Dolcino twisted himself about. His enchanting eyes showed me a smile of recognition, in which, for the moment, I should have taken a due degree of comfort. Miss Ambient, however, received another impression, and I make haste to say that her quick sensibility, which visibly went out to the child, argues that in spite of her affectations she might have been of some human use. "It won't do at all—it won't do at all," she said to me under her breath. "I shall speak to Mark about the Doctor."

Her small nephew was rather white, but the main difference I saw in him was that he was even more beautiful than the day before. He had been dressed in his festal garments—a velvet suit and a crimson sash—and he looked like a little invalid prince too young to know condescension and smiling familiarly on his subjects.

"Put him down, Mark, he's not a bit at his ease," Mrs. Ambient said.

"Should you like to stand on your feet, my boy?" his father asked.

He made a motion that quickly responded. "Oh yes; I'm remarkably well."

Mark placed him on the ground; he had shining pointed shoes with enormous bows. "Are you happy now, Mr. Ambient?"

"Oh yes, I'm particularly happy," Dolcino replied. But the words were scarce out of his mouth when his mother caught him up and, in a moment, holding him on her knees, took her place on the bench where Miss Ambient and I had been sitting. This young lady said something to her brother, in consequence of which the two wandered away into the garden together.

IV

I remained with Mrs. Ambient, but as a servant had brought out a couple of chairs I wasn't obliged to seat myself beside her. Our conversation failed of ease, and I, for my part, felt there would be a shade of hypocrisy in my now trying to make myself agreeable to the partner of my friend's existence. I didn't dislike her—I rather admired her; but I was aware that I differed from her inexpressibly. Then I suspected, what I afterwards definitely knew and have already intimated, that the poor lady felt small taste for her husband's so undisguised disciple; and this of course was not encouraging. She thought me an obtrusive

and designing, even perhaps a depraved, young man whom a perverse Providence had dropped upon their quiet lawn to flatter his worst tendencies. She did me the honour to say to Miss Ambient, who repeated the speech, that she didn't know when she had seen their companion take such a fancy to a visitor; and she measured apparently my evil influence by Mark's appreciation of my society. I had a consciousness, not oppressive but quite sufficient, of all this; though I must say that if it chilled my flow of small-talk it yet didn't prevent my thinking the beautiful mother and beautiful child, interlaced there against their background of roses, a picture such as I doubtless shouldn't soon see again. I was free, I supposed, to go into the house and write letters, to sit in the drawing-room, to repair to my own apartment and take a nap; but the only use I made of my freedom was to linger still in my chair and say to myself that the light hand of Sir Joshua might have painted Mark Ambient's wife and son. I found myself looking perpetually at the latter small mortal, who looked constantly back at me, and that was enough to detain me. With these vaguely-amused eyes he smiled, and I felt it an absolute impossibility to abandon a child with such an expression. His attention never strayed; it attached itself to my face as if among all the small incipient things of his nature throbbed a desire to say something to me. If I could have taken him on my own knee he perhaps would have managed to say it; but it would have been a critical matter to ask his mother to give him up, and it has remained a constant regret for me that on that strange Sunday afternoon I didn't even for a moment hold Dolcino in my arms. He had said he felt remarkably well and was especially happy; but though peace may have been with him as he pillowed his charming head on his mother's breast, dropping his little crimson silk legs from her lap, I somehow didn't think security was. He made no attempt to walk about; he was content to swing his legs softly and strike one as languid and angelic.

Mark returned to us with his sister; and Miss Ambient, repeating her mention of the claims of her correspondence, passed into the house. Mark came and stood in front of his wife, looking down at the child, who immediately took hold of his hand and kept it while he stayed. "I think Mackintosh ought to see him," he said; "I think I'll walk over and fetch him."

"That's Gwendolen's idea, I suppose," Mrs. Ambient replied very sweetly.

"It's not such an out-of-the-way idea when one's child's ill," he returned.

"I'm not ill, papa; I'm much better now," sounded in the boy's silver pipe.

"Is that the truth, or are you only saying it to be agreeable? You've a great idea of being agreeable, you know."

The child seemed to meditate on this distinction, this imputation, for a moment; then his exaggerated eyes, which had wandered, caught my own as I watched him. "Do *you* think me agreeable?" he inquired with the candour of his age and with a look that made his father turn round to me laughing and ask, without saying it, "Isn't he adorable?"

"Then why don't you hop about, if you feel so lusty?" Ambient went on while his son swung his hand.

"Because mamma's holding me close!"

"Oh yes; I know how mamma holds you when I come near!" cried Mark with a grimace at his wife.

She turned her charming eyes up to him without deprecation or concession. "You can go for Mackintosh if you like. I think myself it would be better. You ought to drive."

"She says that to get me away," he put to me with a gaiety that I thought a little false; after which he started for the Doctor's.

I remained there with Mrs. Ambient, though even our exchange of twaddle had run very thin. The boy's little fixed white face seemed, as before, to plead with me to stay, and after a while it produced still another effect, a very curious one, which I shall find it difficult to express. Of course I expose myself to the charge of an attempt to justify by a strained logic after the fact a step which may have been on my part but the fruit of a native want of discretion; and indeed the traceable consequences of that perversity were too lamentable to leave me any desire to trifle with the question. All I can say is that I acted in perfect good faith and that Dolcino's friendly little gaze gradually kindled the spark of my inspiration. What helped it to glow were the other influences—the silent suggestive garden-nook, the perfect opportunity (if it was not an opportunity for that it was an opportunity for nothing) and the plea I speak of, which issued from the child's eyes and seemed to make him say: "The mother who bore me and who presses me here to her bosom—sympathetic little organism that I am—has really the kind of sensibility she has been represented to you as lacking, if you only look for it patiently and respectfully. How is it conceivable she shouldn't have it? How is it possible that *I* should have so much of it—for I'm quite full of it, dear strange gentleman—if it weren't also in some degree in her? I'm my great father's child, but I'm also my beautiful mother's, and I'm sorry for the difference between them!" So it shaped itself before me, the vision of reconciling Mrs. Ambient with her husband, of putting an end to their ugly difference. The project was absurd of course, for had I not had his word for it—spoken with all the bitterness of experience—that the gulf dividing them was well-nigh bottomless? Nevertheless, a quarter of an hour after Mark had left us, I observed to my hostess that I couldn't get over what she had told me the night before about her thinking her husband's compositions "objectionable." I had been so very sorry to hear it, had thought of it constantly and wondered whether it mightn't be possible to make her change her mind. She gave me a great cold stare, meant apparently as an admonition to me to mind my business. I wish I had taken this mute counsel, but I didn't take it. I went on to remark that it seemed an immense pity so much that was interesting should be lost on her.

"Nothing's lost upon me," she said in a tone that didn't make the contradiction less. "I know they're very interesting."

"Don't you like papa's books?" Dolcino asked, addressing his mother but still looking at me. Then he added to me: "Won't you read them to me, American gentleman?"

"I'd rather tell you some stories of my own," I said. "I know some that are awfully good."

"When will you tell them? To-morrow?"

"To-morrow with pleasure, if that suits you."

His mother took this in silence. Her husband, during our walk, had asked me to remain another day; my promise to her son was an implication that I had consented, and it wasn't possible the news could please her. This ought doubtless to have made me more careful as to what I said next, but all I can plead is that it didn't. I soon mentioned that just after leaving her the evening before, and after hearing her apply to her husband's writings the epithet already quoted, I had on going up to my room sat down to the perusal of those sheets of his new book that he had been so good as to lend me. I had sat entranced till nearly three in the morning—I had read them twice over. "You say you haven't looked at them. I think it's such a pity you shouldn't. Do let me beg you to take them up. They're so very remarkable. I'm sure they'll convert you. They place him in—really—such a dazzling light. All that's best in him is there. I've no doubt it's a great liberty, my saying all this; but pardon me, and *do* read them!"

"Do read them, mamma!" the boy again sweetly shrilled. "Do read them!"

She bent her head and closed his lips with a kiss. "Of course I know he has worked immensely over them," she said; after which she made no remark, but attached her eyes thoughtfully to the ground. The tone of these last words was such as to leave me no spirit for further pressure, and after hinting at a fear that her husband mightn't have caught the Doctor I got up and took a turn about the grounds. When I came back ten minutes later she was still in her place watching her boy, who had fallen asleep in her lap. As I drew near she put her finger to her lips and a short time afterwards rose, holding him; it being now best, she said, that she should take him upstairs. I offered to carry him and opened my arms for the purpose; but she thanked me and turned away with the child still in her embrace, his head on her shoulder. "I'm very strong," was her last word as she passed into the house, her slim flexible figure bent backward with the filial weight. So I never laid a longing hand on Dolcino.

I betook myself to Ambient's study, delighted to have a quiet hour to look over his books by myself. The windows were open to the garden; the sunny stillness, the mild light of the English summer, filled the room without quite chasing away the rich dusky tone that was a part of its charm and that abode in the serried shelves where old morocco exhaled the fragrance of curious learning, as well as in the brighter intervals where prints and medals and miniatures were suspended on a surface of faded stuff. The place had both colour and quiet; I thought it a perfect room for work and went so far as to say to myself that, if it were mine to sit and scribble in, there was no knowing but I might learn to write as well as the author of "Beltraffio." This distinguished man still didn't reappear, and I rummaged freely among his treasures. At last I took down a book that detained me a while and seated myself in a fine old leather chair by the window to turn it over. I had been occupied in this way for half an hour—a good part of the afternoon had waned—when I became conscious of another presence in the room and, looking up from my quarto, saw that Mrs. Ambient, having pushed open the door quite again in the same noiseless way marking or disguising her entrance the night before, had advanced across the threshold. On seeing me she stopped; she had not, I think, expected to find me. But her hesitation was only of a moment; she came straight to her husband's writing-table as if she were looking for something. I got up and asked her if I could help her. She glanced about an instant and then put her hand upon a roll of papers which I recognised, as I had placed it on that spot at the early hour of my descent from my room.

"Is this the new book?" she asked, holding it up.

"The very sheets," I smiled; "with precious annotations."

"I mean to take your advice"—and she tucked the little bundle under her arm. I congratulated her cordially and ventured to make of my triumph, as I presumed to call it, a subject of pleasantry. But she was perfectly grave and turned away from me, as she had presented herself, without relaxing her rigour; after which I settled down to my quarto again with the reflexion that Mrs. Ambient was truly an eccentric. My triumph, too, suddenly seemed to me rather vain. A woman who couldn't unbend at a moment exquisitely indicated would never understand Mark Ambient. He came back to us at last in person, having brought the Doctor with him. "He was away from home," Mark said, "and I went after him to where he was supposed to be. He had left the place, and I followed him to two or three others, which accounts for my delay." He was now with Mrs. Ambient, looking at the child, and was to see Mark again before leaving the house. My host noticed at the end of two minutes that the proof-sheets of his new book had been removed from the table; and when I told him, in reply to his question as to what I knew about them, that Mrs. Ambient had carried them off to read he turned almost pale with surprise. "What has suddenly made her so curious?" he cried; and I was obliged to tell him that I was at the bottom of the mystery. I had had it on

my conscience to assure her that she really ought to know of what her husband was capable. "Of what I'm capable? Elle ne s'en doute que trop!" said Ambient with a laugh; but he took my meddling very good-naturedly and contented himself with adding that he was really much afraid she would burn up the sheets, his emendations and all, of which latter he had no duplicate. The Doctor paid a long visit in the nursery, and before he came down I retired to my own quarters, where I remained till dinner-time. On entering the drawing-room at this hour I found Miss Ambient in possession, as she had been the evening before.

"I was right about Dolcino," she said, as soon as she saw me, with an air of triumph that struck me as the climax of perversity. "He's really very ill."

"Very ill! Why when I last saw him, at four o'clock, he was in fairly good form."

"There has been a change for the worse, very sudden and rapid, and when the Doctor got here he found diphtheritic symptoms. He ought to have been called, as I knew, in the morning, and the child oughtn't to have been brought into the garden."

"My dear lady, he was very happy there," I protested with horror.

"He would be very happy anywhere. I've no doubt he's very happy now, with his poor little temperature—!" She dropped her voice as her brother came in, and Mark let us know that as a matter of course Mrs. Ambient wouldn't appear. It was true the boy had developed diphtheritic symptoms, but he was quiet for the present and his mother earnestly watching him. She was a perfect nurse, Mark said, and Mackintosh would come back at ten. Our dinner wasn't very gay—with my host worried and absent; and his sister annoyed me by her constant tacit assumption, conveyed in the very way she nibbled her bread and sipped her wine, of having "told me so." I had had no disposition to deny anything she might have told me, and I couldn't see that her satisfaction in being justified by the event relieved her little nephew's condition. The truth is that, as the sequel was to prove, Miss Ambient had some of the qualities of the sibyl and had therefore perhaps a right to the sibylline contortions. Her brother was so preoccupied that I felt my presence an indiscretion and was sorry I had promised to remain over the morrow. I put it to Mark that clearly I had best leave them in the morning; to which he replied that, on the contrary, if he was to pass the next days in the fidgets my company would distract his attention. The fidgets had already begun for him, poor fellow; and as we sat in his study with our cigars after dinner he wandered to the door whenever he heard the sound of the Doctor's wheels. Miss Ambient, who shared this apartment with us, gave me at such moments significant glances; she had before rejoining us gone upstairs to ask about the child. His mother and his nurse gave a fair report, but Miss Ambient found his fever high and his symptoms very grave. The Doctor came at ten o'clock, and I went to bed after hearing from Mark that he saw no present cause for alarm. He had made every provision for the night and was to return early in the morning.

I quitted my room as eight struck the next day and when I came downstairs saw, through the open door of the house, Mrs. Ambient standing at the front gate of the grounds in colloquy with Mackintosh. She wore a white dressing-gown, but her shining hair was carefully tucked away in its net, and in the morning freshness, after a night of watching, she looked as much "the type of the lady" as her sister-in-law had described her. Her appearance, I suppose, ought to have reassured me; but I was still nervous and uneasy, so that I shrank from meeting her with the necessary challenge. None the less, however, was I impatient to learn how the new day found him; and as Mrs. Ambient hadn't seen me I passed into the grounds by a roundabout way and, stopping at a further gate, hailed the Doctor just as he was driving off. Mrs. Ambient had returned to the house before he got into his cart.

"Pardon me, but as a friend of the family I should like very much to hear about the little boy."

The stout sharp circumspect man looked at me from head to foot and then said: "I'm sorry to say I haven't seen him."

"Haven't seen him?"

"Mrs. Ambient came down to meet me as I alighted, and told me he was sleeping so soundly, after a restless night, that she didn't wish him disturbed. I assured her I wouldn't disturb him, but she said he was quite safe now and she could look after him herself."

"Thank you very much. Are you coming back?"

"No, sir; I'll be hanged if I come back!" cried the honest practitioner in high resentment. And the horse started as he settled beside his man.

I wandered back into the garden, and five minutes later Miss Ambient came forth from the house to greet me. She explained that breakfast wouldn't be served for some time and that she desired a moment herself with the Doctor. I let her know that the good vexed man had come and departed, and I repeated to her what he had told me about his dismissal. This made Miss Ambient very serious, very serious indeed, and she sank into a bench, with dilated eyes, hugging her elbows with crossed arms. She indulged in many strange signs, she confessed herself immensely distressed, and she finally told me what her own last news of her nephew had been. She had sat up very late—after me, after Mark—and before going to bed had knocked at the door of the child's room, opened to her by the nurse. This good woman had admitted her and she had found him quiet, but flushed and "unnatural," with his mother sitting by his bed. "She held his hand in one of hers," said Miss Ambient, "and in the other—what do you think?—the proof-sheets of Mark's new book!" She was reading them there intently: "did you ever hear of anything so extraordinary? Such a very odd time to be reading an author whom she never could abide!" In her agitation Miss Ambient was guilty of this vulgarism of speech, and I was so impressed by her narrative that only in recalling her words later did I notice the lapse. Mrs. Ambient had looked up from her reading with her finger on her lips—I recognised the gesture she had addressed me in the afternoon—and, though the nurse was about to go to rest, had not encouraged her sister-in-law to relieve her of any part of her vigil. But certainly at that time the boy's state was far from reassuring—his poor little breathing so painful; and what change could have taken place in him in those few hours that would justify Beatrice in denying Mackintosh access? This was the moral of Miss Ambient's anecdote, the moral for herself at least. The moral for me, rather, was that it *was* a very singular time for Mrs. Ambient to be going into a novelist she had never appreciated and who had simply happened to be recommended to her by a young American she disliked. I thought of her sitting there in the sick-chamber in the still hours of the night and after the nurse had left her, turning and turning those pages of genius and wrestling with their magical influence.

I must be sparing of the minor facts and the later emotions of this sojourn—it lasted but a few hours longer—and devote but three words to my subsequent relations with Ambient. They lasted five years—till his death—and were full of interest, of satisfaction and, I may add, of sadness. The main thing to be said of these years is that I had a secret from him which I guarded to the end. I believe he never suspected it, though of this I'm not absolutely sure. If he had so much as an inkling the line he had taken, the line of absolute negation of the matter to himself, shows an immense effort of the will. I may at last lay bare my secret, giving it for what it is worth; now that the main sufferer has gone, that he has begun to be alluded to as one of the famous early dead and that his wife has ceased to survive him; now, too, that Miss Ambient, whom I also saw at intervals during the time that followed, has, with her embroideries and her attitudes, her necromantic glances and strange intuitions, retired to a Sisterhood, where, as I am told, she is deeply immured and quite lost to the world.

Mark came in to breakfast after this lady and I had for some time been seated there. He shook hands with me in silence, kissed my companion, opened his letters and newspapers and pretended to drink his coffee. But I took these movements for mechanical and was little surprised when he suddenly pushed away everything that was before him and, with his head in his hands and his elbows on the table, sat staring strangely at the cloth.

“What’s the matter, *caro fratello mio*?” Miss Ambient quavered, peeping from behind the urn.

He answered nothing, but got up with a certain violence and strode to the window. We rose to our feet, his relative and I, by a common impulse, exchanging a glance of some alarm; and he continued to stare into the garden. “In heaven’s name what has got possession of Beatrice?” he cried at last, turning round on us a ravaged face. He looked from one of us to the other—the appeal was addressed to us alike.

Miss Ambient gave a shrug. “My poor Mark, Beatrice is always—Beatrice!”

“She has locked herself up with the boy—bolted and barred the door. She refuses to let me come near him!” he went on.

“She refused to let Mackintosh see him an hour ago!” Miss Ambient promptly returned.

“Refused to let Mackintosh see him? By heaven I’ll smash in the door!” And Mark brought his fist down upon the sideboard, which he had now approached, so that all the breakfast-service rang.

I begged Miss Ambient to go up and try to have speech of her sister-in-law, and I drew Mark out into the garden. “You’re exceedingly nervous, and Mrs. Ambient’s probably right,” I there undertook to plead. “Women know; women should be supreme in such a situation. Trust a mother—a devoted mother, my dear friend!” With such words as these I tried to soothe and comfort him, and, marvellous to relate, I succeeded, with the help of many cigarettes, in making him walk about the garden and talk, or suffer me at least to do so, for near an hour. When about that time had elapsed his sister reappeared, reaching us rapidly and with a convulsed face while she held her hand to her heart.

“Go for the Doctor, Mark—go for the Doctor this moment!”

“Is he dying? Has she killed him?” my poor friend cried, flinging away his cigarette.

“I don’t know what she has done! But she’s frightened, and now she wants the Doctor.”

“He told me he’d be hanged if he came back!” I felt myself obliged to mention.

“Precisely—therefore Mark himself must go for him, and not a messenger. You must see him and tell him it’s to save your child. The trap has been ordered—it’s ready.”

“To save him? I’ll save him, please God!” Ambient cried, bounding with his great strides across the lawn.

As soon as he had gone I felt I ought to have volunteered in his place, and I said as much to Miss Ambient; but she checked me by grasping my arm while we heard the wheels of the dog-cart rattle away from the gate. “He’s off—he’s off—and now I can think! To get him away—while I think—while I think!”

“While you think of what, Miss Ambient?”

“Of the unspeakable thing that has happened under this roof!”

Her manner was habitually that of such a prophetess of ill that I at first allowed for some great extravagance. But I looked at her hard, and the next thing felt myself turn white. “*Dolcino is dying then—he’s dead?*”

“It’s too late to save him. His mother has let him die! I tell you that because you’re sympathetic, because you’ve imagination,” Miss Ambient was good enough to add, interrupting my expression of horror. “That’s why you had the idea of making her read Mark’s new book!”

“What has that to do with it? I don’t understand you. Your accusation’s monstrous.”

“I see it all—I’m not stupid,” she went on, heedless of my emphasis. “It was the book that finished her—it was that decided her!”

“Decided her? Do you mean she has murdered her child?” I demanded, trembling at my own words.

“She sacrificed him; she determined to do nothing to make him live. Why else did she lock herself in, why else did she turn away the Doctor? The book gave her a horror; she determined to rescue him—to prevent him from ever being touched. He had a crisis at two o’clock in the morning. I know that from the nurse, who had left her then, but whom, for a short time, she called back. The darling got much worse, but she insisted on the nurse’s going back to bed, and after that she was alone with him for hours.”

I listened with a dread that stayed my credence, while she stood there with her tearless glare. “Do you pretend then she has no pity, that she’s cruel and insane?”

“She held him in her arms, she pressed him to her breast, not to see him; but she gave him no remedies; she did nothing the Doctor ordered. Everything’s there untouched. She has had the honesty not even to throw the drugs away!”

I dropped upon the nearest bench, overcome with my dismay—quite as much at Miss Ambient’s horrible insistence and distinctness as at the monstrous meaning of her words. Yet they came amazingly straight, and if they did have a sense I saw myself too woefully figure in it. Had I been then a proximate cause—? “You’re a very strange woman and you say incredible things,” I could only reply.

She had one of her tragic headshakes. “You think it necessary to protest, but you’re really quite ready to believe me. You’ve received an impression of my sister-in-law—you’ve guessed of what she’s capable.”

I don’t feel bound to say what concession on this score I made to Miss Ambient, who went on to relate to me that within the last half-hour Beatrice had had a revulsion, that she was tremendously frightened at what she had done; that her fright itself betrayed her; and that she would now give heaven and earth to save the child. “Let us hope she will!” I said, looking at my watch and trying to time poor Ambient; whereupon my companion repeated all portentously “Let us hope so!” When I asked her if she herself could do nothing, and whether she oughtn’t to be with her sister-in-law, she replied: “You had better go and judge! She’s like a wounded tigress!”

I never saw Mrs. Ambient till six months after this, and therefore can’t pretend to have verified the comparison. At the latter period she was again the type of the perfect lady. “She’ll treat him better after this,” I remember her sister-in-law’s saying in response to some quick outburst, on my part, of compassion for her brother. Though I had been in the house but thirty-six hours this young lady had treated me with extraordinary confidence, and there was therefore a certain demand I might, as such an intimate, make of her. I extracted

from her a pledge that she'd never say to her brother what she had just said to me, that she'd let him form his own theory of his wife's conduct. She agreed with me that there was misery enough in the house without her contributing a new anguish, and that Mrs. Ambient's proceedings might be explained, to her husband's mind, by the extravagance of a jealous devotion. Poor Mark came back with the Doctor much sooner than we could have hoped, but we knew five minutes afterwards that it was all too late. His sole, his adored little son was more exquisitely beautiful in death than he had been in life. Mrs. Ambient's grief was frantic; she lost her head and said strange things. As for Mark's—but I won't speak of that. *Basta, basta*, as he used to say. Miss Ambient kept her secret—I've already had occasion to say that she had her good points—but it rankled in her conscience like a guilty participation and, I imagine, had something to do with her ultimately retiring from the world. And, apropos of consciences, the reader is now in a position to judge of my compunction for my effort to convert my cold hostess. I ought to mention that the death of her child in some degree converted her. When the new book came out (it was long delayed) she read it over as a whole, and her husband told me that during the few supreme weeks before her death—she failed rapidly after losing her son, sank into a consumption and faded away at Mentone—she even dipped into the black “Beltraffio.”

Georgina's Reasons

PART I.

I.

She was certainly a singular girl, and if he felt at the end that he didn't know her nor understand her, it is not surprising that he should have felt it at the beginning. But he felt at the beginning what he did not feel at the end, that her singularity took the form of a charm which—once circumstances had made them so intimate—it was impossible to resist or conjure away. He had a strange impression (it amounted at times to a positive distress, and shot through the sense of pleasure—morally speaking—with the acuteness of a sudden twinge of neuralgia) that it would be better for each of them that they should break off short and never see each other again. In later years he called this feeling a foreboding, and remembered two or three occasions when he had been on the point of expressing it to Georgina. Of course, in fact, he never expressed it; there were plenty of good reasons for that. Happy love is not disposed to assume disagreeable duties, and Raymond Benyon's love was happy, in spite of grave presentiments, in spite of the singularity of his mistress and the insufferable rudeness of her parents. She was a tall, fair girl, with a beautiful cold eye and a smile of which the perfect sweetness, proceeding from the lips, was full of compensation; she had auburn hair of a hue that could be qualified as nothing less than gorgeous, and she seemed to move through life with a stately grace, as she would have walked through an old-fashioned minuet. Gentlemen connected with the navy have the advantage of seeing many types of women; they are able to compare the ladies of New York with those of Valparaiso, and those of Halifax with those of the Cape of Good Hope. Eaymond Benyon had had these advantages, and being very fond of women he had learnt his lesson; he was in a position to appreciate Georgina Gressie's fine points. She looked like a duchess,—I don't mean that in foreign ports Benyon had associated with duchesses,—and she took everything so seriously. That was flattering for the young man, who was only a lieutenant, detailed for duty at the Brooklyn navy-yard, without a penny in the world but his pay, with a set of plain, numerous, seafaring, God-fearing relations in New Hampshire, a considerable appearance of talent, a feverish, disguised ambition, and a slight impediment in his speech.

He was a spare, tough young man, his dark hair was straight and fine, and his face, a trifle pale, was smooth and carefully drawn. He stammered a little, blushing when he did so, at long intervals. I scarcely know how he appeared on shipboard, but on shore, in his civilian's garb, which was of the neatest, he had as little as possible an aroma of winds and waves. He was neither salt nor brown, nor red, nor particularly "hearty." He never twitched up his trousers, nor, so far as one could see, did he, with his modest, attentive manner, carry himself as one accustomed to command. Of course, as a subaltern, he had more to do in the way of obeying. He looked as if he followed some sedentary calling, and was, indeed, supposed to be decidedly intellectual. He was a lamb with women, to whose charms he was, as I have hinted, susceptible; but with men he was different, and, I believe, as much of a wolf as was necessary. He had a manner of adoring the handsome, insolent queen of his affections (I will explain in a moment why I call her insolent); indeed, he looked up to her literally as well as sentimentally; for she was the least bit the taller of the two. He had met her the summer before, on the piazza of a hotel at Fort Hamilton, to which, with a brother officer, in a dusty buggy, he had driven over from Brooklyn to spend a tremendously hot Sunday,—the kind of day when the navy-yard was loathsome; and the acquaintance had been renewed by his calling in Twelfth Street on New-Year's Day,—a considerable time to wait for a pretext, but

which proved the impression had not been transitory. The acquaintance ripened, thanks to a zealous cultivation (on his part) of occasions which Providence, it must be confessed, placed at his disposal none too liberally; so that now Georgina took up all his thoughts and a considerable part of his time. He was in love with her, beyond a doubt; but he could not flatter himself that she was in love with him, though she appeared willing (what was so strange) to quarrel with her family about him. He didn't see how she could really care for him,—she seemed marked out by nature for so much greater a fortune; and he used to say to her, “Ah, you don't—there's no use talking, you don't—really care for me at all!” To which she answered, “Really? You are very particular. It seems to me it's real enough if I let you touch one of my fingertips!” “That was one of her ways of being insolent. Another was simply her manner of looking at him, or at other people (when they spoke to her), with her hard, divine blue eye,—looking quietly, amusedly, with the air of considering (wholly from her own point of view) what they might have said, and then turning her head or her back, while, without taking the trouble to answer them, she broke into a short, liquid, irrelevant laugh. This may seem to contradict what I said just now about her taking the young lieutenant in the navy seriously. What I mean is that she appeared to take him more seriously than she took anything else. She said to him once, “At any rate you have the merit of not being a shop-keeper;” and it was by this epithet she was pleased to designate most of the young men who at that time flourished in the best society of New York. Even if she had rather a free way of expressing general indifference, a young lady is supposed to be serious enough when she consents to marry you. For the rest, as regards a certain haughtiness that might be observed in Geoigina Gressie, my story will probably throw sufficient light upon it. She remarked to Benyon once that it was none of his business why she liked him, but that, to please herself, she didn't mind telling him she thought the great Napoleon, before he was celebrated, before he had command of the army of Italy, must have looked something like him; and she sketched in a few words the sort of figure she imagined the incipient Bonaparte to have been,—short, lean, pale, poor, intellectual, and with a tremendous future under his hat. Benyon asked himself whether *he* had a tremendous future, and what in the world Geoigina expected of him in the coming years. He was flattered at the comparison, he was ambitious enough not to be frightened at it, and he guessed that she perceived a certain analogy between herself and the Empress Josephine. She would make a very good empress. That was true; Georgina was remarkably imperial. This may not at first seem to make it more clear why she should take into her favor an aspirant who, on the face of the matter, was not original, and whose Corsica was a flat New England seaport; but it afterward became plain that he owed his brief happiness—it was very brief—to her father's opposition; her father's and her mother's, and even her uncles' and her aunts'. In those days, in New York, the different members of a family took an interest in its alliances, and the house of Gressie looked askance at an engagement between the most beautiful of its daughters and a young man who was not in a paying business. Georgina declared that they were meddling and vulgar,—she could sacrifice her own people, in that way, without a scruple,—and Benyon's position improved from the moment that Mr. Gressie—ill-advised Mr. Gressie—ordered the girl to have nothing to do with him. Georgina was imperial in this—that she wouldn't put up with an order. When, in the house in Twelfth Street, it began to be talked about that she had better be sent to Europe with some eligible friend, Mrs. Portico, for instance, who was always planning to go, and who wanted as a companion some young mind, fresh from manuals and extracts, to serve as a fountain of history and geography,—when this scheme for getting Georgina out of the way began to be aired, she immediately said to Raymond Benyon, “Oh, yes, I 'll marry you!” She said it in such an off-hand way that, deeply as he desired her, he was almost tempted to answer, “But, my dear, have you really thought about it?”

This little drama went on, in New York, in the ancient days, when Twelfth Street had but lately ceased to be suburban, when the squares had wooden palings, which were not often painted; when there were poplars in important thoroughfares and pigs in the lateral ways; when the theatres were miles distant from Madison Square, and the battered rotunda of Castle Garden echoed with expensive vocal music; when “the park” meant the grass-plats of the city hall, and the Bloomingdale road was an eligible drive; when Hoboken, of a summer afternoon, was a genteel resort, and the handsomest house in town was on the corner of the Fifth Avenue and Fifteenth Street. This will strike the modern reader, I fear, as rather a primitive epoch; but I am not sure that the strength of human passions is in proportion to the elongation of a city. Several of them, at any rate, the most robust and most familiar,—love, ambition, jealousy, resentment, greed,—subsisted in considerable force in the little circle at which we have glanced, where a view by no means favorable was taken of Raymond Benyon’s attentions to Miss Gressie. Unanimity was a family trait among these people (Georgina was an exception), especially in regard to the important concerns of life, such as marriages and closing scenes. The Gressies hung together; they were accustomed to do well for themselves and for each other. They did everything well: got themselves born well (they thought it excellent to be born a Gressie), lived well, married well, died well, and managed to be well spoken of afterward. In deference to this last-mentioned habit, I must be careful what I say of them. They took an interest in each other’s concerns, an interest that could never be regarded as of a meddling nature, inasmuch as they all thought alike about all their affairs, and interference took the happy form of congratulation and encouragement. These affairs were invariably lucky, and, as a general thing, no Gressie had anything to do but feel that another Gressie had been almost as shrewd and decided as he himself would have been. The great exception to that, as I have said, was this case of Georgina, who struck such a false note, a note that startled them all, when she told her father that she should like to unite herself to a young man engaged in the least paying business that any Gressie had ever heard of. Her two sisters had married into the most flourishing firms, and it was not to be thought of that—with twenty cousins growing up around her—she should put down the standard of success. Her mother had told her a fortnight before this that she must request Mr. Benyon to cease coming to the house; for hitherto his suit had been of the most public and resolute character. He had been conveyed up town from the Brooklyn ferry, in the “stage,” on certain evenings, had asked for Miss Georgina at the door of the house in Twelfth Street, and had sat with her in the front parlor if her parents happened to occupy the back, or in the back if the family had disposed itself in the front. Georgina, in her way, was a dutiful girl, and she immediately repeated her mother’s admonition to Benyon. He was not surprised, for though he was aware that he had not, as yet, a great knowledge of society, he flattered himself he could tell when—and where—a young man was not wanted. There were houses in Brooklyn where such an animal was much appreciated, and there the signs were quite different. They had been discouraging—except on Georgina’s pail—from the first of his calling in Twelfth Street. Mr. and Mrs. Gressie used to look at each other in silence when he came in, and indulge in strange, perpendicular salutations, without any shaking of hands. People did that at Portsmouth, N.H., when they were glad to see you; but in New York there was more luxuriance, and gesture had a different value. He had never, in Twelfth Street, been asked to “take anything,” though the house had a delightful suggestion, a positive aroma, of sideboards,—as if there were mahogany “cellarettes” under every table. The old people, moreover, had repeatedly expressed surprise at the quantity of leisure that officers in the navy seemed to enjoy. The only way in which they had not made themselves offensive was by always remaining in the other room; though at times even this detachment, to which he owed some delightful moments, presented itself to Benyon as a form of disapprobation. Of course, after Mrs. Gressie’s message, his visits were practically at an end; he wouldn’t give the girl

up, but he wouldn't be beholden to her father for the opportunity to converse with her. Nothing was left for the tender couple—there was a curious mutual mistrust in their tenderness—but to meet in the squares, or in the topmost streets, or in the sidemost avenues, on the afternoons of spring. It was especially during this phase of their relations that Georgina struck Benyon as imperial. Her whole person seemed to exhale a tranquil, happy consciousness of having broken a law. She never told him how she arranged the matter at home, how she found it possible always to keep the appointments (to meet him out of the house) that she so boldly made, in what degree she dissimulated to her parents, and how much, in regard to their continued acquaintance, the old people suspected and accepted. If Mr. and Mrs. Gressie had forbidden him the house, it was not, apparently, because they wished her to walk with him in the Tenth Avenue or to sit at his side under the blossoming lilacs in Stuyvesant Square. He didn't believe that she told lies in Twelfth Street; he thought she was too imperial to lie; and he wondered what she said to her mother when, at the end of nearly a whole afternoon of vague peregrination with her lover, this bridling, bristling matron asked her where she had been. Georgina was capable of simply telling the truth; and yet if she simply told the truth, it was a wonder that she had not been simply packed off to Europe.

Benyon's ignorance of her pretexts is a proof that this rather oddly-mated couple never arrived at perfect intimacy,—in spite of a fact which remains to be related. He thought of this afterwards, and thought how strange it was that he had not felt more at liberty to ask her what she did for him, and how she did it, and how much she suffered for him. She would probably not have admitted that she suffered at all, and she had no wish to pose for a martyr. Benyon remembered this, as I say, in the after years, when he tried to explain to himself certain things which simply puzzled him; it came back to him with the vision, already faded, of shabby cross-streets, straggling toward rivers, with red sunsets, seen through a haze of dust, at the end; a vista through which the figures of a young man and a girl slowly receded and disappeared,—strolling side by side, with the relaxed pace of desultory talk, but more closely linked as they passed into the distance, linked by its at last appearing safe to them—in the Tenth Avenue—that the young lady should take his arm. They were always approaching that inferior thoroughfare; but he could scarcely have told you, in those days, what else they were approaching. He had nothing in the world but his pay, and he felt that this was rather a "mean" income to offer Miss Gressie. Therefore he didn't put it forward; what he offered, instead, was the expression—crude often, and almost boyishly extravagant—of a delighted admiration of her beauty, the tenderest tones of his voice, the softest assurances of his eye and the most insinuating pressure of her hand at those moments when she consented to place it in his arm. All this was an eloquence which, if necessary, might have been condensed into a single sentence; but those few words were scarcely needful, when it was as plain that he expected—in general—she would marry him, as it was indefinite that he counted upon her for living on a few hundreds a year. If she had been a different girl he might have asked her to wait,—might have talked to her of the coming of better days, of his prospective promotion, of its being wiser, perhaps, that he should leave the navy and look about for a more lucrative career. With Georgina it was difficult to go into such questions; she had no taste whatever for detail. She was delightful as a woman to love, because when a young man is in love he discovers that; but she could not be called helpful, for she never suggested anything. That is, she never had done so till the day she really proposed—for that was the form it took—to become his wife without more delay. "Oh, yes, I will marry you;" these words, which I quoted a little way back, were not so much the answer to something he had said at the moment, as the light conclusion of a report she had just made, for the first time, of her actual situation in her father's house.

“I am afraid I shall have to see less of you,” she had begun by saying. “They watch me so much.”

“It is very little already,” he answered. “What is once or twice a week?”

“That’s easy for you to say. You are your own master, but you don’t know what I go through.”

“Do they make it very bad for you, dearest? Do they make scenes?” Benyon asked.

“No, of course not. Don’t you know us enough to know how we behave? No scenes,—that would be a relief. However, I never make them myself, and I never will—that’s one comfort for you, for the future, if you want to know. Father and mother keep very quiet, looking at me as if I were one of the lost, with hard, screwing eyes, like gimlets. To me they scarcely say anything, but they talk it all over with each other, and try and decide what is to be done. It’s my belief that father has written to the people in Washington—what do you call it! the Department—to have you moved away from Brooklyn,—to have you sent to sea.”

“I guess that won’t do much good. They want me in Brooklyn, they don’t want me at sea.”

“Well, they are capable of going to Europe for a year, on purpose to take me,” Georgina said.

“How can they take you, if you won’t go? And if you should go, what good would it do, if you were only to find me here when you came back, just the same as you left me?”

“Oh, well!” said Georgina, with her lovely smile, “of course they think that absence would cure me of—cure me of—” And she paused, with a certain natural modesty, not saying exactly of what.

“Cure you of what, darling? Say it, please say it,” the young man murmured, drawing her hand surreptitiously into his arm.

“Of my absurd infatuation!”

“And would it, dearest?”

“Yes, very likely. But I don’t mean to try. I sha’n’t go to Europe,—not when I don’t want to. But it’s better I should see less of you,—even that I should appear—a little—to give you up.”

“A little? What do you call a little?”

Georgina said nothing, for a moment. “Well, that, for instance, you shouldn’t hold my hand quite so tight!” And she disengaged this conscious member from the pressure of his arm.

“What good will that do?” Benyon asked,

“It will make them think it ‘s all over,—that we have agreed to part.”

“And as we have done nothing of the kind, how will that help us?”

They had stopped at the crossing of a street; a heavy dray was lumbering slowly past them. Georgina, as she stood there, turned her face to her lover, and rested her eyes for some moments on his own. At last: “Nothing will help us; I don’t think we are very happy,” she answered, while her strange, ironical, inconsequent smile played about her beautiful lips.

“I don’t understand how you see things. I thought you were going to say you would marry me!” Benyon rejoined, standing there still, though the dray had passed.

“Oh, yes, I will marry you!” And she moved away, across the street. That was the manner in which she had said it, and it was very characteristic of her. When he saw that she really meant it, he wished they were somewhere else,—he hardly knew where the proper place would

be,—so that he might take her in his arms. Nevertheless, before they separated that day he had said to her he hoped she remembered they would be very poor, reminding her how great a change she would find it. She answered that she shouldn't mind, and presently she said that if this was all that prevented them the sooner they were married the better. The next time he saw her she was quite of the same opinion; but he found, to his surprise, it was now her conviction that she had better not leave her father's house. The ceremony should take place secretly, of course; but they would wait awhile to let their union be known.

“What good will it do us, then?” Raymond Benyon asked.

Georgina colored. “Well, if you don't know, I can't tell you!”

Then it seemed to him that he did know. Yet, at the same time, he could not see why, once the knot was tied, secrecy should be required. When he asked what special event they were to wait for, and what should give them the signal to appear as man and wife, she answered that her parents would probably forgive her, if they were to discover, not too abruptly, after six months, that she had taken the great step. Benyon supposed that she had ceased to care whether they forgave her or not; but he had already perceived that women are full of inconsistencies. He had believed her capable of marrying him out of bravado, but the pleasure of defiance was absent if the marriage was kept to themselves. Now, too, it appeared that she was not especially anxious to defy,—she was disposed rather to manage, to cultivate opportunities and reap the fruits of a waiting game.

“Leave it to me. Leave it to me. You are only a blundering man,” Georgina said. “I shall know much better than you the right moment for saying, ‘Well, you may as well make the best of it, because we have already done it!’”

That might very well be, but Benyon didn't quite understand, and he was awkwardly anxious (for a lover) till it came over him afresh that there was one thing at any rate in his favor, which was simply that the loveliest girl he had ever seen was ready to throw herself into his arms. When he said to her, “There is one thing I hate in this plan of yours,—that, for ever so few weeks, so few days, your father should support my wife,”—when he made this homely remark, with a little flush of sincerity in his face, she gave him a specimen of that unanswerable laugh of hers, and declared that it would serve Mr. Gressie right for being so barbarous and so horrid. It was Benyon's view that from the moment she disobeyed her father, she ought to cease to avail herself of his protection; but I am bound to add that he was not particularly surprised at finding this a kind of honor in which her feminine nature was little versed. To make her his wife first—at the earliest moment—whenever she would, and trust to fortune, and the new influence he should have, to give him, as soon thereafter as possible, complete possession of her,—this rather promptly presented itself to the young man as the course most worthy of a person of spirit. He would be only a pedant who would take nothing because he could not get everything at once. They wandered further than usual this afternoon, and the dusk was thick by the time he brought her back to her father's door. It was not his habit to come so near it, but to-day they had so much to talk about that he actually stood with her for ten minutes at the foot of the steps. He was keeping her hand in his, and she let it rest there while she said,—by way of a remark that should sum up all their reasons and reconcile their differences,—

“There's one great thing it will do, you know; it will make me safe.”

“Safe from what?”

“From marrying any one else.”

“Ah, my girl, if you were to do that—!” Benyon exclaimed; but he didn’t mention the other branch of the contingency. Instead of this, he looked up at the blind face of the house—there were only dim lights in two or three windows, and no apparent eyes—and up and down the empty street, vague in the friendly twilight; after which he drew Georgina Gressie to his breast and gave her a long, passionate kiss. Yes, decidedly, he felt, they had better be married. She had run quickly up the steps, and while she stood there, with her hand on the bell, she almost hissed at him, under her breath, “Go away, go away; Amanda’s coming!” Amanda was the parlor-maid, and it was in those terms that the Twelfth Street Juliet dismissed her Brooklyn Romeo. As he wandered back into the Fifth Avenue, where the evening air was conscious of a vernal fragrance from the shrubs in the little precinct of the pretty Gothic church ornamenting that charming part of the street, he was too absorbed in the impression of the delightful contact from which the girl had violently released herself to reflect that the great reason she had mentioned a moment before was a reason for their marrying, of course, but not in the least a reason for their not making it public. But, as I said in the opening lines of this chapter, if he did not understand his mistress’s motives at the end, he cannot be expected to have understood them at the beginning.

II.

Mrs. Portico, as we know, was always talking about going to Europe; but she had not yet—I mean a year after the incident I have just related—put her hand upon a youthful cicerone. Petticoats, of course, were required; it was necessary that her companion should be of the sex which sinks most naturally upon benches, in galleries and cathedrals, and pauses most frequently upon staircases that ascend to celebrated views. She was a widow, with a good fortune and several sons, all of whom were in Wall Street, and none of them capable of the relaxed pace at which she expected to take her foreign tour. They were all in a state of tension. They went through life standing. She was a short, broad, high-colored woman, with a loud voice, and superabundant black hair, arranged in a way peculiar to herself,—with so many combs and bands that it had the appearance of a national coiffure. There was an impression in New York, about 1845, that the style was Danish; some one had said something about having seen it in Schleswig-Holstein.

Mrs. Portico had a bold, humorous, slightly flamboyant look; people who saw her for the first time received an impression that her late husband had married the daughter of a barkeeper or the proprietress of a menagerie. Her high, hoarse, good-natured voice seemed to connect her in some way with public life; it was not pretty enough to suggest that she might have been an actress. These ideas quickly passed away, however, even if you were not sufficiently initiated to know—as all the Grossies, for instance, knew so well—that her origin, so far from being enveloped in mystery, was almost the sort of thing she might have boasted of. But in spite of the high pitch of her appearance, she didn’t boast of anything; she was a genial, easy, comical, irreverent person, with a large charity, a democratic, fraternizing turn of mind, and a contempt for many worldly standards, which she expressed not in the least in general axioms (for she had a mortal horror of philosophy), but in violent ejaculations on particular occasions. She had not a grain of moral timidity, and she fronted a delicate social problem as sturdily as she would have barred the way of a gentleman she might have met in her vestibule with the plate-chest. The only thing which prevented her being a bore in orthodox circles was that she was incapable of discussion. She never lost her temper, but she lost her vocabulary, and ended quietly by praying that Heaven would give her an opportunity to *show* what she believed.

She was an old friend of Mr. and Mrs. Gressie, who esteemed her for the antiquity of her lineage and the frequency of her subscriptions, and to whom she rendered the service of

making them feel liberal,—like people too sure of their own position to be frightened. She was their indulgence, their dissipation, their point of contact with dangerous heresies; so long as they continued to see her they could not be accused of being narrow-minded,—a matter as to which they were perhaps vaguely conscious of the necessity of taking their precautions. Mrs. Portico never asked herself whether she liked the Gressies; she had no disposition for morbid analysis, she accepted transmitted associations, and she found, somehow, that her acquaintance with these people helped her to relieve herself. She was always making scenes in their drawing-room, scenes half indignant, half jocose, like all her manifestations, to which it must be confessed that they adapted themselves beautifully. They never “met” her in the language of controversy; but always collected to watch her, with smiles and comfortable platitudes, as if they envied her superior richness of temperament. She took an interest in Georgina, who seemed to her different from the others, with suggestions about her of being likely not to marry so unrefreshingly as her sisters had done, and of a high, bold standard of duty. Her sisters had married from duty, but Mrs. Portico would rather have chopped off one of her large, plump hands than behave herself so well as that she had, in her daughterless condition, a certain ideal of a girl that should be beautiful and romantic, with lustrous eyes, and a little persecuted, so that she, Mrs. Portico, might get her out of her troubles. She looked to Georgina, to a considerable degree, to gratify her in this way; but she had really never understood Georgina at all. She ought to have been shrewd, but she lacked this refinement, and she never understood anything until after many disappointments and vexations. It was difficult to startle her, but she was much startled by a communication that this young lady made her one fine spring morning. With her florid appearance and her speculative mind, she was probably the most innocent woman in New York.

Georgina came very early,—earlier even than visits were paid in New York thirty years ago; and instantly, without any preface, looking her straight in the face, told Mrs. Portico that she was in great trouble and must appeal to her for assistance. Georgina had in her aspect no symptom of distress; she was as fresh and beautiful as the April day itself; she held up her head and smiled, with a sort of familiar bravado, looking like a young woman who would naturally be on good terms with fortune. It was not in the least in the tone of a person making a confession or relating a misadventure that she presently said: “Well, you must know, to begin with—of course, it will surprise you—that I ‘m married.”

“Married, Georgina Gressie!” Mrs. Portico repeated in her most resonant tones.

Georgina got up, walked with her majestic step across the room, and closed the door. Then she stood there, her back pressed against the mahogany panels, indicating only by the distance she had placed between herself and her hostess the consciousness of an irregular position. “I am not Georgina Gressie! I am Georgina Benyon,—and it has become plain, within a short time, that the natural consequence will take place.”

Mrs. Portico was altogether bewildered. “The natural consequence?” she exclaimed, staring.

“Of one’s being married, of course,—I suppose you know what that is. No one must know anything about it. I want you to take me to Europe.”

Mrs. Portico now slowly rose from her place, and approached her visitor, looking at her from head to foot as she did so, as if to challenge the truth of her remarkable announcement. She rested her hands on Georgina’s shoulders a moment, gazing into her blooming face, and then she drew her closer and kissed her. In this way the girl was conducted back to the sofa, where, in a conversation of extreme intimacy, she opened Mrs. Portico’s eyes wider than they had ever been opened before. She was Raymond Benyon’s wife; they had been married a year, but no one knew anything about it. She had kept it from every one, and she meant to go

on keeping it. The ceremony had taken place in a little Episcopal church at Harlem, one Sunday afternoon, after the service. There was no one in that dusty suburb who knew them; the clergyman, vexed at being detained, and wanting to go home to tea, had made no trouble; he tied the knot before they could turn round. It was ridiculous how easy it had been.

Raymond had told him frankly that it must all be under the rose, as the young lady's family disapproved of what she was doing. But she was of legal age, and perfectly free; he could see that for himself. The parson had given a grunt as he looked at her over his spectacles. It was not very complimentary; it seemed to say that she was indeed no chicken. Of course she looked old for a girl; but she was not a girl now, was she? Raymond had certified his own identity as an officer in the United States Navy (he had papers, besides his uniform, which he wore), and introduced the clergyman to a friend he had brought with him, who was also in the navy, a venerable paymaster. It was he who gave Georgina away, as it were; he was an old, old man, a regular grandmother, and perfectly safe. He had been married three times himself. After the ceremony she went back to her father's; but she saw Mr. Benyon the next day. After that, she saw him—for a little while—pretty often. He was always begging her to come to him altogether; she must do him that justice. But she wouldn't—she wouldn't now—perhaps she wouldn't ever. She had her reasons, which seemed to her very good, but were very difficult to explain. She would tell Mrs. Portico in plenty of time what they were. But that was not the question now, whether they were good or bad; the question was for her to get away from the country for several months,—far away from any one who had ever known her. She would like to go to some little place in Spain or Italy, where she should be out of the world until everything was over.

Mrs. Portico's heart gave a jump as this serene, handsome, familiar girl, sitting there with a hand in hers, and pouring forth this extraordinary tale, spoke of everything being over. There was a glossy coldness in it, an unnatural lightness, which suggested—poor Mrs. Portico scarcely knew what. If Georgina was to become a mother, it was to be supposed she was to remain a mother. She said there was a beautiful place in Italy—Genoa—of which Raymond had often spoken—and where he had been more than once,—he admired it so much; couldn't they go there and be quiet for a little while? She was asking a great favor,—that she knew very well; but if Mrs. Portico wouldn't take her, she would find some one who would. They had talked of such a journey so often; and, certainly, if Mrs. Portico had been willing before, she ought to be much more willing now. The girl declared that she must do something,—go somewhere,—keep, in one way or another, her situation unperceived. There was no use talking to her about telling,—she would rather die than tell. No doubt it seemed strange, but she knew what she was about. No one had guessed anything yet,—she had succeeded perfectly in doing what she wished,—and her father and mother believed—as Mrs. Portico had believed,—hadn't she?—that, any time the last year, Raymond Beuyon was less to her than he had been before. Well, so he was; yes, he was. He had gone away—he was off, Heaven knew where—in the Pacific; she was alone, and now she would remain alone. The family believed it was all over,—with his going back to his ship, and other things, and they were right: for it *was* over, or it would be soon.

Mrs. Portico, by this time, had grown almost afraid of her young friend; *she* had so little fear, she had even, as it were, so little shame. If the good lady had been accustomed to analyzing things a little more, she would have said she had so little conscience. She looked at Georgina with dilated eyes,—her visitor was so much the calmer of the two,—and exclaimed, and murmured, and sunk back, and sprung forward, and wiped her forehead with her pocket-handkerchief! There were things she didn't understand; that they should all have been so deceived, that they should have thought Georgina was giving her lover up (they flattered themselves she was discouraged, or had grown tired of him), when she was really only

making it impossible she should belong to any one else. And with this, her inconsequence, her capriciousness, her absence of motive, the way she contradicted herself, her apparent belief that she could hush up such a situation forever! There was nothing shameful in having married poor Mr. Benyon, even in a little church at Harlem, and being given away by a paymaster. It was much more shameful to be in such a state without being prepared to make the proper explanations. And she must have seen very little of her husband; she must have given him up—so far as meeting him went—almost as soon as she had taken him. Had not Mrs. Gressie herself told Mrs. Portico (in the preceding October, it must have been) that there now would be no need of sending Georgina away, inasmuch as the affair with the little navy man—a project in every way so unsuitable—had quite blown over?

“After our marriage I saw him less, I saw him a great deal less,” Georgina explained; but her explanation only appeared to make the mystery more dense.

“I don’t see, in that case, what on earth you married him for!”

“We had to be more careful; I wished to appear to have given him up. Of course we were really more intimate,—I saw him differently,” Georgina said, smiling.

“I should think so! I can’t for the life of me see why you weren’t discovered.”

“All I can say is we weren’t. No doubt it’s remarkable. We managed very well,—that is, I managed,—he didn’t want to manage at all. And then, father and mother are incredibly stupid!”

Mrs. Portico exhaled a comprehensive moan, feeling glad, on the whole, that she hadn’t a daughter, while Georgina went on to furnish a few more details. Raymond Benyon, in the summer, had been ordered from Brooklyn to Charlestown, near Boston, where, as Mrs. Portico perhaps knew, there was another navy-yard, in which there was a temporary press of work, requiring more oversight. He had remained there several months, during which he had written to her urgently to come to him, and during which, as well, he had received notice that he was to rejoin his ship a little later. Before doing so he came back to Brooklyn for a few weeks to wind up his work there, and then she had seen him—well, pretty often. That was the best time of all the year that had elapsed since their marriage. It was a wonder at home that nothing had then been guessed; because she had really been reckless, and Benyon had even tried to force on a disclosure. But they *were* stupid, that was very certain. He had besought her again and again to put an end to their false position, but she didn’t want it any more than she had wanted it before. They had rather a bad parting; in fact, for a pair of lovers, it was a very queer parting indeed. He didn’t know, now, the thing she had come to tell Mrs. Portico. She had not written to him. He was on a very long cruise. It might be two years before he returned to the United States. “I don’t care how long he stays away,” Georgina said, very simply.

“You haven’t mentioned why you married him. Perhaps you don’t remember,” Mrs. Portico broke out, with her masculine laugh.

“Oh, yes; I loved him!”

“And you have got over that?”

Georgina hesitated a moment. “Why, no, Mrs. Portico, of course I haven’t; Raymond’s a splendid fellow.”

“Then why don’t you live with him? You don’t explain that.”

“What would be the use when he’s always away? How can one live with a man that spends half his life in the South Seas? If he wasn’t in the navy it would be different; but to go

through everything,—I mean everything that making our marriage known would bring upon me,—the scolding and the exposure and the ridicule, the scenes at home,—to go through it all, just for the idea, and yet be alone here, just as I was before, without my husband after all,—with none of the good of him,”—and here Georgina looked at her hostess as if with the certitude that such an enumeration of inconveniences would touch her effectually,—“really, Mrs. Portico, I am bound to say I don’t think that would be worth while; I haven’t the courage for it.”

“I never thought you were a coward,” said Mrs. Portico.

“Well, I am not,—if you will give me time. I am very patient.”

“I never thought that, either.”

“Marrying changes one,” said Georgina, still smiling.

“It certainly seems to have had a very peculiar effect upon you. Why don’t you make him leave the navy, and arrange your life comfortably, like every one else?”

“I wouldn’t for the world interfere with his prospects—with his promotion. That is sure to come for him, and to come quickly, he has such talents. He is devoted to his profession; it would ruin him to leave it.”

“My dear young woman, you are a wonderful creature!” Mrs. Portico exclaimed, looking at her companion as if she had been in a glass case.

“So poor Raymond says,” Georgina answered, smiling more than ever.

“Certainly, I should have been very sorry to marry a navy man; but if I had married him, I should stick to him, in the face of all the scoldings in the universe!”

“I don’t know what your parents may have been; I know what mine are,” Georgina replied, with some dignity. “When he’s a captain, we shall come out of hiding.”

“And what shall you do meanwhile? What will you do with your children? Where will you hide them? What will you do with this one?”

Georgina rested her eyes on her lap for a minute; then, raising them, she met those of Mrs. Portico. “Somewhere in Europe,” she said, in her sweet tone.

“Georgina Gressie, you ‘re a monster!” the elder lady cried.

“I know what I am about, and you will help me,” the girl went on.

“I will go and tell your father and mother the whole story,—that’s what I will do!”

“I am not in the least afraid of that, not in the least. You will help me,—I assure you that you will.”

“Do you mean I will support the child?”

Georgina broke into a laugh. “I do believe you would, if I were to ask you! But I won’t go so far as that; I have something of my own. All I want you to do is to be with me.”

“At Genoa,—yes, you have got it all fixed! You say Mr. Benyon is so fond of the place. That’s all very well; but how will he like his infant being deposited there?”

“He won’t like it at all. You see I tell you the whole truth,” said Georgina, gently.

“Much obliged; it’s a pity you keep it all for me! It is in his power, then, to make you behave properly. *He* can publish your marriage if you won’t; and if he does you will have to acknowledge your child.”

“Publish, Mrs. Portico? How little you know my Raymond! He will never break a promise; he will go through fire first.”

“And what have you got him to promise?”

“Never to insist on a disclosure against my will; never to claim me openly as his wife till I think it is time; never to let any one know what has passed between us if I choose to keep it still a secret—to keep it for years—to keep it forever. Never to do anything in the matter himself, but to leave it to me. For this he has given me his solemn word of honor. And I know what that means!”

Mrs. Portico, on the sofa, fairly bounded.

“You *do* know what you are about And Mr. Benyon strikes me as more fantastic even than yourself. I never heard of a man taking such an imbecile vow. What good can it do him?”

“What good? The good it did him was that, it gratified me. At the time he took it he would have made any promise under the sun. It was a condition I exacted just at the very last, before the marriage took place. There was nothing at that moment he would have refused me; there was nothing I couldn’t have made him do. He was in love to that degree—but I don’t want to boast,” said Georgina, with quiet grandeur. “He wanted—he wanted—” she added; but then she paused.

“He doesn’t seem to have wanted much!” Mrs. Portico cried, in a tone which made Georgina turn to the window, as if it might have reached the street.

Her hostess noticed the movement and went on: “Oh, my dear, if I ever do tell your story, I will tell it so that people will hear it!”

“You never will tell it. What I mean is, that Raymond wanted the sanction—of the affair at the church—because he saw that I would never do without it. Therefore, for him, the sooner we had it the better, and, to hurry it on, he was ready to take any pledge.”

“You have got it pat enough,” said Mrs. Portico, in homely phrase. “I don’t know what you mean by sanctions, or what *you* wanted of ‘em!”

Georgina got up, holding rather higher than before that beautiful head which, in spite of the embarrassments of this interview, had not yet perceptibly abated of its elevation. “Would you have liked me to—to not marry?”

Mrs. Portico rose also, and, flushed with the agitation of unwonted knowledge,—it was as if she had discovered a skeleton in her favorite cupboard,—faced her young friend for a moment. Then her conflicting sentiments resolved themselves into an abrupt question, uttered,—for Mrs. Portico,—with much solemnity: “Georgina Gressie, were you really in love with him?”

The question suddenly dissipated the girl’s strange, studied, wilful coldness; she broke out, with a quick flash of passion,—a passion that, for the moment, was predominantly anger, “Why else, in Heaven’s name, should I have done what I have done? Why else should I have married him? What under the sun had I to gain?”

A certain quiver in Georgina’s voice, a light in her eye which seemed to Mrs. Portico more spontaneous, more human, as she uttered these words, caused them to affect her hostess rather less painfully than anything she had yet said. She took the girl’s hand and emitted indefinite, admonitory sounds. “Help me, my dear old friend, help me,” Georgina continued, in a low, pleading tone; and in a moment Mrs. Portico saw that the tears were in her eyes.

“You ‘re a queer mixture, my child,” she exclaimed. “Go straight home to your own mother, and tell her everything; that is your best help.”

“You are kinder than my mother. You mustn’t judge her by yourself.”

“What can she do to you? How can she hurt you? We are not living in pagan times,” said Mrs. Portico, who was seldom so historical “Besides, you have no reason to speak of your mother—to think of her, even—so! She would have liked you to marry a man of some property; but she has always been a good mother to you.”

At this rebuke Georgina suddenly kindled again; she was, indeed, as Mrs. Portico had said, a queer mixture. Conscious, evidently, that she could not satisfactorily justify her present stiffness, she wheeled round upon a grievance which absolved her from self-defence. “Why, then, did he make that promise, if he loved me? No man who really loved me would have made it,—and no man that was a man, as I understand being a man! He might have seen that I only did it to test him,—to see if he wanted to take advantage of being left free himself. It is a proof that he doesn’t love me,—not as he ought to have done; and in such a case as that a woman isn’t bound to make sacrifices!”

Mrs. Portico was not a person of a nimble intellect; her mind moved vigorously, but heavily; yet she sometimes made happy guesses. She saw that Georgia’s emotions were partly real and partly fictitious; that, as regards this last matter, especially, she was trying to “get up” a resentment, in order to excuse herself. The pretext was absurd, and the good lady was struck with its being heartless on the part of her young visitor to reproach poor Benyon with a concession on which she had insisted, and which could only be a proof of his devotion, inasmuch as he left her free while he bound himself. Altogether, Mrs. Portico was shocked and dismayed at such a want of simplicity in the behavior of a young person whom she had hitherto believed to be as candid as she was elegant, and her appreciation of this discovery expressed itself in the uncompromising remark: “You strike me as a very bad girl, my dear; you strike me as a very bad girl!”

PART II.

III.

It will doubtless seem to the reader very singular that, in spite of this reflection, which appeared to sum up her judgment of the matter, Mrs. Portico should, in the course of a very few days, have consented to everything that Georgina asked of her. I have thought it well to narrate at length the first conversation that took place between them, but I shall not trace further the details of the girl’s hard pleading, or the steps by which—in the face of a hundred robust and salutary convictions—the loud, kind, sharp, simple, sceptical, credulous woman took under her protection a damsel whose obstinacy she could not speak of without getting red with anger. It was the simple fact of Georgina’s personal condition that moved her; this young lady’s greatest eloquence was the seriousness of her predicament. She might be bad, and she had a splendid, careless, insolent, fair-faced way of admitting it, which at moments, incoherently, inconsistently, and irresistibly, resolved the harsh confession into tears of weakness; but Mrs. Portico had known her from her rosiest years, and when Georgina declared that she couldn’t go home, that she wished to be with her and not with her mother, that she couldn’t expose herself,—how could she?—and that she must remain with her and her only till the day they should sail, the poor lady was forced to make that day a reality. She was overmastered, she was cajoled, she was, to a certain extent, fascinated. She had to accept Georgina’s rigidity (she had none of her own to oppose to it; she was only violent, she was not continuous), and once she did this, it was plain, after all, that to take her young friend to Europe was to help her, and to leave her alone was not to help her. Georgina literally

frightened Mrs. Portico into compliance. She was evidently capable of strange things if thrown upon her own devices.

So, from one day to another Mrs. Portico announced that she was really at last about to sail for foreign lands (her doctor having told her that if she didn't look out she would get too old to enjoy them), and that she had invited that robust Miss Gressie, who could stand so long on her feet, to accompany her. There was joy in the house of Gressie at this announcement, for though the danger was over, it was a great general advantage to Georgina to go, and the Gressies were always elated at the prospect of an advantage. There was a danger that she might meet Mr. Benyon on the other side of the world; but it didn't seem likely that Mrs. Portico would lend herself to a plot of that kind. If she had taken it into her head to favor their love affair, she would have done it frankly, and Georgina would have been married by this time. Her arrangements were made as quickly as her decision had been—or rather had appeared—slow; for this concerned those agile young men down town. Georgina was perpetually at her house; it was understood in Twelfth Street that she was talking over her future travels with her kind friend. Talk there was, of course to a considerable degree; but after it was settled they should start nothing more was said about the motive of the journey. Nothing was said, that is, till the night before they sailed; then a few words passed between them. Georgina had already taken leave of her relations in Twelfth Street, and was to sleep at Mrs. Portico's in order to go down to the ship at an early hour. The two ladies were sitting together in the firelight, silent, with the consciousness of corded luggage, when the elder one suddenly remarked to her companion that she seemed to be taking a great deal upon herself in assuming that Raymond Benyon wouldn't force her hand. *He* might choose to acknowledge his child, if she didn't; there were promises and promises, and many people would consider they had been let off when circumstances were so altered. She would have to reckon with Mr. Benyon more than she thought.

"I know what I am about," Georgina answered. "There is only one promise, for him. I don't know what you mean by circumstances being altered."

"Everything seems to me to be changed," poor Mrs. Portico murmured, rather tragically.

"Well, he isn't, and he never will! I am sure of him,—as sure as that I sit here. Do you think I would have looked at him if I hadn't known he was a man of his word?"

"You have chosen him well, my dear," said Mrs. Portico, who by this time was reduced to a kind of bewildered acquiescence.

"Of course I have chosen him well! In such a matter as this he will be perfectly splendid." Then suddenly, "Perfectly splendid,—that's why I cared for him!" she repeated, with a flash of incongruous passion.

This seemed to Mrs. Portico audacious to the point of being sublime; but she had given up trying to understand anything that the girl might say or do. She understood less and less, after they had disembarked in England and begun to travel southward; and she understood least of all when, in the middle of the winter, the event came off with which, in imagination, she had tried to familiarize herself, but which, when it occurred, seemed to her beyond measure strange and dreadful. It took place at Genoa, for Georgina had made up her mind that there would be more privacy in a big town than in a little; and she wrote to America that both Mrs. Portico and she had fallen in love with the place and would spend two or three months there. At that time people in the United States knew much less than to-day about the comparative attractions of foreign cities, and it was not thought surprising that absent New Yorkers should wish to linger in a seaport where they might find apartments, according to Georgina's report, in a palace painted in fresco by Vandyke and Titian. Georgina, in her letters, omitted, it will

be seen, no detail that could give color to Mrs. Portico's long stay at Genoa. In such a palace—where the travellers hired twenty gilded rooms for the most insignificant sum—a remarkably fine boy came into the world. Nothing could have been more successful and comfortable than this transaction. Mrs. Portico was almost appalled at the facility and felicity of it. She was by this time in a pretty bad way, and—what had never happened to her before in her life—she suffered from chronic depression of spirits. She hated to have to lie, and now she was lying all the time. Everything she wrote home, everything that had been said or done in connection with their stay in Genoa, was a lie. The way they remained indoors to avoid meeting chance compatriots was a lie. Compatriots, in Genoa, at that period, were very rare; but nothing could exceed the businesslike completeness of Georgina's precautions. Her nerves, her self-possession, her apparent want of feeling, excited on Mrs. Portico's part a kind of gloomy suspense; a morbid anxiety to see how far her companion would go took possession of the excellent woman, who, a few months before, hated to fix her mind on disagreeable things.

Georgina went very far indeed; she did everything in her power to dissimulate the origin of her child. The record of its birth was made under a false name, and he was baptized at the nearest church by a Catholic priest. A magnificent contadina was brought to light by the doctor in a village in the hills, and this big, brown, barbarous creature, who, to do her justice, was full of handsome, familiar smiles and coarse tenderness, was constituted nurse to Raymond Benyon's son. She nursed him for a fortnight under the mother's eye, and she was then sent back to her village with the baby in her arms and sundry gold coin knotted into a corner of her rude pocket-handkerchief. Mr. Gressie had given his daughter a liberal letter of credit on a London banker, and she was able, for the present, to make abundant provision for the little one. She called Mrs. Portico's attention to the fact that she spent none of her money on futilities; she kept it all for her small pensioner in the Genoese hills. Mrs. Portico beheld these strange doings with a stupefaction that occasionally broke into passionate protest; then she relapsed into a brooding sense of having now been an accomplice so far that she must be an accomplice to the end. The two ladies went down to Rome—Georgina was in wonderful trim—to finish the season, and here Mrs. Portico became convinced that she intended to abandon her offspring. She had not driven into the country to see the nursling before leaving Genoa,—she had said that she couldn't bear to see it in such a place and among such people. Mrs. Portico, it must be added, had felt the force of this plea,—felt it as regards a plan of her own, given up after being hotly entertained for a few hours, of devoting a day, by herself, to a visit to the big contadina. It seemed to her that if she should see the child in the sordid hands to which Georgina had consigned it she would become still more of a participant than she was already. This young woman's blooming hardness, after they got to Borne, acted upon her like a kind of Medusa-mask. She had seen a horrible thing, she had been mixed up with it, and her motherly heart had received a mortal chill. It became more clear to her every day that, though Georgina would continue to send the infant money in considerable quantities, she had dispossessed herself of it forever. Together with this induction a fixed idea settled in her mind,—the project of taking the baby herself, of making him her own, of arranging that matter with the father. The countenance she had given Georgina up to this point was an effective pledge that she would not expose her; but she could adopt the child without exposing her; she could say that he was a lovely baby—he was lovely, fortunately—whom she had picked up in a poor village in Italy,—a village that had been devastated by brigands. She would pretend—she could pretend; oh, yes, of course, she could pretend! Everything was imposture now, and she could go on to lie as she had begun. The falsity of the whole business sickened her; it made her so yellow that she scarcely knew herself in her glass. None the less, to rescue the child, even if she had to become false still, would be in some measure an atonement for the treachery to which she had already lent herself. She began to hate

Georgina, who had drawn her into such an atrocious current, and if it had not been for two considerations she would have insisted on their separating. One was the deference she owed to Mr. and Mrs. Gressie, who had reposed such a trust in her; the other was that she must keep hold of the mother till she had got possession of the infant. Meanwhile, in this forced communion, her aversion to her companion increased; Georgina came to appear to her a creature of brass, of iron; she was exceedingly afraid of her, and it seemed to her now a wonder of wonders that she should ever have trusted her enough to come so far. Georgina showed no consciousness of the change in Mrs. Portico, though there was, indeed, at present, not even a pretence of confidence between the two. Miss Gressie—that was another lie, to which Mrs. Portico had to lend herself—was bent on enjoying Europe, and was especially delighted with Rome. She certainly had the courage of her undertaking, and she confessed to Mrs. Portico that she had left Raymond Benyon, and meant to continue to leave him, in ignorance of what had taken place at Genoa. There was a certain confidence, it must be said, in that. He was now in Chinese waters, and she probably should not see him for years.

Mrs. Portico took counsel with herself, and the result of her cogitation was, that she wrote to Mr. Benyon that a charming little boy had been born to him, and that Georgina had put him to nurse with Italian peasants, but that, if he would kindly consent to it, she, Mrs. Portico, would bring him up much better than that. She knew not how to address her letter, and Georgina, even if *she* should know, which was doubtful, would never tell her; so she sent the missive to the care of the Secretary of the Navy, at Washington, with an earnest request that it might immediately be forwarded. Such was Mrs. Portico's last effort in this strange business of Georgina's. I relate rather a complicated fact in a very few words when I say that the poor lady's anxieties, indignations, repentances, preyed upon her until they fairly broke her down. Various persons whom she knew in Borne notified her that the air of the Seven Hills was plainly unfavorable to her, and she had made up her mind to return to her native land, when she found that, in her depressed condition, malarial fever had laid its hand upon her. She was unable to move, and the matter was settled for her in the course of an illness which, happily, was not prolonged. I have said that she was not obstinate, and the resistance that she made on the present occasion was not worthy even of her spasmodic energy. Brain-fever made its appearance, and she died at the end of three weeks, during which Georgina's attentions to her patient and protectress had been unremitting. There were other Americans in Rome who, after this sad event, extended to the bereaved young lady every comfort and hospitality. She had no lack of opportunities for returning under a proper escort to New York. She selected, you may be sure, the best, and re-entered her father's house, where she took to plain dressing; for she sent all her pocket-money, with the utmost secrecy, to the little boy in the Genoese hills.

IV.

"Why should he come if he doesn't like you? He is under no obligation, and he has his ship to look after. Why should he sit for an hour at a time, and why should he be so pleasant?"

"Do you think he is very pleasant?" Kate Theory asked, turning away her face from her sister. It was important that Mildred should not see how little the expression of that charming countenance corresponded with the inquiry.

This precaution was useless, however, for in a moment Mildred said, from the delicately draped couch, where she lay at the open window, "Kate Theory, don't be affected!"

"Perhaps it's for you he comes. I don't see why he shouldn't; you are far more attractive than I, and you have a great deal more to say. How can he help seeing that you are the cleverest of the clever? You can talk to him of everything: of the dates of the different eruptions, of the

statues and bronzes in the Museum, which you have never seen, poor darling! but which you know more about than he does, than any one does. What was it you began on last time? Oh, yes, you poured forth floods about Magna Græcia. And then—and then—” But with this Kate Theory paused; she felt it wouldn’t do to speak the words that had risen to her lips. That her sister was as beautiful as a saint, and as delicate and refined as an angel,—she had been on the point of saying something of that sort But Mildred’s beauty and delicacy were the fairness of mortal disease, and to praise her for her refinement was simply to intimate that she had the tenuity of a consumptive. So, after she had checked herself, the younger girl—she was younger only by a year or two—simply kissed her tenderly, and settled the knot of the lace handkerchief that was tied over her head. Mildred knew what she had been going to say,—knew why she had stopped. Mildred knew everything, without ever leaving her room, or leaving, at least, that little salon of their own, at the *pension*, which she had made so pretty by simply lying there, at the window that had the view of the bay and of Vesuvius, and telling Kate how to arrange and rearrange everything. Since it began to be plain that Mildred must spend her small remnant of years altogether in warm climates, the lot of the two sisters had been cast in the ungarnished hostelries of southern Europe. Their little sitting-room was sure to be very ugly, and Mildred was never happy till it was rearranged. Her sister fell to work, as a matter of course, the first day, and changed the place of all the tables, sofas, chairs, till every combination had been tried, and the invalid thought at last that there was a little effect Kate Theory had a taste of her own, and her ideas were not always the same as her sister’s; but she did whatever Mildred liked, and if the poor girl had told her to put the doormat on the dining-table, or the clock under the sofa, she would have obeyed without a murmur. Her own ideas, her personal tastes, had been folded up and put away, like garments out of season, in drawers and trunks, with camphor and lavender. They were not, as a general thing, for southern wear, however indispensable to comfort in the climate of New England, where poor Mildred had lost her health. Kate Theory, ever since this event, had lived for her companion, and it was almost an inconvenience for her to think that she was attractive to Captain Benyon. It was as if she had shut up her house and was not in a position to entertain. So long as Mildred should live, her own life was suspended; if there should be any time afterwards, perhaps she would take it up again; but for the present, in answer to any knock at her door, she could only call down from one of her dusty windows that she was not at home. Was it really in these terms she should have to dismiss Captain Benyon? If Mildred said it was for her he came she must perhaps take upon herself such a duty; for, as we have seen, Mildred knew everything, and she must therefore be right She knew about the statues in the Museum, about the excavations at Pompeii, about the antique splendor of Magna Græcia. She always had some instructive volume on the table beside her sofa, and she had strength enough to hold the book for half an hour at a time. That was about the only strength she had now. The Neapolitan winters had been remarkably soft, but after the first month or two she had been obliged to give up her little walks in the garden. It lay beneath her window like a single enormous bouquet; as early as May, that year, the flowers were so dense. None of them, however, had a color so intense as the splendid blue of the bay, which filled up all the rest of the view. It would have looked painted, if you had not been able to see the little movement of the waves. Mildred Theory watched them by the hour, and the breathing crest of the volcano, on the other side of Naples, and the great sea-vision of Capri, on the horizon, changing its tint while her eyes rested there, and wondered what would become of her sister after she was gone. Now that Percival was married,—he was their only brother, and from one day to the other was to come down to Naples to show them his new wife, as yet a complete stranger, or revealed only in the few letters she had written them during her wedding tour,—now that Percival was to be quite taken up, poor Kate’s situation would be much more grave. Mildred felt that she should be able to judge better, after she should have seen her sister-in-law, how

much of a home Kate might expect to find with the pair; but even if Agnes should prove—well, more satisfactory than her letters, it was a wretched prospect for Kate,—this living as a mere appendage to happier people. Maiden aunts were very well, but being a maiden aunt was only a last resource, and Kate's first resources had not even been tried.

Meanwhile the latter young lady wondered as well,—wondered in what book Mildred had read that Captain Benyon was in love with her. She admired him, she thought, but he didn't seem a man that would fall in love with one like that. She could see that he was on his guard; he wouldn't throw himself away. He thought too much of himself, or at any rate he took too good care of himself,—in the manner of a man to whom something had happened which had given him a lesson. Of course what had happened was that his heart was buried somewhere,—in some woman's grave; he had loved some beautiful girl,—much more beautiful, Kate was sure, than she, who thought herself small and dark,—and the maiden had died, and his capacity to love had died with her. He loved her memory,—that was the only thing he would care for now. He was quiet, gentle, clever, humorous, and very kind in his manner; but if any one save Mildred had said to her that if he came three times a week to Posilippo, it was for anything but to pass his time (he had told them he didn't know another soul in Naples), she would have felt that this was simply the kind of thing—usually so idiotic—that people always thought it necessary to say. It was very easy for him to come; he had the big ship's boat, with nothing else to do; and what could be more delightful than to be rowed across the bay, under a bright awning, by four brown sailors with “Louisiana” in blue letters on their immaculate white shirts, and in gilt letters on their fluttering hat ribbons? The boat came to the steps of the garden of the *pension*, where the orange-trees hung over and made vague yellow balls shine back out of the water. Kate Theory knew all about that, for Captain Benyon had persuaded her to take a turn in the boat, and if they had only had another lady to go with them, he could have conveyed her to the ship, and shown her all over it. It looked beautiful, just a little way off, with the American flag hanging loose in the Italian air. They would have another lady when Agnes should arrive; then Percival would remain with Mildred while they took this excursion. Mildred had stayed alone the day she went in the boat; she had insisted on it, and, of course it was really Mildred who had persuaded her; though now that Kate came to think of it, Captain Benyon had, in his quiet, waiting way—he turned out to be waiting long after you thought he had let a thing pass—said a good deal about the pleasure it would give him. Of course, everything would give pleasure to a man who was so bored. He was keeping the “Louisiana” at Naples, week after week, simply because these were the commodore's orders. There was no work to be done there, and his time was on his hands; but of course the commodore, who had gone to Constantinople with the two other ships, had to be obeyed to the letter, however mysterious his motives. It made no difference that he was a fantastic, grumbling, arbitrary old commodore; only a good while afterwards it occurred to Kate Theory that, for a reserved, correct man, Captain Benyon had given her a considerable proof of confidence, in speaking to her in these terms of his superior officer. If he looked at all hot when he arrived at the *pension*, she offered him a glass of cold “orangeade.” Mildred thought this an unpleasant drink,—she called it messy; but Kate adored it, and Captain Benyon always accepted it.

The day I speak of, to change the subject, she called her sister's attention to the extraordinary sharpness of a zigzagging cloud-shadow, on the tinted slope of Vesuvius; but Mildred only remarked in answer that she wished her sister would marry the captain. It was in this familiar way that constant meditation led Miss Theory to speak of him; it shows how constantly she thought of him, for, in general, no one was more ceremonious than she, and the failure of her health had not caused her to relax any form that it was possible to keep up. There was a kind

of slim erectness, even in the way she lay on her sofa; and she always received the doctor as if he were calling for the first time.

“I had better wait till he asks me,” Kate Theory said. “Dear Milly, if I were to do some of the things you wish me to do, I should shock you very much.”

“I wish he would marry you, then. You know there is very little time, if I wish to see it.”

“You will never see it, Mildred. I don’t see why you should take so for granted that I would accept him.”

“You will never meet a man who has so few disagreeable qualities. He is probably not enormously rich. I don’t know what is the pay of a captain in the navy—”

“It’s a relief to find there is something you don’t know,” Kate Theory broke in.

“But when I am gone,” her sister went on calmly, “when I am gone there will be plenty for both of you.”

The younger sister, at this, was silent for a moment; then she exclaimed, “Mildred, you may be out of health, but I don’t see why you should be dreadful!”

“You know that since we have been leading this life we have seen no one we liked better,” said Milly. When she spoke of the life they were leading—there was always a soft resignation of regret and contempt in the allusion—she meant the southern winters, the foreign climates, the vain experiments, the lonely waitings, the wasted hours, the interminable rains, the bad food, the pottering, humbugging doctors, the damp *pensions*, the chance encounters, the fitful apparitions, of fellow-travellers.

“Why shouldn’t you speak for yourself alone? I am glad *you* like him, Mildred.”

“If you don’t like him, why do you give him orangeade?”

At this inquiry Kate began to laugh, and her sister continued,—

“Of course you are glad I like him, my dear. If I didn’t like him, and you did, it wouldn’t be satisfactory at all. I can imagine nothing more miserable; I shouldn’t die in any sort of comfort.”

Kate Theory usually checked this sort of allusion—she was always too late—with a kiss; but on this occasion she added that it was a long time since Mildred had tormented her so much as she had done to-day. “You will make me hate him,” she added.

“Well, that proves you don’t already,” Milly rejoined; and it happened that almost at this moment they saw, in the golden afternoon, Captain Benyon’s boat approaching the steps at the end of the garden. He came that day, and he came two days later, and he came yet once again after an interval equally brief, before Percival Theory arrived, with Mrs. Percival, from Borne. He seemed anxious to crowd into these few days, as he would have said, a good deal of intercourse with the two remarkably nice girls—or nice women, he hardly knew which to call them—whom in the course of a long, idle, rather tedious detention at Naples, he had discovered in the lovely suburb of Posilippo. It was the American consul who had put him into relation with them; the sisters had had to sign, in the consul’s presence, some law-papers, transmitted to them by the man of business who looked after their little property in America, and the kindly functionary, taking advantage of the pretext (Captain Benyon happened to come into the consulate as he was starting, indulgently, to wait upon the ladies) to bring together “two parties” who, as he said, ought to appreciate each other, proposed to his fellow-officer in the service of the United States that he should go with him as witness of the little ceremony. He might, of course, take his clerk, but the captain would do much better; and he

represented to Benyon that the Miss Theorys (singular name, wasn't it?) suffered—he was sure—from a lack of society; also that one of them was very sick, that they were real pleasant and extraordinarily refined, and that the sight of a compatriot, literally draped, as it were, in the national banner, would cheer them up more than most anything, and give them a sense of protection. They had talked to the consul about Benyon's ship, which they could see from their windows, in the distance, at its anchorage. They were the only American ladies then at Naples,—the only residents, at least,—and the captain wouldn't be doing the polite thing unless he went to pay them his respects. Benyon felt afresh how little it was in his line to call upon strange women; he was not in the habit of hunting up female acquaintance, or of looking out for the soft emotions which the sex only can inspire. He had his reasons for this abstention, and he seldom relaxed it; but the consul appealed to him on rather strong grounds; and he suffered himself to be persuaded. He was far from regretting, during the first weeks at least, an act which was distinctly inconsistent with his great rule,—that of never exposing himself to the chance of seriously caring for an unmarried woman. He had been obliged to make this rule, and had adhered to it with some success. He was fond of women, but he was forced to restrict himself to superficial sentiments. There was no use tumbling into situations from which the only possible issue was a retreat. The step he had taken with regard to poor Miss Theory and her delightful little sister was an exception on which at first he could only congratulate himself. That had been a happy idea of the ruminating old consul; it made Captain Benyon forgive him his hat, his boots, his shirtfront,—a costume which might be considered representative, and the effect of which was to make the observer turn with rapture to a half-naked lazzarone. On either side the acquaintance had helped the time to pass, and the hours he spent at the little *pension* at Posilippo left a sweet—and by no means innutritive—taste behind.

As the weeks went by his exception had grown to look a good deal like a rule; but he was able to remind himself that the path of retreat was always open to him. Moreover, if he should fall in love with the younger girl there would be no great harm, for Kate Theory was in love only with her sister, and it would matter very little to her whether he advanced or retreated. She was very attractive, or rather very attracting. Small, pale, attentive without rigidity, full of pretty curves and quick movements, she looked as if the habit of watching and serving had taken complete possession of her, and was literally a little sister of charity. Her thick black hair was pushed behind her ears, as if to help her to listen, and her clear brown eyes had the smile of a person too full of tact to cary a dull face to a sickbed. She spoke in an encouraging voice, and had soothing and unselfish habits. She was very pretty,—producing a cheerful effect of contrasted black and white, and dressed herself daintily, so that Mildred might have something agreeable to look at. Benyon very soon perceived that there was a fund of good service in her. Her sister had it all now; but poor Miss Theory was fading fast, and then what would become of this precious little force? The answer to such a question that seemed most to the point was that it was none of his business. He was not sick,—at least not physically,—and he was not looking out for a nurse. Such a companion might be a luxury, but was not, as yet, a necessity: The welcome of the two ladies, at first, had been simple, and he scarcely knew what to call it but sweet; a bright, gentle friendliness remained the tone of their greeting. They evidently liked him to come,—they liked to see his big transatlantic ship hover about those gleaming coasts of exile. The fact of Miss Mildred being always stretched on her couch—in his successive visits to foreign waters Benyon had not unlearned (as why should he?) the pleasant American habit of using the lady's personal name—made their intimacy seem greater, their differences less; it was as if his hostesses had taken him into their confidence and he had been—as the consul would have said—of the same party. Knocking about the salt parts of the globe, with a few feet square on a rolling frigate for his only home, the pretty, flower-decked sitting-room of the quiet American sisters became,

more than anything he had hitherto known, his interior. He had dreamed once of having an interior, but the dream had vanished in lurid smoke, and no such vision had come to him again. He had a feeling that the end of this was drawing nigh; he was sure that the advent of the strange brother, whose wife was certain to be disagreeable, would make a difference. That is why, as I have said, he came as often as possible the last week, after he had learned the day on which Percival Theory would arrive. The limits of the exception had been reached.

He had been new to the young ladies at Posilippo, and there was no reason why they should say to each other that he was a very different man from the ingenuous youth who, ten years before, used to wander with Georgina Gressie down vistas of plank fences brushed over with the advertisements of quack medicines. It was natural he should be, and we, who know him, would have found that he had traversed the whole scale of alteration. There was nothing ingenuous in him now; he had the look of experience, of having been seasoned and hardened by the years.

His face, his complexion, were the same; still smooth-shaven and slim, he always passed, at first, for a man scarcely out of his twenties. But his expression was old, and his talk was older still,—the talk of one who had seen much of the world (as indeed he had, to-day), and judged most things for himself, with a humorous scepticism which, whatever concessions it might make, superficially, for the sake of not offending (for instance) two remarkably nice American women, of the kind that had kept most of their illusions, left you with the conviction that the next minute it would go quickly back to its own standpoint. There was a curious contradiction in him; he struck you as serious, and yet he could not be said to take things seriously. This was what made Kate Theory feel so sure that he had lost the object of his affections; and she said to herself that it must have been under circumstances of peculiar sadness, for that was, after all, a frequent accident, and was not usually thought, in itself, a sufficient stroke to make a man a cynic. This reflection, it may be added, was, on the young lady's part, just the least bit acrimonious. Captain Benyon was not a cynic in any sense in which he might have shocked an innocent mind; he kept his cynicism to himself, and was a very clever, courteous, attentive gentleman. If he was melancholy, you knew it chiefly by his jokes, for they were usually at his own expense; and if he was indifferent, it was all the more to his credit that he should have exerted himself to entertain his countrywomen.

The last time he called before the arrival of the expected brother, he found Miss Theory alone, and sitting up, for a wonder, at her window. Kate had driven into Naples to give orders at the hotel for the reception of the travellers, who required accommodation more spacious than the villa at Posilippo (where the two sisters had the best rooms) could offer them; and the sick girl had taken advantage of her absence and of the pretext afforded by a day of delicious warmth, to transfer herself, for the first time in six months, to an arm-chair. She was practising, as she said, for the long carriage-journey to the north, where, in a quiet corner they knew of, on the Lago Maggiore, her summer was to be spent. Eaymond Benyon remarked to her that she had evidently turned the corner and was going to get well, and this gave her a chance to say various things that were on her mind. She had many things on her mind, poor Mildred Theory, so caged and restless, and yet so resigned and patient as she was; with a clear, quick spirit, in the most perfect health, ever reaching forward, to the end of its tense little chain, from her wasted and suffering body; and, in the course of the perfect summer afternoon, as she sat there, exhilarated by the success of her effort to get up, and by her comfortable opportunity, she took her friendly visitor into the confidence of most of her anxieties. She told him, very promptly and positively, that she was not going to get well at all, that she had probably not more than ten months yet to live, and that he would oblige her very much by not forcing her to waste any more breath in contradicting him on that point. Of course she couldn't talk much; therefore, she wished to say to him only things that he would

not hear from any one else. Such, for instance, was her present secret—Katie's and hers—the secret of their fearing so much that they shouldn't like Percival's wife, who was not from Boston, but from New York. Naturally, that by itself would be nothing, but from what they had heard of her set—this subject had been explored by their correspondents—they were rather nervous, nervous to the point of not being in the least reassured by the fact that the young lady would bring Percival a fortune. The fortune was a matter of course, for that was just what they had heard about Agnes's circle—that the stamp of money was on all their thoughts and doings. They were very rich and very new and very splashing, and evidently had very little in common with the two Miss Theoryses, who, moreover, if the truth must be told (and this was a great secret), did not care much for the letters their sister-in-law had hitherto addressed them. She had been at a French boarding-school in New York, and yet (and this was the greatest secret of all) she wrote to them that she had performed a part of the journey through France in *diligance!*

Of course, they would see the next day; Miss Mildred was sure she should know in a moment whether Agnes would like them. She could never have told him all this if her sister had been there, and Captain Benyon must promise never to reveal to Kate how she had chattered. Kate thought always that they must hide everything, and that even if Agnes should be a dreadful disappointment they must never let any one guess it. And yet Kate was just the one who would suffer, in the coming years, after she herself had gone. Their brother had been everything to them, but now it would all be different. Of course it was not to be expected that he should have remained a bachelor for their sake; she only wished he had waited till she was dead and Kate was married. One of these events, it was true, was much less sure than the other; Kate might never marry,—much as she wished she would! She was quite morbidly unselfish, and didn't think she had a right to have anything of her own—not even a husband. Miss Mildred talked a good while about Kate, and it never occurred to her that she might bore Captain Benyon. She didn't, in point of fact; he had none of the trouble of wondering why this poor, sick, worried lady was trying to push her sister down his throat. Their peculiar situation made everything natural, and the tone she took with him now seemed only what their pleasant relation for the last three months led up to. Moreover, he had an excellent reason for not being bored: the fact, namely, that after all, with regard to her sister, Miss Mildred appeared to him to keep back more than she uttered. She didn't tell him the great thing,—she had nothing to say as to what that charming girl thought of Eaymond Benyon. The effect of their interview, indeed, was to make him shrink from knowing, and he felt that the right thing for him would be to get back into his boat, which was waiting at the garden steps, before Kate Theory should return from Naples. It came over him, as he sat there, that he was far too interested in knowing what this young lady thought of him. She might think what she pleased; it could make no difference to him. The best opinion in the world—if it looked out at him from her tender eyes—would not make him a whit more free or more happy. Women of that sort were not for him, women whom one could not see familiarly without falling in love with them, and whom it was no use to fall in love with unless one was ready to marry them. The light of the summer afternoon, and of Miss Mildred's pure spirit, seemed suddenly to flood the whole subject. He saw that he was in danger, and he had long since made up his mind that from this particular peril it was not only necessary but honorable to flee. He took leave of his hostess before her sister reappeared, and had the courage even to say to her that he would not come back often after that; they would be so much occupied by their brother and his wife! As he moved across the glassy bay, to the rhythm of the oars, he wished either that the sisters would leave Naples or that his confounded commodore would send for him.

When Kate returned from her errand, ten minutes later, Milly told her of the captain's visit, and added that she had never seen anything so sudden as the way he left her. "He wouldn't wait for you, my dear, and he said he thought it more than likely that he should never see us again. It is as if he thought you were going to die too!"

"Is his ship called away?" Kate Theory asked.

"He didn't tell me so; he said we should be so busy with Percival and Agnes."

"He has got tired of us,—that's all. There's nothing wonderful in that; I knew he would."

Mildred said nothing for a moment; she was watching her sister, who was very attentively arranging some flowers. "Yes, of course, we are very dull, and he is like everybody else."

"I thought you thought he was so wonderful," said Kate, "and so fond of us."

"So he is; I am surer of that than ever. That's why he went away so abruptly."

Kate looked at her sister now. "I don't understand."

"Neither do I, darling. But you will, one of these days."

"How if he never comes back?"

"Oh, he will—after a while—when I am gone. Then he will explain; that, at least, is clear to me."

"My poor precious, as if I cared!" Kate Theory exclaimed, smiling as she distributed her flowers. She carried them to the window, to place them near her sister, and here she paused a moment, her eye caught by an object, far out in the bay, with which she was not unfamiliar. Mildred noticed its momentary look, and followed its direction.

"It's the captain's gig going back to the ship," Milly said. "It's so still one can almost hear the oars."

Kate Theory turned away, with a sudden, strange violence, a movement and exclamation which, the very next minute, as she became conscious of what she had said,—and, still more, of what she felt—smote her own heart (as it flushed her face) with surprise, and with the force of a revelation: "I wish it would sink him to the bottom of the sea!"

Her sister stared, then caught her by the dress, as she passed from her, drawing her back with a weak hand. "Oh, my dearest, my poorest!" And she pulled Kate down and down toward her, so that the girl had nothing for it but to sink on her knees and bury her face in Mildred's lap. If that ingenious invalid did not know everything now, she knew a great deal.

PART III.

V.

Mrs. Percival proved very pretty. It is more gracious to begin with this declaration, instead of saying that, in the first place, she proved very silly. It took a long day to arrive at the end of her silliness, and the two ladies at Posilippo, even after a week had passed, suspected that they had only skirted its edges. Kate Theory had not spent half an hour in her company before she gave a little private sigh of relief; she felt that a situation which had promised to be embarrassing was now quite clear, was even of a primitive simplicity. She would spend with her sister-in-law, in the coming time, one week in the year; that was all that was mortally possible. It was a blessing that one could see exactly what she was, for in that way the question settled itself. It would have been much more tiresome if Agnes had been a little less obvious; then she would have had to hesitate and consider and weigh one thing against another. She was pretty and silly, as distinctly as an orange is yellow and round; and Kate

Theory would as soon have thought of looking to her to give interest to the future as she would have thought of looking to an orange to impart solidity to the prospect of dinner. Mrs. Percival travelled in the hope of meeting her American acquaintance, or of making acquaintance with such Americans as she did meet, and for the purpose of buying mementos for her relations. She was perpetually adding to her store of articles in tortoise-shell, in mother-of-pearl, in olive-wood, in ivory, in filigree, in tartan lacquer, in mosaic; and she had a collection of Roman scarfs and Venetian beads, which she looked over exhaustively every night before she went to bed. Her conversation bore mainly upon the manner in which she intended to dispose of these accumulations. She was constantly changing about, among each other, the persons to whom they were respectively to be offered. At Borne one of the first things she said to her husband after entering the Coliseum had been: "I guess I will give the ivory work-box to Bessie and the Roman pearls to Aunt Harriet!" She was always hanging over the travellers' book at the hotel; she had it brought up to her, with a cup of chocolate, as soon as she arrived. She searched its pages for the magical name of New York, and she indulged in infinite conjecture as to who the people were—the name was sometimes only a partial cue—who had inscribed it there. What she most missed in Europe, and what she most enjoyed, were the New Yorkers; when she met them she talked about the people in their native city who had "moved" and the streets they had moved to. "Oh, yes, the Drapers are going up town, to Twenty-fourth Street, and the Vanderdeckens are going to be in Twenty-third Street, right back of them. My uncle, Henry Piatt, thinks of building round there." Mrs. Percival Theory was capable of repeating statements like these thirty times over,—of lingering on them for hours. She talked largely of herself, of her uncles and aunts, of her clothes—past, present, and future. These articles, in especial, filled her horizon; she considered them with a complacency which might have led you to suppose that she had invented the custom of draping the human form. Her main point of contact with Naples was the purchase of coral; and all the while she was there the word "set"—she used it as if every one would understand—fell with its little, flat, common sound upon the ears of her sisters-in-law, who had no sets of anything. She cared little for pictures and mountains; Alps and Apennines were not productive of New Yorkers, and it was difficult to take an interest in Madonnas who flourished at periods when, apparently, there were no fashions, or, at any rate, no trimmings.

I speak here not only of the impression she made upon her husband's anxious sisters, but of the judgment passed on her (he went so far as that, though it was not obvious how it mattered to him) by Raymond Benyon. And this brings me at a jump (I confess it's a very small one) to the fact that he did, after all, go back to Posilippo. He stayed away for nine days, and at the end of this time Percival Theory called upon him, to thank him for the civility he had shown his kinswomen. He went to this gentleman's hotel, to return his visit, and there he found Miss Kate, in her brother's sitting-room. She had come in by appointment from the villa, and was going with the others to seek the royal palace, which she had not yet had an opportunity to inspect. It was proposed (not by Kate), and presently arranged, that Captain Benyon should go with them, and he accordingly walked over marble floors for half an hour, exchanging conscious commonplaces with the woman he loved. For this truth had rounded itself during those nine days of absence; he discovered that there was nothing particularly sweet in his life when once Kate Theory had been excluded from it. He had stayed away to keep himself from falling in love with her; but this expedient was in itself illuminating, for he perceived that, according to the vulgar adage, he was locking the stable door after the horse had been stolen. As he paced the deck of his ship and looked toward Posilippo, his tenderness crystallized; the thick, smoky flame of a sentiment that knew itself forbidden and was angry at the knowledge, now danced upon the fuel of his good resolutions. The latter, it must be said, resisted, declined to be consumed. He determined that he would see Kate Theory again, for a time, just

sufficient to bid her good-by, and to add a little explanation. He thought of his explanation very lovingly, but it may not strike the reader as a happy inspiration. To part from her dryly, abruptly, without an allusion to what he might have said if everything had been different,—that would be wisdom, of course, that would be virtue, that would be the line of a practical man, of a man who kept himself well in hand. But it would be virtue terribly unrewarded,—it would be virtue too austere for a person who sometimes flattered himself that he had taught himself stoicism. The minor luxury tempted him irresistibly, since the larger—that of happy love—was denied him; the luxury of letting the girl know that it would not be an accident—oh, not at all—that they should never meet again. She might easily think it was, and thinking it was would doubtless do her no harm. But this wouldn't give him his pleasure,—the Platonic satisfaction of expressing to her at the same time his belief that they might have made each other happy, and the necessity of his renunciation. That, probably, wouldn't hurt her either, for she had given him no proof whatever that she cared for him. The nearest approach to it was the way she walked beside him now, sweet and silent, without the least reference to his not having been back to the villa. The place was cool and dusky, the blinds were drawn, to keep out the light and noise, and the little party wandered through the high saloons, where precious marbles and the gleam of gilding and satin made reflections in the rich dimness. Here and there the cicerone, in slippers, with Neapolitan familiarity, threw open a shutter to show off a picture on a tapestry. He strolled in front with Percival Theory and his wife, while this lady, drooping silently from her husband's arm as they passed, felt the stuff of the curtains and the sofas. When he caught her in these experiments, the cicerone, in expressive deprecation, clasped his hands and lifted his eyebrows; whereupon Mrs. Theory exclaimed to her husband, "Oh, bother his old king!" It was not striking to Captain Benyon why Percival Theory had married the niece of Mr. Henry Piatt. He was less interesting than his sisters,—a smooth, cool, correct young man, who frequently took out a pencil and did a little arithmetic on the back of a letter. He sometimes, in spite of his correctness, chewed a toothpick, and he missed the American papers, which he used to ask for in the most unlikely places. He was a Bostonian converted to New York; a very special type.

"Is it settled when you leave Naples?" Benyon asked of Kate Theory.

"I think so; on the twenty-fourth. My brother has been very kind; he has lent us his carriage, which is a large one, so that Mildred can lie down. He and Agnes will take another; but, of course, we shall travel together."

"I wish to Heaven I were going with you?" Captain Benyon said. He had given her the opportunity to respond, but she did not take it; she merely remarked, with a vague laugh, that of course he couldn't take his ship over the Apennines. "Yes, there is always my ship," he went on. "I am afraid that in future it will carry me far away from you."

They were alone in one of the royal apartments; their companions had passed, in advance of them, into the adjoining room. Benyon and his fellow-visitor had paused beneath one of the immense chandeliers of glass, which in the clear, colored gloom (through it one felt the strong outer light of Italy beating in) suspended its twinkling drops from the decorated vault. They looked round them confusedly, made shy for the moment by Benyon's having struck a note more serious than any that had hitherto sounded between them, looked at the sparse furniture, draped in white overalls, at the scaggiola floor, in which the great cluster of crystal pendants seemed to shine again.

"You are master of your ship. Can't you sail it as you like?" Kate Theory asked, with a smile.

"I am not master of anything. There is not a man in the world less free. I am a slave. I am a victim."

She looked at him with kind eyes; something in his voice suddenly made her put away all thought of the defensive airs that a girl, in certain situations, is expected to assume. She perceived that he wanted to make her understand something, and now her only wish was to help him to say it. "You are not happy," she murmured, simply, her voice dying away in a kind of wonderment at this reality.

The gentle touch of the words—it was as if her hand had stroked his cheek—seemed to him the sweetest thing he had ever known. "No, I am not happy, because I am not free. If I were—if I were, I would give up my ship. I would give up everything, to follow you. I can't explain; that is part of the hardness of it. I only want you to know it,—that if certain things were different, if everything was different, I might tell you that I believe I should have a right to speak to you. Perhaps some day it will change; but probably then it will be too late. Meanwhile, I have no right of any kind. I don't want to trouble you, and I don't ask of you—anything! It is only to have spoken just once. I don't make you understand, of course. I am afraid I seem to you rather a brute,—perhaps even a humbug. Don't think of it now,—don't try to understand. But some day, in the future, remember what I have said to you, and how we stood here, in this strange old place, alone! Perhaps it will give you a little pleasure."

Kate Theory began by listening to him with visible eagerness; but in a moment she turned away her eyes. "I am very sorry for you," she said, gravely.

"Then you do understand enough?"

"I shall think of what you have said, in the future."

Benyon's lips formed the beginning of a word of tenderness, which he instantly suppressed; and in a different tone, with a bitter smile and a sad shake of the head, raising his arms a moment and letting them fall, he said: "It won't hurt any one, your remembering this!"

"I don't know whom you mean." And the girl, abruptly, began to walk to the end of the room. He made no attempt to tell her whom he meant, and they proceeded together in silence till they overtook their companions.

There were several pictures in the neighboring room, and Percival Theory and his wife had stopped to look at one of them, of which the cicerone announced the title and the authorship as Benyon came up. It was a modern portrait of a Bourbon princess, a woman young, fair, handsome, covered with jewels. Mrs. Percival appeared to be more struck with it than with anything the palace had yet offered to her sight, while her sister-in-law walked to the window, which the custodian had opened, to look out into the garden. Benyon noticed this; he was conscious that he had given the girl something to reflect upon, and his ears burned a little as he stood beside Mrs. Percival and looked up, mechanically, at the royal lady. He already repented a little of what he had said, for, after all, what was the use? And he hoped the others wouldn't observe that he had been making love.

"Gracious, Percival! Do you see who she looks like?" Mrs. Theory said to her husband.

"She looks like a woman who has run up a big bill at Tiffany's," this gentleman answered.

"She looks like my sister-in-law; the eyes, the mouth, the way the hair's done,—the whole thing."

"Which do you mean? You have got about a dozen."

"Why, Georgina, of course,—Georgina Roy. She's awfully like."

"Do you call *her* your sister-in-law?" Percival Theory asked. "You must want very much to claim her."

“Well, she’s handsome enough. You have got to invent some new name, then. Captain Benyon, what do you call your brother-in-law’s second wife?” Mrs. Percival continued, turning to her neighbor, who still stood staring at the portrait. At first he had looked without seeing; then sight, and hearing as well, became quick. They were suddenly peopled with thrilling recognitions. The Bourbon princess—the eyes, the mouth, the way the hair was done; these things took on an identity, and the gaze of the painted face seemed to fasten itself to his own. But who in the world was Georgina Roy, and what was this talk about sisters-in-law? He turned to the little lady at his side a countenance unexpectedly puzzled by the problem she had airily presented to him.

“Your brother-in-law’s second wife? That’s rather complicated.”

“Well, of course, he needn’t have married again?” said Mrs. Percival, with a small sigh.

“Whom did he marry?” asked Benyon, staring.

Percival Theory had turned away. “Oh, if you are going into her relationships!” he murmured, and joined his sister at the brilliant window, through which, from the distance, the many-voiced uproar of Naples came in.

“He married first my sister Dora, and she died five years ago. Then he married *her*,” and Mrs. Percival nodded at the princess.

Benyon’s eyes went back to the portrait; he could see what she meant—it stared out at him. “Her? Georgina?”

“Georgina Gressie. Gracious, do you know her?”

It was very distinct—that answer of Mrs. Percival’s, and the question that followed it as well. But he had the resource of the picture; he could look at it, seem to take it very seriously, though it danced up and down before him. He felt that he was turning red, then he felt that he was turning pale. “The brazen impudence!” That was the way he could speak to himself now of the woman he had once loved, and whom he afterwards hated, till this had died out, too. Then the wonder of it was lost in the quickly growing sense that it would make a difference for him,—a great difference. Exactly what, he didn’t see yet; only a difference that swelled and swelled as he thought of it, and caught up, in its expansion, the girl who stood behind him so quietly, looking into the Italian garden.

The custodian drew Mrs. Percival away to show her another princess, before Benyon answered her last inquiry. This gave him time to recover from his first impulse, which had been to answer it with a negative; he saw in a moment that an admission of his acquaintance with Mrs. Roy (Mrs. Roy!—it was prodigious!) was necessarily helping him to learn more. Besides, it needn’t be compromising. Very likely Mrs. Percival would hear one day that he had once wanted to marry her. So, when he joined his companions a minute later he remarked that he had known Miss Gressie years before, and had even admired her considerably, but had lost sight of her entirely in later days. She had been a great beauty, and it was a wonder that she had not married earlier. Five years ago, was it? No, it was only two. He had been going to say that in so long a time it would have been singular he should not have heard of it. He had been away from New York for ages; but one always heard of marriages and deaths. This was a proof, though two years was rather long. He led Mrs. Percival insidiously into a further room, in advance of the others, to whom the cicerone returned. She was delighted to talk about her “connections,” and she supplied him with every detail He could trust himself now; his self-possession was complete, or, so far as it was wanting, the fault was that of a sudden gayety which he could not, on the spot, have accounted for. Of course it was not very flattering to them—Mrs. Percival’s own people—that poor Dora’s husband should have

consoled himself; but men always did it (talk of widows!) and he had chosen a girl who was—well, very fine-looking, and the sort of successor to Dora that they needn't be ashamed of. She had been awfully admired, and no one had understood why she had waited so long to marry. She had had some affair as a girl,—an engagement to an officer in the army,—and the man had jilted her, or they had quarrelled, or something or other. She was almost an old maid,—well, she was thirty, or very nearly,—but she had done something good now. She was handsomer than ever, and tremendously stylish. William Roy had one of the biggest incomes in the city, and he was quite affectionate. He had been intensely fond of Dora—he often spoke of her still, at least to her own relations; and her portrait, the last time Mrs. Percival was in his house (it was at a party, after his marriage to Miss Gressie), was still in the front parlor. Perhaps by this time he had had it moved to the back; but she was sure he would keep it somewhere, anyway. Poor Dora had had no children; but Georgina was making that all right,—she had a beautiful boy. Mrs. Percival had what she would have called quite a pleasant chat with Captain Benyon about Mrs. Roy. Perhaps *he* was the officer—she never thought of that? He was sure he had never jilted her? And he had never quarrelled with a lady? Well, he must be different from most men.

He certainly had the air of being so, before he parted that afternoon with Kate Theory. This young lady, at least, was free to think him wanting in that consistency which is supposed to be a distinctively masculine virtue. An hour before, he had taken an eternal farewell of her, and now he was alluding to future meetings, to future visits, proposing that, with her sister-in-law, she should appoint an early day for coming to see the “Louisiana.” She had supposed she understood him, but it would appear now that she had not understood him at all. His manner had changed, too. More and more off his guard, Raymond Benyon was not aware how much more hopeful an expression it gave him, his irresistible sense that somehow or other this extraordinary proceeding of his wife's would set him free. Kate Theory felt rather weary and mystified,—all the more for knowing that henceforth Captain Benyon's variations would be the most important thing in life for her.

This officer, on his ship in the bay, lingered very late on deck that night,—lingered there, indeed, under the warm southern sky, in which the stars glittered with a hot, red light, until the early dawn began to show. He smoked cigar after cigar, he walked up and down by the hour, he was agitated by a thousand reflections, he repeated to himself that it made a difference,—an immense difference; but the pink light had deepened in the east before he had discovered in what the diversity consisted. By that time he saw it clearly,—it consisted in Georgina's being in his power now, in place of his being in hers. He laughed as he sat there alone in the darkness at the thought of what she had done. It had occurred to him more than once that she would do it,—he believed her capable of anything; but the accomplished fact had a freshness of comicality. He thought of Mr. William Roy, of his big income, of his being “quite affectionate,” of his blooming son and heir, of his having found such a worthy successor to poor Mrs. Dora. He wondered whether Georgina had happened to mention to him that she had a husband living, but was strongly of the belief that she had not. Why should she, after all? She had neglected to mention it to so many others. He had thought he knew her, in so many years,—that he had nothing more to learn about her; but this ripe stroke revived his sense of her audacity. Of course it was what she had been waiting for, and if she had not done it sooner it was because she had hoped he would be lost at sea in one of his long cruises and relieve her of the necessity of a crime. How she must hate him to-day for not having been lost, for being alive, for continuing to put her in the wrong! Much as she hated him, however, his own loathing was at least a match for hers. She had done him the foulest of wrongs,—she had ravaged his life. That he should ever detest in this degree a woman whom he had once loved as he loved her, he would not have thought possible in his innocent

younger years. But he would not have thought it possible then that a woman should be such a cold-blooded devil as she had been. His love had perished in his rage,—his blinding, impotent rage at finding that he had been duped, and measuring his impotence. When he learned, years before, from Mrs. Portico, what she had done with her baby, of whose entrance into life she herself had given him no intimation, he felt that he was face to face with a full revelation of her nature. Before that it had puzzled him; it had amazed him; his relations with her were bewildering, stupefying. But when, after obtaining, with difficulty and delay, a leave of absence from Government, and betaking himself to Italy to look for the child and assume possession of it, he had encountered absolute failure and defeat,—then the case presented itself to him more simply. He perceived that he had mated himself with a creature who just happened to be a monster, a human exception altogether. That was what he couldn't pardon—her conduct about the child; never, never, never! To him she might have done what she chose,—dropped him, pushed him out into eternal cold, with his hands fast tied,—and he would have accepted it, excused her almost, admitted that it had been his business to mind better what he was about. But she had tortured him through the poor little irrecoverable son whom he had never seen, through the heart and the vitals that she had not herself, and that he had to have, poor wretch, for both of them!

All his efforts for years had been to forget these horrible months, and he had cut himself off from them so that they seemed at times to belong to the life of another person. But to-night he lived them over again; he retraced the different gradations of darkness through which he had passed, from the moment, so soon after his extraordinary marriage, when it came over him that she already repented, and meant, if possible, to elude all her obligations. This was the moment when he saw why she had reserved herself—in the strange vow she extracted from him—an open door for retreat; the moment, too, when her having had such an inspiration (in the midst of her momentary good faith, if good faith it had ever been) struck him as a proof of her essential depravity. What he had tried to forget came back to him: the child that was not his child produced for him when he fell upon that squalid nest of peasants in the Genoese country; and then the confessions, retractations, contradictions, lies, terrors, threats, and general bottomless, baffling baseness of every one in the place. The child was gone; that had been the only definite thing. The woman who had taken it to nurse had a dozen different stories,—her husband had as many,—and every one in the village had a hundred more. Georgina had been sending money,—she had managed, apparently, to send a good deal,—and the whole country seemed to have been living on it and making merry. At one moment the baby had died and received a most expensive burial; at another he had been intrusted (for more healthy air, Santissima Madonna!) to the woman's cousin in another village. According to a version, which for a day or two Benyon had inclined to think the least false, he had been taken by the cousin (for his beauty's sake) to Genoa (when she went for the first time in her life to the town to see her daughter in service there), and had been confided for a few hours to a third woman, who was to keep him while the cousin walked about the streets, but who, having no child of her own, took such a fancy to him that she refused to give him up, and a few days later left the place (she was a Pisana) never to be heard of more. The cousin had forgotten her name,—it had happened six months before. Benyon spent a year looking up and down Italy for his child, and inspecting hundreds of swaddled infants, impenetrable candidates for recognition. Of course he could only get further and further from real knowledge, and his search was arrested by the conviction that it was making him mad. He set his teeth and made up his mind (or tried to) that the baby had died in the hands of its nurse. This was, after all, much the likeliest supposition, and the woman had maintained it, in the hope of being rewarded for her candor, quite as often as she had asseverated that it was still, somewhere, alive, in the hope of being remunerated for her good news. It may be imagined with what sentiments toward his wife Benyon had emerged from this episode. To-night his

memory went further back,—back to the beginning and to the days when he had had to ask himself, with all the crudity of his first surprise, what in the name of wantonness she had wished to do with him. The answer to this speculation was so old,—it had dropped so out of the line of recurrence,—that it was now almost new again. Moreover, it was only approximate, for, as I have already said, he could comprehend such conduct as little at the end as at the beginning. She had found herself on a slope which her nature forced her to descend to the bottom. She did him the honor of wishing to enjoy his society, and she did herself the honor of thinking that their intimacy—however brief—must have a certain consecration. She felt that, with him, after his promise (he would have made any promise to lead her on), she was secure,—secure as she had proved to be, secure as she must think herself now. That security had helped her to ask herself, after the first flush of passion was over, and her native, her twice-inherited worldliness had bad time to open its eyes again, why she should keep faith with a man whose deficiencies (as a husband before the world—another affair) had been so scientifically exposed to her by her parents. So she had simply determined not to keep faith; and her determination, at least, she did keep.

By the time Benyon turned in he had satisfied himself, as I say, that Georgina was now in his power; and this seemed to him such an improvement in his situation that he allowed himself (for the next ten days) a license which made Kate Theory almost as happy as it made her sister, though she pretended to understand it far less. Mildred sank to her rest, or rose to fuller comprehensions, within the year, in the Isle of Wight, and Captain Benyon, who had never written so many letters as since they left Naples, sailed westward about the same time as the sweet survivor. For the “Louisiana” at last was ordered home.

VI.

Certainly, I will see you if you come, and you may appoint any day or hour you like. I should have seen you with pleasure any time these last years. Why should we not be friends, as we used to be? Perhaps we shall be yet. I say “perhaps” only, on purpose,—because your note is rather vague about your state of mind. Don’t come with any idea about making me nervous or uncomfortable. I am not nervous by nature, thank Heaven, and I won’t—I positively won’t (do you hear, dear Captain Benyon?)—be uncomfortable. I have been so (it served me right) for years and years; but I am very happy now. To remain so is the very definite intention of, yours ever,

Georgina Roy.

This was the answer Benyon received to a short letter that he despatched to Mrs. Roy after his return to America. It was not till he had been there some weeks that he wrote to her. He had been occupied in various ways: he had had to look after his ship; he had had to report at Washington; he had spent a fortnight with his mother at Portsmouth, N. H.; and he had paid a visit to Kate Theory in Boston. She herself was paying visits, she was staying with various relatives and friends. She had more color—it was very delicately rosy—than she had had of old, in spite of her black dress; and the effect of looking at him seemed to him to make her eyes grow still prettier. Though sisterless now, she was not without duties, and Benyon could easily see that life would press hard on her unless some one should interfere. Every one regarded her as just the person to do certain things. Every one thought she could do everything, because she had nothing else to do. She used to read to the blind, and, more onerously, to the deaf. She looked after other people’s children while the parents attended anti-slavery conventions.

She was coming to New York later to spend a week at her brother’s, but beyond this she didn’t know what she should do. Benyon felt it to be awkward that he should not be able, just

now, to tell her; and this had much to do with his coming to the point, for he accused himself of having rather hung fire. Coming to the point, for Benyon, meant writing a note to Mrs. Roy (as he must call her), in which he asked whether she would see him if he should present himself. The missive was short; it contained, in addition to what I have noted, little more than the remark that he had something of importance to say to her. Her reply, which we have just read, was prompt. Benyon designated an hour, and the next day rang the doorbell of her big modern house, whose polished windows seemed to shine defiance at him.

As he stood on the steps, looking up and down the straight vista of the Fifth Avenue, he perceived that he was trembling a little, that *he* was nervous, if she was not. He was ashamed of his agitation, and he addressed himself a very stern reprimand. Afterwards he saw that what had made him nervous was not any doubt of the goodness of his cause, but his revived sense (as he drew near her) of his wife's hardness,—her capacity for insolence. He might only break himself against that, and the prospect made him feel helpless. She kept him waiting for a long time after he had been introduced; and as he walked up and down her drawing-room, an immense, florid, expensive apartment, covered with blue satin, gilding, mirrors and bad frescos, it came over him as a certainty that her delay was calculated. She wished to annoy him, to weary him; she was as ungenerous as she was unscrupulous. It never occurred to him that in spite of the bold words of her note, she, too, might be in a tremor, and if any one in their secret had suggested that she was afraid to meet him, he would have laughed at this idea. This was of bad omen for the success of his errand; for it showed that he recognized the ground of her presumption,—his having the superstition of old promises. By the time she appeared, he was flushed,—very angry. She closed the door behind her, and stood there looking at him, with the width of the room between them.

The first emotion her presence excited was a quick sense of the strange fact that, after all these years of loneliness, such a magnificent person should be his wife. For she was magnificent, in the maturity of her beauty, her head erect, her complexion splendid, her auburn tresses undimmed, a certain plenitude in her very glance. He saw in a moment that she wished to seem to him beautiful, she had endeavored to dress herself to the best effect. Perhaps, after all, it was only for this she had delayed; she wished to give herself every possible touch. For some moments they said nothing; they had not stood face to face for nearly ten years, and they met now as adversaries. No two persons could possibly be more interested in taking each other's measure. It scarcely belonged to Georgina, however, to have too much the air of timidity; and after a moment, satisfied, apparently, that she was not to receive a broadside, she advanced, slowly rubbing her jewelled hands and smiling. He wondered why she should smile, what thought was in her mind. His impressions followed each other with extraordinary quickness of pulse, and now he saw, in addition to what he had already perceived, that she was waiting to take her cue,—she had determined on no definite line. There was nothing definite about her but her courage; the rest would depend upon him. As for her courage, it seemed to glow in the beauty which grew greater as she came nearer, with her eyes on his and her fixed smile; to be expressed in the very perfume that accompanied her steps. By this time he had got still a further impression, and it was the strangest of all. She was ready for anything, she was capable of anything, she wished to surprise him with her beauty, to remind him that it belonged, after all, at the bottom of everything, to him. She was ready to bribe him, if bribing should be necessary. She had carried on an intrigue before she was twenty; it would be more, rather than less, easy for her, now that she was thirty. All this and more was in her cold, living eyes, as in the prolonged silence they engaged themselves with his; but I must not dwell upon it, for reasons extraneous to the remarkable fact She was a truly amazing creature.

“Raymond!” she said, in a low voice, a voice which might represent either a vague greeting or an appeal.

He took no heed of the exclamation, but asked her why she had deliberately kept him waiting,—as if she had not made a fool enough of him already. She couldn’t suppose it was for his pleasure he had come into the house.

She hesitated a moment,—still with her smile. “I must tell you I have a son,—the dearest little boy. His nurse happened to be engaged for the moment, and I had to watch him. I am more devoted to him than you might suppose.”

He fell back from her a few steps. “I wonder if you are insane,” he murmured.

“To allude to my child? Why do you ask me such questions then? I tell you the simple truth. I take every care of this one. I am older and wiser. The other one was a complete mistake; he had no right to exist.”

“Why didn’t you kill him then with your own hands, instead of that torture?”

“Why didn’t I kill myself? That question would be more to the point. You are looking wonderfully well,” she broke off in another tone; “hadn’t we better sit down?”

“I didn’t come here for the advantage of conversation,” Benyon answered. And he was going on, but she interrupted him—

“You came to say something dreadful, very likely; though I hoped you would see it was better not. But just tell me this before you begin. Are you successful, are you happy? It has been so provoking, not knowing more about you.”

There was something in the manner in which this was said that caused him to break into a loud laugh; whereupon she added,—

“Your laugh is just what it used to be. How it comes back to me! You *have* improved in appearance,” she went on.

She had seated herself, though he remained standing; and she leaned back in a low, deep chair, looking up at him, with her arms folded. He stood near her and over her, as it were, dropping his baffled eyes on her, with his hand resting on the corner of the chimney-piece. “Has it never occurred to you that I may deem myself absolved from the promise made you before I married you?”

“Very often, of course. But I have instantly dismissed the idea. How can you be ‘absolved’? One promises, or one doesn’t. I attach no meaning to that, and neither do you.” And she glanced down to the front of her dress.

Benyon listened, but he went on as if he had not heard her. “What I came to say to you is this: that I should like your consent to my bringing a suit for divorce against you.”

“A suit for divorce? I never thought of that.”

“So that I may marry another woman. I can easily obtain a divorce on the ground of your desertion.”

She stared a moment, then her smile solidified, as it were, and she looked grave; but he could see that her gravity, with her lifted eyebrows, was partly assumed. “Ah, you want to marry another woman!” she exclaimed, slowly, thoughtfully. He said nothing, and she went on:

“Why don’t you do as I have done?”

“Because I don’t want my children to be—”

Before he could say the words she sprang up, checking him with a cry. "Don't say it; it isn't necessary! Of course I know what you mean; but they won't be if no one knows it."

"I should object to knowing it myself; it's enough for me to know it of yours."

"Of course I have been prepared for your saying that"

"I should hope so!" Benyon exclaimed. "You may be a bigamist if it suits you, but to me the idea is not attractive. I wish to marry—" and, hesitating a moment, with his slight stammer, he repeated, "I wish to marry—"

"Marry, then, and have done with it!" cried Mrs. Roy.

He could already see that he should be able to extract no consent from her; he felt rather sick. "It's extraordinary to me that you shouldn't be more afraid of being found out," he said after a moment's reflection. "There are two or three possible accidents."

"How do you know how much afraid I am? I have thought of every accident, in dreadful nights. How do you know what my life is, or what it has been all these miserable years?"

"You look wasted and worn, certainly."

"Ah, don't compliment me!" Georgina exclaimed. "If I had never known you—if I had not been through all this—I believe I should have been handsome. When did you hear of my marriage? Where were you at the time?"

"At Naples, more than six months ago, by a mere chance."

"How strange that it should have taken you so long! Is the lady a Neapolitan? They don't mind what they do over there."

"I have no information to give you beyond what I just said," Benyon rejoined. "My life doesn't in the least regard you."

"Ah, but it does from the moment I refuse to let you divorce me."

"You refuse?" Benyon said softly.

"Don't look at me that way! You Haven't advanced so rapidly as I used to think you would; you haven't distinguished yourself so much," she went on, irrelevantly.

"I shall be promoted commodore one of these days," Benyon answered. "You don't know much about it, for my advancement has already been very exceptionally rapid." He blushed as soon as the words were out of his mouth. She gave a light laugh on seeing it; but he took up his hat and added: "Think over a day or two what I have proposed to you. Think of the temper in which I ask it."

"The temper?" she stared. "Pray, what have you to do with temper?" And as he made no reply, smoothing his hat with his glove, she went on: "Years ago, as much as you please I you had a good right, I don't deny, and you raved, in your letters, to your heart's content That's why I wouldn't see you; I didn't wish to take it full in the face. But that's all over now, time is a healer, you have cooled off, and by your own admission you have consoled yourself. Why do you talk to me about temper! What in the world have I done to you, but let you alone?"

"What do you call this business?" Benyon asked, with his eye flashing all over the room.

"Ah, excuse me, that doesn't touch you,—it's my affair. I leave you your liberty, and I can live as I like. If I choose to live in this way, it may be queer (I admit it is, awfully), but you have nothing to say to it. If I am willing to take the risk, you may be. If I am willing to play

such an infernal trick upon a confiding gentleman (I will put it as strongly as you possibly could), I don't see what you have to say to it except that you are tremendously glad such a woman as that isn't known to be your wife!" She had been cool and deliberate up to this time; but with these words her latent agitation broke out "Do you think I have been happy? Do you think I have enjoyed existence? Do you see me freezing up into a stark old maid?"

"I wonder you stood out so long!" said Benyon.

"I wonder I did. They were bad years."

"I have no doubt they were!"

"You could do as you pleased," Georgina went on. "You roamed about the world; you formed charming relations. I am delighted to hear it from your own lips. Think of my going back to my father's house—that family vault—and living there, year after year, as Miss Gressie! If you remember my father and mother—they are round in Twelfth Street, just the same—you must admit that I paid for my folly!"

"I have never understood you; I don't understand you now," said Benyon.

She looked at him a moment. "I adored you."

"I could damn you with a word!" he went on.

The moment he had spoken she grasped his arm and held up her other hand, as if she were listening to a sound outside the room. She had evidently had an inspiration, and she carried it into instant effect. She swept away to the door, flung it open, and passed into the hall, whence her voice came back to Benyon as she addressed a person who was apparently her husband. She had heard him enter the house at his habitual hour, after his long morning at business; the closing of the door of the vestibule had struck her ear. The parlor was on a level with the hall, and she greeted him without impediment. She asked him to come in and be introduced to Captain Benyon, and he responded with due solemnity. She returned in advance of him, her eyes fixed upon Benyon and lighted with defiance, her whole face saying to him, vividly: "Here is your opportunity; I give it to you with my own hands. Break your promise and betray me if you dare! You say you can damn me with a word: speak the word and let us see!"

Benyon's heart beat faster, as he felt that it was indeed a chance; but half his emotion came from the spectacle—magnificent in its way—of her unparalleled impudence. A sense of all that he had escaped in not having had to live with her rolled over him like a wave, while he looked strangely at Mr. Roy, to whom this privilege had been vouchsafed. He saw in a moment his successor had a constitution that would carry it. Mr. Roy suggested squareness and solidity; he was a broadbased, comfortable, polished man, with a surface in which the rank tendrils of irritation would not easily obtain a foothold. He had a broad, blank face, a capacious mouth, and a small, light eye, to which, as he entered, he was engaged in adjusting a double gold-rimmed glass. He approached Benyon with a prudent, civil, punctual air, as if he habitually met a good many gentlemen in the course of business, and though, naturally, this was not that sort of occasion he was not a man to waste time in preliminaries. Benyon had immediately the impression of having seen him—or his equivalent—a thousand times before. He was middle-aged, fresh-colored, whiskered, prosperous, indefinite. Georgina introduced them to each other. She spoke of Benyon as an old friend whom she had known long before she had known Mr. Roy, who had been very kind to her years ago, when she was a girl.

"He's in the navy. He has just come back from a long cruise."

Mr. Hoy shook hands,—Benyon gave him his before he knew it,—said he was very happy, smiled, looked at Benyon from head to foot, then at Georgina, then round the room, then back at Benyon again,—at Benyon, who stood there, without sound or movement, with a dilated eye, and a pulse quickened to a degree of which Mr. Roy could have little idea. Georgina made some remark about their sitting down, but William Roy replied that he hadn't time for that,—if Captain Benyon would excuse him. He should have to go straight into the library, and write a note to send back to his office, where, as he just remembered, he had neglected to give, in leaving the place, an important direction.

“You can wait a moment, surely,” Georgina said. “Captain Benyon wants so much to see you.”

“Oh, yes, my dear; I can wait a minute, and I can come back.”

Benyon saw, accordingly, that he was waiting, and that Georgina was waiting too. Each was waiting for him to say something, though they were waiting for different things. Mr. Roy put his hands behind him, balanced himself on his toes, hoped that Captain Benyon had enjoyed his cruise,—though he shouldn't care much for the navy himself,—and evidently wondered at the stolidity of his wife's visitor. Benyon knew he was speaking, for he indulged in two or three more observations, after which he stopped. But his meaning was not present to our hero. This personage was conscious of only one thing, of his own momentary power,—of everything that hung on his lips; all the rest swam before him; there was vagueness in his ears and eyes. Mr. Roy stopped, as I say, and there was a pause, which seemed to Benyon of tremendous length. He knew, while it lasted, that Georgina was as conscious as himself that he felt his opportunity, that he held it there in his hand, weighing it noiselessly in the palm, and that she braved and scorned, or, rather, that she enjoyed, the danger. He asked himself whether he should be able to speak if he were to try, and then he knew that he should not, that the words would stick in his throat, that he should make sounds that would dishonor his cause. There was no real choice or decision, then, on Benyon's part; his silence was after all the same old silence, the fruit of other hours and places, the stillness to which Georgina listened, while he felt her eager eyes fairly eat into his face, so that his cheeks burned with the touch of them. The moments stood before him in their turn; each one was distinct. “Ah, well,” said Mr. Roy, “perhaps I interrupt,—I 'll just dash off my note” Benyon knew that he was rather bewildered, that he was making a pretext, that he was leaving the room; knew presently that Georgina again stood before him alone.

“You are exactly the man I thought you!” she announced, as joyously as if she had won a bet.

“You are the most horrible woman I can imagine. Good God! if I *had* had to live with you!” That is what he said to her in answer.

Even at this she never flushed; she continued to smile in triumph. “He adores me—but what's that to you? Of course you have all the future,” she went on; “but I know you as if I had made you!”

Benyon reflected a moment “If he adores you, you are all right. If our divorce is pronounced, you will be free, and then he can marry you properly, which he would like ever so much better.”

“It's too touching to hear you reason about it. Fancy me telling such a hideous story—about myself—me—*me!*” And she touched her breasts with her white fingers.

Benyon gave her a look that was charged with all the sickness of his helpless rage. “You—you!” he repeated, as he turned away from her and passed through the door which Mr. Roy had left open.

She followed him into the hall, she was close behind him; he moved before her as she pressed. "There was one more reason," she said. "I wouldn't be forbidden. It was my hideous pride. That's what prevents me now."

"I don't care what it is," Benyon answered, wearily, with his hand on the knob of the door.

She laid hers on his shoulder; he stood there an instant feeling it, wishing that her loathsome touch gave him the right to strike her to the earth,—to strike her so that she should never rise again.

"How clever you are, and intelligent always,—as you used to be; to feel so perfectly and know so well, without more scenes, that it's hopeless—my ever consenting! If I have, with you, the shame of having made you promise, let me at least have the profit!"

His back had been turned to her, but at this he glanced round. "To hear you talk of shame—!"

"You don't know what I have gone through; but, of course, I don't ask any pity from you. Only I should like to say something kind to you before we part I admire you, esteem you: I don't many people! Who will ever tell her, if you don't? How will she ever know, then? She will be as safe as I am. You know what that is," said Georgina, smiling.

He had opened the door while she spoke, apparently not heeding her, thinking only of getting away from her forever. In reality he heard every word she said, and felt to his marrow the lowered, suggestive tone in which she made him that last recommendation. Outside, on the steps—she stood there in the doorway—he gave her his last look. "I only hope you will die. I shall pray for that!" And he descended into the street and took his way.

It was after this that his real temptation came. Not the temptation to return betrayal for betrayal; that passed away even in a few days, for he simply knew that he couldn't break his promise, that it imposed itself on him as stubbornly as the color of his eyes or the stammer of his lips; it had gone forth into the world to live for itself, and was far beyond his reach or his authority. But the temptation to go through the form of a marriage with Kate Theory, to let her suppose that he was as free as herself, and that their children, if they should have any, would, before the law, have a right to exist,—this attractive idea held him fast for many weeks, and caused him to pass some haggard nights and days. It was perfectly possible she might learn his secret, and that, as no one could either suspect it or have an interest in bringing it to light, they both might live and die in security and honor. This vision fascinated him; it was, I say, a real temptation. He thought of other solutions,—of telling her that he was married (without telling her to whom), and inducing her to overlook such an accident, and content herself with a ceremony in which the world would see no flaw. But after all the contortions of his spirit it remained as clear to him as before that dishonor was in everything but renunciation. So, at last, he renounced. He took two steps which attested this act to himself. He addressed an urgent request to the Secretary of the Navy that he might, with as little delay as possible, be despatched on another long voyage; and he returned to Boston to tell Kate Theory that they must wait. He could explain so little that, say what he would, he was aware that he could not make his conduct seem natural, and he saw that the girl only trusted him,—that she never understood. She trusted without understanding, and she agreed to wait. When the writer of these pages last heard of the pair they were waiting still.

The Path of Duty

I.

His brilliant prospects dated from the death of his brother, who had no children, had indeed steadily refused to marry. When I say brilliant prospects, I mean the vision of the baronetcy, one of the oldest in England, of a charming seventeenth-century house, with its park, in Dorsetshire, and a property worth some twenty thousand a year. Such a collection of items is still dazzling to me, even after what you would call, I suppose, a familiarity with British grandeur. My husband isn't a baronet (or we probably shouldn't be in London in December), and he is far, alas, from having twenty thousand a year. The full enjoyment of these luxuries, on Ambrose Tester's part, was dependent naturally, on the death of his father, who was still very much to the fore at the time I first knew the young man. The proof of it is the way he kept nagging at his sons, as the younger used to say, on the question of taking a wife. The nagging had been of no avail, as I have mentioned, with regard to Francis, the elder, whose affections were centred (his brother himself told me) on the winecup and the faro-table. He was not an exemplary or edifying character, and as the heir to an honorable name and a fine estate was very unsatisfactory indeed. It had been possible in those days to put him into the army, but it was not possible to keep him there; and he was still a very young man when it became plain that any parental dream of a "career" for Frank Tester was exceedingly vain. Old Sir Edmund had thought matrimony would perhaps correct him, but a sterner process than this was needed, and it came to him one day at Monaco—he was most of the time abroad—after an illness so short that none of the family arrived in time. He was reformed altogether, he was utterly abolished.

The second son, stepping into his shoes, was such an improvement that it was impossible there should be much simulation of mourning. You have seen him, you know what he is; there is very little mystery about him. As I am not going to show this composition to you, there is no harm in my writing here that he is—or at any rate he was—a remarkably attractive man. I don't say this because he made love to me, but precisely because he didn't. He was always in love with some one else,—generally with Lady Vandeleur. You may say that in England that usually doesn't prevent; but Mr. Tester, though he had almost no intermissions, didn't, as a general thing, have duplicates. He was not provided with a second loved object, "under-studying," as they say, the part. It was his practice to keep me accurately informed of the state of his affections,—a matter about which he was never in the least vague. When he was in love he knew it and rejoiced in it, and when by a miracle he was not he greatly regretted it. He expatiated to me on the charms of other persons, and this interested me much more than if he had attempted to direct the conversation to my own, as regards which I had no illusions. He has told me some singular things, and I think I may say that for a considerable period my most valued knowledge of English society was extracted from this genial youth. I suppose he usually found me a woman of good counsel, for certain it is that he has appealed to me for the light of wisdom in very extraordinary predicaments. In his earlier years he was perpetually in hot water; he tumbled into scrapes as children tumble into puddles. He invited them, he invented them; and when he came to tell you how his trouble had come about (and he always told the whole truth), it was difficult to believe that a man should have been so idiotic.

And yet he was not an idiot; he was supposed to be very clever, and certainly is very quick and amusing. He was only reckless, and extraordinarily natural, as natural as if he had been an Irishman. In fact, of all the Englishmen that I have known he is the most Irish in

temperament (though he has got over it comparatively of late). I used to tell him that it was a great inconvenience that he didn't speak with a brogue, because then we should be forewarned, and know with whom we were dealing. He replied that, by analogy, if he were Irish enough to have a brogue he would probably be English, which seemed to me an answer wonderfully in character. Like most young Britons of his class he went to America, to see the great country, before he was twenty, and he took a letter to my father, who had occasion, *à propos* of some pickle of course, to render him a considerable service. This led to his coming to see me—I had already been living here three or four years—on his return; and that, in the course of time, led to our becoming fast friends, without, as I tell you, the smallest philandering on either side. But I mustn't protest too much; I shall excite your suspicion. "If he has made love to so many women, why shouldn't he have made love to you?"—some inquiry of that sort you will be likely to make. I have answered it already, "Simply on account of those very engagements." He couldn't make love to every one, and with me it wouldn't have done him the least good. It was a more amiable weakness than his brother's, and he has always behaved very well. How well he behaved on a very important occasion is precisely the subject of my story.

He was supposed to have embraced the diplomatic career; had been secretary of legation at some German capital; but after his brother's death he came home and looked out for a seat in Parliament. He found it with no great trouble and has kept it ever since. No one would have the heart to turn him out, he is so good-looking. It's a great thing to be represented by one of the handsomest men in England, it creates such a favorable association of ideas. Any one would be amazed to discover that the borough he sits for, and the name of which I am always forgetting, is not a very pretty place. I have never seen it, and have no idea that it isn't, and I am sure he will survive every revolution. The people must feel that if they shouldn't keep him some monster would be returned. You remember his appearance,—how tall, and fair, and strong he is, and always laughing, yet without looking silly. He is exactly the young man girls in America figure to themselves—in the place of the hero—when they read English novels, and wish to imagine something very aristocratic and Saxon. A "bright Bostonian" who met him once at my house, exclaimed as soon as he had gone out of the room, "At last, at last, I behold it, the mustache of Roland Tremayne!"

"Of Roland Tremayne!"

"Don't you remember in *A Lawless Love*, how often it's mentioned, and how glorious and golden it was? Well, I have never seen it till now, but now I *have* seen it!"

If you hadn't seen Ambrose Tester, the best description I could give of him would be to say that he looked like Roland Tremayne. I don't know whether that hero was a "strong Liberal," but this is what Sir Ambrose is supposed to be. (He succeeded his father two years ago, but I shall come to that.) He is not exactly what I should call thoughtful, but he is interested, or thinks he is, in a lot of things that I don't understand, and that one sees and skips in the newspapers,—volunteering, and redistribution, and sanitation, and the representation of minors—minorities—what is it? When I said just now that he is always laughing, I ought to have explained that I didn't mean when he is talking to Lady Vandeleur. She makes him serious, makes him almost solemn; by which I don't mean that she bores him. Far from it; but when he is in her company he is thoughtful; he pulls his golden mustache, and Roland Tremayne looks as if his vision were turned in, and he were meditating on her words. He doesn't say much himself; it is she—she used to be so silent—who does the talking. She has plenty to say to him; she describes to him the charms that she discovers in the path of duty. He seldom speaks in the House, I believe, but when he does it's offhand, and amusing, and sensible, and every one likes it. He will never be a great statesman, but he will add to the

softness of Dorsetshire, and remain, in short, a very gallant, pleasant, prosperous, typical English gentleman, with a name, a fortune, a perfect appearance, a devoted, bewildered little wife, a great many reminiscences, a great many friends (including Lady Vandeleur and myself), and, strange to say, with all these advantages, something that faintly resembles a conscience.

II.

Five years ago he told me his father insisted on his marrying,—would not hear of his putting it off any longer. Sir Edmund had been harping on this string ever since he came back from Germany, had made it both a general and a particular request, not only urging him to matrimony in the abstract, but pushing him into the arms of every young woman in the country. Ambrose had promised, procrastinated, temporized; but at last he was at the end of his evasions, and his poor father had taken the tone of supplication. “He thinks immensely of the name, of the place and all that, and he has got it into his head that if I don’t marry before he dies, I won’t marry after.” So much I remember Ambrose Tester said to me. “It’s a fixed idea; he has got it on the brain. He wants to see me married with his eyes, and he wants to take his grandson in his arms. Not without that will he be satisfied that the whole thing will go straight. He thinks he is nearing his end, but he isn’t,—he will live to see a hundred, don’t you think so?—and he has made me a solemn appeal to put an end to what he calls his suspense. He has an idea some one will get hold of me—some woman I can’t marry. As if I were not old enough to take care of myself!”

“Perhaps he is afraid of me,” I suggested, facetiously.

“No, it isn’t you,” said my visitor, betraying by his tone that it was some one, though he didn’t say whom. “That’s all rot, of course; one marries sooner or later, and I shall do like every one else. If I marry before I die, it’s as good as if I marry before he dies, isn’t it? I should be delighted to have the governor at my wedding, but it isn’t necessary for the legality, is it?”

I asked him what he wished me to do, and how I could help him. He knew already my peculiar views, that I was trying to get husbands for all the girls of my acquaintance and to prevent the men from taking wives. The sight of an unmarried woman afflicted me, and yet when my male friends changed their state I took it as a personal offence. He let me know that so far as he was concerned I must prepare myself for this injury, for he had given his father his word that another twelvemonth should not see him a bachelor. The old man had given him *carte blanche*; he made no condition beyond exacting that the lady should have youth and health. Ambrose Tester, at any rate, had taken a vow and now he was going seriously to look about him. I said to him that what must be must be, and that there were plenty of charming girls about the land, among whom he could suit himself easily enough. There was no better match in England, I said, and he would only have to make his choice. That however is not what I thought, for my real reflections were summed up in the silent exclamation, “What a pity Lady Vandeleur isn’t a widow!” I hadn’t the smallest doubt that if she were he would marry her on the spot; and after he had gone I wondered considerably what *she* thought of this turn in his affairs. If it was disappointing to me, how little it must be to *her* taste! Sir Edmund had not been so much out of the way in fearing there might be obstacles to his son’s taking the step he desired. Margaret Vandeleur was an obstacle. I knew it as well as if Mr. Tester had told me.

I don’t mean there was anything in their relation he might not freely have alluded to, for Lady Vandeleur, in spite of her beauty and her tiresome husband, was not a woman who could be accused of an indiscretion. Her husband was a pedant about trifles,—the shape of his hatbrim,

the *pose* of his coachman, and cared for nothing else; but she was as nearly a saint as one may be when one has rubbed shoulders for ten years with the best society in Europe. It is a characteristic of that society that even its saints are suspected, and I go too far in saying that little pinpricks were not administered, in considerable numbers to her reputation. But she didn't feel them, for still more than Ambrose Tester she was a person to whose happiness a good conscience was necessary. I should almost say that for her happiness it was sufficient, and, at any rate, it was only those who didn't know her that pretended to speak of her lightly. If one had the honor of her acquaintance one might have thought her rather shut up to her beauty and her grandeur, but one couldn't but feel there was something in her composition that would keep her from vulgar aberrations. Her husband was such a feeble type that she must have felt doubly she had been put upon her honor. To deceive such a man as that was to make him more ridiculous than he was already, and from such a result a woman bearing his name may very well have shrunk. Perhaps it would have been worse for Lord Vandeleur, who had every pretension of his order and none of its amiability, if he had been a better, or at least, a cleverer man. When a woman behaves so well she is not obliged to be careful, and there is no need of consulting appearances when one is one's self an appearance. Lady Vandeleur accepted Ambrose Tester's attentions, and Heaven knows they were frequent; but she had such an air of perfect equilibrium that one couldn't see her, in imagination, bend responsive. Incense was incense, but one saw her sitting quite serene among the fumes. That honor of her acquaintance of which I just now spoke it had been given me to enjoy; that is to say, I met her a dozen times in the season in a hot crowd, and we smiled sweetly and murmured a vague question or two, without hearing, or even trying to hear, each other's answer. If I knew that Ambrose Tester was perpetually in and out of her house and always arranging with her that they should go to the same places, I doubt whether she, on her side, knew how often he came to see me. I don't think he would have let her know, and am conscious, in saying this, that it indicated an advanced state of intimacy (with her, I mean).

I also doubt very much whether he asked her to look about, on his behalf, for a future Lady Tester. This request he was so good as to make of me; but I told him I would have nothing to do with the matter. If Joscelind is unhappy, I am thankful to say the responsibility is not mine. I have found English husbands for two or three American girls, but providing English wives is a different affair. I know the sort of men that will suit women, but one would have to be very clever to know the sort of women that will suit men. I told Ambrose Tester that he must look out for himself, but, in spite of his promise, I had very little belief that he would do anything of the sort. I thought it probable that the old baronet would pass away without seeing a new generation come in; though when I intimated as much to Mr. Tester, he made answer in substance (it was not quite so crudely said) that his father, old as he was, would hold on till his bidding was done, and if it should not be done, he would hold on out of spite. "Oh, he will tire me out;" that I remember Ambrose Tester did say. I had done him injustice, for six months later he told me he was engaged. It had all come about very suddenly. From one day to the other the right young woman had been found. I forget who had found her; some aunt or cousin, I think; it had not been the young man himself. But when she was found, he rose to the occasion; he took her up seriously, he approved of her thoroughly, and I am not sure that he didn't fall a little in love with her, ridiculous (excuse my London tone) as this accident may appear. He told me that his father was delighted, and I knew afterwards that he had good reason to be. It was not till some weeks later that I saw the girl; but meanwhile I had received the pleasantest impression of her, and this impression came—must have come—mainly from what her intended told me. That proves that he spoke with some positiveness, spoke as if he really believed he was doing a good thing. I had it on my tongue's end to ask him how Lady Vandeleur liked her, but I fortunately checked this vulgar inquiry. He liked her evidently, as I say; every one liked her, and when I knew her I liked her better even than

the others. I like her to-day more than ever; it is fair you should know that, in reading this account of her situation. It doubtless colors my picture, gives a point to my sense of the strangeness of my little story.

Joscelind Bernardstone came of a military race, and had been brought up in camps,—by which I don't mean she was one of those objectionable young women who are known as garrison hacks. She was in the flower of her freshness, and had been kept in the tent, receiving, as an only daughter, the most "particular" education from the excellent Lady Emily (General Bernardstone married a daughter of Lord Clanduflly), who looks like a pink-faced rabbit, and is (after Joscelind) one of the nicest women I know. When I met them in a country-house, a few weeks after the marriage was "arranged," as they say here, Joscelind won my affections by saying to me, with her timid directness (the speech made me feel sixty years old), that she must thank me for having been so kind to Mr. Tester. You saw her at Doubleton, and you will remember that though she has no regular beauty, many a prettier woman would be very glad to look like her. She is as fresh as a new-laid egg, as light as a feather, as strong as a mail-phaeton. She is perfectly mild, yet she is clever enough to be sharp if she would. I don't know that clever women are necessarily thought ill-natured, but it is usually taken for granted that amiable women are very limited. Lady Tester is a refutation of the theory, which must have been invented by a vixenish woman who was *not* clever. She has an adoration for her husband, which absorbs her without in the least making her silly, unless indeed it is silly to be modest, as in this brutal world I sometimes believe. Her modesty is so great that being unhappy has hitherto presented itself to her as a form of egotism,—that egotism which she has too much delicacy to cultivate. She is by no means sure that if being married to her beautiful baronet is not the ideal state she dreamed it, the weak point of the affair is not simply in her own presumption. It doesn't express her condition, at present, to say that she is unhappy or disappointed, or that she has a sense of injury. All this is latent; meanwhile, what is obvious, is that she is bewildered,—she simply doesn't understand; and her perplexity, to me, is unspeakably touching. She looks about her for some explanation, some light. She fixes her eyes on mine sometimes, and on those of other people, with a kind of searching dumbness, as if there were some chance that I—that they—may explain, may tell her what it is that has happened to her. I can explain very well, but not to her,—only to you!

III.

It was a brilliant match for Miss Bernardstone, who had no fortune at all, and all her friends were of the opinion that she had done very well. After Easter she was in London with her people, and I saw a good deal of them, in fact, I rather cultivated them. They might perhaps even have thought me a little patronizing, if they had been given to thinking that sort of thing. But they were not; that is not in their line. English people are very apt to attribute motives,—some of them attribute much worse ones than we poor simpletons in America recognize, than we have even heard of! But that is only some of them; others don't, but take everything literally and genially. That was the case with the Bernardstones; you could be sure that on their way home, after dining with you, they wouldn't ask each other how in the world any one could call you pretty, or say that many people *did* believe, all the same, that you had poisoned your grandfather.

Lady Emily was exceedingly gratified at her daughter's engagement; of course she was very quiet about it, she didn't clap her hands or drag in Mr. Tester's name; but it was easy to see that she felt a kind of maternal peace, an abiding satisfaction. The young man behaved as well as possible, was constantly seen with Joscelind, and smiled down at her in the kindest, most protecting way. They looked beautiful together; you would have said it was a duty for

people whose color matched so well to marry. Of course he was immensely taken up, and didn't come very often to see me; but he came sometimes, and when he sat there he had a look which I didn't understand at first. Presently I saw what it expressed; in my drawing-room he was off duty, he had no longer to sit up and play a part; he would lean back and rest and draw a long breath, and forget that the day of his execution was fixed. There was to be no indecent haste about the marriage; it was not to take place till after the session, at the end of August. It puzzled me and rather distressed me. That his heart shouldn't be a little more in the matter; it seemed strange to be engaged to so charming a girl and yet go through with it as if it were simply a social duty. If one hadn't been in love with her at first, one ought to have been at the end of a week or two. If Ambrose Tester was not (and to me he didn't pretend to be), he carried it off, as I have said, better than I should have expected. He was a gentleman, and he behaved like a gentleman, with the added punctilio, I think, of being sorry for his betrothed. But it was difficult to see what, in the long run, he could expect to make of such a position. If a man marries an ugly, unattractive woman for reasons of state, the thing is comparatively simple; it is understood between them, and he need have no remorse at not offering her a sentiment of which there has been no question. But when he picks out a charming creature to gratify his father and *les convenances*, it is not so easy to be happy in not being able to care for her. It seemed to me that it would have been much better for Ambrose Tester to bestow himself upon a girl who might have given him an excuse for tepidity. His wife should have been healthy but stupid, prolific but morose. Did he expect to continue not to be in love with Joscelind, or to conceal from her the mechanical nature of his attentions? It was difficult to see how he could wish to do the one or succeed in doing the other. Did he expect such a girl as that would be happy if he didn't love her? and did he think himself capable of being happy if it should turn out that she was miserable? If she shouldn't be miserable,—that is, if she should be indifferent, and, as they say, console herself, would he like that any better?

I asked myself all these questions and I should have liked to ask them of Mr. Tester; but I didn't, for after all he couldn't have answered them. Poor young man! he didn't pry into things as I do; he was not analytic, like us Americans, as they say in reviews. He thought he was behaving remarkably well, and so he was—for a man; that was the strange part of it. It had been proper that in spite of his reluctance he should take a wife, and he had dutifully set about it. As a good thing is better for being well done, he had taken the best one he could possibly find. He was enchanted with—with his young lady, you might ask? Not in the least; with himself; that is the sort of person a man is! Their virtues are more dangerous than their vices, and Heaven preserve you when they want to keep a promise! It is never a promise to *you*, you will notice. A man will sacrifice a woman to live as a gentleman should, and then ask for your sympathy—for *him*! And I don't speak of the bad ones, but of the good. They, after all, are the worst. Ambrose Tester, as I say, didn't go into these details, but synthetic as he might be, was conscious that his position was false. He felt that sooner or later, and rather sooner than later, he would have to make it true,—a process that couldn't possibly be agreeable. He would really have to make up his mind to care for his wife or not to care for her. What would Lady Vandeleur say to one alternative, and what would little Joscelind say to the other? That is what it was to have a pertinacious father and to be an accommodating son. With me, it was easy for Ambrose Tester to be superficial, for, as I tell you, if I didn't wish to engage him, I didn't wish to disengage him, and I didn't insist. Lady Vandeleur insisted, I was afraid; to be with her was of course very complicated; even more than Miss Bernardstone she must have made him feel that his position was false. I must add that he once mentioned to me that she had told him he ought to marry. At any rate, it is an immense thing to be a pleasant fellow. Our young fellow was so universally pleasant that of course his *fiancée* came in for her share. So did Lady Emily, suffused with hope, which made her

pinkier than ever; she told me he sent flowers even to her. One day in the Park, I was riding early; the Row was almost empty. I came up behind a lady and gentleman who were walking their horses, close to each other, side by side. In a moment I recognized her, but not before seeing that nothing could have been more benevolent than the way Ambrose Tester was bending over his future wife. If he struck me as a lover at that moment, of course he struck her so. But that isn't the way they ride to-day.

IV.

One day, about the end of June, he came in to see me when I had two or three other visitors; you know that even at that season I am almost always at home from six to seven. He had not been three minutes in the room before I saw that he was different,—different from what he had been the last time, and I guessed that something had happened in relation to his marriage. My visitors didn't, unfortunately, and they stayed and stayed until I was afraid he would have to go away without telling me what, I was sure, he had come for. But he sat them out; I think that by exception they didn't find him pleasant. After we were alone he abused them a little, and then he said, "Have you heard about Vandeleur? He 's very ill. She's awfully anxious." I hadn't heard, and I told him so, asking a question or two; then my inquiries ceased, my breath almost failed me, for I had become aware of something very strange. The way he looked at me when he told me his news was a full confession,—a confession so full that I had needed a moment to take it in. He was not too strong a man to be taken by surprise,—not so strong but that in the presence of an unexpected occasion his first movement was to look about for a little help. I venture to call it help, the sort of thing he came to me for on that summer afternoon. It is always help when a woman who is not an idiot lets an embarrassed man take up her time. If he too is not an idiot, that doesn't diminish the service; on the contrary his superiority to the average helps him to profit. Ambrose Tester had said to me more than once, in the past, that he was capable of telling me things, because I was an American, that he wouldn't confide to his own people. He had proved it before this, as I have hinted, and I must say that being an American, with him, was sometimes a questionable honor. I don't know whether he thinks us more discreet and more sympathetic (if he keeps up the system: he has abandoned it with me), or only more insensible, more proof against shocks; but it is certain that, like some other Englishmen I have known, he has appeared, in delicate cases, to think I would take a comprehensive view. When I have inquired into the grounds of this discrimination in our favor, he has contented himself with saying, in the British-cursory manner, "Oh, I don't know; you are different!" I remember he remarked once that our impressions were fresher. And I am sure that now it was because of my nationality, in addition to other merits, that he treated me to the confession I have just alluded to. At least I don't suppose he would have gone about saying to people in general, "Her husband will probably die, you know; then why shouldn't I marry Lady Vandeleur?"

That was the question which his whole expression and manner asked of me, and of which, after a moment, I decided to take no notice. Why shouldn't he? There was an excellent reason why he shouldn't. It would just kill Joscelind Bernardstone; that was why he shouldn't? The idea that he should be ready to do it frightened me, and independent as he might think my point of view, I had no desire to discuss such abominations. It struck me as an abomination at this very first moment, and I have never wavered in my judgment of it. I am always glad when I can take the measure of a thing as soon as I see it; it 's a blessing to *feel* what we think, without balancing and comparing. It's a great rest, too, and a great luxury. That, as I say, was the case with the feeling excited in me by this happy idea of Ambrose Tester's. Cruel and wanton I thought it then, cruel and wanton I thought it later, when it was pressed upon me. I knew there were many other people that didn't agree with me, and I can only hope for them that their conviction was as quick and positive as mine; it all depends upon the way

a thing strikes one. But I will add to this another remark. I thought I was right then, and I still think I was right; but it strikes me as a pity that I should have wished so much to be right. Why couldn't I be content to be wrong; to renounce my influence (since I appeared to possess the mystic article), and let my young friend do as he liked? As you observed the situation at Doubleton, shouldn't you say it was of a nature to make one wonder whether, after all, one did render a service to the younger lady?

At all events, as I say, I gave no sign to Ambrose Tester that I understood him, that I guessed what he wished to come to. He got no satisfaction out of me that day; it is very true that he made up for it later. I expressed regret at Lord Vandeleur's illness, inquired into its nature and origin, hoped it wouldn't prove as grave as might be feared, said I would call at the house and ask about him, commiserated discreetly her ladyship, and in short gave my young man no chance whatever. He knew that I had guessed his *arrière-pensée*, but he let me off for the moment, for which I was thankful; either because he was still ashamed of it, or because he supposed I was reserving myself for the catastrophe,—should it occur. Well, my dear, it did occur, at the end of ten days. Mr. Tester came to see me twice in that interval, each time to tell me that poor Vandeleur was worse; he had some internal inflammation which, in nine cases out of ten, is fatal. His wife was all devotion; she was with him night and day. I had the news from other sources as well; I leave you to imagine whether in London, at the height of the season, such a situation could fail to be considerably discussed. To the discussion as yet, however, I contributed little, and with Ambrose Tester nothing at all. I was still on my guard. I never admitted for a moment that it was possible there should be any change in his plans. By this time, I think, he had quite ceased to be ashamed of his idea, he was in a state almost of exaltation about it; but he was very angry with me for not giving him an opening.

As I look back upon the matter now, there is something almost amusing in the way we watched each other,—he thinking that I evaded his question only to torment him (he believed me, or pretended to believe me, capable of this sort of perversity), and I determined not to lose ground by betraying an insight into his state of mind which he might twist into an expression of sympathy. I wished to leave my sympathy where I had placed it, with Lady Emily and her daughter, of whom I continued, bumping against them at parties, to have some observation. They gave no signal of alarm; of course it would have been premature. The girl, I am sure, had no idea of the existence of a rival. How they had kept her in the dark I don't know; but it was easy to see she was too much in love to suspect or to criticise. With Lady Emily it was different; she was a woman of charity, but she touched the world at too many points not to feel its vibrations. However, the dear little woman planted herself firmly; to the eye she was still enough. It was not from Ambrose Tester that I first heard of Lord Vandeleur's death; it was announced, with a quarter of a column of "padding," in the *Times*. I have always known the *Times* was a wonderful journal, but this never came home to me so much as when it produced a quarter of a column about Lord Vandeleur. It was a triumph of word-spinning. If he had carried out his vocation, if he had been a tailor or a hatter (that's how I see him), there might have been something to say about him. But he missed his vocation, he missed everything but posthumous honors. I was so sure Ambrose Tester would come in that afternoon, and so sure he knew I should expect him, that I threw over an engagement on purpose. But he didn't come in, nor the next day, nor the next. There were two possible explanations of his absence. One was that he was giving all his time to consoling Lady Vandeleur; the other was that he was giving it all, as a blind, to Joscelind Bernardstone. Both proved incorrect, for when he at last turned up he told me he had been for a week in the country, at his father's. Sir Edmund also had been unwell; but he had pulled through better than poor Lord Vandeleur. I wondered at first whether his son had been talking over with him the question of a change of base; but guessed in a moment that he had not

suffered this alarm. I don't think that Ambrose would have spared him if he had thought it necessary to give him warning; but he probably held that his father would have no ground for complaint so long as he should marry some one; would have no right to remonstrate if he simply transferred his contract. Lady Vandeleur had had two children (whom she had lost), and might, therefore, have others whom she shouldn't lose; that would have been a reply to nice discriminations on Sir Edmund's part.

V.

In reality, what the young man had been doing was thinking it over beneath his ancestral oaks and beeches. His countenance showed this,—showed it more than Miss Bernardstone could have liked. He looked like a man who was crossed, not like a man who was happy, in love. I was no more disposed than before to help him out with his plot, but at the end of ten minutes we were articulately discussing it. When I say *we* were, I mean he was; for I sat before him quite mute, at first, and amazed at the clearness with which, before his conscience, he had argued his case. He had persuaded himself that it was quite a simple matter to throw over poor Joscelind and keep himself free for the expiration of Lady Vandeleur's term of mourning. The deliberations of an impulsive man sometimes land him in strange countries. Ambrose Tester confided his plan to me as a tremendous secret. He professed to wish immensely to know how it appeared to me, and whether my woman's wit couldn't discover for him some loophole big enough round, some honorable way of not keeping faith. Yet at the same time he seemed not to foresee that I should, of necessity, be simply horrified. Disconcerted and perplexed (a little), that he was prepared to find me; but if I had refused, as yet, to come to his assistance, he appeared to suppose it was only because of the real difficulty of suggesting to him that perfect pretext of which he was in want. He evidently counted upon me, however, for some illuminating proposal, and I think he would have liked to say to me, "You have always pretended to be a great friend of mine,"—I hadn't; the pretension was all on his side,—"and now is your chance to show it. Go to Joscelind and make her feel (women have a hundred ways of doing that sort of thing), that through Vandeleur's death the change in my situation is complete. If she is the girl I take her for, she will know what to do in the premises."

I was not prepared to oblige him to this degree, and I lost no time in telling him so, after my first surprise at seeing how definite his purpose had become. His contention, after all, was very simple. He had been in love with Lady Vandeleur for years, and was now more in love with her than ever. There had been no appearance of her being, within a calculable period, liberated by the death of her husband. This nobleman was—he didn't say what just then (it was too soon)—but he was only forty years old, and in such health and preservation as to make such a contingency infinitely remote. Under these circumstances, Ambrose had been driven, for the most worldly reasons—he was ashamed of them, pah!—into an engagement with a girl he didn't love, and didn't pretend to love. Suddenly the unexpected occurred; the woman he did love had become accessible to him, and all the relations of things were altered.

Why shouldn't he alter, too? Why shouldn't Miss Bernardstone alter, Lady Emily alter, and every one alter? It would be *wrong* in him to marry Joscelind in so changed a world;—a moment's consideration would certainly assure me of that. He could no longer carry out his part of the bargain, and the transaction must stop before it went any further. If Joscelind knew, she would be the first to recognize this, and the thing for her now was to know.

"Go and tell her, then, if you are so sure of it," I said. "I wonder you have put it off so many days."

He looked at me with a melancholy eye. "Of course I know it's beastly awkward."

It was beastly awkward certainly; there I could quite agree with him, and this was the only sympathy he extracted from me. It was impossible to be less helpful, less merciful, to an embarrassed young man than I was on that occasion. But other occasions followed very quickly, on which Mr. Tester renewed his appeal with greater eloquence. He assured me that it was torture to be with his intended, and every hour that he didn't break off committed him more deeply and more fatally. I repeated only once my previous question,—asked him only once why then he didn't tell her he had changed his mind. The inquiry was idle, was even unkind, for my young man was in a very tight place. He didn't tell her, simply because he couldn't, in spite of the anguish of feeling that his chance to right himself was rapidly passing away. When I asked him if Joscelind appeared to have guessed nothing, he broke out, "How in the world can she guess, when I am so kind to her? I am so sorry for her, poor little wretch, that I can't help being nice to her. And from the moment I am nice to her she thinks it's all right."

I could see perfectly what he meant by that, and I liked him more for this little generosity than I disliked him for his nefarious scheme. In fact, I didn't dislike him at all when I saw what an influence my judgment would have on him. I very soon gave him the full benefit of it. I had thought over his case with all the advantages of his own presentation of it, and it was impossible for me to see how he could decently get rid of the girl. That, as I have said, had been my original opinion, and quickened reflection only confirmed it. As I have also said, I hadn't in the least recommended him to become engaged; but once he had done so I recommended him to abide by it. It was all very well being in love with Lady Vandeleur; he might be in love with her, but he hadn't promised to marry her. It was all very well not being in love with Miss Bernardstone; but, as it happened, he had promised to marry her, and in my country a gentleman was supposed to keep such promises. If it was a question of keeping them only so long as was convenient, where would any of us be? I assure you I became very eloquent and moral,—yes, moral, I maintain the word, in spite of your perhaps thinking (as you are very capable of doing) that I ought to have advised him in just the opposite sense. It was not a question of love, but of marriage, for he had never promised to love poor Joscelind. It was useless his saying it was dreadful to marry without love; he knew that he thought it, and the people he lived with thought it, nothing of the kind. Half his friends had married on those terms. "Yes, and a pretty sight their private life presented!" That might be, but it was the first time I had ever heard him say it. A fortnight before he had been quite ready to do like the others. I knew what I thought, and I suppose I expressed it with some clearness, for my arguments made him still more uncomfortable, unable as he was either to accept them or to act in contempt of them. Why he should have cared so much for my opinion is a mystery I can't elucidate; to understand my little story, you must simply swallow it. That he did care is proved by the exasperation with which he suddenly broke out, "Well, then, as I understand you, what you recommend me is to marry Miss Bernardstone, and carry on an intrigue with Lady Vandeleur!"

He knew perfectly that I recommended nothing of the sort, and he must have been very angry to indulge in this *boutade*. He told me that other people didn't think as I did—that every one was of the opinion that between a woman he didn't love and a woman he had adored for years it was a plain moral duty not to hesitate. "Don't hesitate then!" I exclaimed; but I didn't get rid of him with this, for he returned to the charge more than once (he came to me so often that I thought he must neglect both his other alternatives), and let me know again that the voice of society was quite against my view. You will doubtless be surprised at such an intimation that he had taken "society" into his confidence, and wonder whether he went about asking people whether they thought he might back out. I can't tell you exactly, but I know that for some weeks his dilemma was a great deal talked about. His friends perceived he was

at the parting of the roads, and many of them had no difficulty in saying which one *they* would take. Some observers thought he ought to do nothing, to leave things as they were. Others took very high ground and discoursed upon the sanctity of love and the wickedness of really deceiving the girl, as that would be what it would amount to (if he should lead her to the altar). Some held that it was too late to escape, others maintained that it is never too late. Some thought Miss Bernardstone very much to be pitied; some reserved their compassion for Ambrose Tester; others, still, lavished it upon Lady Vandeleur.

The prevailing opinion, I think, was that he ought to obey the promptings of his heart—London cares so much for the heart! Or is it that London is simply ferocious, and always prefers the spectacle that is more entertaining? As it would prolong the drama for the young man to throw over Miss Bernardstone, there was a considerable readiness to see the poor girl sacrificed. She was like a Christian maiden in the Roman arena. That is what Ambrose Tester meant by telling me that public opinion was on his side. I don't think he chattered about his quandary, but people, knowing his situation, guessed what was going on in his mind, and he on his side guessed what they said. London discussions might as well go on in the whispering-gallery of St. Paul's. I could of course do only one thing,—I could but reaffirm my conviction that the Roman attitude, as I may call it, was cruel, was falsely sentimental. This naturally didn't help him as he wished to be helped,—didn't remove the obstacle to his marrying in a year or two Lady Vandeleur. Yet he continued to look to me for inspiration,—I must say it at the cost of making him appear a very feeble-minded gentleman. There was a moment when I thought him capable of an oblique movement, of temporizing with a view to escape. If he succeeded in postponing his marriage long enough, the Bernardstones would throw *him* over, and I suspect that for a day he entertained the idea of fixing this responsibility on them. But he was too honest and too generous to do so for longer, and his destiny was staring him in the face when an accident gave him a momentary relief. General Bernardstone died, after an illness as sudden and short as that which had carried off Lord Vandeleur; his wife and daughter were plunged into mourning and immediately retired into the country. A week later we heard that the girl's marriage would be put off for several months,—partly on account of her mourning, and partly because her mother, whose only companion she had now become, could not bear to part with her at the time originally fixed and actually so near. People of course looked at each other,—said it was the beginning of the end, a “dodge” of Ambrose Tester's. I wonder they didn't accuse him of poisoning the poor old general. I know to a certainty that he had nothing to do with the delay, that the proposal came from Lady Emily, who, in her bereavement, wished, very naturally, to keep a few months longer the child she was going to lose forever. It must be said, in justice to her prospective son-in-law, that he was capable either of resigning himself or of frankly (with however many blushes) telling Joscilind he couldn't keep his agreement, but was not capable of trying to wriggle out of his difficulty. The plan of simply telling Joscilind he couldn't,—this was the one he had fixed upon as the best, and this was the one of which I remarked to him that it had a defect which should be counted against its advantages. The defect was that it would kill Joscilind on the spot.

I think he believed me, and his believing me made this unexpected respite very welcome to him. There was no knowing what might happen in the interval, and he passed a large part of it in looking for an issue. And yet, at the same time, he kept up the usual forms with the girl whom in his heart he had renounced. I was told more than once (for I had lost sight of the pair during the summer and autumn) that these forms were at times very casual, that he neglected Miss Bernardstone most flagrantly, and had quite resumed his old intimacy with Lady Vandeleur. I don't exactly know what was meant by this, for she spent the first three months of her widowhood in complete seclusion, in her own old house in Norfolk, where he

certainly was not staying with her. I believe he stayed some time, for the partridge shooting, at a place a few miles off. It came to my ears that if Miss Bernardstone didn't take the hint it was because she was determined to stick to him through thick and thin. She never offered to let him off, and I was sure she never would; but I was equally sure that, strange as it may appear, he had not ceased to be nice to her. I have never exactly understood why he didn't hate her, and I am convinced that he was not a comedian in his conduct to her,—he was only a good fellow. I have spoken of the satisfaction that Sir Edmund took in his daughter-in-law that was to be; he delighted in looking at her, longed for her when she was out of his sight, and had her, with her mother, staying with him in the country for weeks together. If Ambrose was not so constantly at her side as he might have been, this deficiency was covered by his father's devotion to her, by her appearance of being already one of the family. Mr. Tester was away as he might be away if they were already married.

VI.

In October I met him at Doubleton; we spent three days there together. He was enjoying his respite, as he didn't scruple to tell me; and he talked to me a great deal—as usual—about Lady Vandeleur. He didn't mention Joscelind's name, except by implication in this assurance of how much he valued his weeks of grace.

“Do you mean to say that, under the circumstances, Lady Vandeleur is willing to marry you?”

I made this inquiry more expressively, doubtless, than before; for when we had talked of the matter then he had naturally spoken of her consent as a simple contingency. It was contingent upon the lapse of the first months of her bereavement; it was not a question he could begin to press a few days after her husband's death.

“Not immediately, of course; but if I wait, I think so.” That, I remember, was his answer.

“If you wait till you get rid of that poor girl, of course.”

“She knows nothing about that,—it's none of her business.”

“Do you mean to say she doesn't know you are engaged?”

“How should she know it, how should she believe it, when she sees how I love her?” the young man exclaimed; but he admitted afterwards that he had not deceived her, and that she rendered full justice to the motives that had determined him. He thought he could answer for it that she would marry him some day or other.

“Then she is a very cruel woman,” I said, “and I should like, if you please, to hear no more about her.” He protested against this, and, a month later, brought her up again, for a purpose. The purpose, you will see, was a very strange one indeed. I had then come back to town; it was the early part of December. I supposed he was hunting, with his own hounds; but he appeared one afternoon in my drawing-room and told me I should do him a great favor if I would go and see Lady Vandeleur.

“Go and see her? Where do you mean, in Norfolk?”

“She has come up to London—didn't you know it? She has a lot of business. She will be kept here till Christmas; I wish you would go.”

“Why should I go?” I asked. “Won't you be kept here till Christmas too, and isn't that company enough for her?”

“Upon my word, you are cruel,” he said, “and it's a great shame of you, when a man is trying to do his duty and is behaving like a saint.”

“Is that what you call saintly, spending all your time with Lady Vandeleur? I will tell you whom I think a saint, if you would like to know.”

“You needn’t tell me; I know it better than you. I haven’t a word to say against her; only she is stupid and hasn’t any perceptions. If I am stopping a bit in London you don’t understand why; it’s as if you hadn’t any perceptions either! If I am here for a few days, I know what I am about.”

“Why should I understand?” I asked,—not very candidly, because I should have been glad to. “It’s your own affair; you know what you are about, as you say, and of course you have counted the cost.”

“What cost do you mean? It’s a pretty cost, I can tell you.” And then he tried to explain—if I would only enter into it, and not be so suspicious. He was in London for the express purpose of breaking off.

“Breaking off what,—your engagement?”

“No, no, damn my engagement,—the other thing. My acquaintance, my relations—”

“Your intimacy with Lady Van—?” It was not very gentle, but I believe I burst out laughing. “If this is the way you break off, pray what would you do to keep up?”

He flushed, and looked both foolish and angry, for of course it was not very difficult to see my point. But he was—in a very clumsy manner of his own—trying to cultivate a good conscience, and he was getting no credit for it. “I suppose I may be allowed to look at her! It’s a matter we have to talk over. One doesn’t drop such a friend in half an hour.”

“One doesn’t drop her at all, unless one has the strength to make a sacrifice.”

“It’s easy for you to talk of sacrifice. You don’t know what she is!” my visitor cried.

“I think I know what she is not. She is not a friend, as you call her, if she encourages you in the wrong, if she doesn’t help you. No, I have no patience with her,” I declared; “I don’t like her, and I won’t go to see her!”

Mr. Tester looked at me a moment, as if he were too vexed to trust himself to speak. He had to make an effort not to say something rude. That effort however, he was capable of making, and though he held his hat as if he were going to walk out of the house, he ended by staying, by putting it down again, by leaning his head, with his elbows on his knees, in his hands, and groaning out that he had never heard of anything so impossible, and that he was the most wretched man in England. I was very sorry for him, and of course I told him so; but privately I didn’t think he stood up to his duty as he ought. I said to him, however, that if he would give me his word of honor that he would not abandon Miss Bernardstone, there was no trouble I wouldn’t take to be of use to him. I didn’t think Lady Vandeleur *was* behaving well. He must allow me to repeat that; but if going to see her would give him any pleasure (of course there was no question of pleasure for *her*) I would go fifty times. I couldn’t imagine how it would help him, but I would do it as I would do anything else he asked me. He didn’t give me his word of honor, but he said quietly, “I shall go straight; you needn’t be afraid;” and as he spoke there was honor enough in his face. This left an opening, of course, for another catastrophe. There might be further postponements, and poor Lady Emily, indignant for the first time in her life, might declare that her daughter’s situation had become intolerable and that they withdrew from the engagement. But this was too odious a chance, and I accepted Mr. Tester’s assurance. He told me that the good I could do by going to see Lady Vandeleur was that it would cheer her up, in that dreary, big house in Upper Brook Street, where she was absolutely alone, with horrible overalls on the furniture, and

newspapers—actually newspapers—on the mirrors. She was seeing no one, there was no one to see; but he knew she would see me. I asked him if she knew, then, he was to speak to me of coming, and whether I might allude to him, whether it was not too delicate. I shall never forget his answer to this, nor the tone in which he made it, blushing a little, and looking away. “Allude to me? Rather!” It was not the most fatuous speech I had ever heard; it had the effect of being the most modest; and it gave me an odd idea, and especially a new one, of the condition in which, at any time, one might be destined to find Lady Vandeleur. If she, too, were engaged in a struggle with her conscience (in this light they were an edifying pair!) it had perhaps changed her considerably, made her more approachable; and I reflected, ingeniously, that it probably had a humanizing effect upon her. Ambrose Tester didn’t go away after I had told him that I would comply with his request. He lingered, fidgeting with his stick and gloves, and I perceived that he had more to tell me, and that the real reason why he wished me to go and see Lady Vandeleur was not that she had newspapers on her mirrors. He came out with it at last, for that “Rather!” of his (with the way I took it) had broken the ice.

“You say you don’t think she behaved well” (he naturally wished to defend her). “But I dare say you don’t understand her position. Perhaps you wouldn’t behave any better in her place.”

“It’s very good of you to imagine me there!” I remarked, laughing.

“It’s awkward for me to say. One doesn’t want to dot one’s i’s to that extent.”

“She would be delighted to marry you. That’s not such a mystery.”

“Well, she likes me awfully,” Mr. Tester said, looking like a handsome child. “It’s not all on one side; it’s on both. That’s the difficulty.”

“You mean she won’t let you go?—she holds you fast?”

But the poor fellow had, in delicacy, said enough, and at this he jumped up. He stood there a moment, smoothing his hat; then he broke out again: “Please do this. Let her know—make her feel. You can bring it in, you know.” And here he paused, embarrassed.

“What can I bring in, Mr. Tester? That’s the difficulty, as you say.”

“What you told me the other day. You know. What you have told me before.”

“What I have told you—?”

“That it would put an end to Joscelind! If you can’t work round to it, what’s the good of being—you?” And with this tribute to my powers he took his departure.

VII.

It was all very well of him to be so flattering, but I really didn’t see myself talking in that manner to Lady Vandeleur. I wondered why he didn’t give her this information himself, and what particular value it could have as coming from me. Then I said to myself that of course he *had* mentioned to her the truth I had impressed upon him (and which by this time he had evidently taken home), but that to enable it to produce its full effect upon Lady Vandeleur the further testimony of a witness more independent was required. There was nothing for me but to go and see her, and I went the next day, fully conscious that to execute Mr. Tester’s commission I should have either to find myself very brave or to find her strangely confidential; and fully prepared, also, not to be admitted. But she received me, and the house in Upper Brook Street was as dismal as Ambrose Tester had represented it. The December fog (the afternoon was very dusky) seemed to pervade the muffled rooms, and her ladyship’s pink lamplight to waste itself in the brown atmosphere. He had mentioned to me that the heir

to the title (a cousin of her husband), who had left her unmolested for several months, was now taking possession of everything, so that what kept her in town was the business of her "turning out," and certain formalities connected with her dower. This was very ample, and the large provision made for her included the London house. She was very gracious on this occasion, but she certainly had remarkably little to say. Still, she was different, or at any rate (having taken that hint), I saw her differently. I saw, indeed, that I had never quite done her justice, that I had exaggerated her stiffness, attributed to her a kind of conscious grandeur which was in reality much more an accident of her appearance, of her figure, than a quality of her character. Her appearance is as grand as you know, and on the day I speak of, in her simplified mourning, under those vaguely gleaming *lambris*, she looked as beautiful as a great white lily. She is very simple and good-natured; she will never make an advance, but she will always respond to one, and I saw, that evening, that the way to get on with her was to treat her as if she were not too imposing. I saw also that, with her nun-like robes and languid eyes, she was a woman who might be immensely in love. All the same, we hadn't much to say to each other. She remarked that it was very kind of me to come, that she wondered how I could endure London at that season, that she had taken a drive and found the Park too dreadful, that she would ring for some more tea if I didn't like what she had given me. Our conversation wandered, stumbling a little, among these platitudes, but no allusion was made on either side to Ambrose Tester. Nevertheless, as I have said, she was different, though it was not till I got home that I phrased to myself what I had detected.

Then, recalling her white face, and the deeper, stranger expression of her beautiful eyes, I entertained myself with the idea that she was under the influence of "suppressed exaltation." The more I thought of her the more she appeared to me not natural; wound up, as it were, to a calmness beneath which there was a deal of agitation. This would have been nonsense if I had not, two days afterwards, received a note from her which struck me as an absolutely "exalted" production. Not superficially, of course; to the casual eye it would have been perfectly commonplace. But this was precisely its peculiarity, that Lady Vandeleur should have written me a note which had no apparent point save that she should like to see me again, a desire for which she did succeed in assigning a reason. She reminded me that she was paying no calls, and she hoped I wouldn't stand on ceremony, but come in very soon again, she had enjoyed my visit so much. We had not been on note-writing terms, and there was nothing in that visit to alter our relations; moreover, six months before, she would not have dreamed of addressing me in that way. I was doubly convinced, therefore, that she was passing through a crisis, that she was not in her normal state of nerves. Mr. Tester had not reappeared since the occasion I have described at length, and I thought it possible he had been capable of the bravery of leaving town. I had, however, no fear of meeting him in Upper Brook Street; for, according to my theory of his relations with Lady Vandeleur, he regularly spent his evenings with her, it being clear to me that they must dine together. I could answer her note only by going to see her the next day, when I found abundant confirmation of that idea about the crisis. I must confess to you in advance that I have never really understood her behavior,—never understood why she should have taken me so suddenly—with whatever reserves, and however much by implication merely—into her confidence. All I can say is that this is an accident to which one is exposed with English people, who, in my opinion, and contrary to common report, are the most demonstrative, the most expansive, the most gushing in the world. I think she felt rather isolated at this moment, and she had never had many intimates of her own sex. That sex, as a general thing, disapproved of her proceedings during the last few months, held that she was making Joscelind Bernardstone suffer too cruelly. She possibly felt the weight of this censure, and at all events was not above wishing some one to know that whatever injury had fallen upon the girl to whom Mr. Tester had so stupidly

engaged himself, had not, so far as she was concerned, been wantonly inflicted. I was there, I was more or less aware of her situation, and I would do as well as any one else.

She seemed really glad to see me, but she was very nervous. Nevertheless, nearly half an hour elapsed, and I was still wondering whether she had sent for me only to discuss the question of how a London house whose appointments had the stamp of a debased period (it had been thought very handsome in 1850) could be “done up” without being made æsthetic. I forget what satisfaction I gave her on this point; I was asking myself how I could work round in the manner prescribed by Joscelind’s intended. At the last, however, to my extreme surprise, Lady Vandeleur herself relieved me of this effort.

“I think you know Mr. Tester rather well,” she remarked, abruptly, irrelevantly, and with a face more conscious of the bearings of things than any I had ever seen her wear. On my confessing to such an acquaintance, she mentioned that Mr. Tester (who had been in London a few days—perhaps I had seen him) had left town and wouldn’t come back for several weeks. This, for the moment, seemed to be all she had to communicate; but she sat looking at me from the corner of her sofa as if she wished me to profit in some way by the opportunity she had given me. Did she want help from outside, this proud, inscrutable woman, and was she reduced to throwing out signals of distress? Did she wish to be protected against herself,—applauded for such efforts as she had already made? I didn’t rush forward, I was not precipitate, for I felt that now, surely, I should be able at my convenience to execute my commission. What concerned me was not to prevent Lady Vandeleur’s marrying Mr. Tester, but to prevent Mr. Tester’s marrying her. In a few moments—with the same irrelevance—she announced to me that he wished to, and asked whether I didn’t know it I saw that this was my chance, and instantly, with extreme energy, I exclaimed,—

“Ah, for Heaven’s sake don’t listen to him! It would kill Miss Bernardstone!”

The tone of my voice made her color a little, and she repeated, “Miss Bernardstone?”

“The girl he is engaged to,—or has been,—don’t you know? Excuse me, I thought every one knew.”

“Of course I know he is dreadfully entangled. He was fairly hunted down.” Lady Vandeleur was silent a moment, and then she added, with a strange smile, “Fancy, in such a situation, his wanting to marry me!”

“Fancy!” I replied. I was so struck with the oddity of her telling me her secrets that for the moment my indignation did not come to a head,—my indignation, I mean, at her accusing poor Lady Emily (and even the girl herself) of having “trapped” our friend. Later I said to myself that I supposed she was within her literal right in abusing her rival, if she was trying sincerely to give him up. “I don’t know anything about his having been hunted down,” I said; “but this I do know, Lady Vandeleur, I assure you, that if he should throw Joscelind over she would simply go out like that!” And I snapped my fingers.

Lady Vandeleur listened to this serenely enough; she tried at least to take the air of a woman who has no need of new arguments. “Do you know her very well?” she asked, as if she had been struck by my calling Miss Bernardstone by her Christian name.

“Well enough to like her very much.” I was going to say “to pity her;” but I thought better of it.

“She must be a person of very little spirit. If a man were to jilt me, I don’t think I should go out!” cried her ladyship with a laugh.

“Nothing is more probable than that she has not your courage or your wisdom. She may be weak, but she is passionately in love with him.”

I looked straight into Lady Vandeleur’s eyes as I said this, and I was conscious that it was a tolerably good description of my hostess.

“Do you think she would really die?” she asked in a moment.

“Die as if one should stab her with a knife. Some people don’t believe in broken hearts,” I continued. “I didn’t till I knew Joscelind Bernardstone; then I felt that she had one that wouldn’t be proof.”

“One ought to live,—one ought always to live,” said Lady Vandeleur; “and always to hold up one’s head.”

“Ah, I suppose that one oughtn’t to feel at all, if one wishes to be a great success.”

“What do you call a great success?” she asked.

“Never having occasion to be pitied.”

“Being pitied? That must be odious!” she said; and I saw that though she might wish for admiration, she would never wish for sympathy. Then, in a moment, she added that men, in her opinion, were very base,—a remark that was deep, but not, I think, very honest; that is, in so far as the purpose of it had been to give me the idea that Ambrose Tester had done nothing but press her, and she had done nothing but resist. They were very odd, the discrepancies in the statements of each of this pair; but it must be said for Lady Vandeleur that now that she had made up her mind (as I believed she had) to sacrifice herself, she really persuaded herself that she had not had a moment of weakness. She quite unbosomed herself, and I fairly assisted at her crisis. It appears that she had a conscience,—very much so, and even a high ideal of duty. She represented herself as moving heaven and earth to keep Ambrose Tester up to the mark, and you would never have guessed from what she told me that she had entertained ever so faintly the idea of marrying him. I am sure this was a dreadful perversion, but I forgave it on the score of that exaltation of which I have spoken. The things she said, and the way she said them, come back to me, and I thought that if she looked as handsome as that when she preached virtue to Mr. Tester, it was no wonder he liked the sermon to be going on perpetually.

“I dare say you know what old friends we are; but that doesn’t make any difference, does it? Nothing would induce me to marry him,—I Haven’t the smallest intention of marrying again. It is not a time for me to think of marrying, before his lordship has been dead six months. The girl is nothing to me; I know nothing about her, and I don’t wish to know; but I should be very, very sorry if she were unhappy. He is the best friend I ever had, but I don’t see that that’s any reason I should marry him, do you?” Lady Vandeleur appealed to me, but without waiting for my answers, asking advice in spite of herself, and then remembering it was beneath her dignity to appear to be in need of it. “I have told him that if he doesn’t act properly I shall never speak to him again. She’s a charming girl, every one says, and I have no doubt she will make him perfectly happy. Men don’t feel things like women, I think, and if they are coddled and flattered they forget the rest. I have no doubt she is very sufficient for all that. For me, at any rate, once I see a thing in a certain way, I must abide by that I think people are so dreadful,—they do such horrible things. They don’t seem to think what one’s duty may be. I don’t know whether you think much about that, but really one must at times, don’t you think so? Every one is so selfish, and then, when they have never made an effort or a sacrifice themselves, they come to you and talk such a lot of hypocrisy. I know so much better than any one else whether I should marry or not. But I don’t mind telling you that I

don't see why I should. I am not in such a bad position,—with my liberty and a decent maintenance.”

In this manner she rambled on, gravely and communicatively, contradicting herself at times; not talking fast (she never did), but dropping one simple sentence, with an interval, after the other, with a certain richness of voice which always was part of the charm of her presence. She wished to be convinced against herself, and it was a comfort to her to hear herself argue. I was quite willing to be part of the audience, though I had to confine myself to very superficial remarks; for when I had said the event I feared would kill Miss Bernardstone I had said everything that was open to me. I had nothing to do with Lady Vandeleur's marrying, apart from that I probably disappointed her. She had caught a glimpse of the moral beauty of self-sacrifice, of a certain ideal of conduct (I imagine it was rather new to her), and would have been glad to elicit from me, as a person of some experience of life, an assurance that such joys are not insubstantial. I had no wish to wind her up to a spiritual ecstasy from which she would inevitably descend again, and I let her deliver herself according to her humor, without attempting to answer for it that she would find renunciation the road to bliss. I believed that if she should give up Mr. Tester she would suffer accordingly; but I didn't think that a reason for not giving him up. Before I left her she said to me that nothing would induce her to do anything that she didn't think right. “It would be no pleasure to me, don't you see? I should be always thinking that another way would have been better. Nothing would induce me,—nothing, nothing!”

VIII.

She protested too much, perhaps, but the event seemed to show that she was in earnest. I have described these two first visits of mine in some detail, but they were not the only ones I paid her. I saw her several times again, before she left town, and we became intimate, as London intimacies are measured. She ceased to protest (to my relief, for it made me nervous), she was very gentle, and gracious, and reasonable, and there was something in the way she looked and spoke that told me that for the present she found renunciation its own reward. So far, my scepticism was put to shame; her spiritual ecstasy maintained itself. If I could have foreseen then that it would maintain itself till the present hour I should have felt that Lady Vandeleur's moral nature is finer indeed than mine. I heard from her that Mr. Tester remained at his father's, and that Lady Emily and her daughter were also there. The day for the wedding had been fixed, and the preparations were going rapidly forward. Meanwhile—she didn't tell me, but I gathered it from things she dropped—she was in almost daily correspondence with the young man. I thought this a strange concomitant of his bridal arrangements; but apparently, henceforth, they were bent on convincing each other that the torch of virtue lighted their steps, and they couldn't convince each other too much. She intimated to me that she had now effectually persuaded him (always by letter), that he would fail terribly if he should try to found his happiness on an injury done to another, and that of course she could never be happy (in a union with him), with the sight of his wretchedness before her. That a good deal of correspondence should be required to elucidate this is perhaps after all not remarkable. One day, when I was sitting with her (it was just before she left town), she suddenly burst into tears. Before we parted I said to her that there were several women in London I liked very much,—that was common enough,—but for her I had a positive respect, and that was rare. My respect continues still, and it sometimes makes me furious.

About the middle of January Ambrose Tester reappeared in town. He told me he came to bid me good-by. He was going to be beheaded. It was no use saying that old relations would be the same after a man was married; they would be different, everything would be different. I had wanted him to marry, and now I should see how I liked it He didn't mention that I had

also wanted him not to marry, and I was sure that if Lady Vandeleur had become his wife, she would have been a much greater impediment to our harmless friendship than Joscelind Bernardstone would ever be. It took me but a short time to observe that he was in very much the same condition as Lady Vandeleur. He was finding how sweet it is to renounce, hand in hand with one we love. Upon him, too, the peace of the Lord had descended. He spoke of his father's delight at the nuptials being so near at hand; at the festivities that would take place in Dorsetshire when he should bring home his bride. The only allusion he made to what we had talked of the last time we were together was to exclaim suddenly, "How can I tell you how easy she has made it? She is so sweet, so noble. She really is a perfect creature!" I took for granted that he was talking of his future wife, but in a moment, as we were at cross-purposes, perceived that he meant Lady Vandeleur. This seemed to me really ominous. It stuck in my mind after he had left me. I was half tempted to write him a note, to say, "There is, after all, perhaps, something worse than your jilting Miss Bernardstone would be; and that is the danger that your rupture with Lady Vandeleur may become more of a bond than your marrying her would have been For Heaven's sake, let your sacrifice *be* a sacrifice; keep it in its proper place!"

Of course I didn't write; even the slight responsibility I had already incurred began to frighten me, and I never saw Mr. Tester again till he was the husband of Joscelind Bernardstone. They have now been married some four years; they have two children, the eldest of whom is, as he should be, a boy. Sir Edmund waited till his grandson had made good his place in the world, and then, feeling it was safe, he quietly, genially surrendered his trust. He died, holding the hand of his daughter-in-law, and giving it doubtless a pressure which was an injunction to be brave. I don't know what he thought of the success of his plan for his son; but perhaps, after all, he saw nothing amiss, for Joscelind is the last woman in the world to have troubled him with her sorrows. From him, no doubt, she successfully concealed that bewilderment on which I have touched. You see I speak of her sorrows as if they were a matter of common recognition; certain it is that any one who meets her must see that she doesn't pass her life in joy. Lady Vandeleur, as you know, has never married again; she is still the most beautiful widow in England. She enjoys the esteem of every one, as well as the approbation of her conscience, for every one knows the sacrifice she made, knows that she was even more in love with Sir Ambrose than he was with her. She goes out again, of course, as of old, and she constantly meets the baronet and his wife. She is supposed to be even "very nice" to Lady Tester, and she certainly treats her with exceeding civility. But you know (or perhaps you don't know) all the deadly things that, in London, may lie beneath that method. I don't in the least mean that Lady Vandeleur has any deadly intentions; she is a very good woman, and I am sure that in her heart she thinks she lets poor Joscelind off very easily. But the result of the whole situation is that Joscelind is in dreadful fear of her, for how can she help seeing that she has a very peculiar power over her husband? There couldn't have been a better occasion for observing the three together (if together it may be called, when Lady Tester is so completely outside), than those two days of ours at Doubleton. That's a house where they have met more than once before; I think she and Sir Ambrose like it. By "she" I mean, as he used to mean, Lady Vandeleur. You saw how Lady Tester was absolutely white with uneasiness. What can she do when she meets everywhere the implication that if two people in our time have distinguished themselves for their virtue, it is her husband and Lady Vandeleur? It is my impression that this pair are exceedingly happy. His marriage *has* made a difference, and I see him much less frequently and less intimately. But when I meet him I notice in him a kind of emanation of quiet bliss. Yes, they are certainly in felicity, they have trod the clouds together, they have soared into the blue, and they wear in their faces the glory of those altitudes. They encourage, they cheer, inspire, sustain, each other, remind each other that they have chosen the better part Of course they have to meet for this purpose, and their

interviews are filled, I am sure, with its sanctity. He holds up his head, as a man may who on a very critical occasion behaved like a perfect gentleman. It is only poor Joscelind that droops. Haven't I explained to you now why she doesn't understand?

THE END

I'm Julie, the woman who runs [Global Grey](#) - the website where this ebook was published. These are my own formatted editions, and I hope you enjoyed reading this particular one.

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