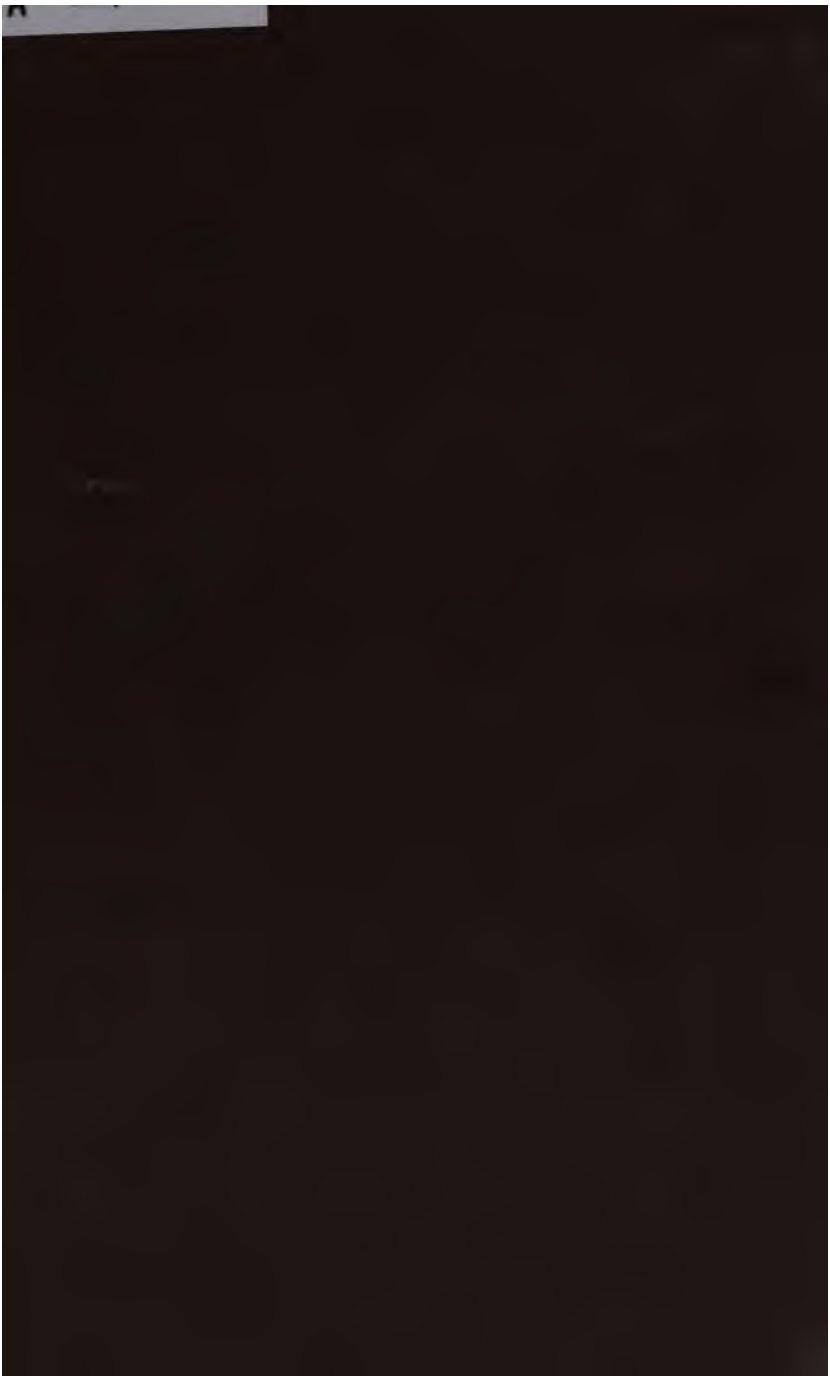

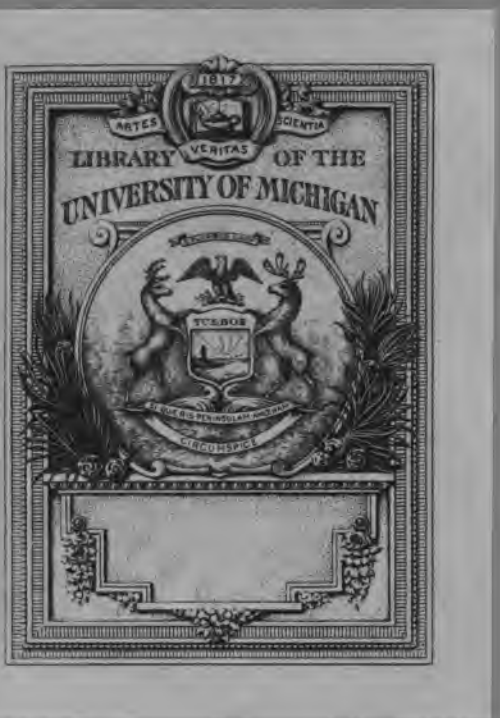
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STORIES REVIVED

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IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

GEORGINA'S REASONS. A PASSIONATE PILGRIM. A LANDSCAPE-PAINTER. ROSE-AGATHE.

BY

HENRY JAMES

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STORIES REVIVED.

GEORGINA'S REASONS.

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. Raymond Benyon had had these opportunities, and, being fond of women, he had learned 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, 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 a person 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 an 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 smitten with him, though she seemed willing (what was so strange) to quarrel with her family about him. He didn't see how she could really care for him—she was 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 finger-tips!" 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 Georgina 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 Georgina 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 favour an aspirant who, on the face of the matter, was not original, and whose Corsica was a flat New England seaport; but it afterwards 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 meddlesome 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?"

II.

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 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 favourable 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 afterwards. 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 meddlesome 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 parlour 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 polite 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 part, 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 spring afternoons. 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 rustling, 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 still more 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 needed 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 hundred 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.

III.

"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 little hard, piercing 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 my 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 kind of cynical 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 shall not 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 way 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 coloured. "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 especial 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 the nature of women is a queer mosaic. 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. It now appeared that she was not especially anxious to defy; she was disposed rather to manage and temporise.

"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 favour, which was simply that the finest 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 honour 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 finally presented itself to the young officer as the course most worthy of a lover and a gentleman. 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 aloft 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 parlour-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 pleasant 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.

IV.

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-coloured 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 bar-keeper 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 Gressies, 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, fraternising 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 quickly by praying that heaven would give her an opportunity to act out 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 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 who should be beautiful and romantic, with wistful 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 give actuality to this vision; 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 challenge, 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 am 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 measure 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 Haarlem, 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 a dear old man, a regular grandmother, and perfectly safe. He had been married three times himself, and the first time in the same way. 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 should 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, domestic girl, sitting there with a hand in hers and pouring forth her 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 would 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 favour, 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 *would* 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 Benyon was less to her than he had been before. Well, so he was; yes, he was. He had gone away—he was off, goodness 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.

V.

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 analysing 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 sank back, and sprang 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 for ever! There was nothing shameful in having married poor Mr. Benyon, even in a little church at Haarlem, 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 dense, 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 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 who 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 to 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 odd 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 immediately, he has such talents. He is devoted to his profession; it would ruin him to leave it."

"My dear young woman, you are a living wonder!" 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 would 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 baby 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 for ever. Never do anything in the matter himself, but to leave it to me. For this he has given me his solemn word of honour, and I know what that means!"

Mrs. Portico, on the sofa, fairly bounced.

"You do know what you are about! And Mr. Benyon strikes me as more demented even than yourself. I never heard of a man putting his head into such a noose. 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 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 favourite cupboard—faced her young friend for a moment. Then her conflicting sentiments resolved themselves into an abrupt question, implying, for Mrs. Portico, much subtlety: "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 predominately 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 are a precious 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 precious 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 Georgina'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 behaviour of a young person whom she had hitherto believed to be as candid as she was stylish, 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!"

VI.

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 successive phases of the girl's appeal, 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, irresistibly, transmuted the cynical 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 —she absolutely couldn't—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 over-mastered, 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 favour their love-affair she would have done it openly, 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 mercurial 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 plain 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 altered," 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 familiarise 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 colour 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 business-like completeness of Georgina's precautions. Her nerve, 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 his 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 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.

VII.

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 Rome, 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 for ever. 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 poor little mortal without exposing her, she could say that he was a lovely baby—he was lovely, fortunately—whom she had picked up in a wretched village in Italy, a village that had been devastated by brigands. She could 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 falser still, would be in some measure an atonement for the treachery to which she had already surrendered herself. She began to hate Georgina, who had dragged her into such an abyss, 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 detestation of her companion increased; Georgina came to appear to her a creature of clay and 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 Rome notified her that the air of the Seven Hills was plainly unfavourable 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 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.

VIII.

"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 on which 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, *poverina*, 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 just to remind her 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 how to 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 remodelled. 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 door-mat 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 splendour 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 winter 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 colour 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 meagre and dusky — 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 lady 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.

IX.

THE day I speak of, to change the subject, she called her sister's attention to the extraordinary sharpness of a zigzaging cloud-shadow on the tinted slope of Vesuvius; but Mildred remarked in answer only 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 very well off. 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 girl, 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. Theory from Rome.

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 particular 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 danger of becoming entangled with 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 shirt-front—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 with her sister, and it would matter very little to her whether he advanced or retreated. She was very attractive, or rather she was 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 carry a sad face to a sick-bed. 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, jocular friendliness remained the tone of their intercourse. 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 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 decidedly youthful mariner. But his expression was old, and his talk was older still—the talk of a man 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 who had kept most of their illusions, left you with the conviction that the next minute it would go quickly back to its own stand-point. 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.

X.

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. Raymond 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 in her mind. She had various 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 a twelvemonth 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 head. 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 Theorys, 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 a "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 tell 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 relations 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 Raymond 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 honourable to flee. He took leave of his hostess before her sister reappeared, and had the courage even to say to her that he should 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 is all. There is 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, *cara*. 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 darling dear!" And she drew 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.

XI.

MRS. PERCIVAL proved very pretty; it is more gracious to begin with this declaration, instead of saying, in the first place, that she proved very vapid.

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 would be 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 one 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 Rome 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, was 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, Mr. Henry Platt, 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 look at 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 crystallised; 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-bye 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 even for a person who 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 satis-

faction 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 come 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 or 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 Platt. 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, coloured gloom, through which 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 scagliola 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 her 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 rejoined, "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.

XII.

THERE were several pictures in the neighbouring 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 lady who has 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 neighbour, 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 lightly 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 Cora, 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 gaiety 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 Cora'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 Cora 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 striking. William Roy had one of the biggest incomes in the city, and he was quite affectionate. He had been intensely fond of Cora—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 parlour. Perhaps by this time he had had it moved to the back; but she was sure he would keep it somewhere, anyway. Poor Cora 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.

XIII.

THAT officer, on his ship in the bay, lingered very late on the 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 change 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 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 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. Cora. He wondered whether Georgina had mentioned 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 neither would he 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 mocked 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 human vitals that she had not herself,

and that he had to have, poor wretch, for both of them.

All his effort, for years, had been to forget those 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 mendacity and idiocy 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 entrusted (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, inscrutable 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 candour, 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 perversity 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 baseness 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 honour of wishing to enjoy his society, and she did herself the honour 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. That security had helped her to ask herself, after the first flush of passion was over, and her native, her twice-inherited worldliness had had 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.

XIV.

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 colour—it was very delicately rosy—than she had had of old, in

spite of her black dress; and the effect of her 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 had no idea 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 hinted, 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 rang the door-bell 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 were not. He was ashamed of his agitation,

and he pulled himself vigorously together. 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 frescoes, 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 recognised 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 endeavoured 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 a still 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 continued.

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 I 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 at 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. It will simplify our situation."

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 horrid years? But every one is dead."

"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 have 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 extraordinary 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. It's a perfectly possible proceeding. 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! 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, tremendously), 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 exceedingly 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 exclaimed.

XV.

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 apparently was 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 parlour 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 broad-based, 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-coloured, 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 is in the navy. He has just come back from a long cruise."

Mr. Roy 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 vacuity 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 which would dishonour his cause. There was no real choice nor 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 will just dash off my note." Benyon knew that he was rather bewildered, that he was making a protest, 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 to live with you!" That is what he said to her in answer.

Even at this she never flinched; 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 considered 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 so much. 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 wide while she spoke, apparently not heeding her, thinking only of getting away from her for ever. 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 colour 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 never 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 honour. 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 dishonour 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.

1884.

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, of which I had dreamed much but as yet knew nothing. I had formed in Italy and France a resolute preference for old inns, deeming 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, far to the east of Temple Bar, deep in what I used to denominate the Johnsonian city. 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 apartment 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 discover romantic meanings in it.

The latent preparedness of the American mind

for even the most characteristic features of English life is a fact I never have got to the bottom of. The roots of it are so deeply buried in the soil of our early culture that, without some great upheaval of experience, it would be hard to say exactly when and where and how it begins. It makes an American's enjoyment of England an emotion more intimate, as the French say, than his enjoyment, for instance, of Italy or Spain. 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 small table, which in crowded seasons was expected to accommodate no less than four pairs of active British elbows. But crowded seasons had passed away from the Red Lion for ever. It was crowded only with 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 unremitted friction, that by gazing awhile into its lucid blackness I fancied I could discern the lingering images of a party of gentlemen in periwigs and short-clothes, 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, in his lonely revolutions, had trodden so many massive sootflakes 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 superior being 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 that vigorous dorsal resistance which expresses 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 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, consulted his watch, and looked apparently out of the window, but really 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 exaggerated leanness. His hair, very thin on the summit of his head, was dark, short, and fine. His eye was of a pale, turbid gray, 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 reposed a soft, horizontal moustache. His mouth and chin were meagre and uncertain of outline; not vulgar, perhaps, but weak. A cold, fatal, gentlemanly weakness, indeed, seemed expressed 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 careful, and 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 murmured momentarily in tones barely audible. I heard the words "claret," "sherry," with a tentative inflection, and finally "beer," with a gentle affirmative. Perhaps he was a Russian in reduced circumstances; he reminded me slightly of certain sceptical, cosmopolitan Russians whom I had met on the Continent. While I was considering this facile problem—for you see I was interested—there appeared a short, brisk man, with reddish-brown hair, a vulgar nose, a sharp blue eye, and a red beard, confined to his lower jaw and chin. My potential Russian was still standing on the rug, with his mild gaze wandering over the dingy

ornaments of the room. The other marched up to him, and with his umbrella gave him a playful poke in the concavity of his melancholy waistcoat. "A ha'penny for your thoughts!" said the newcomer.

His companion 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 friend, 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 became conscious that the crumbs of their conversation were 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, as if they remembered that their topic was private, but the mystery pieced itself together, as if on purpose to entertain me. Their utterance was pitched in that key which may, in English air, be called foreign, in spite of resemblances of orthography. The voices were American, however, with a difference; and I had no hesitation in assigning the lighter and softer of the two 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," his friend affirmed.

"Reduced! I have been on the verge of the grave. I haven't slept six hours in three weeks." This was said with great gravity. "Well, I have made the voyage for the last time."

"The deuce you have! You mean to stay here for ever?"

"Here, or somewhere! It won't be so long as —some things have been."

There was a pause; after which: "You're the same cheerful old boy, Searle. Going to give up the ghost to-morrow, eh?"

"I almost wish I were."

"You are not in love with England, then? I have heard people say at home that you dressed and talked and acted like an Englishman. But I know Englishmen, and I know you. You're not one of these animals, Searle, not you. You'll go under here, sir; you'll go under as sure as my name is Simmons."

Following this I heard a sudden clatter, as of the dropping of a knife and fork. "Well, you're a delicate sort of creature, Simmons! I have been wandering about all day in this accursed city, ready to cry with home-sickness and heart-sickness 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 syllable of cheer and comfort, and giving me some feeble ray of hope. Go under? Ain't I under now? I can't sink lower except to sink into my grave!"

Mr. Simmons' 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 us have any sentiment. Sentiment 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, Simmons, 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 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 have done.—Your beer is dreadful bad," to the waiter. "I'll have some more."

"For God's sake, explain yourself!" cried Searle.

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 pity you. But you must allow me to say that you have acted more like a

wandering maniac than a member of our best society."

Mr. Searle seemed to have made an effort to compose himself. "Be so good as to tell me what was the meaning of your letter."

"Well, I was kind of sentimental myself when I wrote that letter. 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 that letter you had come out here to seek your fortune."

"What did you expect me to do?"

"I expected you to wait patiently till I had made further inquiries and had written to you again."

"You have made further inquiries now?"

"Inquiries! I have made assaults."

"And you find I have no claim?"

"No claim that one of these London fellows will look at. It looked at first as if you had a rather seductive case. I confess the idea took hold of me——"

"Thanks to your liking to please folks!"

Mr. Simmons seemed for a moment to be disgusted with something; it proved to be with his beverage. "This beer is awfully nasty, as you say here," he remarked to the waiter. "I guess I'll have some brandy.—Come, Searle," he resumed, "don't challenge me to the arts of debate, or I'll jump right on top of you! My natural urbanity, as I say, was part of it. The reflection 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, erratic genius as you are, you had a claim, for the very beauty of it! I should hardly care what you did with the confounded property when you got it. I could leave you alone to turn it into Yankee notions—into ducks and drakes, as they call it 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, Simmons," said Searle, for all response to this ambiguous compliment.

"I should be very glad to think I didn't, Searle. I have been to no small amount of trouble for you. I have consulted by main force three first-rate men. They smile at the idea. I should like you to see the way they smile, these big-wigs in the Inns of Court—that's what they call 'em—when they want to let you know there's no help for you. I guess it would take it out of you to be simpered at that way. I sounded in person the solicitor of your usurping cousin, and he evidently knew there was something in the wind. It seems your brother George, some twenty years ago, put out a feeler. So you are not to have the glory of even frightening them."

"I never frightened any one," said Searle. "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 I had become keenly interested in poor Mr. Searle's unencouraging—or unencouraged—claim; so interested that it was vexatious to hear his emotions reflected in his voice without being able to see them 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.

Abijah Simmons was in the act of choosing a soft chop from the dish—an act accompanied by a great deal of prying and poking with his own personal 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 stared at him a moment, and I imagined there was a certain tenderness in his gaze; but I am not sure whether this was pity or whether it was beer and brandy. "I say, Searle" —and for my benefit, I think, taking me for a native who might be struck with his cleverness, he lifted his voice a little and gave it an ironical ring—"in this country it is the inestimable privilege of a loyal citizen, under whatsoever stress of pleasure or of pain, to make a point of eating his dinner."

Searle disgustedly gave his plate another push. "Anything may happen now," he said. "I don't care a straw."

"You ought to care. Have another chop, and you *will* care. Have some brandy. Take my advice!"

Searle, from between his two hands, looked at him. "I have had enough of your advice," he said.

"A little more," said Simmons mildly; "I sha'n't trouble you again. What do you mean to do?"

"Nothing."

"Oh, come!"

"Nothing, nothing, nothing!"

"Nothing but starve. How about the cash?"

"Why do you ask? 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. Possibly! There's perhaps no such tremendous difference between knowing you and not knowing you. At any rate, you don't know me. I expect you to go home."

"I won't go home! I have crossed that beastly ocean for the last time."

"What's the matter? Are you afraid?"

"Yes, I'm afraid! 'I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word!'"

"You are more afraid to go than to stay?"

"I shall not stay. I shall leave for another place."

"Oh, are you sure of that?"

"One can always be sure of that."

Mr. Simmons was silent a moment. "Well, you *are* sick!" he exclaimed presently. "All I can say is that if you are going to talk about prussic acid and that sort of thing, we cease to occupy common ground. You can't get a dose of prussic acid for nothing, you know. Look here,

Searle: if you'll consent to return home with me by the steamer of the 23d, I'll pay your passage down. More than that, I'll pay your wine-bill."

Searle meditated. "I believe I never made up my mind to anything before," he said, "but I think it's made up now. I shall stay here till I take my departure for a newer world than that wretched little New World 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 to Europe, as they say? And now that I have got here must I just back out? No, no, I'll move on. I am much obliged to you for your offer. I have enough money for the present. I have about my person some forty pounds' worth of British gold, and the same amount, say, of Yankee vitality. They'll see me through together! After they are 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 came in, 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 just go and look. I declined to look, but took number 12 at a venture, and transferred my attention back to my friends. They had risen to their feet; 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 have thought of it so often 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?" said the other, frowning.

"Well, sir! you talk of moving on. You might move on the damsel."

Mr. Searle frowned in silence, and Simmons gave him a tap on the stomach. "Line those ribs a bit first!" The poor gentleman blushed crimson; his eyes filled with tears. "You *are* a coarse brute," he said. The scene was pathetic. I was prevented from seeing the conclusion of it 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 inspect the premises. 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, for it had occurred to me that I might catch another glimpse of Mr. Searle. I was not disappointed. I found him sitting before the fire, with his head fallen on his breast, fast asleep and dreaming perhaps of Abijah Simmons. I looked

at 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 benevolent enough to be poor Mr. Searle's fortune. As I walked away I perceived in one of the little prandial pews I have described the melancholy waiter, with his whiskered chin, too, reposing on the blankness of his shirt-front. I lingered a moment beside the old inn-yard, in which, upon a time, the coaches and postchaises 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 object 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 moving about London, chiefly on business, but catching all kinds of romantic impressions by the way. To the ingenious American eye the grimy complexion of the British metropolis often flushes with the tints of association. As the afternoon approached, however, I became conscious of a wish to see

something green, 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 a sort of regal monotony, 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 as if you were strolling 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 the terraced gardens and misty park. The brown walls are dimly illumined by innumerable portraits of persons attached to Court and State, more especially with various members of the Dutch-looking *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 unspeakably stale and sad. The tints of all things have both faded and darkened, and 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 idea, however, was dispelled suddenly by my coming upon 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 would be very glad to answer me, were I to speak to him. But he did not wait for this. The next moment, seeing I had a catalogue, he asked the name of the portrait. On my satisfying him, he inquired, timidly, how I liked the lady.

"Well," said I, not quite timidly enough, perhaps, "I confess she seems to me rather slight."

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 infirm but that he was interesting. We talked of our inn, of London, of the palace; he uttered his mind freely, but he seemed to struggle with a weight of depression. It was a simple mind enough, with no great cultivation, but with a certain natural love of pleasant things. I foresaw that I should find him a genuine American, full of that perplexing interfusion of refinement

and crudity which is a sign of our transatlantic taste. His perceptions were delicate, his opinions were probably rather primitive. On my telling him that I was a fellow-citizen, he stopped short and seemed overcome with emotion; then silently passing his arm into my own, he 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. A portion of the edifice is reserved as a series of private tenements, occupied by state-pensioners, reduced gentlewomen in receipt of the Queen's bounty, and other deserving persons. Many of the apartments have their little private gardens; and here and there, between their verdure-coated walls, you catch a glimpse of these somewhat stuffy bowers. My companion and I took several turns up and down this quiet terrace, looking down on the floral figures of the rest of the garden and on the stoutly-woven tapestry of creeping plants which muffles 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 looked 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. There are few sensations in life so exquisite as to stand with a

companion in a foreign land and inhale the alien quality of the air and the tonic picturesqueness of things. This common appreciation of local colour makes comrades of strangers. My companion seemed oppressed with enjoyment; he scowled gently, as if it gave him pain. I proposed, at last, that we should dine in the neighbourhood 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 pretended, very sincerely, to find excellent. Mr. Searle sat down to table with small apparent interest in the repast, but, gradually warming to his work, he declared at the end of half-an-hour that for the first time in a month he felt an appetite.

"I am afraid you are rather out of health," I said.

"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 whole sum of its impressions at a gulp. You take in the whole place, whatever it is. You feel England, you feel Italy, and the sensation, for the moment, is accompanied with a sort of excitement. 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 disembarkation 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 with 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 perused the British classics; it was this mild, moist air that had blown from the verses of the poets; and I seemed to feel the buried generations in the dense and elastic sod.

These reflections came in some form or other from my lips, as I gather, remembering it, from a remark of my companion's.

"You have the advantage over me in coming to all this with an educated eye. You already know the old. I have never known it but by report. I have always fancied I should like it. In a small way at home, you know, I have tried to stick to the old. I must be a conservative by nature. People at home used to call me a cockney. 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 felt that it was merely a question of time that I should learn his story. Something told me that I had gained his confidence and he

would unfold himself. "Before you lost your health," I said.

"Before I lost my health," he answered. "And my property—the little I had. And my ambition. And my self-esteem."

"Come!" I said. "You shall recover everything. This tonic English climate will wind you up in a month. And with the return of health all the rest will return."

He sat musing, with his eyes fixed on the distant palace. "They are too far gone — self-esteem especially! I should like to be an old genteel pensioner, lodged over there in the palace, and spending my days in maundering about these classic haunts. 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 pay them compliments. Poor, precious, forsaken creatures! So flattered and courted in their day, so neglected now! Offering up their shoulders and ringlets and smiles to that deadly silence!"

I laid my hand on my friend's shoulder. "You shall be yourself again yet," I said.

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 instrument. "This is something better than a Lely," I said. Searle hastened forward, picked up the crop, and, removing his hat with an air of great civility, presented it to the young girl. Fluttered and blushing she reached forward, took it with softly-murmured gratitude, and the next moment was bounding over the quiet turf. Searle stood watching her; the servant, as he passed us, touched his hat. When Searle turned toward me again I saw that he too was blushing. "I don't think you have come abroad too late," I said, laughing.

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 said at last.

"Oh, hang the train!" said Searle.

"Willingly. There could be no better spot than this to feel the magic of an English twilight." So we lingered, and the twilight lingered around us, strangely clear, in spite of the thickness of the air. As we sat, there came trudging along the road an individual whom, from afar, I recognised as a member of the genus "tramp." I had read about the British tramp in the British novel, but I had never yet encountered him, and I brought my historic consciousness to bear upon the present specimen. 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 in the bottom. His face was pale, haggard, and degraded beyond description—an extraordinary mixture of the brutal and the insinuating. He too, like everything else, had a history. From what height had he fallen, from what depth had he risen? He was the completest vagabond I had ever encountered. There was a richness of outline about him which filled me with a kind of respect. I felt as if I were in the presence of a personage —a great artist or actor.

"For God's sake, gentlemen," he said, in that raucous tone of weather-beaten poverty suggestive of chronic sore-throat exacerbated by perpetual gin —"for God's sake, gentlemen, have pity on a poor fern-collector!"—turning up his stale dandelions. "Food hasn't passed my lips, gentlemen, in 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 be enough?" I murmured. And our fasting botanist went limping away through the park, with a mystery of satirical gratitude superadded to his general mystery.

"I feel as if I had seen my *Doppelganger*," said Searle. "He reminds me of myself. What am I but a tramp, like him?"

"What are you 'anyway,' my friend?" I asked. "Who are you—please?"

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 I have lived there all my life. What am I? That's easily told. Nothing! I assure you, nothing, at all."

"A very good fellow, apparently," I remarked, smiling.

"A very good fellow! Ah, there it is! You have said more than you mean. It's by having been a very good fellow all my days that I have come to this. I have drifted through life. I am a failure, sir—a failure as hopeless and helpless 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 is nothing left to show. I was rotten before I was ripe. To begin with, certainly, I was not 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 dreams I cherished, the poisonous fumes of pleasure, amid

which nothing was sweet or precious 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 have got one; but most people haven't. My taste was to be delicate; well, perhaps I was so! I had a little money; it went the way of my little wit. Here in my pocket I have forty pounds of it left. The only thing I have to show for my early wealth is a little volume of verses, printed at my own expense, in which fifteen years ago I made bold to sing the charms of love and idleness. Six months since I got hold of the volume; it reads like the poetry of fifty years ago. The form is incredible—upon my word. I hadn't seen these old places then—I hadn't seen any form. I should tell you I used to be a precious fool. At present I am not even a fool—I am nothing at all, as I have told you. Was I meant to come to this? Upon my soul I wasn't! If I say what I feel you'll fancy my vanity quite equal to my folly, and set me down as one of those fatuous theorisers after the fact, who draw any moral from their misfortunes but the right one, because that looks bad for them. Take it for what it's worth. I have always fancied that I was meant for 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 came into the world an aristocrat. I was born with a passion for ancient rites. It condemns me, I confess; but in a measure, too, it absolves me. 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 land, I feel—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 crude dissipation would have been—don't laugh now!—would have been elegant leisure. How it was that I never came over here 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 entangled. Besides, I had a horror of the sea—with reason, heaven knows! A year ago I was reminded of the existence of an old claim to a portion of an English estate, which has danced before the eyes of my family, at odd moments, any time these eighty years. I confess it's very shadowy and desperately hard to follow. I am by no means sure that to this hour I have got the hang of it. You look as if you had a clear head: some other time, if you consent, we will puzzle it out, 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 about it for six months, half expecting to wake up some fine morning to hear through a latticed casement the cawing of an English rookery. A

couple of months ago there came out here on business of his own a man who once got me out of a dreadful mess—not that I had done any harm—a sharp American lawyer, an extremely common fellow, but with a great deal of *flair*, as they say in New York. It was with him yesterday that you saw me dining. He undertook, as he expressed it, to 'nose round' and see if anything could be made of these vague pretensions of ours. The matter had never seriously been taken up. A month later I got a letter from Simmons, assuring me that things looked monstrous well, 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 have been here three days: it seems three months. After keeping me waiting for thirty-six hours, last evening my precious Simmons makes his appearance and informs me, with his mouth full of mutton, that I was a blasted fool to have taken him at his word; that he had been precipitate, that I had been idiotic, that my claim was moonshine, and that I must do penance and take a ticket for another fortnight of seasickness in his agreeable society. My friend, my friend—shall I say I was disappointed? I am 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 Simmons—I forgive him with all my heart. But for him I should not be sitting in this place, in this air, with these thoughts. This is a

world I could have got on with beautifully. There is a great fitness in its having been kept for the last. After this nothing would have been tolerable. I shall now have a month of it, I hope, and I shall not have a chance to be disenchanted. 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 at your own request," I said. "But it must be on condition of your omitting from your conversation this intolerable flavour of mortality. The end! Perhaps it's the beginning."

He shook his head. "You don't know me. It's a long story. I am incurably ill."

"I know you a little. I have a strong suspicion that your illness is in great measure a matter of low spirits. All that you have told me is but another way of saying that you have lived hitherto in yourself. The tenement's haunted! Live abroad—take an interest!"

He looked at me for a moment with 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 am bankrupt."

"Oh, health is money!" I said. "Get well, and the rest will take care of itself. I am interested in your vague pretensions, as you call them, and pretenders, to me, have always been an attractive class. But their first duty is to be gallant."

"Their first duty is to be definite, to understand what they want," he answered, with a languid

smile. "Don't ask me to trace our pedigree now. I'll try some day, but it's a sad muddle. There's no doubt, however, that we are a very old race. 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 this hard world is no place for ideal justice. There is no doubt that a hundred years ago we suffered a palpable wrong. But we made no appeal at the time, and the dust of a century now lies heaped upon our silence. Let it rest!"

"What is the estimated value of your interest?"

"We were instructed from the first to accept a compromise. Compared with the whole property, our ideas are extremely small. Simmons talked of a hundred and thirty thousand dollars. Why a hundred and thirty I am sure I don't know. Don't beguile me into figures."

"Allow me one more question. Who is actually in possession?"

"A certain Mr. Richard Searle. I know nothing about him."

"He is in some way related to you?"

"Our great-grandfathers were half-brothers. What does that make?"

"Twentieth cousins, say. And where does your twentieth cousin live?"

"At Lockley Park, in Slopeshire."

I reflected a little. "Yes, as I tell you, I am interested in you, Mr. Searle," I said. "In your story, in your title, such as it is, and in Lockley

Park in Slopeshire. Suppose we go down and see it."

He rose to his feet with a certain alertness. "I shall make a sound man of him yet," I said to myself.

"I shouldn't have the heart to accomplish the melancholy pilgrimage alone," he said. "But with you I will go anywhere."

On our return to London we determined to spend three days there together, and then to go into the country. We were equally conscious of that intellectual pressure which London exerts upon those pilgrims from the west who feel it to be the mother-city of their race, the distributing heart of their traditional life. Certain characteristics of London, certain aspects, phases, expressions, are more suggestive to an American than anything else in Europe. The influence of these things on Searle was deep and singular. His observation I soon perceived to be extremely acute. His almost morbid relish for the old, the artificial, the social, well-nigh extinct from long inanition, began to flicker up and illuminate his face and his talk.

We looked up the topography of Slopeshire in a county-guide, which spoke highly, as the phrase is, of Lockley Park. We took up our abode, our journey ended, at a certain little wayside-inn, at which, in the days of leisure, the coach must have stopped for lunch, and burnished pewters of rustic ale been handed up as straight as possible to outsiders athirst with fast travelling. We stopped here for simple admiration of its steep thatched

roof, its latticed windows, its hospitable porch. We allowed a couple of days to elapse in vague, undirected strolls and sweet sentimental observance of the land, before we proceeded to 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 appeal to us at every step. The whole land, 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 had been washed over with a lighter brush. We went forth without loss of time for a long walk on the hills, 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-checkered 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 houses, taking the mild English light.

We took an immense deal of notice of 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 gray, 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 descended through slanting, oblique fields, green to cottage-doors, to where a russet village beckoned us from the interstices of the hedges. Close beside it, I admit, the railway shoots fiercely from its tunnel in the hills; and yet there broods upon this charming hamlet an old-time quietude which seems to make it a violation of confidence to tell its name 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 lanes and roads which have curtailed 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 in equal pieces to notify the scowling stranger of the mediæval gloom within, retain their opacity as a part of the primitive idea of defence. Such an old house fills an American with an indefinable feeling 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 high-road, we came to the common browsing-patch, the "village-green" of the tales of our youth. Nothing was wanting: 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 story-book, lost and mourned and found again. It was marvellous how well we knew them. 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 the surface of the stuff. We followed it from field to field and from stile to stile; it was 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 gray, gray tower, a huge black yew, a cluster of village-graves, with crooked headstones and protrusions that had settled and sunk. The whole scene spoke so of a long tradition of worship, that my sensitive companion was quite overcome.

"You must bury me here," he murmured. "It's

the first real church I have seen in my life. How it makes a Sunday where it stands!"

The next day we visited a place of worship more commodious. We walked over to Worcester, through such a mist of local colour that I felt like one 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 came nearer still, we stopped on the bridge and looked down at the reflection of the solid minster in the yellow Severn. And going further yet we entered the 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 gravelled close and gazed insatiably at that most soul-soothing sight, the waning, wasting afternoon-light, the visible ether which feels the voices of the chimes, clinging 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 clerical precinct; saw a rosy English lad come forth and lock the door of the old foundation-school which dovetails 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 meadows by the Severn. On the third morning we betook ourselves to Lockley, having learned that the greater part of it was open to visitors, and that, indeed, on application, the house was occasionally shown.

Within its enclosure 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 the villa of an Italian prince; and I have never seen that angular English fact of 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 liberal margin we passed into the heart of the park, 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, we perceived the rich gray front of the Tudor-time, above its blooming parterres and terraces.

"Here you can wander all day," I said to

Searle, "like an exiled prince who has come back on tiptoe, hovering about the dominion of the usurper."

"To think of people having enjoyed this all these years!" he answered. "I know what I am, but what might I have been? What does all this make of a man?"

"That it makes him perfectly happy, independent of other things, I rather hesitate to believe," I said. "But it's hard to suppose that such a place has not some beneficent action of its own."

"What a perfect scene and background it forms!" Searle went on. "What legends, what histories it knows! My heart is breaking with unutterable visions. 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 it?—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 inquired whether we should be likely to gain admittance to the house. He answered that Mr. Searle was away from home, and 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 passed another lodge-gate and entered the gardens. The house was an admirable production of some four hundred years ago: a multitudinous cluster of gables and porches, projections and recesses, brown old surfaces nestling under their ivy, and mottled roofs that testified not to seasons but to centuries. Two broad terraces commanded the great wooded horizon of the place. Our summons was answered by the butler in person. He repeated the assertion that Mr. Searle was away from home, and said he would present our petition to 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," he said.

The butler gave a diplomatic cough. "Miss Searle is at home."

"Yours alone will suffice," said Searle. I took out a card and pencil, and wrote beneath my name, *New York.* As I stood with the pencil in my hand a temptation entered into it. Without in the least considering proprieties or results, I let the pencil obey, and added above my name the words, *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 calico gown; an exquisite specimen of refined and venerable servility.

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 all the proper features of a great mansion. 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, and 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 tarnished silken divan, with 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, Searle?" I asked. "Are you unwell?"

He uncovered his haggard face and showed me a blush which I felt, I think, more than he. "A memory of the past! I was thinking of 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 who had a taste for foreign gimcracks. Here it has stood for a hundred years, keeping its clear, firm hues in this aristocratic twilight."

Searle sprang to his feet. "I say, in heaven's name, take me away! I can't stand this sort of thing. Before I know it I shall do something I shall be ashamed of. 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 keep me here for a month!"

If poor Searle could ever have been said to look dangerous, he looked 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 suite, a small, unused boudoir, over whose chimney-piece hung a noble portrait of a young man in a powdered wig and a brocaded waistcoat. I was immediately struck with his resemblance to my companion.

"This is Mr. Clement Searle, Mr. Searle's great-uncle, by Sir Joshua Reynolds," quoth the housekeeper. "He died young, poor gentleman. He perished at sea, going to America."

"He's the young buck who brought the majolica out of Italy," I suggested.

"Indeed, sir, I believe he did," said the housekeeper, without any wonder.

"He's the image of you, Searle," I murmured.

"He's wonderfully like the gentleman, saving his presence," said the housekeeper.

My friend stood staring. "Clement Searle—at sea—going to America——" he muttered. Then harshly, to the housekeeper, "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 the little old woman, "they have come to him at last!"

She blushed like a wrinkled rose-leaf. "Indeed, sir," she said, "I verily believe that you are one of *us!*"

"My name is the name of that beautiful youth," Searle went on. "Dear kinsman, I salute you. Attend!" And 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 poor spirit can escape!"

The housekeeper, very timorously, endeavoured to practise a smile. The scene was really embarrassing, and my confusion was not allayed

when I suddenly perceived in the doorway the figure of a lady. "Miss Searle!" whispered the housekeeper. 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 am not mistaken, one of you gentlemen is Mr. Clement Searle," the lady said.

"My friend is Mr. Clement Searle," I replied. "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 to—to intrude upon you."

"The intrusion, madam, has been on our part. And with just that excuse—that we come from America."

Miss Searle, while I spoke, had fixed her eyes on my friend, as he stood silent beneath Sir Joshua's portrait. The housekeeper, amazed and mystified, suddenly took a liberty. "Heaven preserve us, Miss! It's your great-uncle's picture come to life."

"I am not mistaken, then," said Miss Searle. "We must be distantly related." She had the aspect of a thoroughly diffident woman — she was evidently embarrassed at having to make advances without help. Searle eyed her with gentle wonder from head to foot, and I could easily

read his thoughts. This, then, was Miss Searle, his maiden-cousin, prospective mistress of these hereditary treasures. She was a person of about thirty-five years of age, taller than most women, and full of a kind of slim robustness. She had a small gray eye, 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. Around her neck she wore a blue silk handkerchief, and over this handkerchief, in many convolutions, a string of amber beads. Her appearance was singular; she was large, yet not imposing, girlish, yet mature. Her expression and tone, in addressing us, were very shy and simple. 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. His person was suddenly illumined with an old disused gallantry.

"We are distant cousins, I believe. I am happy to claim a relationship which you are so good as to remember. I had not counted on your knowing anything about me."

"Perhaps I have done wrong." And Miss Searle blushed and smiled anew. "But I have always known of there being people of our blood in America, and I have often wondered and asked about them; without learning much, however. To-day, when this card was brought me and I knew that a Clement Searle was wandering about the house like a stranger, I felt as if I ought to do something. But, you know, I hardly knew what! My brother is in London. I have done

what I think he would have done. Welcome, as a cousin." And with a gesture at once frank and hesitating, she put out her hand.

"I am welcome indeed," said Searle, taking it, "if he would have done it half so graciously."

"You have seen what there is, I think," Miss Searle went on. "Perhaps now you will have some lunch." We followed her into a small breakfast-room, where a deep bay window opened on the mossy flags of a great terrace. Here, for some moments, she remained dumb and abashed, in the manner of a person resting from an effort. Searle, too, was formal and reticent, so that I had to busy myself with providing conversation. 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 brilliancy of expression or manner; there was something meagre and provincial in her dress; yet she pleased me well. She had a sort of antique sweetness, a homely fragrance of old traditions. To be so simple, among those complicated treasures, so mellow 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. Miss Searle 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 objects of a curiosity that was not artfully 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?" I inquired.

"Only once. Three years ago my brother took me to Switzerland. We thought it extremely beautiful. Except for that journey, I have always lived here. I was born in this house. It's a dear old place, indeed, and I know it well. Sometimes one gets a little tired." 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 summoned for the first time to define her situation and enumerate the elements of her life. "We see very few people. I don't think there are many nice people hereabouts. At least we don't know them. Our own family is very small. My brother cares for little else 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 have done something (I don't quite know what) to the entail? Poor me! Since his loss my brother has preferred to be quite alone. I am sorry he is away. But you must wait till he comes back. I expect him in a day or two." She talked more and more, with rambling eagerness, 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 blush in self-surprise, and yet moving steadily from point

to point in the deepening excitement of temptation and occasion. Of all the old things I had seen in England, this mind of Miss Searle's seemed to me the oldest, the quaintest, the most mellow; so fenced and protected by convention and precedent and usage, so passive and mild and docile. I felt as if I were talking with the heroine of a last-century novel. As she talked she rested her dull, kind eyes upon her kinsman with a sort of fascinated stare. At last, "Did you mean to go away without asking for us?" she inquired.

"I had thought it over, Miss Searle, and had determined not to trouble you. You have 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 have always liked to think of them."

"You merely wished to look, then? We don't pretend to be much to look at."

"You don't know what you are, Miss Searle," said my friend, gravely.

"You like the old place, then?"

Searle looked at her in silence. "If I could only tell you!" he said at last.

"Do tell me. You must come and stay with us."

Searle began to laugh. "Take care, take care!" he cried. "I should surprise you. I am afraid I should bore you. I should never leave you."

"Oh, you would get homesick—for America."

At this Searle laughed the more. "By the way, tell Miss Searle about America," he said to me. And he stepped, through the window, out upon the terrace, followed by two beautiful dogs, a pointer and a young stag-hound, who, from the moment we came in, had established the fondest relation with him. Miss Searle looked at him as he went, with a certain tender wonder in her eye; it began to be plain enough that she was interested in her curious 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 the tact to manipulate her a little! Something assured me that her heart was virgin-soil, that the flower of romantic affection had never bloomed there. If I could only 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," said Miss Searle.

"Oh, it isn't his looks, poor fellow."

"Of course looks are not everything. I never talked with a foreigner before; but he talks as I have fancied foreigners."

"Yes, he is foreign enough."

"Is he married?"

"He is a widower—all alone in the world."

"Has he much property?"

"None to speak of."

"But he has means to travel about."

I meditated. "He has not expected to travel far," I said at last. "You know he is in very poor health."

"Poor gentleman! So I supposed."

"But he is better than he thinks. He came here because he wanted to see your place before he dies."

"Dear me—poor man!" And I thought I perceived in Miss Searle's eye the lustre of a rising tear. "And he was going away without my seeing him?"

"He is very modest, you see."

"He is very much of a gentleman."

"Assuredly!"

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 pointer. 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 voice he 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 promenades to which people may have adjourned from formal dinners, to drink coffee in old Sêvres, 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 said, 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 duchess 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 have 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 count upon it."

"Oh, Mr. Searle! We have always been a very well-behaved family. Nothing out of the way has ever happened, I think."

"Nothing out of the way? Oh, that won't do! We have managed better than that in America. Why, I myself!"—and he gazed at her

a moment with a gleam of malice, laughing at his idea. "Suppose I should turn out a better Searle than you—better than you, nursed here in romance and picturesqueness? Come, don't disappoint me. You have some history among you all, you have some poetry. I have been famished all my days for these things. Do you understand? Ah, you can't understand! Tell me something extraordinary. 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! of the births and deaths, the joys and sufferings, the young hopes and the old regrets, the rich experience of life——" And here he faltered a moment, with the increase of his agitation. The gleam in his eye, which I have called a gleam of malice, had settled into a deep, unnatural light. I began to fear he was really losing his head. But he went on, with redoubled passion. "To see it all called up there before me," he cried, "if the Devil alone could do it, I would make a bargain with the Devil! Oh, Miss Searle, I am a most unhappy man!"

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said Miss Searle.

"Look at that window, that dear little window!" And he pointed to a small, protruding oriel, above us, relieved against the purple brick-work, framed in chiselled stone and curtained with ivy.

"It's my little room," said Miss Searle.

"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, Miss Searle, you are one of them yet." And he marched towards her and took her large white hand. She surrendered it, blushing to her eyes, and pressing her other hand to her breast. "You are a woman of the past. You are 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 will not know me to-morrow. Let me to-day do a mad, sweet thing. Let me fancy you to be the spirit of all the dead women who have trod these terrace-flags, which lie here like sepulchral tablets in the pavement of a church. Let me say I delight in you!" And he raised her hand to his lips. She gently withdrew it, and for a moment averted her face. Meeting her eyes the next moment, I saw that they were filled with tears. 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.*"

II.

"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 my companion should remain. "Really you must," she said; and forthwith repaired to the housekeeper, to give orders for the preparation of a room.

"How in the world did he know of my being here?" asked Searle.

I answered that he had probably learned from his solicitor of the visit of your friend Simmons. "Simmons and the solicitor must have had another interview since your arrival in England," I said. "Simmons, for reasons of his own, has communicated to the solicitor your journey to this neighbourhood, and Mr. Searle, learning this, has immediately taken for granted that you have formally presented yourself to his sister. He is hospitably inclined, and he wishes her to do the proper thing by you. More, perhaps! I have my little theory that he is the very phœnix of usurpers, that he has been very much struck with what the legal people have had to say for you, and that he wishes to have the originality of making over to you your partial interest in the estate."

"I give it up!" said my friend, musing. "Come what come will!"

"You, of course," said Miss Searle, reappearing

and turning to me, "are included in my brother's invitation. I have 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 companion. I made my way along this passage —a low, narrow corridor, with a long, latticed casement, through which there streamed, upon a series of grotesquely sculptured oaken closets and cupboards, the lurid; animating glow of the western sun—knocked at his door, and, getting no answer, opened it. In an arm-chair by the open window sat my friend, sleeping, with arms and legs relaxed and head dropped on his breast. It was a great relief to find him resting 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 the lips—something nearer to spiritual repose 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!" he said.

"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 am in love with her."

"It's better to see her than to dream about her," I said. "Get up and dress, and we shall 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 are all right!" I said, as he rose to his feet. "You will live to bury Mr. Simmons." He told me that he had spent the hours of my absence with Miss Searle — they had strolled together over the park and through the gardens and green-houses. "You must be very intimate," I said, smiling.

"She is intimate with me," he answered. "Heaven knows what rigmarole I have treated her to!" They had parted an hour ago; since when, he believed, her brother had arrived.

The slow-fading twilight still abode in the great drawing-room as we entered it. The housekeeper had told us that 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 further end of it, 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 of her eyes, grave and expanded, watching us intently over the top of it. The master of Lockley Park grasped in silence the proffered hand of his kinsman, and eyed him from head to foot, suppressing, I think, a start of surprise at his resemblance to Sir Joshua's portrait. "This is a happy day," he said. And then turning to me with a curious 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, like the face of a scholar, a dilettante, a man who lives in a library, bending over books and prints and medals. At a distance it had an oddly innocent and youthful look; 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, which were large and deep-set, had a kind of auburn glow, a vulpine keenness and redness, and were full of temper and spirit.

Imagine this physiognomy—grave and solemn in aspect, 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 covertly scrutinised him, than anything we had yet encountered. How thoroughly I had entered into sympathy with my companion, and how effectually I had associated my sensibilities with his, I had not suspected until, within the short five minutes which preceded the announcement of dinner, I became aware, without his giving me the least sign, that he was 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 signal 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, her eyes were red with weeping. These tragic betrayals gave an unexpected dignity to her aspect, 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 Miss Searle, 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 circle 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 very difficult part. The part of my friend, however, seemed the most embarrassing, and I was filled with the desire that he should acquit himself with honour. I seemed to see him summon his shadowy faculties to obey his languid will. The poor fellow tried to take himself more seriously than he had done even in his 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 friend screw himself round, as it were, to take a new point of view. 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, with all his exaggerated urbanity, he was unable to repress a shade of annoyance at finding him so harmless. Mr. Searle was not the man to show his hand, but I think his best card had been a certain implicit confidence that this transatlantic parasite would hardly have good manners. Our host, with great delicacy, led the conversation to America, talking of it rather as if it were some fabled planet, alien to the British orbit, lately proclaimed indeed 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 of even such inconsiderable particles as ourselves.

"I knew in a general way of my having relations in America," Mr. Searle said, "but you know one hardly realises those things. I could hardly more have imagined people of our blood there than I could have imagined being there myself. There was a man I knew at college, a very odd fellow, a nice fellow too; he and I were rather cronies; I think he afterwards went to America; to the Argentine Republic, I believe. Do you know the Argentine Republic? What an extraordinary name, by the way! And then, you know, 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 have 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 are he, you have 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, brother!" cried Miss Searle, in simple horror.

"Of course *you* know nothing of such things," said Mr. Searle. "You are too sound a sleeper to hear the sobbing of ghosts."

"I am sure I should like immensely to hear the sobbing of a ghost," said my friend, with the light of his previous eagerness playing up into his eyes. "Why does it sob? Do tell us all about it."

Mr. Searle eyed his audience for a moment, gaugingly; and then, as the French say, *se receuillit*, as if he were measuring 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 bright eye telling of a gleeful sense that, small and peculiar as he sat there, he was for the moment profoundly impressive, he distilled 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 means 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 what the French call a *maîtresse-femme.* A proud, passionate, imperious woman, she had had great 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 believed that he loved in secret. If he loved in secret, of course he loved beneath him. He went about the place, sombre, sullen, 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 which quickened their bitterness. A young woman, soaked 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. The poor girl had been a second time too trustful. The women, in scorn, in horror, with blows, possibly, turned 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 are haunted by the curate's daughter !"

Mr. Searle related this anecdote in the tone of a very cultivated man, and when he ceased there was a pause of some moments. "Ah, well we may be !" said Miss Searle, with much emotion.

Searle blazed up into enthusiasm. "Of course

you know"—and suddenly he began to blush violently—"I should be sorry to claim any identity with my faithless namesake, poor fellow. But I shall be immensely gratified if the *revenant* should be deceived by my resemblance and mistake me for her cruel lover. She is 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, with a subtle sneer, "I could almost believe you are!" he said.

"Oh, brother—cousin!" cried Miss Searle, with the gentlest, yet most appealing dignity; "how can you talk so horribly?"

This horrible talk, however, evidently possessed a potent magic for my friend; and his imagination, checked for a while by the influence of his kinsman, began to ferment and crepitate. From this moment he ceased to steer his cockle-shell, 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 talked I ceased even mentally to protest. I have wondered since that I should not 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, a kind of irresponsible sweetness in everything that passed his lips. Free alike from either adulation or envy, the essence of his discourse was a divine apprehension, an imaginative mastery, free as the flight of Ariel, of the poetry of his companions'

situation and the contrasted prosiness of their attitude.

"How does the look of age come?" he suddenly inquired, 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 gray hair this morning," Miss Searle remarked.

"Good heavens! I hope you respected it," cried Searle.

"I looked at it for a long time in my hand-glass," said his cousin, simply.

"Miss Searle for many years to come can afford to be amused at gray hairs," I interposed.

"Ten years from last Thursday I shall be forty-four," she answered.

"That's my age," 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 to get famished for it."

"Why did you wait for the starving-point?" asked Mr. Searle. "To think of these ten years that we might have been enjoying you!" And

at the thought of this wasted period Mr. Searle broke into a violent, nervous laugh.

"I always had a notion—a stupid, vulgar notion, if there ever was one—that to come abroad properly one ought to have a pot of money. My pot was too nearly empty. At last I came with my empty pot!"

Mr. Searle coughed, with an air of hesitation. "You are reduced—you are—a—straitened?"

My friend apparently was much amused at hearing his bleak situation depicted in semi-tones. "Reduced to nothing; straitened to the clothes on my back!"

"Upon my word!" murmured Mr. Searle, with an air of being divided between his sense of the indecency and his sense of the rarity of a gentleman taking just that tone about his affairs. "Well—well—well!" he added, in a voice which might have meant everything or nothing; and proceeded, in an inscrutable, humorous manner, to finish a glass of wine. His sparkling eye, as he drank, encountered mine over the top of his glass, and, for a moment, we exchanged a long, deep glance—a glance so penetrating as to leave a slight embarrassment on the face of each. "And you," said Mr. Searle, by way of carrying it off, "how about *your* wardrobe?"

"Oh, his!" cried my friend; "his wardrobe is immense. He could dress up a regiment!" He had drunk, I think, rather more champagne—I admit that the champagne was good—than was to have been desired in the interest of perfect self-control. He was rapidly drifting beyond

any tacit dissuasion of mine. A certain feverish rashness in his glance and voice warned me that to attempt to direct him would 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 whispered. "The romantic, the fatal, the critical night!"

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. Niched 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 ancient house, they seemed to people the great rooms, as our little group passed slowly from one to another, with a dim, expectant presence. We had a delightful 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—metaphysically!" To speak vulgarly, he rubbed it in. 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. Mr. Searle knew his house to perfection. He touched upon a hundred traditions and memories, and sketched very vividly

several figures of its earlier occupants. He told a dozen *historiettes* with remarkable art. His companion attended, with a sort of brooding intelligence. 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 raising her kind little eyes: "Old friends, and 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 had no cousin! He is really very odd!"

"It's not so much he as his circumstances that are odd," I ventured to say.

"I am so sorry for his circumstances. I wish I could help him in some way. He interests me so much." And here Miss Searle gave a sweet-sounding sigh. "I wish I had known him a long time ago. He told me that he is but the shadow of what he used to be."

I wondered whether Searle had been consciously practising upon the sensibilities of this gentle creature. If he had, I believed he had gained his point. But, in fact, his position had 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 that he ought to be."

"Dear me, what can I do?"

"Be a friend to him. Let him like you, let

him love you! I daresay you see in him now much to pity and to wonder at. But let him simply enjoy awhile the grateful sense of your nearness and dearness. He will be a better and stronger man for it, and then you can love him, you can esteem him, without restriction."

Miss Searle listened with a pathetic little frown. "It's a hard part for poor stupid me to play!"

Her almost infantine gentleness left me no choice but to be absolutely frank. "Did you ever play any part at all?" I asked.

Her eyes met mine, wonderingly; she blushed, as if I had been reproaching her with her insignificance. "Never! I think I have hardly lived."

"You have begun to live now, perhaps. You have begun to care for something else than your old-fashioned habits. Excuse me if I seem rather meddlesome; you know we Americans are very rough. It's a great moment; I wish you joy!"

"I could almost believe you are laughing at me. I feel more trouble than joy."

"Why do you feel trouble?"

She paused, with her eyes fixed on our two companions. "My cousin's arrival is a great disturbance," she said at last.

"You mean that you did wrong in coming to meet him? In that case the fault is mine. He had no intention of giving you the opportunity."

"I did wrong, in a certain sense. But I can't find it in my heart to regret it. I never shall regret it! I did what I thought right and just. 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 do know him, then, the better." I could not 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!" And then, as she turned away—"Are you afraid of him?" I added.

She gave me a long shuddering sidelong glance. "He's looking at me!" she murmured.

He was standing with his back to us, holding a large Venetian hand-mirror, framed in chiselled silver, which he had taken from a shelf of antiquities, in just such a position that he caught the reflection of his sister's person. It was evident that I too was being supervised, and I determined I should not be suspected for nothing. "Miss Searle," I said, insisting upon her attention, "promise me something."

She turned upon me with a start and a glance which begged me to spare her. "Oh, don't ask me—please don't!" she cried. 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 that retreat was impossible, 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, if he should ask you, any wish you may suspect on your brother's part notwithstanding."

She coloured deeply. "You mean," she said —"you mean that he—has something particular to say."

"Something very 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 are in time to hear the most delightful story," said my friend, as I rejoined the two gentlemen. They were standing before an old sombre portrait of a lady in the dress of Queen Anne's time, with her ill-painted flesh-tints showing 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! Pray go on. What came of it all?"

Mr. Searle looked at his kinsman for a moment with an air of distaste for his boisterous homage and of pity for his crude imagination. Then resuming, with a very effective dryness: "I found a year ago, in a box of very old papers, a letter from Mrs. Margaret to a certain Cynthia Searle, her elder sister. It was dated from Paris and dreadfully ill-spelled. It contained a most pas-

sionate appeal for—a—for pecuniary assistance. She had just had a baby, she was starving, and dreadfully neglected by her husband; she cursed the day she left England. It was a most dismal production. I never heard that she found means to return."

"So much for marrying a Frenchman!" I said, sententiously.

Mr. Searle was silent for some moments. Then he remarked, "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, staring 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," my friend returned; and he walked rapidly away in search of her.

Mr. Searle and I pursued our march through the lighted rooms. "You have found a cousin with a vengeance," I said, laughing.

"Ah, a vengeance?" my host repeated, stiffly.

"I mean that he takes as keen an interest in your annals and possessions as yourself."

"Oh, exactly so! He tells me he is an invalid," he added in a moment. "I should never have supposed it."

"Within the past few hours he is a changed man. Your beautiful house, your extreme kindness, have refreshed him immensely."

Mr. Searle uttered the vague ejaculation with which Englishmen of a certain class sometimes

recognise the concussion of any especial courtesy of speech. He bent his eyes on the floor, frowningly, and then, to my surprise, he suddenly stopped and looked at me with a penetrating eye. "I am an honest man!" he said. I was quite prepared to assent; but he went on, with a sort of fury of frankness, as if it were the first time in his life that he had opened himself to any one, as if the process were monstrous 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 Mr. Searle paused to select a word which should vividly enough express what, for good or for ill, his kinsman had been to him. "He has been to me an *amazement!* I have no doubt he is a most amiable man. You will not deny, however, that he's a very odd sort of person. I am sorry he is ill. I am sorry he is poor. He is my fiftieth cousin. Well and good. I am an honest man. He shall not have it to say that he was not received at my house."

"He, too, thank heaven, is an honest man!" I said, smiling.

"Why the devil, then," cried Mr. Searle, turning almost fiercely upon me, "why the devil has he put forward this underhand claim to my property?"

This startling inquiry flashed backward a gleam of light upon the demeanour of our host and the suppressed agitation of his sister. In an instant the jealous soul of the unhappy gentleman revealed

itself. For a moment I was so surprised and scandalised at the directness of his attack that I lacked words to respond. As soon as he had spoken Mr. Searle appeared to feel that he had been wanting in form. "Excuse me, sir," he hurried on, "if I speak of this matter with heat. But I have been more disgusted than I can say on learning, as I learned this morning from my solicitor, the extraordinary proceedings of Mr. Clement Searle. Great heaven, sir, for what does the man take me? He pretends to the Lord knows what fantastic admiration for my place. Let him respect my place, then! Let him, with his tawdry 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, a mountebank, a Bohemian! I thought America boasted that she had land for all men! Upon my soul, sir, I have 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 on my own part it seemed well that I should answer him once for all. "Your apprehensions, Mr. Searle," I said at last—"your terrors, I may call them—have fairly over-mastered your common sense. You are attacking a man of straw, a creature of unworthy illusion; though I am sadly afraid you have 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 sharp eyes flashing, 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 of the mansion and stood facing the main doorway. The door stood open into the portico, through whose stone archway I saw the garden glittering in the blue light of a full moon. As Mr. Searle uttered the words I have just repeated I beheld my companion come 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 his appearance at the head of the staircase on our left, faltering visibly a moment on seeing Mr. Searle; but then, perceiving 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 toward my friend, extending the salver and note. Mr. Searle made a movement as if to spring forward, but controlled himself. "Tottenham!" he shouted, 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 as if to discredit a suspicion of his having read the direction.

"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, with his equilibrium completely restored by the crisis, "isn't that rather my business?"

"What happens in my house is my business; and mighty strange things seem to be happening." Mr. Searle had become so exasperated that I was afraid he would snatch Mrs. Horridge's missive. "Bring me the note!" he cried. The butler obeyed.

"Really, this is too much!" exclaimed my companion, affronted and helpless.

I was very angry. Before Mr. Searle had time to take the note I possessed myself of it. "If you have no regard for your sister," I said, "let a stranger, at least, act for her." And I tore the disputed document into a dozen pieces.

"In the name of decency, what does this horrid business mean?" Searle broke out.

Mr. Searle was about to open fire on him; but at this moment his sister appeared on the staircase, summoned evidently by our high-pitched, conten-

tious 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 downward, 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 remarkable intuitions and extreme agility, 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 seized the white wrist which escaped from the loose sleeve of her dress. "What was in that note?" he demanded.

Miss Searle looked first at its scattered fragments and then at her cousin. "Did you read it?" she asked.

"No, but I thank you for it!" said Searle.

Her eyes for an instant communed brightly with his own; then she transferred them to her brother's face, where the light went out of them, leaving a dull, sad patience. But there was something even in her patience which seemed to him to mock him, so that he flushed crimson with rage and spite and flung her away. "You always were an idiot!" he cried. "Go to bed."

In poor Searle's face, as well, the gathered serenity was 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 inquired, very plaintively.

"A madman, yes, if you will! A man mad with the love of his home and the sense of its stability. I have held my tongue till now, but you have been too much for me. Who are you, what are you? From what paradise of fools do you come, that you fancy I shall cut off a piece of my land, my house, my heart, to toss to you? Forsooth, I shall share my property 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.

Mr. Searle went on in the same infuriated tone. "Wasn't it enough that you should have plotted against my property? Need you have come into my very house to intrigue with my sister?"

Searle put his two hands to his face. "Oh, oh, oh!" he groaned.

Miss Searle crossed rapidly and dropped on her knees at his side.

"Go to bed, you fool!" shrieked her brother.

"Dear cousin," said Miss Searle, "it's cruel that you are to have to think of us so!"

"Oh, I shall think of *you* as you would like," he said. And he laid a hand on her head.

"I believe you have done nothing wrong," she murmured.

"I have done what I could," her brother 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 insane little man, with a laugh. "Proceed with your case! My people in London are instructed and prepared."

"I have a fancy that your case has improved a good deal since you gave it up," I said to Searle.

"Oho! you don't feign ignorance, then?" and he shook his brilliant head at me. "It is very kind of you to give it up! Perhaps you will also give up my sister!"

Searle sat in his chair in a sort of collapse, staring at his adversary. "Ah, miserable man!" he moaned at last. "I fancied we had become such friends!"

"Boh, you hypocrite!" cried our host.

Searle seemed not to hear him. "Am I seriously expected," he pursued, slowly and painfully,—"am I seriously expected to sit here and defend myself—to prove I have done nothing wrong? 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," cried Mr. Searle, "you are not going away!" This ejaculation, under the circumstances, had the grandest comicality. "Bless my soul," he added artlessly, "of course you are 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 broke in, "you and I will settle together!"

"Let me imagine its contents," Searle exclaimed.

"Ah! they have been too much imagined!" she answered, simply. "It was only a word of warning. It was to tell you to go. I knew something painful was coming."

Searle 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 was to come of it."

"A deal too much has come of it!" cried our host, irrepressibly.

Searle looked at him mildly, almost benignantly, from head to foot; and then closing his eyes with an air of sudden physical distress: "I am afraid so! I can't stand more of this." I gave him my arm, and we crossed the threshold. As we passed out I heard Miss Searle burst into a torrent of sobs.

"We shall hear from each other yet, I take it!" her brother went on, harassing our retreat.

Searle stopped and turned round on him sharply, almost fiercely. "You very ridiculous man!" he cried.

"Do you mean to say you will not prosecute?" shouted the other. "I shall force you to prose-

cute! I shall drag you into court, and you shall be beaten—beaten—beaten!" This grim participle continued to ring in our ears as we drove away.

We drove, of course, to the little wayside inn from which we had departed in the morning so unencumbered, in all broad England, with either enemies or friends. My companion, as the carriage rolled along, seemed utterly overwhelmed and exhausted. "What a dream!" he murmured stupidly. "What an 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, if 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, in obedience to her heart and in defiance to her family. As I talked the sheeted moonlight seemed to close about us, and 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!' She had said that 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 connection with the place, I spoke of my claim against the estate. 'It exists,' I answered, 'but I have 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?' 'In our marriage, the whole difficulty will melt away like a rain-drop in the ocean,' I answered. 'Our marriage!' she repeated, wonderingly; 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. This is the only witchcraft I have used!"

The poor fellow was at once so excited and so exhausted by the day's events, that I believed he would get little sleep. Conscious, on my own part, that I should not 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 into Searle's room was flung open, and my companion stood on the threshold, pale as a corpse, in his nightshirt, standing like a phantom against the darkness behind him. "Look at me!" he said, in a low voice, "touch me, embrace me, revere me! You see a man who has seen a ghost!"

"Great heaven, 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 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 are throbbing! Do 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 am!"

I made no attempt either to explain my friend's vision or to turn it into ridicule. It is enough that I felt for the hour the contagion of his excitement. 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. Nevertheless, I soon recovered my common sense sufficiently to feel the necessity of guarding my friend's health against the results of excitement and exposure. It was easily agreed that, for the night, he was not to return to his room; and I soon made him fairly comfortable in his place by the fire. Wishing above all to preserve him from a chill, I removed my bedding and wrapped him up in the blankets and counterpanes. I had no nerves either for writing or sleep; so I put out my lights, renewed the fire, and sat down on the opposite side of the hearth. I found a solemn entertainment in watching my friend. Silent, swathed and muffled to his chin, he sat rigid and erect with the dignity of his great adventure. For the most part his eyes were closed; though from

time to time he would open them, with a steady expansion, and look, without blinking, into the fire, as if he again beheld, without terror, the image of the little woman with the muff. With 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, he looked like the vision-haunted knight of La Mancha, laid up after one of his exploits. The night passed wholly without speech. Towards its close I slept for half an hour. When I awoke the awakened birds had began 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 asked.

He looked at me for a long time without replying. Then he spoke with a kind of innocent grandiloquence, and with pauses between his words, as if an inner voice were slowly prompting him. "You asked me, when you first knew me, what I was. 'Nothing,' I said—'nothing of any consequence.' Nothing I have always supposed myself to be. But I have wronged myself. I am a great exception. I am a haunted man!"

If sleep had passed out of his eyes, I felt with a deeper pang that sanity had passed out of his voice. From this moment I prepared myself for the worst. There were in my friend, however, such confirmed habits of mildness that I did not fear he would prove unmanageable. As morning

began fully to dawn upon us I brought our curious vigil to a close. Searle was so weak that I gave him my hands to help him to get out of his chair; he retained them for some moments after rising to his feet, being apparently unable to keep his balance. "Well," he said, "I have seen one ghost, but I don't think I shall live to see another. I shall soon be myself as good a ghost as any of them. I shall haunt Mr. Searle! It can only mean one thing—that they are 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 have got more than you bargained for—not only a man with a grievance, but a man with a ghost. But it won't be for long." It immediately became a question, of course, whither we should now direct our steps.

"As I have so little time," Searle said, "I should like to see the best, the best alone." I answered that, either for time or eternity, I had supposed Oxford to be the best thing in England; and for Oxford in the course of an hour we accordingly departed.

Of this remarkable spot I shall not attempt to speak with any order, or indeed with any reason. It must long remain for an American one of the supreme gratifications of travel. The impression it produces, the emotions it kindles in the mind of

the western pilgrim, are too rich and various to be expressed in the halting rhythm of prose. Passing through the small, oblique streets in which the long gray, battered, public face of the colleges seems to be watching for noises that may break upon the stillness of study, you feel it to be the most dignified, the most educated, of cities. Over all of it, through all of it, the great corporate fact of the University slowly throbs, like some steady bass in a concerted piece, like the mediæval, mystical presence of the Empire in the old states of Germany. The plain perpendicular of the long street-fronts of the colleges—blessed seraglios of culture and leisure—irritates the imagination like the blank harem-walls of Eastern towns. Within their arching portals, however, you discover more sacred and sunless courts, and the dark verdure that bookish eyes like to rest upon. The gray-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 which passes beneath 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, as it 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 was pleased to see that Searle became extremely interested; but I very soon began to fear that he would take Oxford too hard, as he took everything. I may say that from this time forward, with my unhappy friend, I found it difficult to distinguish between the play of fancy and the labour of thought, and to fix the balance between what he saw and what he imagined. He had already taken a fancy to mingle his identity with that of the earlier Clement Searle; he now began to talk altogether in the character of his old-time kinsman.

"This was my college, you know," he said; "the noblest in the whole place. How often I have walked up and down this cloister with the undergraduates of the last century! My friends are all dead, but many a young fellow as we meet him, dark or fair, tall or short, reminds me of early attachments. Even Oxford, they say, 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 University, the home of rank abuses, of invidious distinctions and privileges. What cared I, who was a perfect gentleman, with my pockets full of money? I had an allowance of two thousand a year."

It became evident to me, on the following day, that he had lost the little that remained of his strength, and that he was unequal to the effort of regular sight-seeing. He read my apprehension in my eyes, and took pains to assure me that

I was right. "I am going 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 adventure at the home of the Searles had given place to an unruffled resignation, in which the scene around 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 in hundreds the young, the happy generation, clad in white flannel and blue, muscular, fair-haired, magnificent, fresh, lounging down the current in their idle punts, in friendly couples or in a singleness that nursed ambitions; or pulling in straining crews and hoarsely exhorted from the near bank. When, in conjunction with all this beautiful physical life, you think of the lawns and bowers, the perfumed privacy of the college-gardens, you cannot but hold that to be young in this incomparable country is to be doubly—infinitely—blessed. As my companion found himself less and less able to walk, we repaired to these scholastic shades, 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-gray, outshouldering the matted leafage of unrecorded plants, filled with

nightingales and memories—a sort of hum of tradition; with students lounging bookishly on the turf (as if to spare it the injury of their boot-heels), and with the great conservative presence of the college-front 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 English afternoon. This charmed seclusion was especially grateful to my friend, and his sense of it reached its climax, I remember, on the last afternoon of our three, as we sat, in fascinated *flânerie*, in the spacious garden of St. John's. The long face of the college here perhaps broods over the lawn with a more effective air of property than elsewhere. Searle dropped into fitful talk and spun his fancies into golden figures. Every collegian who passed us was the subject of an extemporised romance, and every feature of the place the theme of a lyric rhapsody.

"Isn't it all a delightful lie?" he demanded. "Mightn't one fancy this the very central point of the world's heart, where all the echoes of the world's life arrive only to falter and die? Listen! the air is thick with arrested voices. It is 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 is well in this weary world, all perfect and rounded, mellow and complete, in this sphere of the pitiful unachieved

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 England, and how essential a factor of the educated British consciousness one omits in not thinking of such a place! Thank heaven, they had the wit to send me here in the other time. I am not much with it, perhaps; but what should I have been without it? The misty spires and towers of Oxford, seen far off on the level, have been all these years one of the constant things of memory. Seriously, what does Oxford do for these people? Are they wiser, gentler, richer, cleverer? At moments when its massive influence surges into my mind like a tidal wave, I take it as a sort of affront to my dignity. My soul reverts to the naked background of our own education, the dead white wall before which we played our meagre little parts. I assent to it all with a sort of desperate calmness; I accept it with a dogged pride. We are nursed at the opposite pole. Naked come we into a naked world. There is a certain grandeur in the absence of decorations, a certain heroic strain in those young imaginations of the West, which find nothing made to their hands, which have to invent their own traditions and raise high into our morning-air, with a ringing hammer and nails, the castles in which they dwell. *Noblesse oblige* — Oxford obliges. What a horrible thing not to respond to such obligations! 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 are 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 tell me 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 something really artistic in my poor

friend's divagations; the disheartened dandy had turned rhapsodist and seer. I was particularly struck with his having laid aside the diffidence and self-consciousness which had marked him during the first days of our acquaintance. He was becoming more and more a disembodied observer and critic; the shell of sense, growing daily thinner and more transparent, transmitted the tremor of his quickened spirit. He revealed an unexpected faculty for becoming acquainted with the lounging gownsmen whom we met in our vague peregrinations. 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 boisterous hospitality. For myself, I chose not to be present on these occasions; I shrank partly from being held in any degree responsible for his extravagance, partly from seeing him get worse under the pressure—applied without scruple by the juvenile class—of champagne and an admiring circle. He reported these adventures with less eloquence than I had supposed he might use; but, on the whole, I suspect that a certain method in his madness, a certain dignity in his desire to fraternise, had ensured him perfect respect. If they didn't think him a lunatic they certainly thought him a celebrity of the Occident. Two things, however, became evident—that he drank more champagne than was good for him, and that the boyish grossness of his entertainers tended rather, on re-

flection, to disturb in his mind the pure image of Oxford. 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, and alluded afterwards to these banquets with a sort of religious unction. One evening, after a symposium indiscreetly prolonged, he came back to the hotel in a cab, accompanied by a friendly student and a physician, looking deadly pale. He had swooned away on leaving table, and had remained so rigidly unconscious as to excite great alarm among his companions. The following twenty-four hours, of course, he spent in bed; but on the third day he declared himself strong enough to go out. On reaching the street his strength again forsook him, and I insisted upon his returning to his room. He besought me with tears in his eyes not to shut him up. "It's my last chance," he said. "I want to go back for an hour to that garden of St. 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, and it 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 prepared to perform the office; but just as Searle 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 an individual whom I had seen lounging shyly about the doors of the hotels, at intervals during our stay, with a depressed air of wanting employment and a poor prospect of finding any. 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 declined his services a little ungraciously. 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." To describe him in the slang of our native land, he was a "dead-beat." He was, I suppose, some fifty years of age; but his pale, haggard, unwholesome visage, his plaintive, drooping carriage, and the irremediable decay of his apparel, seemed to add to the burden of his days and tribulations. His eyes were bloodshot and weak-looking, his handsome nose had assumed a tinge, and his reddish beard, largely streaked with gray, bristled with a mouth's desperate indifference to the razor. In all this rusty forlornness there 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 pathetic in the way he fiercely merged the attempt to touch the greasy rim of his antiquated hat into such a bow as one man of

the world might make to another. Exchanging a few words with him as we went along, I was struck with the superiority of his accent.

"Take me by some long, roundabout way," said Searle, "so that I may see as many college-walls as possible."

"You can wander without losing your way?" I asked of our attendant.

"I ought to be able 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, sir," he added.

At these words Searle commanded him to stop and come and stand in front of him. "You say that is *your* college?" he demanded.

"My college might deny me, sir; but heaven forbid I should deny my college. If you will allow me to take you into the quad, I will show you my windows, thirty years ago!"

Searle sat staring, with his huge, pale eyes, which now had come to usurp the greatest place in his wasted visage, filled with wonder and pity. "If you will be so kind," he said with immense politeness. 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 his hands, with his own hand, from the back of the chair, drew him alongside of him and turned to me. "While we are 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

thirty years ago, where now a rosy youth in a scarlet smoking-fez was puffing a cigarette in the open casement. Thence we proceeded into the little 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, wheeled it about toward the front of the college, and sat down on the grass. Our attendant shifted himself mournfully from one foot to the other; Searle eyed him, open-mouthed. At length the latter broke out, "God bless my soul, sir, you don't suppose that I expect you to stand! There's an empty bench."

"Thank you," said our friend, bending his joints to sit.

"You English are really fabulous! I don't know whether I most admire you or abhor 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 a ragged handkerchief. "My name is Rawson, sir. Beyond that, it's a long story."

"I ask out of sympathy," said Searle. "I have a fellow-feeling! You are a poor devil; I am a poor devil too."

"I am the poorer devil of the two," said the stranger, with a little emphatic nod of the head.

"Possibly. I suppose an English poor devil is the poorest of all poor devils. And then, you have fallen from a height. From a gentleman commoner (is that what they called you?) to a

Bath-chair man! 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 great 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 a Bath-chair and walking behind it!"

"Oh, I am at my last gasp, Mr. Rawson."

"I am at my last penny, sir."

"Literally, Mr. Rawson?"

Mr. Rawson shook his head, with a world of vague bitterness. "I have almost come to the point of drinking my beer and buttoning my coat figuratively; but I don't talk in figures," he said.

Fearing that the conversation had taken a turn which might seem to cast a rather fantastic light upon 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 have a wife and three children, starving, sir. You wouldn't believe what I have 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?"

"Dear me," cried Searle, "why didn't you speak to us before?"

"I wanted to; half a dozen times I have 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 am living on charity."

"And I am not, sir! There it is. I am dying for the want of charity. You say you're a pauper; 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!" added Mr. Rawson, with feeble force. Then brooding for a moment on his wrongs: "Have you a brother? or you, sir? It matters little to you. But it has mattered to me with a vengeance! Shabby as I sit here, I have a brother with his five thousand a year. Being a couple of years my senior, he gorges while I starve. 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 twenty-pound note now and then! I don't say that there have not been times when I have sorely tried his generosity. I have 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 nothing else! 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 said.

"I would change chances with him!" And Mr. Rawson gave a passionate slap to his knee.

Searle reclined in his chair, with his eyes closed and his face twitching with violent emotion. Suddenly he opened his eyes with a look of awful gravity. "My friend," he said, "you're a failure! Be judged! Don't talk about chances. Don't talk about fair starts and false starts. I'm at that point myself that I have 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 can do or can undo. It lies in one's will. You and I, sir, have had none; that's very plain! We have been weak, sir; as weak as water. Here we are, sitting staring in each other's faces and reading our weakness in each other's eyes. We are of no importance whatever, Mr. Rawson!"

Mr. Rawson received this sally with a countenance in which heartfelt conviction was oddly mingled with a vague suspicion that a proper

self-respect required him to resent its unflattering candour. In the course of a minute a proper self-respect yielded to the warm, comfortable sense of his being understood, even if he didn't gain by it. "Go on, sir, go on," he said. "It's wholesome truth." And he wiped his eyes with his dingy handkerchief.

"Dear me!" cried Searle. "I have made you cry. Well! we speak as from man to man. I should be glad to think that 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 for a moment, with his eyes fixed on the ground and his well-cut nose more deeply dyed by his agitation. Then at last, looking up: "You're a very good-natured man, sir; and you'll not persuade me that you don't come of a good-natured race. Say what you please about a chance; when a man is 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 chance is in your country—that great home of last chances. I can starve here, of course; but I don't want to starve. Hang it, sir, I want to live! I see thirty years of life before me yet. If only, by God's help, I could spend them there! It's a fixed idea of mine. I have had it for the last ten years. It's not that I am a radical. Oh, I have no opinions! Old England's good enough for me, but I am not good enough for old England. I am a shabby man that wants to get out of a room full of staring gentlefolks. I am for ever put to

the blush. It's a perfect agony of spirit. Everything reminds me of my younger and better self. Oh, for 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 perceived it was neither. "Oh, my country, my country, my country!" he murmured, in a broken voice; and then sat for some time abstracted and depressed. I intimated to our companion that it was time we should bring our little 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 half-way home before Searle spoke or moved. Suddenly in the High Street, as we passed a chop-house, from whose open doors there proceeded an aroma of old-fashioned cookery, and other restorative things, he motioned us to halt. "This is my last five pounds," he said, drawing 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. Order a bottle of Burgundy and drink it to my eternal rest!" Mr. Rawson stiffened himself up and received the gift with fingers momentarily irresponsive. But Mr. Rawson had the nerves of a gentleman. I saw the titillation of his pointed finger-tips as they closed upon the crisp paper; I noted the fine tremor in his empurpled nostril as it became more deeply conscious of the savoury character of the

establishment. He crushed the crackling note in his palm with a convulsive pressure.

"It shall be the yellow seal!" he said, jerking a spasmodic bow. The next moment the door swung behind him.

Searle relapsed into his feeble stupor, and on reaching the hotel I helped him to get to bed. For the rest of the day he lay in a half-somnolent state, without motion or speech. The doctor, whom I had constantly in attendance, declared that 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 aroused himself with a purpose which I had vaguely felt gathering beneath his quietude. "My cousin, my cousin," he said, confusedly. "Is she here?" It was the first time he had spoken of Miss Searle since our exit from her brother's house. "I was to have married her," he went on. "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 sweet woman? Or have I 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 condition should have a wish. Why should one eat one's breakfast the day one is 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 despatched a note to Miss Searle: "*Your cousin is rapidly sinking. He asks to see you.*" I was conscious of a certain unkindness in doing so. It would bring her great trouble, and no power to face the trouble; but out of her distress I fondly hoped a sufficient energy might be born. On the following day my friend's exhaustion had become so great that I began to fear that his intelligence was altogether gone. But towards evening he rallied awhile, and talked in a maundering way 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 have 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 am gone! No, I leave you something more precious than gold—the sense of a great kindness. But I have a little gold left. Bring me those trinkets." I placed on the bed before him several articles of jewelry, 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 associ-

ated with them. At last, looking up with a sudden energy, "What has become of Mr. Rawson?"

"You want to see him?"

"How much are these things worth?" he asked, without heeding me. "How much would they bring?" And he held them up in his weak hands. "They have a great weight. Two hundred pounds? I am 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 the adjoining sitting-room, to send and ascertain if Mr. Rawson were on the premises. He returned in a few moments, introducing our shabby friend. Mr. Rawson was pale, even to his nose, and, with his suppressed agitation, had an air of great 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!" said Mr. Rawson, fervently.

"My friend," said Searle, "there is to be one American the less. Let there be one the more. At the worst you will 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 are 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, in a tremulous voice. "Do get well, and I will stop here. I will stay with you and wait on you."

"No, I am booked for my journey, you for yours. I hope you don't suffer at sea."

Mr. Rawson exhaled a groan of helpless gratitude, appealing piteously from so awful a good fortune. "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 beneficent interview had plunged him Searle 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 Searle opened his eyes wide. "She will not come," he murmured. "Amen! she's an English sister." Five minutes passed; he started forward. "She has come, she is here!" he whispered. 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 spoken your name," I said. And then, with a fuller consciousness of the change in her dress and countenance: "What has happened?"

"Oh, death, death!" said Miss Searle. "You and I are left."

There came to me with her words a sort of sickening shock, the sense of poetic justice having been shuffled away. "Your brother?" I demanded.

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 took my arm. A moment later we had entered the room and approached the bedside, while the doctor withdrew. Searle opened his eyes and looked at her from head to foot. Suddenly he seemed to perceive her mourning. "Already!" he cried, audibly; with a smile, as I believe, 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, with a slight rising inflection: "You are free?"

"Free, cousin. Sadly free. And now—*now*—with what use for freedom?"

He looked steadily a moment into her eyes, dark in the heavy shadow of her musty mourning veil. "For me wear colours!" he said.

In a moment more death had come, the doctor had silently attested it, and Miss Searle 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 gray. A year has passed; Miss Searle, I believe, has begun to wear colours.

1871.

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 attributed to the famous statue. The one defect in her face, in spite of an expression of great candour 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 break 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 prize-fight 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, it was not impossible for me to believe that her first-born had also shown the cloven foot. 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 toward the last of May I met him. He told me that he was on the look-out for a quiet, unfrequented place at the seaside, 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 go into, a good many of his personal belongings have become mine. You will remember that he was a man of what are called cultivated tastes; that is, he was fond of reading, wrote a little, and painted a good deal. He wrote some rather amateurish verse, but he produced a number of remarkable paintings. He left a mass of papers, on many subjects, few of which are calculated to be generally interesting. A few of them, however, I highly prize—that portion 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 charming artist. 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 magnifi-

cent Venus Victrix. The recent passing away of the one person who had a voice paramount to mine in the disposal of Locksley's effects enables me to act without reserve.

Chowderville, June 9th.—I have been sitting some minutes, pen in hand, wondering whether on this new earth, beneath this new sky, I had better resume this occasional history of nothing at all. 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 I have had least to say. I doubt not, therefore, that, once I have had a sufficient dose of dulness, 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, my brain is immensely refreshed, 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, outside, 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. Monkhouse, to have thought of this place! I must write her a letter of passionate thanks.

Never before have I seen such a pretty little coast—never before have I been so taken with wave and rock and cloud. I am filled with ecstasy at the life, light, and transparency of the air. I am enamoured of all the moods and tenses of the ocean; and as yet, I suppose, I have not seen half of them. I came in to supper hungry, weary, footsore, sunburnt, dirty —happier, in short, than I have been for a twelvemonth. And now, if you please, for the prodigies of the brush!

June 11*th.*—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 neighbourhood, and appeal to the indigenous sentiment of hospitality. But never have I seen a folk so devoid of this amiable quality. By dinner-time I had given up in despair. After dinner I strolled down to the harbour, 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 four or five 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 dear little cove—so bright, so still, so warm, so remote from Chowderville, which lay 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 round to the landward entrance. The fort is a hollow old shell; looking upwards, 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 the 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 on the hills that encircle the little cove in which I had landed, heedless of the minutes and the miles, watching the sailing clouds and the flitting, gleaming sails, listening to the musical attrition of the tidal pebbles, passing the time anyhow. 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 sail-boat shoot out from behind a neighbouring bluff, and advance along the shore. I quickened pace. On reaching the beach I found the new-comer standing out about a hundred yards. The man at the helm appeared to regard me with some interest. With a mute prayer that his disposition might not be hostile —he didn't look like a wild islander—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 shall turn out in the morning to have sustained any. Meanwhile, I suppose, it is held secure against the next tidal revolution, however violent.

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 exchange. His name is Richard Quarterman, "though most people," he added, "call me Cap'n, for respect." 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 understatements, why, he is welcome, and bless his simple heart! The fact is, I have simply 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 large income? 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 merits. If they fail me I shall fall back upon my dollars, but with God's help I will test them, and see what kind of stuff I am made of. To be young, strong and 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 founts of inspiration of my time. I replied to Captain Quarterman 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 studying and sketching coast-scenery; toning myself up with the sea air. I have reason to believe, moreover, that he suspects me of limited means and of being of a very frugal mind. 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 want of success in the morning in the pursuit of the same. He is a queer mixture of the gentleman of the old school and the hot-headed merchant-captain.

"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 tenement 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 sweetest little garden in the world, stretching down to the water's edge. It's all as quiet as anything can be, short of a churchyard.

The back windows, you know, overlook the harbour ; 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 ever 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. Monkhouse 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 Quarterman brought me word this morning that his daughter makes no objection. I am to report this evening ; but I shall send my slender baggage in an hour or two.

P.M. —Here I am, domiciled, almost domesticated. The house is less than a mile from the inn, and reached by a very pleasant road, which skirts the harbour. At about six o'clock I pre-

sented myself; Captain Quarterman 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 Quarterman's, too, for that matter. She received me very nicely. The late Mrs. Quarterman was probably a superior being. As for the young lady's being thirty, she is about twenty-four. She wore a fresh white dress, with a blue ribbon on her neck, and a rose-bud in her button-hole—or whatever corresponds to the button-hole on the feminine bosom. I thought I discerned in this costume a vague intention of courtesy, of gaiety, of celebrating my arrival. I don't believe Miss Quarterman wears white muslin every day. She shook hands with me, and made me a pleasing little speech about their taking me in. "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 simply tell you so." Brava, Miss Quarterman! The best of it is, that she is decidedly beautiful—and in the grand manner; tall, and with roundness in her lines. What is the orthodox description of a pretty girl?—white and red? Miss Quarterman is not a pretty girl, she is a handsome woman. She leaves an impression of black and

red; that is, she is a brunette with colour. 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 colour of those slate-cliffs which I saw yesterday, weltering under the tide. She has perfect teeth, and her smile is almost unnaturally brilliant. Her chin is surpassingly round. She has a capital movement, too, and looked uncommonly well as she strolled in the garden-path with a big spray of geranium lifted to her nose. She has very little to say, apparently; but when she speaks, it is to the point, and if the point suggests it, she doesn't hesitate to laugh very musically. Indeed, if she is not talkative, it is not from timidity. Is it from indifference? Time will elucidate this, as well as other mysteries. I cling to the hypothesis that she is amiable. She is, moreover, intelligent; she is probably fond of keeping herself *to* herself, as the phrase is, and is even, possibly, very proud. She is, in short, a woman of character. There you are, Miss Quarterman, at as full length as I can paint you. After tea she gave us some music in the parlour. 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 her stately way of sitting at the instrument, than by the quality of her playing, though that is evidently high.

June 18th.—I have now been here almost a week. I occupy two very pleasant rooms. My painting-room is a large and rather bare apartment, with a very good north-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 so as to make it look as much like a studio as possible, I called in my hosts. The Captain snuffed 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 prudent reserve. 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 for ever taking women to mean a great deal more than their Maker intended? Regarding Miss Quarterman 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 obtained 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 the Captain 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? The young lady'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 second-hand acquaintance with life. "I read all the novels I can get," she said yesterday; "but I only like the good ones. I do so like *The Missing Bride*, which I have just finished." I must set her to work at some of the masters. I should like some of those fretful daughters of gold, in New York, 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 Quarterman, in a shabby old bonnet and shawl, starts off to school. If the weather is fine the Captain goes a-fishing, and I am left quite to my own devices. Twice I have accompanied the old man. The second time I was lucky enough to catch a big blue-fish, which we had for dinner. The Captain is an excellent specimen of the pure navigator, with his loose blue clothes, his ultra-divergent legs, his crisp white hair, 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 deposit of melancholy resignation. The streets are clean, bright and airy; but this fact only deepens the impression of vanished uses. It seems to say that the protecting heavens look down on their decline and can't help them. 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 harbour.

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 bitterness. For a week, now, I have been out sketching daily. The Captain carries me to a certain point on the shore of the bay, I disembark and strike across the uplands to a spot where I have taken a kind of tryst 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) industry and (comparative) privation. I am quite in love with my poverty, if I may call it so. And 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 they have also lachrymal moods. I have been painting rather languidly, and at a great disadvantage, at my window. . . . Through all this pouring and pattering Miss Miriam—her name is Miriam, and it exactly fits her—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 rich cheeks and her dark lashes, her cloak bespattered with mud and her hands red with the cool damp, she is a very honourable figure. I never fail to make her a very low bow, for which she repays me with a familiar, but not a vulgar, nod. The working-day side of her character is what especially pleases me in Miss Quarterman. This holy working-dress sits upon her with the fine effect 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-colour. The ocean is of a deep purple blue; above it, the pure, bright sky looks pale, though it hangs over the inland horizon a canopy of denser tissue. 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 a really grand landscape of barren rocks and grassy slopes. At one extremity is a broad outlook on the open sea; at the other, buried in the foliage of an apple-orchard, stands an old haunted-looking farm-house. To the west of the pond is a wide expanse of rock and grass, of sand and marsh. The sheep browse over it—poorly—as they might upon a Highland moor. Except a few stunted firs and cedars, there is not a tree in sight. When I want shade I have to look for it in the shelter of one of the large stones which hold up to the sun a shoulder coated with delicate gray, figured over with fine, pale, sea-green moss, or else in one of the long, shallow dells where a tangle of blackberry-bushes hedges about a pool that reflects the sky. I am giving my best attention to a plain brown hillside, and trying to make it look like something in nature; 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 Quarterman supplies me with a little parcel 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 discoloured 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 Quarterman it is always 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 light dress for tea, and arranged her hair anew, and with these improvements flits about with the quiet hither and thither of her gentle footstep, 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 darkening 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 believes her to be the most accomplished of women. He waits upon her as if, instead of his old familiar Miriam, she were some new arrival—say a daughter-in-law lately brought home. And *à propos* of daughters-in-law, 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 for ever? 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 they should like me, because I have tried to please them. The way to the old man's heart is through a studied consideration of his daughter. He knows, I imagine, that I admire Miss Quarterman, 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 economise with the dollars and cents, they have a right to be splendid in their feelings. I have done my best to be nice to the stately Miriam without making love to her. That I haven't done *that*, however, is 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. Those animated eyes have a power to keep people in their place. I mention 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 Quarterman, 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 a retentive faculty. 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 worldly lore 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 submissive listener. These warm July evenings, in the sweet-smelling garden, are just the proper setting for his traveller's tales. An odd enough understanding 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 in condition to be practised upon.

Sometimes his artless fables don't "take" at all: 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 dry climate of my land-bred mind. 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 colours of the deepest dye. I wonder whether my friends have any suspicion of the real state of the case. How should they? I take for granted that I play my little part pretty well. I am delighted to find it comes so easy. I do not mean that I find little difficulty in foregoing my old luxuries and pleasures—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 allusions 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 down stairs, 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 parlour, as the church-bells were ringing, Miss Quarterman asked me if I never went to a place of worship.

"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."

"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. Prendergast, for instance," said I.

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

"Yes," she answered, "Mr. Prendergast 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. Prendergast,' 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, frankly. "I am going to sit down here and talk to you, and I wish our conversation not to be interrupted."

"Have you anything particular to say?"

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

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

"His rights, then," she remarked, "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."

"You have had all the attention I am capable of. Have I been so very rude?"

"Not so very rude, perhaps, but rather inconsiderate. You have been sighing for the company of a third person, whom you can't expect me to care much about."

"Why not, pray? If I, a lady, can put up with Mr. Prendergast'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 weak tastes. That's a very 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 accusations and rebukes. Take care, Miss Quarterman! A couple of intelligent New-Englanders, of opposite sexes, young, unmarried, are pretty far gone, when they begin to scan each other's faults. So you told Mr. Prendergast that he is conceited? And I suppose you added that he was also dreadfully satirical and sceptical? What was his rejoinder? Let me see. Did he ever tell you that you were a wee 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 peruse my Bible."

"Meanwhile what shall I do?"

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

"My Bible," I said, "is the female mind."

I was nevertheless compelled to retire, with the promise of a second audience in half-an-hour. Poor Miss Quarterman owes it to her conscience to read a certain number of chapters. In what a terrible tradition she has been reared, and what an edifying spectacle is the piety of women! 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 puts it on 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-creed!"—When I returned to the parlour Miriam 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, without chaffing, what she had been reading, and she answered me in the same tone. 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 so very poor and friendless?"

"Did you ever hear of an art-student who was not poor? 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 half-a-one. But if you are friendless, it's probably your own fault."

"Perhaps it is," said I, sitting down in the rocking-chair; "and also, perhaps it isn't. Have you found me so very difficult to live with? 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 lump of sugar, Mr. Locksley; that's the long and short of it. I haven't given you one since you have been here. How you must have suffered! But it's a pity you couldn't have waited a while longer, instead of beginning to put out your paws and bark. For an artist, you are very slap-dash. Men never know how to wait. 'Have I found you very difficult to live with? 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 lump of sugar. I have found you very indulgent. You let us off easily, but you wouldn't like us a bit if you didn't pity us. Don't I go

deep? Sociable? ah, well, no—decidedly not! 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 striking. I want you to understand why I don't consider you sociable. You call poor Mr. Prendergast conceited; but, really, I believe he has more humility than you. He envies my father and me—thinks us so cultivated. You don't envy any one, and yet I don't think you're a saint. You treat us kindly because you think virtue in a lowly station ought to be encouraged. Would you take the same amount of pains for a person you thought your equal, a person equally averse with yourself to being under an obligation? There are differences. Of course it's very delightful to fascinate people. Who wouldn't? There is no harm in it, as long as the fascinator doesn't 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 dazzled and encouraged, but to be listened to, counted with, 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 Miss Blankenberg. That is, I mingle with people without any *arrière-pensée*. Of course the people I see are mainly women. Not that I wish you to do so: on the contrary, if the contrary is agreeable 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 exposing yourself to be bored, whereas I take it as my waterproof takes the rain. You have no idea what heroism I show in the exercise of my profession! Every day I have occasion to pocket my pride and to stifle my 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 smallness of your own means; but if you do, I dare say you shun rich men. I don't, I like to bleed; to go into rich people's houses, and to be very polite to the ladies, especially if they are very much dressed, very 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 patience. 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 selfish. 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 good opinion 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 n 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, "be so good as to excuse me."

"This was certainly worth waiting for," said I. "I don't know what answer to make. My head swims. Sugar, did you say? I don't know whether you have been giving me sugar or vitriol. 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 Quarterman. "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 scales, 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 and has a hump."

"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 needn't 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. Prendergast. The latter was in the highest spirits.

"How are you, Miss Miriam? 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 Miriam. 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. Prendergast'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 if 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 richly 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 finest lady of them all to despair. Prendergast is a man of excellent intentions but no taste. Two or three times I looked at Miss

Quarterman 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 port. I asked him frankly, as a friend, whether Prendergast 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 Miriam is for a female."

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

"Unless it be yourself," said the Captain.

"Thank you. I know a great many ways in which Mr. Prendergast 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 one of the old sort."

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

"Oh, she respects him," said Quarterman. "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, edifying expression, "she's born to do her duty. We are all of us born for that."

"Sometimes our duty is rather dismal," 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 Miriam were excellent friends. One day Miriam came up to me, and looked me in the face, and told me she had passed her word.

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

"'When Alfred'—his name was Alfred—'grows rich enough,' says she.

"'When will that be?'

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

"A whole year passed, and, so far as I could see, the young man hadn't accumulated very much. He was for ever 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 Alfred made his little pile yet?" I asked.

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

"'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 Alfred Bannister,' said I. That was his name.

"'I believe Mr. Bannister is in China,' says Miriam, 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 Bannister is amassing considerable wealth 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 mariner, his daughter, and his black domestic. God bless them, one and all! I say his daughter, because old Cynthia informs me that for

half-an-hour one morning, at dawn, after a night during which I had been very feeble, Miss Quarterman relieved guard at my bedside, while I lay sleeping like a log. It is very jolly to see sky and ocean once again. I have got myself into my easy-chair, by the best 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 luminosity. *Allons donc!*

The handsomest of women has just tapped, and come in with a plate of early peaches. The peaches are of a gorgeous colour and plumpness; but Miss Quarterman looks pale and thin. The hot weather doesn't agree with her, and besides she is over-worked. Damn her drudgery! Of course I thanked her warmly for her attentions during my illness. She disclaims all gratitude, and refers me to her father and the dusky Cynthia.

"I allude more especially," I said, "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 Quarterman, colouring. "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, a sentimental man is the most despicable!" she exclaimed.

I confess I was somewhat nettled—the thrust seemed gratuitous.

"Of all things a woman without sentiment is the most wanting in sweetness."

"Sentiment and sweetness are all very well when you have time for them," said Miss Quarterman. "I haven't. I am 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 vehicle, and treated Miss Quarterman to a drive. We went successively over the three beaches. What a spin we had coming home! I shall never forget that breezy 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 last night, which has not yet subsided, and the waves have 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 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 sometimes painted. It was a splendid confusion of purple and green and gold—the clouds flying and floating in the wind like the folds of a mighty banner borne by some triumphal fleet which had rounded the curve of the globe. As we reached the point where the cliffs begin I pulled up, and we remained for some time looking at their long, diminishing, crooked perspective, blue and dun as it receded, with the white surge playing at their feet.

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 my host and his daughter had performed their usual osculation, and the latter had given me that confiding hand-shake which I never fail to exact.

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

"What do you mean?"

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

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

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 disappointed, 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 little story.

On Thursday evening Miss Quarterman 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," Miriam said. "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 neat little picnic. Let us go over to old Fort Plunkett, across the bay. We will take our dinner with us, and send Cynthia to spend the day with her sister, and put the house-key in our pocket, and not come home till we please."

I entered into the project with passion, and it was accordingly carried into execution the next morning, when—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; and 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 colour 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 delicate 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, which looked like masses of black lace. The steep, straggling sides of the cliffs lifted their rugged angles against the burning blue of the sky. I remember, when Miss Quarterman stepped ashore

and stood upon the beach, relieved against the cool darkness 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 picture she made. There is a certain purity in the air of this place which I have never seen surpassed—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 Quarterman's figure, as she stood there on the beach, was almost *criarde;* but how it animated the whole scene! Her light muslin dress, gathered up over her white petticoat, her little black mantilla, the blue veil which she had knotted about her neck, 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, where her cheerful eyes shone darkly and her parted lips said things I lost—these are some of the points I hastily noted.

"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 aerial perspective."

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

"Swear ahead," said the Captain.

"I am going to say you are infernally handsome."

"Dear me! is that all?" cried Miss Quarterman,

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 returned, with an intensely white pocket-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 for roaming about idly with her parasol and gloves.

"Do you think I am going to take any trouble or do any work?" cried Miss Miriam, in the greatest good-humour. "Is not this my holiday? I am not going to raise a finger, nor soil these beautiful gloves, for which I paid so much at Mr. Dawson's at Chowderville. After you have found a shady place for your provisions, I should 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 Miriam. "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 cheap fun it all sounds now! As we looked about us shade seemed scarce, as it generally is in this region. But Miss Quarterman, like the very adroit and practical young person she is, for all that she would have me believe the contrary, immediately discovered flowing water 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, he and I; while Miriam 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 sweetness and artless revelry of this interminable summer's day. We ate and 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 perfect nonsense. We told stories without the least point. The Captain and I made atrocious puns. I believe, indeed, that Miss Quarterman herself made one little punkin, as I called it. If there had been any superfluous representative of humanity present to notice the fact, I should say that we made fools of ourselves. But as there was no one to criticise us we were brilliant enough. I am conscious myself of having said several witty things, which Miss Quarterman understood: *in vino veritas.* The dear old Captain twanged the long bow indefatigably. The bright high sun dawdled above us, in the same place, 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 recall to 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 rich *brune;* young man reclining on his elbow; old man drinking. An empty sky, with no end of expression. The whole stupendous in colour, drawing, feeling. Artist uncertain; supposed to be Robinson, 1900.

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 hamper, and in less than half an hour we saw him standing out from shore. Miss Quarterman 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. My companion remarked that, as the air was freshening, she supposed she ought to put on her shawl. I helped her to fold it into the proper shape, and then I placed it on her shoulders; it being an old shawl

of faded red (Canton crape, I believe they call it), which I have seen very often. And then she tied her veil once more about her neck, and gave me her hat to hold, while she effected a partial re-distribution of her hair-pins. By way of being humorous, I spun her hat round on my stick; 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 forms 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 life. Our conversation I need hardly repeat. I think I may trust it to the keeping of my memory; it was the sort of thing that comes back to one—after. If something ever happens which I think *may*, that apparently idle hour will seem, as one looks back, very symptomatic, and what we didn't say be perceived to have been more significant than what we did. There was something between us—there *is* something between us—and we listened to its impalpable presence—I liken it to the hum (very faint) of an unseen insect—in the golden stillness of the afternoon. I must add that if she expects, foresees, if she waits, she does so with a supreme serenity. If she is my fate (and she has the air of it), she is conscious that it's *her* fate to be so.

September 1st.—I have been working steadily for a week. This is the first day of autumn. Read aloud to Miss Quarterman 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, autumnal weather; dusk has gathered early. This evening, after tea, the Captain went into town—on business, as he said: I believe, to attend some Poorhouse or Hospital Board. Miriam and I went into the parlour. The place 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 half-a-dozen logs, 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 at least have made a show of calling the negress. I should have had my own way, but we have changed all that. Miriam went to her piano, and I sat down to a book. I read not a word, but sat considering my fate and watching it come nearer and nearer. For the first time since I have known her (my fate) she had put on a dark, warm dress; I think it was of the material called alpaca. The first time I saw her (I remember such things) she wore a

white dress with a blue 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 Quarterman," I said, "do you remember the first evening I passed beneath your roof, last June?"

"Perfectly," she replied, without stopping.

"You played the 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 am 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 that I should come here?"

"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 my father to do as he pleased."

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

"Miss Quarterman," said I, at last.

"Well, sir?"

"Excuse me for interrupting you so often. But"—and I got up and went to the piano—"but, you know, 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 have hit it exactly. I wish to be alone. I wish to monopolise 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 the merest accident. 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 curtsey.

"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 you exasperate me. I want you to listen to me. Believe me, you will need all your attention."

She looked at me steadily a moment, and I returned her glance. During that moment I was reflecting whether I might put my arm round her waist and kiss her; but I decided that I might do nothing of the sort. 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 Quarterman," 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."

"Is that my crime?" asked my companion.

"It's not so much a crime as a vice, 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 rather a shrill laugh. I wonder whether she thought I meant Prendergast.

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

"Are there so many? For myself."

"Honestly?"

"Do you think me capable of deceiving you?"

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

"Let us speak plain English, Miss Quarterman."

"'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 pity's sake, Miss Quarterman, be serious, or I shall call it something else. Yes, I love you. Don't you believe it?"

"How can I help believing what you tell me?"

"Dearest, bravest of women," said I.

And I attempted to take her hand.

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

"Actions speak louder than words," said I.

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

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

I don't know whether *she* whispered or not, but before I left her she consented.

September 12th.—We are to be married in about 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. Miriam tells me that it was talked about a month ago, and that there is a very general feeling of disappointment that I am so very poor.

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

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

"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 *buying* which I suffered from six months ago. That intercourse was conducted by means of little parcels, and I have resolved that this engagement, at all events, shall have no connection with the shops. I was cheated of my poetry once; I shan't be a second time. Fortunately there is not much

danger of this, for my mistress is positively lyrical. She takes an enthusiastic interest in her simple —showing me triumphantly certain of her ses, and making a great mystery about which she is pleased to denominate table- and napkins. Last evening I found her buttons on a table-cloth. I had heard a deal of a certain pink silk dress, and this morning, accordingly, she marched up to me, arrayed in this garment, upon which all the art and taste and eyesight, and all the velvet and lace, of Chowderville have been lavished.

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

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

"You mean all the women who have handsome dresses," Miriam replied, with great humility.

Our wedding is fixed for next Thursday. I tell Miriam that it will be as little of a wedding, and as much of a marriage, as possible. Her father and her good friend Miss Blankenberg (the school-mistress) alone are to be present. My secret oppresses me considerably; but I have resolved to keep it for the honeymoon, when it may leak out as occasion helps it. I am harassed with a dismal apprehension that if Miriam were to discover it now, the whole thing would have to be done over again. I have taken rooms at a romantic little watering-place called Cragthorpe,

ten miles off. The hotel is already quite purged of cockneys, 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 to New York. 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, 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 infant a kiss, bless her tender 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 Miriam 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 ever so much money. But believe me, Mr. Locksley, I am none the worse for the knowledge. You intimated in one place in your book that I am fitted by nature for wealth and splendour. I verily 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 now about what passed through me when you asked me to—to do *this*. 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 cheated me and I mystified you. Now that you tell me your secret I can tell you mine. *Now* we are free, with the fortune that you know. Excuse me, but it sometimes comes over 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 wouldn't have done so."

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

"A false woman? No, it was the act of any woman—placed as I was placed. You don't believe it?" And she began to smile. "Come, you may abuse me in your diary if you like— I shall never peep into it again!"

1866.

ROSE-AGATHE.

I HAD invited the excellent fellow to dinner, and had begun to wonder, the stroke of half-past six having sounded, why he did not present himself. At last I stepped out upon the balcony and looked along the street in the direction from which, presumably, he would approach. A Parisian thoroughfare is always an entertaining spectacle, and I had still much of a stranger's alertness of attention. Before long, therefore, I quite forgot my unpunctual guest in my relish of the multifarious animation of the brilliant city. It was a perfect evening, toward the end of April; there was a charming golden glow on the opposite house-tops, which looked toward the west; there was a sort of vernal odour in the street, mingling with the emanations of the restaurant across the way, whose door now always stood open; with the delightful aroma of the chocolate-shop which occupied the ground-floor of the house in whose *entresol* I was lodged; and, as I fancied, with certain luscious perfumes hovering about the brilliantly-polished window of the hairdresser's establishment, adjacent to the restaurant. It had above it the sign, "Anatole, Coiffeur;" these artists, in Paris, being known only by their Christian name.

Then there was a woman in a minutely-fluted cap, selling violets in a little handcart which she gently pushed along over the smooth asphalte, and which, as she passed, left a sensible trace in the thick, mild air. All this made a thoroughly Parisian mixture, and I envied Sanguinetti the privilege of spending his life in a city in which even the humblest of one's senses is the medium of poetic impressions. There was poetry in the warm, succulent exhalations of the opposite restaurant, where, among the lighted lamps, I could see the little tables glittering with their glass and silver, the tenderly-brown rolls nestling in the petals of the folded napkins, the waiters, in their snowy aprons, standing in the various attitudes of imminent eagerness, the agreeable *dame de comptoir* sitting idle for the moment and rubbing her plump white hands. To a person so inordinately fond of chocolate as myself—there was literally a pretty little box, half-emptied of large soft globules of the compound, standing at that moment on my table—there was of course something very agreeable in the faint upward gusts of the establishment in my rez-de-chaussée. Presently, too, it appeared to me that the savours peculiar to the hairdressing-shop had assumed an extraordinary intensity, and that my right-hand nostril was exposed to the titillation of a new influence. It was as if a bottle of the finest hair-oil had suddenly been uncorked. Glancing that way again, I perceived the source of this rich effluvium. The hairdresser's door was open, and a person whom I supposed to be his wife had come to

inhale upon the threshold the lighter atmosphere of the street. She stood there for some moments, looking up and down, and I had time to see that she was very pretty. She wore a plain black silk dress, and one needed to know no more of millinery than most men to observe that it was admirably fitted to a charming figure. She had a little knot of pink ribbon at her throat and a bunch of violets in her rounded bosom. Her face seemed to me at once beautiful and lively—two merits that are not always united; for smiles, I have observed, are infrequent with women who are either very ugly or very pretty. Her light-brown hair was, naturally enough, dressed with consummate art, and the character of her beauty being suggestive of purity and gentleness, she looked (her black silk dress apart) like a Madonna who should have been *coiffée* by M. Anatole. What a delightful person for a barber's wife, I thought; and I saw her sitting in the little front shop, at the desk, and taking the money with a gracious smile from the gentlemen who had been having their whiskers trimmed in the inner sanctuary. I touched my own whiskers, and straightway decided that they needed trimming. In a few moments this lovely woman stepped out upon the pavement, and strolled along, in front of the shop-window, on a little tour of inspection. She stood there a moment, looking at the brilliant array of brightly-capped flacons, of ivory toilet-implements, of detached human tresses disposed in every variety of fashionable convolution: she inclined her head to one side and gently stroked her chin. I was able to perceive

that even with her back turned she was hardly less pretty than when seen in front—her back had, as they say, so much *chic*. The inclination of her head denoted contentment, even complacency; and, indeed, well it might, for the window was most artistically arranged. Its principal glory was conferred by two waxen heads of lovely ladies, such as are usually seen in hairdressers' windows; and these wig-wearing puppets, which maintained a constant rotary movement, seemed to be a triumph of the modeller's art. One of the revolving ladies was dark, and the other fair, and each tossed back her head and thrust out her waxen bosom and parted her rosy lips in the most stylish manner conceivable. Several persons, passing by, had stopped to admire them. In a few moments a second inmate came to the door of the shop, and said a word to the barber's pretty wife. This was not the barber himself, but a young woman apparently employed in the shop. She was a nice-looking young woman enough, but she had by no means the beauty of her companion, who, to my regret, on hearing her voice, instantly went in.

After this I fell to watching something else, I forget what: I had quite forgotten Sanguinetti. I think I was looking at a gentleman and lady who had come into the restaurant and placed themselves near the great sheet of plate-glass which separated the interior from the street. The lady, who had the most wonderfully arched eyebrows, was evidently ordering the dinner, and I was struck with the profusion of its items. At last she began to eat her soup, with her little finger very much

curled out, and then my gaze wandered toward the hairdresser's window again. This circumstance reminded me that I was really very good-natured to be waiting so placidly for that dilatory Sanguinetti. There he stood in front of the coiffeur's, staring as intently and serenely into the window as if he had the whole evening before him. I waited a few moments, to give him a chance to move on, but he remained there, gaping like a rustic at a fair. What in the world was he looking at? Had he spied something that could play a part in his collection? For Sanguinetti was a collector, and had a room full of old crockery and uncomfortable chairs. But he cared for nothing that was not a hundred years old, and the pretty things in the hairdresser's window all bore the stamp of the latest Parisian manufacture—were part and parcel of that modern rubbish which he so cordially despised. What then had so forcibly arrested his attention? Was the poor fellow thinking of buying a new chignon, or a solitary pendent curl, for the object of his affections? This could hardly be, for to my almost certain knowledge his affections had no object save the faded crockery and the angular chairs I have mentioned. I had, indeed, more than once thought it a pity that he should not interest himself in some attractive little woman; for he might end by marrying her, and that would be a blessing, inasmuch as she would probably take measures for his being punctual when he was asked out to dinner. I tapped on the edge of the little railing which served as my window-guard, but the noise of

the street prevented this admonition from reaching his ear. He was decidedly quite too absorbed. Then I ventured to hiss at him in the manner of the Latin races—a mode of address to which I have always had a lively aversion, but which, it must be confessed, proceeding from Latin lips, reaches its destination in cases in which a nobler volume of sound will stop half way. Still, like the warrior's widow in Tennyson's song, he neither spake nor moved. But here, suddenly, I comprehended the motive of his immobility: he was looking of course at the barber's beautiful wife, the pretty woman with the face of a Madonna and the coiffure of a Parisienne, whom I myself had just found so charming. This was really an excuse, and I felt disposed to allow him a few moments' grace. There was evidently an unobstructed space behind the window, through which this attractive person could be perceived as she sat at her desk in some attitude of graceful diligence—adding up the items of a fine lady's little indebtedness for rouge-pots and rice-powder, or braiding ever so neatly the long tresses of a *fausse natte* of the fashionable colour. I promised myself to look out for this point of visual access the very first time I should pass.

I gave my tarrying guest another five minutes' grace, during which the lamps were lighted in the hairdresser's shop. The window now became extremely brilliant; the ivory brushes and the little silver mirrors glittered and flashed, the coloured cosmetics in the little toilet-bottles acquired an almost appetising radiance, and the

beautiful waxen ladies, tossing back their heads more than ever from their dazzling busts, seemed to sniff up the agreeable atmosphere. Of course the hairdresser's wife had become even more vividly visible, and so, evidently, Sanguinetti was finding out. He moved no more than if he himself had been a barber's block. This was all very well, but now, seriously, I was hungry, and I felt extremely disposed to fling a flower-pot at him: I had an array of these ornaments in the balcony. Just then my servant came into the room, and beckoning to this functionary I pointed out to him the gentleman at the barber's window, and bade him go down into the street and interrupt Mr. Sanguinetti's contemplations. He departed, descended, and I presently saw him cross the way. Just as he drew near my friend, however, the latter turned round, abruptly, and looked at his watch. Then, with an obvious sense of alarm, he moved quickly forward; but he had not gone five steps before he paused again and cast back a supreme glance at the object of his admiration. He raised his hand to his lips, and, upon my word, he looked as if he were kissing it. My servant now accosted him with a bow, and motioned toward my balcony; but Sanguinetti, without looking up, simply passed quickly across to my door. He might well be shy about looking up—kissing his hand in the street to pretty *dames de comptoir:* for a modest little man, who was supposed to care for nothing but bric-à-brac, and not to be in the least what is called "enterprising" with women, this was certainly a very smart jump. And the

hairdresser's wife? Had she, on her side, been kissing her finger-tips to him? I thought it very possible, and remembered that I had always heard that Paris is the city of gallantry.

Sanguinetti came in, blushing a good deal, and saying that he was extremely sorry to have kept me waiting.

"Oh," I answered, "I understand it very well. I have been watching you from my window for the last quarter of an hour."

He smiled a little, blushing still. "Though I have lived in Paris for fifteen years," he said, "you know I always look at the shops. One never knows what one may pick up."

"You have a taste for picking up pretty faces," I rejoined. "That is certainly a very pretty one at the hairdresser's."

Poor Sanguinetti was really very modest; my "chaff" discomposed him, and he began to fidget and protest.

"Oh," I went on, "your choice does great honour to your taste. She's a very lovely creature; I admire her myself."

He looked at me a moment, with his soup-spoon poised. He was always a little afraid of me; he was sure I thought him a very flimsy fellow, with his passion for cracked teacups and scraps of old brocade. But now he seemed a trifle reassured; he would talk a little if he dared. "You know there are two of them," he said, "but one is much more beautiful than the other."

"Precisely," I answered—"the fair one."

"My dear friend," murmured my guest, "she is the most beautiful object I ever beheld."

"That, perhaps, is going a little too far. But she is uncommonly handsome."

"She is quite perfect," Sanguinetti declared, finishing his soup. And presently he added, "Shall I tell you what she looks like?"

"Like a fashionable angel," I said.

"Yes," he answered, smiling, "or like a Madonna who should have had her hair dressed—over there."

"My dear fellow," I exclaimed, "that is just the comparison I hit upon a while ago!"

"That proves the truth of it. It is a real Madonna type."

"A little Parisianised about the corners of the mouth," I rejoined.

"Possibly," said Sanguinetti. "But the mouth is her loveliest feature."

"Could you see her well?" I inquired, as I helped him to a sweetbread.

"Beautifully — especially after the gas was lighted."

"Had you never noticed her before?"

"Never, strangely enough. But though, as I say, I am very fond of shop-windows, I confess to always having had a great prejudice against those of the hairdressers."

"You see how wrong you were."

"No, not in general; this is an exception. The women are usually hideous. They have the most impossible complexions; they are always fearfully sallow. There is one of them in my street, three doors from my own house: you would say she

was made of——" And he paused a moment for his comparison. "You would say she was made of tallow."

We finished our sweetbreads, and, I think, talked of something else, my companion presently drawing from his pocket and exhibiting with some elation a little purchase in the antiquarian line which he had made that morning. It was a small coffee-cup, of the Sèvres manufacture and of the period of Louis XV., very delicately painted over with nosegays and garlands. I was far from being competent in such matters, but Sanguinetti assured me that it bore a certain little earmark which made it a precious acquisition. And he put it back into its little red morocco case, and fell a-musing while his eyes wandered toward the window. He was fond of old gimcracks and bibelots, of every order and epoch, but he had, I knew, a special tenderness for the productions of the baser period of the French monarchy. His collection of snuff-boxes and flowered screens was highly remarkable—might, I suppose, have been called celebrated. In spite of his foreign name he was a genuine compatriot of my own, and indeed our acquaintance had begun with our being, as very small boys, at school together. There was a tradition that Sanguinetti's grandfather had been an Italian image-vendor, in the days when those gentlemen might have claimed in America to be the only representatives of a care for the fine arts. In the early part of the century they were also less numerous than they have since become, and it was believed that the founder of the trans-

atlantic stock of the Sanguinettis had, by virtue of his fine Italian eyes, his slouched hat, his earrings, his persuasive eloquence, his foreign idioms and his little tray of plaster effigies and busts, been deemed a personage of sufficient importance to win the heart and hand of the daughter of a well-to-do attorney in the State of Vermont. This lady had brought her husband a property which he invested in some less brittle department of the Italian trade, and, prospering as people, alas! prospered in those good old days, bequeathed, much augmented, to the father of my guest. My companion, who had several sisters, was brought up like a little gentleman, and showed symptoms even at the earliest age of his mania for refuse furniture. At school he used to collect old slate-pencils and match-boxes; I suppose he inherited the taste from his grandfather, who had perambulated the country with a tray covered with the most useless ornaments (like a magnified chess-board) upon his head. When he was twenty years old Sanguinetti lost his father and got his share of the patrimony, with which he immediately came to Europe, where he had lived these many years. When I first saw him, on coming to Paris, I asked him if he meant never to go back to New York, and I very well remember his answer. "My dear fellow" (in a very mournful tone), "what *can* you get there? The things are all second-rate, and during the Louis Quinze period, you know, our poor dear country was really—really——" And he shook his head very slowly and expressively.

I answered that there were (as I had been told)

very good spinning-wheels and kitchen-settles, but he rejoined that he cared only for things that were truly elegant. He was a most simple-minded and amiable little bachelor, and would have done anything possible to oblige a friend, but he made no secret of his conviction that "pretty things" were the only objects in the world worth troubling one's self about. He was very near-sighted, and was always putting up his glass to look at something on your chimney-piece or your side-table. He had a lingering, solemn way of talking about the height of Madame de Pompadour's heels and the different shapes of old Dutch candlesticks; and though many of his country-people thought him tremendously "affected," he always seemed to me the least pretentious of men. He never read the newspapers for their politics, and didn't pretend to: he read them only for their lists of auction-sales. I had a great kindness for him; he seemed to me such a pure-minded mortal, sitting there in his innocent company of Dresden shepherdesses and beauties whose smiles were stippled on the lids of snuff-boxes. There is always something agreeable in a man who is a perfect example of a type, and Sanguinetti was all of one piece. He was the perfect authority on pretty things.

He kept looking at the window, as I have said, and it required no great shrewdness to guess that his thoughts had stepped out of it and were hovering in front of the hairdresser's *étalage*. I was inclined to humour his enthusiasm, for it amused me to see a man who had hitherto found a pink-faced lady on a china plate a sufficiently substan-

tial object of invocation led captive by a charmer who would, as the phrase is, have something to say for herself.

"Shouldn't you have liked to have a closer view of her?" I asked, with a sympathetic smile.

He glanced at me and blushed again. "That lovely creature?"

"That lovely creature. Shouldn't you have liked to get nearer?"

"Indeed I should. That sheet of plate-glass is a great vexation."

"But why didn't you make a pretext for going into the shop? You might have bought a tooth-brush."

"I don't know that I should have gained much," said Sanguinetti, simply.

"You would have seen her move; her movement is charming."

"Her movement is—the poetry of motion. But I could see that outside."

"My dear fellow, you are not enterprising enough," I urged. "In your place I should get a footing in the shop."

He fixed his clear little near-sighted eyes upon me. "Yes, yes," he said, "it would certainly be delightful to be able to sit there and watch her: it would be more comfortable than standing outside."

"Rather, my dear boy. But sitting there and watching her? You go rather far."

"I suppose I should be a little in the way. But every now and then she would turn her face toward me. And I don't know but that she is as pretty behind as before," he added.

"You make an observation that I made myself. She has so much *chic*."

Sanguinetti kissed his finger-tips with a movement that he had learned of his long Parisian sojourn. "The poetry of *chic!* But I shall go further," he presently pursued. "I don't despair, I don't despair." And he paused, with his hands in his pockets, tilting himself back in his seat.

"You don't despair of what?"

"Of making her my own."

I burst out laughing. "Your own, my dear fellow! You are more enterprising than I thought. But what do you mean? I don't suppose that, under the circumstances, you can marry her?"

"No: under the circumstances, unfortunately, I can't. But I can have her always there."

"Always where?"

"At home, in my salon. It's just the place for her."

"Ah, my good friend," I rejoined, laughing, but slightly scandalised, "that's a matter of opinion."

"It's a matter of taste. I think it would suit her."

A matter of taste, indeed, this question of common morality! Sanguinetti was more Parisianised than I had supposed, and I reflected that Paris was certainly a very dangerous place, since it had got the better of his inveterate propriety. But I was not too much shocked to be still a good deal amused.

"Of course I shall not go too fast," he went on. "I shall not be too abrupt."

"Pray don't."

"I shall approach the matter gradually. I shall go into the shop several times, to buy certain things. First a pot of cold cream, then a piece of soap, then a bottle of glycerine. I shall go into a great many ecstasies and express no end of admiration. Meanwhile, she will slowly move around, and every now and then she will look at me. And so, little by little, I will come to the great point."

"Perhaps you will not be listened to."

"I will make a very handsome offer."

"What sort of an offer do you mean?"

"I am ashamed to tell you: you will call it throwing away money."

An offer of money! He was really very crude. Should I too come to this, if I continued to live in Paris? "Oh," I said, "if you think that money simply will do it——"

"Why, you don't suppose that I expect to have her for nothing?" He was actually cynical, and I remained silent. "But I shall not be happy again—at least for a long time"—he went on, "unless I succeed. I have always dreamed of just such a woman as that; and now at last, when I behold her perfect image and embodiment, why, I simply can't do without her." He was evidently very sincere.

"You are simply in love," I said.

He looked at me a moment, and blushed. "Yes, I honestly believe I am. It's very absurd."

"From some point of view or other, infatuations are always absurd," I said; and I decided that the matter was none of my business.

We talked of other things for an hour, but before he took leave of me Sanguinetti reverted to the beautiful being at the hairdresser's. "I am sure you will think me a great donkey," he said, "for taking that—that creature so seriously;" and he nodded in the direction of the other side of the street.

"I was always taught, in our country, that it is one's duty to take things seriously!"

I made a point, of course, the next day, of stopping at the hairdresser's window for the purpose of obtaining another glimpse of the remarkable woman who had made such an impression upon my friend. I found, in fact, that there was a large aperture in the back of the window through which it was very possible to see what was going on in a considerable part of the shop. Just then, however, the object of Sanguinetti's admiration was not within the range of vision of a passer-by, and I waited some time without her appearing. At last, having invented something to buy, I entered the aromatic precinct. To my vexation, the attendant who came forward to serve me was not the charming woman whom I had seen the evening before on the pavement, but the young person of inferior attractions who had come to the door to call her. This young person also wore a black silk dress and had a very neat figure; she was beautifully *coiffée* and very polite. But she was a very different affair from Sanguinetti's friend, and I rather grudged the five francs that I paid her for the little bottle of lavender-water that I didn't want. What should I do with a bottle of lavender-

water? I would give it to Sanguinetti. I lingered in the shop under half-a-dozen pretexts, but still saw no sign of its lovelier inmate. The other young woman stood smiling and rubbing her hands, answering my questions and giving explanations with high-pitched urbanity. At last I took up my little bottle and laid my hand upon the door-knob. At that moment a velvet curtain was raised at the back of the shop, and the hairdresser's wife presented herself. She stood there a moment, with the curtain lifted, looking out and smiling; on her beautiful head was poised a crisp little morning-cap. Yes, she was lovely, and I really understood Sanguinetti's sudden passion. But I could not remain staring at her, and, as I had exhausted my expedients, I was obliged to withdraw. I took a position in front of the shop, however, and presently she approached the window. She looked into it to see if it was in proper order. She was still smiling—she seemed always to be smiling—but she gave no sign of seeing me, and I felt that if there had been a dozen men standing there she would have worn that same sweetly unconscious mask. She glanced about her a moment, and then, extending a small, fair, dainty hand, she gave a touch to the back hair of one of the waxen ladies—the right-hand one, the blonde.

A couple of hours later, rising from breakfast, I repaired to my little balcony, from which post of observation I instantly espied a figure stationed at the hairdresser's window. If I had not recognised it otherwise, the attentive, absorbed droop of its head would at once have proved it to be Sanguin-

etti. "Why does he not go inside?" I asked myself. "He can't look at her properly out there." At this conclusion he appeared himself to have arrived, for he suddenly straightened himself up and entered the establishment. He remained within a long time. I grew tired of waiting for him to reappear, and went back to my arm-chair to finish reading the *Débats*. I had just accomplished this somewhat arduous feat when I heard the lame tinkle of my door-bell, a few moments after which Sanguinetti was ushered in.

He really looked love-sick; he was pale and heavy-eyed. "My too-susceptible friend," I said, "you are very far gone."

"Yes," he answered; "I am really in love. It is too ridiculous. Please don't tell any one."

"I shall certainly tell no one," I declared. "But it does not seem to me exactly ridiculous."

He gave me a grateful stare. "Ah, if you don't find it so, *tant mieux*."

"Unadvisable, rather; that's what I should call it."

He gave me another stare. "You think I can't afford it?"

"It is not so much that."

"You think it won't look well? I will arrange it so that the harshest critic will be disarmed. This morning she is in great beauty," he added, the next moment.

"Yes, I have had a glimpse of her myself," I said. "And you have been in the shop?"

"I have spent half-an-hour there. I thought it best to go straight to the point."

"What did you say?"

"I said the simple truth—that I have an intense desire to possess her."

"And the hairdresser's wife—how did she take it?"

"She seemed a good deal amused."

"Amused, simply? Nothing more?"

"I think she was a little flattered."

"I hope so."

"Yes," my companion rejoined, "for, after all, her own exquisite taste is half the business." To this proposition I cordially assented, and Sanguinetti went on: "But, after all, too, the dear creature won't lose that in coming to me. I shall make arrangements to have her hair dressed regularly."

"I see that you mean to do things *en prince*. Who is it that dresses her hair?"

"The coiffeur himself."

"The husband?"

"Exactly. They say he is the best in Paris."

"The best husband?" I asked.

"My dear fellow, be serious—the best coiffeur."

"It will certainly be very obliging of him."

"Of course," said Sanguinetti, "I shall pay him for his visits, as—if—as if——" And he paused a moment.

"As if what?"

"As if she were one of his fine ladies. His wife tells me that he goes to all the duchesses."

"Of course that will be something," I replied. "But still——"

"You mean that I live so far away? I know that, but I will give him his cab-fare."

I looked at him, and—I couldn't help it—I began to laugh. I had never seen such a strange mixture of passion and reason.

"Ah," he exclaimed, blushing, "you *do* think it ridiculous!"

"Yes," I said, "coming to this point, I confess it makes me laugh."

"I don't care," Sanguinetti declared, with amiable doggedness; "I mean to keep her to myself."

Just at this time my attention was much taken up by the arrival in Paris of some relatives who had no great talent for assimilating their habits to foreign customs, and who carried me about in their train as cicerone and interpreter. For three or four weeks I was constantly in their company, and I saw much less of Sanguinetti than I had done before. He used to appear, however, at odd moments, in my rooms, being, as may be imagined, very often in the neighbourhood. I always asked him for the latest tidings of his audacious flame, which had begun to blaze in a manner that made him perfectly indifferent to the judgment of others. The poor fellow was sincerely in love.

"Je suis tout à ma passion," he would say when I asked him the news. "Until that matter is settled I can think of nothing else. I have always been so when I have wanted a thing intensely. It has become a monomania, a fixed idea; and naturally this case is not an exception." He was always going into the shop. "We talk it over," he said. "She can't make up her mind."

"I can imagine the difficulty," I answered.

"She says it's a great change."

"I can also imagine that."

"I never see the husband," said Sanguinetti. "He is always away with his duchesses. But she talks it over with him. At first he wouldn't listen to it."

"Naturally!"

"He said it would be an irreparable loss. But I am in hopes he will come round. He can get on very well with the other."

"The other?—the little dark one? She is not nearly so pretty."

"Of course not. But she isn't bad in her way. I really think," said Sanguinetti, "that he will come round. If he does not we will do without his consent, and take the consequences. He will not be sorry, after all, to have the money."

You may be sure that I felt plenty of surprise at the business-like tone in which Sanguinetti discussed this unscrupulous project of becoming the "possessor" of another man's wife. There was certainly no hypocrisy about it; he had quite passed beyond the stage at which it is deemed needful to throw a sop to propriety. But I said to myself that this was doubtless the Parisian tone, and that, since it had made its mark upon so perfect a little model of social orthodoxy as my estimable friend, nothing was more possible than that I too should become equally perverted. Whenever, after this, Sanguinetti came in he had something to say at first about the lovely creature across the way. "Have you noticed her this morning?" he would demand. "She is really enchanting. I thought of asking leave to kiss her."

"I wonder you should ask leave," I answered. "I should suppose you would do it without leave, and count upon being forgiven."

"I am afraid of hurting her," he said. "And then if I should be seen from the street, it would look rather absurd."

I could only say that he seemed to me a very odd mixture of perversity and discretion, but he went on without heeding my comments: "You may laugh at the idea, but, upon my word, to me she is different every day; she has never the same expression. Sometimes she's a little melancholy —sometimes she's in high spirits."

"I should say she was always smiling."

"Superficially, yes," said Sanguinetti. "That's all the vulgar see. But there's something beneath it—the most delicious little pensive look. At bottom she's sad. She's weary of her position there, it's so public.—Yesterday she was very pale," he would say at another time; "I'm sure she wants rest. That constant movement can't be good for her. It's true she moves very slowly."

"Yes," said I, "she seemed to me to move very slowly."

"And so beautifully! Still, with me," Sanguinetti went on, "she shall be perfectly quiet; I will see how that suits her."

"I should think she would need a little exercise," I objected.

He stared a moment, and then accused me, as he often did, of "making game" of him. "There is something in your tone in saying that," he remarked; but he shortly afterward forgot my

sarcastic tendencies, and came to announce to me a change in the lady's coiffure. "Have you noticed that she has her hair dressed differently? I don't know that I like it; it covers up her forehead. But it's beautifully done, it's entirely new, and you will see that it will set the fashion for all Paris."

"Do they take the fashion from her?" I asked.

"Always. All the knowing people keep a note of her successive coiffures."

"And when you have carried her off, what will the knowing people do?"

"They will go by the other, the dark one—Mademoiselle Clémentine."

"Is that her name? And the name of your sweetheart?"

Sanguinetti looked at me an instant, with his usual helplessly mistrustful little blush, and then he answered, "Rose-Agathe."

When I asked him how his suit was prospering, he usually replied that he believed it to be merely a question of time. "We keep talking it over, and in that way, at any rate, I can see her. The poor woman can't get used to the idea."

"I should think not."

"She says it would change everything—that the shop would be a different place without her. She is so well known, so universally admired. I tell her that it will not be impossible to get a clever substitute; and she answers that, clever as the substitute may be, she will never have the peculiar charm of Rose-Agathe."

"Ah! she herself is aware then of this peculiar charm?"

"Perfectly, and it delights her to have me talk about it."

A part of the charm's peculiarity, I reflected, was that it was not spoiled by the absence of modesty; yet I also remembered the coiffeur's handsome wife had looked extremely *pudique*. Sanguinetti, however, appeared bent upon ministering to her vanity; I learned that he was making her presents. "I have given her a pair of earrings," he announced, "and she is wearing them now. Do notice them as you pass. They are great big amethysts, and are extremely becoming."

I looked out for our beautiful friend the next time I left the house, but she was not visible through the hairdresser's window. Her plainer companion was waiting upon a fine lady, presumably one of the duchesses, while Madame Anatole herself, I supposed, was posturing before one of the mirrors in the inner apartment, with Sanguinetti's big amethysts in her ears.

One day he told me that he had determined to buy her a *parure*, and he greatly wished I would come and help him to choose it. I called him an extravagant dog, but I good-naturedly consented to accompany him to the jeweller's. He led me to the Palais-Royal, and there, somewhat to my surprise, introduced me into one of those dazzling little shops which wear upon their front in neat gilt letters the candid announcement, "Imitation." Here you may purchase any number of glittering gems for the most inconsiderable sum, and indulge at a moderate expense a pardonable taste for splendour. And the splendour is most effective,

the glitter of the counterfeit jewels most natural. It is only the sentiment of the thing, you say to yourself, that prevents you from making all your purchases of jewelry in one of these convenient establishments; though, indeed, as their proprietors very aptly remark, fifty thousand francs more (for instance) is a good deal to pay for sentiment. Of this expensive superstition, however, I should have expected Sanguinetti to be guilty.

"You are not going to get a real set?" I asked.

He seemed a little annoyed. "Wouldn't you in that case blow me up for my extravagance?"

"It is highly probable. And yet a present of false jewelry! The handsomer it is, you know, the more ridiculous it is."

"I have thought of that," said my friend, "and I confess I am rather ashamed of myself. I should like to give her a real set. But, you see, I want diamonds and sapphires, and a real set such as I desire would cost about a hundred thousand francs. That's a good deal for—for——" And he paused a moment.

"For a barber's wife," I said to myself.

"Besides," my companion added, "she won't know the difference." I thought he rather underestimated her intelligence: a pretty Parisienne was, by instinct, a judge of parures. I remembered, however, that he had rarely spoken of this lady's intellectual qualities; he had dwelt exclusively upon her beauty and sweetness. So I stood by him while he purchased for two hundred francs a gorgeous necklace, and a coronet of the stones of Golconda. His passion was an odd affair

altogether, and an oddity the more or the less hardly mattered. He remarked, moreover, that he had at home a curious collection of artificial gems, and that these things would be an interesting addition to his stock. "I shall make her wear them all," he exclaimed; and I wondered how she would like it.

He told me afterwards that his offering had been most gratefully received, that she was now wearing the wonderful necklace, and that she looked lovelier than ever.

That evening, however, I stopped before the shop to catch a glimpse, if possible, of the barber's lady thus splendidly adorned. I had seldom been fortunate enough to espy her, and on this occasion I turned away disappointed. Just as I was doing so I perceived something which suggested that she was making a fool of my amiable friend. On the radiant bosom of one of the great waxen dolls in her window glittered a necklace of brilliants which bore a striking resemblance to the article I had helped Sanguinetti to select. She had made over her lover's tribute to this rosy effigy, to whom, it must be confessed, it was very becoming.

Yet, for all this, I was out in my calculation. A week later Sanguinetti came into my rooms with a radiant countenance, and announced to me the consummation of his dream. "She is mine! she is mine! mine only!" he cried, dropping into a chair.

"She has left the shop?" I demanded.

"Last night—at eleven o'clock. We went off in a cab."

"You have her at home?"

"For ever and ever!" he exclaimed, ecstatically.

"My dear fellow, my compliments!"

"It was not an easy matter," he went on. "But I held her in my arms."

I renewed my congratulations, and said I hoped she was happy; and he declared that she had an expression of pure bliss. There was something in her eyes. He added that I must immediately come and see her; he was impatient to present me. Nothing, I answered, would give me greater pleasure, but meanwhile what did the husband say?

"He grumbles a bit, but I gave him five hundred francs."

"You have got off easily," I said; and I promised that at my first moment of leisure I would call upon my friend's new companion. I saw him three or four times before this moment arrived, and he assured me that she had made a happy man of him. "Whenever I have greatly wanted a thing, waited for it, and at last got it, I have always been in bliss for a month afterwards," he said. "But I think that this time my pleasure will really last."

"It will last as long, I hope, as she herself does!"

"I am sure it will. This is the sort of thing —yes, smile away—in which I get my happiness."

"Vous n'êtes pas difficile," I rejoined.

"Of course she's perishable," he added in a moment.

"Ah!" said I, "you must take good care of her."

And a day or two later, on his coming for me, I went with him to his apartment. His rooms were charming, and lined from ceiling to floor with the "pretty things" of the occupant—tapestries and bronzes, terra-cotta medallions and pre-

cious specimens of porcelain. There were cabinets and tables charged with similar treasures; the place was a perfect little museum. Sanguinetti led me through two or three rooms, and then stopped near a window, close to which, half hidden by the curtain, stood a lady, with her head turned away from us, looking out. In spite of our approach she stood motionless until my friend went up to her and with a gallant, affectionate movement placed his arm round her waist. Hereupon she slowly turned and gazed at me with a beautiful brilliant face and large quiet eyes.

"It is a pity she creaks," said my companion as I was making my bow. And then, as I made it, I perceived with amazement—and amusement—the cause of her creaking. She existed only from the waist upward, and the skirt of her dress was a very neat pedestal covered with red velvet. Sanguinetti gave another loving twist, and she slowly revolved again, making a little gentle squeal. She exhibited the back of her head, with its beautifully braided tresses resting upon her sloping waxen shoulders. She was the right-hand effigy of the coiffeur's window—the blonde! Her movement, as Sanguinetti had claimed, was particularly commendable, and of all his pretty things she was certainly the prettiest.

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END OF VOL. II.

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