

**ГЕНРИ
ДЖЕЙМС**

THE

EUROPEANS

Генри Джеймс
The Europeans

«Public Domain»

Джеймс Г.

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Henry James

The Europeans

CHAPTER I

A narrow grave-yard in the heart of a bustling, indifferent city, seen from the windows of a gloomy-looking inn, is at no time an object of enlivening suggestion; and the spectacle is not at its best when the mouldy tombstones and funereal umbrage have received the ineffectual refreshment of a dull, moist snow-fall. If, while the air is thickened by this frosty drizzle, the calendar should happen to indicate that the blessed vernal season is already six weeks old, it will be admitted that no depressing influence is absent from the scene. This fact was keenly felt on a certain 12th of May, upwards of thirty years since, by a lady who stood looking out of one of the windows of the best hotel in the ancient city of Boston. She had stood there for half an hour—stood there, that is, at intervals; for from time to time she turned back into the room and measured its length with a restless step. In the chimney-place was a red-hot fire which emitted a small blue flame; and in front of the fire, at a table, sat a young man who was busily plying a pencil. He had a number of sheets of paper cut into small equal squares, and he was apparently covering them with pictorial designs—strange-looking figures. He worked rapidly and attentively, sometimes threw back his head and held out his drawing at arm's-length, and kept up a soft, gay-sounding humming and whistling. The lady brushed past him in her walk; her much-trimmed skirts were voluminous. She never dropped her eyes upon his work; she only turned them, occasionally, as she passed, to a mirror suspended above the toilet-table on the other side of the room. Here she paused a moment, gave a pinch to her waist with her two hands, or raised these members—they were very plump and pretty—to the multifold braids of her hair, with a movement half caressing, half corrective. An attentive observer might have fancied that during these periods of desultory self-inspection her face forgot its melancholy; but as soon as she neared the window again it began to proclaim that she was a very ill-pleased woman. And indeed, in what met her eyes there was little to be pleased with. The window-panes were battered by the sleet; the head-stones in the grave-yard beneath seemed to be holding themselves askance to keep it out of their faces. A tall iron railing protected them from the street, and on the other side of the railing an assemblage of Bostonians were trampling about in the liquid snow. Many of them were looking up and down; they appeared to be waiting for something. From time to time a strange vehicle drew near to the place where they stood,—such a vehicle as the lady at the window, in spite of a considerable acquaintance with human inventions, had never seen before: a huge, low omnibus, painted in brilliant colors, and decorated apparently with jangling bells, attached to a species of groove in the pavement, through which it was dragged, with a great deal of rumbling, bouncing and scratching, by a couple of remarkably small horses. When it reached a certain point the people in front of the grave-yard, of whom much the greater number were women, carrying satchels and parcels, projected themselves upon it in a compact body—a movement suggesting the scramble for places in a life-boat at sea—and were engulfed in its large interior. Then the life-boat—or the life-car, as the lady at the window of the hotel vaguely designated it—went bumping and jingling away upon its invisible wheels, with the helmsman (the man at the wheel) guiding its course incongruously from the prow. This phenomenon was repeated every three minutes, and the supply of eagerly-moving women in cloaks, bearing reticules and bundles, renewed itself in the most liberal manner. On the other side of the grave-yard was a row of small red brick houses, showing a series of homely, domestic-looking backs; at the end opposite the hotel a tall wooden church-spire, painted white, rose high into the vagueness of the snow-flakes. The lady at the window looked at it for some time; for reasons of her own she thought it the ugliest thing she

had ever seen. She hated it, she despised it; it threw her into a state of irritation that was quite out of proportion to any sensible motive. She had never known herself to care so much about church-spires.

She was not pretty; but even when it expressed perplexed irritation her face was most interesting and agreeable. Neither was she in her first youth; yet, though slender, with a great deal of extremely well-fashioned roundness of contour—a suggestion both of maturity and flexibility—she carried her three and thirty years as a light-wristed Hebe might have carried a brimming wine-cup. Her complexion was fatigued, as the French say; her mouth was large, her lips too full, her teeth uneven, her chin rather commonly modeled; she had a thick nose, and when she smiled—she was constantly smiling—the lines beside it rose too high, toward her eyes. But these eyes were charming: gray in color, brilliant, quickly glancing, gently resting, full of intelligence. Her forehead was very low—it was her only handsome feature; and she had a great abundance of crisp dark hair, finely frizzled, which was always braided in a manner that suggested some Southern or Eastern, some remotely foreign, woman. She had a large collection of ear-rings, and wore them in alternation; and they seemed to give a point to her Oriental or exotic aspect. A compliment had once been paid her, which, being repeated to her, gave her greater pleasure than anything she had ever heard. “A pretty woman?” someone had said. “Why, her features are very bad.” “I don’t know about her features,” a very discerning observer had answered; “but she carries her head like a pretty woman.” You may imagine whether, after this, she carried her head less becomingly.

She turned away from the window at last, pressing her hands to her eyes. “It’s too horrible!” she exclaimed. “I shall go back—I shall go back!” And she flung herself into a chair before the fire.

“Wait a little, dear child,” said the young man softly, sketching away at his little scraps of paper.

The lady put out her foot; it was very small, and there was an immense rosette on her slipper. She fixed her eyes for a while on this ornament, and then she looked at the glowing bed of anthracite coal in the grate. “Did you ever see anything so hideous as that fire?” she demanded. “Did you ever see anything so—so *affreux* as—as everything?” She spoke English with perfect purity; but she brought out this French epithet in a manner that indicated that she was accustomed to using French epithets.

“I think the fire is very pretty,” said the young man, glancing at it a moment. “Those little blue tongues, dancing on top of the crimson embers, are extremely picturesque. They are like a fire in an alchemist’s laboratory.”

“You are too good-natured, my dear,” his companion declared.

The young man held out one of his drawings, with his head on one side. His tongue was gently moving along his under-lip. “Good-natured—yes. Too good-natured—no.”

“You are irritating,” said the lady, looking at her slipper.

He began to retouch his sketch. “I think you mean simply that you are irritated.”

“Ah, for that, yes!” said his companion, with a little bitter laugh. “It’s the darkest day of my life—and you know what that means.”

“Wait till tomorrow,” rejoined the young man.

“Yes, we have made a great mistake. If there is any doubt about it today, there certainly will be none tomorrow. *Ce sera clair, au moins!*”

The young man was silent a few moments, driving his pencil. Then at last, “There are no such things as mistakes,” he affirmed.

“Very true—for those who are not clever enough to perceive them. Not to recognize one’s mistakes—that would be happiness in life,” the lady went on, still looking at her pretty foot.

“My dearest sister,” said the young man, always intent upon his drawing, “it’s the first time you have told me I am not clever.”

“Well, by your own theory I can’t call it a mistake,” answered his sister, pertinently enough.

The young man gave a clear, fresh laugh. “You, at least, are clever enough, dearest sister,” he said.

“I was not so when I proposed this.”

“Was it you who proposed it?” asked her brother.

She turned her head and gave him a little stare. “Do you desire the credit of it?”

“If you like, I will take the blame,” he said, looking up with a smile.

“Yes,” she rejoined in a moment, “you make no difference in these things. You have no sense of property.”

The young man gave his joyous laugh again. “If that means I have no property, you are right!”

“Don’t joke about your poverty,” said his sister. “That is quite as vulgar as to boast about it.”

“My poverty! I have just finished a drawing that will bring me fifty francs!”

“*Voyons*,” said the lady, putting out her hand.

He added a touch or two, and then gave her his sketch. She looked at it, but she went on with her idea of a moment before. “If a woman were to ask you to marry her you would say, ‘Certainly, my dear, with pleasure!’ And you would marry her and be ridiculously happy. Then at the end of three months you would say to her, ‘You know that blissful day when I begged you to be mine!’”

The young man had risen from the table, stretching his arms a little; he walked to the window. “That is a description of a charming nature,” he said.

“Oh, yes, you have a charming nature; I regard that as our capital. If I had not been convinced of that I should never have taken the risk of bringing you to this dreadful country.”

“This comical country, this delightful country!” exclaimed the young man, and he broke into the most animated laughter.

“Is it those women scrambling into the omnibus?” asked his companion. “What do you suppose is the attraction?”

“I suppose there is a very good-looking man inside,” said the young man.

“In each of them? They come along in hundreds, and the men in this country don’t seem at all handsome. As for the women—I have never seen so many at once since I left the convent.”

“The women are very pretty,” her brother declared, “and the whole affair is very amusing. I must make a sketch of it.” And he came back to the table quickly, and picked up his utensils—a small sketching-board, a sheet of paper, and three or four crayons. He took his place at the window with these things, and stood there glancing out, plying his pencil with an air of easy skill. While he worked he wore a brilliant smile. Brilliant is indeed the word at this moment for his strongly-lighted face. He was eight and twenty years old; he had a short, slight, well-made figure. Though he bore a noticeable resemblance to his sister, he was a better favored person: fair-haired, clear-faced, witty-looking, with a delicate finish of feature and an expression at once urbane and not at all serious, a warm blue eye, an eyebrow finely drawn and excessively arched—an eyebrow which, if ladies wrote sonnets to those of their lovers, might have been made the subject of such a piece of verse—and a light moustache that flourished upwards as if blown that way by the breath of a constant smile. There was something in his physiognomy at once benevolent and picturesque. But, as I have hinted, it was not at all serious. The young man’s face was, in this respect, singular; it was not at all serious, and yet it inspired the liveliest confidence.

“Be sure you put in plenty of snow,” said his sister. “*Bonté divine*, what a climate!”

“I shall leave the sketch all white, and I shall put in the little figures in black,” the young man answered, laughing. “And I shall call it—what is that line in Keats?—Mid-May’s Eldest Child!”

“I don’t remember,” said the lady, “that mamma ever told me it was like this.”

“Mamma never told you anything disagreeable. And it’s not like this—every day. You will see that tomorrow we shall have a splendid day.”

“*Qu’en savez-vous?* Tomorrow I shall go away.”

“Where shall you go?”

“Anywhere away from here. Back to Silberstadt. I shall write to the Reigning Prince.”

The young man turned a little and looked at her, with his crayon poised. “My dear Eugenia,” he murmured, “were you so happy at sea?”

Eugenia got up; she still held in her hand the drawing her brother had given her. It was a bold, expressive sketch of a group of miserable people on the deck of a steamer, clinging together and clutching at each other, while the vessel lurched downward, at a terrific angle, into the hollow of a wave. It was extremely clever, and full of a sort of tragi-comical power. Eugenia dropped her eyes upon it and made a sad grimace. "How can you draw such odious scenes?" she asked. "I should like to throw it into the fire!" And she tossed the paper away. Her brother watched, quietly, to see where it went. It fluttered down to the floor, where he let it lie. She came toward the window, pinching in her waist. "Why don't you reproach me—abuse me?" she asked. "I think I should feel better then. Why don't you tell me that you hate me for bringing you here?"

"Because you would not believe it. I adore you, dear sister! I am delighted to be here, and I am charmed with the prospect."

"I don't know what had taken possession of me. I had lost my head," Eugenia went on.

The young man, on his side, went on plying his pencil. "It is evidently a most curious and interesting country. Here we are, and I mean to enjoy it."

His companion turned away with an impatient step, but presently came back. "High spirits are doubtless an excellent thing," she said; "but you give one too much of them, and I can't see that they have done you any good."

The young man stared, with lifted eyebrows, smiling; he tapped his handsome nose with his pencil. "They have made me happy!"

"That was the least they could do; they have made you nothing else. You have gone through life thanking fortune for such very small favors that she has never put herself to any trouble for you."

"She must have put herself to a little, I think, to present me with so admirable a sister."

"Be serious, Felix. You forget that I am your elder."

"With a sister, then, so elderly!" rejoined Felix, laughing. "I hoped we had left seriousness in Europe."

"I fancy you will find it here. Remember that you are nearly thirty years old, and that you are nothing but an obscure Bohemian—a penniless correspondent of an illustrated newspaper."

"Obscure as much as you please, but not so much of a Bohemian as you think. And not at all penniless! I have a hundred pounds in my pocket. I have an engagement to make fifty sketches, and I mean to paint the portraits of all our cousins, and of all *their* cousins, at a hundred dollars a head."

"You are not ambitious," said Eugenia.

"You are, dear Baroness," the young man replied.

The Baroness was silent a moment, looking out at the sleet-darkened grave-yard and the bumping horse-cars. "Yes, I am ambitious," she said at last. "And my ambition has brought me to this dreadful place!" She glanced about her—the room had a certain vulgar nudity; the bed and the window were curtainless—and she gave a little passionate sigh. "Poor old ambition!" she exclaimed. Then she flung herself down upon a sofa which stood near against the wall, and covered her face with her hands.

Her brother went on with his drawing, rapidly and skillfully; after some moments he sat down beside her and showed her his sketch. "Now, don't you think that's pretty good for an obscure Bohemian?" he asked. "I have knocked off another fifty francs."

Eugenia glanced at the little picture as he laid it on her lap. "Yes, it is very clever," she said. And in a moment she added, "Do you suppose our cousins do that?"

"Do what?"

"Get into those things, and look like that."

Felix meditated awhile. "I really can't say. It will be interesting to discover."

"Oh, the rich people can't!" said the Baroness.

"Are you very sure they are rich?" asked Felix, lightly.

His sister slowly turned in her place, looking at him. “Heavenly powers!” she murmured. “You have a way of bringing out things!”

“It will certainly be much pleasanter if they are rich,” Felix declared.

“Do you suppose if I had not known they were rich I would ever have come?”

The young man met his sister’s somewhat peremptory eye with his bright, contented glance. “Yes, it certainly will be pleasanter,” he repeated.

“That is all I expect of them,” said the Baroness. “I don’t count upon their being clever or friendly—at first—or elegant or interesting. But I assure you I insist upon their being rich.”

Felix leaned his head upon the back of the sofa and looked awhile at the oblong patch of sky to which the window served as frame. The snow was ceasing; it seemed to him that the sky had begun to brighten. “I count upon their being rich,” he said at last, “and powerful, and clever, and friendly, and elegant, and interesting, and generally delightful! *Tu vas voir.*” And he bent forward and kissed his sister. “Look there!” he went on. “As a portent, even while I speak, the sky is turning the color of gold; the day is going to be splendid.”

And indeed, within five minutes the weather had changed. The sun broke out through the snow-clouds and jumped into the Baroness’s room. “*Bonté divine,*” exclaimed this lady, “what a climate!”

“We will go out and see the world,” said Felix.

And after a while they went out. The air had grown warm as well as brilliant; the sunshine had dried the pavements. They walked about the streets at hazard, looking at the people and the houses, the shops and the vehicles, the blazing blue sky and the muddy crossings, the hurrying men and the slow-strolling maidens, the fresh red bricks and the bright green trees, the extraordinary mixture of smartness and shabbiness. From one hour to another the day had grown vernal; even in the bustling streets there was an odor of earth and blossom. Felix was immensely entertained. He had called it a comical country, and he went about laughing at everything he saw. You would have said that American civilization expressed itself to his sense in a tissue of capital jokes. The jokes were certainly excellent, and the young man’s merriment was joyous and genial. He possessed what is called the pictorial sense; and this first glimpse of democratic manners stirred the same sort of attention that he would have given to the movements of a lively young person with a bright complexion. Such attention would have been demonstrative and complimentary; and in the present case Felix might have passed for an undisciplined young exile revisiting the haunts of his childhood. He kept looking at the violent blue of the sky, at the scintillating air, at the scattered and multiplied patches of color.

“*Comme c’est bariolé, eh?*” he said to his sister in that foreign tongue which they both appeared to feel a mysterious prompting occasionally to use.

“Yes, it is *bariolé* indeed,” the Baroness answered. “I don’t like the coloring; it hurts my eyes.”

“It shows how extremes meet,” the young man rejoined. “Instead of coming to the West we seem to have gone to the East. The way the sky touches the house-tops is just like Cairo; and the red and blue sign-boards patched over the face of everything remind one of Mahometan decorations.”

“The young women are not Mahometan,” said his companion. “They can’t be said to hide their faces. I never saw anything so bold.”

“Thank Heaven they don’t hide their faces!” cried Felix. “Their faces are uncommonly pretty.”

“Yes, their faces are often very pretty,” said the Baroness, who was a very clever woman. She was too clever a woman not to be capable of a great deal of just and fine observation. She clung more closely than usual to her brother’s arm; she was not exhilarated, as he was; she said very little, but she noted a great many things and made her reflections. She was a little excited; she felt that she had indeed come to a strange country, to make her fortune. Superficially, she was conscious of a good deal of irritation and displeasure; the Baroness was a very delicate and fastidious person. Of old, more than once, she had gone, for entertainment’s sake and in brilliant company, to a fair in a provincial town. It seemed to her now that she was at an enormous fair—that the entertainment and the *désagrémens* were very much the same. She found herself alternately smiling and shrinking; the

show was very curious, but it was probable, from moment to moment, that one would be jostled. The Baroness had never seen so many people walking about before; she had never been so mixed up with people she did not know. But little by little she felt that this fair was a more serious undertaking. She went with her brother into a large public garden, which seemed very pretty, but where she was surprised at seeing no carriages. The afternoon was drawing to a close; the coarse, vivid grass and the slender tree-boles were gilded by the level sunbeams—gilded as with gold that was fresh from the mine. It was the hour at which ladies should come out for an airing and roll past a hedge of pedestrians, holding their parasols askance. Here, however, Eugenia observed no indications of this custom, the absence of which was more anomalous as there was a charming avenue of remarkably graceful, arching elms in the most convenient contiguity to a large, cheerful street, in which, evidently, among the more prosperous members of the *bourgeoisie*, a great deal of pedestrianism went forward. Our friends passed out into this well lighted promenade, and Felix noticed a great many more pretty girls and called his sister's attention to them. This latter measure, however, was superfluous; for the Baroness had inspected, narrowly, these charming young ladies.

“I feel an intimate conviction that our cousins are like that,” said Felix.

The Baroness hoped so, but this is not what she said. “They are very pretty,” she said, “but they are mere little girls. Where are the women—the women of thirty?”

“Of thirty-three, do you mean?” her brother was going to ask; for he understood often both what she said and what she did not say. But he only exclaimed upon the beauty of the sunset, while the Baroness, who had come to seek her fortune, reflected that it would certainly be well for her if the persons against whom she might need to measure herself should all be mere little girls. The sunset was superb; they stopped to look at it; Felix declared that he had never seen such a gorgeous mixture of colors. The Baroness also thought it splendid; and she was perhaps the more easily pleased from the fact that while she stood there she was conscious of much admiring observation on the part of various nice-looking people who passed that way, and to whom a distinguished, strikingly-dressed woman with a foreign air, exclaiming upon the beauties of nature on a Boston street corner in the French tongue, could not be an object of indifference. Eugenia's spirits rose. She surrendered herself to a certain tranquil gaiety. If she had come to seek her fortune, it seemed to her that her fortune would be easy to find. There was a promise of it in the gorgeous purity of the western sky; there was an intimation in the mild, unimpertinent gaze of the passers of a certain natural facility in things.

“You will not go back to Silberstadt, eh?” asked Felix.

“Not tomorrow,” said the Baroness.

“Nor write to the Reigning Prince?”

“I shall write to him that they evidently know nothing about him over here.”

“He will not believe you,” said the young man. “I advise you to let him alone.”

Felix himself continued to be in high good humor. Brought up among ancient customs and in picturesque cities, he yet found plenty of local color in the little Puritan metropolis. That evening, after dinner, he told his sister that he should go forth early on the morrow to look up their cousins.

“You are very impatient,” said Eugenia.

“What can be more natural,” he asked, “after seeing all those pretty girls today? If one's cousins are of that pattern, the sooner one knows them the better.”

“Perhaps they are not,” said Eugenia. “We ought to have brought some letters—to some other people.”

“The other people would not be our kinsfolk.”

“Possibly they would be none the worse for that,” the Baroness replied.

Her brother looked at her with his eyebrows lifted. “That was not what you said when you first proposed to me that we should come out here and fraternize with our relatives. You said that it was the prompting of natural affection; and when I suggested some reasons against it you declared that the *voix du sang* should go before everything.”

“You remember all that?” asked the Baroness.

“Vividly! I was greatly moved by it.”

She was walking up and down the room, as she had done in the morning; she stopped in her walk and looked at her brother. She apparently was going to say something, but she checked herself and resumed her walk. Then, in a few moments, she said something different, which had the effect of an explanation of the suppression of her earlier thought. “You will never be anything but a child, dear brother.”

“One would suppose that you, madam,” answered Felix, laughing, “were a thousand years old.”

“I am—sometimes,” said the Baroness.

“I will go, then, and announce to our cousins the arrival of a personage so extraordinary. They will immediately come and pay you their respects.”

Eugenia paced the length of the room again, and then she stopped before her brother, laying her hand upon his arm. “They are not to come and see me,” she said. “You are not to allow that. That is not the way I shall meet them first.” And in answer to his interrogative glance she went on. “You will go and examine, and report. You will come back and tell me who they are and what they are; their number, gender, their respective ages—all about them. Be sure you observe everything; be ready to describe to me the locality, the accessories—how shall I say it?—the *mise en scène*. Then, at my own time, at my own hour, under circumstances of my own choosing, I will go to them. I will present myself—I will appear before them!” said the Baroness, this time phrasing her idea with a certain frankness.

“And what message am I to take to them?” asked Felix, who had a lively faith in the justness of his sister’s arrangements.

She looked at him a moment—at his expression of agreeable veracity; and, with that justness that he admired, she replied, “Say what you please. Tell my story in the way that seems to you most—natural.” And she bent her forehead for him to kiss.

CHAPTER II

The next day was splendid, as Felix had prophesied; if the winter had suddenly leaped into spring, the spring had for the moment as quickly leaped into summer. This was an observation made by a young girl who came out of a large square house in the country, and strolled about in the spacious garden which separated it from a muddy road. The flowering shrubs and the neatly-disposed plants were basking in the abundant light and warmth; the transparent shade of the great elms—they were magnificent trees—seemed to thicken by the hour; and the intensely habitual stillness offered a submissive medium to the sound of a distant church-bell. The young girl listened to the church-bell; but she was not dressed for church. She was bare-headed; she wore a white muslin waist, with an embroidered border, and the skirt of her dress was of colored muslin. She was a young lady of some two or three and twenty years of age, and though a young person of her sex walking bare-headed in a garden, of a Sunday morning in spring-time, can, in the nature of things, never be a displeasing object, you would not have pronounced this innocent Sabbath-breaker especially pretty. She was tall and pale, thin and a little awkward; her hair was fair and perfectly straight; her eyes were dark, and they had the singularity of seeming at once dull and restless—differing herein, as you see, fatally from the ideal “fine eyes,” which we always imagine to be both brilliant and tranquil. The doors and windows of the large square house were all wide open, to admit the purifying sunshine, which lay in generous patches upon the floor of a wide, high, covered piazza adjusted to two sides of the mansion—a piazza on which several straw-bottomed rocking-chairs and half a dozen of those small cylindrical stools in green and blue porcelain, which suggest an affiliation between the residents and the Eastern trade, were symmetrically disposed. It was an ancient house—ancient in the sense of being eighty years old; it was built of wood, painted a clean, clear, faded gray, and adorned along the front, at intervals, with flat wooden pilasters, painted white. These pilasters appeared to support a kind of classic pediment, which was decorated in the middle by a large triple window in a boldly carved frame, and in each of its smaller angles by a glazed circular aperture. A large white door, furnished with a highly-polished brass knocker, presented itself to the rural-looking road, with which it was connected by a spacious pathway, paved with worn and cracked, but very clean, bricks. Behind it there were meadows and orchards, a barn and a pond; and facing it, a short distance along the road, on the opposite side, stood a smaller house, painted white, with external shutters painted green, a little garden on one hand and an orchard on the other. All this was shining in the morning air, through which the simple details of the picture addressed themselves to the eye as distinctly as the items of a “sum” in addition.

A second young lady presently came out of the house, across the piazza, descended into the garden and approached the young girl of whom I have spoken. This second young lady was also thin and pale; but she was older than the other; she was shorter; she had dark, smooth hair. Her eyes, unlike the other's, were quick and bright; but they were not at all restless. She wore a straw bonnet with white ribbons, and a long, red, India scarf, which, on the front of her dress, reached to her feet. In her hand she carried a little key.

“Gertrude,” she said, “are you very sure you had better not go to church?”

Gertrude looked at her a moment, plucked a small sprig from a lilac-bush, smelled it and threw it away. “I am not very sure of anything!” she answered.

The other young lady looked straight past her, at the distant pond, which lay shining between the long banks of fir trees. Then she said in a very soft voice, “This is the key of the dining-room closet. I think you had better have it, if anyone should want anything.”

“Who is there to want anything?” Gertrude demanded. “I shall be all alone in the house.”

“Someone may come,” said her companion.

“Do you mean Mr. Brand?”

“Yes, Gertrude. He may like a piece of cake.”

“I don’t like men that are always eating cake!” Gertrude declared, giving a pull at the lilac-bush. Her companion glanced at her, and then looked down on the ground. “I think father expected you would come to church,” she said. “What shall I say to him?”

“Say I have a bad headache.”

“Would that be true?” asked the elder lady, looking straight at the pond again.

“No, Charlotte,” said the younger one simply.

Charlotte transferred her quiet eyes to her companion’s face. “I am afraid you are feeling restless.”

“I am feeling as I always feel,” Gertrude replied, in the same tone.

Charlotte turned away; but she stood there a moment. Presently she looked down at the front of her dress. “Doesn’t it seem to you, somehow, as if my scarf were too long?” she asked.

Gertrude walked half round her, looking at the scarf. “I don’t think you wear it right,” she said.

“How should I wear it, dear?”

“I don’t know; differently from that. You should draw it differently over your shoulders, round your elbows; you should look differently behind.”

“How should I look?” Charlotte inquired.

“I don’t think I can tell you,” said Gertrude, plucking out the scarf a little behind. “I could do it myself, but I don’t think I can explain it.”

Charlotte, by a movement of her elbows, corrected the laxity that had come from her companion’s touch. “Well, some day you must do it for me. It doesn’t matter now. Indeed, I don’t think it matters,” she added, “how one looks behind.”

“I should say it mattered more,” said Gertrude. “Then you don’t know who may be observing you. You are not on your guard. You can’t try to look pretty.”

Charlotte received this declaration with extreme gravity. “I don’t think one should ever try to look pretty,” she rejoined, earnestly.

Her companion was silent. Then she said, “Well, perhaps it’s not of much use.”

Charlotte looked at her a little, and then kissed her. “I hope you will be better when we come back.”

“My dear sister, I am very well!” said Gertrude.

Charlotte went down the large brick walk to the garden gate; her companion strolled slowly toward the house. At the gate Charlotte met a young man, who was coming in—a tall, fair young man, wearing a high hat and a pair of thread gloves. He was handsome, but rather too stout. He had a pleasant smile. “Oh, Mr. Brand!” exclaimed the young lady.

“I came to see whether your sister was not going to church,” said the young man.

“She says she is not going; but I am very glad you have come. I think if you were to talk to her a little”.... And Charlotte lowered her voice. “It seems as if she were restless.”

Mr. Brand smiled down on the young lady from his great height. “I shall be very glad to talk to her. For that I should be willing to absent myself from almost any occasion of worship, however attractive.”

“Well, I suppose you know,” said Charlotte, softly, as if positive acceptance of this proposition might be dangerous. “But I am afraid I shall be late.”

“I hope you will have a pleasant sermon,” said the young man.

“Oh, Mr. Gilman is always pleasant,” Charlotte answered. And she went on her way.

Mr. Brand went into the garden, where Gertrude, hearing the gate close behind him, turned and looked at him. For a moment she watched him coming; then she turned away. But almost immediately she corrected this movement, and stood still, facing him. He took off his hat and wiped his forehead as he approached. Then he put on his hat again and held out his hand. His hat being removed, you would have perceived that his forehead was very large and smooth, and his hair abundant but rather colorless. His nose was too large, and his mouth and eyes were too small; but for all this he was,

as I have said, a young man of striking appearance. The expression of his little clean-colored blue eyes was irresistibly gentle and serious; he looked, as the phrase is, as good as gold. The young girl, standing in the garden path, glanced, as he came up, at his thread gloves.

“I hoped you were going to church,” he said. “I wanted to walk with you.”

“I am very much obliged to you,” Gertrude answered. “I am not going to church.”

She had shaken hands with him; he held her hand a moment. “Have you any special reason for not going?”

“Yes, Mr. Brand,” said the young girl.

“May I ask what it is?”

She looked at him smiling; and in her smile, as I have intimated, there was a certain dullness. But mingled with this dullness was something sweet and suggestive. “Because the sky is so blue!” she said.

He looked at the sky, which was magnificent, and then said, smiling too, “I have heard of young ladies staying at home for bad weather, but never for good. Your sister, whom I met at the gate, tells me you are depressed,” he added.

“Depressed? I am never depressed.”

“Oh, surely, sometimes,” replied Mr. Brand, as if he thought this a regrettable account of one’s self.

“I am never depressed,” Gertrude repeated. “But I am sometimes wicked. When I am wicked I am in high spirits. I was wicked just now to my sister.”

“What did you do to her?”

“I said things that puzzled her—on purpose.”

“Why did you do that, Miss Gertrude?” asked the young man.

She began to smile again. “Because the sky is so blue!”

“You say things that puzzle *me*,” Mr. Brand declared.

“I always know when I do it,” proceeded Gertrude. “But people puzzle me more, I think. And they don’t seem to know!”

“This is very interesting,” Mr. Brand observed, smiling.

“You told me to tell you about my—my struggles,” the young girl went on.

“Let us talk about them. I have so many things to say.”

Gertrude turned away a moment; and then, turning back, “You had better go to church,” she said.

“You know,” the young man urged, “that I have always one thing to say.”

Gertrude looked at him a moment. “Please don’t say it now!”

“We are all alone,” he continued, taking off his hat; “all alone in this beautiful Sunday stillness.”

Gertrude looked around her, at the breaking buds, the shining distance, the blue sky to which she had referred as a pretext for her irregularities. “That’s the reason,” she said, “why I don’t want you to speak. Do me a favor; go to church.”

“May I speak when I come back?” asked Mr. Brand.

“If you are still disposed,” she answered.

“I don’t know whether you are wicked,” he said, “but you are certainly puzzling.”

She had turned away; she raised her hands to her ears. He looked at her a moment, and then he slowly walked to church.

She wandered for a while about the garden, vaguely and without purpose. The church-bell had stopped ringing; the stillness was complete. This young lady relished highly, on occasions, the sense of being alone—the absence of the whole family and the emptiness of the house. Today, apparently, the servants had also gone to church; there was never a figure at the open windows; behind the house there was no stout negress in a red turban, lowering the bucket into the great shingle-hooded well. And the front door of the big, unguarded home stood open, with the trustfulness of the golden age;

or what is more to the purpose, with that of New England's silvery prime. Gertrude slowly passed through it, and went from one of the empty rooms to the other—large, clear-colored rooms, with white wainscots, ornamented with thin-legged mahogany furniture, and, on the walls, with old-fashioned engravings, chiefly of scriptural subjects, hung very high. This agreeable sense of solitude, of having the house to herself, of which I have spoken, always excited Gertrude's imagination; she could not have told you why, and neither can her humble historian. It always seemed to her that she must do something particular—that she must honor the occasion; and while she roamed about, wondering what she could do, the occasion usually came to an end. Today she wondered more than ever. At last she took down a book; there was no library in the house, but there were books in all the rooms. None of them were forbidden books, and Gertrude had not stopped at home for the sake of a chance to climb to the inaccessible shelves. She possessed herself of a very obvious volume—one of the series of the *Arabian Nights*—and she brought it out into the portico and sat down with it in her lap. There, for a quarter of an hour, she read the history of the loves of the Prince Camaralzaman and the Princess Badoura. At last, looking up, she beheld, as it seemed to her, the Prince Camaralzaman standing before her. A beautiful young man was making her a very low bow—a magnificent bow, such as she had never seen before. He appeared to have dropped from the clouds; he was wonderfully handsome; he smiled—smiled as if he were smiling on purpose. Extreme surprise, for a moment, kept Gertrude sitting still; then she rose, without even keeping her finger in her book. The young man, with his hat in his hand, still looked at her, smiling and smiling. It was very strange.

“Will you kindly tell me,” said the mysterious visitor, at last, “whether I have the honor of speaking to Miss Wentworth?”

“My name is Gertrude Wentworth,” murmured the young woman.

“Then—then—I have the honor—the pleasure—of being your cousin.”

The young man had so much the character of an apparition that this announcement seemed to complete his unreality. “What cousin? Who are you?” said Gertrude.

He stepped back a few paces and looked up at the house; then glanced round him at the garden and the distant view. After this he burst out laughing. “I see it must seem to you very strange,” he said. There was, after all, something substantial in his laughter. Gertrude looked at him from head to foot. Yes, he was remarkably handsome; but his smile was almost a grimace. “It is very still,” he went on, coming nearer again. And as she only looked at him, for reply, he added, “Are you all alone?”

“Everyone has gone to church,” said Gertrude.

“I was afraid of that!” the young man exclaimed. “But I hope you are not afraid of me.”

“You ought to tell me who you are,” Gertrude answered.

“I am afraid of you!” said the young man. “I had a different plan. I expected the servant would take in my card, and that you would put your heads together, before admitting me, and make out my identity.”

Gertrude had been wondering with a quick intensity which brought its result; and the result seemed an answer—a wondrous, delightful answer—to her vague wish that something would befall her. “I know—I know,” she said. “You come from Europe.”

“We came two days ago. You have heard of us, then—you believe in us?”

“We have known, vaguely,” said Gertrude, “that we had relations in France.”

“And have you ever wanted to see us?” asked the young man.

Gertrude was silent a moment. “I have wanted to see you.”

“I am glad, then, it is you I have found. We wanted to see you, so we came.”

“On purpose?” asked Gertrude.

The young man looked round him, smiling still. “Well, yes; on purpose. Does that sound as if we should bore you?” he added. “I don't think we shall—I really don't think we shall. We are rather fond of wandering, too; and we were glad of a pretext.”

“And you have just arrived?”

“In Boston, two days ago. At the inn I asked for Mr. Wentworth. He must be your father. They found out for me where he lived; they seemed often to have heard of him. I determined to come, without ceremony. So, this lovely morning, they set my face in the right direction, and told me to walk straight before me, out of town. I came on foot because I wanted to see the country. I walked and walked, and here I am! It’s a good many miles.”

“It is seven miles and a half,” said Gertrude, softly. Now that this handsome young man was proving himself a reality she found herself vaguely trembling; she was deeply excited. She had never in her life spoken to a foreigner, and she had often thought it would be delightful to do so. Here was one who had suddenly been engendered by the Sabbath stillness for her private use; and such a brilliant, polite, smiling one! She found time and means to compose herself, however: to remind herself that she must exercise a sort of official hospitality. “We are very—very glad to see you,” she said. “Won’t you come into the house?” And she moved toward the open door.

“You are not afraid of me, then?” asked the young man again, with his light laugh.

She wondered a moment, and then, “We are not afraid—here,” she said.

“*Ah, comme vous devez avoir raison!*” cried the young man, looking all round him, appreciatively. It was the first time that Gertrude had heard so many words of French spoken. They gave her something of a sensation. Her companion followed her, watching, with a certain excitement of his own, this tall, interesting-looking girl, dressed in her clear, crisp muslin. He paused in the hall, where there was a broad white staircase with a white balustrade. “What a pleasant house!” he said. “It’s lighter inside than it is out.”

“It’s pleasanter here,” said Gertrude, and she led the way into the parlor,—a high, clean, rather empty-looking room. Here they stood looking at each other,—the young man smiling more than ever; Gertrude, very serious, trying to smile.

“I don’t believe you know my name,” he said. “I am called Felix Young. Your father is my uncle. My mother was his half sister, and older than he.”

“Yes,” said Gertrude, “and she turned Roman Catholic and married in Europe.”

“I see you know,” said the young man. “She married and she died. Your father’s family didn’t like her husband. They called him a foreigner; but he was not. My poor father was born in Sicily, but his parents were American.”

“In Sicily?” Gertrude murmured.

“It is true,” said Felix Young, “that they had spent their lives in Europe. But they were very patriotic. And so are we.”

“And you are Sicilian,” said Gertrude.

“Sicilian, no! Let’s see. I was born at a little place—a dear little place—in France. My sister was born at Vienna.”

“So you are French,” said Gertrude.

“Heaven forbid!” cried the young man. Gertrude’s eyes were fixed upon him almost insistently. He began to laugh again. “I can easily be French, if that will please you.”

“You are a foreigner of some sort,” said Gertrude.

“Of some sort—yes; I suppose so. But who can say of what sort? I don’t think we have ever had occasion to settle the question. You know there are people like that. About their country, their religion, their profession, they can’t tell.”

Gertrude stood there gazing; she had not asked him to sit down. She had never heard of people like that; she wanted to hear. “Where do you live?” she asked.

“They can’t tell that, either!” said Felix. “I am afraid you will think they are little better than vagabonds. I have lived anywhere—everywhere. I really think I have lived in every city in Europe.” Gertrude gave a little long soft exhalation. It made the young man smile at her again; and his smile made her blush a little. To take refuge from blushing she asked him if, after his long walk, he was not hungry or thirsty. Her hand was in her pocket; she was fumbling with the little key that her sister

had given her. “Ah, my dear young lady,” he said, clasping his hands a little, “if you could give me, in charity, a glass of wine!”

Gertrude gave a smile and a little nod, and went quickly out of the room. Presently she came back with a very large decanter in one hand and a plate in the other, on which was placed a big, round cake with a frosted top. Gertrude, in taking the cake from the closet, had had a moment of acute consciousness that it composed the refectation of which her sister had thought that Mr. Brand would like to partake. Her kinsman from across the seas was looking at the pale, high-hung engravings. When she came in he turned and smiled at her, as if they had been old friends meeting after a separation. “You wait upon me yourself?” he asked. “I am served like the gods!” She had waited upon a great many people, but none of them had ever told her that. The observation added a certain lightness to the step with which she went to a little table where there were some curious red glasses—glasses covered with little gold sprigs, which Charlotte used to dust every morning with her own hands. Gertrude thought the glasses very handsome, and it was a pleasure to her to know that the wine was good; it was her father’s famous madeira. Felix Young thought it excellent; he wondered why he had been told that there was no wine in America. She cut him an immense triangle out of the cake, and again she thought of Mr. Brand. Felix sat there, with his glass in one hand and his huge morsel of cake in the other—eating, drinking, smiling, talking. “I am very hungry,” he said. “I am not at all tired; I am never tired. But I am very hungry.”

“You must stay to dinner,” said Gertrude. “At two o’clock. They will all have come back from church; you will see the others.”

“Who are the others?” asked the young man. “Describe them all.”

“You will see for yourself. It is you that must tell me; now, about your sister.”

“My sister is the Baroness Münster,” said Felix.

On hearing that his sister was a Baroness, Gertrude got up and walked about slowly, in front of him. She was silent a moment. She was thinking of it. “Why didn’t she come, too?” she asked.

“She did come; she is in Boston, at the hotel.”

“We will go and see her,” said Gertrude, looking at him.

“She begs you will not!” the young man replied. “She sends you her love; she sent me to announce her. She will come and pay her respects to your father.”

Gertrude felt herself trembling again. A Baroness Münster, who sent a brilliant young man to “announce” her; who was coming, as the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon, to pay her “respects” to quiet Mr. Wentworth—such a personage presented herself to Gertrude’s vision with a most effective unexpectedness. For a moment she hardly knew what to say. “When will she come?” she asked at last.

“As soon as you will allow her—tomorrow. She is very impatient,” answered Felix, who wished to be agreeable.

“Tomorrow, yes,” said Gertrude. She wished to ask more about her; but she hardly knew what could be predicated of a Baroness Münster. “Is she—is she—married?”

Felix had finished his cake and wine; he got up, fixing upon the young girl his bright, expressive eyes. “She is married to a German prince—Prince Adolf, of Silberstadt-Schreckenstein. He is not the reigning prince; he is a younger brother.”

Gertrude gazed at her informant; her lips were slightly parted. “Is she a—*Princess*?” she asked at last.

“Oh, no,” said the young man; “her position is rather a singular one. It’s a morganatic marriage.”

“Morganatic?” These were new names and new words to poor Gertrude.

“That’s what they call a marriage, you know, contracted between a scion of a ruling house and—and a common mortal. They made Eugenia a Baroness, poor woman; but that was all they could do. Now they want to dissolve the marriage. Prince Adolf, between ourselves, is a ninny; but his brother, who is a clever man, has plans for him. Eugenia, naturally enough, makes difficulties; not, however,

that I think she cares much—she’s a very clever woman; I’m sure you’ll like her—but she wants to bother them. Just now everything is *en l’air*.”

The cheerful, off-hand tone in which her visitor related this darkly romantic tale seemed to Gertrude very strange; but it seemed also to convey a certain flattery to herself, a recognition of her wisdom and dignity. She felt a dozen impressions stirring within her, and presently the one that was uppermost found words. “They want to dissolve her marriage?” she asked.

“So it appears.”

“And against her will?”

“Against her right.”

“She must be very unhappy!” said Gertrude.

Her visitor looked at her, smiling; he raised his hand to the back of his head and held it there a moment. “So she says,” he answered. “That’s her story. She told me to tell it you.”

“Tell me more,” said Gertrude.

“No, I will leave that to her; she does it better.”

Gertrude gave her little excited sigh again. “Well, if she is unhappy,” she said, “I am glad she has come to us.”

She had been so interested that she failed to notice the sound of a footstep in the portico; and yet it was a footstep that she always recognized. She heard it in the hall, and then she looked out of the window. They were all coming back from church—her father, her sister and brother, and their cousins, who always came to dinner on Sunday. Mr. Brand had come in first; he was in advance of the others, because, apparently, he was still disposed to say what she had not wished him to say an hour before. He came into the parlor, looking for Gertrude. He had two little books in his hand. On seeing Gertrude’s companion he slowly stopped, looking at him.

“Is this a cousin?” asked Felix.

Then Gertrude saw that she must introduce him; but her ears, and, by sympathy, her lips, were full of all that he had been telling her. “This is the Prince,” she said, “the Prince of Silberstadt-Schreckenstein!”

Felix burst out laughing, and Mr. Brand stood staring, while the others, who had passed into the house, appeared behind him in the open doorway.

CHAPTER III

That evening at dinner Felix Young gave his sister, the Baroness Münster, an account of his impressions. She saw that he had come back in the highest possible spirits; but this fact, to her own mind, was not a reason for rejoicing. She had but a limited confidence in her brother's judgment; his capacity for taking rose-colored views was such as to vulgarize one of the prettiest of tints. Still, she supposed he could be trusted to give her the mere facts; and she invited him with some eagerness to communicate them. "I suppose, at least, they didn't turn you out from the door;" she said. "You have been away some ten hours."

"Turn me from the door!" Felix exclaimed. "They took me to their hearts; they killed the fatted calf."

"I know what you want to say: they are a collection of angels."

"Exactly," said Felix. "They are a collection of angels—simply."

"*C'est bien vague*," remarked the Baroness. "What are they like?"

"Like nothing you ever saw."

"I am sure I am much obliged; but that is hardly more definite. Seriously, they were glad to see you?"

"Enchanted. It has been the proudest day of my life. Never, never have I been so lionized! I assure you, I was cock of the walk. My dear sister," said the young man, "*nous n'avons qu'à nous tenir*; we shall be great swells!"

Madame Münster looked at him, and her eye exhibited a slight responsive spark. She touched her lips to a glass of wine, and then she said, "Describe them. Give me a picture."

Felix drained his own glass. "Well, it's in the country, among the meadows and woods; a wild sort of place, and yet not far from here. Only, such a road, my dear! Imagine one of the Alpine glaciers reproduced in mud. But you will not spend much time on it, for they want you to come and stay, once for all."

"Ah," said the Baroness, "they want me to come and stay, once for all? *Bon*."

"It's intensely rural, tremendously natural; and all overhung with this strange white light, this far-away blue sky. There's a big wooden house—a kind of three-story bungalow; it looks like a magnified Nuremberg toy. There was a gentleman there that made a speech to me about it and called it a 'venerable mansion;' but it looks as if it had been built last night."

"Is it handsome—is it elegant?" asked the Baroness.

Felix looked at her a moment, smiling. "It's very clean! No splendors, no gilding, no troops of servants; rather straight-backed chairs. But you might eat off the floors, and you can sit down on the stairs."

"That must be a privilege. And the inhabitants are straight-backed too, of course."

"My dear sister," said Felix, "the inhabitants are charming."

"In what style?"

"In a style of their own. How shall I describe it? It's primitive; it's patriarchal; it's the *ton* of the golden age."

"And have they nothing golden but their *ton*? Are there no symptoms of wealth?"

"I should say there was wealth without symptoms. A plain, homely way of life: nothing for show, and very little for—what shall I call it?—for the senses; but a great *aisance*, and a lot of money, out of sight, that comes forward very quietly for subscriptions to institutions, for repairing tenements, for paying doctor's bills; perhaps even for portioning daughters."

"And the daughters?" Madame Münster demanded. "How many are there?"

"There are two, Charlotte and Gertrude."

"Are they pretty?"

“One of them,” said Felix.

“Which is that?”

The young man was silent, looking at his sister. “Charlotte,” he said at last.

She looked at him in return. “I see. You are in love with Gertrude. They must be Puritans to their finger-tips; anything but gay!”

“No, they are not gay,” Felix admitted. “They are sober; they are even severe. They are of a pensive cast; they take things hard. I think there is something the matter with them; they have some melancholy memory or some depressing expectation. It’s not the epicurean temperament. My uncle, Mr. Wentworth, is a tremendously high-toned old fellow; he looks as if he were undergoing martyrdom, not by fire, but by freezing. But we shall cheer them up; we shall do them good. They will take a good deal of stirring up; but they are wonderfully kind and gentle. And they are appreciative. They think one clever; they think one remarkable!”

“That is very fine, so far as it goes,” said the Baroness. “But are we to be shut up to these three people, Mr. Wentworth and the two young women—what did you say their names were—Deborah and Hephzibah?”

“Oh, no; there is another little girl, a cousin of theirs, a very pretty creature; a thorough little American. And then there is the son of the house.”

“Good!” said the Baroness. “We are coming to the gentlemen. What of the son of the house?”

“I am afraid he gets tipsy.”

“He, then, has the epicurean temperament! How old is he?”

“He is a boy of twenty; a pretty young fellow, but I am afraid he has vulgar tastes. And then there is Mr. Brand—a very tall young man, a sort of lay-priest. They seem to think a good deal of him, but I don’t exactly make him out.”

“And is there nothing,” asked the Baroness, “between these extremes—this mysterious ecclesiastic and that intemperate youth?”

“Oh, yes, there is Mr. Acton. I think,” said the young man, with a nod at his sister, “that you will like Mr. Acton.”

“Remember that I am very fastidious,” said the Baroness. “Has he very good manners?”

“He will have them with you. He is a man of the world; he has been to China.”

Madame Münster gave a little laugh. “A man of the Chinese world! He must be very interesting.”

“I have an idea that he brought home a fortune,” said Felix.

“That is always interesting. Is he young, good-looking, clever?”

“He is less than forty; he has a baldish head; he says witty things. I rather think,” added the young man, “that he will admire the Baroness Münster.”

“It is very possible,” said this lady. Her brother never knew how she would take things; but shortly afterwards she declared that he had made a very pretty description and that on the morrow she would go and see for herself.

They mounted, accordingly, into a great barouche—a vehicle as to which the Baroness found nothing to criticise but the price that was asked for it and the fact that the coachman wore a straw hat. (At Silberstadt Madame Münster had had liveries of yellow and crimson.) They drove into the country, and the Baroness, leaning far back and swaying her lace-fringed parasol, looked to right and to left and surveyed the way-side objects. After a while she pronounced them *affreux*. Her brother remarked that it was apparently a country in which the foreground was inferior to the *plans reculés*; and the Baroness rejoined that the landscape seemed to be all foreground. Felix had fixed with his new friends the hour at which he should bring his sister; it was four o’clock in the afternoon. The large, clean-faced house wore, to his eyes, as the barouche drove up to it, a very friendly aspect; the high, slender elms made lengthening shadows in front of it. The Baroness descended; her American kinsfolk were stationed in the portico. Felix waved his hat to them, and a tall, lean gentleman, with

a high forehead and a clean shaven face, came forward toward the garden gate. Charlotte Wentworth walked at his side. Gertrude came behind, more slowly. Both of these young ladies wore rustling silk dresses. Felix ushered his sister into the gate. "Be very gracious," he said to her. But he saw the admonition was superfluous. Eugenia was prepared to be gracious as only Eugenia could be. Felix knew no keener pleasure than to be able to admire his sister unrestrictedly; for if the opportunity was frequent, it was not inveterate. When she desired to please she was to him, as to everyone else, the most charming woman in the world. Then he forgot that she was ever anything else; that she was sometimes hard and perverse; that he was occasionally afraid of her. Now, as she took his arm to pass into the garden, he felt that she desired, that she proposed, to please, and this situation made him very happy. Eugenia would please.

The tall gentleman came to meet her, looking very rigid and grave. But it was a rigidity that had no illiberal meaning. Mr. Wentworth's manner was pregnant, on the contrary, with a sense of grand responsibility, of the solemnity of the occasion, of its being difficult to show sufficient deference to a lady at once so distinguished and so unhappy. Felix had observed on the day before his characteristic pallor; and now he perceived that there was something almost cadaverous in his uncle's high-featured white face. But so clever were this young man's quick sympathies and perceptions that he already learned that in these semi-mortuary manifestations there was no cause for alarm. His light imagination had gained a glimpse of Mr. Wentworth's spiritual mechanism, and taught him that, the old man being infinitely conscientious, the special operation of conscience within him announced itself by several of the indications of physical faintness.

The Baroness took her uncle's hand, and stood looking at him with her ugly face and her beautiful smile. "Have I done right to come?" she asked.

"Very right, very right," said Mr. Wentworth, solemnly. He had arranged in his mind a little speech; but now it quite faded away. He felt almost frightened. He had never been looked at in just that way—with just that fixed, intense smile—by any woman; and it perplexed and weighed upon him, now, that the woman who was smiling so and who had instantly given him a vivid sense of her possessing other unprecedented attributes, was his own niece, the child of his own father's daughter. The idea that his niece should be a German Baroness, married "morganatically" to a Prince, had already given him much to think about. Was it right, was it just, was it acceptable? He always slept badly, and the night before he had lain awake much more even than usual, asking himself these questions. The strange word "morganatic" was constantly in his ears; it reminded him of a certain Mrs. Morgan whom he had once known and who had been a bold, unpleasant woman. He had a feeling that it was his duty, so long as the Baroness looked at him, smiling in that way, to meet her glance with his own scrupulously adjusted, consciously frigid organs of vision; but on this occasion he failed to perform his duty to the last. He looked away toward his daughters. "We are very glad to see you," he had said. "Allow me to introduce my daughters—Miss Charlotte Wentworth, Miss Gertrude Wentworth."

The Baroness thought she had never seen people less demonstrative. But Charlotte kissed her and took her hand, looking at her sweetly and solemnly. Gertrude seemed to her almost funereal, though Gertrude might have found a source of gaiety in the fact that Felix, with his magnificent smile, had been talking to her; he had greeted her as a very old friend. When she kissed the Baroness she had tears in her eyes. Madame Münster took each of these young women by the hand, and looked at them all over. Charlotte thought her very strange-looking and singularly dressed; she could not have said whether it was well or ill. She was glad, at any rate, that they had put on their silk gowns—especially Gertrude. "My cousins are very pretty," said the Baroness, turning her eyes from one to the other. "Your daughters are very handsome, sir."

Charlotte blushed quickly; she had never yet heard her personal appearance alluded to in a loud, expressive voice. Gertrude looked away—not at Felix; she was extremely pleased. It was not the compliment that pleased her; she did not believe it; she thought herself very plain. She could hardly

have told you the source of her satisfaction; it came from something in the way the Baroness spoke, and it was not diminished—it was rather deepened, oddly enough—by the young girl's disbelief. Mr. Wentworth was silent; and then he asked, formally, "Won't you come into the house?"

"These are not all; you have some other children," said the Baroness.

"I have a son," Mr. Wentworth answered.

"And why doesn't he come to meet me?" Eugenia cried. "I am afraid he is not so charming as his sisters."

"I don't know; I will see about it," the old man declared.

"He is rather afraid of ladies," Charlotte said, softly.

"He is very handsome," said Gertrude, as loud as she could.

"We will go in and find him. We will draw him out of his *cachette*." And the Baroness took Mr. Wentworth's arm, who was not aware that he had offered it to her, and who, as they walked toward the house, wondered whether he ought to have offered it and whether it was proper for her to take it if it had not been offered. "I want to know you well," said the Baroness, interrupting these meditations, "and I want you to know me."

"It seems natural that we should know each other," Mr. Wentworth rejoined. "We are near relatives."

"Ah, there comes a moment in life when one reverts, irresistibly, to one's natural ties—to one's natural affections. You must have found that!" said Eugenia.

Mr. Wentworth had been told the day before by Felix that Eugenia was very clever, very brilliant, and the information had held him in some suspense. This was the cleverness, he supposed; the brilliancy was beginning. "Yes, the natural affections are very strong," he murmured.

"In some people," the Baroness declared. "Not in all." Charlotte was walking beside her; she took hold of her hand again, smiling always. "And you, *cousine*, where did you get that enchanting complexion?" she went on; "such lilies and roses?" The roses in poor Charlotte's countenance began speedily to predominate over the lilies, and she quickened her step and reached the portico. "This is the country of complexions," the Baroness continued, addressing herself to Mr. Wentworth. "I am convinced they are more delicate. There are very good ones in England—in Holland; but they are very apt to be coarse. There is too much red."

"I think you will find," said Mr. Wentworth, "that this country is superior in many respects to those you mention. I have been to England and Holland."

"Ah, you have been to Europe?" cried the Baroness. "Why didn't you come and see me? But it's better, after all, this way," she said. They were entering the house; she paused and looked round her. "I see you have arranged your house—your beautiful house—in the—in the Dutch taste!"

"The house is very old," remarked Mr. Wentworth. "General Washington once spent a week here."

"Oh, I have heard of Washington," cried the Baroness. "My father used to tell me of him."

Mr. Wentworth was silent a moment, and then, "I found he was very well known in Europe," he said.

Felix had lingered in the garden with Gertrude; he was standing before her and smiling, as he had done the day before. What had happened the day before seemed to her a kind of dream. He had been there and he had changed everything; the others had seen him, they had talked with him; but that he should come again, that he should be part of the future, part of her small, familiar, much-meditating life—this needed, afresh, the evidence of her senses. The evidence had come to her senses now; and her senses seemed to rejoice in it. "What do you think of Eugenia?" Felix asked. "Isn't she charming?"

"She is very brilliant," said Gertrude. "But I can't tell yet. She seems to me like a singer singing an air. You can't tell till the song is done."

“Ah, the song will never be done!” exclaimed the young man, laughing. “Don’t you think her handsome?”

Gertrude had been disappointed in the beauty of the Baroness Münster; she had expected her, for mysterious reasons, to resemble a very pretty portrait of the Empress Josephine, of which there hung an engraving in one of the parlors, and which the younger Miss Wentworth had always greatly admired. But the Baroness was not at all like that—not at all. Though different, however, she was very wonderful, and Gertrude felt herself most suggestively corrected. It was strange, nevertheless, that Felix should speak in that positive way about his sister’s beauty. “I think I *shall* think her handsome,” Gertrude said. “It must be very interesting to know her. I don’t feel as if I ever could.”

“Ah, you will know her well; you will become great friends,” Felix declared, as if this were the easiest thing in the world.

“She is very graceful,” said Gertrude, looking after the Baroness, suspended to her father’s arm. It was a pleasure to her to say that anyone was graceful.

Felix had been looking about him. “And your little cousin, of yesterday,” he said, “who was so wonderfully pretty—what has become of her?”

“She is in the parlor,” Gertrude answered. “Yes, she is very pretty.” She felt as if it were her duty to take him straight into the house, to where he might be near her cousin. But after hesitating a moment she lingered still. “I didn’t believe you would come back,” she said.

“Not come back!” cried Felix, laughing. “You didn’t know, then, the impression made upon this susceptible heart of mine.”

She wondered whether he meant the impression her cousin Lizzie had made. “Well,” she said, “I didn’t think we should ever see you again.”

“And pray what did you think would become of me?”

“I don’t know. I thought you would melt away.”

“That’s a compliment to my solidity! I melt very often,” said Felix, “but there is always something left of me.”

“I came and waited for you by the door, because the others did,” Gertrude went on. “But if you had never appeared I should not have been surprised.”

“I hope,” declared Felix, looking at her, “that you would have been disappointed.”

She looked at him a little, and shook her head. “No—no!”

“*Ah, par exemple!*” cried the young man. “You deserve that I should never leave you.”

Going into the parlor they found Mr. Wentworth performing introductions. A young man was standing before the Baroness, blushing a good deal, laughing a little, and shifting his weight from one foot to the other—a slim, mild-faced young man, with neatly-arranged features, like those of Mr. Wentworth. Two other gentlemen, behind him, had risen from their seats, and a little apart, near one of the windows, stood a remarkably pretty young girl. The young girl was knitting a stocking; but, while her fingers quickly moved, she looked with wide, brilliant eyes at the Baroness.

“And what is your son’s name?” said Eugenia, smiling at the young man.

“My name is Clifford Wentworth, ma’am,” he said in a tremulous voice.

“Why didn’t you come out to meet me, Mr. Clifford Wentworth?” the Baroness demanded, with her beautiful smile.

“I didn’t think you would want me,” said the young man, slowly sidling about.

“One always wants a *beau cousin*,—if one has one! But if you are very nice to me in future I won’t remember it against you.” And Madame Münster transferred her smile to the other persons present. It rested first upon the candid countenance and long-skirted figure of Mr. Brand, whose eyes were intently fixed upon Mr. Wentworth, as if to beg him not to prolong an anomalous situation. Mr. Wentworth pronounced his name. Eugenia gave him a very charming glance, and then looked at the other gentleman.

This latter personage was a man of rather less than the usual stature and the usual weight, with a quick, observant, agreeable dark eye, a small quantity of thin dark hair, and a small moustache. He had been standing with his hands in his pockets; and when Eugenia looked at him he took them out. But he did not, like Mr. Brand, look evasively and urgently at their host. He met Eugenia's eyes; he appeared to appreciate the privilege of meeting them. Madame Münster instantly felt that he was, intrinsically, the most important person present. She was not unconscious that this impression was in some degree manifested in the little sympathetic nod with which she acknowledged Mr. Wentworth's announcement, "My cousin, Mr. Acton!"

"Your cousin—not mine?" said the Baroness.

"It only depends upon you," Mr. Acton declared, laughing.

The Baroness looked at him a moment, and noticed that he had very white teeth. "Let it depend upon your behavior," she said. "I think I had better wait. I have cousins enough. Unless I can also claim relationship," she added, "with that charming young lady," and she pointed to the young girl at the window.

"That's my sister," said Mr. Acton. And Gertrude Wentworth put her arm round the young girl and led her forward. It was not, apparently, that she needed much leading. She came toward the Baroness with a light, quick step, and with perfect self-possession, rolling her stocking round its needles. She had dark blue eyes and dark brown hair; she was wonderfully pretty.

Eugenia kissed her, as she had kissed the other young women, and then held her off a little, looking at her. "Now this is quite another *type*," she said; she pronounced the word in the French manner. "This is a different outline, my uncle, a different character, from that of your own daughters. This, Felix," she went on, "is very much more what we have always thought of as the American type."

The young girl, during this exposition, was smiling askance at everyone in turn, and at Felix out of turn. "I find only one type here!" cried Felix, laughing. "The type adorable!"

This sally was received in perfect silence, but Felix, who learned all things quickly, had already learned that the silences frequently observed among his new acquaintances were not necessarily restrictive or resentful. It was, as one might say, the silence of expectation, of modesty. They were all standing round his sister, as if they were expecting her to acquit herself of the exhibition of some peculiar faculty, some brilliant talent. Their attitude seemed to imply that she was a kind of conversational mountebank, attired, intellectually, in gauze and spangles. This attitude gave a certain ironical force to Madame Münster's next words. "Now this is your circle," she said to her uncle. "This is your *salon*. These are your regular *habitués*, eh? I am so glad to see you all together."

"Oh," said Mr. Wentworth, "they are always dropping in and out. You must do the same."

"Father," interposed Charlotte Wentworth, "they must do something more." And she turned her sweet, serious face, that seemed at once timid and placid, upon their interesting visitor. "What is your name?" she asked.

"Eugenia-Camilla-Dolores," said the Baroness, smiling. "But you needn't say all that."

"I will say Eugenia, if you will let me. You must come and stay with us."

The Baroness laid her hand upon Charlotte's arm very tenderly; but she reserved herself. She was wondering whether it would be possible to "stay" with these people. "It would be very charming—very charming," she said; and her eyes wandered over the company, over the room. She wished to gain time before committing herself. Her glance fell upon young Mr. Brand, who stood there, with his arms folded and his hand on his chin, looking at her. "The gentleman, I suppose, is a sort of ecclesiastic," she said to Mr. Wentworth, lowering her voice a little.

"He is a minister," answered Mr. Wentworth.

"A Protestant?" asked Eugenia.

"I am a Unitarian, madam," replied Mr. Brand, impressively.

"Ah, I see," said Eugenia. "Something new." She had never heard of this form of worship. Mr. Acton began to laugh, and Gertrude looked anxiously at Mr. Brand.

“You have come very far,” said Mr. Wentworth.

“Very far—very far,” the Baroness replied, with a graceful shake of her head—a shake that might have meant many different things.

“That’s a reason why you ought to settle down with us,” said Mr. Wentworth, with that dryness of utterance which, as Eugenia was too intelligent not to feel, took nothing from the delicacy of his meaning.

She looked at him, and for an instant, in his cold, still face, she seemed to see a far-away likeness to the vaguely remembered image of her mother. Eugenia was a woman of sudden emotions, and now, unexpectedly, she felt one rising in her heart. She kept looking round the circle; she knew that there was admiration in all the eyes that were fixed upon her. She smiled at them all.

“I came to look—to try—to ask,” she said. “It seems to me I have done well. I am very tired; I want to rest.” There were tears in her eyes. The luminous interior, the gentle, tranquil people, the simple, serious life—the sense of these things pressed upon her with an overmastering force, and she felt herself yielding to one of the most genuine emotions she had ever known. “I should like to stay here,” she said. “Pray take me in.”

Though she was smiling, there were tears in her voice as well as in her eyes. “My dear niece,” said Mr. Wentworth, softly. And Charlotte put out her arms and drew the Baroness toward her; while Robert Acton turned away, with his hands stealing into his pockets.

CHAPTER IV

A few days after the Baroness Münster had presented herself to her American kinsfolk she came, with her brother, and took up her abode in that small white house adjacent to Mr. Wentworth's own dwelling of which mention has already been made. It was on going with his daughters to return her visit that Mr. Wentworth placed this comfortable cottage at her service; the offer being the result of a domestic colloquy, diffused through the ensuing twenty-four hours, in the course of which the two foreign visitors were discussed and analyzed with a great deal of earnestness and subtlety. The discussion went forward, as I say, in the family circle; but that circle on the evening following Madame Münster's return to town, as on many other occasions, included Robert Acton and his pretty sister. If you had been present, it would probably not have seemed to you that the advent of these brilliant strangers was treated as an exhilarating occurrence, a pleasure the more in this tranquil household, a prospective source of entertainment. This was not Mr. Wentworth's way of treating any human occurrence. The sudden irruption into the well-ordered consciousness of the Wentworths of an element not allowed for in its scheme of usual obligations required a readjustment of that sense of responsibility which constituted its principal furniture. To consider an event, crudely and baldly, in the light of the pleasure it might bring them was an intellectual exercise with which Felix Young's American cousins were almost wholly unacquainted, and which they scarcely supposed to be largely pursued in any section of human society. The arrival of Felix and his sister was a satisfaction, but it was a singularly joyless and inelastic satisfaction. It was an extension of duty, of the exercise of the more recondite virtues; but neither Mr. Wentworth, nor Charlotte, nor Mr. Brand, who, among these excellent people, was a great promoter of reflection and aspiration, frankly adverted to it as an extension of enjoyment. This function was ultimately assumed by Gertrude Wentworth, who was a peculiar girl, but the full compass of whose peculiarities had not been exhibited before they very ingeniously found their pretext in the presence of these possibly too agreeable foreigners. Gertrude, however, had to struggle with a great accumulation of obstructions, both of the subjective, as the metaphysicians say, and of the objective, order; and indeed it is no small part of the purpose of this little history to set forth her struggle. What seemed paramount in this abrupt enlargement of Mr. Wentworth's sympathies and those of his daughters was an extension of the field of possible mistakes; and the doctrine, as it may almost be called, of the oppressive gravity of mistakes was one of the most cherished traditions of the Wentworth family.

"I don't believe she wants to come and stay in this house," said Gertrude; Madame Münster, from this time forward, receiving no other designation than the personal pronoun. Charlotte and Gertrude acquired considerable facility in addressing her, directly, as "Eugenia;" but in speaking of her to each other they rarely called her anything but "she."

"Doesn't she think it good enough for her?" cried little Lizzie Acton, who was always asking unpractical questions that required, in strictness, no answer, and to which indeed she expected no other answer than such as she herself invariably furnished in a small, innocently-satirical laugh.

"She certainly expressed a willingness to come," said Mr. Wentworth.

"That was only politeness," Gertrude rejoined.

"Yes, she is very polite—very polite," said Mr. Wentworth.

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