

ГЕНРИ ДЖЕЙМС

GEORGINA'S
REASONS

Генри Джеймс
Georgina's Reasons

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Georgina's Reasons:

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Henry James

Georgina's Reasons

PART I

I

She was certainly a singular girl, and if he felt at the end that he did n't know her nor understand her, it is not surprising that he should have felt it at the beginning. But he felt at the beginning what he did not feel at the end, that her singularity took the form of a charm which—once circumstances had made them so intimate—it was impossible to resist or conjure away. He had a strange impression (it amounted at times to a positive distress, and shot through the sense of pleasure—morally speaking—with the acuteness of a sudden twinge of neuralgia) that it would be better for each of them that they should break off short and never see each other again. In later years he called this feeling a foreboding, and remembered two or three occasions when he had been on the point of expressing it to Georgina. Of course, in fact, he never expressed it; there were plenty of good reasons for that. Happy love is not disposed to assume disagreeable duties, and Raymond Benyon's love was happy, in spite of grave

presentiments, in spite of the singularity of his mistress and the insufferable rudeness of her parents. She was a tall, fair girl, with a beautiful cold eye and a smile of which the perfect sweetness, proceeding from the lips, was full of compensation; she had auburn hair of a hue that could be qualified as nothing less than gorgeous, and she seemed to move through life with a stately grace, as she would have walked through an old-fashioned minuet. Gentlemen connected with the navy have the advantage of seeing many types of women; they are able to compare the ladies of New York with those of Valparaiso, and those of Halifax with those of the Cape of Good Hope. Eaymond Benyon had had these advantages, and being very fond of women he had learnt his lesson; he was in a position to appreciate Georgina Gressie's fine points. She looked like a duchess,—I don't mean that in foreign ports Benyon had associated with duchesses,—and she took everything so seriously. That was flattering for the young man, who was only a lieutenant, detailed for duty at the Brooklyn navy-yard, without a penny in the world but his pay, with a set of plain, numerous, seafaring, God-fearing relations in New Hampshire, a considerable appearance of talent, a feverish, disguised ambition, and a slight impediment in his speech.

He was a spare, tough young man, his dark hair was straight and fine, and his face, a trifle pale, was smooth and carefully drawn. He stammered a little, blushing when he did so, at long intervals. I scarcely know how he appeared on shipboard, but on shore, in his civilian's garb, which was of the neatest, he had as

little as possible an aroma of winds and waves. He was neither salt nor brown, nor red, nor particularly "hearty." He never twitched up his trousers, nor, so far as one could see, did he, with his modest, attentive manner, carry himself as one accustomed to command. Of course, as a subaltern, he had more to do in the way of obeying. He looked as if he followed some sedentary calling, and was, indeed, supposed to be decidedly intellectual. He was a lamb with women, to whose charms he was, as I have hinted, susceptible; but with men he was different, and, I believe, as much of a wolf as was necessary. He had a manner of adoring the handsome, insolent queen of his affections (I will explain in a moment why I call her insolent); indeed, he looked up to her literally as well as sentimentally; for she was the least bit the taller of the two. He had met her the summer before, on the piazza of a hotel at Fort Hamilton, to which, with a brother officer, in a dusty buggy, he had driven over from Brooklyn to spend a tremendously hot Sunday,—the kind of day when the navy-yard was loathsome; and the acquaintance had been renewed by his calling in Twelfth Street on New-Year's Day,—a considerable time to wait for a pretext, but which proved the impression had not been transitory. The acquaintance ripened, thanks to a zealous cultivation (on his part) of occasions which Providence, it must be confessed, placed at his disposal none too liberally; so that now Georgina took up all his thoughts and a considerable part of his time. He was in love with her, beyond a doubt; but he could not flatter himself that she was in love with

him, though she appeared willing (what was so strange) to quarrel with her family about him. He did n't see how she could really care for him,—she seemed marked out by nature for so much greater a fortune; and he used to say to her, “Ah, you don't—there's no use talking, you don't—really care for me at all!” To which she answered, “Really? You are very particular. It seems to me it's real enough if I let you touch one of my fingertips!” “That was one of her ways of being insolent Another was simply her manner of looking at him, or at other people (when they spoke to her), with her hard, divine blue eye,—looking quietly, amusedly, with the air of considering (wholly from her own point of view) what they might have said, and then turning her head or her back, while, without taking the trouble to answer them, she broke into a short, liquid, irrelevant laugh. This may seem to contradict what I said just now about her taking the young lieutenant in the navy seriously. What I mean is that she appeared to take him more seriously than she took anything else. She said to him once, “At any rate you have the merit of not being a shop-keeper;” and it was by this epithet she was pleased to designate most of the young men who at that time flourished in the best society of New York. Even if she had rather a free way of expressing general indifference, a young lady is supposed to be serious enough when she consents to marry you. For the rest, as regards a certain haughtiness that might be observed in Geogina 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 did n'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 favor an aspirant who, on the face of the matter, was not original, and whose Corsica was a flat New England seaport; but it afterward became plain that he owed his brief happiness—it was very brief—to her father's opposition; her father's and her mother's, and even her uncles' and her aunts'. In those days, in New York, the different members of a family took an interest in its alliances, and the house of Gressie looked askance at an engagement between the most beautiful of its daughters and a young man who was not in a paying business. Georgina declared that they were meddling and vulgar,—she could sacrifice her own people, in that way, without a scruple,—and Benyon's position improved from the moment that Mr. Gressie—ill-advised Mr. Gressie—ordered the

girl to have nothing to do with him. Georgina was imperial in this—that she wouldn't put up with an order. When, in the house in Twelfth Street, it began to be talked about that she had better be sent to Europe with some eligible friend, Mrs. Portico, for instance, who was always planning to go, and who wanted as a companion some young mind, fresh from manuals and extracts, to serve as a fountain of history and geography,—when this scheme for getting Georgina out of the way began to be aired, she immediately said to Raymond Benyon, “Oh, yes, I'll marry you!” She said it in such an off-hand way that, deeply as he desired her, he was almost tempted to answer, “But, my dear, have you really thought about it?”

This little drama went on, in New York, in the ancient days, when Twelfth Street had but lately ceased to be suburban, when the squares had wooden palings, which were not often painted; when there were poplars in important thoroughfares and pigs in the lateral ways; when the theatres were miles distant from Madison Square, and the battered rotunda of Castle Garden echoed with expensive vocal music; when “the park” meant the grass-plats of the city hall, and the Bloomingdale road was an eligible drive; when Hoboken, of a summer afternoon, was a genteel resort, and the handsomest house in town was on the corner of the Fifth Avenue and Fifteenth Street. This will strike the modern reader, I fear, as rather a primitive epoch; but I am not sure that the strength of human passions is in proportion to the elongation of a city. Several of them, at any rate, the most

robust and most familiar,—love, ambition, jealousy, resentment, greed,—subsisted in considerable force in the little circle at which we have glanced, where a view by no means favorable was taken of Raymond Benyon's attentions to Miss Gressie. Unanimity was a family trait among these people (Georgina was an exception), especially in regard to the important concerns of life, such as marriages and closing scenes. The Gressies hung together; they were accustomed to do well for themselves and for each other. They did everything well: got themselves born well (they thought it excellent to be born a Gressie), lived well, married well, died well, and managed to be well spoken of afterward. In deference to this last-mentioned habit, I must be careful what I say of them. They took an interest in each other's concerns, an interest that could never be regarded as of a meddling nature, inasmuch as they all thought alike about all their affairs, and interference took the happy form of congratulation and encouragement. These affairs were invariably lucky, and, as a general thing, no Gressie had anything to do but feel that another Gressie had been almost as shrewd and decided as he himself would have been. The great exception to that, as I have said, was this case of Georgina, who struck such a false note, a note that startled them all, when she told her father that she should like to unite herself to a young man engaged in the least paying business that any Gressie had ever heard of. Her two sisters had married into the most flourishing firms, and it was not to be thought of that—with twenty cousins growing up

around her—she should put down the standard of success. Her mother had told her a fortnight before this that she must request Mr. Benyon to cease coming to the house; for hitherto his suit had been of the most public and resolute character. He had been conveyed up town from the Brooklyn ferry, in the “stage,” on certain evenings, had asked for Miss Georgina at the door of the house in Twelfth Street, and had sat with her in the front parlor if her parents happened to occupy the back, or in the back if the family had disposed itself in the front. Georgina, in her way, was a dutiful girl, and she immediately repeated her mother’s admonition to Beuyon. He was not surprised, for though he was aware that he had not, as yet, a great knowledge of society, he flattered himself he could tell when—and where—a young man was not wanted. There were houses in Brooklyn where such an animal was much appreciated, and there the signs were quite different. They had been discouraging—except on Georgina’s pail—from the first of his calling in Twelfth Street. Mr. and Mrs. Gressie used to look at each other in silence when he came in, and indulge in strange, perpendicular salutations, without any shaking of hands. People did that at Portsmouth, N.H., when they were glad to see you; but in New York there was more luxuriance, and gesture had a different value. He had never, in Twelfth Street, been asked to “take anything,” though the house had a delightful suggestion, a positive aroma, of sideboards,—as if there were mahogany “cellarettes” under every table. The old people, moreover, had repeatedly expressed surprise at the

quantity of leisure that officers in the navy seemed to enjoy. The only way in which they had not made themselves offensive was by always remaining in the other room; though at times even this detachment, to which he owed some delightful moments, presented itself to Benyon as a form of disapprobation. Of course, after Mrs. Gressie's message, his visits were practically at an end; he would n't give the girl up, but he would n't be beholden to her father for the opportunity to converse with her. Nothing was left for the tender couple—there was a curious mutual mistrust in their tenderness—but to meet in the squares, or in the topmost streets, or in the sidemost avenues, on the afternoons of spring. It was especially during this phase of their relations that Georgina struck Benyon as imperial. Her whole person seemed to exhale a tranquil, happy consciousness of having broken a law. She never told him how she arranged the matter at home, how she found it possible always to keep the appointments (to meet him out of the house) that she so boldly made, in what degree she dissimulated to her parents, and how much, in regard to their continued acquaintance, the old people suspected and accepted. If Mr. and Mrs. Gressie had forbidden him the house, it was not, apparently, because they wished her to walk with him in the Tenth Avenue or to sit at his side under the blossoming lilacs in Stuyvesant Square. He didn't believe that she told lies in Twelfth Street; he thought she was too imperial to lie; and he wondered what she said to her mother when, at the end of nearly a whole afternoon of vague peregrination with her lover, this bridling,

bristling matron asked her where she had been. Georgina was capable of simply telling the truth; and yet if she simply told the truth, it was a wonder that she had not been simply packed off to Europe.

Benyon's ignorance of her pretexts is a proof that this rather oddly-mated couple never arrived at perfect intimacy,—in spite of a fact which remains to be related. He thought of this afterwards, and thought how strange it was that he had not felt more at liberty to ask her what she did for him, and how she did it, and how much she suffered for him. She would probably not have admitted that she suffered at all, and she had no wish to pose for a martyr. Benyon remembered this, as I say, in the after years, when he tried to explain to himself certain things which simply puzzled him; it came back to him with the vision, already faded, of shabby cross-streets, straggling toward rivers, with red sunsets, seen through a haze of dust, at the end; a vista through which the figures of a young man and a girl slowly receded and disappeared,—strolling side by side, with the relaxed pace of desultory talk, but more closely linked as they passed into the distance, linked by its at last appearing safe to them—in the Tenth Avenue—that the young lady should take his arm. They were always approaching that inferior thoroughfare; but he could scarcely have told you, in those days, what else they were approaching. He had nothing in the world but his pay, and he felt that this was rather a “mean” income to offer Miss Gressie. Therefore he did n't put it forward; what he offered, instead, was

the expression—crude often, and almost boyishly extravagant—of a delighted admiration of her beauty, the tenderest tones of his voice, the softest assurances of his eye and the most insinuating pressure of her hand at those moments when she consented to place it in his arm. All this was an eloquence which, if necessary, might have been condensed into a single sentence; but those few words were scarcely needful, when it was as plain that he expected—in general—she would marry him, as it was indefinite that he counted upon her for living on a few hundreds a year. If she had been a different girl he might have asked her to wait,—might have talked to her of the coming of better days, of his prospective promotion, of its being wiser, perhaps, that he should leave the navy and look about for a more lucrative career. With Georgina it was difficult to go into such questions; she had no taste whatever for detail. She was delightful as a woman to love, because when a young man is in love he discovers that; but she could not be called helpful, for she never suggested anything. That is, she never had done so till the day she really proposed—for that was the form it took—to become his wife without more delay. “Oh, yes, I will marry you;” these words, which I quoted a little way back, were not so much the answer to something he had said at the moment, as the light conclusion of a report she had just made, for the first time, of her actual situation in her father’s house.

“I am afraid I shall have to see less of you,” she had begun by saying. “They watch me so much.”

“It is very little already,” he answered. “What is once or twice a week?”

“That’s easy for you to say. You are your own master, but you don’t know what I go through.”

“Do they make it very bad for you, dearest? Do they make scenes?” Benyon asked.

“No, of course not. Don’t you know us enough to know how we behave? No scenes,—that would be a relief. However, I never make them myself, and I never will—that’s one comfort for you, for the future, if you want to know. Father and mother keep very quiet, looking at me as if I were one of the lost, with hard, screwing eyes, like gimlets. To me they scarcely say anything, but they talk it all over with each other, and try and decide what is to be done. It’s my belief that father has written to the people in Washington—what do you call it! the Department—to have you moved away from Brooklyn,—to have you sent to sea.”

“I guess that won’t do much good. They want me in Brooklyn, they don’t want me at sea.”

“Well, they are capable of going to Europe for a year, on purpose to take me,” Georgina said.

“How can they take you, if you won’t go? And if you should go, what good would it do, if you were only to find me here when you came back, just the same as you left me?”

“Oh, well!” said Georgina, with her lovely smile, “of course they think that absence would cure me of—cure me of—” And she paused, with a certain natural modesty, not saying exactly of

what.

“Cure you of what, darling? Say it, please say it,” the young man murmured, drawing her hand surreptitiously into his arm.

“Of my absurd infatuation!”

“And would it, dearest?”

“Yes, very likely. But I don’t mean to try. I sha’n’t go to Europe,—not when I don’t want to. But it’s better I should see less of you,—even that I should appear—a little—to give you up.”

“A little? What do you call a little?”

Georgina said nothing, for a moment. “Well, that, for instance, you should n’t hold my hand quite so tight!” And she disengaged this conscious member from the pressure of his arm.

“What good will that do?” Benyon asked,

“It will make them think it ‘s all over,—that we have agreed to part.”

“And as we have done nothing of the kind, how will that help us?”

They had stopped at the crossing of a street; a heavy dray was lumbering slowly past them. Georgina, as she stood there, turned her face to her lover, and rested her eyes for some moments on his own. At last: “Nothing will help us; I don’t think we are very happy,” she answered, while her strange, ironical, inconsequent smile played about her beautiful lips.

“I don’t understand how you see things. I thought you were going to say you would marry me!” Benyon rejoined, standing

there still, though the dray had passed.

“Oh, yes, I will marry you!” And she moved away, across the street. That was the manner in which she had said it, and it was very characteristic of her. When he saw that she really meant it, he wished they were somewhere else,—he hardly knew where the proper place would be,—so that he might take her in his arms. Nevertheless, before they separated that day he had said to her he hoped she remembered they would be very poor, reminding her how great a change she would find it. She answered that she should n’t mind, and presently she said that if this was all that prevented them the sooner they were married the better. The next time he saw her she was quite of the same opinion; but he found, to his surprise, it was now her conviction that she had better not leave her father’s house. The ceremony should take place secretly, of course; but they would wait awhile to let their union be known.

“What good will it do us, then?” Raymond Benyon asked.

Georgina colored. “Well, if you don’t know, I can’t tell you!”

Then it seemed to him that he did know. Yet, at the same time, he could not see why, once the knot was tied, secrecy should be required. When he asked what special event they were to wait for, and what should give them the signal to appear as man and wife, she answered that her parents would probably forgive her, if they were to discover, not too abruptly, after six months, that she had taken the great step. Benyon supposed that she had ceased to care whether they forgave her or not; but he had already perceived that

women are full of inconsistencies. He had believed her capable of marrying him out of bravado, but the pleasure of defiance was absent if the marriage was kept to themselves. Now, too, it appeared that she was not especially anxious to defy,—she was disposed rather to manage, to cultivate opportunities and reap the fruits of a waiting game.

“Leave it to me. Leave it to me. You are only a blundering man,” Georgina said. “I shall know much better than you the right moment for saying, ‘Well, you may as well make the best of it, because we have already done it!’”

That might very well be, but Benyon did n’t quite understand, and he was awkwardly anxious (for a lover) till it came over him afresh that there was one thing at any rate in his favor, which was simply that the loveliest girl he had ever seen was ready to throw herself into his arms. When he said to her, “There is one thing I hate in this plan of yours,—that, for ever so few weeks, so few days, your father should support my wife,”—when he made this homely remark, with a little flush of sincerity in his face, she gave him a specimen of that unanswerable laugh of hers, and declared that it would serve Mr. Gressie right for being so barbarous and so horrid. It was Benyon’s view that from the moment she disobeyed her father, she ought to cease to avail herself of his protection; but I am bound to add that he was not particularly surprised at finding this a kind of honor in which her feminine nature was little versed. To make her his wife first—at the earliest moment—whenever she would, and trust to

fortune, and the new influence he should have, to give him, as soon thereafter as possible, complete possession of her,—this rather promptly presented itself to the young man as the course most worthy of a person of spirit. He would be only a pedant who would take nothing because he could not get everything at once. They wandered further than usual this afternoon, and the dusk was thick by the time he brought her back to her father's door. It was not his habit to come so near it, but to-day they had so much to talk about that he actually stood with her for ten minutes at the foot of the steps. He was keeping her hand in his, and she let it rest there while she said,—by way of a remark that should sum up all their reasons and reconcile their differences,—

“There's one great thing it will do, you know; it will make me safe.”

“Safe from what?”

“From marrying any one else.”

“Ah, my girl, if you were to do that—!” Benyon exclaimed; but he did n't mention the other branch of the contingency. Instead of this, he looked up at the blind face of the house—there were only dim lights in two or three windows, and no apparent eyes—and up and down the empty street, vague in the friendly twilight; after which he drew Georgina Gressie to his breast and gave her a long, passionate kiss. Yes, decidedly, he felt, they had better be married. She had run quickly up the steps, and while she stood there, with her hand on the bell, she almost hissed at him, under her breath, “Go away, go away; Amanda's

coming!” Amanda was the parlor-maid, and it was in those terms that the Twelfth Street Juliet dismissed her Brooklyn Romeo. As he wandered back into the Fifth Avenue, where the evening air was conscious of a vernal fragrance from the shrubs in the little precinct of the pretty Gothic church ornamenting that charming part of the street, he was too absorbed in the impression of the delightful contact from which the girl had violently released herself to reflect that the great reason she had mentioned a moment before was a reason for their marrying, of course, but not in the least a reason for their not making it public. But, as I said in the opening lines of this chapter, if he did not understand his mistress’s motives at the end, he cannot be expected to have understood them at the beginning.

II

Mrs. Portico, as we know, was always talking about going to Europe; but she had not yet—I mean a year after the incident I have just related—put her hand upon a youthful cicerone. Petticoats, of course, were required; it was necessary that her companion should be of the sex which sinks most naturally upon benches, in galleries and cathedrals, and pauses most frequently upon staircases that ascend to celebrated views. She was a widow, with a good fortune and several sons, all of whom were in Wall Street, and none of them capable of the relaxed pace at which she expected to take her foreign tour. They were all in a state of tension. They went through life standing. She was a short, broad, high-colored woman, with a loud voice, and superabundant black hair, arranged in a way peculiar to herself,—with so many combs and bands that it had the appearance of a national coiffure. There was an impression in New York, about 1845, that the style was Danish; some one had said something about having seen it in Schleswig-Holstein.

Mrs. Portico had a bold, humorous, slightly flamboyant look; people who saw her for the first time received an impression that her late husband had married the daughter of a barkeeper or the proprietress of a menageria. Her high, hoarse, good-natured voice seemed to connect her in some way with public life; it was not pretty enough to suggest that she might have been an actress.

These ideas quickly passed away, however, even if you were not sufficiently initiated to know—as all the Grossies, for instance, knew so well—that her origin, so far from being enveloped in mystery, was almost the sort of thing she might have boasted of. But in spite of the high pitch of her appearance, she didn't boast of anything; she was a genial, easy, comical, irreverent person, with a large charity, a democratic, fraternizing turn of mind, and a contempt for many worldly standards, which she expressed not in the least in general axioms (for she had a mortal horror of philosophy), but in violent ejaculations on particular occasions. She had not a grain of moral timidity, and she fronted a delicate social problem as sturdily as she would have barred the way of a gentleman she might have met in her vestibule with the plate-chest. The only thing which prevented her being a bore in orthodox circles was that she was incapable of discussion. She never lost her temper, but she lost her vocabulary, and ended quietly by praying that Heaven would give her an opportunity to *show* what she believed.

She was an old friend of Mr. and Mrs. Gressie, who esteemed her for the antiquity of her lineage and the frequency of her subscriptions, and to whom she rendered the service of making them feel liberal,—like people too sure of their own position to be frightened. She was their indulgence, their dissipation, their point of contact with dangerous heresies; so long as they continued to see her they could not be accused of being narrow-minded,—a matter as to which they were perhaps vaguely

conscious of the necessity of taking their precautions. Mrs. Portico never asked herself whether she liked the Gressies; she had no disposition for morbid analysis, she accepted transmitted associations, and she found, somehow, that her acquaintance with these people helped her to relieve herself. She was always making scenes in their drawing-room, scenes half indignant, half jocose, like all her manifestations, to which it must be confessed that they adapted themselves beautifully. They never "met" her in the language of controversy; but always collected to watch her, with smiles and comfortable platitudes, as if they envied her superior richness of temperament. She took an interest in Georgina, who seemed to her different from the others, with suggestions about her of being likely not to marry so unrefreshingly as her sisters had done, and of a high, bold standard of duty. Her sisters had married from duty, but Mrs. Portico would rather have chopped off one of her large, plump hands than behave herself so well as that. She had, in her daughterless condition, a certain ideal of a girl that should be beautiful and romantic, with lustrous eyes, and a little persecuted, so that she, Mrs. Portico, might get her out of her troubles. She looked to Georgina, to a considerable degree, to gratify her in this way; but she had really never understood Georgina at all. She ought to have been shrewd, but she lacked this refinement, and she never understood anything until after many disappointments and vexations. It was difficult to startle her, but she was much startled by a communication that this young lady made her one fine spring morning. With her florid appearance

and her speculative mind, she was probably the most innocent woman in New York.

Georgina came very early,—earlier even than visits were paid in New York thirty years ago; and instantly, without any preface, looking her straight in the face, told Mrs. Portico that she was in great trouble and must appeal to her for assistance. Georgina had in her aspect no symptom of distress; she was as fresh and beautiful as the April day itself; she held up her head and smiled, with a sort of familiar bravado, looking like a young woman who would naturally be on good terms with fortune. It was not in the least in the tone of a person making a confession or relating a misadventure that she presently said: “Well, you must know, to begin with—of course, it will surprise you—that I ‘m married.”

“Married, Georgina Gressie!” Mrs. Portico repeated in her most resonant tones.

Georgina got up, walked with her majestic step across the room, and closed the door. Then she stood there, her back pressed against the mahogany panels, indicating only by the distance she had placed between herself and her hostess the consciousness of an irregular position. “I am not Georgina Gressie! I am Georgina Benyon,—and it has become plain, within a short time, that the natural consequence will take place.”

Mrs. Portico was altogether bewildered. “The natural consequence?” she exclaimed, staring.

“Of one’s being married, of course,—I suppose you know what that is. No one must know anything about it. I want you to

take me to Europe.”

Mrs. Portico now slowly rose from her place, and approached her visitor, looking at her from head to foot as she did so, as if to challenge the truth of her remarkable announcement. She rested her hands on Georgina's shoulders a moment, gazing into her blooming face, and then she drew her closer and kissed her. In this way the girl was conducted back to the sofa, where, in a conversation of extreme intimacy, she opened Mrs. Portico's eyes wider than they had ever been opened before. She was Raymond Benyon's wife; they had been married a year, but no one knew anything about it. She had kept it from every one, and she meant to go on keeping it. The ceremony had taken place in a little Episcopal church at Harlem, one Sunday afternoon, after the service. There was no one in that dusty suburb who knew them; the clergyman, vexed at being detained, and wanting to go home to tea, had made no trouble; he tied the knot before they could turn round. It was ridiculous how easy it had been. Raymond had told him frankly that it must all be under the rose, as the young lady's family disapproved of what she was doing. But she was of legal age, and perfectly free; he could see that for himself. The parson had given a grunt as he looked at her over his spectacles. It was not very complimentary; it seemed to say that she was indeed no chicken. Of course she looked old for a girl; but she was not a girl now, was she? Raymond had certified his own identity as an officer in the United States Navy (he had papers, besides his uniform, which he wore), and introduced the

clergyman to a friend he had brought with him, who was also in the navy, a venerable paymaster. It was he who gave Georgina away, as it were; he was an old, old man, a regular grandmother, and perfectly safe. He had been married three times himself. After the ceremony she went back to her father's; but she saw Mr. Benyon the next day. After that, she saw him—for a little while—pretty often. He was always begging her to come to him altogether; she must do him that justice. But she wouldn't—she wouldn't now—perhaps she would n't ever. She had her reasons, which seemed to her very good, but were very difficult to explain. She would tell Mrs. Portico in plenty of time what they were. But that was not the question now, whether they were good or bad; the question was for her to get away from the country for several months,—far away from any one who had ever known her. She would like to go to some little place in Spain or Italy, where she should be out of the world until everything was over.

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