

ГЕНРИ ДЖЕЙМС

LADY BARBARINA, THE
SIEGE OF LONDON, AN
INTERNATIONAL
EPISODE, AND OTHER
TALES

Генри Джеймс

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Henry James

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PREFACE

I have gathered into this volume several short fictions of the type I have already found it convenient to refer to as “international”—though I freely recognise, before the array of my productions, of whatever length and whatever brevity, the general applicability of that term. On the interest of *contrasted* things any painter of life and manners inevitably much depends, and contrast, fortunately for him, is easy to seek and to recognise; the only difficulty is in presenting it again with effect, in extracting from it its sense and its lesson. The reader of these volumes will certainly see it offered in no form so frequent or so salient as that of the opposition of aspects from country to country. Their author, I am quite aware, would seem struck with no possibility of contrast in the human lot so great as that encountered as we turn back and forth between the distinctively American and the distinctively European outlook. He might even perhaps on such a showing be represented as scarce aware, before the human scene, of any other sharp antithesis at all. He is far from denying that this one has always been vivid for him; yet there are cases in which, however obvious and however contributive, its office for the particular demonstration has been quite secondary, and in which the work is by no means merely addressed to the illustration of it. These things have had in the latter case their proper subject: as, for instance, the subject of “The Wings of the Dove,” or that of “The Golden Bowl,” has not been the exhibited behaviour of certain Americans as Americans, of certain English persons as English, of certain Romans as Romans. Americans, Englishmen, Romans are, in the whole matter, agents or victims; but this is in virtue of an association nowadays so developed, so easily to be taken for granted, as to have created a new scale of relations altogether, a state of things from which *emphasised* internationalism has either quite dropped or is well on its way to drop.

The dramatic side of human situations subsists of course on contrast; and when we come to the two novels I have just named we shall see, for example, just how they positively provide themselves with that source of interest. We shall see nevertheless at the same time that the subject could in each case have been perfectly expressed had *all* the persons concerned been only American or only English or only Roman or whatever.

If it be asked then, in this light, why they deviate from that natural harmony, why the author resorts to the greater extravagance when the less would serve, the answer is simply that the course taken has been, on reflexion, the course of the greater amusement. That is an explanation adequate, I admit, only when itself a little explained—but I shall have due occasion to explain it. Let me for the moment merely note that the very condition I here glance at—that of the achieved social fusion, say, without the sense and experience of which neither “The Wings of the Dove,” nor “The Golden Bowl,” nor “The Portrait of a Lady,” nor even, after all, I think, “The Ambassadors,” would have been written—represents a series of facts of the highest interest and one that, at this time of day, the late-coming observer and painter, the novelist sometimes depressed by all the drawbacks of a literary form overworked and relaxed, can only rejoice to meet in his path and to measure more and more as a portent and an opportunity. In proportion as he intelligently meets it, and more especially in proportion as he may happen to have “assisted” from far back at so many of the odd and fresh phenomena involved, must he see a vast new province, infinitely peopled and infinitely elastic—by which I mean with incalculable power to grow—annexed to the kingdom of the dramatist. On this point, however, much more is to be said than I can touch on by the way—so that I return to my

minor contention; which is that in a whole group of tales I here collect the principle of illustration has on the other hand quite definitely been that the idea could *not* have expressed itself without the narrower application of international terms. The contrast in “Lady Barbarina” depends altogether on the immitigable Anglicism of this young woman and that equally marked projection of New York elements and objects which, surrounding and framing her figure, throws it into eminent relief. She has her personal qualities, but the very interest, the very curiosity of the matter is that her imbroglia is able to attest itself with scarce so much as a reference to them. It plays itself out quite consistently on the plane of her general, her instinctive, her exasperatedly conscious ones. The others, the more intimate, the subtler, the finer—so far as there may have been such—virtually become, while the story is enacted, not relevant, though their relevancy might have come up on some other basis.

But that this is true, always in its degree, of each of the other contributions to the class before us, we shall sufficiently make out, I think, as we take them in their order. I am only struck, I may indeed parenthesise, with the inveteracy of the general ground (not to say of the extension I give it) over which my present remarks play. It does thus in truth come home to me that, combining and comparing in whatever proportions and by whatever lights, my “America” and its products would doubtless, as a theme, have betrayed gaps and infirmities enough without such a kicking-up of the dramatic dust (mainly in the foreground) as I could set my “Europe” in motion for; just as my Europe would probably have limped across our stage to no great effect of processional state without an ingenuous young America (constantly seen as ingenuous and young) to hold up its legendary train. At the same time I pretend not at all to regret my having had from the very first to see my workable world all and only as an unnatural mixture. No mixture, for that matter, is quite unnatural unless quite sterile, and the particular range of associations that betimes, to my eyes, blocked out everything else, blocked out aspects and combinations more simply conditioned, was at least not open to the reproach of not giving me results. These were but what they could be, of course; but such as they were, at all events, here am I at this time of day quite earnestly grouping, distinguishing, discussing them. The great truth in the whole connexion, however, is, I think, that one never really chooses one’s general range of vision—the experience from which ideas and themes and suggestions spring: this proves ever what it has had to be, this is one with the very turn one’s life has taken; so that whenever it “gives,” whatever it makes us feel and think of, we regard very much as imposed and inevitable. The subject thus pressed upon the artist is the necessity of his case and the fruit of his consciousness; which truth makes and has ever made of any quarrel with his subject, and stupid attempt to go behind *that*, the true stultification of criticism. The author of these remarks has in any case felt it, from far back, quite his least stupid course to meet halfway, as it were, the turn taken and the perceptions engendered by the tenor of his days. Here it is that he has never pretended to “go behind”—which would have been for him a deplorable waste of time. The thing of profit is to have your experience—to recognise and understand it, and for this almost any will do; there being surely no absolute ideal about it beyond getting from it all it has to give. The artist—for it is of this strange brood we speak—has but to have his honest sense of life to find it fed at every pore even as the birds of the air are fed; with more and more to give, in turn, as a consequence, and, quite by the same law that governs the responsive affection of a kindly-used animal, in proportion as more and more is confidently asked.

All of which, however, doubtless wanders a little far from my mild argument—that of my so grateful and above all so well-advised primary acceptance of a *determined* array of appearances.

What I was clearly to be treated to by fate—with the early-taken ply I have already elsewhere glanced at—was (should I have the intelligence to embrace it) some considerable occasion to appreciate the mixture of manners. So, as I say, there would be a decent economy in cultivating the intelligence; through the sincerity of which process I have plucked, I hold, every little flower of a “subject” pressed between the leaves of these volumes. I am tempted indeed to make for my original lucidity the claim of something more than bare prudence—almost that of a happy instinctive foresight. This is what I mean by having been “well-advised.” It was as if I had, vulgarly speaking, received quite at first

the “straight tip”—to back the right horse or buy the right shares. The mixture of manners was to become in other words not a less but a very much more appreciable and interesting subject of study.

The mixture of manners was in fine to loom large and constantly larger all round; it was to be a matter, plainly, about which the future would have much to say. Nothing appeals to me more, I confess, as a “critic of life” in any sense worthy of the name, than the finer—if indeed thereby the less easily formulated—group of the conquests of civilisation, the multiplied symptoms among educated people, from wherever drawn, of a common intelligence and a social fusion tending to abridge old rigours of separation. This too, I must admit, in spite of the many-coloured sanctity of such rigours in general, which have hitherto made countries smaller but kept the globe larger, and by which immediate strangeness, immediate beauty, immediate curiosity were so much fostered. Half our instincts work for the maintained differences; without them, for instance, what would have been the point of the history of poor Lady Barbarina? I have but to put that question, I must add, to feel it beautifully large; for there looms before me at its touch the vision of a Lady Barbarina reconciled, domesticated, developed, of possibly greater vividness than the quite other vision expressed in these pages. It is a question, however, of the tendency, perceptive as well as reflective too, of the braver imagination—which faculty, in our future, strikes me as likely to be appealed to much less by the fact, by the pity and the misery and the greater or less grotesqueness, of the courageous, or even of the timid, missing their lives beyond certain stiff barriers, than by the picture of their more and more steadily making out their opportunities and their possible communications. Behind all the small comedies and tragedies of the international, in a word, has exquisitely lurked for me the idea of some eventual sublime consensus of the educated; the exquisite conceivabilities of which, intellectual, moral, emotional, sensual, social, political—all, I mean, in the face of felt difficulty and danger—constitute stuff for such “situations” as may easily make many of those of a more familiar type turn pale. *There*, if one will—in the dauntless fusions to come—is the personal drama of the future.

We are far from it certainly—as I have delayed much too long to remark—in the chronicle of Lady Barb. I have placed this composition (1888) at the top of my list, in the present cluster, despite the earlier date of some of its companions; consistently giving it precedence by reason of its greatest length. The idea at the root of it scarcely brooks indication, so inevitable had it surely become, in all the conditions, that a young Englishwoman in some such predicament should figure as the happy pictorial thought. The whole thing rests, I need scarce point out, on the most primitive logic. The international relation had begun to present itself “socially,” after the liveliest fashion, a quarter of a century ago and earlier, as a relation of intermarrying; but nothing was meanwhile so striking as that these manifestations took always the same turn. The European of “position” married the young American woman, or the young American woman married the European of position—one scarce knew how best to express the regularity of it; but the social field was scanned in vain for a different pairing. No American citizen appeared to offer his hand to the “European” girl, or if he did so offered it in vain. The bridal migrations were eastward without exception—as rigidly as if settled by statute. Custom clearly had acquired the force of law; a fact remarkable, significant, interesting and even amusing. And yet, withal, it seemed scarce to demand explanations. So far as they appeared indeed they were confident on the American side. The representatives of that interest had no call in life to go “outside” for their wives—having obviously close at hand the largest and choicest assortment of such conveniences; as was sufficiently proved by the European “run” on the market. What American run on any foreign market had been noted?—save indeed always on the part of the women! It all redounded to the honour and glory of the young woman grown in American conditions—to cast discredit on whose general peerlessness by attested preference for other types could but strike the domestic aspirant as an act of disloyalty or treachery. It was just the observed rarity of the case therefore that prompted one to put it to the imaginative test. Any case so unlikely to happen—taking it for at all conceivable—could only be worth attention when it *should*, once in a blue moon, occur. There was nothing meanwhile, in truth, to “go by”; we had seen the American girl

“of position” absorbed again and again into the European social system, but we had only seen young foreign candidates for places as cooks and housemaids absorbed into the American. The more one viewed the possible instance, accordingly, the more it appealed to speculative study; so that, failing all valid testimony, one had studiously, as it were, to forge the very documents.

I have only to add that I found mine, once I had produced them, thoroughly convincing: the most one could do, in the conditions, was to make one’s picture appear to hang together, and I should have broken down, no doubt, had my own, after a superficial question or two, not struck me as decently hanging. The essential, at the threshold, I seem to recall, was to get my young man right—I somehow quite took for granted the getting of my young woman. Was this because, for the portrait of Lady Barb, I felt appealed to so little in the name of *shades*? Shades would be decidedly neither of her general world nor of her particular consciousness: the image I had in view was a maiden nature that, after a fashion all its own, should show as fine and complete, show as neither coarse nor poor, show above all as a resultant of many causes, quite without them. I felt in short sure of Lady Barb, and I think there is no question about her, or about the depth of root she might strike in American soil, that I shouldn’t have been ready on the spot to answer. Such is the luck of the conception that imposes itself *en bloc*—or such at least the artist’s luck in face of it; such certainly, to begin with and “subjectively” speaking, is the great advantage of a character all of a piece: immediacy of representation, the best omens for felicity, then so honourably await it. It was Jackson Lemon and *his* shades, comparatively, and his comparative sense for shades, that, in the tale, most interested me. The one thing fine-drawn in his wife was that she had been able to care for him as he was: to almost every one and every thing else equally American, to almost every one and everything else so sensibly stamped, toned and warranted, she was to find herself quite otherwise affected. With her husband the law was reversed—he had, much rather, imputed authority and dignity, imputed weight and charm, to the antecedents of which she was so fine and so direct a consequence; his estimate, his appreciation of her being founded thus on a vision of innumerable close correspondences. It is that vision in him that is racked, and at so many fine points, when he finds their experiment come so near failure; all of which—at least as I seem to see it again so late in the day—lights his inward drama as with the never-quenched lamp of a sacred place. His wife’s, on the other hand, goes on in comparatively close darkness.

It is indeed late in the day that I thus project the ray of *my* critical lantern, however; for it comes over me even as I write that the general air in which most of these particular flowers of fancy bloom is an air we have pretty well ceased to breathe. “Lady Barbarina” is, as I have said, scarce a quarter of a century old; but so many of the perceived conditions in which it took birth have changed that the account of them embodied in that tale and its associates will already pass for ancient history.

“Civilisation” and education move fast, after all, and too many things have happened; too many *sorts* of things, above all, seem more and more likely to happen. This multiplication of kinds of occurrences, I make no doubt, will promote the inspiration of observers and poets to come; but it may meanwhile well make for an effect of superannuation in any record of the leaner years. Jackson Lemon’s has become a more frequent adventure, and Lady Barbarina is to-day as much at her ease in New York, in Washington, at Newport, as in London or in Rome. If this is her case, moreover, it is still more that of little Mrs. Headway, of “The Siege of London” (1883), who suffers, I feel, by the sad circumstance that her type of complication, or, more exactly speaking perhaps, that of the gentlemen concerned with her, is no longer eminent, or at least salient. Both she and her friends have had too many companions and successors; so that to reinvest them with historic importance, with individual dignity, I have to think of them rather as brave precursors, as adventurous skirmishers and *éclairceurs*.

This doesn’t diminish, I recognise, any interest that may reside in the form either of “The Siege” aforesaid or of its congeners “An International Episode,” “A Bundle of Letters” and “The Pension Beaurepas.” Or rather indeed perhaps I should distinguish among these things and, if presuming to claim for several some hint of the distinction we may see exemplified in any first-class art-museum, the distinction of the archaic subject treated by a “primitive” master of high finish, yet notice duly

that others are no more “quaint” than need be. What has really happened, I think, is that the *great* international cases, those that bristle with fifty sorts of social reference and overflow, and, by the same token, with a hundred illustrations of social incoherence, are now equally taken for granted on all sides of the sea, have simply become incidents and examples of the mixture of manners, as I call it, and the thicker fusion: which may mean nothing more, in truth, but that social incoherence (with the sense for its opposite practically extinct among the nations) has at last got itself accepted, right and left, as normal.

So much, as I put it, for the great cases; but a certain freshness, I make out, still hangs strangely enough about the smaller and the more numerous; those to which we owe it that such anecdotes—in my general array—as “Pandora,” as “Fordham Castle,” as “Flickerbridge,” as “Miss Gunton of Poughkeepsie,” are by no means false even to present appearances. “The Pension Beaurepas” is not alone, thanks to some of its associations, in glowing for me with the tender grace of a day that is dead; and yet, though the accidents and accessories, in such a picture, may have been marked for change, why shall not the essence of the matter, the situation of Mr. and Mrs. Ruck and their daughter at old Geneva—for there is of course a new, a newer Geneva—freely recur? I am careful to put it as a question, and all for a particular reason—the reason that, to be frank, I find myself, before the vast diluvian occidental presence in Europe, with its remorseless rising tide and its positive expression of almost nothing but quantity and number, deprived, on definite and ample grounds, of the precious faculty of confidence. This confidence was of old all instinctive, in face of the “common run” of appearances, the even then multitudinous, miscellaneous minor international phenomena, those of which the “short story,” as contemporaneously practised, could effect a fairly prompt and easy notation; but it is now unmistakable that to come forth, from whatever privacy, to almost any one of the great European highways, and more particularly perhaps to approach the ports of traffic for the lately-developed and so flourishing “southern route” from New York and Boston, is to encounter one of those big general questions that sturdily brush away the multiplication of small answers. “Who are they, what are they, whence and whither and why,” the “critic of life,” international or other, still, or more and more, asks himself, as he of course always asked, but with the actual difference that the reply that used to come so conveniently straight, “Why, they’re just the American vague variety of the dear old Anglo-Saxon race,” not only hangs fire and leaves him to wait and wonder, but really affects him as having for this act of deference (as to which he can’t choose, I admit) little more than a conscious mocking, baffling, in fact a just all but sinister, grimace. “Don’t you wish you knew, or even *could* know?” the inscrutable grin seems to convey; and with resources of cynicism behind it not in the least to be disturbed by any such cheap retort as “Don’t you wish that, on your side, *you* could say—or even, for your own convenience, so much as guess?”

For there is no communicating to the diluvian presence, on such a scale, any suspicion that convenience shall anywhere fail it: all its consciousness, on that general head, is that of itself representing and actively *being* the biggest convenience of the world. Little need to insist on the guarantee of subjective ease involved in such an attitude—the immense noted growth of which casts its chill, as I intimate, on the inquirer proceeding from settled premisses. He was aware formerly, when it came to an analysis, of all his presumptions; he had but to glance for an immemorial assurance at a dozen of the myriad “registers” disposed in the vestibules of bankers, the reading-rooms of hotels and “exchanges,” open on the most conspicuous table of visited palace and castle, to see them bristle with names of a more or less conceivable tradition. Queer enough often, whether in isolation or in association, were these gages of identity: but their queerness, not independent of some more or less traceable weird law, was exactly, after all, their most familiar note. They had their way of not breaking, through it all, the old sweet Anglo-Saxon spell; they had their way of not failing, when all was said, to suggest more communities and comprehensions than conundrums and “stunts.”

He would be brave, however, who should say that any such ghost of a quiet conformity presides in the fulness of time over the interminable passenger-lists that proclaim the prosperity of the great

conveying companies. If little books have their fates, little names—and long ones still more—have their eloquence; the emphasis of nominal reference in the general roll-call falls so strongly upon alien syllables and sounds, representative signs that fit into our “English” legend (as we were mainly conscious up to a few years since of having inherited that boon) scarcely more than if borrowed from the stony slabs of Nineveh. I may not here attempt to weigh the question of what these exotic symbols positively represent—a prodigious question, I cannot but think; I content myself with noting the difference made for fond fancy by the so rapidly established change, by the so considerable drop of old associations. The point is of one’s having the heart to assume that the Ninevites, as I may momentarily call them for convenience, are to be constantly taken as feeling in the same way about fifty associational matters as we used, in all satisfaction, to observe our earlier generations feel. One can but speak for one’s self, and my imagination, on the great highways, I find, doesn’t rise to such people, who are obviously beyond my divination. They strike one, above all, as giving no account of themselves in any terms already consecrated by human use; to this inarticulate state they probably form, collectively, the most unprecedented of monuments; abysmal the mystery of what they think, what they feel, what they want, what they suppose themselves to be saying. There would appear to be to-day no slim scrap even of a Daisy Miller to bridge the chasm; no light-footed Francie Dosson or Pandora Day to dance before one across the wavering plank.

I plead a blank of memory as to the origin of “The Siege of London”; I get no nearer to the birth of the idea than by recalling a certain agitation of the spirit, a lively irritation of the temper, under which, one evening early in the autumn of 1877, that is more than thirty years ago, I walked away from the close of a performance at the Théâtre Français. The play had been “Le Demi-Monde” of the younger Dumas, a masterpiece which I had not heard for the first time, but a particular feature of which on this occasion more than ever yet filled up the measure of my impatience. I could less than ever swallow it, Olivier de Jalin’s denunciation of Madame d’Ange; the play, from the beginning, marches toward it—it is the main hinge of the action; but the very perfection with which the part was rendered in those years by Delaunay (just as Croizette was pure perfection as Suzanne) seemed to have made me present at something inhuman and odious. It was the old story—that from the positive, the prodigious *morality* of such a painter of the sophisticated life as Dumas, not from anything else or less edifying, one must pray to be delivered. There are doubtless many possible views of such a dilemma as Olivier’s, the conflict of propriety for him between the man he likes and esteems and the woman he has loved but hasn’t esteemed and doesn’t, and as to whom he sees his friend blind, and, as he thinks, befooled; in consequence of which I am not re-judging his case. But I recover with a pensive pleasure that is almost all a pang the intensity with which I could then feel it; to the extent of wondering whether the general situation of the three persons concerned, or something like it, mightn’t be shown as taking quite another turn. Was there not conceivable an Olivier of our race, a different Olivier altogether, moved to ask himself how at such a juncture a “real gentleman,” distressed and perplexed, would yet most naturally act? The question would be interesting, it was easy to judge, if only by the light it might throw on some of the other, the antecedent and concomitant, phases of a real gentleman’s connexion “at all at all” with such a business and such a world. It remained with me, at all events, and was to prove in time the germ of “The Siege of London”; of the conception of which the state of mind so reflected strikes me as making, I confess, very ancient history.

Far away and unspeakably regretted the days, alas, or, more exactly, the nights, on which one could walk away from the Français under the spell of such fond convictions and such deep and agitating problems. The emphasis of the international proposition has indeed had time, as I say, to place itself elsewhere—if, for that matter, there be any emphasis or any proposition left at all—since the age when that particular pleasure seemed the keenest in life. A few months ago, one evening, I found myself withdrawing from the very temple and the supposedly sacred rites before these latter were a third over: beneath that haunted dome itself they seemed to have become at last so accessible, cynically making their bargain with them, to the profanations long kept at bay. Only, with

that evolution of taste possible on the part of the old worshipper in question, what world-convulsions mightn't, in general, well have taken place? Let me continue to speak of the rest of the matter here before us as therefore of almost prehistoric reference. I was to make, in due course, at any rate, my limited application of that glimmering image of a M. de Jalin with whom we might have more fellow-feeling, and I sent "The Siege of London" accordingly to my admirable friend the late Leslie Stephen, then editor of *The Cornhill Magazine*, where it appeared during the first two months of 1883. That is all I remember about it save always the particular London light in which at that period I invoked the muse and drove the pen and with which the compositions resulting strike my fancy to-day as so closely interfused that in reading over those of them I here preserve every aspect and element of my scene of application lives again for me. This scene consisted of small chambers in a small street that opened, at a very near corner, into Piccadilly and a view of the Green Park; I had dropped into them almost instantaneously, under the accepted heavy pressure of the autumnal London of 1876, and was to sit scribbling in them for nearly ten years. The big human rumble of Piccadilly (all human and equine then and long after) was close at hand; I liked to think that Thackeray's Curzon Street, in which Becky Sharp, or rather Mrs. Rawdon Crawley, had lived, was not much further off: I thought of it preponderantly, in my comings and goings, as Becky's and her creator's; just as I was to find fifty other London neighbourhoods speak to me almost only with the voice, the thousand voices, of Dickens.

A "great house," forming the south-west corner of Piccadilly and with its long and practically featureless side, continued by the high wall of its ample court, opposite my open-eyed windows, gloomed, in dusty brick, as the extent of my view, but with a vast convenient neutrality which I found, soon enough, protective and not inquisitive, so that whatever there was of my sedentary life and regular habits took a sort of local wealth of colour from the special greyish-brown tone of the surface always before me. This surface hung there like the most voluminous of curtains—it masked the very stage of the great theatre of the town. To sit for certain hours at one's desk before it was somehow to occupy in the most suitable way in the world the proportionately ample interacts of the mightiest of dramas. When I went out it was as if the curtain rose; so that, to repeat, I think of my tolerably copious artistry of that time as all the fruit of the interacts, with the curtain more or less quietly down and with the tuning of fiddles and only the vague rumble of shifted scenery playing round it and through it. There were absences of course: "A Bundle of Letters," here reproduced, took birth (1879) during certain autumn weeks spent in Paris, where a friend of those years, a young London journalist, the late Theodore Child (of Merton College, Oxford, who was to die, prematurely and lamentedly, during a gallant professional tour of exploration in Persia) was fondly carrying on, under difficulties, an Anglo-American periodical called *The Parisian*. He invited me to contribute to its pages, and, again, a small sharply-resonant street off the Rue de la Paix, where all existence somehow went on as a repercussion from well-brushed asphalt, lives for me as the scene of my response. A snowstorm of a violence rare in Paris raged, I recollect, for many hours, for the greater part of a couple of days; muffling me noiselessly into the small shiny shabby salon of an *hôtel garni* with a droll combinational, almost cosmic sign, and promoting (it comes back to me) a deep concentration, an unusual straightness of labour. "A Bundle of Letters" was written in a single long session and, the temperature apart, at a "heat." Its companion-piece, "The Point of View," marks not less for memory, I find, an excursion associated with diligence. I have no heart to "go into" these mere ingenious and more or less effective pleasantries to any tune beyond this of glancing at the *other*, the extinct, actualities they hold up the glimmering taper to. They are still faintly scented, doubtless, with something of that authenticity, and a living work of art, however limited, pretends always, as for part of its grace, to some good faith of community, however indirect, with its period and place.

To read over "The Point of View" has opened up for me, I confess, no contentious vista whatever, nothing but the faded iridescence of a far-away Washington spring. This, in 1881, had been my first glimpse of that interesting city, where I then spent a few weeks, a visit repeated the

following year; and I remember beginning on the first occasion a short imaginary correspondence after the pattern of the then already published “Bundle of Letters.” After an absence from America of some five years I inevitably, on the spot again, had impressions; and not less inevitably and promptly, I remember, recognised the truth that if one really was subject to such, and to a good many, and they were at all worth entertaining or imparting, one was likely to bristle with a quite proportionately smaller number of neat and complacent conclusions. Impressions could mutually conflict—which was exactly the interest of them; whereas in ninety-nine connexions out of a hundred, conclusions could but raise the wind for large groups of persons incapable, to all appearance, of intelligently opening their eyes, though much occupied, to make up for it, with opening, and all vociferously, their mouths. “The Point of View,” in fine, I fear, was but to commemorate, punctually enough, its author’s perverse and incurable disposition to interest himself less in his own (always so quickly stale) experience, under certain sorts of pressure, than in that of conceivable fellow mortals, which might be mysteriously and refreshingly different. The thing indeed may also serve, in its degree, as a punctual small monument to a recognition that was never to fail; that of the nature of the burden bequeathed by such rash multiplications of the candid consciousness. They are splendid for experience, the multiplications, each in its way an intensifier; but expression, liking things above all to be made comfortable and easy for it, views them askance. The case remains, none the less—alas for this faculty!—that no representation of life worth speaking of can go forward without them.

All of which will perhaps be judged to have but a strained relevance, however, to the fact that, though the design of the short imaginary correspondence I speak of was interrupted during those first weeks in Washington, a second visit, the following spring, served it better; I had kept the thread (through a return to London and a return again thence) and, if I remember rightly, I brought my small scheme to a climax on the spot. The finished thing appeared in *The Century Magazine* of December 1882. I recently had the chance to “look up,” for old sake’s sake, that momentary seat of the good-humoured satiric muse—the seats of the muses, even when the merest flutter of one of their robes has been involved, losing no scrap of sanctity for me, I profess, by the accident of my having myself had the honour to offer the visitant the chair. The chair I had anciently been able to push forward in Washington had not, I found, survived the ravage of nearly thirty years; its place knew it no more, infirm and precarious dependence as it had struck me even at the time as being. So, quite exquisitely, as whenever that lapse occurs, the lost presence, the obliterated scene, translated itself for me at last into terms of almost more than earthly beauty and poetry. Fifty intimate figures and objects flushed with life in the other time had passed away since then; a great chapter of history had made itself, tremendous things had happened; the ghosts of old cherished names, of old tragedies, of old comedies, even of old mere mystifications, had marshalled their array. Only the little rounded composition remained; which glowed, ever so strangely, like a swinging playing lantern, with a light that brought out the past. The past had been most concretely that vanished and slightly sordid tenement of the current housing of the muse. I had had “rooms” in it, and I could remember how the rooms, how the whole place, a nest of rickety tables and chairs, lame and disqualified utensils of every sort, and of smiling shuffling procrastinating persons of colour, had exhaled for me, to pungency, the domestic spirit of the “old South.” I had nursed the unmistakable scent; I had read history by its aid; I had learned more than I could say of what had anciently been the matter under the reign of the great problem of persons of colour—so badly the matter, by my vision, that a deluge of blood and fire and tears had been needed to correct it. These complacencies of perception swarmed for me again—while yet no brick of the little old temple of the revelation stood on another.

I could scarcely have said where the bricks *had* stood; the other, the superseded Washington of the exquisite springtime, of the earlier initiation, of the hovering plaintive ghosts, reduced itself to a great vague blur of warmth and colour and fragrance. It kept flushing through the present—very much as if I had had my small secret for making it. I could turn on my finger the magic ring—it was strange how slight a thing, a mere handful of pages of light persistent prose, could act as that

talisman. So, at all events, I like to date, and essentially to synchronise, these sincere little studies in general. Nothing perhaps can vouch better for their having applied to conditions that superficially at least have changed than the fact that to fond memory—I speak of my own—there hangs about the last item on this list, the picture of “The Pension Beaurepas,” the unearthly poetry, as I call it, of the Paquis, and that I should yet have to plunge into gulfs of explanation as to where and what the Paquis may have been. An old-world nook of one’s youth was so named, a scrap of the lakeside fringe of ancient Geneva, now practically quite reformed and improved away. The Pension Beaurepas, across the years, looks to me prodigiously archaic and incredibly quaint; I ask myself why, at the time, I so wasted the precious treasure of a sense that absolutely primitive pre-revolutionary “Europe” had never really been swept out of its cupboards, shaken out of its curtains, thumped out of its mattresses.

The echoes of the eighteenth century, to go no further back, must have been thick on its rather greasy stone staircase, up down which, unconscious of the character of the fine old wrought-iron *rampe*, as of most other things in the world besides, Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Ruck, to speak only of them, used mournfully to straggle. But I mustn’t really so *much* as speak only, as even speak, of them. They would carry me too far back—which possibly outlived verisimilitude in them is what I wish to acknowledge.

HENRY JAMES.

LADY BARBARINA

I

It is well known that there are few sights in the world more brilliant than the main avenues of Hyde Park of a fine afternoon in June. This was quite the opinion of two persons who on a beautiful day at the beginning of that month, four years ago, had established themselves under the great trees in a couple of iron chairs—the big ones with arms, for which, if I mistake not, you pay twopence—and sat there with the slow procession of the Drive behind them while their faces were turned to the more vivid agitation of the Row. Lost in the multitude of observers they belonged, superficially at least, to that class of persons who, wherever they may be, rank rather with the spectators than with the spectacle. They were quiet simple elderly, of aspect somewhat neutral; you would have liked them extremely but would scarcely have noticed them. It is to them, obscure in all that shining host, that we must nevertheless give our attention. On which the reader is begged to have confidence; he is not asked to make vain concessions. It was indicated touchingly in the faces of our friends that they were growing old together and were fond enough of each other's company not to object—since it was a condition—even to that. The reader will have guessed that they were husband and wife; and perhaps while he is about it will further have guessed that they were of that nationality for which Hyde Park at the height of the season is most completely illustrative. They were native aliens, so to speak, and people at once so initiated and so detached could only be Americans. This reflexion indeed you would have made only after some delay; for it must be allowed that they bristled with none of those modern signs that carry out the tradition of the old indigenous war-paint and feathers.

They had the American turn of mind, but that was very secret; and to your eye—if your eye had cared about it—they might have been either intimately British or more remotely foreign. It was as if they studied, for convenience, to be superficially colourless; their colour was all in their talk. They were not in the least verdant; they were grey rather, of monotonous hue. If they were interested in the riders, the horses, the walkers, the great exhibition of English wealth and health, beauty, luxury and leisure, it was because all this referred itself to other impressions, because they had the key to almost everything that needed an answer—because, in a word, they were able to compare. They had not arrived, they had only returned; and recognition much more than surprise was expressed in their quiet eyes. Dexter Freer and his wife belonged in fine to that great company of Americans who are constantly “passing through” London. Enjoyers of a fortune of which, from any standpoint, the limits were plainly visible, they were unable to treat themselves to that commonest form of ease, the ease of living at home. They found it much more possible to economise at Dresden or Florence than at Buffalo or Minneapolis. The saving was greater and the strain was less. From Dresden, from Florence, moreover, they constantly made excursions that wouldn't have been possible with an excess of territory; and it is even to be feared they practised some eccentricities of thrift. They came to London to buy their portmanteaus, their toothbrushes, their writing-paper; they occasionally even recrossed the Atlantic westward to assure themselves that westward prices were still the same.

They were eminently a social pair; their interests were mainly personal. Their curiosity was so invidiously human that they were supposed to be too addicted to gossip, and they certainly kept up their acquaintance with the affairs of other people. They had friends in every country, in every town; and it was not their fault if people told them their secrets. Dexter Freer was a tall lean man, with an interested eye and a nose that rather drooped than aspired, yet was salient withal. He brushed his hair, which was streaked with white, forward over his ears and into those locks represented in the portraits of clean-shaven gentlemen who flourished fifty years ago and wore an old-fashioned neckcloth and gaiters. His wife, a small plump person, rather polished than naturally fresh, with a white face and

hair still evenly black, smiled perpetually, but had never laughed since the death of a son whom she had lost ten years after her marriage. Her husband, on the other hand, who was usually quite grave, indulged on great occasions in resounding mirth. People confided in her less than in him, but that mattered little, as she confided much in herself. Her dress, which was always black or dark grey, was so harmoniously simple that you could see she was fond of it; it was never smart by accident or by fear. She was full of intentions of the most judicious sort and, though perpetually moving about the world, had the air of waiting for every one else to pass. She was celebrated for the promptitude with which she made her sitting-room at an inn, where she might be spending a night or two, appear a real temple of memory. With books, flowers, photographs, draperies, rapidly distributed—she had even a way, for the most part, of not failing of a piano—the place seemed almost hereditary. The pair were just back from America, where they had spent three months, and now were able to face the world with something of the elation of people who have been justified of a stiff conviction. They had found their native land quite ruinous.

“There he is again!” said Mr. Freer, following with his eyes a young man who passed along the Row, riding slowly. “That’s a beautiful thoroughbred!”

Mrs. Freer asked idle questions only when she wanted time to think. At present she had simply to look and see who it was her husband meant. “The horse is too big,” she remarked in a moment.

“You mean the rider’s too small,” her husband returned. “He’s mounted on his millions.”

“Is it really millions?”

“Seven or eight, they tell me.”

“How disgusting!” It was so that Mrs. Freer usually spoke of the large fortunes of the day. “I wish he’d see us,” she added.

“He does see us, but he doesn’t like to look at us. He’s too conscious. He isn’t easy.”

“Too conscious of his big horse?”

“Yes and of his big fortune. He’s rather ashamed of that.”

“This is an odd place to hang one’s head in,” said Mrs. Freer.

“I’m not so sure. He’ll find people here richer than himself, and other big horses in plenty, and that will cheer him up. Perhaps too he’s looking for that girl.”

“The one we heard about? He can’t be such a fool.”

“He isn’t a fool,” said Dexter Freer. “If he’s thinking of her he has some good reason.”

“I wonder what Mary Lemon would say,” his wife pursued.

“She’d say it was all right if he should do it. She thinks he can do no wrong. He’s immensely fond of her.”

“I shan’t be sure of that,” said Mrs. Freer, “if he takes home a wife who’ll despise her.”

“Why should the girl despise her? She’s a delightful woman.”

“The girl will never know it—and if she should it would make no difference: she’ll despise everything.”

“I don’t believe it, my dear; she’ll like some things very much. Every one will be very nice to her.”

“She’ll despise them all the more. But we’re speaking as if it were all arranged. I don’t believe in it at all,” said Mrs. Freer.

“Well, something of the sort—in this case or in some other—is sure to happen sooner or later,” her husband replied, turning round a little toward the back-water, as it were, formed, near the entrance to the Park, by the confluence of the two great vistas of the Drive and the Row.

Our friends had turned their backs, as I have said, to the solemn revolution of wheels and the densely-packed mass of spectators who had chosen that aspect of the show. These spectators were now agitated by a unanimous impulse: the pushing-back of chairs, the shuffle of feet, the rustle of garments and the deepening murmur of voices sufficiently expressed it. Royalty was approaching—royalty was passing—royalty had passed. Mr. Freer turned his head and his ear a little, but failed to

alter his position further, and his wife took no notice of the flurry. They had seen royalty pass, all over Europe, and they knew it passed very quickly. Sometimes it came back; sometimes it didn't; more than once they had seen it pass for the last time. They were veteran tourists and they knew as perfectly as regular attendants at complicated church-services when to get up and when to remain seated. Mr. Freer went on with his proposition. "Some young fellow's certain to do it, and one of these girls is certain to take the risk. They must take risks over here more and more."

"The girls, I've no doubt, will be glad enough; they have had very little chance as yet. But I don't want Jackson to begin."

"Do you know I rather think I do," said Dexter Freer. "It will be so very amusing."

"For us perhaps, but not for him. He'll repent of it and be wretched. He's too good for that."

"Wretched never! He has no capacity for wretchedness, and that's why he can afford to risk it."

"He'll have to make great concessions," Mrs. Freer persisted.

"He won't make one."

"I should like to see."

"You admit, then, that it will be amusing: all I contend for," her husband replied. "But, as you say, we're talking as if it were settled, whereas there's probably nothing in it after all. The best stories always turn out false. I shall be sorry in this case."

They relapsed into silence while people passed and repassed them—continuous successive mechanical, with strange facial, strange expressional, sequences and contrasts. They watched the procession, but no one heeded them, though every one was there so admittedly to see what was to be seen. It was all striking, all pictorial, and it made a great composition. The wide long area of the Row, its red-brown surface dotted with bounding figures, stretched away into the distance and became suffused and misty in the bright thick air. The deep dark English verdure that bordered and overhung it looked rich and old, revived and refreshed though it was by the breath of June. The mild blue of the sky was spotted with great silvery clouds, and the light drizzled down in heavenly shafts over the quieter spaces of the Park, as one saw them beyond the Row. All this, however, was only a background, for the scene was before everything personal; quite splendidly so, and full of the gloss and lustre, the contrasted tones, of a thousand polished surfaces. Certain things were salient, pervasive—the shining flanks of the perfect horses, the twinkle of bits and spurs, the smoothness of fine cloth adjusted to shoulders and limbs, the sheen of hats and boots, the freshness of complexions, the expression of smiling talking faces, the flash and flutter of rapid gallops. Faces were everywhere, and they were the great effect—above all the fair faces of women on tall horses, flushed a little under their stiff black hats, with figures stiffened, in spite of much definition of curve, by their tight-fitting habits. Their well-secured helmets, their neat compact heads, their straight necks, their firm tailor-made armour, their frequent hardy bloom, all made them look singularly like amazons about to ride a charge. The men, with their eyes before them, with hats of undulating brim, good profiles, high collars, white flowers on their chests, long legs and long feet, had an air more elaboratively decorative, as they jolted beside the ladies, always out of step. These were the younger types; but it was not all youth, for many a saddle sustained a richer rotundity, and ruddy faces with short white whiskers or with matronly chins looked down comfortably from an equilibrium that seemed moral as well as physical. The walkers differed from the riders only in being on foot and in looking at the riders more than these looked at them; for they would have done as well in the saddle and ridden as the others ride. The women had tight little bonnets and still tighter little knots of hair; their round chins rested on a close swathing of lace or in some cases on throttling silver chains and circlets. They had flat backs and small waists, they walked slowly, with their elbows out, carrying vast parasols and turning their heads very little to the right or the left. They were amazons unmounted, quite ready to spring into the saddle. There was a great deal of beauty and a diffused look of happy expansion, all limited and controlled, which came from clear quiet eyes and well-cut lips, rims of stout vessels that didn't overflow and on which syllables were liquid and sentences brief. Some of the young men, as well as

the women, had the happiest proportions and oval faces—faces in which line and colour were pure and fresh and the idea of the moment far from intense.

“They’re often very good-looking,” said Mr. Freer at the end of ten minutes. “They’re on the whole the finest whites.”

“So long as they remain white they do very well; but when they venture upon colour!” his wife replied. She sat with her eyes at the level of the skirts of the ladies who passed her, and she had been following the progress of a green velvet robe enriched with ornaments of steel and much gathered up in the hands of its wearer, who, herself apparently in her teens, was accompanied by a young lady draped in scant pink muslin, a tissue embroidered esthetically with flowers that simulated the iris.

“All the same, in a crowd, they’re wonderfully well turned out,” Dexter Freer went on—“lumping men and women and horses and dogs together. Look at that big fellow on the light chestnut: what could be more perfect? By the way, it’s Lord Canterville,” he added in a moment and as if the fact were of some importance.

Mrs. Freer recognised its importance to the degree of raising her glass to look at Lord Canterville. “How do you know it’s he?” she asked with that implement still up.

“I heard him say something the night I went to the House of Lords. It was very few words, but I remember him. A man near me mentioned who he was.”

“He’s not so handsome as you,” said Mrs. Freer, dropping her glass.

“Ah, you’re too difficult!” her husband murmured. “What a pity the girl isn’t with him,” he went on. “We might see something.”

It appeared in a moment, however, that the girl was with him. The nobleman designated had ridden slowly forward from the start, then just opposite our friends had pulled up to look back as if waiting for some one. At the same moment a gentleman in the Walk engaged his attention, so that he advanced to the barrier which protects the pedestrians and halted there, bending a little from his saddle and talking with his friend, who leaned against the rail. Lord Canterville was indeed perfect, as his American admirer had said. Upwards of sixty and of great stature and great presence, he was a thoroughly splendid apparition. In capital preservation he had the freshness of middle life—he would have been young indeed to the eye if his large harmonious spread hadn’t spoken of the lapse of years. He was clad from head to foot in garments of a radiant grey, and his fine florid countenance was surmounted with a white hat of which the majestic curves were a triumph of good form. Over his mighty chest disposed itself a beard of the richest growth and of a colour, in spite of a few streaks vaguely grizzled, to which the coat of his admirable horse appeared to be a perfect match. It left no opportunity in his uppermost button-hole for the customary orchid; but this was of comparatively little consequence, since the vegetation of the beard itself was tropical. Astride his great steed, with his big fist, gloved in pearl-grey, on his swelling thigh, his face lighted up with good-humoured indifference and all his magnificent surface reflecting the mild sunshine, he was, strikingly, a founded and builded figure, such as could only represent to the public gaze some Institution, some Exhibition or some Industry, in a word some unquenchable Interest. People quite lingered to look up at him as they passed. His halt was brief, however, for he was almost immediately joined by two handsome girls, who were as well turned-out, in Dexter Freer’s phrase, as himself. They had been detained a moment at the entrance to the Row and now advanced side by side, their groom close behind them. One was noticeably taller and older than the other, and it was plain at a glance that they were sisters. Between them, with their charming shoulders, their contracted waists and their skirts that hung without a wrinkle, like plates of zinc, they represented in a singularly complete form the pretty English girl in the position in which she is prettiest.

“Of course they’re his daughters,” said Dexter Freer as these young ladies rode away with Lord Canterville; “and in that case one of them must be Jackson Lemon’s sweetheart. Probably the bigger; they said it was the eldest. She’s evidently a fine creature.”

“She’d hate it over there,” Mrs. Freer returned for all answer to this cluster of inductions.

“You know I don’t admit that. But granting she should, it would do her good to have to accommodate herself.”

“She wouldn’t accommodate herself.”

“She looks so confoundedly fortunate, perched up on that saddle,” he went on without heed of his wife’s speech.

“Aren’t they supposed to be very poor?”

“Yes, they look it!” And his eyes followed the eminent trio while, with the groom, as eminent in his way as any of them, they started on a canter.

The air was full of sound, was low and economised; and when, near our friends, it became articulate the words were simple and few. “It’s as good as the circus, isn’t it, Mrs. Freer?” These words correspond to that description, but they pierced the dense medium more effectually than any our friends had lately heard. They were uttered by a young man who had stopped short in the path, absorbed by the sight of his compatriots. He was short and stout, he had a round kind face and short stiff-looking hair, which was reproduced in a small bristling beard. He wore a double-breasted walking-coat, which was not, however, buttoned, and on the summit of his round head was perched a hat of exceeding smallness and of the so-called “pot” category. It evidently fitted him, but a hatter himself wouldn’t have known why. His hands were encased in new gloves of a dark-brown colour, and these masquerading members hung consciously, quite ruefully, at his sides. He sported neither umbrella nor stick. He offered one of his stuffed gloves almost with eagerness to Mrs. Freer, blushing a little as he measured his precipitation.

“Oh Doctor Feeder!”—she smiled at him. Then she repeated to her husband, “Doctor Feeder, my dear!” and her husband said, “Oh Doctor, how d’ye do?” I have spoken of the composition of the young man’s appearance, but the items were not perceived by these two. They saw but one thing, his delightful face, which was both simple and clever and, as if this weren’t enough, showed a really tasteless overheaping of the cardinal virtues. They had lately made the voyage from New York in his company, and he was clearly a person who would shine at sea with an almost intolerable blandness.

After he had stood in front of them a moment a chair beside Mrs. Freer became vacant; on which he took possession of it and sat there telling her what he thought of the Park and how he liked London. As she knew every one she had known many of his people at home, and while she listened to him she remembered how large their contribution had been to the moral worth of Cincinnati.

Mrs. Freer’s social horizon included even that city; she had had occasion to exercise an amused recognition of several families from Ohio and was acquainted with the position of the Feeders there.

This family, very numerous, was interwoven into an enormous cousinship. She stood off herself from any Western promiscuity, but she could have told you whom Doctor Feeder’s great-grandfather had married. Every one indeed had heard of the good deeds of the descendants of this worthy, who were generally physicians, excellent ones, and whose name expressed not inaptly their numerous acts of charity. Sidney Feeder, who had several cousins of this name established in the same line at Cincinnati, had transferred himself and his ambition to New York, where his practice had at the end of three years begun to grow. He had studied his profession at Vienna and was saturated with German science; had he only worn spectacles he might indeed perfectly, while he watched the performers in Rotten Row as if their proceedings were a successful demonstration, have passed for some famously “materialistic” young German. He had come over to London to attend a medical congress which met this year in the British capital, for his interest in the healing art was by no means limited to the cure of his patients. It embraced every form of experiment, and the expression of his honest eyes would almost have reconciled you to vivisection. This was his first time of looking into the Park; for social experiments he had little leisure. Being aware, however, that it was a very typical and, as might be, symptomatic sight, he had conscientiously reserved an afternoon and dressed himself carefully for the occasion. “It’s quite a brilliant show,” he said to Mrs. Freer; “it makes me wish I had a mount.”

Little as he resembled Lord Canterville he rode, as he would have gaily said, first-rate.

“Wait till Jackson Lemon passes again and you can stop him and make him let you take a turn.” This was the jocular suggestion of Dexter Freer.

“Why, is he here? I’ve been looking out for him and should like to see him.”

“Doesn’t he go to your medical congress?” asked Mrs. Freer.

“Well yes, he attends—but isn’t very regular. I guess he goes out a good deal.”

“I guess he does,” said Mr. Freer; “and if he isn’t very regular I guess he has a good reason. A beautiful reason, a charming reason,” he went on, bending forward to look down toward the beginning of the Row. “Dear me, what a lovely reason!”

Doctor Feeder followed the direction of his eyes and after a moment understood his allusion.

Little Jackson Lemon passed, on his big horse, along the avenue again, riding beside one of the bright creatures who had come that way shortly before under escort of Lord Canterville. His lordship followed in conversation with the other, his younger daughter. As they advanced Jackson Lemon turned his eyes to the multitude under the trees, and it so happened that they rested on the Dexter Freers. He smiled, he raised his hat with all possible friendliness, and his three companions turned to see whom he so frankly greeted. As he settled his hat on his head he espied the young man from Cincinnati, whom he had at first overlooked; whereupon he laughed for the luck of it and waved Sidney Feeder an airy salutation with his hand, reining in a little at the same time just for an instant, as if he half-expected this apparition to come and speak to him. Seeing him with strangers, none the less, Sidney Feeder hung back, staring a little as he rode away.

It is open to us to know that at this moment the young lady by whose side he was riding put him the free question: “Who are those people you bowed to?”

“Some old friends of mine—Americans,” said Jackson Lemon.

“Of course they’re Americans; there’s nothing anywhere but Americans now.”

“Oh yes, our turn’s coming round!” laughed the young man.

“But that doesn’t say who they are,” his companion continued. “It’s so difficult to say who Americans are,” she added before he had time to answer her.

“Dexter Freer and his wife—there’s nothing difficult about that. Every one knows them,” Jackson explained.

“I never heard of them,” said the English girl.

“Ah, that’s your fault and your misfortune. I assure you everybody knows them.”

“And does everybody know the little man with the fat face to whom you kissed your hand?”

“I didn’t kiss my hand, but I would if I had thought of it. He’s a great chum of mine—a fellow-student at Vienna.”

“And what’s *his* name?”

“Doctor Feeder.”

Jackson Lemon’s companion had a dandling pause. “Are *all* your friends doctors?”

“No—some of them are in other businesses.”

“Are they all in some business?”

“Most of them—save two or three like Dexter Freer.”

“Dexter’ Freer? I thought you said Doctor Feeder.”

The young man gave a laugh. “You heard me wrong. You’ve got doctors on the brain, Lady Barb.”

“I’m rather glad,” said Lady Barb, giving the rein to her horse, who bounded away.

“Well yes, she’s very handsome, the reason,” Doctor Feeder remarked as he sat under the trees.

“Is he going to marry her?” Mrs. Freer inquired.

“Marry her? I hope not.”

“Why do you hope not?”

“Because I know nothing about her. I want to know something about the woman that man marries.”

“I suppose you’d like him to marry in Cincinnati,” Mrs. Freer not unadventurously threw out.

“Well, I’m not particular where it is; but I want to know her first.” Doctor Feeder was very sturdy.

“We were in hopes you’d know all about it,” said his other entertainer.

“No, I haven’t kept up with him there.”

“We’ve heard from a dozen people that he has been always with her for the last month—and that kind of thing, in England, is supposed to mean something. Hasn’t he spoken of her when you’ve seen him?”

“No, he has only talked about the new treatment of spinal meningitis. He’s very much interested in spinal meningitis.”

“I wonder if he talks about it to Lady Barb,” said Mrs. Freer.

“Who is she anyway?” the young man wanted to know.

Well, his companions both let him. “Lady Barb Clement.”

“And who’s Lady Barb Clement?”

“The daughter of Lord Canterville.”

“And who’s Lord Canterville?”

“Dexter must tell you that,” said Mrs. Freer.

And Dexter accordingly told him that the Marquis of Canterville had been in his day a great sporting nobleman and an ornament to English society, and had held more than once a high post in her Majesty’s household. Dexter Freer knew all these things—how his lordship had married a daughter of Lord Treherne, a very serious intelligent and beautiful woman who had redeemed him from the extravagance of his youth and presented him in rapid succession with a dozen little tenants for the nurseries at Pasterns—this being, as Mr. Freer also knew, the name of the principal seat of the Cantervilles. The head of that house was a Tory, but not a particular dunce for a Tory, and very popular in society at large; good-natured, good-looking, knowing how to be rather remarkably free and yet remain a *grand seigneur*, clever enough to make an occasional telling speech and much associated with the fine old English pursuits as well as with many of the new improvements—the purification of the Turf, the opening of the museums on Sunday, the propagation of coffee-taverns, the latest ideas on sanitary reform. He disapproved of the extension of the suffrage but had positively drainage on the brain. It had been said of him at least once—and, if this historian is not mistaken, in print—that he was just the man to convey to the popular mind the impression that the British aristocracy is still a living force. He was unfortunately not very rich—for a man who had to exemplify such truths—and of his twelve children no less than seven were daughters. Lady Barb, Jackson Lemon’s friend, was the second; the eldest had married Lord Beauchemin. Mr. Freer had caught quite the right pronunciation of this name, which he successfully sounded as Bitumen. Lady Lucretia had done very well, for her husband was rich and she had brought him nothing to speak of; but it was hardly to be expected they would all achieve such flights. Happily the younger girls were still in the schoolroom, and before they had come up, Lady Canterville, who was a woman of bold resource, would have worked off the two that were out. It was Lady Agatha’s first season; she wasn’t so pretty as her sister, but was thought to be cleverer. Half-a-dozen people had spoken to him of Jackson Lemon’s being a great deal at the Cantervilles. He was supposed to be enormously rich.

“Well, so he is,” said Sidney Feeder, who had listened to Mr. Freer’s report with attention, with eagerness even, but, for all its lucidity, with an air of imperfect apprehension.

“Yes, but not so rich as they probably think.”

“Do they want his money? Is that what they’re after?”

“You go straight to the point!” Mrs. Freer rang out.

“I haven’t the least idea,” said her husband. “He’s a very good sort in himself.”

“Yes, but he’s a doctor,” Mrs. Freer observed.

“What have they got against that?” asked Sidney Feeder.

“Why, over here, you know, they only call them in to prescribe,” said his other friend. “The profession isn’t—a—what you’d call aristocratic.”

“Well, I don’t know it, and I don’t know that I want to know it. How do you mean, aristocratic?”

What profession is? It would be rather a curious one. Professions are meant to do the work of professions; and what work’s done without your sleeves rolled up? Many of the gentlemen at the congress there are quite charming.”

“I like doctors very much,” said Mrs. Freer; “my father was a doctor. But they don’t marry the daughters of marquises.”

“I don’t believe Jackson wants to marry that one,” Sidney Feeder calmly argued.

“Very possibly not—people are such asses,” said Dexter Freer. “But he’ll have to decide. I wish you’d find out, by the way. You can if you will.”

“I’ll ask him—up at the congress; I can do that. I suppose he has got to marry some one.” The young man added in a moment: “And she may be a good thing.”

“She’s said to be charming.”

“Very well then, it won’t hurt him. I must say, however, I’m not sure I like all that about her family.”

“What I told you? It’s all to their honour and glory,” said Mr. Freer.

“Are they quite on the square? It’s like those people in Thackeray.”

“Oh if Thackeray could have done *this!*” And Mrs. Freer yearned over the lost hand.

“You mean all this scene?” asked the young man.

“No; the marriage of a British noblewoman and an American doctor. It would have been a subject for a master of satire.”

“You see you do want it, my dear,” said her husband quietly.

“I want it as a story, but I don’t want it for Doctor Lemon.”

“Does he call himself ‘Doctor’ still?” Mr. Freer asked of young Feeder.

“I suppose he does—I call him so. Of course he doesn’t practise. But once a doctor always a doctor.”

“That’s doctrine for Lady Barb!”

Sidney Feeder wondered. “Hasn’t *she* got a title too? What would she expect him to be?

President of the United States? He’s a man of real ability—he might have stood at the head of his profession. When I think of that I want to swear. What did his father want to go and make all that money for?”

“It must certainly be odd to them to see a ‘medical man’ with six or eight millions,” Mr. Freer conceded.

“They use much the same term as the Choctaws,” said his wife.

“Why, some of their own physicians make immense fortunes,” Sidney Feeder remarked.

“Couldn’t he,” she went on, “be made a baronet by the Queen?”

“Yes, then he’d be aristocratic,” said the young man. “But I don’t see why he should want to marry over here; it seems to me to be going out of his way. However, if he’s happy I don’t care. I like him very much; he has ‘A1’ ability. If it hadn’t been for his father he’d have made a splendid doctor.

But, as I say, he takes a great interest in medical science and I guess he means to promote it all he can—with his big fortune. He’ll be sure to keep up his interest in research. He thinks we *do* know something and is bound we shall know more. I hope she won’t lower him, the young marchioness—is that her rank? And I hope they’re really good people. He ought to be very useful. I should want to know a good deal about the foreign family I was going to marry into.”

“He looked to me, riding there, as if he knew a good deal about the Clements,” Dexter Freer said, getting to his feet as his wife suggested they ought to be going; “and he looked to me pleased with the knowledge. There they come down the other side. Will you walk away with us or will you stay?”

“Stop him and ask him, and then come and tell us—in Jermyn Street.” This was Mrs. Freer’s parting injunction to Sidney Feeder.

“He ought to come himself—tell him that,” her husband added.

“Well, I guess I’ll stay,” said the young man as his companions merged themselves in the crowd that now was tending toward the gates. He went and stood by the barrier and saw Doctor Lemon and his friends pull up at the entrance to the Row, where they apparently prepared to separate. The separation took some time and Jackson’s colleague became interested. Lord Canterville and his younger daughter lingered to talk with two gentlemen, also mounted, who looked a good deal at the legs of Lady Agatha’s horse. Doctor Lemon and Lady Barb were face to face, very near each other, and she, leaning forward a little, stroked the overlapping neck of his glossy bay. At a distance he appeared to be talking and she to be listening without response. “Oh yes, he’s making love to her,” thought Sidney Feeder. Suddenly her father and sister turned away to leave the Park, and she joined them and disappeared while Jackson came up on the left again as for a final gallop. He hadn’t gone far before he perceived his comrade, who awaited him at the rail; and he repeated the gesture Lady Barb had described as a kiss of the hand, though it had not to his friend’s eyes that full grace. When he came within hail he pulled up.

“If I had known you were coming here I’d have given you a mount,” he immediately and bountifully cried. There was not in his person that irradiation of wealth and distinction which made Lord Canterville glow like a picture; but as he sat there with his neat little legs stuck out he looked very bright and sharp and happy, wearing in his degree the aspect of one of Fortune’s favourites. He had a thin keen delicate face, a nose very carefully finished, a quick eye, a trifle hard in expression, and a fine dark moustache, a good deal cultivated. He was not striking, but he had his intensity, and it was easy to see that he had his purposes.

“How many horses have you got—about forty?” his compatriot inquired in response to his greeting.

“About five hundred,” said Jackson Lemon.

“Did you mount your friends—the three you were riding with?”

“Mount them? They’ve got the best horses in England.”

“Did they sell you this one?” Sidney Feeder continued in the same humorous strain.

“What do you think of him?” said his friend without heed of this question.

“Well, he’s an awful old screw. I wonder he can carry you.”

“Where did you get your hat?” Jackson asked both as a retort and as a relevant criticism.

“I got it in New York. What’s the matter with it?”

“It’s very beautiful. I wish I had brought over one like it.”

“The head’s the thing—not the hat. I don’t mean yours—I mean mine,” Sidney Feeder laughed.

“There’s something very deep in your question. I must think it over.”

“Don’t—don’t,” said Jackson Lemon; “you’ll never get to the bottom of it. Are you having a good time?”

“A glorious time. Have you been up to-day?”

“Up among the doctors? No—I’ve had a lot of things to do,” Jackson was obliged to plead.

“Well”—and his friend richly recovered it—“we had a very interesting discussion. I made a few remarks.”

“You ought to have told me. What were they about?”

“About the intermarriage of races from the point of view—” And Sidney Feeder paused a moment, occupied with the attempt to scratch the nose of the beautiful horse.

“From the point of view of the progeny, I suppose?”

“Not at all. From the point of view of the old friends.”

“Damn the old friends!” Doctor Lemon exclaimed with jocular crudity.

“Is it true that you’re going to marry a young marchioness?”

The face of the speaker in the saddle became just a trifle rigid, and his firm eyes penetrated the other. “Who has played that on you?”

“Mr. and Mrs. Freer, whom I met just now.”

“Mr. and Mrs. Freer be hanged too. And who told *them*?”

“Ever so many fashionable people. I don’t know who.”

“Gad, how things are tattled!” cried Jackson Lemon with asperity.

“I can see it’s true by the way you say that,” his friend ingenuously stated.

“Do Freer and his wife believe it?” Jackson went on impatiently.

“They want you to go and see them. You can judge for yourself.”

“I’ll go and see them and tell them to mind their business.”

“In Jermyn Street; but I forget the number. I’m sorry the marchioness isn’t one of ours,” Doctor Feeder continued.

“If I should marry her she *would* be quick enough. But I don’t see what difference it can make to you,” said Jackson.

“Why, she’ll look down on the profession, and I don’t like that from your wife.”

“That will touch me more than you.”

“Then it *is* true?” Doctor Feeder cried with a finer appeal.

“She won’t look down. I’ll answer for that.”

“You won’t care. You’re out of it all now.”

“No, I’m not. I mean to do no end of work.”

“I’ll believe that when I see it,” said Sidney Feeder, who was by no means perfectly incredulous, but who thought it salutary to take that tone. “I’m not sure you’ve any right to work—you oughtn’t to have everything; you ought to leave the field to us, not take the bread out of our mouths and get the *kudos*. You must pay the penalty of being bloated. You’d have been celebrated if you had continued to practise—more celebrated than any one. But you won’t be now—you can’t be any way you fix it. Some one else is going to be in your place.”

Jackson Lemon listened to this, but without meeting the eyes of the prophet; not, however, as if he were avoiding them, but as if the long stretch of the Ride, now less and less obstructed, irresistibly drew him off again and made his companion’s talk retarding. Nevertheless he answered deliberately and kindly enough. “I hope it will be you, old boy.” And he bowed to a lady who rode past.

“Very likely it will. I hope I make you feel mean. That’s what I’m trying to do.”

“Oh awfully!” Jackson cried. “All the more that I’m not in the least engaged.”

“Well, that’s good. Won’t you come up to-morrow?” Doctor Feeder went on.

“I’ll try, my dear fellow. I can’t be sure. By-bye!”

“Oh you’re lost anyway!” sighed Sidney Feeder as the other started away.

II

It was Lady Marmaduke, wife of Sir Henry of that clan, who had introduced the amusing young American to Lady Beauchemin; after which Lady Beauchemin had made him acquainted with her mother and sisters. Lady Marmaduke too was of outland strain, remaining for her conjugal baronet the most ponderable consequence of a tour in the United States. At present, by the end of ten years, she knew her London as she had never known her New York, so that it had been easy for her to be, as she called herself, Jackson's social godmother. She had views with regard to his career, and these views fitted into a scheme of high policy which, if our space permitted, I should be glad to lay before the reader in its magnitude. She wished to add an arch or two to the bridge on which she had effected her transit from America; and it was her belief that Doctor Lemon might furnish the materials. This bridge, as yet a somewhat sketchy and rickety structure, she saw—in the future—boldly stretch from one solid pier to another. It could but serve both ways, for reciprocity was the keynote of Lady Marmaduke's plan. It was her belief that an ultimate fusion was inevitable and that those who were the first to understand the situation would enjoy the biggest returns from it. The first time the young man had dined with her he met Lady Beauchemin, who was her intimate friend. Lady Beauchemin was remarkably gracious, asking him to come and see her as if she really meant it. He in fact presented himself and in her drawing-room met her mother, who happened to be calling at the same moment. Lady Canterville, not less friendly than her daughter, invited him down to Pasterns for Eastertide, and before a month had passed it struck him that, though he was not what he would have called intimate at any house in London, the door of the house of Clement opened to him pretty often.

This seemed no small good fortune, for it always opened upon a charming picture. The inmates were a blooming and beautiful race, and their interior had an aspect of the ripest comfort. It was not the splendour of New York—as New York had lately begun to appear to the young man—but an appearance and a set of conditions, of factors as he used to say, not to be set in motion in that city by any power of purchase. He himself had a great deal of money, and money was good even when it was new; but old money was somehow *more* to the shilling and the pound. Even after he learned that Lord Canterville's fortune was less present than past it was still the positive golden glow that struck him. It was Lady Beauchemin who had told him her father wasn't rich; having told him furthermore many surprising things—things both surprising in themselves and surprising on her lips.

This was to come home to him afresh that evening—the day he met Sidney Feeder in the Park. He dined out in the company of Lady Beauchemin, and afterwards, as she was alone—her husband had gone down to listen to a debate—she offered to “take him on.” She was going to several places, at some of which he must be due. They compared notes, and it was settled they should proceed together to the Trumpingtons', whither, it appeared at eleven o'clock, all the world was proceeding, with the approach to the house choked for half a mile with carriages. It was a close muggy night; Lady Beauchemin's chariot, in its place in the rank, stood still for long periods. In his corner beside her, through the open window, Jackson Lemon, rather hot, rather oppressed, looked out on the moist greasy pavement, over which was flung, a considerable distance up and down, the flare of a public-house. Lady Beauchemin, however, was not impatient, for she had a purpose in her mind, and now she could say what she wished.

“Do you really love her?” That was the first thing she said.

“Well, I guess so,” Jackson Lemon answered as if he didn't recognise the obligation to be serious.

She looked at him a moment in silence; he felt her gaze and, turning his eyes, saw her face, partly shadowed, with the aid of a street-lamp. She was not so pretty as Lady Barb; her features had a certain sharpness; her hair, very light in colour and wonderfully frizzled, almost covered her eyes, the expression of which, however, together with that of her pointed nose and the glitter of several

diamonds, emerged from the gloom. What she next said seemed somehow to fall in with that. “You don’t seem to know. I never saw a man in so vague a state.”

“You push me a little too much; I must have time to think of it,” the young man returned.

“You know in my country they allow us plenty of time.” He had several little oddities of expression, of which he was perfectly conscious and which he found convenient, for they guarded him in a society condemning a lonely New Yorker who proceeded by native inspiration to much exposure; they ensured him the profit corresponding with sundry sacrifices. He had no great assortment of vernacular drolleries, conscious or unconscious, to draw upon; but the occasional use of one, discreetly chosen, made him appear simpler than he really was, and reasons determined his desiring this result. He was not simple; he was subtle, circumspect, shrewd—perfectly aware that he might make mistakes. There was a danger of his making one now—a mistake that might gravely count. He was resolved only to succeed. It is true that for a great success he would take a certain risk; but the risk was to be considered, and he gained time while he multiplied his guesses and talked about his country.

“You may take ten years if you like,” said Lady Beauchemin. “I’m in no hurry whatever to make you my brother-in-law. Only you must remember that you spoke to me first.”

“What did I say?”

“You spoke to me of Barb as the finest girl you had seen in England.”

“Oh I’m willing to stand by that.” And he had another try, which would have been transparent to a compatriot. “I guess I like her type.”

“I should think you might!”

“I like her all round—with all her peculiarities.”

“What do you mean by her peculiarities?”

“Well, she has some peculiar ideas,” said Jackson Lemon in a tone of the sweetest reasonableness, “and she has a peculiar way of speaking.”

“Ah, you can’t expect us to speak so well as you!” cried Lady Beauchemin.

“I don’t see why not.” He was perfectly candid. “You do some things much better.”

“We’ve our own ways at any rate, and we think them the best in the world—as they mostly are!” laughed Lady Beauchemin. “One of them’s not to let a gentleman devote himself to a girl for so long a time without some sense of responsibility. If you don’t wish to marry my sister you ought to go away.”

“I ought never to have come,” said Jackson Lemon.

“I can scarcely agree to that,” her ladyship good-naturedly replied, “as in that case I should have lost the pleasure of knowing you.”

“It would have spared you this duty, which you dislike very much.”

“Asking you about your intentions? Oh I don’t dislike it at all!” she cried. “It amuses me extremely.”

“Should you like your sister to marry me?” asked Jackson with great simplicity.

If he expected to take her by surprise he was disappointed: she was perfectly prepared to commit herself. “I should like it particularly. I think English and American society ought to be but one. I mean the best of each. A great whole.”

“Will you allow me to ask whether Lady Marmaduke suggested that to you?” he at once inquired.

“We’ve often talked of it.”

“Oh yes, that’s her aim.”

“Well, it’s my aim too. I think there’s a lot to be done.”

“And you’d like me to do it?”

“To begin it, precisely. Don’t you think we ought to see more of each other? I mean,” she took the precaution to explain, “just the best in each country.”

Jackson Lemon appeared to weigh it. “I’m afraid I haven’t any general ideas. If I should marry an English girl it wouldn’t be for the good of the species.”

“Well, we want to be mixed a little. That I’m sure of,” Lady Beauchemin said.

“You certainly got that from Lady Marmaduke,” he commented.

“It’s too tiresome, your not consenting to be serious! But my father will make you so,” she went on with her pleasant assurance. “I may as well let you know that he intends in a day or two to ask you your intentions. That’s all I wished to say to you. I think you ought to be prepared.”

“I’m much obliged to you. Lord Canterville will do quite right,” the young man allowed.

There was to his companion something really unfathomable in this little American doctor whom she had taken up on grounds of large policy and who, though he was assumed to have sunk the medical character, was neither handsome nor distinguished, but only immensely rich and quite original—since he wasn’t strictly insignificant. It was unfathomable to begin with that a medical man should be so rich, or that so rich a man should be medical; it was even, to an eye always gratified by suitability and, for that matter, almost everywhere recognising it, rather irritating. Jackson Lemon himself could have explained the anomaly better than any one else, but this was an explanation one could scarcely ask for. There were other things: his cool acceptance of certain situations; his general indisposition to make comprehension easy, let alone to guess it, with all his guessing, so much hindered; his way of taking refuge in jokes which at times had not even the merit of being American; his way too of appearing to be a suitor without being an aspirant. Lady Beauchemin, however, was, like her puzzling friend himself, prepared to run a certain risk. His reserves made him slippery, but that was only when one pressed. She flattered herself she could handle people lightly. “My father will be sure to act with perfect tact,” she said; “though of course if you shouldn’t care to be questioned you can go out of town.” She had the air of really wishing to act with the most natural delicacy.

“I don’t want to go out of town; I’m enjoying it far too much here,” Jackson cried. “And wouldn’t your father have a right to ask me what I should mean by that?”

Lady Beauchemin thought—she really wondered. But in a moment she exclaimed: “He’s incapable of saying anything vulgar!”

She hadn’t definitely answered his inquiry, and he was conscious of this; but he was quite ready to say to her a little later, as he guided her steps from the brougham to the strip of carpet which, beneath a rickety border of striped cloth and between a double row of waiting footmen, policemen and dingy amateurs of both sexes, stretched from the curbstone to the portal of the Trumpingtons: “Of course I shan’t wait for Lord Canterville to speak to me.”

He had been expecting some such announcement as this from Lady Beauchemin and really judged her father would do no more than his duty. He felt he should be prepared with an answer to the high challenge so prefigured, and he wondered at himself for still not having come to the point. Sidney Feeder’s question in the Park had made him feel rather pointless; it was the first direct allusion as yet made to his possible marriage by any one but Lady Beauchemin. None of his own people were in London; he was perfectly independent, and even if his mother had been within reach he couldn’t quite have consulted her on the subject. He loved her dearly, better than any one; but she wasn’t a woman to consult, for she approved of whatever he did: the fact of his doing it settled the case for it. He had been careful not to be too serious when he talked with Lady Barb’s relative; but he was very serious indeed as he thought over the matter within himself, which he did even among the diversions of the next half-hour, while he squeezed, obliquely and with tight arrests, through the crush in the Trumpingtons’ drawing-room. At the end of the half-hour he came away, and at the door he found Lady Beauchemin, from whom he had separated on entering the house and who, this time with a companion of her own sex, was awaiting her carriage and still “going on.” He gave her his arm to the street, and as she entered the vehicle she repeated that she hoped he’d just go out of town.

“Who then would tell me what to do?” he returned, looking at her through the window.

She might tell him what to do, but he felt free all the same; and he was determined this should continue. To prove it to himself he jumped into a hansom and drove back to Brook Street and to his hotel instead of proceeding to a bright-windowed house in Portland Place where he knew he should

after midnight find Lady Canterville and her daughters. He recalled a reference to that chance during his ride with Lady Barb, who would probably expect him; but it made him taste his liberty not to go, and he liked to taste his liberty. He was aware that to taste it in perfection he ought to “turn in”; but he didn’t turn in, he didn’t even take off his hat. He walked up and down his sitting-room with his head surmounted by this ornament, a good deal tipped back, and with his hands in his pockets.

There were various cards stuck into the frame of the mirror over his chimney-piece, and every time he passed the place he seemed to see what was written on one of them—the name of the mistress of the house in Portland Place, his own name and in the lower left-hand corner “A small Dance.” Of course, now, he must make up his mind; he’d make it up by the next day: that was what he said to himself as he walked up and down; and according to his decision he’d speak to Lord Canterville or would take the night-express to Paris. It was better meanwhile he shouldn’t see Lady Barb. It was vivid to him, as he occasionally paused with fevered eyes on the card in the chimney-glass, that he had come pretty far; and he had come so far because he was under the spell—yes, he was under the spell, or whatever it was, of Lady Barb. There was no doubt whatever of this; he had a faculty for diagnosis and he knew perfectly what was the matter with him. He wasted no time in musing on the mystery of his state; in wondering if he mightn’t have escaped such a seizure by a little vigilance at first, or if it would abate should he go away. He accepted it frankly for the sake of the pleasure it gave him—the girl was the delight of most of his senses—and confined himself to considering how it would square with his general situation to marry her. The squaring wouldn’t at all necessarily follow from the fact that he was in love; too many other things would come in between. The most important of these was the change not only of the geographical but of the social standpoint for his wife, and a certain readjustment that it would involve in his own relation to things. He wasn’t inclined to readjustments, and there was no reason why he should be: his own position was in most respects so advantageous. But the girl tempted him almost irresistibly, satisfying his imagination both as a lover and as a student of the human organism; she was so blooming, so complete, of a type so rarely encountered in that degree of perfection. Jackson Lemon was no Anglomaniac, but he took peculiar pleasure in certain physical facts of the English—their complexion, their temperament, their tissue; and Lady Barb had affected him from the first as in flexible virginal form a wonderful compendium of these elements. There was something simple and robust in her beauty; it had the quietness of an old Greek statue, without the vulgarity of the modern *simper* or of contemporary prettiness. Her head was antique, and though her conversation was quite of the present period Jackson told himself that some primitive sincerity of soul couldn’t but match with the cast of her brow, of her bosom, of the back of her neck, and with the high carriage of her head, which was at once so noble and so easy. He saw her as she might be in the future, the beautiful mother of beautiful children in whom the appearance of “race” should be conspicuous. He should like his children to have the appearance of race as well as other signs of good stuff, and wasn’t unaware that he must take his precautions accordingly. A great many people in England had these indications, and it was a pleasure to him to see them, especially as no one had them so unmistakably as the second daughter of the Cantervilles.

It would be a great luxury to call a creature so constituted one’s own; nothing could be more evident than that, because it made no difference that she wasn’t strikingly clever. Striking cleverness wasn’t one of the signs, nor a mark of the English complexion in general; it was associated with the modern *simper*, which was a result of modern nerves. If Jackson had wanted a wife all fiddlestrings of course he could have found her at home; but this tall fair girl, whose character, like her figure, appeared mainly to have been formed by riding across country, was differently put together. All the same would it suit his book, as they said in London, to marry her and transport her to New York? He came back to this question; came back to it with a persistency which, had she been admitted to a view of it, would have tried the patience of Lady Beauchemin. She had been irritated more than once at his appearing to attach himself so exclusively to that horn of the dilemma—as if it could possibly fail to be a good thing for a little American doctor to marry the daughter of an English peer. It would

have been more becoming in her ladyship's eyes that he should take this for granted a little more and take the consent of her ladyship's—of their ladyships'—family a little less. They looked at the matter so differently! Jackson Lemon was conscious that if he should propose for the young woman who so strongly appealed to him it would be because it suited him, and not because it suited his possible sisters-in-law. He believed himself to act in all things by his own faculty of choice and volition, a feature of his outfit in which he had the highest confidence.

It would have seemed, indeed, that just now this part of his inward machine was not working very regularly, since, though he had come home to go to bed, the stroke of half-past twelve saw him jump not into his sheets but into a hansom which the whistle of the porter had summoned to the door of his hotel and in which he rattled off to Portland Place. Here he found—in a very large house—an assembly of five hundred persons and a band of music concealed in a bower of azaleas.

Lady Canterville had not arrived; he wandered through the rooms and assured himself of that. He also discovered a very good conservatory, where there were banks and pyramids of azaleas. He watched the top of the staircase, but it was a long time before he saw what he was looking for, and his impatience grew at last extreme. The reward, however, when it came, was all he could have desired.

It consisted of a clear smile from Lady Barb, who stood behind her mother while the latter extended vague finger-tips to the hostess. The entrance of this charming woman and her beautiful daughters—always a noticeable incident—was effected with a certain spread of commotion, and just now it was agreeable to Jackson to feel this produced impression concern him probably more than any one else in the house. Tall, dazzling, indifferent, looking about her as if she saw very little, Lady Barb was certainly a figure round which a young man's fancy might revolve. Very rare, yet very quiet and very simple, she had little manner and little movement; but her detachment was not a vulgar art. She appeared to efface herself, to wait till, in the natural course, she should be attended to; and in this there was evidently no exaggeration, for she was too proud not to have perfect confidence. Her sister, quite another affair, with a little surprised smile which seemed to say that in her extreme innocence she was still prepared for anything, having heard, indirectly, such extraordinary things about society, was much more impatient and more expressive, and had always projected across a threshold the pretty radiance of her eyes and teeth before her mother's name was announced. Lady Canterville was by many persons more admired and more championed than her daughters; she had kept even more beauty than she had given them, and it was a beauty which had been called intellectual. She had extraordinary sweetness, without any definite professions; her manner was mild almost to tenderness; there was even in it a degree of thoughtful pity, of human comprehension. Moreover her features were perfect, and nothing could be more gently gracious than a way she had of speaking, or rather of listening, to people with her head inclined a little to one side. Jackson liked her without trepidation, and she had certainly been “awfully nice” to him. He approached Lady Barb as soon as he could do so without an appearance of rushing up; he remarked to her that he hoped very much she wouldn't dance. He was a master of the art which flourishes in New York above every other, and had guided her through a dozen waltzes with a skill which, as she felt, left absolutely nothing to be desired. But dancing was not his business to-night. She smiled without scorn at the expression of his hope.

“That's what mamma has brought us here for,” she said; “she doesn't like it if we don't dance.”

“How does she know whether she likes it or not? You always have danced.”

“Oh, once there was a place where I didn't,” said Lady Barb.

He told her he would at any rate settle it with her mother, and persuaded her to wander with him into the conservatory, where coloured lights were suspended among the plants and a vault of verdure arched above. In comparison with the other rooms this retreat was far and strange. But they were not alone; half a-dozen other couples appeared to have had reasons as good as theirs. The gloom, none the less, was rosy with the slopes of azalea and suffused with mitigated music, which made it possible to talk without consideration of one's neighbours. In spite of this, though it was only in looking back on the scene later that Lady Barb noted the fact, these dispersed couples were talking very softly. She

didn't look at them; she seemed to take it that virtually she was alone with the young American. She said something about the flowers, about the fragrance of the air; for all answer to which he asked her, as he stood there before her, a question that might have startled her by its suddenness.

"How do people who marry in England ever know each other before marriage? They have no chance."

"I'm sure I don't know," she returned. "I never was married."

"It's very different in my country. There a man may see much of a girl; he may freely call on her, he may be constantly alone with her. I wish you allowed that over here."

Lady Barb began to examine the less ornamental side of her fan as if it had never invited her before. "It must be so very odd, America," she then concluded.

"Well, I guess in that matter we're right. Over here it's a leap in the dark."

"I'm sure I don't know," she again made answer. She had folded her fan; she stretched out her arm mechanically and plucked a sprig of azalea.

"I guess it doesn't signify after all," Jackson however proceeded. "Don't you know they say that love's blind at the best?" His keen young face was bent upon hers; his thumbs were in the pockets of his trousers; he smiled with a slight strain, showing his fine teeth. She said nothing, only pulling her azalea to pieces. She was usually so quiet that this small movement was striking.

"This is the first time I've seen you in the least without a lot of people," he went on.

"Yes, it's very tiresome."

"I've been sick of it. I didn't want even to come here to-night."

She hadn't met his eyes, though she knew they were seeking her own. But now she looked at him straight. She had never objected to his appearance, and in this respect had no repugnance to surmount. She liked a man to be tall and handsome, and Jackson Lemon was neither; but when she was sixteen, and as tall herself as she was to be at twenty, she had been in love—for three weeks—with one of her cousins, a little fellow in the Hussars, who was shorter even than the American, was of inches markedly fewer than her own. This proved that distinction might be independent of stature—not that she had ever reasoned it out. Doctor Lemon's facial spareness and his bright ocular attention, which had a fine edge and a marked scale, unfolded and applied rule-fashion, affected her as original, and she thought of them as rather formidable to a good many people, which would do very well in a husband of hers. As she made this reflexion it of course never occurred to her that she herself might suffer true measurement, for she was not a sacrificial lamb. She felt sure his features expressed a mind—a mind immensely useful, like a good hack or whatever, and that he knew how to employ. She would never have supposed him a doctor; though indeed when all was said this was very negative and didn't account for the way he imposed himself.

"Why, then, did you come?" she asked in answer to his last speech.

"Because it seems to me after all better to see you this way than not to see you at all. I want to know you better."

"I don't think I ought to stay here," she said as she looked round her.

"Don't go till I've told you I love you," the young man distinctly replied.

She made no exclamation, indulged in no start; he couldn't see even that she changed colour.

She took his request with a noble simplicity, her head erect and her eyes lowered. "I don't think you've quite a right to tell me that."

"Why not?" Jackson demanded. "I want to claim the right. I want you to give it to me."

"I can't—I don't know you. You've said that yourself."

"Can't you have a little faith?" he at once asked, speaking as fast as if he were not even a little afraid to urge the pace. "That will help us to know each other better. It's disgusting, the want of opportunity; even at Pasterns I could scarcely get a walk with you. But I've the most absolute trust of you. I *know* I love you, and I couldn't do more than that at the end of six months. I love your beauty, I love your nature, I love you from head to foot. Don't move, please don't move." He lowered his tone

now, but it went straight to her ear and we must believe conveyed a certain eloquence. For himself, after he had heard himself say these words, all his being was in a glow. It was a luxury to speak to her of her beauty; it brought him nearer to her than he had ever been. But the colour had come into her face and seemed to remind him that her beauty wasn't all. "Everything about you is true and sweet and grand," he went on; "everything's dear to me. I'm sure you're good. I don't know what you think of me; I asked Lady Beauchemin to tell me, and she told me to judge for myself. Well, then, I judge you like me. Haven't I a right to assume that till the contrary's proved? May I speak to your father?"

That's what I want to know. I've been waiting, but now what should I wait for longer? I want to be able to tell him you've given me hope. I suppose I ought to speak to him first. I meant to, to-morrow, but meanwhile, to-night, I thought I'd just put this in. In my country it wouldn't matter particularly.

You must see all that over there for yourself. If you should tell me not to speak to your father I wouldn't—I'd wait. But I like better to ask your leave to speak to him than ask his to speak to you."

His voice had sunk almost to a whisper, but, though it trembled, the fact of his pleading gave it intensity. He had the same attitude, his thumbs in his trousers, his neat attentive young head, his smile, which was a matter of course; no one would have imagined what he was saying. She had listened without moving and at the end she raised her eyes. They rested on his own a moment, and he remembered for a long time the look, the clear effluence of splendid maidenhood, as deep as a surrender, that passed her lids.

Disconcertingly, however, there was no surrender in what she answered. "You may say anything you please to my father, but I don't wish to hear any more. You've said too much, considering how little idea you've given me before."

"I was watching you," said Jackson Lemon.

She held her head higher, still looking straight at him. Then quite seriously, "I don't like to be watched," she returned.

"You shouldn't be so beautiful then. Won't you give me a word of hope?"

"I've never supposed I should marry a foreigner," said Lady Barb.

"Do you call me a foreigner?"

"I think your ideas are very different and your country different. You've told me so yourself."

"I should like to show it to you. I would make you like it."

"I'm not sure what you'd make me do," she went on very honestly.

"Nothing you don't want."

"I'm sure you'd try," she smiled as for more accommodation.

"Well," said Jackson Lemon, "I'm after all trying now."

To this she returned that she must go to her mother, and he was obliged to lead her out of the place. Lady Canterville was not immediately found, so that he had time to keep it up a little as they went. "Now that I've spoken I'm very happy."

"Perhaps you're happy too soon."

"Ah, don't say that, Lady Barb," he tenderly groaned.

"Of course I must think of it."

"Of course you must!" Jackson abundantly concurred. "I'll speak to your father to-morrow."

"I can't fancy what he'll say."

"How can he dislike me? But I guess he doesn't!" the young man cried in a tone which Lady Beauchemin, had she heard him, would have felt connected with his general retreat upon the quaint.

What Lady Beauchemin's sister thought of it is not recorded; but there is perhaps a clue to her opinion in the answer she made him after a moment's silence: "Really, you know, you *are* a foreigner!"

With this she turned her back, for she was already in her mother's hands. Jackson Lemon said a few words to Lady Canterville; they were chiefly about its being very hot. She gave him her vague sweet attention, as if he were saying something ingenious but of which she missed the point. He could see she was thinking of the ways of her daughter Agatha, whose attitude toward the contemporary young

man was wanting in the perception of differences—a madness too much without method; she was evidently not occupied with Lady Barb, who was more to be depended on. This young woman never met her suitor's eyes again; she let her own rest rather ostentatiously on other objects. At last he was going away without a glance from her. Her mother had asked him to luncheon for the morrow, and he had said he would come if she would promise him he should see his lordship. "I can't pay you another visit till I've had some talk with him."

"I don't see why not, but if I speak to him I daresay he will be at home," she returned.

"It will be worth his while!" At this he almost committed himself; and he left the house reflecting that as he had never proposed to a girl before he couldn't be expected to know how women demean themselves in this emergency. He had heard indeed that Lady Barb had had no end of offers; and though he supposed the number probably overstated, as it always is, he had to infer that her way of appearing suddenly to have dropped him was but the usual behaviour for the occasion.

III

At her mother's the next day she was absent from luncheon, and Lady Canterville mentioned to him—he didn't ask—that she had gone to see a dear old great-aunt who was also her godmother and who lived at Roehampton. Lord Canterville was not present, but Jackson learned from his hostess that he had promised her he would come in exactly at three o'clock. Our young man lunched with her ladyship and the children, who appeared in force at this repast, all the younger girls being present, and two little boys, the juniors of the two sons who were in their teens. Doctor Lemon, who was fond of children and thought these absolutely the finest in the world—magnificent specimens of a magnificent brood, such as it would be so satisfactory in future days to see about his own knee—Doctor Lemon felt himself treated as one of the family, but was not frightened by what he read into the privilege of his admission. Lady Canterville showed no sense whatever of his having mooted the question of becoming her son-in-law, and he believed the absent object of his attentions hadn't told her of their evening's talk. This idea gave him pleasure; he liked to think Lady Barb was judging him for herself. Perhaps indeed she was taking counsel of the old lady at Roehampton: he saw himself the sort of lover of whom a godmother would approve. Godmothers, in his mind, were mainly associated with fairy-tales—he had had no baptismal sponsors of his own; and that point of view would be favourable to a young man with a great deal of gold who had suddenly arrived from a foreign country—an apparition surely in a proper degree elfish. He made up his mind he should like Lady Canterville as a mother-in-law; she would be too well-bred to meddle. Her husband came in at three o'clock, just after they had risen, and observed that it was very good in him to have waited.

"I haven't waited," Jackson replied with his watch in his hand; "you're punctual to the minute."

I know not how Lord Canterville may have judged his young friend, but Jackson Lemon had been told more than once in his life that he would have been all right if he hadn't been so literal.

After he had lighted a cigarette in his lordship's "den," a large brown apartment on the ground-floor, which partook at once of the nature of an office and of that of a harness-room—it couldn't have been called in any degree a library or even a study—he went straight to the point in these terms: "Well now, Lord Canterville, I feel I ought to let you know without more delay that I'm in love with Lady Barb and that I should like to make her my wife." So he spoke, puffing his cigarette, with his conscious but unextenuating eyes fixed on his host.

No man, as I have intimated, bore better being looked at than this noble personage; he seemed to bloom in the envious warmth of human contemplation and never appeared so faultless as when most exposed. "My dear fellow, my dear fellow," he murmured almost in disparagement, stroking his ambrosial beard from before the empty fireplace. He lifted his eyebrows, but looked perfectly good-natured.

"Are you surprised, sir?" Jackson asked.

"Why I suppose a fellow's surprised at any one's wanting one of his children. He sometimes feels the weight of that sort of thing so much, you know. He wonders what use on earth another man can make of them." And Lord Canterville laughed pleasantly through the copious fringe of his lips.

"I only want one of them," said his guest, laughing too, but with a lighter organ.

"Polygamy would be rather good for the parents. However, Luke told me the other night she knew you to be looking the way you speak of."

"Yes, I mentioned to Lady Beauchemin that I love Lady Barb, and she seemed to think it natural."

"Oh I suppose there's no want of nature in it! But, my dear fellow, I really don't know what to say," his lordship added.

“Of course you’ll have to think of it.” In saying which Jackson felt himself make the most liberal concession to the point of view of his interlocutor; being perfectly aware that in his own country it wasn’t left much to the parents to think of.

“I shall have to talk it over with my wife.”

“Well, Lady Canterville has been very kind to me; I hope she’ll continue.”

Lord Canterville passed a large fair hand, as for inspiration, over his beard. “My dear fellow, we’re excellent friends. No one could appreciate you more than Lady Canterville. Of course we can only consider such a question on the—a—the highest grounds. You’d never want to marry without knowing—as it were—exactly what you’re doing. I, on my side, naturally, you know, am bound to do the best I can for my own poor child. At the same time, of course, we don’t want to spend our time in—a—walking round the horse. We want to get at the truth about him.” It was settled between them after a little that the truth about Lemon’s business was that he knew to a certainty the state of his affections and was in a position to pretend to the hand of a young lady who, Lord Canterville might say without undue swagger, had a right to expect to do as well as any girl about the place.

“I should think she had,” Doctor Lemon said. “She’s a very rare type.”

His entertainer had a pleasant blank look. “She’s a clever well-grown girl and she takes her fences like a grasshopper. Does she know all this, by the way?”

“Oh yes, I told her last night.”

Again Lord Canterville had the air, unusual with him, of sounding, at some expense of precious moments, the expression of face of a visitor so unacquainted with shyness. “I’m not sure you ought to have done that, you know.”

“I couldn’t have spoken to you first—I couldn’t,” said Jackson Lemon. “I meant to; but it stuck in my crop.”

“They don’t in your country, I guess,” his lordship amicably laughed.

“Well, not as a general thing. However, I find it very pleasant to have the whole thing out with you now.” And in truth it was very pleasant. Nothing could be easier, friendlier, more informal, than Lord Canterville’s manner, which implied all sorts of equality, especially that of age and fortune, and made our young man feel at the end of three minutes almost as if he too were a beautifully-preserved and somewhat straitened nobleman of sixty, with the views of a man of the world about his own marriage. Jackson perceived that Lord Canterville waived the point of his having spoken first to the girl herself, and saw in this indulgence a just concession to the ardour of young affection. For his lordship seemed perfectly to appreciate the sentimental side—at least so far as it was embodied in his visitor—when he said without deprecation: “Did she give you any encouragement?”

“Well, she didn’t box my ears. She told me she’d think of it, but that I must speak to you.

Naturally, however, I shouldn’t have said what I did if I hadn’t made up my mind during the last fortnight that I’m not disagreeable to her.”

“Ah, my dear young man, women are odd fish!” this parent exclaimed rather unexpectedly.

“But of course you know all that,” he added in an instant; “you take the general risk.”

“I’m perfectly willing to take the general risk. The particular risk strikes me as small.”

“Well, upon my honour I don’t really know my girls. You see a man’s time in England is tremendously taken up; but I daresay it’s the same in your country. Their mother knows them—I think I had better send for their mother. If you don’t mind,” Lord Canterville wound up, “I’ll just suggest that she join us here.”

“I’m rather afraid of you both together, but if it will settle it any quicker—!” Jackson said.

His companion rang the bell and, when a servant appeared, despatched him with a message to her ladyship. While they were waiting the young man remembered how easily he could give a more definite account of his pecuniary basis. He had simply stated before that he was abundantly able to marry; he shrank from putting himself forward as a monster of money. With his excellent taste he wished to appeal to Lord Canterville primarily as a gentleman. But now that he had to make a double

impression he bethought himself of his millions, for millions were always impressive. “It strikes me as only fair to let you know that my fortune’s really considerable.”

“Yes, I daresay you’re beastly rich,” said Lord Canterville with a natural and visible faith.

“Well, I represent, all told, some seven millions.”

“Seven millions?”

“I count in dollars. Upwards of a million and a half sterling.”

Lord Canterville looked at him from head to foot, exhaling with great promptitude an air of cheerful resignation to a form of grossness threatening to become common. Then he said with a touch of that inconsequence of which he had already given a glimpse: “What the deuce in that case possessed you to turn doctor?”

Jackson Lemon coloured a little and demurred, but bethought himself of his best of reasons.

“Why, my having simply the talent for it.”

“Of course I don’t for a moment doubt your ability. But don’t you,” his lordship candidly asked, “find it rather a bore?”

“I don’t practise much. I’m rather ashamed to say that.”

“Ah well, of course in your country it’s different. I daresay you’ve got a door-plate, eh?”

“Oh yes, and a tin sign tied to the balcony!” Jackson laughed.

Here the joke was beyond his friend, who but went on: “What on earth did your father say to it?”

“To my going into medicine? He said he’d be hanged if he’d take any of my doses. He didn’t think I should succeed; he wanted me to go into the house.”

“Into the House—a—?” Lord Canterville just wondered. “That would be into your Congress?”

“Ah no, not so bad as that. Into the store,” Jackson returned with that refinement of the ingenuous which he reserved for extreme cases.

His host stared, not venturing even for the moment to hazard an interpretation; and before a solution had presented itself Lady Canterville was on the scene.

“My dear, I thought we had better see you. Do you know he wants to marry our second girl?”

It was in these simple and lucid terms that her husband acquainted her with the question.

She expressed neither surprise nor elation; she simply stood there smiling, her head a little inclined to the side and her beautiful benevolence well to the front. Her charming eyes rested on Doctor Lemon’s; and, though they showed a shade of anxiety for a matter of such importance, his own discovered in them none of the coldness of calculation. “Are you talking about dear Barb?” she asked in a moment and as if her thoughts had been far away.

Of course they were talking about dear Barb, and Jackson repeated to her what he had said to her noble spouse. He had thought it all over and his mind was quite made up. Moreover, he had spoken to the young woman.

“Did she tell you that, my dear?” his lordship asked while he lighted another cigar.

She gave no heed to this inquiry, which had been vague and accidental on the speaker’s part; she simply remarked to their visitor that the thing was very serious and that they had better sit down a moment. In an instant he was near her on the sofa on which she had placed herself and whence she still smiled up at her husband with her air of luxurious patience.

“Barb has told me nothing,” she dropped, however, after a little.

“That proves how much she cares for me!” Jackson declared with instant lucidity.

Lady Canterville looked as if she thought this really too ingenious, almost as professional as if their talk were a consultation; but her husband went, all gaily, straighter to the point. “Ah well, if she cares for you I don’t object.”

This was a little ambiguous; but before the young man had time to look into it his hostess put a bland question. “Should you expect her to live in America?”

“Oh yes. That’s my home, you know.”

“Shouldn’t you be living sometimes in England?”

“Oh yes—we’ll come over and see you.” He was in love, he wanted to marry, he wanted to be genial and to commend himself to the family; yet it was in his nature not to accept conditions save in so far as they met his taste, not to tie himself or, as they said in New York, give himself away.

He preferred in any transaction his own terms to those of any one else, so that the moment Lady Canterville gave signs of wishing to extract a promise he was on his guard.

“She’ll find it very different; perhaps she won’t like it,” her ladyship suggested.

“If she likes me she’ll like my country,” Jackson Lemon returned with decision.

“He tells me he has a plate on his door,” Lord Canterville put in for the right pleasant tone.

“We must talk to her of course; we must understand how she feels”—and his wife looked, though still gracious, more nobly responsible.

“Please don’t discourage her, Lady Canterville,” Jackson firmly said; “and give me a chance to talk to her a little more myself. You haven’t given me much chance, you know.”

“We don’t offer our daughters to people, however amiable, Mr. Lemon.” Her charming grand manner rather quickened.

“She isn’t like some women in London, you know,” Lord Canterville helpfully explained; “you see we rather stave off the evil day: we like to be together.” And Jackson certainly, if the idea had been presented to him, would have said that No, decidedly, Lady Barb hadn’t been thrown at him.

“Of course not,” he declared in answer to her mother’s remark. “But you know you mustn’t decline overtures too much either; you mustn’t make a poor fellow wait too long. I admire her, I love her, more than I can say; I give you my word of honour for that.”

“He seems to think that settles it,” said Lord Canterville, shining richly down at the young American from his place before the cold chimney-piece.

“Certainly that’s what we desire, Philip,” her ladyship returned with an equal grace.

“Lady Barb believes it; I’m sure she does!” Jackson exclaimed with spirit. “Why should I pretend to be in love with her if I’m not?”

Lady Canterville received this appeal in silence, and her husband, with just the least air in the world of repressed impatience, began to walk up and down the room. He was a man of many engagements, and he had been closeted for more than a quarter of an hour with the young American doctor. “Do you imagine you should come often to England?” Lady Canterville asked as if to think of everything.

“I’m afraid I can’t tell you that; of course we shall do whatever seems best.” He was prepared to suppose they should cross the Atlantic every summer—that prospect was by no means displeasing to him; but he wasn’t prepared to tie himself, as he would have said, up to it, nor up to anything in particular. It was in his mind not as an overt pretension but as a tacit implication that he should treat with the parents of his presumed bride on a footing of perfect equality; and there would somehow be nothing equal if he should begin to enter into engagements that didn’t belong to the essence of the matter. They were to give their daughter and he was to take her: in this arrangement there would be as much on one side as on the other. But beyond it he had nothing to ask of them; there was nothing he was calling on them to promise, and his own pledges therefore would have no equivalent.

Whenever his wife should wish it she should come over and see her people. Her home was to be in New York; but he was tacitly conscious that on the question of absences he should be very liberal, and there was meanwhile something in the very grain of his character that forbade he should be eagerly yielding about times and dates.

Lady Canterville looked at her spouse, but he was now not attentive; he was taking a peep at his watch. In a moment, however, he threw out a remark to the effect that he thought it a capital thing the two countries should become more united, and there was nothing that would bring it about better than a few of the best people on both sides pairing-off together. The English indeed had begun it; a lot of fellows had brought over a lot of pretty girls, and it was quite fair play that the Americans should take their pick. They were all one race, after all; and why shouldn’t they make one society—

the best of both sides, of course? Jackson Lemon smiled as he recognised Lady Marmaduke's great doctrine, and he was pleased to think Lady Beauchemin had some influence with her father; for he was sure the great old boy, as he mentally designated his host, had got all this from her, though he expressed himself less happily than the cleverest of his daughters. Our hero had no objection to make to it, especially if there were aught in it that would really help his case. But it was not in the least on these high grounds he had sought the hand of Lady Barb. He wanted her not in order that her people and his—the best on both sides!—should make one society; he wanted her simply because he wanted her. Lady Canterville smiled, but she seemed to have another thought.

"I quite appreciate what my husband says, but I don't see why poor Barb should be the one to begin."

"I daresay she'll like it," said his lordship as if he were attempting a short cut. "They say you spoil your women awfully."

"She's not one of their women yet," Lady Canterville remarked in the sweetest tone in the world; and then she added without Jackson Lemon's knowing exactly what she meant: "It seems so strange."

He was slightly irritated, and these vague words perhaps added to the feeling. There had been no positive opposition to his suit, and both his entertainers were most kind; but he felt them hold back a little, and though he hadn't expected them to throw themselves on his neck he was rather disappointed—his pride was touched. Why should they hesitate? He knew himself such a good *parti*. It was not so much his noble host—it was Lady Canterville. As he saw her lord and master look covertly and a second time at his watch he could have believed him glad to settle the matter on the spot. Lady Canterville seemed to wish their aspirant to come forward more, to give certain assurances and pledges. He felt he was ready to say or do anything that was a matter of proper form, but he couldn't take the tone of trying to purchase her ladyship's assent, penetrated as he was with the conviction that such a man as he could be trusted to care for his wife rather more than an impecunious British peer and *his* wife could be supposed—with the lights he had acquired on English society—to care even for the handsomest of a dozen children. It was a mistake on the old lady's part not to recognise that. He humoured this to the extent of saying just a little dryly: "My wife shall certainly have everything she wants."

"He tells me he's disgustingly rich," Lord Canterville added, pausing before their companion with his hands in his pockets.

"I'm glad to hear it; but it isn't so much that," she made answer, sinking back a little on her sofa.

If it wasn't that she didn't say what it was, though she had looked for a moment as if she were going to. She only raised her eyes to her husband's face, she asked for inspiration. I know not whether she found it, but in a moment she said to Jackson Lemon, seeming to imply that it was quite another point: "Do you expect to continue your profession?"

He had no such intention, so far as his profession meant getting up at three o'clock in the morning to assuage the ills of humanity; but here, as before, the touch of such a question instantly stiffened him. "Oh, my profession! I rather wince at that grand old name. I've neglected my work so scandalously that I scarce know on what terms with it I shall be—though hoping for the best when once I'm right there again."

Lady Canterville received these remarks in silence, fixing her eyes once more upon her husband's. But his countenance really rather failed her; still with his hands in his pockets, save when he needed to remove his cigar from his lips, he went and looked out of the window. "Of course we know you don't practise, and when you're a married man you'll have less time even than now. But I should really like to know if they call you Doctor over there."

"Oh yes, universally. We're almost as fond of titles as your people."

"I don't call that a title," her ladyship smiled.

"It's not so good as duke or marquis, I admit; but we have to take what we've got."

“Oh bother, what does it signify?” his lordship demanded from his place at the window. “I used to have a horse named Doctor, and a jolly good one too.”

“Don’t you call bishops Doctors? Well, then, call me Bishop!” Jackson laughed.

Lady Canterville visibly didn’t follow. “I don’t care for *any* titles,” she nevertheless observed.

“I don’t see why a gentleman shouldn’t be called Mr.”

It suddenly appeared to her young friend that there was something helpless, confused and even slightly comical in her state. The impression was mollifying, and he too, like Lord Canterville, had begun to long for a short cut. He relaxed a moment and, leaning toward his hostess with a smile and his hands on his little knees, he said softly: “It seems to me a question of no importance. All I desire is that you should call me your son-in-law.”

She gave him her hand and he pressed it almost affectionately. Then she got up, remarking that before anything was decided she must see her child, must learn from her own lips the state of her feelings. “I don’t like at all her not having spoken to me already,” she added.

“Where has she gone—to Roehampton? I daresay she has told it all to her godmother,” said Lord Canterville.

“She won’t have much to tell, poor girl!” Jackson freely commented. “I must really insist on seeing with more freedom the person I wish to marry.”

“You shall have all the freedom you want in two or three days,” said Lady Canterville.

She irradiated all her charity; she appeared to have accepted him and yet still to be making tacit assumptions. “Aren’t there certain things to be talked of first?”

“Certain things, dear lady?”

She looked at her husband, and though he was still at his window he felt it this time in her silence and had to come away and speak. “Oh she means settlements and that kind of thing.” This was an allusion that came with a much better grace from the father.

Jackson turned from one of his companions to the other; he coloured a little and his self-control was perhaps a trifle strained. “Settlements? We don’t make them in my country. You may be sure I shall make a proper provision for my wife.”

“My dear fellow, over here—in our class, you know—it’s the custom,” said Lord Canterville with a truer ease in his face at the thought that the discussion was over.

“I’ve my own ideas,” Jackson returned with even greater confidence.

“It seems to me it’s a question for the solicitors to discuss,” Lady Canterville suggested.

“They may discuss it as much as they please”—the young man showed amusement. He thought he saw his solicitors discussing it! He had indeed his own ideas. He opened the door for his hostess and the three passed out of the room together, walking into the hall in a silence that expressed a considerable awkwardness. A note had been struck which grated and scratched a little. A pair of shining footmen, at their approach, rose from a bench to a great altitude and stood there like sentinels presenting arms. Jackson stopped, looking for a moment into the interior of his hat, which he had in his hand. Then raising his keen eyes he fixed them a moment on those of Lady Canterville, addressing her instinctively rather than his other critic. “I guess you and Lord Canterville had better leave it to me!”

“We have our traditions, Mr. Lemon,” said her ladyship with a firm grace. “I imagine you don’t know—!” she gravely breathed.

Lord Canterville laid his hand on their visitor’s shoulder. “My dear boy, those fellows will settle it in three minutes.”

“Very likely they will!” said Jackson Lemon. Then he asked of Lady Canterville when he might see Lady Barb.

She turned it spaciouly over. “I’ll write you a note.”

One of the tall footmen at the end of the impressive vista had opened wide the portals, as if even he were aware of the dignity to which the small strange gentleman had virtually been raised. But

Jackson lingered; he was visibly unsatisfied, though apparently so little conscious he was unsatisfying. “I don’t think you understand me.”

“Your ideas are certainly different,” said Lady Canterville.

His lordship, however, made comparatively light of it. “If the girl understands you that’s enough!”

“Mayn’t *she* write to me?” Jackson asked of her mother. “I certainly must write to her, you know, if you won’t let me see her.”

“Oh yes, you may write to her, Mr. Lemon.”

There was a point, for a moment, in the look he returned on this, while he said to himself that if necessary he would transmit his appeal through the old lady at Roehampton. “All right—good-bye. You know what I want at any rate.” Then as he was going he turned and added: “You needn’t be afraid I won’t always bring her over in the hot weather!”

“In the hot weather?” Lady Canterville murmured with vague visions of the torrid zone. Jackson however quitted the house with the sense he had made great concessions.

His host and hostess passed into a small morning-room and—Lord Canterville having taken up his hat and stick to go out again—stood there a moment, face to face. Then his lordship spoke in a summary manner. “It’s clear enough he wants her.”

“There’s something so odd about him,” Lady Canterville answered. “Fancy his speaking so about settlements!”

“You had better give him his head. He’ll go much quieter.”

“He’s so obstinate—very obstinate; it’s easy to see that. And he seems to think,” she went on, “that a girl in your daughter’s position can be married from one day to the other—with a ring and a new frock—like a housemaid.”

“Well that, of course, over there is the kind of thing. But he seems really to have a most extraordinary fortune, and every one does say they give their women *carte blanche*.”

“*Carte blanche* is not what Barb wants; she wants a settlement. She wants a definite income,” said Lady Canterville; “she wants to be safe.”

He looked at her rather straight. “Has she told you so? I thought you said—” And then he stopped. “I beg your pardon,” he added.

She didn’t explain her inconsequence; she only remarked that American fortunes were notoriously insecure; one heard of nothing else; they melted away like smoke. It was their own duty to their child to demand that something should be fixed.

Well, he met this in his way. “He has a million and a half sterling. I can’t make out what he does with it.”

She rose to it without a flutter. “Our child should have, then, something very handsome.”

“I agree, my dear; but you must manage it; you must consider it; you must send for Hardman.

Only take care you don’t put him off; it may be a very good opening, you know. There’s a great deal to be done out there; I believe in all that,” Lord Canterville went on in the tone of a conscientious parent.

“There’s no doubt that he *is* a doctor—in some awful place,” his wife brooded.

“He may be a pedlar for all I care.”

“If they should go out I think Agatha might go with them,” her ladyship continued in the same tone, but a little disconnectedly.

“You may send them all out if you like. Goodbye!”

The pair embraced, but her hand detained him a moment. “Don’t you think he’s greatly in love?”

“Oh yes, he’s very bad—but he’s a sharp little beggar.”

“She certainly quite likes him,” Lady Canterville stated rather formally as they separated.

IV

Jackson Lemon had said to Dr. Feeder in the Park that he would call on Mr. and Mrs. Freer; but three weeks were to elapse before he knocked at their door in Jermyn Street. In the meantime he had met them at dinner and Mrs. Freer had told him how much she hoped he would find time to come and see her. She had not reproached him nor shaken her finger at him, and her clemency, which was calculated and very characteristic of her, touched him so much—for he was in fault, she was one of his mother's oldest and best friends—that he very soon presented himself. It was on a fine Sunday afternoon, rather late, and the region of Jermyn Street looked forsaken and inanimate; the native dulness of the brick scenery reigned undisputed. Mrs. Freer, however, was at home, resting on a lodging-house sofa—an angular couch draped in faded chintz—before she went to dress for dinner. She made the young man very welcome; she told him again how much she had been thinking of him; she had longed so for a chance to talk with him. He immediately guessed what she had in her mind, and he then remembered that Sidney Feeder had named to him what it was this pair took upon themselves to say. This had provoked him at the time, but he had forgotten it afterward; partly because he became aware that same night of his wanting to make the “young marchioness” his own and partly because since then he had suffered much greater annoyance. Yes, the poor young man, so conscious of liberal intentions, of a large way of looking at the future, had had much to irritate and disgust him. He had seen the mistress of his affections but three or four times, and had received a letter from Mr. Hardman, Lord Canterville's solicitor, asking him, in terms the most obsequious it was true, to designate some gentleman of the law with whom the preliminaries of his marriage to Lady Barbarina Clement might be arranged. He had given Mr. Hardman the name of such a functionary, but he had written by the same post to his own solicitor—for whose services in other matters he had had much occasion, Jackson Lemon being distinctly contentious—instructing him that he was at liberty to meet that gentleman, but not at liberty to entertain any proposals as to the odious English idea of a settlement. If marrying Jackson Lemon wasn't settlement enough the house of Canterville had but to alter their point of view. It was quite out of the question he should alter his.

It would perhaps be difficult to explain the strong dislike he entertained to the introduction into his prospective union of this harsh diplomatic element; it was as if they mistrusted him and suspected him; as if his hands were to be tied so that he shouldn't be able to handle his own fortune as he thought best. It wasn't the idea of parting with his money that displeased him, for he flattered himself he had plans of expenditure for his wife beyond even the imagination of her distinguished parents. It struck him even that they were fools not to have felt subtly sure they should make a much better thing of it by leaving him perfectly free. This intervention of the solicitor was a nasty little English tradition—totally at variance with the large spirit of American habits—to which he wouldn't submit. It wasn't his way to submit when he disapproved: why should he change his way on this occasion when the matter lay so near him?

These reflexions and a hundred more had flowed freely through his mind for several days before his call in Jermyn Street, and they had engendered a lively indignation and a bitter sense of wrong. They had even introduced, as may be imagined, a certain awkwardness into his relations with the house of Canterville, of which indeed it may be said that these amenities were for the moment virtually suspended. His first interview with Lady Barb after his conference with the old couple, as he called her august elders, had been as frank, had been as sweet, as he could have desired. Lady Canterville had at the end of three days sent him an invitation—five words on a card—asking him to dine with them on the morrow quite *en famille*. This had been the only formal intimation that his engagement to her daughter was recognised; for even at the family banquet, which included half a dozen guests of pleasant address but vague affiliation, there had been no reference on the part either of his host or his hostess to the subject of their converse in Lord Canterville's den. The only allusion

was a wandering ray, once or twice, in Lady Barb's own fine eyes. When, however, after dinner, she strolled away with him into the music-room, which was lighted and empty, to play for him something out of "Carmen," of which he had spoken at table, and when the young couple were allowed to enjoy for upwards of an hour, unmolested, the comparative privacy of that elegant refuge, he felt Lady Canterville definitely to count on him. She didn't believe in any serious difficulties. Neither did he then; and that was why it was not to be condoned that there should be a vain appearance of them. The arrangements, he supposed her ladyship would have said, were pending, and indeed they were; for he had already given orders in Bond Street for the setting of an extraordinary number of diamonds. Lady Barb, at any rate, during that hour he spent with her, had had nothing to say about arrangements; and it had been an hour of pure satisfaction. She had seated herself at the piano and had played perpetually, in a soft incoherent manner, while he leaned over the instrument, very close to her, and said everything that came into his head. She was braver and handsomer than ever and looked at him as if she liked him out and out.

This was all he expected of her, for it didn't belong to the cast of her beauty to betray a vulgar infatuation. That beauty was clearly all he had believed it from the first, and with something now thrown in, something ever so touching and stirring, which seemed to stamp her from that moment as his precious possession. He felt more than ever her intimate value and the great social outlay it had taken to produce such a mixture. Simple and girlish as she was, and not particularly quick in the give and take of conversation, she seemed to him to have a part of the history of England in her blood; she was the fine flower of generations of privileged people and of centuries of rich country-life. Between these two of course was no glance at the question which had been put into the hands of Mr. Hardman, and the last thing that occurred to Jackson was that Lady Barb had views as to his settling a fortune upon her before their marriage. It may appear odd, but he hadn't asked himself whether his money operated on her in any degree as a bribe; and this was because, instinctively, he felt such a speculation idle—the point was essentially not to be ascertained—and because he was quite ready to take it for agreeable to her to continue to live in luxury. It was eminently agreeable to him to have means to enable her to do so. He was acquainted with the mingled character of human motives and glad he was rich enough to pretend to the hand of a young woman who, for the best of reasons, would be very expensive. After the good passage in the music-room he had ridden with her twice, but hadn't found her otherwise accessible. She had let him know the second time they rode that Lady Canterville had directed her to make, for the moment, no further appointment with him; and on his presenting himself more than once at the house he had been told that neither the mother nor the daughter was at home: it had been added that Lady Barb was staying at Roehampton. In touching on that restriction she had launched at him just a distinguishable mute reproach—there was always a certain superior dumbness in her eyes—as if he were exposing her to an annoyance she ought to be spared, or taking an eccentric line on a question that all well-bred people treated in the conventional way.

His induction from this was not that she wished to be secure about his money, but that, like a dutiful English daughter, she received her opinions—on points that were indifferent to her—ready-made from a mamma whose fallibility had never been exposed. He knew by this that his solicitor had answered Mr. Hardman's letter and that Lady Canterville's coolness was the fruit of the correspondence. The effect of it was not in the least to make him come round, as he phrased it; he had not the smallest intention of doing that. Lady Canterville had spoken of the traditions of her family; but he had no need to go to his family for his own. They resided within himself; anything he had once undiscussably made up his mind to acquired in three minutes the force, and with that the due dignity of a tradition. Meanwhile he was in the detestable position of not knowing whether or no he were engaged. He wrote to Lady Barb to clear it up, to smooth it down—it being so strange she shouldn't receive him; and she addressed him in return a very pretty little letter, which had to his mind a fine by-gone quality, an old-fashioned, a last-century freshness that might have flowed, a little thinly, from the pen of Clarissa or Sophia. She professed that she didn't in the least understand

the situation; that of course she would never give him up; that her mother had said there were the best reasons for their not going too fast; that, thank God, she was yet young and could wait as long as he would; but that she begged he wouldn't write her about money-matters: she had never been able to count even on her fingers. He felt in no danger whatever of making this last mistake; he only noted how Lady Barb thought it natural there should be a discussion; and this made it vivid to him afresh that he had got hold of a daughter of the Crusaders. His ingenious mind could appreciate this hereditary assumption at the very same time that, to light his own footsteps, it remained entirely modern. He believed—or he thought he believed—that in the end he should marry his gorgeous girl on his own terms; but in the interval there was a sensible indignity in being challenged and checked.

One effect of it indeed was to make him desire the young woman more intensely. When she wasn't before his eyes in the flesh she hovered before him as an image, and this image had reasons of its own for making him at hours fairly languid with love.

There were moments, however, when he wearied of the mere enshrined memory—it was too impalpable and too thankless. Then it befell that Jackson Lemon for the first time in his life dropped and gave way—gave way, that is, to the sense of sadness. He felt alone in London, and very much out of it, in spite of all the acquaintances he had made and the bills he had paid; he felt the need of a greater intimacy than any he had formed—save of course in the case of Lady Barb. He wanted to vent his disgust, to relieve himself, from the New York point of view. He felt that in engaging in a contest with the great house of Canterville he was after all rather single. That singleness was of course in a great measure an inspiration; but it pinched him hard at moments. Then it would have pleased him could his mother have been near; he used to talk of his affairs a great deal with this delightful parent, who had a delicate way of advising him in the sense he liked best. He had even gone so far as to wish he had never laid eyes on Lady Barb, but had fallen in love instead with some one or other of the rarer home-products. He presently came back of course to the knowledge that in the United States there was—and there could be—nothing nearly so rare as the young lady who had in fact appealed to him so straight, for was it not precisely as a high resultant of the English climate and the British constitution that he valued her? He had relieved himself, from his New York point of view, by speaking his mind to Lady Beauchemin, who confessed that she was infinitely vexed with her parents. She agreed with him that they had made a great mistake; they ought to have left him free; and she expressed her confidence that such freedom could only have been, in him, for her family, like the silence of the sage, golden. He must let them down easily, must remember that what was asked of him had been their custom for centuries. She didn't mention her authority as to the origin of customs, but she promised him she would say three words to her father and mother which would make it all right. Jackson answered that customs were all very well, but that really intelligent people recognised at sight, and then indeed quite enjoyed, the right occasion for departing from them; and with this he awaited the result of Lady Beauchemin's remonstrance. It had not as yet been perceptible, and it must be said that this charming woman was herself not quite at ease.

When on her venturing to hint to her mother that she thought a wrong line had been taken with regard to her sister's *prétendant*, Lady Canterville had replied that Mr. Lemon's unwillingness to settle anything was in itself a proof of what they had feared, the unstable nature of his fortune—since it was useless to talk (this gracious lady could be very decided) as if there could be any serious reason but that one—on meeting this argument, as I say, Jackson's protectress felt considerably baffled. It was perhaps true, as her mother said, that if they didn't insist upon proper pledges Barbarina might be left in a few years with nothing but the stars and stripes—this odd phrase was a quotation from Mr. Lemon—to cover her withal. Lady Beauchemin tried to reason it out with Lady Marmaduke; but these were complications unforeseen by Lady Marmaduke in her project of an Anglo-American society. She was obliged to confess that Mr. Lemon's fortune couldn't have the solidity of long-established things; it was a very new fortune indeed. His father had made the greater part of it all in a lump, a few years before his death, in the extraordinary way in which people made money in

America; that of course was why the son had those singular professional attributes. He had begun to study to be a doctor very young, before his expectations were so great. Then he had found he was very clever and very fond of it, and had kept on because after all, in America, where there were no country gentlemen, a young man had to have something to do, don't you know? And Lady Marmaduke, like an enlightened woman, intimated that in such a case she thought it in much better taste not to try to sink anything. "Because in America, don't you see?" she reasoned, "you can't sink it—nothing *will* sink.

Everything's floating about—in the newspapers." And she tried to console her friend by remarking that if Mr. Lemon's fortune was precarious it was at all events so big. That was just the trouble for Lady Beauchemin, it was so big and yet they were going to lose it. He was as obstinate as a mule; she was sure he would never come round. Lady Marmaduke declared he really *would* come round; she even offered to bet a dozen pair of *gants de Suède* on it; and she added that this consummation lay quite in the hands of Barbarina. Lady Beauchemin promised herself to contend with her sister, as it was not for nothing she had herself caught the glamour of her friend's international scheme.

Jackson Lemon, to dissipate his chagrin, had returned to the sessions of the medical congress, where, inevitably, he had fallen into the hands of Sidney Feeder, who enjoyed in this disinterested assembly the highest esteem. It was Dr. Feeder's earnest desire that his old friend should share his credit—all the more easily that the medical congress was, as the young physician observed, a perpetual symposium. Jackson entertained the entire body at dinner—entertained it profusely and in a manner befitting one of the patrons of science rather than the humbler votaries; but these dissipations made him forget but for the hour the arrest of his relations with the house of Canterville. It punctually came back to him that he was disconcerted, and Dr. Feeder saw it stamped on his brow. Jackson Lemon, with his acute inclination to open himself, was on the point more than once of taking this sturdy friend into his confidence. His colleague gave him easy occasion—asked him what it was he was thinking of all the time and whether the young marchioness had concluded she couldn't swallow a doctor. These forms of speech were displeasing to our baffled aspirant, whose fastidiousness was nothing new; but he had even deeper reasons for saying to himself that in such complicated cases as his there was no assistance in the Sidney Feeders. To understand his situation one must know the world, and the children of Cincinnati, prohibitively provincial, didn't know the world—at least the world with which this son of New York was now concerned.

"Is there a hitch in your marriage? Just tell me that," Sidney Feeder had said, taking things for granted in a manner that of itself testified to an innocence abysmal. It is true he had added that he supposed he had no business to ask; but he had been anxious about it ever since hearing from Mr. and Mrs. Freer that the British aristocracy was down on the medical profession. "Do they want you to give it up? Is that what the hitch is about? Don't desert your colours, Jackson. The suppression of pain, the mitigation of misery, constitute surely the noblest profession in the world."

"My dear fellow, you don't know what you're talking about," Jackson could only observe in answer to this. "I haven't told any one I was going to be married—still less have I told any one that any one objects to my profession. I should like to see any one do it. I've rather got out of the swim, but I don't regard myself as the sort of person that people object to. And I do expect to do something yet."

"Come home, then, and do it. And don't crush me with grandeur if I say that the facilities for getting married are much greater over there."

"You don't seem to have found them very great," Jackson sniffed.

"I've never had time really to go into them. But wait till my next vacation and you'll see."

"The facilities over there are too great. Nothing's worth while but what's difficult," said Jackson with a sententious ring that quite distressed his mate.

"Well, they've got their backs up, I can see that. I'm glad you like it. Only if they despise your profession what will they say to that of your friends? If they think you're queer what would they think of me?" asked Sidney Feeder, whose spirit was not as a general thing in the least bitter, but who was pushed to this sharpness by a conviction that—in spite of declarations which seemed half

an admission and half a denial—his friend was suffering worry, or really perhaps something almost like humiliation, for the sake of a good that might be gathered at home on every bush.

“My dear fellow, all that’s ‘rot’!” This had been Jackson’s retort, which expressed, however, not half his feeling. The other half was inexpressible, or almost, springing as it did from his depth of displeasure at its having struck even so genial a mind as Sidney Feeder’s that in proposing to marry a daughter of the highest civilisation he was going out of his way—departing from his natural line. Was he then so ignoble, so pledged to inferior things, that when he saw a girl who—putting aside the fact that she hadn’t genius, which was rare, and which, though he prized rarity, he didn’t want—seemed to him the most naturally and functionally founded and seated feminine subject he had known, he was to think himself too different, too incongruous, to mate with her? He would mate with whom he “damn pleased”; that was the upshot of Jackson Lemon’s passion. Several days elapsed during which everybody—even the pure-minded, like poor Sidney—seemed to him very abject.

All of which is recorded to show how he, in going to see Mrs. Freer, was prepared much less to be angry with people who, like her husband and herself a month before, had given it out that he was engaged to a peer’s daughter, than to resent the insinuation that there were obstacles to such a prospect. He sat with the lady of Jermyn Street alone for half an hour in the sabbatical stillness.

Her husband had gone for a walk in the Park—he always walked in the Park of a Sunday. All the world might have been there and Jackson and Mrs. Freer in sole possession of the district of Saint James’s. This perhaps had something to do with making him at last so confidential; they had such a margin for easy egotism and spreading sympathy. Mrs. Freer was ready for anything—in the critical, the “real” line; she treated him as a person she had known from the age of ten; asked his leave to continue recumbent; talked a great deal about his mother and seemed almost, for a while, to perform the earnest functions of that lady. It had been wise of her from the first not to allude, even indirectly, to his having neglected so long to call; her silence on this point was in the best taste. Jackson had forgotten how it was a habit with her, and indeed a high accomplishment, never to reproach people with these omissions. You might have left her alone for months or years, her greeting was always the same; she never was either too delighted to see you or not delighted enough. After a while, however, he felt her silence to be in some measure an allusion; she appeared to take for granted his devoting all his hours to a certain young lady. It came over him for a moment that his compatriots took a great deal for granted; but when Mrs. Freer, rather abruptly sitting up on her sofa, said to him half-simply, half-solemnly: “And now, my dear Jackson, I want you to tell me something!”—he saw that, after all, she kept within bounds and didn’t pretend to know more about his business than he himself did. In the course of a quarter of an hour—so appreciatively she listened—he had given her much information. It was the first time he had said so much to any one, and the process relieved him even more than he would have supposed. There were things it made clear to him by bringing them to a point—above all, the fact that he had been wronged. He made no mention whatever of its being out of the usual way that, as an American doctor, he should sue for the hand of a marquis’s daughter; and this reserve was not voluntary, it was quite unconscious. His mind was too full of the sudden rudeness of the Cantervilles and the sordid side of their want of confidence.

He couldn’t imagine that while he talked to Mrs. Freer—and it amazed him afterwards that he should have chattered so; he could account for it but by the state of his nerves—she should be thinking only of the strangeness of the situation he sketched for her. She thought Americans as good as other people, but she didn’t see where, in American life, the daughter of a marquis would, as she phrased it, work in. To take a simple instance—they coursed through Mrs. Freer’s mind with extraordinary speed—wouldn’t she always expect to go in to dinner first? As a novelty and for a change, over there, they might like to see her do it—there might be even a pressure for places at the show. But with the increase of every kind of sophistication that was taking place in America the humorous view to which she would owe her immediate ease mightn’t continue to be taken; and then where would poor Lady Barb be? This was in truth a scant instance; but Mrs. Freer’s vivid imagination—much as

she had lived in Europe she knew her native land so well—saw a host of others massing themselves behind it. The consequence of all of which was that after listening to her young friend in the most engaging silence she raised her clasped hands, pressed them against her breast, lowered her voice to a tone of entreaty and, with all the charming cheer of her wisdom, uttered three words: “My dear Jackson, don’t—don’t—don’t.”

“Don’t what?” He took it at first coldly.

“Don’t neglect the chance you have of getting out of it. You see it would never do.”

He knew what she meant by his chance of getting out of it; he had in his many meditations of course not overlooked that. The ground the old couple had taken about settlements—and the fact that Lady Beauchemin hadn’t come back to him to tell him, as she promised, that she had moved them, proved how firmly they were rooted—would have offered an all-sufficient pretext to a man who should have repented of his advances. Jackson knew this, but knew at the same time that he had not repented. The old couple’s want of imagination didn’t in the least alter the fact that the girl was, in her perfection, as he had told her father, one of the rarest of types. Therefore he simply said to Mrs. Freer that he didn’t in the least wish to get out of it; he was as much in it as ever and intended to remain in it. But what did she mean, he asked in a moment, by her statement that it would never do? Why wouldn’t it do? Mrs. Freer replied by another question—should he really like her to tell him? It wouldn’t do because Lady Barb wouldn’t be satisfied with her place at dinner. She wouldn’t be content—in a society of commoners—with any but the best; and the best she couldn’t expect (and it was to be supposed he didn’t expect her) always grossly to monopolise; as people of her sort, for that matter, did so successfully grab it in England.

“What do you mean by commoners?” Jackson rather grimly demanded.

“I mean you and me and my poor husband and Dr. Feeder,” said Mrs. Freer.

“I don’t see how there can be commoners where there aren’t lords. It’s the lord that makes the commoner, and *vice versa*.”

“Won’t a lady do as well? Our Lady Barb—a single English girl—can make a million inferiors.”

“She will be, before anything else, my wife; and she won’t on the whole think it any less vulgar to talk about inferiors than I do myself.”

“I don’t know what she’ll talk about, my dear Jackson, but she’ll think; and her thoughts won’t be pleasant—I mean for others. Do you expect to sink her to your own rank?”

Dr. Lemon’s bright little eyes rested more sharply on his hostess. “I don’t understand you and don’t think you understand yourself.” This was not absolutely candid, for he did understand Mrs. Freer to a certain extent; it has been related that before he asked Lady Barb’s hand of her parents there had been moments when he himself doubted if a flower only to be described as of the social hothouse, that is of aristocratic air, would flourish in American earth. But an intimation from another person that it was beyond his power to pass off his wife—whether she were the daughter of a peer or of a shoemaker—set all his blood on fire. It quenched on the instant his own perception of difficulties of detail and made him feel only that he was dishonoured—he the heir of all the ages—by such insinuations. It was his belief—though he had never before had occasion to put it forward—that his position, one of the best in the world, had about it the felicity that makes everything possible.

He had had the best education the age could offer, for if he had rather wasted his time at Harvard, where he entered very young, he had, as he believed, been tremendously serious at Heidelberg and at Vienna. He had devoted himself to one of the noblest of professions—a profession recognised as such everywhere but in England—and had inherited a fortune far beyond the expectation of his earlier years, the years when he cultivated habits of work which alone (or rather in combination with talents that he neither exaggerated nor undervalued) would have conduced to distinction. He was one of the most fortunate inhabitants of an immense fresh rich country, a country whose future was admitted to be incalculable, and he moved with perfect ease in a society in which he was not overshadowed by others. It seemed to him, therefore, beneath his dignity to wonder whether he could afford, socially

speaking, to marry according to his taste. He pretended to general strength, and what was the use of strength if you weren't prepared to undertake things timid people might find difficult? It was his plan to marry the woman he desired and not be afraid of her afterward. The effect of Mrs. Freer's doubt of his success was to represent to him that his own character wouldn't cover his wife's; she couldn't have made him feel worse if she had told him that he was marrying beneath him and would have to ask for indulgence. "I don't believe you know how much I think that any woman who marries me will be doing very well," he promptly added.

"I'm very sure of that; but it isn't so simple—one's being an American," Mrs. Freer rejoined with a small philosophic sigh.

"It's whatever one chooses to make it."

"Well, you'll make it what no one has done yet if you take that young lady to America and make her happy there."

"Do you think our country, then, such a very dreadful place?"

His hostess had a pause. "It's not a question of what I think, but of what she will."

Jackson rose from his chair and took up his hat and stick. He had actually turned a little pale with the force of his emotion; there was a pang of wrath for him in this fact that his marriage to Lady Barbarina might be looked at as too high a flight. He stood a moment leaning against the mantelpiece and very much tempted to say to Mrs. Freer that she was a vulgar-minded old woman. But he said something that was really more to the point. "You forget that she'll have her consolations."

"Don't go away or I shall think I've offended you. You can't console an injured noblewoman."

"How will she be injured? People will be charming to her."

"They'll be charming to her—charming to her!" These words fell from the lips of Dexter Freer, who had opened the door of the room and stood with the knob in his hand, putting himself into relation to his wife's talk with their visitor. This harmony was achieved in an instant. "Of course I know whom you mean," he said while he exchanged greetings with Jackson. "My wife and I—naturally we're great busybodies—have talked of your affair and we differ about it completely. She sees only the dangers, while I see all the advantages."

"By the advantages he means the fun for us," Mrs. Freer explained, settling her sofa-cushions.

Jackson looked with a certain sharp blankness from one of these disinterested judges to the other; even yet they scarce saw how their misdirected freedom wrought on him. It was hardly more agreeable to him to know that the husband wished to see Lady Barb in America than to know that the wife waved away such a vision. There was that in Dexter Freer's face which seemed to forecast the affair as taking place somehow for the benefit of the spectators. "I think you both see too much—a great deal too much—in the whole thing," he rather coldly returned.

"My dear young man, at my age I may take certain liberties," said Dexter Freer. "Do what you've planned—I beseech you to do it; it has never been done before." And then as if Jackson's glance had challenged this last assertion he went on: "Never, I assure you, this particular thing. Young female members of the British aristocracy have married coachmen and fishmongers and all that sort of thing; but they've never married you and me."

"They certainly haven't married the 'likes' of either of you!" said Mrs. Freer.

"I'm much obliged to you for your advice." It may be thought that Jackson Lemon took himself rather seriously, and indeed I'm afraid that if he hadn't done so there would have been no occasion even for this summary report of him. But it made him almost sick to hear his engagement spoken of as a curious and ambiguous phenomenon. He might have his own ideas about it—one always had about one's engagement; but the ideas that appeared to have peopled the imagination of his friends ended by kindling a small hot expanse in each of his cheeks. "I'd rather not talk any more about my little plans," he added to his host. "I've been saying all sorts of absurd things to Mrs. Freer."

"They've been most interesting and most infuriating," that lady declared. "You've been very stupidly treated."

“May she tell me when you go?” her husband asked of the young man.

“I’m going now—she may tell you whatever she likes.”

“I’m afraid we’ve displeased you,” she went on; “I’ve said too much what I think. You must pardon me—it’s all for your mother.”

“It’s she whom I want Lady Barb to see!” Jackson exclaimed with the inconsequence of filial affection.

“Deary me!” Mrs. Freer gently wailed.

“We shall go back to America to see how you get on,” her husband said; “and if you succeed it will be a great precedent.”

“Oh I shall succeed!” And with this he took his departure. He walked away with the quick step of a man labouring under a certain excitement; walked up to Piccadilly and down past Hyde Park Corner. It relieved him to measure these distances, for he was thinking hard, under the influence of irritation, and it was as if his movement phrased his passion. Certain lights flashed on him in the last half-hour turned to fire in him; the more that they had a representative value and were an echo of the common voice. If his prospects wore that face to Mrs. Freer they would probably wear it to others; so he felt a strong sharp need to show such others that they took a mean measure of his position. He walked and walked till he found himself on the highway of Hammersmith. I have represented him as a young man with a stiff back, and I may appear to undermine this plea when I note that he wrote that evening to his solicitor that Mr. Hardman was to be informed he would agree to any proposals for settlements that this worthy should make. Jackson’s stiff back was shown in his deciding to marry Lady Barbarina on any terms. It had come over him through the action of this desire to prove he wasn’t afraid—so odious was the imputation—that terms of any kind were very superficial things. What was fundamental and of the essence of the matter would be to secure the grand girl and *then* carry everything out.

V

“On Sundays now you might be at home,” he said to his wife in the following month of March—more than six months after his marriage.

“Are the people any nicer on Sundays than they are on other days?” Lady Barb asked from the depths of her chair and without looking up from a stiff little book.

He waited ever so briefly before answering. “I don’t know whether they are, but I think you might be.”

“I’m as nice as I know how to be. You must take me as I am. You knew when you married me that I wasn’t American.”

Jackson stood before the fire toward which his wife’s face was turned and her feet extended; stood there some time with his hands behind him and his eyes dropped a little obliquely on Lady Barb’s bent head and richly-draped figure. It may be said without delay that he was sore of soul, and it may be added that he had a double cause. He knew himself on the verge of the first crisis that had occurred between himself and his wife—the reader will note that it had occurred rather promptly—and he was annoyed at his annoyance. A glimpse of his state of mind before his marriage has been given the reader, who will remember that at that period our young man had believed himself lifted above possibilities of irritation. When one was strong one wasn’t fidgety, and a union with a species of calm goddess would of course be a source of repose. Lady Barb was a calm, was an even calmer goddess still, and he had a much more intimate view of her divinity than on the day he had led her to the altar; but I’m not sure he felt either as firm or as easy.

“How do you know what people are?” he said in a moment. “You’ve seen so few; you’re perpetually denying yourself. If you should leave New York to-morrow you’d know wonderfully little about it.”

“It’s all just the same,” she pleaded. “The people are all exactly alike. There’s only one sort.”

“How can you tell? You never see them.”

“Didn’t I go out every night for the first two months we were here?”

“It was only to about a dozen houses—those, I agree, always the same; people, moreover, you had already met in London. You’ve got no general impressions.”

She raised her beautiful blank face. “That’s just what I *have* got; I had them before I came. I see no difference whatever. They’ve just the same names—just the same manners.”

Again for an instant Jackson hung fire; then he said with that practised flat candour of which mention has already been made and which he sometimes used in London during his courtship: “Don’t you like it over here?”

Lady Barb had returned to her book, but she looked up again. “Did you expect me to like it?”

“I hoped you would, of course. I think I told you so.”

“I don’t remember. You said very little about it; you seemed to make a kind of mystery. I knew of course you expected me to live here, but I didn’t know you expected me to like it.”

“You thought I asked of you the sacrifice, as it were.”

“I’m sure I don’t know,” said Lady Barb. She got up from her chair and tossed her unconsolatory volume into the empty seat. “I recommend you to read that book,” she added.

“Is it interesting?”

“It’s an American novel.”

“I never read novels.”

“You had really better look at that one. It will show you the kind of people you want me to know.”

“I’ve no doubt it’s very vulgar,” Jackson said. “I don’t see why you read it.”

“What else can I do? I can’t always be riding in the Park. I hate the Park,” she quite rang out.

“It’s just as good as your own,” said her husband.

She glanced at him with a certain quickness, her eyebrows slightly lifted. “Do you mean the park at Pasterns?”

“No; I mean the park in London.”

“Oh I don’t care about London. One was only in London a few weeks.” She had a horrible lovely ease.

Yet he but wanted to help her to turn round. “I suppose you miss the country,” he suggested. It was his idea of life that he shouldn’t be afraid of anything, not be afraid, in any situation, of knowing the worst that was to be known about it; and the demon of a courage with which discretion was not properly commingled prompted him to take soundings that were perhaps not absolutely necessary for safety and yet that revealed unmistakable rocks. It was useless to know about rocks if he couldn’t avoid them; the only thing was to trust to the wind.

“I don’t know what I miss. I think I miss everything!” This was his wife’s answer to his too-curious inquiry. It wasn’t peevish, for that wasn’t the tone of a calm goddess; but it expressed a good deal—a good deal more than Lady Barb, who was rarely eloquent, had expressed before.

Nevertheless, though his question had been precipitate, Jackson said to himself that he might take his time to think over what her fewness of words enclosed; he couldn’t help seeing that the future would give him plenty of chance. He was in no hurry to ask himself whether poor Mrs. Freer, in Jermyn Street, mightn’t after all have been right in saying that when it came to marrying an English caste-product it wasn’t so simple to be an American doctor—it might avail little even in such a case to be the heir of all the ages. The transition was complicated, but in his bright mind it was rapid, from the brush of a momentary contact with such ideas to certain considerations which led him to go on after an instant: “Should you like to go down into Connecticut?”

“Into Connecticut?”

“That’s one of our States. It’s about as large as Ireland. I’ll take you there if you like.”

“What does one do there?”

“We can try and get some hunting.”

“You and I alone?”

“Perhaps we can get a party to join us.”

“The people in the State?”

“Yes—we might propose it to them.”

“The tradespeople in the towns?”

“Very true—they’ll have to mind their shops,” Jackson said. “But we might hunt alone.”

“Are there any foxes?”

“No, but there are a few old cows.”

Lady Barb had already noted that her husband sought the relief of a laugh at her expense, and she was aware that this present opportunity was neither worse nor better than some others. She didn’t mind that trick in him particularly now, though in England it would have disgusted her; she had the consciousness of virtue, an immense comfort, and flattered herself she had learned the lesson of an altered standard of fitness—besides which there were so many more disagreeable things in America than being laughed at by one’s husband. But she pretended not to like it because this made him stop, and above all checked discussion, which with Jackson was habitually so facetious and consequently so tiresome. “I only want to be left alone,” she said in answer—though indeed it hadn’t the style of an answer—to his speech about the cows. With this she wandered away to one of the windows that looked out on the Fifth Avenue. She was very fond of these windows and had taken a great fancy to the Fifth Avenue, which, in the high-pitched winter weather, when everything sparkled, was bright and funny and foreign. It will be seen that she was not wholly unjust to her adoptive country: she found it delightful to look out of the window. This was a pleasure she had enjoyed in London only in the most furtive manner; it wasn’t the kind of thing that girls in England did. Besides, in

London, in Hill Street, there was nothing particular to see; whereas in the Fifth Avenue everything and every one went by, and observation was made consistent with dignity by the quantities of brocade and lace dressing the embrasure, which somehow wouldn't have been tidy in England and which made an ambush without concealing the brilliant day. Hundreds of women—the queer women of New York, who were unlike any that Lady Barb had hitherto seen—passed the house every hour; and her ladyship was infinitely entertained and mystified by the sight of their clothes. She spent more time than she was aware of in this recreation, and had she been addicted to returning upon herself, to asking herself for an account of her conduct—an inquiry she didn't indeed completely neglect, but made no great form of—she must have had a wan smile for this proof of what she appeared mainly to have come to America for, conscious though she was that her tastes were very simple and that so long as she didn't hunt it didn't much matter what she did.

Her husband turned about to the fire, giving a push with his foot to a log that had fallen out of its place. Then he said—and the connexion with the words she had just uttered was direct enough —“You really must manage to be at home on Sundays, you know. I used to like that so much in London. All the best women here do it. You had better begin to-day. I'm going to see my mother. If I meet any one I'll tell them to come.”

“Tell them not to talk so much,” said Lady Barb among her lace curtains.

“Ah, my dear,” Jackson returned, “it isn't every one who has your concision.” And he went and stood behind her in the window, putting his arm round her waist. It was as much of a satisfaction to him as it had been six months before, at the time the solicitors were settling the matter, that this flower of an ancient stem should be worn upon his own breast; he still thought its fragrance a thing quite apart, and it was as clear as day to him that his wife was the handsomest woman in New York. He had begun, after their arrival, by telling her this very often; but the assurance brought no colour to her cheek, no light to her eyes: to be the handsomest woman in New York, now that she was acquainted with that city, plainly failed to strike her as a position in life. The reader may, moreover, be informed that, oddly enough, Lady Barb didn't particularly believe this assertion. There were some very pretty women in New York, and without in the least wishing to be like them—she had seen no woman in America whom she desired to resemble—she envied them some of their peculiar little freshnesses.

It's probable that her own finest points were those of which she was most unconscious. But Jackson was intensely aware of all of them; nothing could exceed the minuteness of his appreciation of his wife. It was a sign of this that after he had stood behind her a moment he kissed her very tenderly.

“Have you any message for my mother?” he asked.

“Please give her my love. And you might take her that book.”

“What book?”

“That nasty one I've been reading.”

“Oh bother your books!” he cried with a certain irritation as he went out of the room.

There had been a good many things in her life in New York that cost her an effort, but sending her love to her mother-in-law was not one of these. She liked Mrs. Lemon better than any one she had seen in America; she was the only person who seemed to Lady Barb really simple, as she herself understood that quality. Many people had struck her as homely and rustic and many others as pretentious and vulgar; but in Jackson's mother she had found the golden mean of a discretion, of a native felicity and modesty and decency, which, as she would have said, were really nice. Her sister, Lady Agatha, was even fonder of Mrs. Lemon; but then Lady Agatha had taken the most extraordinary fancy to every one and everything, and talked as if America were the most delightful country in the world. She was having a lovely time—she already spoke the most beautiful American—and had been, during the bright winter just drawing to a close, the most prominent girl in New York. She had gone out at first with her elder; but for some weeks past Lady Barb had let so many occasions pass that Agatha threw herself into the arms of Mrs. Lemon, who found her unsurpassably quaint and amusing and was delighted to take her into society. Mrs. Lemon, as an old woman, had

given up such vanities; but she only wanted a motive, and in her good nature she ordered a dozen new caps and sat smiling against the wall while her little English maid, on polished floors, to the sound of music, cultivated the American step as well as the American tone. There was no trouble in New York about going out, and the winter wasn't half over before the little English maid found herself an accomplished diner, finding her way without any chaperon at all to feasts where she could count on a bouquet at her plate. She had had a great deal of correspondence with her own female parent on this point, and Lady Canterville had at last withdrawn her protest, which in the meantime had been perfectly useless. It was ultimately Lady Canterville's feeling that if she had married the handsomest of her daughters to an American doctor she might let another become a professional *raconteuse*—Agatha had written to her that she was expected to talk so much—strange as such a destiny seemed for a girl of nineteen. Mrs. Lemon had even a higher simplicity than Lady Barb imputed to her; for she hadn't noticed that Lady Agatha danced much oftener with Herman Longstraw than with any one else. Jackson himself, though he went little to balls, had discovered this truth, and he looked slightly preoccupied when, after he had sat five minutes with his mother on the Sunday afternoon through which I have invited the reader to trace so much more than—I am afraid—is easily apparent of the progress of this simple story, he learned that his sister-in-law was entertaining Mr. Longstraw in the library. That young man had called half an hour before, and she had taken him into the other room to show him the seal of the Cantervilles, which she had fastened to one of her numerous trinkets—she was adorned with a hundred bangles and chains—and the proper exhibition of which required a taper and a stick of wax. Apparently he was examining it very carefully, for they had been absent a good while. Mrs. Lemon's simplicity was further shown by the fact that she had not measured their absence; it was only when Jackson questioned her that she remembered.

Herman Longstraw was a young Californian who had turned up in New York the winter before and who travelled on his moustache, as they were understood to say in his native State. This moustache and some of its accompanying features were greatly admired; several ladies in New York had been known to declare that they were as beautiful as a dream. Taken in connexion with his tall stature, his familiar good nature and his remarkable Western vocabulary they constituted his only social capital; for of the two great divisions, the rich Californians and the poor Californians, it was well known to which he belonged. Doctor Lemon had viewed him as but a slightly mitigated cowboy, and was somewhat vexed at his own parent, though also aware that she could scarcely figure to herself what an effect such a form of speech as this remarkably straight echo of the prairie would produce in the halls of Canterville. He had no desire whatever to play a trick on the house to which he was allied, and knew perfectly that Lady Agatha hadn't been sent to America to become entangled with a Californian of the wrong denomination. He had been perfectly willing to bring her; he thought, a little vindictively, that this would operate as a hint to her progenitors on what he might have imagined doing if they hadn't been so stupidly bent on Mr. Hardman. Herman Longstraw, according to the legend, had been a trapper, a squatter, a miner, a pioneer—had been everything that one could be in the desperate parts of America, and had accumulated masses of experience before the age of thirty.

He had shot bears in the Rockies and buffaloes on the plains; and it was even believed that he had brought down animals of a still more dangerous kind among the haunts of men. There had been a story that he owned a cattle-ranch in Arizona; but a later and apparently more authentic version of it, though representing him as looking after the cattle, didn't depict him as their proprietor.

Many of the stories told about him were false; but there was no doubt his moustache, his native ease and his native accent were the best of their kind. He danced very badly; but Lady Agatha had frankly told several persons that that was nothing new to her, and in short she delighted—this, however, she didn't tell—in Mr. Herman Longstraw. What she enjoyed in America was the revelation of freedom, and there was no such proof of freedom as absolutely unrestricted discourse with a gentleman who dressed in crude skins when not in New York and who, in his usual pursuits, carried his life—as well as that of other persons—in his hand. A gentleman whom she had sat next to at

dinner in the early part of her visit had remarked to her that the United States were the paradise of women and of mechanics; and this had seemed to her at the time very abstract, for she wasn't conscious as yet of belonging to either class. In England she had been only a girl, and the principal idea connected with that was simply that for one's misfortune one wasn't a boy. But she presently herself found the odd American world a true sojourn of the youthful blest; and this helped her to know that she must be one of the people mentioned in the axiom of her neighbour—people who could do whatever they wanted, had a voice in everything and made their taste and their ideas felt.

She saw what fun it was to be a woman in America, and that this was the best way to enjoy the New York winter—the wonderful brilliant New York winter, the queer long-shaped glittering city, the heterogeneous hours among which you couldn't tell the morning from the afternoon or the night from either of them, the perpetual liberties and walks, the rushings-out and the droppings-in, the intimacies, the endearments, the comicalities, the sleigh-bells, the cutters, the sunsets on the snow, the ice-parties in the frosty clearness, the bright hot velvety houses, the bouquets, the bonbons, the little cakes, the big cakes, the irrepressible inspirations of shopping, the innumerable luncheons and dinners offered to youth and innocence, the quantities of chatter of quantities of girls, the perpetual motion of the “German,” the suppers at restaurants after the play, the way in which life was pervaded by Delmonico and Delmonico by the sense that though one's hunting was lost, and this therefore so different, it was very nearly as good. In all, through all, flowed a suffusion of loud unmodulated friendly sound which reminded her of an endless tuning of rather bad fiddles.

Lady Agatha was at present staying for a little change with Mrs. Lemon, and such adventures as that were part of the pleasure of her American season. The house was too close, but physically the girl could bear anything, and it was all she had to complain of; for Mrs. Lemon, as we know, thought her a weird little specimen, and had none of those old-world scruples in regard to spoiling young people to which Lady Agatha herself now knew she must in the past have been unduly sacrificed.

In her own way—it was not at all her sister's way—she liked to be of importance; and this was assuredly the case when she saw that Mrs. Lemon had apparently nothing in the world to do, after spending a part of the morning with her servants, but invent little distractions—many of them of the edible sort—for her guest. She appeared to have several friends, but she had no society to speak of, and the people who entered her house came principally to see Lady Agatha. This, as we have noted, was strikingly the case with Herman Longstraw. The whole situation gave the young stranger a great feeling of success—success of a new and unexpected kind. Of course in England she had been born successful, as it might be called, through her so emerging in one of the most beautiful rooms at Pasterns; but her present triumph was achieved more by her own effort—not that she had tried very hard—and by her merit. It wasn't so much what she said—since she could never equal for quantity the girls of New York—as the spirit of enjoyment that played in her fresh young face, with its pointless curves, and shone in her grey English eyes. She enjoyed everything, even the street-cars, of which she made liberal use; and more than everything she enjoyed Mr. Longstraw and his talk about buffaloes and bears. Mrs. Lemon promised to be very careful as soon as her son had begun to warn her; and this time she had a certain understanding of what she promised. She thought people ought to make the matches they liked; she had given proof of this in her late behaviour to Jackson, whose own union was, to her sense, marked with all the arbitrariness of pure love. Nevertheless she could see that Herman Longstraw would probably be thought rough in England; and it wasn't simply that he was so inferior to Jackson, for, after all, certain things were not to be expected. Jackson was not oppressed with his mother-in-law, having taken his precautions against such a danger; but he was certain he should give Lady Canterville a permanent advantage over him if her third daughter should while in America attach herself to a mere moustache.

It was not always, as I have hinted, that Mrs. Lemon entered completely into the views of her son, though in form she never failed to subscribe to them devoutly. She had never yet, for instance, apprehended his reason for marrying poor Lady Barb. This was a great secret, and she was

determined, in her gentleness, that no one should ever know it. For herself, she was sure that to the end of time she shouldn't discover Jackson's reason. She might never ask about it, for that of course would betray her. From the first she had told him she was delighted, there being no need of asking for explanations then, as the young lady herself, when she should come to know her, would explain.

But the young lady hadn't yet explained and after this evidently never would. She was very tall, very handsome, she answered exactly to Mrs. Lemon's prefigurement of the daughter of a lord, and she wore her clothes, which were peculiar, but to one of her shape remarkably becoming, very well. But she didn't elucidate; we know ourselves that there was very little that was explanatory about Lady Barb. So Mrs. Lemon continued to wonder, to ask herself, "Why that one, more than so many others who'd have been more natural?" The choice struck her, as I have said, as quite arbitrary. She found Lady Barb very different from other girls she had known, and this led her almost immediately to feel sorry for her daughter-in-law. She felt how the girl was to be pitied if she found her husband's people as peculiar as his mother found *her*, since the result of that would be to make her very lonesome.

Lady Agatha was different, because she seemed to keep nothing back; you saw all there was of her, and she was evidently not home-sick. Mrs. Lemon could see that Barbarina was ravaged by this last ailment and was also too haughty to show it. She even had a glimpse of the ultimate truth; namely, that Jackson's wife had not the comfort of crying, because that would have amounted to a confession that she had been idiotic enough to believe in advance that, in an American town, in the society of doctors, she should escape such pangs. Mrs. Lemon treated her with studied consideration—all the indulgence that was due to a young woman in the unfortunate position of having been married one couldn't tell why.

The world, to the elder lady's view, contained two great departments, that of people and that of things; and she believed you must take an interest either in one or the other. The true incomprehensible in Lady Barb was that she cared for neither side of the show. Her house apparently inspired her with no curiosity and no enthusiasm, though it had been thought magnificent enough to be described in successive columns of the native newspapers; and she never spoke of her furniture or her domestics, though she had a prodigious show of such possessions. She was the same with regard to her acquaintance, which was immense, inasmuch as every one in the place had called on her. Mrs. Lemon was the least critical woman in the world, but it had occasionally ruffled her just a little that her daughter-in-law should receive every one in New York quite in the same automatic manner. There were differences, Mrs. Lemon knew, and some of them of the highest importance; but poor Lady Barb appeared never to suspect them. She accepted every one and everything and asked no questions. She had no curiosity about her fellow-citizens, and as she never assumed it for a moment she gave Mrs. Lemon no opportunity to enlighten her. Lady Barb was a person with whom you could do nothing unless she left you an opening; and nothing would have been more difficult than to "post" her, as her mother-in-law would have said, against her will. Of course she picked up a little knowledge, but she confounded and transposed American attributes in the most extraordinary way. She had a way of calling every one Doctor; and Mrs. Lemon could scarcely convince her that this distinction was too precious to be so freely bestowed. She had once said to that supporter that in New York there was nothing to know people by, their names were so very monotonous; and Mrs. Lemon had entered into this enough to see that there was something that stood out a good deal in Barbarina's own prefix. It is probable that during her short period of domestication complete justice was not done Lady Barb; she never—as an instance—got credit for repressing her annoyance at the poverty of the nominal signs and styles, a deep desolation. That little speech to her husband's mother was the most reckless sign she gave of it; and there were few things that contributed more to the good conscience she habitually enjoyed than her self-control on this particular point.

Doctor Lemon was engaged in professional researches just now, which took up a great deal of his time; and for the rest he passed his hours unreservedly with his wife. For the last three months, therefore, he had seen his other nearest relative scarcely more than once a week. In spite of researches,

in spite of medical societies, where Jackson, to her knowledge, read papers, Lady Barb had more of her husband's company than she had counted on at the time she married. She had never known a married pair to be so much together as she and Jackson; he appeared to expect her to sit with him in the library in the morning. He had none of the occupations of gentlemen and noblemen in England, for the element of politics appeared to be as absent as the element of the chase. There were politics in Washington, she had been told, and even at Albany, and Jackson had proposed to introduce her to these cities; but the proposal, made to her once at dinner, before several people, had excited such cries of horror that it fell dead on the spot. "We don't want you to see anything of that kind," one of the ladies had said, and Jackson had appeared to be discouraged—that is if in regard to Jackson she could really tell.

"Pray what is it you want me to see?" Lady Barb had asked on this occasion.

"Well, New York and Boston (Boston if you want to very much, but not otherwise), and then Niagara. But more than anything Newport."

She was tired of their eternal Newport; she had heard of it a thousand times and felt already as if she had lived there half her life; she was sure, moreover, that she should hate the awful little place. This is perhaps as near as she came to having a lively conviction on any American subject.

She asked herself whether she was then to spend her life in the Fifth Avenue with alternations of a city of villas—she detested villas—and wondered if that was all the great American country had to offer her. There were times when she believed she should like the backwoods and that the Far West might be a resource; for she had analysed her feelings just deep enough to discover that when she had—hesitating a good deal—turned over the question of marrying Jackson Lemon it was not in the least of American barbarism she was afraid; her dread had been all of American civilisation.

She judged the little lady I have just quoted a goose, but that didn't make New York any more interesting. It would be reckless to say that she suffered from an overdose of Jackson's company, since she quite felt him her most important social resource. She could talk to him about England, about her own England, and he understood more or less what she wished to say—when she wished to say anything, which was not frequent. There were plenty of other people who talked about England; but with them the range of allusion was always the hotels, of which she knew nothing, and the shops and the opera and the photographs: they had the hugest appetite for photographs. There were other people who were always wanting her to tell them about Pasterns and the manner of life there and the parties; but if there was one thing Lady Barb disliked more than another it was describing Pasterns.

She had always lived with people who knew of themselves what such a place would be, without demanding these pictorial efforts, proper only, as she vaguely felt, to persons belonging to the classes whose trade was the arts of expression. Lady Barb of course had never gone into it; but she knew that in her own class the business was not to express but to enjoy, not to represent but to be represented—though indeed this latter liability might involve offence; for it may be noted that even for an aristocrat Jackson Lemon's wife was aristocratic.

Lady Agatha and her visitor came back from the library in course of time, and Jackson Lemon felt it his duty to be rather cold to Herman Longstraw. It wasn't clear to him what sort of a husband his sister-in-law would do well to look for in America—if there were to be any question of husbands; but as to that he wasn't bound to be definite provided he should rule out Mr. Longstraw. This gentleman, however, was not given to noticing shades of manner; he had little observation, but very great confidence.

"I think you had better come home with me," Jackson said to Lady Agatha; "I guess you've stayed here long enough."

"Don't let him say that, Mrs. Lemon!" the girl cried. "I like being with you so awfully."

"I try to make it pleasant," said Mrs. Lemon. "I should really miss you now; but perhaps it's your mother's wish." If it was a question of defending her guest from ineligible suitors Mrs. Lemon felt

of course that her son was more competent than she; though she had a lurking kindness for Herman Longstraw and a vague idea that he was a gallant genial specimen of unsophisticated young America.

“Oh mamma wouldn’t see any difference!” Lady Agatha returned with pleading blue eyes on her brother-in-law. “Mamma wants me to see every one; you know she does. That’s what she sent me to America for; she knows—for we’ve certainly told her enough—that it isn’t like England. She wouldn’t like it if I didn’t sometimes stay with people; she always wanted us to stay at other houses.

And she knows all about you, Mrs. Lemon, and she likes you immensely. She sent you a message the other day and I’m afraid I forgot to give it you—to thank you for being so kind to me and taking such a lot of trouble. Really she did, but I forgot it. If she wants me to see as much as possible of America it’s much better I should be here than always with Barb—it’s much less like one’s own country. I mean it’s much nicer—for a girl,” said Lady Agatha affectionately to Mrs. Lemon, who began also to look at Jackson under the influence of this uttered sweetness which was like some quaint little old air, she thought, played upon a faded spinet with two girlish fingers.

“If you want the genuine thing you ought to come out on the plains,” Mr. Longstraw interposed with bright sincerity. “I guess that was your mother’s idea. Why don’t you all come out?” He had been looking intently at Lady Agatha while the remarks I have just repeated succeeded each other on her lips—looking at her with a fascinated approbation, for all the world as if he had been a slightly slow-witted English gentleman and the girl herself a flower of the West, a flower that knew the celebrated language of flowers. Susceptible even as Mrs. Lemon was he made no secret of the fact that Lady Agatha’s voice was music to him, his ear being much more accessible than his own inflexions would have indicated. To Lady Agatha those inflexions were not displeasing, partly because, like Mr. Herman himself in general, she had not a perception of shades; and partly because it never occurred to her to compare them with any other tones. He seemed to her to speak a foreign language altogether—a romantic dialect through which the most comical meanings gleamed here and there.

“I should like it above all things,” she said in answer to his last observation.

“The scenery’s ahead of anything round here,” Mr. Longstraw went on.

Mrs. Lemon, as we have gathered, was the mildest of women; but, as an old New Yorker, she had no patience with some of the new fashions. Chief among these was the perpetual reference, which had become common only within a few years, to the outlying parts of the country, the States and Territories of which children, in her time, used to learn the names, in their order, at school, but which no one ever thought of going to or talking about. Such places, in her opinion, belonged to the geography-books, or at most to the literature of newspapers, but neither to society nor to conversation; and the change—which, so far as it lay in people’s talk, she thought at bottom a mere affectation—threatened to make her native land appear vulgar and vague. For this amiable daughter of Manhattan the normal existence of man, and still more of women, had been “located,” as she would have said, between Trinity Church and the beautiful Reservoir at the top of the Fifth Avenue—monuments of which she was personally proud; and if we could look into the deeper parts of her mind I am afraid we should discover there an impression that both the countries of Europe and the remainder of her own continent were equally far from the centre and the light.

“Well, scenery isn’t everything,” she made soft answer to Mr. Longstraw; “and if Lady Agatha should wish to see anything of that kind all she has got to do is to take the boat up the Hudson.” Mrs. Lemon’s recognition of this river, I should say, was all it need have been; she held the Hudson existed for the purpose of supplying New Yorkers with poetical feelings, helping them to face comfortably occasions like the present and, in general, meet foreigners with confidence—part of the oddity of foreigners being their conceit about their own places.

“That’s a good idea, Lady Agatha; let’s take the boat,” said Mr. Longstraw. “I’ve had great times on the boats.”

Lady Agatha fixed on her *amoroso* her singular charming eyes, eyes of which it was impossible to say at any moment whether they were the shyest or the frankest in the world; and she was not aware

while this contemplation lasted that her brother-in-law was observing her. He was thinking of certain things while he did so, of things he had heard about the English; who still, in spite of his having married into a family of that nation, appeared to him very much through the medium of hearsay.

They were more passionate than the Americans, and they did things that would never have been expected; though they seemed steadier and less excitable there was much social evidence to prove them more wildly impulsive.

“It’s so very kind of you to propose that,” Lady Agatha said in a moment to Mrs. Lemon. “I think I’ve never been in a ship—except of course coming from England. I’m sure mamma would wish me to see the Hudson. We used to go in immensely for boating in England.”

“Did you boat in a ship?” Herman Longstraw asked, showing his teeth hilariously and pulling his moustaches.

“Lots of my mother’s people have been in the navy.” Lady Agatha perceived vaguely and good-naturedly that she had said something the odd Americans thought odd and that she must justify herself. Something most unnatural was happening to her standard of oddity.

“I really think you had better come back to us,” Jackson repeated: “your sister’s very lonely without you.”

“She’s much more lonely *with* me. We’re perpetually having differences. Barb’s dreadfully vexed because I like America instead of—instead of—” And Lady Agatha paused a moment; for it just occurred to her that this might be treacherous.

“Instead of what?” Jackson inquired.

“Instead of perpetually wanting to go to England, as she does,” she went on, only giving her phrase a little softer turn; for she felt the next moment that Barb could have nothing to hide and must of course have the courage of her opinions. “Of course England’s best, but I daresay I like to be bad,” the girl said artlessly.

“Oh there’s no doubt you’re awfully bad,” Mr. Longstraw broke out, with joyous eagerness.

Naturally he couldn’t know that what she had principally in mind was an exchange of opinions that had taken place between her sister and herself just before she came to stay with Mrs. Lemon. This incident, of which he himself was the occasion, might indeed have been called a discussion, for it had carried them quite into the cold air of the abstract. Lady Barb had said she didn’t see how Agatha could look at such a creature as that—an odious familiar vulgar being who had not about him the rudiments of a gentleman. Lady Agatha had replied that Mr. Longstraw was familiar and rough and that he had a twang and thought it amusing to talk to her as “the Princess”; but that he was a gentleman for all that and was tremendous fun whatever one called him—it didn’t seem to matter what one called any one or anything there. Her sister had returned to this that if he was rough and familiar he couldn’t be a gentleman, inasmuch as that was just what a gentleman meant—a man who was civil and well-bred and well-born. Lady Agatha had argued that such a point was just where she differed; that a man might perfectly be a gentleman and yet be rough, and even ignorant, so long as he was really nice. The only thing was that he should be really nice, which was the case with Mr. Longstraw, who, moreover, was quite extraordinarily civil—as civil as a man could be. And then Lady Agatha herself made the strongest point she had ever made in her life (she had never been so inspired) in saying that Mr. Longstraw was rough perhaps, but not rude—a distinction altogether wasted on her sister, who declared that she hadn’t come to America, of all places, to learn what a gentleman was.

The discussion in short had been a trifle grim. I know not whether it was the tonic effect on them too, alien organisms as they were, of the fine winter weather, or that of Lady Barb’s being bored and having nothing else to do; but Lord Canterville’s daughters went into the question with the moral earnestness of a pair of approved Bostonians. It was part of Lady Agatha’s view of her admirer that he after all much resembled other tall people with smiling eyes and tawny moustaches who had ridden a good deal in rough countries and whom she had seen in other places. If he was more familiar he was also more alert; still, the difference was not in himself, but in the way she saw him—the way she

saw everybody in America. If she should see the others in the same way no doubt they'd be quite the same; and Lady Agatha sighed a little over the possibilities of life; for this peculiar way, especially regarded in connexion with gentlemen, had become very pleasant to her.

She had betrayed her sister more than she thought, even though Jackson didn't particularly show it in the tone in which he commented: "Of course she knows she's going to see your mother in the summer." His tone was rather that of irritation at so much harping on the very obvious.

"Oh it isn't only mamma," the girl said.

"I know she likes a cool house," Mrs. Lemon contributed.

"When she goes you had better bid her good-bye," Lady Agatha went on.

"Of course I shall bid her good-bye," said Mrs. Lemon, to whom apparently this remark was addressed.

"I'll never bid *you* good-bye, Princess," Herman Longstraw interposed. "You can bet your life on that."

"Oh it doesn't matter about me, for of course I shall come back; but if Barb once gets to England she never will."

"Oh my dear child!" Mrs. Lemon wailed, addressing her young visitor, but looking at her son, who on his side looked at the ceiling, at the floor, looked above all very conscious.

"I hope you don't mind my saying that, Jackson dear," Lady Agatha said to him, for she was very fond of her brother-in-law.

"Ah well then, she shan't go there," he threw off in a moment with a small strange dry laugh that attached his mother's eyes in shy penetration to his face.

"But you promised mamma, you know," said the girl with the confidence of her affection.

Jackson's countenance expressed to her none even of his very moderate hilarity. "Your mother, then, must bring her back."

"Get some of your navy people to supply an ironclad!" cried Mr. Longstraw.

"It would be very pleasant if the Marchioness could come over," said Mrs. Lemon.

"Oh she'd hate it more than poor Barb," Lady Agatha quickly replied. It didn't at all suit her to find a marchioness inserted into her field of vision.

"Doesn't she feel interested from what you've told her?" Lady Agatha's admirer inquired. But Jackson didn't heed his sister-in-law's answer—he was thinking of something else. He said nothing more, however, about the subject of his thought, and before ten minutes were over took his departure, having meanwhile neglected also to revert to the question of Lady Agatha's bringing her visit to his mother to a close. It wasn't to speak to him of this—for, as we know, she wished to keep the girl and somehow couldn't bring herself to be afraid of Herman Longstraw—that when her son took leave she went with him to the door of the house, detaining him a little while she stood on the steps, as people had always done in New York in her time, though it was another of the new fashions she didn't like, the stiffness of not coming out of the parlour. She placed her hand on his arm to keep him on the "stoop" and looked up and down into the lucid afternoon and the beautiful city—its chocolate-coloured houses so extraordinarily smooth—in which it seemed to her that even the most fastidious people ought to be glad to live. It was useless to attempt to conceal it: his marriage had made a difference and a worry, had put a barrier that she was yet under the painful obligation of trying to seem not to notice. It had brought with it a problem much more difficult than his old problem of how to make his mother feel herself still, as she had been in his childhood, the dispenser of his rewards.

The old problem had been easily solved, the new was a great tax. Mrs. Lemon was sure her daughter-in-law didn't take her seriously, and that was a part of the barrier. Even if Barbarina liked her better than any one else this was mostly because she liked every one else so little. Mrs. Lemon had in her nature no grain of resentment, and it wasn't to feed a sense of wrong that she permitted herself to criticise her son's wife. She couldn't help feeling that his marriage wasn't altogether fortunate if his wife didn't take his mother seriously. She knew she wasn't otherwise remarkable than as being his

mother; but that position, which was no merit of hers—the merit was all Jackson's in being her son—affected her as one which, familiar as Lady Barb appeared to have been in England with positions of various kinds, would naturally strike the girl as very high and to be accepted as freely as a fine morning. If she didn't think of his mother as an indivisible part of him perhaps she didn't think of other things either; and Mrs. Lemon vaguely felt that, remarkable as Jackson was, he was made up of parts, and that it would never do that these should be rated lower one by one, since there was no knowing what that might end in. She feared that things were rather cold for him at home when he had to explain so much to his wife—explain to her, for instance, all the sources of happiness that were to be found in New York. This struck her as a new kind of problem altogether for a husband. She had never thought of matrimony without a community of feeling in regard to religion and country; one took those great conditions for granted just as one assumed that one's food was to be cooked; and if Jackson should have to discuss them with his wife he might, in spite of his great abilities, be carried into regions where he would get entangled and embroiled—from which even possibly he wouldn't come back at all. Mrs. Lemon had a horror of losing him in some way, and this fear was in her eyes as she stood by the doorway of her house and, after she had glanced up and down the street, eyed him a moment in silence. He simply kissed her again and said she would take cold.

"I'm not afraid of that—I've a shawl!" Mrs. Lemon, who was very small and very fair, with pointed features and an elaborate cap, passed her life in a shawl, and owed to this habit her reputation for being an invalid—an idea she scorned, naturally enough, inasmuch as it was precisely her shawl that, as she believed, kept every ill at bay. "Is it true Barbarina won't come back?" she then asked.

"I don't know that we shall ever find out; I don't know that I shall take her to England," Jackson distinctly returned.

She looked more anxious still. "Didn't you promise, dear?"

"I don't know that I promised—not absolutely."

"But you wouldn't keep her here against her will?" quavered Mrs. Lemon.

"I guess she'll get used to it," he returned with a levity that misrepresented the state of his nerves.

Mrs. Lemon looked up and down the street again and gave a little sigh. "What a pity she isn't American!" She didn't mean this as a reproach, a hint of what might have been; it was simply embarrassment resolved into speech.

"She couldn't have been American," said Jackson with decision.

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