

**ГЕНРИ
ДЖЕЙМС**

A SMALL BOY
AND OTHERS

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Содержание

I	4
II	17
III	27
IV	39
V	49
VI	59
VII	70
VIII	83
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	92

Henry James

A Small Boy and Others

I

In the attempt to place together some particulars of the early life of William James and present him in his setting, his immediate native and domestic air, so that any future gathered memorials of him might become the more intelligible and interesting, I found one of the consequences of my interrogation of the past assert itself a good deal at the expense of some of the others. For it was to memory in the first place that my main appeal for particulars had to be made; I had been too near a witness of my brother's beginnings of life, and too close a participant, by affection, admiration and sympathy, in whatever touched and moved him, not to feel myself in possession even of a greater quantity of significant truth, a larger handful of the fine substance of history, than I could hope to express or apply. To recover anything like the full treasure of scattered, wasted circumstance was at the same time to live over the spent experience itself, so deep and rich and rare, with whatever sadder and sorer intensities, even with whatever poorer and thinner passages, after the manner of every one's experience; and the effect of this in turn was to find discrimination among the parts

of my subject again and again difficult—so inseparably and beautifully they seemed to hang together and the comprehensive case to decline mutilation or refuse to be treated otherwise than handsomely. This meant that aspects began to multiply and images to swarm, so far at least as they showed, to appreciation, as true terms and happy values; and that I might positively and exceedingly rejoice in my relation to most of them, using it for all that, as the phrase is, it should be worth. To knock at the door of the past was in a word to see it open to me quite wide—to see the world within begin to "compose" with a grace of its own round the primary figure, see it people itself vividly and insistently. Such then is the circle of my commemoration and so much these free and copious notes a labour of love and loyalty. We were, to my sense, the blest group of us, such a company of characters and such a picture of differences, and withal so fused and united and interlocked, that each of us, to that fond fancy, pleads for preservation, and that in respect to what I speak of myself as possessing I think I shall be ashamed, as of a cold impiety, to find any element altogether negligible. To which I may add perhaps that I struggle under the drawback, innate and inbred, of seeing the whole content of memory and affection in each enacted and recovered moment, as who should say, in the vivid image and the very scene; the light of the only terms in which life has treated me to experience. And I cherish the moment and evoke the image and repaint the scene; though meanwhile indeed scarce able to convey how prevailingly and almost exclusively, during years and

years, the field was animated and the adventure conditioned for me by my brother's nearness and that play of genius in him of which I had never had a doubt from the first.

The "first" then—since I retrace our steps to the start, for the pleasure, strangely mixed though it be, of feeling our small feet plant themselves afresh and artlessly stumble forward again—the first began long ago, far off, and yet glimmers at me there as out of a thin golden haze, with all the charm, for imagination and memory, of pressing pursuit rewarded, of distinctness in the dimness, of the flush of life in the grey, of the wonder of consciousness in everything; everything having naturally been all the while but the abject little matter of course. Partly doubtless as the effect of a life, now getting to be a tolerably long one, spent in the older world, I see the world of our childhood as very young indeed, young with its own juvenility as well as with ours; as if it wore the few and light garments and had gathered in but the scant properties and breakable toys of the tenderest age, or were at the most a very unformed young person, even a boisterous hobbledehoy. It exhaled at any rate a simple freshness, and I catch its pure breath, at our infantile Albany, as the very air of long summer afternoons—occasions tasting of ample leisure, still bookless, yet beginning to be bedless, or cribless; tasting of accessible garden peaches in a liberal backward territory that was still almost part of a country town; tasting of many-sized uncles, aunts, cousins, of strange legendary domestics, inveterately but archaically Irish, and whose familiar

remarks and "criticism of life" were handed down, as well as of dim family ramifications and local allusions—mystifications always—that flowered into anecdote as into small hard plums; tasting above all of a big much-shaded savoury house in which a softly-sighing widowed grandmother, Catherine Barber by birth, whose attitude was a resigned consciousness of complications and accretions, dispensed an hospitality seemingly as joyless as it was certainly boundless. What she *liked*, dear gentle lady of many cares and anxieties, was the "fiction of the day," the novels, at that time promptly pirated, of Mrs. Trollope and Mrs. Gore, of Mrs. Marsh, Mrs. Hubback and the Misses Kavanagh and Aguilar, whose very names are forgotten now, but which used to drive her away to quiet corners whence her figure comes back to me bent forward on a table with the book held out at a distance and a tall single candle placed, apparently not at all to her discomfort, in that age of sparer and braver habits, straight between the page and her eyes. There is a very animated allusion to one or two of her aspects in the fragment of a "spiritual autobiography," the reminiscences of a so-called Stephen Dewhurst printed by W. J. (1885) in *The Literary Remains of Henry James*; a reference which has the interest of being very nearly as characteristic of my father himself (which his references in almost any connection were wont to be) as of the person or the occasion evoked. I had reached my sixteenth year when she died, and as my only remembered grandparent she touches the chord of attachment to a particular vibration. She represented for us in our generation

the only English blood—that of both her own parents—flowing in our veins; I confess that out of that association, for reasons and reasons, I feel her image most beneficently bend. We were, as to three parts, of two other stocks; and I recall how from far back I reflected—for I see I must have been always reflecting—that, mixed as such a mixture, our Scotch with our Irish, might be, it had had still a grace to borrow from the third infusion or dimension. If I could freely have chosen moreover it was precisely from my father's mother that, fond votary of the finest faith in the vivifying and characterising force of mothers, I should have wished to borrow it; even while conscious that Catherine Barber's own people had drawn breath in American air for at least two generations before her. Our father's father, William James, an Irishman and a Protestant born (of county Cavan) had come to America, a very young man and then sole of his family, shortly after the Revolutionary War; my father, the second son of the third of the marriages to which the country of his adoption was liberally to help him, had been born in Albany in 1811. Our maternal greatgrandfather on the father's side, Hugh Walsh, had reached our shores from a like Irish home, Killyleagh, county Down, somewhat earlier, in 1764, he being then nineteen; he had settled at Newburgh-on-the-Hudson, half way to Albany, where some of his descendants till lately lingered. Our maternal greatgrandfather on the mother's side—that is our mother's mother's father, Alexander Robertson of Polmont near Edinburgh—had likewise crossed the sea in

the mid-century and prospered in New York very much as Hugh Walsh was prospering and William James was still more markedly to prosper, further up the Hudson; as unanimous and fortunate beholders of the course of which admirable stream I like to think of them. I find Alexander Robertson inscribed in a wee New York directory of the close of the century as Merchant; and our childhood in that city was passed, as to some of its aspects, in a sense of the afterglow, reduced and circumscribed, it is true, but by no means wholly inanimate, of his shining solidity.

The sweet taste of Albany probably lurked most in its being our admired antithesis to New York; it was holiday, whereas New York was home; at least that presently came to be the relation, for to my very very first fleeting vision, I apprehend, Albany itself must have been the scene exhibited. Our parents had gone there for a year or two to be near our grandmother on their return from their first (that is our mother's first) visit to Europe, which had quite immediately followed my birth, which appears to have lasted some year and a half, and of which I shall have another word to say. The Albany experiment would have been then their first founded housekeeping, since I make them out to have betaken themselves for the winter following their marriage to the ancient Astor House—not indeed at that time ancient, but the great and appointed modern hotel of New York, the only one of such pretensions, and which somehow continued to project its massive image, that of a great square block of granite with vast dark warm interiors, across some of the later and more sensitive

stages of my infancy. Clearly—or I should perhaps rather say dimly—recourse to that hospitality was again occasionally had by our parents; who had originally had it to such a happy end that on January 9th, 1842, my elder brother had come into the world there. It remained a tradition with him that our father's friend from an early time, R. W. Emerson, then happening to be in New York and under that convenient roof, was proudly and pressingly "taken upstairs" to admire and give his blessing to the lately-born babe who was to become the second American William James. The blessing was to be renewed, I may mention, in the sense that among the impressions of the next early years I easily distinguish that of the great and urbane Emerson's occasional presence in Fourteenth Street, a centre of many images, where the parental tent was before long to pitch itself and rest awhile. I am interested for the moment, however, in identifying the scene of our very first perceptions—of my very own at least, which I can here best speak for.

One of these, and probably the promptest in order, was that of my brother's occupying a place in the world to which I couldn't at all aspire—to any approach to which in truth I seem to myself ever conscious of having signally forfeited a title. It glimmers back to me that I quite definitely and resignedly thought of him as in the most exemplary manner already beforehand with me, already seated at his task when the attempt to drag me crying and kicking to the first hour of my education failed on the threshold of the Dutch House in Albany after the fashion I have

glanced at in a collection of other pages than these (just as I remember to have once borrowed a hint from our grandmother's "interior" in a work of imagination). That failure of my powers or that indifference to them, my retreat shrieking from the Dutch House, was to leave him once for all already there an embodied demonstration of the possible—already wherever it might be that there was a question of my arriving, when arriving at all, belatedly and ruefully; as if he had gained such an advance of me in his sixteen months' experience of the world before mine began that I never for all the time of childhood and youth in the least caught up with him or overtook him. He was always round the corner and out of sight, coming back into view but at his hours of extremest ease. We were never in the same schoolroom, in the same game, scarce even in step together or in the same phase at the same time; when our phases overlapped, that is, it was only for a moment—he was clean out before I had got well in. How far he had really at any moment dashed forward it is not for me now to attempt to say; what comes to me is that I at least hung inveterately and woefully back, and that this relation alike to our interests and to each other seemed proper and preappointed. I lose myself in wonder at the loose ways, the strange process of waste, through which nature and fortune may deal on occasion with those whose faculty for application is all and only in their imagination and their sensibility. There may be during those bewildered and brooding years so little for them to "show" that I liken the individual dunce—as he so often must

appear—to some commercial traveller who has lost the key to his packed case of samples and can but pass for a fool while other exhibitions go forward.

I achieve withal a dim remembrance of my final submission, though it is the faintest ghost of an impression and consists but of the bright blur of a dame's schoolroom, a mere medium for small piping shuffling sound and suffered heat, as well as for the wistfulness produced by "glimmering squares" that were fitfully screened, though not to any revival of cheer, by a huge swaying, yet dominant object. This dominant object, the shepherdess of the flock, was Miss Bayou or Bayhoo—I recover but the alien sound of her name, which memory caresses only because she may have been of like race with her temple of learning, which faced my grandmother's house in North Pearl Street and really justified its exotic claim by its yellow archaic gable-end: I think of the same as of brick baked in the land of dykes and making a series of small steps from the base of the gable to the point. These images are subject, I confess, to a soft confusion—which is somehow consecrated, none the less, and out of which, with its shade of contributory truth, some sort of scene insists on glancing. The very flush of the uneven bricks of the pavement lives in it, the very smell of the street cobbles, the imputed grace of the arching umbrage—I see it all as from under trees; the form of Steuben Street, which crossed our view, as steep even to the very essence of adventure, with a summit, and still more with a nethermost and riskiest incline, very far away. There

lives in it the aspect of the other house—the other and much smaller than my grandmother's, conveniently near it and within sight; which was pinkish-red picked out with white, whereas my grandmother's was greyish-brown and very grave, and which must have stood back a little from the street, as I seem even now to swing, or at least to perch, on a relaxed gate of approach that was conceived to work by an iron chain weighted with a big ball; all under a spreading tree again and with the high, oh so high white stone steps (mustn't they have been marble?) and fan-lighted door of the pinkish-red front behind me. I lose myself in ravishment before the marble and the pink. There were other houses too—one of them the occasion of the first "paid" visit that struggles with my twilight of social consciousness; a call with my father, conveying me presumably for fond exhibition (since if my powers were not exhibitional my appearance and my long fair curls, of which I distinctly remember the lachrymose sacrifice, suppositiously were), on one of our aunts, the youngest of his three sisters, lately married and who, predestined to an early death, hovers there for me, softly spectral, in long light "front" ringlets, the fashion of the time and the capital sign of all our paternal aunts seemingly; with the remembered enhancement of her living in Elk Street, the name itself vaguely portentous, as through beasts of the forest not yet wholly exorcised, and more or less under the high brow of that Capitol which, as aloft somewhere and beneath the thickest shades of all, loomed, familiar yet impressive, at the end of almost any Albany vista of

reference. I have seen other capitols since, but the whole majesty of the matter must have been then distilled into my mind—even though the connection was indirect and the concrete image, that of the primitive structure, long since pretentiously and insecurely superseded—so that, later on, the impression was to find itself, as the phrase is, discounted. Had it not moreover been reinforced at the time, for that particular Capitoline hour, by the fact that our uncle, our aunt's husband, was a son of Mr. Martin Van Buren, and that *he* was the President? This at least led the imagination on—or leads in any case my present imagination of that one; ministering to what I have called the soft confusion.

The confusion clears, however, though the softness remains, when, ceasing to press too far backward, I meet the ampler light of conscious and educated little returns to the place; for the education of New York, enjoyed up to my twelfth year, failed to blight its romantic appeal. The images I really distinguish flush through the maturer medium, but with the sense of them only the more wondrous. The other house, the house of my parents' limited early sojourn, becomes that of those of our cousins, numerous at that time, who pre-eminently figured for us; the various brood presided over by my father's second sister, Catherine James, who had married at a very early age Captain Robert Temple, U.S.A. Both these parents were to die young, and their children, six in number, the two eldest boys, were very markedly to people our preliminary scene; this being true in particular of three of them, the sharply differing brothers and

the second sister, Mary Temple, radiant and rare, extinguished in her first youth, but after having made an impression on many persons, and on ourselves not least, which was to become in the harmonious circle, for all time, matter of sacred legend and reference, of associated piety. Those and others with them were the numerous dawns on which in many cases the deepening and final darknesses were so soon to follow: our father's family was to offer such a chronicle of early deaths, arrested careers, broken promises, orphaned children. It sounds cold-blooded, but part of the charm of our grandmother's house for us—or I should perhaps but speak for myself—was in its being so much and so sociably a nurseried and playroomed orphanage. The children of her lost daughters and daughters-in-law overflowed there, mainly as girls; on whom the surviving sons-in-law and sons occasionally and most trustingly looked in. Parentally bereft cousins were somehow more thrilling than parentally provided ones; and most thrilling when, in the odd fashion of that time, they were sent to school in New York as a preliminary to their being sent to school in Europe. They spent scraps of holidays with us in Fourteenth Street, and I think my first childish conception of the enviable lot, formed amid these associations, was to be so little fathered or mothered, so little sunk in the short range, that the romance of life seemed to lie in some constant improvisation, by vague overhovering authorities, of new situations and horizons. We were intensely domesticated, yet for the very reason perhaps that we felt our young bonds easy; and they were so easy

compared to other small plights of which we had stray glimpses that my first assured conception of true richness was that we should be sent separately off among cold or even cruel aliens in order to be there thrillingly homesick. Homesickness was a luxury I remember craving from the tenderest age—a luxury of which I was unnaturally, or at least prosaically, deprived. Our motherless cousin Augustus Barker came up from Albany to the Institution Charlier—unless it was, as I suspect, a still earlier specimen, with a name that fades from me, of that type of French establishment for boys which then and for years after so incongruously flourished in New York; and though he professed a complete satisfaction with pleasures tasted in our innocent society I felt that he was engaged in a brave and strenuous adventure while we but hugged the comparatively safe shore.

II

We were day-boys, William and I, at dispensaries of learning the number and succession of which to-day excite my wonder; we couldn't have changed oftener, it strikes me as I look back, if our presence had been inveterately objected to, and yet I enjoy an inward certainty that, my brother being vividly bright and I quite blankly innocuous, this reproach was never brought home to our house. It was an humiliation to me at first, small boys though we were, that our instructors kept being instructresses and thereby a grave reflection both on our attainments and our spirit. A bevy of these educative ladies passes before me, I still possess their names; as for instance that of Mrs. Daly and that of Miss Rogers (previously of the "Chelsea Female Institute," though at the moment of Sixth Avenue this latter), whose benches indeed my brother didn't haunt, but who handled us literally with gloves—I still see the elegant objects as Miss Rogers beat time with a long black ferule to some species of droning chant or chorus in which we spent most of our hours; just as I see her very tall and straight and spare, in a light blue dress, her firm face framed in long black glossy ringlets and the stamp of the Chelsea Female Institute all over her. Mrs. Daly, clearly the immediate successor to the nebulous Miss Bayou, remains quite substantial—perhaps because the sphere of her small influence has succeeded in not passing away, up to this present writing; so that in certain notes

on New York published a few years since I was moved to refer to it with emotion as one of the small red houses on the south side of Waverley Place that really carry the imagination back to a vanished social order. They carry mine to a stout red-faced lady with grey hair and a large apron, the latter convenience somehow suggesting, as she stood about with a resolute air, that she viewed her little pupils as so many small slices cut from the loaf of life and on which she was to dab the butter of arithmetic and spelling, accompanied by way of jam with a light application of the practice of prize-giving. I recall an occasion indeed, I must in justice mention, when the jam really was thick—my only memory of a schoolfeast, strange to say, throughout our young annals: something uncanny in the air of the schoolroom at the unwonted evening or late afternoon hour, and tables that seemed to me prodigiously long and on which the edibles were chunky and sticky. The stout red-faced lady must have been Irish, as the name she bore imported—or do I think so but from the indescribably Irish look of her revisited house? It refers itself at any rate to a New York age in which a little more or a little less of the colour was scarce notable in the general flush.

Of pure unimported strain, however, were Miss Sedgwick and Mrs. Wright (Lavinia D.), the next figures in the procession—the procession that was to wind up indeed with two foreign recruits, small brown snappy Mademoiselle Delavigne, who plied us with the French tongue at home and who had been introduced to us as the niece—or could it have been the grandniece?—of the

celebrated Casimir, and a large Russian lady in an extraordinarily short cape (I like to recall the fashion of short capes) of the same stuff as her dress, and Merovingian sidebraids that seemed to require the royal crown of Frédégonde or Brunéhaut to complete their effect. This final and aggravational representative of the compromising sex looms to my mind's eye, I should add, but as the creature of an hour, in spite of her having been domiciled with us; whereas I think of Mademoiselle Delavigne as flitting in and out on quick, fine, more or less cloth-shod feet of exemplary neatness, the flat-soled feet of Louis Philippe and of the female figures in those volumes of Gavarni then actual, then contemporaneous, which were kept in a piece of furniture that stood between the front-parlour windows in Fourteenth Street, together with a set of Béranger enriched by steel engravings to the strange imagery of which I so wonderingly responded that all other art of illustration, ever since, has been for me comparatively weak and cold. These volumes and the tall entrancing folios of Nash's lithographed Mansions of England in the Olden Time formed a store lending itself particularly to distribution on the drawingroom carpet, with concomitant pressure to the same surface of the small student's stomach and relieving agitation of his backward heels. I make out that it had decidedly been given to Mlle. Delavigne to represent to my first perception personal France; she was, besides not being at all pink or shy, oval and fluent and mistress somehow of the step—the step of levity that involved a whisk of her short skirts; there

she was, to the life, on the page of Gavarni, attesting its reality, and there again did that page in return (I speak not of course of the unplumbed depths of the appended text) attest her own felicity. I was later on to feel—that is I was to learn—how many impressions and appearances, how large a sense of things, her type and tone prefigured. The evanescence of the large Russian lady, whom I think of as rather rank, I can't express it otherwise, may have been owing to some question of the purity of her accent in French; it was one of her attributes and her grounds of appeal to us that she had come straight from Siberia, and it is distinct to me that the purity was challenged by a friend of the house, and without—pathetically enough!—provoking the only answer, the plea that the missing Atticism would have been wasted on young barbarians. The Siberian note, on our inmate's part, may perhaps have been the least of her incongruities; she was above all too big for a little job, towered over us doubtless too heroically; and her proportions hover but to lose themselves—with the successors to her function awaiting us a little longer.

Meanwhile, to revert an instant, if the depressed consciousness of our still more or less quailing, educationally, beneath the female eye—and there was as well the deeper depth, there was the degrading fact, that with us literally consorted and contended Girls, that we sat and strove, even though we drew the line at playing with them and at knowing them, when not of the swarming cousinship, at home—if that felt awkwardness didn't exactly coincide with the ironic effect of "Gussy's" appearances,

his emergence from rich mystery and his return to it, our state was but comparatively the braver: he always had so much more to tell us than we could possibly have to tell him. On reflection I see that the most completely rueful period couldn't after all greatly have prolonged itself; since the female eye last bent on us would have been that of Lavinia D. Wright, to our connection with whom a small odd reminiscence attaches a date. A little schoolmate displayed to me with pride, while the connection lasted, a beautiful coloured, a positively iridescent and gilded card representing the first of all the "great exhibitions" of our age, the London Crystal Palace of 1851—his father having lately gone out to it and sent him the dazzling memento. In 1851 I was eight years old and my brother scarce more than nine; in addition to which it is distinct to me in the first place that we were never faithful long, or for more than one winter, to the same studious scene, and in the second that among our instructors Mrs. Lavinia had no successor of her own sex unless I count Mrs. Vredenburg, of New Brighton, where we spent the summer of 1854, when I had reached the age of eleven and found myself bewildered by recognition of the part that "attendance at school" was so meanly to play in the hitherto unclouded long vacation. This was true at least for myself and my next younger brother, Wilky, who, under the presumption now dawning of his "community of pursuits" with my own, was from that moment, off and on, for a few years, my extremely easy yokefellow and playfellow. On William, charged with learning—

I thought of him inveterately from our younger time as charged with learning—no such trick was played; he rested or roamed, that summer, on his accumulations; a fact which, as I was sure I saw these more and more richly accumulate, didn't in the least make me wonder. It comes back to me in truth that I had been prepared for anything by his having said to me toward the end of our time at Lavinia D's and with characteristic authority—his enjoyment of it coming from my character, I mean, quite as much as from his own—that that lady was a very able woman, as shown by the Experiments upstairs. He was upstairs of course, and I was down, and I scarce even knew what Experiments were, beyond their indeed requiring capability. The region of their performance was William's natural sphere, though I recall that I had a sense of peeping into it to a thrilled effect on seeing our instructress illustrate the proper way to extinguish a candle. She firmly pressed the flame between her thumb and her two forefingers, and, on my remarking that I didn't see how she could do it, promptly replied that I of course couldn't do it myself (as *he* could) because I should be afraid.

That reflection on my courage awakes another echo of the same scant season—since the test involved must have been that of our taking our way home through Fourth Avenue from some point up town, and Mrs. Wright's situation in East Twenty-first Street was such a point. The Hudson River Railroad was then in course of construction, or was being made to traverse the upper reaches of the city, through that part of which raged, to

my young sense, a riot of explosion and a great shouting and waving of red flags when the gunpowder introduced into the rocky soil was about to take effect. It was our theory that our passage there, in the early afternoon, was beset with danger, and our impression that we saw fragments of rock hurtle through the air and smite to the earth another and yet another of the persons engaged or exposed. The point of honour, among several of us, was of course nobly to defy the danger, and I feel again the emotion with which I both hoped and feared that the red flags, lurid signals descried from afar, would enable or compel us to renew the feat. That I didn't for myself inveterately renew it I seem to infer from the memory of other perambulations of the period—as to which I am divided between their still present freshness and my sense of perhaps making too much of these tiny particles of history. My stronger rule, however, I confess, and the one by which I must here consistently be guided, is that, from the moment it is a question of projecting a picture, no particle that counts for memory or is appreciable to the spirit *can* be too tiny, and that experience, in the name of which one speaks, is all compact of them and shining with them. There was at any rate another way home, with other appeals, which consisted of getting straight along westward to Broadway, a sphere of a different order of fascination and bristling, as I seem to recall, with more vivid aspects, greater curiosities and wonderments. *The* curiosity was of course the country-place, as I supposed it to be, on the northeast corner of Eighteenth Street, if I am not

mistaken; a big brown house in "grounds" peopled with animal life, which, little as its site may appear to know it to-day, lingered on into considerably later years. I have but to close my eyes in order to open them inwardly again, while I lean against the tall brown iron rails and peer through, to a romantic view of browsing and pecking and parading creatures, not numerous, but all of distinguished appearance: two or three elegant little cows of refined form and colour, two or three nibbling fawns and a larger company, above all, of peacocks and guineafowl, with, doubtless—though as to this I am vague—some of the commoner ornaments of the barnyard. I recognise that the scene as I evoke it fails of grandeur; but it none the less had for me the note of greatness—all of which but shows of course what a very town-bred small person I was, and was to remain.

I see myself moreover as somehow always alone in these and like New York *flâneries* and contemplations, and feel how the sense of my being so, being at any rate master of my short steps, such as they were, through all the beguiling streets, was probably the very savour of each of my chance feasts. Which stirs in me at the same time some wonder at the liberty of range and opportunity of adventure allowed to my tender age; though the puzzle may very well drop, after all, as I ruefully reflect that I couldn't have been judged at home reckless or adventurous. What I look back to as my infant license can only have had for its ground some timely conviction on the part of my elders that the only form of riot or revel ever known to me would be that

of the visiting mind. Wasn't I myself for that matter even at that time all acutely and yet resignedly, even quite fatalistically, aware of what to think of this? I at any rate watch the small boy dawdle and gape again. I smell the cold dusty paint and iron as the rails of the Eighteenth Street corner rub his contemplative nose, and, feeling him foredoomed, withhold from him no grain of my sympathy. He is a convenient little image or warning of all that was to be for him, and he might well have been even happier than he was. For there was the very pattern and measure of all he was to demand: just to *be* somewhere—almost anywhere would do—and somehow receive an impression or an accession, feel a relation or a vibration. He was to go without many things, ever so many—as all persons do in whom contemplation takes so much the place of action; but everywhere, in the years that came soon after, and that in fact continued long, in the streets of great towns, in New York still for some time, and then for a while in London, in Paris, in Geneva, wherever it might be, he was to enjoy more than anything the so far from showy practice of wondering and dawdling and gaping: he was really, I think, much to profit by it. What it at all appreciably gave him—that is gave him in producible form—would be difficult to state; but it seems to him, as he even now thus indulges himself, an education like another: feeling, as he has come to do more and more, that no education avails for the intelligence that doesn't stir in it some subjective passion, and that on the other hand almost anything that does so act is largely educative, however small a figure the

process might make in a scheme of training. Strange indeed, furthermore, are some of the things that *have* stirred a subjective passion—stirred it, I mean, in young persons predisposed to a more or less fine inspired application.

III

But I positively dawdle and gape here—I catch myself in the act; so that I take up the thread of fond reflection that guides me through that mystification of the summer school, which I referred to a little way back, at the time when the Summer School as known in America to-day was so deep in the bosom of the future. The seat of acquisition I speak of must have been contiguous to the house we occupied—I recall it as most intimately and objectionably near—and carried on in the interest of those parents from New York who, in villeggiatura under the queer conditions of those days, with the many modern mitigations of the gregarious lot still unrevealed and the many refinements on the individual one still undeveloped, welcomed almost any influence that might help at all to form their children to civility. Yet I remember that particular influence as more noisy and drowsy and dusty than anything else—as to which it must have partaken strongly of the general nature of New Brighton; a neighbourhood that no apt agency whatever had up to that time concerned itself to fashion, and that was indeed to remain shabbily shapeless for years; since I recall almost as dire an impression of it received in the summer of 1875. I seem more or less to have begun life, for that matter, with impressions of New Brighton; there comes back to me another, considerably more infantile than that of 1854, so infantile indeed that I wonder at

its having stuck—that of a place called the Pavilion, which must have been an hotel sheltering us for July and August, and the form of which to childish retrospect, unprejudiced by later experience, was that of a great Greek temple shining over blue waters in the splendour of a white colonnade and a great yellow pediment. The elegant image remained, though imprinted in a child so small as to be easily portable by a stout nurse, I remember, and not less easily duckable; I gasp again, and was long to gasp, with the sense of salt immersion received at her strong hands. Wonderful altogether in fact, I find as I write, the quantity, the intensity of picture recoverable from even the blankest and tenderest state of the little canvas.

I connect somehow with the Pavilion period a visit paid with my father—who decidedly must have liked to take me about, I feel so rich in that general reminiscence—to a family whom we reached in what struck me as a quite lovely embowered place, on a very hot day, and among whom luxuries and eccentricities flourished together. They were numerous, the members of this family, they were beautiful, they partook of their meals, or were at the moment partaking of one, out of doors, and the then pre-eminent figure in the group was a very big Newfoundland dog on whose back I was put to ride. That must have been my first vision of the liberal life—though I further ask myself what my age could possibly have been when my weight was so fantastically far from hinting at later developments. But the romance of the hour was particularly in what I have called the eccentric note,

the fact that the children, my entertainers, riveted my gaze to stockingless and shoeless legs and feet, conveying somehow at the same time that they were not poor and destitute but rich and provided—just as I took their garden-feast for a sign of overflowing food—and that their state as of children of nature was a refinement of freedom and grace. They were to become great and beautiful, the household of that glimmering vision, they were to figure historically, heroically, and serve great public ends; but always, to my remembering eyes and fond fancy, they were to move through life as with the bare white feet of that original preferred fairness and wildness. This is rank embroidery, but the old surface itself insists on spreading—it waits at least with an air of its own. The rest is silence; I can—extraordinary encumbrance even for the most doating of parents on a morning call—but have returned with my father to "our hotel"; since I feel that I must not only to this but to a still further extent face the historic truth that we were for considerable periods, during our earliest time, nothing less than hotel children. Between the far-off and the later phases at New Brighton stretched a series of summers that had seen us all regularly installed for a couple of months at an establishment passing in the view of that simpler age for a vast caravansery—the Hamilton House, on the south Long Island shore, so called from its nearness to the Fort of that name, which had Fort Lafayette, the Bastille of the Civil War, out in the channel before it and which probably cast a stronger spell upon the spirit of our childhood, William's and mine at least,

than any scene presented to us up to our reaching our teens.

I find that I draw from the singularly unobliterated memory of the particulars of all that experience the power quite to glory in our shame; of so entrancing an interest did I feel it at the time to *be* an hotel child, and so little would I have exchanged my lot with that of any small person more privately bred. We were private enough in all conscience, I think I must have felt, the rest of the year; and at what age mustn't I quite have succumbed to the charm of the world seen in a larger way? For there, incomparably, was the chance to dawdle and gape; there were human appearances in endless variety and on the exhibition-stage of a piazza that my gape measured almost as by miles; it was even as if I had become positively conscious that the social scene so peopled would pretty well always say more to me than anything else. What it did say I of course but scantily understood; but I none the less knew it spoke, and I listened to its voice, I seem to recall, very much as "young Edwin," in Dr. Beattie's poem, listened to the roar of tempests and torrents from the nobler eminence of beetling crags and in exposure to still deeper abysses. I cling for the moment, however, to the small story of our Vredenburg summer, as we were for long afterwards invidiously to brand it; the more that it so plays its part in illustration, under the light of a later and happier age, of the growth, when not rather of the arrest, of manners and customs roundabout our birthplace. I think we had never been so much as during these particular months disinherited of the

general and public amenities that reinforce for the young private precept and example—disinherited in favour of dust and glare and mosquitoes and pigs and shanties and rumshops, of no walks and scarce more drives, of a repeated no less than of a strong emphasis on the more sordid sides of the Irish aspect in things. There was a castellated residence on the hill above us—very high I remember supposing the hill and very stately the structure; it had towers and views and pretensions and belonged to a Colonel, whom we thought very handsome and very costumed, (as if befrogged and high-booted, which he couldn't have been at all, only *ought* to have been, would even certainly have been at a higher pitch of social effect,) and whose son and heir, also very handsome and known familiarly and endearingly as Chick, had a velvet coat and a pony and I think spurs, all luxuries we were without, and was cousin to boys, the De Coppets, whom we had come to know at our school of the previous winter and who somehow—doubtless partly as guests of the opulent Chick—hovered again about the field of idleness.

The De Coppets, particularly in the person of the first-born Louis, had been a value to us, or at any rate to me—for though I was, in common with my elders then, unacquainted with the application of that word as I use it here, what was my incipient sense of persons and things, what were my first stirred observant and imaginative reactions, discriminations and categories, but a vague groping for it? The De Coppets (again as more especially and most impressively interpreted by the

subtle Louis) enjoyed the pre-eminence of being European; they had dropped during the scholastic term of 1853-4 straight from the lake of Geneva into the very bosom of Mr. Richard Pulling Jenks's select resort for young gentlemen, then situated in Broadway below Fourth Street; and had lately been present at an historic pageant—whether or no celebrating the annals of the town of Coppet I know not—in which representatives of their family had figured in armour and on horseback as the Barons (to our comprehension) de Coup or Cou. Their father was thus of the Canton de Vaud—only their mother had been native among ourselves and sister to the Colonel of the castellations. But what was the most vivid mark of the brothers, and vividest on the part of the supersubtle Louis, was his French treatment of certain of our native local names, Ohio and Iowa for instance, which he rendered, as to their separate vowels, with a daintiness and a delicacy invidious and imperturbable, so that he might have been Chateaubriand declaiming *Les Natchez* at Madame Récamier's—O-ee-oh and Ee-o-wah; a proceeding in him, a violence offered to his serried circle of little staring and glaring New Yorkers supplied with the usual allowance of fists and boot-toes, which, as it was clearly conscious, I recollect thinking unsurpassed for cool calm courage. Those *were* the right names—which we owed wholly to the French explorers and Jesuit Fathers; so much the worse for us if we vulgarly didn't know it. I lose myself in admiration of the consistency, the superiority, the sublimity, of the not at all game-playing, yet in

his own way so singularly sporting, Louis. He was naturally and incorruptibly French—as, so oddly, I have known other persons of both sexes to be whose English was naturally and incorruptibly American; the appearance being thus that the possession of indigenous English alone forms the adequate barrier and the assured racial ground. (Oh the queer reversions observed on the part of Latinized compatriots in the course of a long life—the remarkable drops from the quite current French or Italian to the comparatively improvised native idiom, with the resulting effect of the foreign tongue used as a domestic and the domestic, that is the original American, used as a foreign tongue, or without inherited confidence!)

Louis De Coppet, though theoretically American and domiciled, was *naturally* French, and so pressed further home to me that "sense of Europe" to which I feel that my very earliest consciousness waked—a perversity that will doubtless appear to ask for all the justification I can supply and some of which I shall presently attempt to give. He opened vistas, and I count ever as precious anyone, everyone, who betimes does that for the small straining vision; performing this office never so much, doubtless, as when, during that summer, he invited me to collaborate with him in the production of a romance which *il se fit fort* to get printed, to get published, when success, or in other words completion, should crown our effort. Our effort, alas, failed of the crown, in spite of sundry solemn and mysterious meetings—so much devoted, I seem to remember, to

the publishing question that others more fundamental dreadfully languished; leaving me convinced, however, that my friend would have got our fiction published if he could only have got it written. I think of my participation in this vain dream as of the very first gage of visiting approval offered to the exercise of a gift—though quite unable to conceive my companion's ground for suspecting a gift of which I must at that time quite have failed to exhibit a single in the least "phenomenal" symptom. It had none the less by his overtures been handsomely *imputed* to me; that was in a manner a beginning—a small start, yet not wholly unattended with bravery. Louis De Coppet, I must add, brought to light later on, so far as I know, no compositions of his own; we met him long after in Switzerland and eventually heard of his having married a young Russian lady and settled at Nice. If I drop on his memory this apology for a bay-leaf it is from the fact of his having given the earliest, or at least the most personal, tap to that pointed prefigurement of the manners of "Europe," which, inserted wedge-like, if not to say peg-like, into my young allegiance, was to split the tender organ into such unequal halves. His the toy hammer that drove in the very point of the golden nail.

It was as if there had been a mild magic in that breath, however scant, of another world; but when I ask myself what element of the pleasing or the agreeable may have glimmered through the then general, the outer and enveloping conditions, I recover many more of the connections in which forms and civilities

lapsed beyond repair than of those in which they struggled at all successfully. It is for some record of the question of taste, of the consciousness of an æsthetic appeal, as reflected in forms and aspects, that I shall like best to testify; as the promise and the development of these things on our earlier American scene are the more interesting to trace for their doubtless demanding a degree of the finer attention. The plain and happy profusions and advances and successes, as one looks back, reflect themselves at every turn; the quick beats of material increase and multiplication, with plenty of people to tell of them and throw up their caps for them; but the edifying matters to recapture would be the adventures of the "higher criticism" so far as there was any—and so far too as it might bear on the real quality and virtue of things; the state of manners, the terms of intercourse, the care for excellence, the sense of appearances, the intellectual reaction generally. However, any breasting of those deep waters must be but in the form for me of an occasional dip. It meanwhile fairly overtakes and arrests me here as a contributive truth that our general medium of life in the situation I speak of was such as to make a large defensive verandah, which seems to have very stoutly and completely surrounded us, play more or less the part of a raft of rescue in too high a tide—too high a tide there beneath us, as I recover it, of the ugly and the graceless. My particular perspective may magnify a little wildly—when it doesn't even more weirdly diminish; but I read into the great hooded and guarded resource in question an evidential force:

as if it must really have played for us, so far as its narrowness and its exposure permitted, the part of a buffer-state against the wilderness immediately near, that of the empty, the unlovely and the mean. Interposing a little ease, didn't it interpose almost all the ease we knew?—so that when amiable friends, arriving from New York by the boat, came to see us, there was no rural view for them but that of our great shame, a view of the pigs and the shanties and the loose planks and scattered refuse and rude public ways; never even a field-path for a gentle walk or a garden nook in afternoon shade. I recall my prompt distaste, a strange precocity of criticism, for so much aridity—since of what lost Arcadia, at that age, had I really had the least glimpse?

Our scant margin must have affected me more nobly, I should in justice add, when old Mrs. L. passed or hovered, for she sometimes caustically joined the circle and sometimes, during the highest temperatures, which were very high that summer, but flitted across it in a single flowing garment, as we amazedly conceived; one of the signs of that grand impertinence, I supposed, which belonged to "dowagers"—dowagers who were recognised characters and free speakers, doing and saying what they liked. This ancient lady was lodged in some outlying tract of the many-roomed house, which in more than one quarter stretched away into mystery; but the piazza, to which she had access, was unbroken, and whenever she strayed from her own territory she swam afresh into ours. I definitely remember that, having heard and perhaps read of dowagers, who, as I was

aware, had scarce been provided for in our social scheme, I said to myself at first sight of our emphatic neighbour, a person clearly used to exceptional deference, "This must be a perfect specimen;" which was somehow very wonderful. The absolute first sight, however, had preceded the New Brighton summer, and it makes me lose myself in a queer dim vision, all the obscurities attendant on my having been present, as a very small boy indeed, at an evening entertainment where Mrs. L. figured in an attire that is still vivid to me: a blue satin gown, a long black lace shawl and a head-dress consisting in equally striking parts of a brown wig, a plume of some sort waving over it and a band or fillet, whether of some precious metal or not I forget, keeping it in place by the aid of a precious stone which adorned the centre of her brow. Such was my first view of the *féronnière* of our grandmothers, when not of our greatgrandmothers. I see its wearer at this day bend that burdened brow upon me in a manner sufficiently awful, while her knuckly white gloves toyed with a large fan and a vinaigrette attached to her thumb by a chain; and as she was known to us afterwards for a friend of my Albany grandmother's it may have been as a tribute to this tie that she allowed me momentarily to engage her attention. *Then* it predominantly must have been that I knew her for a dowager—though this was a light in which I had never considered my grandmother herself; but what I have quite lost the clue to is the question of my extraordinary footing in such an assembly, the occasion of a dance of my elders, youthful elders but young

married people, into which, really, my mother, as a participant, must have introduced me.

IV

It took place in the house of our cousins Robert and Kitty Emmet the elder—for we were to have two cousin Kittys of that ilk and yet another consanguineous Robert at least; the latter name being naturally, among them all, of a pious, indeed of a glorious, tradition, and three of my father's nieces marrying three Emmet brothers, the first of these the Robert aforesaid. Catherine James, daughter of my uncle Augustus, his then quite recent and, as I remember her, animated and attractive bride, whose fair hair framed her pointed smile in full and far-drooping "front" curls, I easily evoke as my first apprehended image of the free and happy young woman of fashion, a sign of the wondrous fact that ladies might live for pleasure, pleasure always, pleasure alone. She was distinguished for nothing whatever so much as for an insatiable love of the dance; that passion in which I think of the "good," the best, New York society of the time as having capered and champagned itself away. Her younger sister Gertrude, afterwards married to James—or more inveterately Jim—Pendleton, of Virginia, followed close upon her heels, literally speaking, and though emulating her in other respects too, was to last, through many troubles, much longer (looking extraordinarily the while like the younger portraits of Queen Victoria) and to have much hospitality, showing it, and showing everything, in a singularly natural way, for a

considerable collection of young hobbledehoy kinsmen. But I am solicited a moment longer by the queer little issues involved—as if a social light would somehow stream from them—in my having been taken, a mere mite of observation, to Kitty Emmet's "grown-up" assembly. Was it that my mother really felt that to the scrap that I was other scraps would perhaps strangely adhere, to the extent thus of something to distinguish me by, nothing else probably having as yet declared itself—such a scrap for instance as the fine germ of this actual ferment of memory and play of fancy, a retroactive vision almost intense of the faded hour and a fond surrender to the questions with which it bristles? All the female relatives on my father's side who reappear to me in these evocations strike me as having been intensely and admirably, but at the same time almost indescribably, *natural*; which fact connects itself for the brooding painter and fond analyst with fifty other matters and impressions, his vision of a whole social order—if the American scene might indeed have been said at that time to be positively ordered. Wasn't the fact that the dancing passion was so out of proportion to any social resource just one of the signs of the natural?—and for that matter in both sexes alike of the artless kindred. It was shining to us that Jim Pendleton had a yacht—though I was not smuggled aboard it; there the line was drawn—but the deck must have been more used for the "German" than for other manœuvres, often doubtless under the lead of our cousin Robert, the eldest of the many light irresponsibles to whom my father was uncle: distinct to

me still being the image of that phenomenally lean and nimble choreographic hero, "Bob" James to us always, who, almost ghost-fashion, led the cotillion on from generation to generation, his skull-like smile, with its accent from the stiff points of his long moustache and the brightly hollow orbits of his eyes, helping to make of him an immemorial elegant skeleton.

It is at all events to the sound of fiddles and the popping of corks that I see even young brides, as well as young grooms, originally so formed to please and to prosper as our hosts of the restless little occasion I have glanced at, vanish untimely, become mysterious and legendary, with such unfathomed silences and significant headshakes replacing the earlier concert; so that I feel how one's impression of so much foredoomed youthful levity received constant and quite thrilling increase. It was of course an impression then obscurely gathered, but into which one was later on to read strange pages—to some of which I may find myself moved to revert. Mere mite of observation though I have dubbed myself, I won't pretend to have deciphered any of them amid the bacchanal sounds that, on the evening so suggestively spent, floated out into the region of Washington Place. It is round that general centre that my richest memories of the "gay" little life in general cluster—as if it had been, for the circle in which I seem justified in pretending to have "moved," of the finer essence of "town"; covering as it did the stretch of Broadway down to Canal Street, with, closer at hand, the New York Hotel, which figured somehow inordinately in our family annals (the two

newer ones, the glory of their brief and discredited, their flouted and demolished age, the brown Metropolitan and the white St. Nicholas, were much further down) and rising northward to the Ultima Thule of Twenty-third Street, only second then in the supposedly ample scheme of the regular ninth "wide" street. I can't indeed have moved much on that night of revelations and yet of enigmas over which I still hang fascinated; I must have kept intensely still in my corner, all wondering and all fearing—fearing notice most; and in a definite way I but remember the formidable interest of my so convincing dowager (to hark back for a second to *her*) and the fact that a great smooth white cloth was spread across the denuded room, converted thus into a field of frolic the prospect of which much excited my curiosity. I but recover the preparations, however, without recovering the performance; Mrs. L. and I must have been the only persons not shaking a foot, and premature unconsciousness clearly in my case supervened. Out of it peeps again the riddle, the so quaint *trait de mœurs*, of my infant participation. But I set that down as representative and interesting, and have done with it.

The manners of the time had obviously a *bonhomie* of their own—certainly so on our particularly indulgent and humane little field; as to which general proposition the later applications and transformations of the *bonhomie* would be interesting to trace. It has lingered and fermented and earned other names, but I seem on the track of its prime evidence with that note of the sovereign ease of all the young persons with whom we grew up. In the after-

time, as our view took in, with new climes and new scenes, other examples of the class, these were always to affect us as more formed and finished, more tutored and governessed, warned and armed at more points for, and doubtless often against, the social relation; so that this prepared state on their part, and which at first appeared but a preparation for shyness or silence or whatever other ideal of the unconvertible, came to be for us the normal, since it was the relative and not the positive, still less the superlative, state. No charming creatures of the growing girl sort were ever to be natural in the degree of these nearer and remoter ornaments of our family circle in youth; when after intervals and absences the impression was renewed we saw how right we had been about it, and I feel as if we had watched it for years under the apprehension and the vision of some inevitable change, wondering with an affectionate interest what effect the general improvement in manners might, perhaps all unfortunately, have upon it. I make out as I look back that it was really to succumb at no point to this complication, that it was to keep its really quite inimitable freshness to the end, or, in other words, when it had been the first free growth of the old conditions, was to pass away but with the passing of those themselves for whom it had been the sole possible expression. For it was as of an altogether special shade and sort that the New York young naturalness of our prime was touchingly to linger with us—so that to myself, at present, with only the gentle ghosts of the so numerous exemplars of it before me, it becomes the very stuff of the soft ceremonies

in which their general mild mortality is laid away. We used to have in the after-time, amid fresh recognitions and reminders, the kindest "old New York" identifications for it. The special shade of its identity was thus that it was not conscious—really not conscious of anything in the world; or was conscious of so few possibilities at least, and these so immediate and so a matter of course, that it came almost to the same thing. That was the testimony that the slight subjects in question strike me as having borne to their surrounding medium—the fact that their unconsciousness could be so preserved. They played about in it so happily and serenely and sociably, as unembarrassed and loquacious as they were unadmonished and uninformed—only aware at the most that a good many people within their horizon were "dissipated"; as in point of fact, alas, a good many *were*. What it was to be dissipated—that, however, was but in the most limited degree a feature of their vision; they would have held, under pressure, that it consisted more than anything else in getting tipsy.

Infinitely queer and quaint, almost incongruously droll, the sense somehow begotten in ourselves, as very young persons, of our being surrounded by a slightly remote, yet dimly rich, outer and quite kindred circle of the tipsy. I remember how, once, as a very small boy, after meeting in the hall a most amiable and irreproachable gentleman, all but closely consanguineous, who had come to call on my mother, I anticipated his further entrance by slipping in to report to that parent that I thought

he must be tipsy. And I was to recall perfectly afterwards the impression I so made on her—in which the general proposition that the gentlemen of a certain group or connection might on occasion be best described by the term I had used sought to destroy the particular presumption that our visitor wouldn't, by his ordinary measure, show himself for one of those. He didn't, to all appearance, for I was afterwards disappointed at the lapse of lurid evidence: that memory remained with me, as well as a considerable subsequent wonder at my having leaped to so baseless a view. The truth was indeed that we had too, in the most innocent way in the world, our sense of "dissipation" as an abounding element in family histories; a sense fed quite directly by our fondness for making our father—I can at any rate testify for the urgency of my own appeal to him—tell us stories of the world of his youth. He regaled us with no scandals, yet it somehow rarely failed to come out that each contemporary on his younger scene, each hero of each thrilling adventure, had, in spite of brilliant promise and romantic charm, ended badly, as badly as possible. This became our gaping generalisation—it gaped even under the moral that the anecdote was always, and so familiarly, humanly and vividly, designed to convey: everyone in the little old Albany of the Dutch houses and the steep streets and the recurrent family names—Townsend, Clintons, Van Rensselaers, Pruyns: I pick them up again at hazard, and all uninvincibly, out of reverberations long since still—everyone without exception had at last taken a turn as far as possible from

edifying. And what they had most in common, the hovering presences, the fitful apparitions that, speaking for myself, so engaged my imagination, was just the fine old Albany drama—in the light of which a ring of mystery as to their lives (mainly carried on at the New York Hotel aforesaid) surrounded them, and their charm, inveterate, as I believed, shone out as through vaguely-apprehended storm-clouds. Their charm was in various marks of which I shall have more to say—for as I breathe all this hushed air again even the more broken things give out touching human values and faint sweet scents of character, flushes of old beauty and good-will.

The grim little generalisation remained, none the less, and I may speak of it—since I speak of everything—as still standing: the striking evidence that scarce aught but disaster *could*, in that so unformed and unseasoned society, overtake young men who were in the least exposed. Not to have been immediately launched in business of a rigorous sort was to *be* exposed—in the absence I mean of some fairly abnormal predisposition to virtue; since it was a world so simply constituted that whatever wasn't business, or exactly an office or a "store," places in which people sat close and made money, was just simply pleasure, sought, and sought only, in places in which people got tipsy. There was clearly no mean, least of all the golden one, for it was just the ready, even when the moderate, possession of gold that determined, that hurried on, disaster. There were whole sets and groups, there were "sympathetic," though too susceptible, races, that seemed

scarce to recognise or to find possible any practical application of moneyed, that is of transmitted, ease, however limited, but to go more or less rapidly to the bad with it—which meant even then going as often as possible to Paris. The bright and empty air was as void of "careers" for a choice as of cathedral towers for a sketcher, and I passed my younger time, till within a year or two of the Civil War, with an absolute vagueness of impression as to how the political life of the country was carried on. The field was strictly covered, to my young eyes, I make out, by three classes, the busy, the tipsy, and Daniel Webster. This last great man must have represented for us a class in himself; as if to be "political" was just to *be* Daniel Webster in his proper person and with room left over for nobody else. That he should have filled the sky of public life from pole to pole, even to a childish consciousness not formed in New England and for which that strenuous section was but a name in the geography-book, is probably indeed a sign of how large, in the general air, he comparatively loomed. The public scene was otherwise a blank to our young vision, I discern, till, later on, in Paris, I saw—for at that unimproved period we of the unfledged didn't suppose ourselves to "meet"—Charles Sumner; with whose name indeed there further connects itself the image of a thrilled hour in the same city some months before: the gathering of a group of indignant persons on the terrace of a small old-world *hôtel* or pavilion looking out on the Avenue des Champs Elysées, slightly above the Rond-Point and just opposite the antediluvian Jardin d'Hiver (who remembers the

Jardin d'Hiver, who remembers the ancient lodges of the *octroi*, the pair of them facing each other at the Barrière de l'Étoile?) and among them a passionate lady in tears over the news, fresh that morning, of the assault on Sumner by the South Carolina ruffian of the House. The wounded Senator, injured in health, had come to Europe later on to recuperate, and he offered me my first view, to the best of my belief, not only of a "statesman," but of any person whomsoever concerned in political life. I distinguish in the earlier twilight of Fourteenth Street my father's return to us one November day—we knew he had been out to vote—with the news that General Winfield Scott, his and the then "Whig" candidate, had been defeated for the Presidency; just as I rescue from the same limbo my afterwards proud little impression of having "met" that high-piled hero of the Mexican War, whom the Civil War was so soon and with so little ceremony to extinguish, literally met him, at my father's side, in Fifth Avenue, where he had just emerged from a cross-street. I remain vague as to what had then happened and scarce suppose I was, at the age probably of eight or nine, "presented"; but we must have been for some moments face to face while from under the vast amplitude of a dark blue military cloak with a big velvet collar and loosened silver clasp, which spread about him like a symbol of the tented field, he greeted my parent—so clear is my sense of the time it took me to gape *all* the way up to where he towered aloft.

V

The not very glorious smoke of the Mexican War, I note for another touch, had been in the air when I was a still smaller boy, and I have an association with it that hovers between the definite and the dim, a vision of our uncle (Captain as he then was) Robert Temple, U.S.A., in regimentals, either on his way to the scene of action or on the return from it. I see him as a person half asleep sees some large object across the room and against the window-light—even if to the effect of my now asking myself why, so far from the scene of action, he was in panoply of war. I seem to see him cock-hatted and feathered too—an odd vision of dancing superior plumes which doesn't fit if he was only a captain. However, I cultivate the wavering shade merely for its value as my earliest glimpse of any circumstance of the public order—unless indeed another, the reminiscence to which I owe to-day my sharpest sense of personal antiquity, had already given me the historic thrill. The scene of this latter stir of consciousness is, for memory, an apartment in one of the three Fifth Avenue houses that were not long afterward swallowed up in the present Brevoort Hotel, and consists of the admired appearance of my uncles "Gus" and John James to announce to my father that the Revolution had triumphed in Paris and Louis Philippe had fled to England. These last words, the flight of the king, linger on my ear at this hour even as they fell there; we had somehow

waked early to a perception of Paris, and a vibration of my very most infantine sensibility under its sky had by the same stroke got itself preserved for subsequent wondering reference. I had been there for a short time in the second year of my life, and I was to communicate to my parents later on that as a baby in long clothes, seated opposite to them in a carriage and on the lap of another person, I had been impressed with the view, framed by the clear window of the vehicle as we passed, of a great stately square surrounded with high-roofed houses and having in its centre a tall and glorious column. I had naturally caused them to marvel, but I had also, under cross-questioning, forced them to compare notes, as it were, and reconstitute the miracle. They knew what my observation of monumental squares had been—and alas hadn't; neither New York nor Albany could have offered me the splendid perspective, and, for that matter, neither could London, which moreover I had known at a younger age still. Conveyed along the Rue St.-Honoré while I waggled my small feet, as I definitely remember doing, under my flowing robe, I had crossed the Rue de Castiglione and taken in, for all my time, the admirable aspect of the Place and the Colonne Vendôme. I don't now pretend to measure the extent to which my interest in the events of 1848—I was five years old—was quickened by that *souvenir*, a tradition further reinforced, I should add, by the fact that some relative or other, some member of our circle, was always either "there" ("there" being of course generally Europe, but particularly and pointedly Paris) or going there or coming

back from there: I at any rate revert to the sound of the rich words on my uncles' lips as to my positive initiation into History. It was as if I had been ready for them and could catch on; I had heard of kings presumably, and also of fleeing: but that kings had sometimes to flee was a new and striking image, to which the apparent consternation of my elders added dramatic force. So much, in any case, for what I may claim—perhaps too idly—on behalf of my backward reach.

It has carried me far from my rather evident proposition that if we saw the "natural" so happily embodied about us—and in female maturity, or comparative maturity, scarce less than in female adolescence—this was because the artificial, or in other words the complicated, was so little there to threaten it. The complicated, as we were later on to define it, was but another name for those more massed and violent assaults upon the social sense that we were to recognise subsequently by their effects—observing thus that a sense more subtly social had so been created, and that it quite differed from that often almost complete inward blankness, in respect to any circumjacent, any constituted, order to the exhibition of which our earlier air and our family scene had inimitably treated us. We came more or less to see that our young contemporaries of another world, the trained and admonished, the disciplined and governessed, or in a word the formed, relatively speaking, had been made aware of many things of which those at home hadn't been; yet we were also to note—so far as we may be conceived as so precociously

"noting," though we were certainly incorrigible observers—that, the awareness in question remaining at the best imperfect, our little friends as distinguished from our companions of the cousinship, greater and less, advanced and presumed but to flounder and recede, elated at once and abashed and on the whole but *feebly* sophisticated. The cousinship, on the other hand, all unalarmed and unsuspecting and unembarrassed, lived by pure serenity, sociability and loquacity; the oddest fact about its members being withal that it didn't make them bores, I seem to feel as I look back, or at least not worse bores than sundry specimens of the other growth. There can surely never have been anything like their good faith and, generally speaking, their amiability. I should have but to let myself go a little to wish to cite examples—save that in doing so I should lose sight of my point; which is to recall again that whether we were all amiable or not (and, frankly, I claim it in a high degree for most of us) the scene on which we so freely bloomed does strike me, when I reckon up, as extraordinarily unfurnished. How came it then that for the most part so simple we yet weren't more inane? This was doubtless by reason of the quantity of our inward life—ours of our father's house in especial I mean—which made an excellent, in some cases almost an incomparable, *fond* for a thicker civility to mix with when growing experience should begin to take that in. It was also quaint, among us, I may be reminded, to have *begun* with the inward life; but we began, after the manner of all men, as we could, and I hold that if it comes to that we might

have begun much worse.

I was in my seventeenth year when the raid and the capture of John Brown, of Harper's Ferry fame, enjoyed its sharp reverberation among us, though we were then on the other side of the world; and I count this as the very first reminder that reached me of our living, on our side, in a political order: I had perfectly taken in from the pages of "Punch," which contributed in the highest degree to our education, that the peoples on the other side so lived. As there was no American "Punch," and to this time has been none, to give small boys the sense and the imagination of living with their public administrators, Daniel Webster and Charles Sumner had never become, for my fancy, members of a class, a class which numbered in England, by John Leech's showing, so many other members still than Lords Brougham, Palmerston and John Russell. The war of Secession, soon arriving, was to cause the field to bristle with features and the sense of the State, in our generation, infinitely to quicken; but that alarm came upon the country like a thief at night, and we might all have been living in a land in which there seemed at least nothing save a comparatively small amount of quite private property to steal. Even private property in other than the most modest amounts scarce figured for our particular selves; which doubtless came partly from the fact that amid all the Albany issue there was ease, with the habit of ease, thanks to our grandfather's fine old ability—he had decently provided for so large a generation; but our consciousness was positively

disfurnished, as that of young Americans went, of the actualities of "business" in a world of business. As to that we all formed together quite a monstrous exception; business in a world of business was the thing we most agreed (differ as we might on minor issues) in knowing nothing about. We touched it and it touched us neither directly nor otherwise, and I think our fond detachment, not to say our helpless ignorance and on occasion (since I can speak for one fine instance) our settled density of understanding, made us an unexampled and probably, for the ironic "smart" gods of the American heaven, a lamentable case. Of course even the office and the "store" leave much of the provision for an approximately complete scheme of manners to be accounted for; still there must have been vast numbers of people about us for whom, under the usages, the assault on the imagination from without was much stronger and the filling-in of the general picture much richer. It was exactly by the lack of that filling-in that we—we more especially who lived at near view of my father's admirable example—had been thrown so upon the inward life. No one could ever have taken to it, even in the face of discouragement, more kindly and naturally than he; but the situation had at least that charm that, in default of so many kinds of the outward, people had their choice of as many kinds of the inward as they would, and might practise those kinds with whatever consistency, intensity and brilliancy. Of our father's perfect gift for practising *his* kind I shall have more to say; but I meanwhile glance yet again at those felicities of destitution which

kept us, collectively, so genially interested in almost nothing but each other and which come over me now as one of the famous blessings in disguise.

There were "artists" in the prospect—didn't Mr. Tom Hicks and Mr. Paul Duggan and Mr. C. P. Cranch and Mr. Felix Darley, this last worthy of a wider reputation, capable perhaps even of a finer development, than he attained, more or less haunt our friendly fireside, and give us also the sense of others, landscapist Cropseys and Coles and Kensetts, and bust-producing Iveses and Powerses and Moziars, hovering in an outer circle? There were authors not less, some of them vague and female and in this case, as a rule, glossily ringletted and monumentally breastpinned, but mostly frequent and familiar, after the manner of George Curtis and Parke Godwin and George Ripley and Charles Dana and N. P. Willis and, for brighter lights or those that in our then comparative obscurity almost deceived the morn, Mr. Bryant, Washington Irving and E. A. Poe—the last-named of whom I cite not so much because he was personally present (the extremity of personal absence had just overtaken him) as by reason of that predominant lustre in him which our small opening minds themselves already recognised and which makes me wonder to-day at the legend of the native neglect of him. Was he not even at that time on all lips, had not my brother, promptly master of the subject, beckoned on my lagging mind with a recital of *The Gold-Bug* and *The Pit* and the *Pendulum*?—both of which, however, I was soon enough to read for myself, adding to

them The Murders in the Rue Morgue. Were we not also forever mounting on little platforms at our infant schools to "speak" The Raven and Lenore and the verses in which we phrased the heroine as Annabelle?—falling thus into the trap the poet had so recklessly laid for us, as he had laid one for our interminable droning, not less, in the other pieces I have named. So far from misprizing our ill-starred magician we acclaimed him surely at every turn; he lay upon our tables and resounded in our mouths, while we communed to satiety, even for boyish appetites, over the thrill of his choicest pages. Don't I just recognise the ghost of a dim memory of a children's Christmas party at the house of Fourteenth Street neighbours—they come back to me as "the Beans": who and what and whence and whither the kindly Beans?—where I admired over the chimney piece the full-length portrait of a lady seated on the ground in a Turkish dress, with hair flowing loose from a cap which was not as the caps of ladies known to me, and I think with a tambourine, who was somehow identified to my enquiring mind as the wife of the painter of the piece, Mr. Osgood, and the so ministering friend of the unhappy Mr. Poe. There she throned in honour, like Queen Constance on the "huge firm earth"—all for *that* and her tambourine; and surely we could none of us have done more for the connection.

Washington Irving I "met," with infant promptitude, very much as I had met General Scott; only this time it was on a steamboat that I apprehended the great man; my father, under whose ever-patient protection I then was—during the

summer afternoon's sail from New York to Fort Hamilton—having named him to me, for this long preservation, before they greeted and talked, and having a fact of still more moment to mention, with the greatest concern, afterwards: Mr. Irving had given him the news of the shipwreck of Margaret Fuller in those very waters (Fire Island at least was but just without our big Bay) during the great August storm that had within the day or two passed over us. The unfortunate lady was essentially of the Boston connection; but she must have been, and probably through Emerson, a friend of my parents—mustn't she have held "conversations," in the finest exotic Bostonese, in New York, Emerson himself lecturing there to admiration?—since the more I squeeze the sponge of memory the more its stored secretions flow, to remind me here again that, being with those elders late one evening at an exhibition of pictures, possibly that of the National Academy, then confined to scant quarters, I was shown a small full-length portrait of Miss Fuller, seated as now appears to me and wrapped in a long white shawl, the failure of which to do justice to its original my companions denounced with some emphasis. Was this work from the hand of Mr. Tom Hicks aforesaid, or was that artist concerned only with the life-sized, the enormous (as I took it to be) the full-length, the violently protruded accessories in which come back to me with my infant sense of the wonder and the beauty of them, as expressed above all in the image of a very long and lovely lady, the new bride of the artist, standing at a window before a row of plants or bulbs

in tall coloured glasses. The light of the window playing over the figure and the "treatment" of its glass and of the flower-pots and the other furniture, passed, by my impression, for the sign of the master hand; and *was* it all brave and charming, or was it only very hard and stiff, quite ugly and helpless? I put these questions as to a vanished world and by way of pressing back into it only the more clingingly and tenderly—wholly regardless in other words of whether the answers to them at all matter. They matter doubtless but for fond evocation, and if one tries to evoke one must neglect none of the arts, one must do it with all the forms. Why I *should* so like to do it is another matter—and what "outside interest" I may suppose myself to create perhaps still another: I fatuously proceed at any rate, I make so far as I can the small warm dusky homogeneous New York world of the mid-century close about us.

VI

I see a small and compact and ingenuous society, screened in somehow conveniently from north and west, but open wide to the east and comparatively to the south and, though perpetually moving up Broadway, none the less constantly and delightfully walking down it. Broadway was the feature and the artery, the joy and the adventure of one's childhood, and it stretched, and prodigiously, from Union Square to Barnum's great American Museum by the City Hall—or only went further on the Saturday mornings (absurdly and deplorably frequent alas) when we were swept off by a loving aunt, our mother's only sister, then much domesticated with us and to whom the ruthless care had assigned itself from the first, to Wall Street and the torture chamber of Dr. Parkhurst, our tremendously respectable dentist, who was so old and so empurpled and so polite, in his stock and dress-coat and dark and glossy wig, that he had been our mother's and our aunt's haunting fear in *their* youth as well, since, in their quiet Warren Street, not far off, they were, dreadful to think, comparatively under his thumb. He extremely resembles, to my mind's eye, certain figures in Phiz's illustrations to Dickens, and it was clear to us through our long ordeal that our elders must, by some mistaken law of compensation, some refinement of the vindictive, be making us "pay" for what they in like helplessness had suffered from him: as if *we* had done them any harm! Our

analysis was muddled, yet in a manner relieving, and for us too there were compensations, which we grudged indeed to allow, but which I could easily, even if shyly, have named. One of these was Godey's *Lady's Book*, a sallow pile of which (it shows to me for sallow in the warmer and less stony light of the Wall Street of those days and through the smell of ancient anodynes) lay on Joey Bagstock's table for our beguilement while we waited: I was to encounter in Phiz's *Dombey and Son* that design for our tormentor's type. There is no doubt whatever that I succumbed to the spell of Godey, who, unlike the present essences, was an anodyne before the fact as well as after; since I remember poring, in his pages, over tales of fashionable life in Philadelphia while awaiting my turn in the chair, not less than doing so when my turn was over and to the music of my brother's groans. This must have been at the hours when we were left discreetly to our own fortitude, through our aunt's availing herself of the relative proximity to go and shop at Stewart's and then come back for us; the ladies' great shop, vast, marmorean, plate-glassy and notoriously fatal to the female nerve (we ourselves had wearily trailed through it, hanging on the skirts, very literally, of indecision) which bravely waylaid custom on the Broadway corner of Chambers Street. Wasn't part of the charm of life—since I assume that there *was* such a charm—in its being then (I allude to life itself) so much more down-towny, on the supposition at least that our young gravitation in that sense for most of the larger joys consorted with something of the general

habit? The joy that had to be fished out, like Truth, from the very bottom of the well was attendance at Trinity Church, still in that age supereminent, pointedly absolute, the finest feature of the southward scene; to the privilege of which the elder Albany cousins were apt to be treated when they came on to stay with us; an indulgence making their enjoyment of our city as down-towny as possible too, for I seem otherwise to see them but as returning with the familiar Stewart headache from the prolonged strain of selection.

The great reward dispensed to us for our sessions in the house of pain—as to which it became our subsequent theory that we had been regularly dragged there on alternate Saturdays—was our being carried on the return to the house of delight, or to one of them, for there were specifically two, where we partook of ice-cream, deemed sovereign for sore mouths, deemed sovereign in fact, all through our infancy, for everything. Two great establishments for the service of it graced the prospect, one Thompson's and the other Taylor's, the former, I perfectly recall, grave and immemorial, the latter upstart but dazzling, and having together the effect that whichever we went to we wondered if we hadn't better have gone to the other—with that capacity of childhood for making the most of its adventures after a fashion that may look so like making the least. It is in our father's company indeed that, as I press the responsive spring, I see the bedizened saucers heaped up for our fond consumption (they bore the Taylor-title painted in blue and gilded, with the

Christian name, as parentally pointed out to us, perverted to "Jhon" for John, whereas the Thompson-name scorned such vulgar and above all such misspelt appeals;) whence I infer that still other occasions for that experience waited on us—as almost any would serve, and a paternal presence so associated with them was not in the least conceivable in the Wall Street *repaire*. That presence is in fact not associated for me, to any effect of distinctness, with the least of our suffered shocks or penalties—though partly doubtless because our acquaintance with such was of the most limited; a conclusion I form even while judging it to have been on the whole sufficient for our virtue. This sounds perhaps as if we had borne ourselves as prodigies or prigs—which was as far as possible from being the case; we were bred in horror of *conscious* propriety, of what my father was fond of calling "flagrant" morality; what I myself at any rate read back into our rare educational ease, for the memory of some sides of which I was ever to be thankful, is, besides the *general* humanisation of our apprehended world and our "social" tone, the unmistakeable appearance that my father was again and again accompanied in public by his small second son: so many young impressions come back to me as gathered at his side and in his personal haunts. Not that he mustn't have offered his firstborn at least equal opportunities; but I make out that he seldom led us forth, such as we were, together, and my brother must have had in *his* turn many a mild adventure of which the secret—I like to put it so—perished with him. He was to remember,

as I perceived later on, many things that I didn't, impressions I sometimes wished, as with a retracing jealousy, or at least envy, that I might also have fallen direct heir to; but he professed amazement, and even occasionally impatience, at my reach of reminiscence—liking as he did to brush away old moral scraps in favour of new rather than to hoard and so complacently exhibit them. If in my way I collected the new as well I yet cherished the old; the ragbag of memory hung on its nail in my closet, though I learnt with time to control the habit of bringing it forth. And I say that with a due sense of my doubtless now appearing to empty it into these pages.

I keep picking out at hazard those passages of our earliest age that help to reconstruct for me even by tiny touches the experience of our parents, any shade of which seems somehow to signify. I cherish, to the extent of here reproducing, an old daguerreotype all the circumstances of the taking of which I intensely recall—though as I was lately turned twelve when I figured for it the feat of memory is perhaps not remarkable. It documents for me in so welcome and so definite a manner my father's cultivation of my company. It documents at the same time the absurdest little legend of my small boyhood—the romantic tradition of the value of being taken up from wherever we were staying to the queer empty dusty smelly New York of midsummer: I apply that last term because we always arrived by boat and I have still in my nostril the sense of the *abords* of the hot town, the rank and rubbishy waterside quarters,

where big loose cobbles, for the least of all the base items, lay wrenched from their sockets of pungent black mud and where the dependent streets managed by a law of their own to be all corners and the corners to be all groceries; groceries indeed largely of the "green" order, so far as greenness could persist in the torrid air, and that bristled, in glorious defiance of traffic, with the overflow of their wares and implements. Carts and barrows and boxes and baskets, sprawling or stacked, familiarly elbowed in its course the bumping hack (the comprehensive "carriage" of other days, the only vehicle of hire then known to us) while the situation was accepted by the loose citizen in the garb of a freeman save for the brass star on his breast—and the New York garb of the period was, as I remember it, an immense attestation of liberty. Why the throb of romance should have beat time for me to such visions I can scarce explain, or can explain only by the fact that the squalor was a squalor wonderfully mixed and seasoned, and that I should wrong the whole impression if I didn't figure it first and foremost as that of some vast succulent cornucopia. What did the stacked boxes and baskets of our youth represent but the boundless fruitage of that more bucolic age of the American world, and what was after all of so strong an assault as the rankness of such a harvest? Where is that fruitage now, where in particular are the peaches *d'antan*? where the mounds of Isabella grapes and Seckel pears in the sticky sweetness of which our childhood seems to have been steeped? It was surely, save perhaps for oranges, a more informally and familiarly fruit-

eating time, and bushels of peaches in particular, peaches big and peaches small, peaches white and peaches yellow, played a part in life from which they have somehow been deposed; every garden, almost every bush and the very boys' pockets grew them; they were "cut up" and eaten with cream at every meal, domestically "brandied" they figured, the rest of the year, scarce less freely—if they were rather a "party dish" it was because they made the party whenever they appeared, and when ice-cream was added, or they were added *to* it, they formed the highest revel we knew. Above all the public heaps of them, the high-piled receptacles at every turn, touched the street as with a sort of southern plenty; the note of the rejected and scattered fragments, the memory of the slippery skins and rinds and kernels with which the old dislocated flags were bestrown, is itself endeared to me and contributes a further pictorial grace. We ate everything in those days by the bushel and the barrel, as from stores that were infinite; we handled watermelons as freely as cocoanuts, and the amount of stomach-ache involved was negligible in the general Eden-like consciousness.

The glow of this consciousness even in so small an organism was part of the charm of these retreats offered me cityward upon our base of provisions; a part of the rest of which, I disengage, was in my fond perception of that almost eccentrically home-loving habit in my father which furnished us with half the household humour of our childhood—besides furnishing *him* with any quantity of extravagant picture of his so prompt

pangs of anguish in absence for celebration of his precipitate returns. It was traditional for us later on, and especially on the European scene, that for him to leave us in pursuit of some advantage or convenience, some improvement of our condition, some enlargement of our view, was for him breathlessly to reappear, after the shortest possible interval, with no account at all to give of the benefit aimed at, but instead of this a moving representation, a far richer recital, of his spiritual adventures at the horrid inhuman inns and amid the hard alien races which had stayed his advance. He reacted, he rebounded, in favour of his fireside, from whatever brief explorations or curiosities; these passionate spontaneities were the pulse of his life and quite some of the principal events of ours; and, as he was nothing if not expressive, whatever happened to him for inward intensity happened abundantly to us for pity and terror, as it were, as well as for an ease and a quality of amusement among ourselves that was really always to fail us among others. Comparatively late in life, after his death, I had occasion to visit, in lieu of my brother, then in Europe, an American city in which he had had, since his own father's death, interests that were of importance to us all. On my asking the agent in charge when the owner had last taken personal cognisance of his property that gentleman replied only half to my surprise that he had never in all his years of possession performed such an act. Then it was perhaps that I most took the measure of his fine faith in human confidence as an administrative function. He had to have

a *relation*, somehow expressed—and as he was the vividest and happiest of letter-writers it rarely failed of coming; but once it was established it served him, in every case, much better than fussy challenges, which had always the drawback of involving lapses and inattentions in regard to solitudes more pressing. He incurably took for granted—incurably because whenever he did so the process succeeded; with which association, however, I perhaps overdrench my complacent vision of our summer snatches at town. Through a grave accident in early life country walks on rough roads were, in spite of his great constitutional soundness, tedious and charmless to him; he liked on the other hand the peopled pavement, the thought of which made him restless when away. Hence the fidelities and sociabilities, however superficial, that he couldn't *not* reaffirm—if he could only reaffirm the others, the really intimate and still more communicable, soon enough afterwards.

It was these of the improvised and casual sort that I shared with him thus indelibly; for truly if we took the boat to town to do things I did them quite as much as he, and so that a little boy could scarce have done them more. My part may indeed but have been to surround his part with a thick imaginative aura; but that constituted for me an activity than which I could dream of none braver or wilder. We went to the office of The New York Tribune—my father's relations with that journal were actual and close; and that was a wonderful world indeed, with strange steepnesses and machineries and noises and hurrying

bare-armed, bright-eyed men, and amid the agitation clever, easy, kindly, jocular, partly undressed gentlemen (it was always July or August) some of whom I knew at home, taking it all as if it were the most natural place in the world. It was big to me, big to me with the breath of great vague connections, and I supposed the gentlemen very old, though since aware that they must have been, for the connections, remarkably young; and the conversation of one of them, the one I saw oftenest up town, who attained to great local and to considerable national eminence afterwards, and who talked often and thrillingly about the theatres, I retain as many bright fragments of as if I had been another little Boswell. It was as if he had dropped into my mind the germ of certain interests that were long afterwards to flower—as for instance on his announcing the receipt from Paris of news of the appearance at the Théâtre Français of an actress, Madame Judith, who was formidably to compete with her coreligionary Rachel and to endanger that artist's laurels. Why should Madame Judith's name have stuck to me through all the years, since I was never to see her and she is as forgotten as Rachel is remembered? Why should that scrap of gossip have made a date for my consciousness, turning it to the Comédie with an intensity that was long afterwards to culminate? Why was it equally to abide for me that the same gentleman had on one of these occasions mentioned his having just come back from a wonderful city of the West, Chicago, which, though but a year or two old, with plank sidewalks when there were any, and holes

and humps where there were none, and shanties where there were not big blocks, and everything where there had yesterday been nothing, had already developed a huge energy and curiosity, and also an appetite for lectures? I became aware of the Comédie, I became aware of Chicago; I also became aware that even the most alluring fiction was not always for little boys to read. It was mentioned at the Tribune office that one of its reporters, Mr. Solon Robinson, had put forth a novel rather oddly entitled "Hot Corn" and more or less having for its subject the career of a little girl who hawked that familiar American luxury in the streets. The volume, I think, was put into my father's hand, and I recall my prompt desire to make acquaintance with it no less than the remark, as promptly addressed to my companion, that the work, however engaging, was not one that should be left accessible to an innocent child. The pang occasioned by this warning has scarcely yet died out for me, nor my sense of my first wonder at the discrimination—so great became from that moment the mystery of the tabooed book, of whatever identity; the question, in my breast, of why, if it was to be so right for others, it was only to be wrong for me. I remember the soreness of the thought that it was I rather who was wrong for the book—which was somehow humiliating: in that amount of discredit one couldn't but be involved. Neither then nor afterwards was the secret of "Hot Corn" revealed to me, and the sense of privation was to be more prolonged, I fear, than the vogue of the tale, which even as a success of scandal couldn't have been great.

VII

Dimly queer and "pathetic" to me were to remain through much of the after time indeed most of those early indigenous vogues and literary flurries: so few of those that brushed by my childhood had been other than a tinkling that suddenly stopped. I am afraid I mean that what was touching was rather the fact that the tinkle *could* penetrate than the fact that it died away; the light of criticism might have beat so straight—if the sense of proportion and the fact of compassion hadn't waved it away—on the æsthetic phase during which the appeal was mainly *by* the tinkle. The Scarlet Letter and The Seven Gables had the deep tone as much as one would; but of the current efforts of the imagination they were alone in having it till Walt Whitman broke out in the later fifties—and I was to know nothing of that happy genius till long after. An absorbed perusal of The Lamplighter was what I was to achieve at the fleeting hour I continue to circle round; that romance was on every one's lips, and I recollect it as more or less thrust upon me in amends for the imposed sacrifice of a ranker actuality—that of the improper Mr. Robinson, I mean, as to whom there revives in me the main question of where his impropriety, in so general a platitude of the bourgeois, could possibly have dwelt. It was to be true indeed that Walt Whitman achieved an impropriety of the first magnitude; that success, however, but showed us the platitude returning in a genial rage

upon itself and getting out of control by generic excess. There was no rage at any rate in *The Lamplighter*, over which I fondly hung and which would have been my first "grown-up" novel—it had been soothingly offered me for that—had I consented to take it as really and truly grown-up. I couldn't have said what it lacked for the character, I only had my secret reserves, and when one blest afternoon on the New Brighton boat I waded into *The Initials* I saw how right I had been. *The Initials* *was* grown-up and the difference thereby exquisite; it came over me with the very first page, assimilated in the fluttered little cabin to which I had retired with it—all in spite of the fact too that my attention was distracted by a pair of remarkable little girls who lurked there out of more public view as to hint that they weren't to be seen for nothing.

That must have been a rich hour, for I mix the marvel of the *Boon Children*, strange pale little flowers of the American theatre, with my conscious joy in bringing back to my mother, from our forage in New York, a gift of such happy promise as the history of the long-legged Mr. Hamilton and his two Bavarian beauties, the elder of whom, Hildegarde, was to figure for our small generation as the very type of the haughty as distinguished from the forward heroine (since I think our categories really came to no more than those). I couldn't have got very far with Hildegarde in moments so scant, but I memorably felt that romance was thick round me—everything, at such a crisis, seeming to make for it at once. *The Boon Children*, conveyed

thus to New Brighton under care of a lady in whose aspect the strain of the resolute triumphed over the note of the battered, though the showy in it rather succumbed at the same time to the dowdy, were already "billed," as infant phenomena, for a performance that night at the Pavilion, where our attendance, it was a shock to feel, couldn't be promised; and in gazing without charge at the pair of weary and sleepy little mountebanks I found the histrionic character and the dramatic profession for the first time revealed to me. They filled me with fascination and yet with fear; they expressed a melancholy grace and a sort of peevish refinement, yet seemed awfully detached and indifferent, indifferent perhaps even to being pinched and slapped, for art's sake, at home; they honoured me with no notice whatever and regarded me doubtless as no better than one of the little louts peeping through the tent of the show. In return I judged their appearance dissipated though fascinating, and sought consolation for the memory of their scorn and the loss of their exhibition, as time went on, in noting that the bounds of their fame seemed somehow to have been stayed. I neither "met" them nor heard of them again. The little Batemans must have obscured their comparatively dim lustre, flourishing at the same period and with a larger command of the pictorial poster and the other primitive symbols in Broadway—such posters and such symbols as they were at that time!—the little Batemans who were to be reserved, in maturer form, for my much later and more grateful appreciation.

This weak reminiscence has obstructed, however, something more to the purpose, the retained impression of those choicest of our loiterings that took place, still far down-town, at the Bookstore, home of delights and haunt of fancy. It was at the Bookstore we had called on the day of *The Initials* and the *Boon Children*—and it was thence we were returning with our spoil, of which the charming novel must have been but a fragment. My impression composed itself of many pieces; a great and various practice of burying my nose in the half-open book for the strong smell of paper and printer's ink, known to us as the English smell, was needed to account for it. *That* was the exercise of the finest sense that hung about us, my brother and me—or of one at least but little less fine than the sense for the satisfaction of which we resorted to Thompson's and to Taylor's: it bore me company during all our returns from forages and left me persuaded that I had only to snuff up hard enough, fresh uncut volume in hand, to taste of the very substance of London. All our books in that age were English, at least all our down-town ones—I personally recall scarce any that were not; and I take the perception of that quality in them to have associated itself with more fond dreams and glimmering pictures than any other one principle of growth. It was all a result of the deeply *infected* state: I had been prematurely poisoned—as I shall presently explain. The Bookstore, fondest of my father's resorts, though I remember no more of its public identity than that it further enriched the brave depth of Broadway, was overwhelmingly and irresistibly English,

as not less tonically English was our principal host there, with whom we had moreover, my father and I, thanks to his office, such personal and genial relations that I recall seeing him grace our board at home, in company with his wife, whose vocal strain and complexion and coiffure and flounces I found none the less informing, none the less "racial," for my not being then versed in the language of analysis.

The true inwardness of these rich meanings—those above all of the Bookstore itself—was that a tradition was thus fed, a presumption thus created, a vague vision thus filled in: all expression is clumsy for so mystic a process. What else can have happened but that, having taken over, under suggestion and with singular infant promptitude, a particular throbbing consciousness, I had become aware of the source at which it could best be refreshed? That consciousness, so communicated, was just simply of certain impressions, certain *sources* of impression again, proceeding from over the sea and situated beyond it—or even much rather of my parents' own impression of such, the fruit of a happy time spent in and about London with their two babies and reflected in that portion of their talk with each other to which I best attended. Had *all* their talk for its subject, in my infant ears, that happy time?—did it deal only with London and Piccadilly and the Green Park, where, over against their dwelling, their two babies mainly took the air under charge of Fanny of Albany, their American nurse, whose remark as to the degree to which the British Museum fell short for one who

had had the privilege of that of Albany was handed down to us? Did it never forbear from Windsor and Richmond and Sudbrook and Ham Common, amid the rich complexity of which, crowding their discourse with echoes, they had spent their summer?—all a scattering of such pearls as it seemed that their second-born could most deftly and instinctively pick up. Our sole maternal aunt, already mentioned as a devoted and cherished presence during those and many later years, was in a position to share with them the treasure of these mild memories, which strike me as having for the most part, through some bright household habit, overflowed at the breakfast-table, where I regularly attended with W. J.; she had imbibed betimes in Europe the seeds of a long nostalgia, and I think of her as ever so patiently communicative on that score under pressure of my artless appeal. That I should have been so inquiring while still so destitute of primary data was doubtless rather an anomaly; and it was for that matter quite as if my infant divination proceeded by the light of nature: I divined that it would matter to me in the future that "English life" should be of this or that fashion. My father had subscribed for me to a small periodical of quarto form, covered in yellow and entitled *The Charm*, which shed on the question the softest lustre, but of which the appearances were sadly intermittent, or then struck me as being; inasmuch as many of our visits to the Bookstore were to ask for the new number—only to learn with painful frequency that the last consignment from London had arrived without it. I feel again the pang of that disappointment—as if through the

want of what I needed most for going on; the English smell was exhaled by The Charm in a peculiar degree, and I see myself affected by the failure as by that of a vital tonic. It was not, at the same time, by a Charm the more or the less that my salvation was to be, as it were, worked out, or my imagination at any rate duly convinced; conviction was the result of the very air of home, so far as I most consciously inhaled it. This represented, no doubt, a failure to read into matters close at hand all the interest they were capable of yielding; but I had taken the twist, had sipped the poison, as I say, and was to feel it to that end the most salutary cup. I saw my parents homesick, as I conceived, for the ancient order and distressed and inconvenienced by many of the more immediate features of the modern, as the modern pressed upon us, and since their theory of our better living was from an early time that we should renew the quest of the ancient on the very first possibility I simply grew greater in the faith that somehow to manage that would constitute success in life. I never found myself deterred from this fond view, which was implied in every question I asked, every answer I got, and every plan I formed.

Those are great words for the daydream of infant ignorance, yet if success in life may perhaps be best defined as the performance in age of some intention arrested in youth I may frankly put in a claim to it. To press my nose against the sources of the English smell, so different for young bibliophiles from any American, was to adopt that sweetness as the sign of my "atmosphere"; roundabout might be the course to take, but one

was in motion from the first and one never lost sight of the goal. The very names of places and things in the other world—the marked opposite in most ways of that in which New York and Albany, Fort Hamilton and New Brighton formed so fallacious a maximum—became to me values and secrets and shibboleths; they were probably often on my tongue and employed as ignorance determined, but I quite recall being ashamed to use them as much as I should have liked. It was New Brighton, I reconstruct (and indeed definitely remember) that "finished" us at last—that and our final sordid school, W. J.'s and mine, in New York: the ancient order *had* somehow to be invoked when such "advantages" as those were the best within our compass and our means. Not further to anticipate, at all events, that climax was for a while but vaguely in sight, and the illusion of felicity continued from season to season to shut us in. It is only of what I took for felicity, however few the years and however scant the scene, that I am pretending now to speak; though I shall have strained the last drop of romance from this vision of our towny summers with the quite sharp reminiscence of my first sitting for my daguerreotype. I repaired with my father on an August day to the great Broadway establishment of Mr. Brady, supreme in that then beautiful art, and it is my impression—the only point vague with me—that though we had come up by the Staten Island boat for the purpose we were to keep the affair secret till the charming consequence should break, at home, upon my mother. Strong is my conviction that

our mystery, in the event, yielded almost at once to our elation, for no tradition had a brighter household life with us than that of our father's headlong impatience. He moved in a cloud, if not rather in a high radiance, of precipitation and divulgation, a chartered rebel against cold reserves. The good news in his hand refused under any persuasion to grow stale, the sense of communicable pleasure in his breast was positively explosive; so that we saw those "surprises" in which he had conspired with our mother for our benefit converted by him in every case, under our shamelessly encouraged guesses, into common conspiracies against her—against her knowing, that is, how thoroughly we were all compromised. He had a special and delightful sophistry at the service of his overflow, and never so fine a fancy as in defending it on "human" grounds. He was something very different withal from a parent of weak mercies; weakness was never so positive and plausible, nor could the attitude of sparing you be more handsomely or on occasion even more comically aggressive.

My small point is simply, however, that the secrecy of our conjoined portrait was probably very soon, by his act, to begin a public and shining life and to enjoy it till we received the picture; as to which moreover still another remembrance steals on me, a proof of the fact that our adventure was improvised. Sharp again is my sense of not being so adequately dressed as I should have taken thought for had I foreseen my exposure; though the resources of my wardrobe as then constituted could surely

have left me but few alternatives. The main resource of a small New York boy in this line at that time was the little sheath-like jacket, tight to the body, closed at the neck and adorned in front with a single row of brass buttons—a garment of scant grace assuredly and compromised to my consciousness, above all, by a strange ironic light from an unforgotten source. It was but a short time before those days that the great Mr. Thackeray had come to America to lecture on The English Humourists, and still present to me is the voice proceeding from my father's library, in which some glimpse of me hovering, at an opening of the door, in passage or on staircase, prompted him to the formidable words: "Come here, little boy, and show me your extraordinary jacket!" My sense of my jacket became from that hour a heavy one—further enriched as my vision is by my shyness of posture before the seated, the celebrated visitor, who struck me, in the sunny light of the animated room, as enormously big and who, though he laid on my shoulder the hand of benevolence, bent on my native costume the spectacles of wonder. I was to know later on why he had been so amused and why, after asking me if this were the common uniform of my age and class, he remarked that in England, were I to go there, I should be addressed as "Buttons." It had been revealed to me thus in a flash that we were somehow *queer*, and though never exactly crushed by it I became aware that I at least felt so as I stood with my head in Mr. Brady's vise. Beautiful most decidedly the lost art of the daguerreotype; I remember the "exposure" as on this occasion interminably long,

yet with the result of a facial anguish far less harshly reproduced than my suffered snapshots of a later age. Too few, I may here interject, were to remain my gathered impressions of the great humourist, but one of them, indeed almost the only other, bears again on the play of his humour over our perversities of dress. It belongs to a later moment, an occasion on which I see him familiarly seated with us, in Paris, during the spring of 1857, at some repast at which the younger of us too, by that time, habitually flocked, in our affluence of five. Our youngest was beside him, a small sister, then not quite in her eighth year, and arrayed apparently after the fashion of the period and place; and the tradition lingered long of his having suddenly laid his hand on her little flounced person and exclaimed with ludicrous horror: "Crinoline?—I was suspecting it! So young and so depraved!"

A fainter image, that of one of the New York moments, just eludes me, pursue it as I will; I recover but the setting and the fact of his brief presence in it, with nothing that was said or done beyond my being left with my father to watch our distinguished friend's secretary, who was also a young artist, establish his easel and proceed to paint. The setting, as I recall it, was an odd, oblong, blank "private parlour" at the Clarendon Hotel, then the latest thing in hotels, but whose ancient corner of Fourth Avenue and—was it Eighteenth Street?—long ago ceased to know it; the gentle, very gentle, portraitist was Mr. Eyre Crowe and the obliging sitter my father, who sat in response to Mr. Thackeray's desire that his protégé should find employment. The protector

after a little departed, blessing the business, which took the form of a small full-length of the model seated, his arm extended and the hand on the knob of his cane. The work, it may at this time of day be mentioned, fell below its general possibilities; but I note the scene through which I must duly have gaped and wondered (for I had as yet seen no one, least of all a casual acquaintance in an hotel parlour, "really paint" before,) as a happy example again of my parent's positive cultivation of my society, it would seem, and thought for my social education. And then there are other connections; I recall it as a Sunday morning, I recover the place itself as a featureless void—bleak and bare, with its developments all to come, the hotel parlour of other New York days—but vivid still to me is my conscious assistance for the first time at operations that were to mean much for many of my coming years. Those of quiet Mr. Crowe held me spellbound—I was to circle so wistfully, as from that beginning, round the practice of his art, which in spite of these earnest approaches and intentions never on its own part in the least acknowledged our acquaintance; scarcely much more than it was ever to respond, for that matter, to the overtures of the mild aspirant himself, known to my observation long afterwards, in the London years, as the most touchingly resigned of the children of disappointment. Not only by association was he a Thackerayan figure, but much as if the master's hand had stamped him with the outline and the value, with life and sweetness and patience—shown, as after the long futility, seated in a quiet wait, very long

too, for the end. That was sad, one couldn't but feel; yet it was in the oddest way impossible to take him for a failure. He might have been one of fortune's, strictly; but what was that when he was one of Thackeray's own successes?—in the minor line, but with such a grace and such a truth, those of some dim second cousin to Colonel Newcome.

VIII

I feel that at such a rate I remember too much, and yet this mild apparitionism is only part of it. To look back at all is to meet the apparitional and to find in its ghostly face the silent stare of an appeal. When I fix it, the hovering shade, whether of person or place, it fixes me back and seems the less lost—not to my consciousness, for that is nothing, but to its own—by my stopping however idly for it. The day of the daguerreotype, the August afternoon, what was it if not one of the days when we went to Union Square for luncheon and for more ice-cream and more peaches and even more, even most, enjoyment of ease accompanied by stimulation of wonder? It may have been indeed that a visit to Mrs. Cannon rather on that occasion engaged us—memory selects a little confusedly from such a wealth of experience. For the wonder was the experience, and that was everywhere, even if I didn't so much find it as take it with me, to be sure of not falling short. Mrs. Cannon lurked near Fourth Street—*that* I abundantly grasp, not more definitely placing her than in what seemed to me a labyrinth of grave bye-streets westwardly "back of" Broadway, yet at no great distance from it, where she must have occupied a house at a corner, since we reached her not by steps that went up to a front door but by others that went slightly down and formed clearly an independent side access, a feature that affected me as rich and strange.

What the steps went down to was a spacious room, light and friendly, so that it couldn't have been compromised by an "area," which offered the brave mystification, amid other mystifications, of being at once a parlour and a shop, a shop in particular for the relief of gentlemen in want of pocket-handkerchiefs, neckties, collars, umbrellas and straw-covered bottles of the essence known in old New York as "Cullone"—with a very long and big O. Mrs. Cannon was always seated at some delicate white or other needlework, as if she herself made the collars and the neckties and hemmed the pocket-handkerchiefs, though the air of this conflicts with the sense of importation from remoter centres of fashion breathed by some of the more thrilling of the remarks I heard exchanged, at the same time that it quickened the oddity of the place. For the oddity was in many things—above all perhaps in there being no counter, no rows of shelves and no vulgar till for Mrs. Cannon's commerce; the parlour clearly dissimulated the shop—and positively to that extent that I might uncannily have wondered what the shop dissimulated. It represented, honestly, I made out in the course of visits that seem to me to have been delightfully repeated, the more informal of the approaches to our friend's brave background or hinterland, the realm of her main industry, the array of the furnished apartments for gentlemen—gentlemen largely for whom she imported the Eau de Cologne and the neckties and who struck me as principally consisting of the ever remarkable Uncles, desirous at times, on their restless returns from Albany or wherever, of an intimacy

of comfort that the New York Hotel couldn't yield. Fascinating thus the implications of Mrs. Cannon's establishment, where the talk took the turn, in particular, of Mr. John and Mr. Edward and Mr. Howard, and where Miss Maggie or Miss Susie, who were on the spot in other rocking chairs and with other poised needles, made their points as well as the rest of us. The interest of the place was that the uncles were somehow always under discussion—as to where they at the moment might be, or as to when they were expected, or above all as to how (the "how" was the great matter and the fine emphasis) they had last appeared and might be conceived as carrying themselves; and that their consumption of neckties and Eau de Cologne was somehow inordinate: I might have been judging it in my innocence as their only *consommation*. I refer to those sources, I say, the charm of the scene, the finer part of which must yet have been that it didn't, as it regularly lapsed, dispose of *all* mystifications. If I didn't understand, however, the beauty was that Mrs. Cannon understood (that was what she did most of all, even more than hem pocket-handkerchiefs and collars) and my father understood, and each understood that the other did, Miss Maggie and Miss Susie being no whit behind. It was only I who didn't understand—save in so far as I understood *that*, which was a kind of pale joy; and meanwhile there would be more to come from uncles so attachingly, so almost portentously, discussable. The vision at any rate was to stick by me as through its old-world friendly grace, its light on the elder amenity; the prettier manners,

the tender personal note in the good lady's importations and anxieties, that of the hand-made fabric and the discriminating service. Fit to figure as a value anywhere—by which I meant in the right corner of any social picture, I afterwards said to myself—that refined and composed significance of Mrs. Cannon's scene.

Union Square was a different matter, though with the element there also that I made out that I *didn't* make out (my sense of drama was in this case, I think, rather more frightened off than led on;) a drawback for which, however, I consoled myself by baked apples and custards, an inveterate feature of our Sunday luncheon there (those of weekdays being various and casual) and by a study of a great store, as it seemed to me, of steel-plated volumes, devoted mainly to the heroines of Romance, with one in particular, presenting those of Shakespeare, in which the plates were so artfully coloured and varnished, and complexion and dress thereby so endeared to memory, that it was for long afterwards a shock to me at the theatre not to see just those bright images, with their peculiar toggeries, come on. I was able but the other day, moreover, to renew almost on the very spot the continuity of contemplation; large lumpish presences, precarious creations of a day, seemed to have elbowed out of the Square all but one or two of the minor monuments, pleasant appreciable things, of the other time; yet close to University Place the old house of the picture-books and the custards and the domestic situation had, though disfigured and overscored,

not quite received its death-stroke; I disengaged, by a mere identification of obscured window and profaned portico, a whole chapter of history; which fact should indeed be a warning to penetration, a practical plea here for the superficial—by its exhibition of the rate at which the relations of any gage of experience multiply and ramify from the moment the mind begins to handle it. I pursued a swarm of such relations, on the occasion I speak of, up and down West Fourteenth Street and over to Seventh Avenue, running most of them to earth with difficulty, but finding them at half a dozen points quite confess to a queer stale sameness. The gage of experience, as I say, had in these cases been strangely spared—the sameness had in two or three of them held out as with conscious craft. But these are impressions I shall presently find it impossible not to take up again at any cost.

I first "realised" Fourteenth Street at a very tender age, and I perfectly recall that flush of initiation, consisting as it did of an afternoon call with my father at a house there situated, one of an already fairly mature row on the south side and quite near Sixth Avenue. It was as "our" house, just acquired by us, that he thus invited my approval of it—heaping as that does once more the measure of my small adhesiveness. I thoroughly approved—quite as if I had foreseen that the place was to become to me for ever so long afterwards a sort of anchorage of the spirit, being at the hour as well a fascination for the eyes, since it was there I first fondly gaped at the process of "decorating." I saw charming men

in little caps ingeniously formed of folded newspaper—where in the roaring city are those quaint badges of the handicrafts now?—mounted on platforms and casting plaster into moulds; I saw them in particular paste long strips of yellowish grained paper upon walls, and I vividly remember thinking the grain and the pattern (for there was a pattern from waist-high down, a complication of dragons and sphinxes and scrolls and other fine flourishes) a wonderful and sumptuous thing. I would give much, I protest, to recover its lost secret, to see what it really was—so interesting ever to retrace, and sometimes so difficult of belief, in a community of one's own knowing, is the general æsthetic adventure, are the dangers and delusions, the all but fatal accidents and mortal ailments, that Taste has smilingly survived and after which the fickle creature may still quite brazenly look one in the face. Our quarter must have bristled in those years with the very worst of the danger-signals—though indeed they figured but as coarse complacencies; the age of "brown stone" had just been ushered in, and that material, in deplorable, in monstrous form, over all the vacant spaces and eligible sites then numerous between the Fifth and Sixth Avenues, more and more affronted the day. We seemed to have come up from a world of quieter harmonies, the world of Washington Square and thereabouts, so decent in its dignity, so instinctively unpretentious. There were even there spots of shabbiness that I recall, such as the charmless void reaching westward from the two houses that formed the Fifth Avenue corner to our grandfather's, our New

York grandfather's house, itself built by him, with the happiest judgment, not so long before, and at no distant time in truth to be solidly but much less pleasingly neighboured. The ancient name of the Parade-ground still hung about the central space, and the ancient wooden palings, then so generally accounted proper for central spaces—the whole image infinitely recedes—affected even my innocent childhood as rustic and mean. Union Square, at the top of the Avenue—or what practically then counted for the top—was encased, more smartly, in iron rails and further adorned with a fountain and an aged amateur-looking constable, awful to my generation in virtue of his star and his switch. I associate less elegance with the Parade-ground, into which we turned for recreation from my neighbouring dame's-school and where the parades deployed on no scale to check our own evolutions; though indeed the switch of office abounded there, for what I best recover in the connection is a sense and smell of perpetual autumn, with the ground so muffled in the leaves and twigs of the now long defunct ailanthus-tree that most of our own motions were a kicking of them up—the semi-sweet rankness of the plant was all in the air—and small boys pranced about as cavaliers whacking their steeds. There were bigger boys, bolder still, to whom this vegetation, or something kindred that escapes me, yielded long black beanlike slips which they lighted and smoked, the smaller ones staring and impressed; I at any rate think of the small one I can best speak for as constantly wading through an Indian summer of these *disjecta*, fascinated by

the leaf-kicking process, the joy of lonely trudges, over a course in which those parts and the slightly more northward pleasantly confound themselves. These were the homely joys of the nobler neighbourhood, elements that had their match, and more, hard by the Fourteenth Street home, in the poplars, the pigs, the poultry, and the "Irish houses," two or three in number, exclusive of a very fine Dutch one, seated then, this last, almost as among gardens and groves—a breadth of territory still apparent, on the spot, in that marginal ease, that spread of occupation, to the nearly complete absence of which New York aspects owe their general failure of "style."

But there were finer vibrations as well—for the safely-prowling infant, though none perhaps so fine as when he stood long and drank deep at those founts of romance that gushed from the huge placards of the theatre. These announcements, at a day when advertisement was contentedly but information, had very much the form of magnified playbills; they consisted of vast oblong sheets, yellow or white, pasted upon tall wooden screens or into hollow sockets, and acquainting the possible playgoer with every circumstance that might seriously interest him. These screens rested sociably against trees and lamp-posts as well as against walls and fences, to all of which they were, I suppose, familiarly attached; but the sweetest note of their confidence was that, in parallel lines and the good old way, characters facing performers, they gave the whole cast, which in the "palmy days" of the drama often involved many names. I catch myself again

in the fact of endless stations in Fifth Avenue near the southwest corner of Ninth Street, as I think it must have been, since the dull long "run" didn't exist then for the young *badaud* and the poster there was constantly and bravely renewed. It engaged my attention, whenever I passed, as the canvas of a great master in a great gallery holds that of the pious tourist, and even though I can't at this day be sure of its special reference I was with precocious passion "at home" among the theatres—thanks to our parents' fond interest in them (as from this distance I see it flourish for the time) and to the liberal law and happy view under which the addiction was shared with us, they never caring much for things we couldn't care for and generally holding that what was good to them would be also good for their children. It had the effect certainly of preparing for these, so far as we should incline to cherish it, a strange little fund of theatrical reminiscence, a small hoard of memories maintaining itself in my own case for a lifetime and causing me to wonder to-day, before its abundance, on how many evenings of the month, or perhaps even of the week, we were torn from the pursuits of home.

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