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THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY.

XI.

RALPH took a resolve after this not to misinterpret her words, even when Miss Stackpole appeared to strike the personal note most strongly. He bethought himself that persons, in her view, were simple and homogeneous organisms, and that he, for his own part, was too perverted a representative of human nature to have a right to deal with her in strict reciprocity. He carried out his resolve with a great deal of tact, and the young lady found in her relations with him no obstacle to the exercise of that somewhat aggressive frankness which was the social expression of her nature. Her situation at Gardencourt, therefore, appreciated as we have seen her to be by Isabel, and full of appreciation herself of that fine freedom of composition which to her sense rendered Isabel's character a sister spirit, and of the easy venerableness of Mr. Touchett, whose general tone, as she said, met with her full approval, — her situation at Gardencourt would have been perfectly comfortable, had she not conceived an irresistible mistrust of the little lady to whom she had at first supposed herself obliged to pay a certain deference as mistress of the house. But she presently discovered that this obligation was of the lightest, and that Mrs. Touchett

cared very little how Miss Stackpole behaved. Mrs. Touchett had spoken of her to Isabel as a "newspaper-woman," and expressed surprise at her niece's having selected such a friend; but she had immediately added that she knew Isabel's friends were her own affair, and that she never undertook to like them all, or to restrict the girl to those she liked.

"If you could see none but the people I like, my dear, you would have a very small society," Mrs. Touchett frankly admitted; "and I don't think I like any man or woman well enough to recommend them to you. When it comes to recommending, it is a serious affair. I don't like Miss Stackpole, — I don't like her tone. She talks too loud, and she looks at one too hard. I am sure she has lived all her life in a boarding-house, and I detest the style of manners that such a way of living produces. If you ask me if I prefer my own manners, which you doubtless think very bad, I will tell you that I prefer them immensely. Miss Stackpole knows that I detest boarding-house civilization, and she detests me for detesting it, because she thinks it is the highest in the world. She would like Gardencourt a great deal better if it were a boarding-house. For me, I find it almost too much of one! We shall never get on together, therefore, and there is no use trying."

Mrs. Touchett was right in guessing that Henrietta disapproved of her, but she had not quite put her finger on the reason. A day or two after Miss Stackpole's arrival she had made some invidious reflections on American hotels which excited a vein of counter-argument on the part of the correspondent of the Interviewer, who in the exercise of her profession had acquired a large familiarity with the technical hospitality of her country. Henrietta expressed the opinion that American hotels were the best in the world, and Mrs. Touchett recorded a conviction that they were the worst. Ralph, with his experimental geniality, suggested, by way of healing the breach, that the truth lay between the two extremes, and that the establishments in question ought to be described as fair middling. This contribution to the discussion, however, Miss Stackpole rejected with scorn. Middling, indeed! If they were not the best in the world, they were the worst, but there was nothing middling about an American hotel.

"We judge from different points of view, evidently," said Mrs. Touchett. "I like to be treated as an individual; you like to be treated as a 'party.'"

"I don't know what you mean," Henrietta replied. "I like to be treated as an American lady."

"Poor American ladies!" cried Mrs. Touchett, with a laugh. "They are the slaves of slaves."

"They are the companions of freemen," Henrietta rejoined.

"They are the companions of their servants, — the Irish chambermaid and the negro waiter. They share their work."

"Do you call the domestics in an American household 'slaves'?" Miss Stackpole inquired. "If that's the way you desire to treat them, no wonder you don't like America."

"If you have not good servants, you are miserable," Mrs. Touchett said, se-

renely. "They are very bad in America, but I have five perfect ones in Florence."

"I don't see what you want with five," Henrietta could not help observing. "I don't think I should like to see five persons surrounding me in that menial position."

"I like them in that position better than in some others," cried Mrs. Touchett, with a laugh.

"Should you like me better if I were your butler, dear?" her husband asked.

"I don't think I should; you would make a very poor butler."

"The companions of freemen, — I like that, Miss Stackpole," said Ralph. "It's a beautiful description."

"When I said freemen, I didn't mean you, sir!"

And this was the only reward that Ralph got for his compliment. Miss Stackpole was baffled. She evidently thought there was something treasonable in Mrs. Touchett's appreciation of a class which she privately suspected of being a mysterious survival of feudalism. It was perhaps because her mind was oppressed with this image that she suffered some days to elapse before she said to Isabel, in the morning, while they were alone together, —

"My dear friend, I wonder whether you are growing faithless!"

"Faithless? Faithless to you, Henrietta?"

"No, that would be a great pain; but it is not that."

"Faithless to my country, then?"

"Ah, that I hope will never be. When I wrote to you from Liverpool, I said I had something particular to tell you. You have never asked me what it is. Is it because you have suspected?"

"Suspected what? As a rule, I don't think I suspect," said Isabel. "I remember now that phrase in your letter, but I confess I had forgotten it. What have you to tell me?"

Henrietta looked disappointed, and her steady gaze betrayed her.

"You don't ask that right, — as if you thought it important. You are changed, — you are thinking of other things."

"Tell me what you mean, and I will think of that."

"Will you really think of it? That is what I wish to be sure of."

"I have not much control of my thoughts, but I will do my best," said Isabel.

Henrietta gazed at her in silence for a period of time which tried Isabel's patience, so that our heroine said at last, —

"Do you mean that you are going to be married?"

"Not till I have seen Europe!" said Miss Stackpole. "What are you laughing at?" she went on. "What I mean is that Mr. Goodwood came out in the steamer with me."

"Ah!" Isabel exclaimed quickly.

"You say right. I had a good deal of talk with him; he has come after you!"

"Did he tell you so?"

"No, he told me nothing; that's how I knew it," said Henrietta, cleverly. "He said very little about you, but I spoke of you a good deal."

Isabel was silent a moment. At the mention of Mr. Goodwood's name she had colored a little, and now her blush was slowly fading.

"I am very sorry you did that," she observed at last.

"It was a pleasure to me, and I liked the way he listened. I could have talked a long time to such a listener; he was so quiet, so intense; he drank it all in."

"What did you say about me?" Isabel asked.

"I said you were on the whole the finest creature I know."

"I am very sorry for that. He thinks too well of me already; he ought not to be encouraged."

"He is dying for a little encouragement. I see his face now, and his earnest, absorbed look while I talked. I never saw an ugly man look so handsome!"

"He is very simple-minded," said Isabel. "And he is not so ugly."

"There is nothing so simple as a great passion."

"It is not a great passion; I am very sure it is not that."

"You don't say that as if you were sure."

Isabel gave rather a cold smile.

"I shall say it better to Mr. Goodwood himself!"

"He will soon give you a chance," said Henrietta.

Isabel offered no answer to this assertion, which her companion made with an air of great confidence.

"He will find you changed," the latter pursued. "You have been affected by your new surroundings."

"Very likely. I am affected by everything."

"By everything but Mr. Goodwood!" Miss Stackpole exclaimed, with a laugh.

Isabel failed even to smile in reply; and in a moment she said, —

"Did he ask you to speak to me?"

"Not in so many words. But his eyes asked it, — and his hand-shake, when he bade me good-by."

"Thank you for doing so." And Isabel turned away.

"Yes, you are changed; you have got new ideas over here," her friend continued.

"I hope so," said Isabel; "one should get as many new ideas as possible."

"Yes, but they should n't interfere with the old ones."

Isabel turned about again. "If you mean that I had any idea with regard to Mr. Goodwood" — And then she paused; Henrietta's bright eyes seemed to her to grow enormous.

"My dear child, you certainly encouraged him," said Miss Stackpole.

Isabel appeared for the moment to be on the point of denying this charge, but instead of this she presently answered, "It is very true; I did encourage him." And then she inquired whether her companion had learned from Mr. Goodwood what he intended to do. This inquiry was a concession to curiosity, for she did not enjoy discussing the gentleman with Henrietta Stackpole, and she thought that in her treatment of the subject this faithful friend lacked delicacy.

"I asked him, and he said he meant to do nothing," Miss Stackpole answered. "But I don't believe that; he's not a man to do nothing. He is a man of action. Whatever happens to him, he will always do something, and whatever he does will be right."

"I quite believe that," said Isabel. Henrietta might be wanting in delicacy; but it touched the girl, all the same, to hear this rich assertion made.

"Ah, you *do* care for him," Henrietta murmured.

"Whatever he does will be right," Isabel repeated. "When a man is of that supernatural mould, what does it matter to him whether one cares for him?"

"It may not matter to him, but it matters to some one's self."

"Ah, what it matters to me, that is not what we are discussing," said Isabel, smiling a little.

This time her companion was grave. "Well, I don't care; you have changed," she replied. "You are not the girl you were a few short weeks ago, and Mr. Goodwood will see it. I expect him here any day."

"I hope he will hate me, then," said Isabel.

"I believe that you hope it about as much as I believe that he is capable of it!"

To this observation our heroine made no rejoinder; she was absorbed in the feeling of alarm given her by Henri-

etta's intimation that Caspar Goodwood would present himself at Gardencourt. Alarm is perhaps a violent term to apply to the uneasiness with which she regarded this contingency; but her uneasiness was keen, and there were various good reasons for it. She pretended to herself that she thought the event impossible, and, later, she communicated her disbelief to her friend; but for the next forty-eight hours, nevertheless, she stood prepared to hear the young man's name announced. The feeling was oppressive; it made the air sultry, as if there were to be a change of weather; and the weather, socially speaking, had been so agreeable during Isabel's stay at Gardencourt that any change would be for the worse. Her suspense, however, was dissipated on the second day. She had walked into the park, in company with the sociable Bunchie, and after strolling about for some time, in a manner at once listless and restless, had seated herself on a garden bench, within sight of the house, beneath a spreading beech, where, in a white dress ornamented with black ribbons, she formed, among the flickering shadows, a very graceful and harmonious image. She entertained herself for some moments with talking to the little terrier, as to whom the proposal of an ownership divided with her cousin had been applied as impartially as possible, — as impartially as Bunchie's own somewhat fickle and inconstant sympathies would allow. But she was notified for the first time, on this occasion, of the finite character of Bunchie's intellect; hitherto she had been mainly struck with its extent. It seemed to her at last that she would do well to take a book; formerly, when she felt heavy-hearted, she had been able, with the help of some well-chosen volume, to transfer the seat of consciousness to the organ of pure reason. Of late, however, it was not to be denied, literature had a less absorbing force, and even after she had re-

mind herself that her uncle's library was provided with a complete set of those authors which no gentleman's collection should be without, she sat motionless and empty-handed, with her eyes fixed upon the cool green turf of the lawn. Her meditations were presently interrupted by the arrival of a servant, who handed her a letter. The letter bore the London postmark, and was addressed in a hand that she knew,—that she seemed to know all the better, indeed, as the writer had been present to her mind when the letter was delivered. This document proved to be short, and I may give it entire:—

MY DEAR MISS ARCHER,—I don't know whether you will have heard of my coming to England, but even if you have not, it will scarcely be a surprise to you. You will remember that when you gave me my dismissal at Albany, three month ago, I did not accept it. I protested against it. You in fact appeared to accept my protest, and to admit that I had the right on my side. I had come to see you with the hope that you would let me bring you over to my conviction; my reasons for entertaining this hope had been of the best. But you disappointed it; I found you changed, and you were able to give me no reason for the change. You admitted that you were unreasonable, and it was the only concession you would make; but it was a very cheap one, because you are not unreasonable. No, you are not, and you never will be. Therefore it is that I believe you will let me see you again. You told me that I am not disagreeable to you, and I believe it; for I don't see why that should be. I shall always think of you. I shall never think of any one else. I came to England simply because you are here. I could n't stay at home after you had gone; I hated the country because you were not in it. If I like this one at present, it is only because you are here. I have been

to England before, but I have never enjoyed it much. May I not come and see you for half an hour? This at present is the dearest wish of, yours faithfully,
CASPAR GOODWOOD.

Isabel read Mr. Goodwood's letter with such profound attention that she had not perceived an approaching tread on the soft grass. Looking up, however, as she mechanically folded the paper, she saw Lord Warburton standing before her.

XII.

She put the letter into her pocket, and offered her visitor a smile of welcome, exhibiting no trace of discomposure, and half surprised at her self-possession.

"They told me you were out here," said Lord Warburton; "and as there was no one in the drawing-room, and it is really you that I wish to see, I came out with no more ado."

Isabel had got up; she felt a wish, for the moment, that he should not sit down beside her. "I was just going in-doors," she said.

"Please don't do that; it is much pleasanter here. I have ridden over from Lockleigh. It's a lovely day." His smile was peculiarly friendly and pleasing, and his whole person seemed to emit that radiance of good feeling and well-being which had formed the charm of the girl's first impression of him. It surrounded him like a zone of fine June weather.

"We will walk about a little, then," said Isabel, who could not divest herself of the sense of an intention on the part of her visitor, and who wished both to elude the intention and to satisfy her curiosity regarding it. It had flashed upon her vision once before, and it had given her on that occasion, as we know, a certain alarm. This alarm was composed of several elements, not all of

which were disagreeable; she had, indeed, spent some days in analyzing them, and had succeeded in separating the pleasant part of this idea of Lord Warburton's making love to her from the painful. It may appear to some readers that the young lady was both precipitate and unduly fastidious; but the latter of these facts, if the charge be true, may serve to exonerate her from the discredit of the former. She was not eager to convince herself that a territorial magnate, as she had heard Lord Warburton called, was smitten with her charms; because a declaration from such a source would arouse more questions than it would answer. She had received a strong impression of Lord Warburton's being a personage, and she had occupied herself in examining the idea. At the risk of making the reader smile, it must be said that there had been moments when the intimation that she was admired by a "personage" struck her as an aggression which she would rather have been spared. She had never known a personage before; there were no personages in her native land. When she had thought of such matters as this, she had done so on the basis of character, — of what one liked in a gentleman's mind and in his talk. She herself was a character, — she could not help being aware of that; and hitherto her visions of a completed life had concerned themselves largely with moral images, — things as to which the question would be whether they pleased her soul. Lord Warburton loomed up before her, largely and brightly, as a collection of attributes and powers which were not to be measured by this simple rule, but which demanded a different sort of appreciation, — an appreciation which the girl, with her habit of judging quickly and freely, felt that she lacked the patience to bestow. Of course, there would be a short cut to it, and as Lord Warburton was evidently a very fine fellow it would probably also be a safe cut. Isabel was able to say

all this to herself, but she was unable to feel the force of it. What she felt was that a territorial, a political, a social magnate had conceived the design of drawing her into the system in which he lived and moved. A certain instinct, not imperious, but persuasive, told her to resist, — it murmured to her that virtually she had a system and an orbit of her own. It told her other things besides, — things which both contradicted and confirmed each other: that a girl might do much worse than trust herself to such a man as Lord Warburton, and that it would be very interesting to see something of his system from his own point of view; that, on the other hand, however, there was evidently a great deal of it which she should regard only as an incumbrance, and that even in the whole there was something heavy and rigid which would make it unacceptable. Furthermore, there was a young man lately come from America who had no system at all, but who had a character of which it was useless for her to try to persuade herself that the impression on her mind had been light. The letter that she carried in her pocket sufficiently reminded her of the contrary. Smile not, however, I venture to repeat, at this simple young lady from Albany, who debated whether she should accept a brilliant English viscount before he had offered himself, and who was disposed to believe that on the whole she could do better. She was a person of great good faith, and if there was a great deal of folly in her wisdom, those who judge her severely may have the satisfaction of finding that, later, she became consistently wise only at the cost of an amount of folly which will constitute almost a direct appeal to charity.

Lord Warburton seemed quite ready to walk, to sit, or to do anything that Isabel should propose, and he gave her this assurance with his usual air of being particularly pleased to exercise a social virtue. But he was, nevertheless,

not in command of his emotions, and as he strolled beside her for a moment in silence, looking at her without letting her know it, there was something embarrassed in his glance and his misdirected laughter. Yes, assuredly, — as we have touched on the point, we may return to it for a moment again, — the English are the most romantic people in the world, and Lord Warburton was about to give an example of it. He was about to take a step which would astonish all his friends and displease a great many of them, and which, superficially, had nothing to recommend it. The young lady who trod the turf beside him had come from a queer country across the sea, which he knew a good deal about; her antecedents, her associations, were very vague to his mind, except in so far as they were generic, and in this sense they occurred to him with a certain vividness. Miss Archer had neither a fortune nor the sort of beauty that justifies a man to the multitude, and he calculated that he had spent about twenty-six hours in her company. He had summed up all this, — the perversity of the impulse, which had declined to avail itself of the most liberal opportunities to subside, and the judgment of mankind, as exemplified particularly in the more quickly-judging half of it; he had looked these things well in the face, and then he had dismissed them from his thoughts. He cared no more for them than for the rosebud in his button-hole. It is the good fortune of a man who for the greater part of a life-time has abstained without effort from making himself disagreeable to his friends that, when the need comes for such a course, it is not discredited by irritating associations.

“I hope you had a pleasant ride,” said Isabel, who observed her companion’s hesitancy.

“It would have been pleasant if for nothing else than that it brought me here,” Lord Warburton answered.

“Are you so fond of Gardencourt?”

the girl asked, more and more sure that he meant to make some demand of her; wishing not to challenge him if he hesitated, and yet to keep all the quietness of her reason if he proceeded. It suddenly came upon her that her situation was one which a few weeks ago she would have deemed deeply romantic: the park of an old English country-house, with the foreground embellished by a local nobleman in the act of making love to a young lady who, on careful inspection, should be found to present remarkable analogies with herself. But if she were now the heroine of the situation, she succeeded scarcely the less in looking at it from the outside.

“I care nothing for Gardencourt,” said Lord Warburton. “I care only for you.”

“You have known me too short a time to have a right to say that, and I cannot believe you are serious.”

These words of Isabel’s were not perfectly sincere, for she had no doubt whatever that he was serious. They were simply a tribute to the fact, of which she was perfectly aware, that those he himself had just uttered would have excited surprise on the part of the public at large. And, moreover, if anything beside the sense she had already acquired that Lord Warburton was not a frivolous person had been needed to convince her, the tone in which he replied to her would quite have served the purpose.

“One’s right in such a matter is not measured by the time, Miss Archer; it is measured by the feeling itself. If I were to wait three months, it would make no difference; I should not be more sure of what I mean than I am to-day. Of course I have seen you very little; but my impression dates from the very first hour we met. I lost no time; I fell in love with you then. It was at first sight, as the novels say; I know now that it is not a fancy phrase, and I shall think better of novels forever-

more. Those two days I spent here settled it. I don't know whether you suspected I was doing so, but I paid — mentally speaking, I mean — the greatest possible attention to you. Nothing you said, nothing you did, was lost upon me. When you came to Lockleigh, the other day, — or rather when you went away, — I was perfectly sure. Nevertheless, I made up my mind to think it over, and to question myself narrowly. I have done so; all these days I have thought of nothing else. I don't make mistakes about such things; I am a very judicious fellow. I don't go off easily, but when I am touched it's for life. It's for life, Miss Archer, — it's for life," Lord Warburton repeated in the kindest, tenderest, pleasantest voice Isabel had ever heard, and looking at her with eyes that shone with the light of a passion that had sifted itself clear of the baser parts of emotion, — the heat, the violence, the unreason, — and which burned as steadily as a lamp in a windless place.

By tacit consent, as he talked, they had walked more and more slowly, and at last they stopped, and he took her hand.

"Ah, Lord Warburton, how little you know me!" Isabel said, very gently; gently, too, she drew her hand away.

"Don't taunt me with that: that I don't know you better makes me unhappy enough already; it's all my loss. But that is what I want, and it seems to me I am taking the best way. If you will be my wife, then I shall know you, and when I tell you all the good I think of you, you will not be able to say it is from ignorance."

"If you know me little, I know you even less," said Isabel.

"You mean that, unlike yourself, I may not improve on acquaintance? Ah, of course, that is very possible. But think, to speak to you as I do, how determined I must be to try and give satisfaction! You do like me, rather, don't you?"

"I like you very much, Lord Warburton," the girl answered; and at this moment she liked him immensely.

"I thank you for saying that; it shows you don't regard me as a stranger. I really believe I have filled all the other relations of life very creditably, and I don't see why I should not fill this one, — in which I offer myself to you, — seeing that I care so much more about it. Ask the people who know me well; I have friends who will speak for me."

"I don't need the recommendations of your friends," said Isabel.

"Ah, now, that is delightful of you. You believe in me yourself."

"Completely," Isabel declared; and it was the truth.

The light in her companion's eyes turned into a smile, and he gave a long murmur of satisfaction.

"If you are mistaken, Miss Archer, let me lose all I possess!"

She wondered whether he meant this for a reminder that he was rich, and, on the instant, felt sure that he did not. He was sinking that, as he would have said himself; and indeed he might safely leave it to the memory of any interlocutor, especially of one to whom he was offering his hand. Isabel had prayed that she might not be agitated, and her mind was tranquil enough, even while she listened and asked herself what it was best she should say, to indulge in this incidental criticism. What she should say, had she asked herself? Her foremost wish was to say something as nearly as possible as kind as what he had said to her. His words had carried perfect conviction with them; she felt that he loved her.

"I thank you more than I can say for your offer," she rejoined at last; "it does me great honor."

"Ah, don't say that!" Lord Warburton broke out. "I was afraid you would say something like that. I don't see what you have to do with that sort

of thing. I don't see why you should thank me; it is I who ought to thank you, for listening to me, — a man whom you know so little, coming down on you with such a thumping demand. Of course it's a great question; I must tell you that I would rather ask it than have it to answer myself. But the way you have listened — or at least your having listened at all — gives me some hope."

"Don't hope too much," Isabel said.

"Oh, Miss Archer!" her companion murmured, smiling again in his seriousness, as if such a warning might perhaps be taken but as the play of high spirits, — the coquetry of elation.

"Should you be greatly surprised if I were to beg you not to hope at all?" Isabel asked.

"Surprised? I don't know what you mean by surprise. It would n't be that; it would be a feeling very much worse."

Isabel walked on again; she was silent for some minutes.

"I am very sure that, highly as I already think of you, my opinion of you, if I should know you well, would only rise. But I am by no means sure that you would not be disappointed. And I say that not in the least out of conventional modesty; it is perfectly sincere."

"I am willing to risk it, Miss Archer," her companion answered.

"It's a great question, as you say; it's a very difficult question."

"I don't expect you, of course, to answer it outright. Think it over as long as may be necessary. If I can gain by waiting, I will gladly wait a long time. Only remember that in the end my dearest happiness depends upon your answer."

"I should be very sorry to keep you in suspense," said Isabel.

"Oh, don't mind. I would much rather have a good answer six months hence than a bad one to-day."

"But it is very probable that even six months hence I should not be able

to give you one that you would think good."

"Why not, since you really like me?"

"Ah, you must never doubt of that," said Isabel.

"Well, then, I don't see what more you ask!"

"It is not what I ask; it is what I can give. I don't think I should suit you; I really don't think I should."

"You need n't bother about that; that's my affair. You need n't be a better royalist than the king."

"It is not only that," said Isabel; "but I am not sure I wish to marry any one."

"Very likely you don't. I have no doubt a great many women begin that way," said his lordship, who, be it averred, did not in the least believe in the axiom he thus beguiled his anxiety by uttering. "But they are frequently persuaded."

"Ah, that is because they want to be!" And Isabel lightly laughed.

Her suitor's countenance fell, and he looked at her for a while in silence.

"I'm afraid it's my being an Englishman that makes you hesitate," he said, presently. "I know your uncle thinks you ought to marry in your own country."

Isabel listened to this assertion with some interest. It had never occurred to her that Mr. Touchett was likely to discuss her matrimonial prospects with Lord Warburton.

"Has he told you that?" she asked.

"I remember his making the remark; he spoke, perhaps, of Americans generally."

"He appears himself to have found it very pleasant to live in England," said Isabel, in a manner that might have seemed a little perverse, but which expressed both her constant perception of her uncle's picturesque circumstances and her general disposition to elude any obligation to take a restricted view.

It gave her companion hope, and he immediately exclaimed, warmly, —

“Ah, my dear Miss Archer, old England is a very good sort of country, you know! And it will be still better when we have furbished it up a little.”

“Oh, don’t furbish it, Lord Warburton; leave it alone; I like it this way.”

“Well, then, if you like it, I am more and more unable to see your objection to what I propose.”

“I am afraid I can’t make you understand.”

“You ought at least to try; I have got a fair intelligence. Are you afraid — afraid of the climate? We can easily live elsewhere, you know. You can pick out your climate, the whole world over!”

These words were uttered with a tender eagerness which went to Isabel’s heart, and she would have given her little finger at that moment to feel, strongly and simply, the impulse to answer, “Lord Warburton, it is impossible for a woman to do better in this world than to commit herself to your loyalty.” But though she could conceive the impulse, she could not let it operate; her imagination was charmed, but it was not led captive. What she finally bethought herself of saying was something very different, — something which altogether deferred the need of answering: “Don’t think me unkind if I ask you to say no more about this today.”

“Certainly, certainly!” cried Lord Warburton. “I would n’t pain you for the world.”

“You have given me a great deal to think about, and I promise you I will do it justice.”

“That’s all I ask of you, of course, — and that you will remember that my happiness is in your hands.”

Isabel listened with extreme respect to this admonition, but she said after a minute, “I must tell you that what I shall think about is some way of letting

you know that what you ask is impossible, without making you miserable.”

“There is no way to do that, Miss Archer. I won’t say that, if you refuse me, you will kill me; I shall not die of it. But I shall do worse: I shall live to no purpose.”

“You will live to marry a better woman than I.”

“Don’t say that, please,” said Lord Warburton, very gravely. “That is fair to neither of us.”

“To marry a worse one, then.”

“If there are better women than you, then I prefer the bad ones; that’s all I can say!” he went on, with the same gravity. “There is no accounting for tastes.”

His gravity made her feel equally grave, and she attested it by again requesting him to drop the subject for the present. “I will speak to you myself, very soon,” she said. “Perhaps I will write to you.”

“At your convenience, yes,” he answered. “Whatever time you take, it must seem to me long, and I suppose I must make the best of that.”

“I shall not keep you in suspense; I only want to collect my mind a little.”

He gave a melancholy sigh, and stood looking at her a moment, with his hands behind him, giving short, nervous shakes to his hunting-whip. “Do you know I am very much afraid of it — of that mind of yours?”

Our heroine’s biographer can scarcely tell why, but the question made her start, and brought a conscious blush to her cheek. She returned his look a moment, and then, with a note in her voice that might almost have appealed to his compassion, “So am I, my lord!” she exclaimed.

His compassion was not stirred, however; all that he possessed of the faculty of pity was needed at home. “Ah! be merciful, be merciful!” he murmured.

“I think you had better go,” said Isabel. “I will write to you.”

“Very good; but whatever you write, I will come and see you.” And then he stood reflecting, with his eyes fixed on the observant countenance of Bunchie, who had the air of having understood all that had been said, and of pretending to carry off the indiscretion by a stimulated fit of curiosity as to the roots of an ancient beech. “There is one thing more,” said Lord Warburton. “You know, if you don’t like Lockleigh, — if you think it’s damp, or anything of that sort, — you need never go within fifty miles of it. It is not damp, by the way; I have had the house thoroughly examined; it is perfectly sanitary. But if you should n’t fancy it, you need n’t dream of living in it. There is no difficulty whatever about that; there are plenty of houses. I thought I would just mention it; some people don’t like a moat, you know. Good-by.”

“I delight in a moat,” said Isabel. “Good-by.”

He held out his hand, and she gave him hers a moment, — a moment long enough for him to bend his head and kiss it. Then, shaking his hunting-whip with little quick strokes, he walked rapidly away. He was evidently much excited.

Isabel herself was excited, but she was not agitated, as she would have expected beforehand to be. What she felt was not a great responsibility, a great difficulty of choice; for it appeared to her that there was no choice in the question. She could not marry Lord Warburton; the idea failed to correspond to any vision of happiness that she had hitherto entertained, or was now capable of entertaining. She must write this to him, she must convince him, and this duty was comparatively simple. But what excited her, in the sense that it struck her with wonderment, was this very fact that it cost her so little to refuse a great opportunity. With whatever qualifications one would, Lord Warburton had offered her a great opportunity; the situation might have dis-

comforts, might contain elements that would displease her, but she did her sex no injustice in believing that nineteen women out of twenty would accommodate themselves to it with extreme zeal. Why, then, upon her also should it not impose itself? Who was she, what was she, that she should hold herself superior? What view of life, what design upon fate, what conception of happiness, had she that pretended to be larger than this large occasion? If she would not do this, then she must do great things, she must do something greater. Poor Isabel found occasion to remind herself from time to time that she must not be too proud, and nothing could be more sincere than her prayer to be delivered from such a danger; for the isolation and loneliness of pride had for her mind the horror of a desert place. If it were pride that interfered with her accepting Lord Warburton, it was singularly misplaced; and she was so conscious of liking him that she ventured to assure herself it was not. She liked him too much to marry him, — that was the point; something told her that she should not be satisfied, and to inflict upon a man who offered so much a wife with a tendency to criticise would be a peculiarly discreditable act. She had promised him that she would consider his proposal, and when, after he had left her, she wandered back to the bench where he had found her, and lost herself in meditation, it might have seemed that she was keeping her word. But this was not the case; she was wondering whether she were not a cold, hard girl; and when at last she got up and rather quickly went back to the house it was because, as she had said to Lord Warburton, she was really frightened at herself.

XIII.

It was this feeling, and not the wish to ask advice, — she had no desire what-

ever for that, — that led her to speak to her uncle of what Lord Warburton had said to her. She wished to speak to some one ; she should feel more natural, more human ; and her uncle, for this purpose, presented himself in a more attractive light than either her aunt or her friend Henrietta. Her cousin, of course, was a possible confidant ; but it would have been disagreeable to her to confide this particular matter to Ralph. So, the next day, after breakfast, she sought her occasion. Her uncle never left his apartment till the afternoon ; but he received his cronies, as he said, in his dressing-room. Isabel had quite taken her place in the class so designated, which, for the rest, included the old man's son, his physician, his personal servant, and even Miss Stackpole. Mrs. Touchett did not figure in the list, and this was an obstacle the less to Isabel's finding her uncle alone. He sat in a complicated mechanical chair, at the open window of his room, looking westward over the park and the river, with his newspapers and letters piled up beside him, his toilet freshly and minutely made, and his smooth, fine face composed to benevolent expectation.

Isabel approached her point very directly : " I think I ought to let you know that Lord Warburton has asked me to marry him. I suppose I ought to tell my aunt ; but it seems best to tell you first."

The old man expressed no surprise, but thanked her for the confidence she showed him. " Do you mind telling me whether you accepted him ? " he added.

" I have not answered him definitely, yet ; I have taken a little time to think of it, because that seems more respectful. But I shall not accept him."

Mr. Touchett made no comment upon this ; he had the air of thinking that, whatever interest he might take in the matter from the point of view of sociability, he had no active voice in it,

" Well, I told you you would be a success over here. Americans are highly appreciated."

" Very highly indeed," said Isabel. " But at the cost of seeming ungrateful, I don't think I can marry Lord Warburton."

" Well," her uncle went on, " of course an old man can't judge for a young lady. I am glad you did n't ask me before you made up your mind. I suppose I ought to tell you," he added slowly, but as if it were not of much consequence, " that I have known all about it these three days."

" About Lord Warburton's state of mind ? "

" About his intentions, as they say here. He wrote me a very pleasant letter, telling me all about them. Should you like to see it ? " the old man asked, obligingly.

" Thank you ; I don't think I care about that. But I am glad he wrote to you ; it was right that he should, and he would be certain to do what was right."

" Ah, well, I guess you do like him ! " Mr. Touchett declared. " You need n't pretend you don't."

" I like him extremely ; I am very free to admit that. But I don't wish to marry any one just now."

" You think some one may come along whom you may like better. Well, that's very likely," said Mr. Touchett, who appeared to wish to show his kindness to the girl by easing off her decision, as it were, and finding cheerful reasons for it.

" I don't care if I don't meet any one else ; I like Lord Warburton quite well enough," said Isabel, with that appearance of a sudden change of point of view with which she sometimes startled and even displeased her interlocutors.

Her uncle, however, seemed proof against either of these sensations.

" He's a very fine man," he resumed, in a tone which might have passed for

that of encouragement. "His letter was one of the pleasantest letters I have received in some weeks. I suppose one of the reasons I liked it was that it was all about you; that is, all except the part which was about himself. I suppose he told you all that."

"He would have told me everything I wished to ask him," Isabel said.

"But you did n't feel curious?"

"My curiosity would have been idle, once I had determined to decline his offer."

"You did n't find it sufficiently attractive?" Mr. Touchett inquired.

The girl was silent a moment.

"I suppose it was that," she presently admitted. "But I don't know why."

"Fortunately, ladies are not obliged to give reasons," said her uncle. "There is a great deal that's attractive about such an idea; but I don't see why the English should want to entice us away from our native land. I know that we try to attract them over there; but that is because our population is insufficient. Here, you know, they are rather crowded. However, I suppose there is room for charming young ladies everywhere."

"There seems to have been room here for you," said Isabel, whose eyes had been wandering over the large pleasure-spaces of the park.

Mr. Touchett gave a shrewd, conscious smile.

"There is room everywhere, my dear, if you will pay for it. I sometimes think I have paid too much for this. Perhaps you also might have to pay too much."

"Perhaps I might," the girl replied.

This suggestion gave her something more definite to rest upon than she had found in her own thoughts, and the fact of her uncle's genial shrewdness being associated with her dilemma seemed to prove to her that she was concerned with the natural and reasonable emotions of life, and not altogether a victim to intellectual eagerness and vague am-

bitions, — ambitions reaching beyond the copious honors of Lord Warburton's petition to something indefinable and possibly not commendable. In so far as the indefinable had an influence upon Isabel's behavior at this juncture, it was not the conception, however unformulated, of a union with Caspar Goodwood; for, however little she might have felt warranted in lending a receptive ear to her English suitor, she was at least as far removed from the disposition to let the young man from Boston take complete possession of her. The sentiment in which she ultimately took refuge, after reading his letter, was a suppressed irritation at his having come abroad; for it was part of the influence he had upon her that he seemed to take from her the sense of freedom. There was something too sensible, something oppressive and restrictive, in the manner in which he presented himself. She had been haunted at moments by the image of his disapproval, and she had wondered — a consideration she had never paid in an equal degree to any one else — whether he would like what she did. The difficulty was that more than any man she had ever known, more than poor Lord Warburton (she had begun now to give his lordship the benefit of this epithet), Caspar Goodwood gave her an impression of strength. She might like it or not, but at any rate there was something very firm about him; even in one's usual contact with him one had to reckon with it. The idea of a diminished liberty was particularly disagreeable to Isabel at present, because it seemed to her that she had just given a sort of personal accent to her independence by making up her mind to refuse Lord Warburton. Sometimes Caspar Goodwood had seemed to range himself on the side of her destiny, to be the stubbornest fact she knew; she said to herself at each moment that she might evade him for a time, but that she must make terms with him at

last, — terms which would be certain to be favorable to himself. Her impulse had been to avail herself of the things that helped her to resist such an obligation; and this impulse had been much concerned in her eager acceptance of her aunt's invitation, which had come to her at a time when she expected from day to day to see Mr. Goodwood, and when she was glad to have an answer ready for something she was sure he would say to her. When she had told him at Albany, on the evening of Mrs. Touchett's visit, that she could not now discuss difficult questions, because she was preoccupied with the idea of going to Europe with her aunt, he declared that this was no answer at all; and it was to obtain a better one that he followed her across the seas. To say to herself that he was a kind of fate was well enough for a fanciful young woman, who was able to take much for granted in him; but the reader has a right to demand a description less metaphysical.

He was the son of a proprietor of certain well-known cotton-mills in Massachusetts, — a gentleman who had accumulated a considerable fortune in the exercise of this industry. Caspar now managed the establishment, with a judgment and an energy which, in spite of keen competition and languid years, had kept its prosperity from dwindling. He had received the better part of his education at Harvard University, where, however, he had gained more renown as a gymnast and an oarsman than as a votary of culture. Later, he had become reconciled to culture, and though he was still fond of sport he was capable of showing an excellent understanding of other matters. He had a remarkable aptitude for mechanics, and had invented an improvement in the cotton-spinning process, which was now largely used and was known by his name. You might have seen his name in the papers in connection with this fruitful contrivance; assurance of which he had

given to Isabel by showing her in the columns of the New York Interviewer an exhaustive article on the Goodwood patent, — an article not prepared by Miss Stackpole, friendly as she had proved herself to his more sentimental interests. He had great talent for business, for administration, and for making people execute his purpose and carry out his views, — for managing men, as the phrase was; and to give its complete value to this faculty he had an insatiable, an almost fierce, ambition. It always struck people who knew him that he might do greater things than carry on a cotton-factory; there was nothing cottony about Caspar Goodwood, and his friends took for granted that he would not always content himself with that. He had once said to Isabel that, if the United States were only not such a confoundedly peaceful nation, he would find his proper place in the army. He keenly regretted that the civil war should have terminated just as he had grown old enough to wear shoulder-straps, and was sure that if something of the same kind would only occur again he would make a display of striking military talent. It pleased Isabel to believe that he had the qualities of a famous captain, and she answered that, if it would help him along, she should not object to a war, — a speech which ranked among the three or four most encouraging ones he had elicited from her, and of which the value was not diminished by her subsequent regret at having said anything so heartless, inasmuch as she never communicated this regret to him. She liked, at any rate, this idea of his being potentially a commander of men, — liked it much better than some other points in his character and appearance. She cared nothing about his cotton-mill, and the Goodwood patent left her imagination absolutely cold. She wished him not an inch less a man than he was; but she sometimes thought he would be rather nicer if he looked, for instance, a little different.

His jaw was too square and grim, and his figure too straight and stiff; these things suggested a want of easy adaptability to some of the occasions of life. Then she viewed with disfavor a habit he had of dressing always in the same manner. It was not, apparently, that he wore the same clothes continually, for, on the contrary, his garments had a way of looking rather too new. But they all seemed to be made of the same piece; the pattern, the cut, was in every case identical. She had reminded herself more than once that this was a frivolous objection to a man of Mr. Goodwood's importance; and then she had amended the rebuke by saying that it would be a frivolous objection if she were in love with him. She was not in love with him, and therefore she might criticise his small defects as well as his great ones, — which latter consisted in the collective reproach of his being too serious; or, rather, not of his being too serious, — for one could never be that, — but of his seeming so. He showed his seriousness too simply, too artlessly; when one was alone with him he talked too much about the same subject, and when other people were present he talked too little about anything. And yet he was the strongest man she had ever known, and she believed that at bottom he was the cleverest. It was very strange; she was far from understanding the contradictions among her own impressions. Caspar Goodwood had never corresponded to her idea of a delightful person, and she supposed that this was why he was so unsatisfactory. When, however, Lord Warburton, who not only did correspond with it, but gave an extension to the term, appealed to her approval, she found herself still unsatisfied. It was certainly strange.

Such incongruities were not a help to answering Mr. Goodwood's letter, and Isabel determined to leave it a while unanswered. If he had determined to persecute her, he must take the conse-

quences, — foremost among which was his being left to perceive that she did not approve of his coming to Garden-court. She was already liable to the incursions of one suitor at this place, and, though it might be pleasant to be appreciated in opposite quarters, Isabel had a personal shrinking from entertaining two lovers at once, even in a case where the entertainment should consist of dismissing them. She sent no answer to Mr. Goodwood; but at the end of three days she wrote to Lord Warburton, and the letter belongs to our history. It ran as follows: —

DEAR LORD WARBURTON, — A great deal of careful reflection has not led me to change my mind about the suggestion you were so kind as to make me the other day. I do not find myself able to regard you in the light of a husband, or to regard your home — your various homes — in the light of my own. These things cannot be reasoned about, and I very earnestly entreat you not to return to the subject we discussed so exhaustively. We see our lives from our own point of view; that is the privilege of the weakest and the humblest of us; and I shall never be able to see mine in the manner you proposed. Kindly let this suffice you, and do me the justice to believe that I have given your proposal the deeply respectful consideration it deserves. It is with this feeling of respect that I remain very truly yours,
ISABEL ARCHER.

While the author of this missive was making up her mind to dispatch it, Henrietta Stackpole formed a resolution which was accompanied by no hesitation. She invited Ralph Touchett to take a walk with her in the garden, and when he had assented with that alacrity which seemed constantly to testify to his high expectations she informed him that she had a favor to ask of him. It may be confided to the reader that at this infor-

mation the young man flinched; for we know that Miss Stackpole had struck him as indiscreet. The movement was unreasonable, however; for he had measured the limits of her discretion as little as he had explored its extent; and he made a very civil profession of the desire to serve her. He was afraid of her, and he presently told her so.

"When you look at me in a certain way," he said, "my knees knock together, my faculties desert me; I am filled with trepidation, and I ask only for strength to execute your commands. You have a look which I have never encountered in any woman."

"Well," Henrietta replied, good-humoredly, "if I had not known before that you were trying to turn me into ridicule, I should know it now. Of course I am easy game, — I was brought up with such different customs and ideas. I am not used to your arbitrary standards, and I have never been spoken to in America as you have spoken to me. If a gentleman, conversing with me, over there, were to speak to me like that, I should n't know what to make of it. We take everything more naturally over there, and, after all, we are a great deal more simple. I admit that; I am very simple myself. Of course, if you choose to laugh at me for that, you are very welcome; but I think, on the whole, I would rather be myself than you. I am quite content to be myself; I don't want to change. There are plenty of people that appreciate me just as I am; it is true they are only Americans!" Henrietta had lately taken up the tone of helpless innocence and large concession. "I want you to assist me a little," she went on. "I don't care in the least whether I amuse you while you do so; or, rather, I am perfectly willing that your amusement should be your reward. I want you to help me about Isabel."

"Has she injured you?" Ralph asked. "If she had I should n't mind, and I

should never tell you. What I am afraid of is that she will injure herself."

"I think that is very possible," said Ralph.

His companion stopped in the garden walk, fixing on him a gaze which may perhaps have contained the quality that caused his knees to knock together. "That, too, would amuse you, I suppose! The way you do say things! I never heard any one so indifferent."

"To Isabel? Never in the world."

"Well, you are not in love with her, I hope."

"How can that be, when I am in love with another?"

"You are in love with yourself, — that is the other!" Miss Stackpole declared. "Much good may it do you! But if you wish to be serious once in your life, here is a chance; and if you really care for your cousin here is an opportunity to prove it. I don't expect you to understand her; that's too much to ask. But you need n't do that to grant my favor. I will supply the necessary intelligence."

"I shall enjoy that immensely!" Ralph exclaimed. "I will be Caliban, and you shall be Ariel."

"You are not at all like Caliban, because you are sophisticated, and Caliban was not. But I am not talking about imaginary characters; I am talking about Isabel. Isabel is intensely real. What I wish to tell you is that I find her fearfully changed."

"Since you came, do you mean?"

"Since I came, and before I came. She is not the same as she was."

"As she was in America?"

"Yes, in America. I suppose you know that she comes from there. She can't help it, but she does."

"Do you want to change her back again?"

"Of course I do; and I want you to help me."

"Ah," said Ralph, "I am only Caliban; I am not Prospero."

"You were Prospero enough to make her what she has become. You have acted on Isabel Archer since she came here, Mr. Touchett."

"I, my dear Miss Stackpole? Never in the world. Isabel Archer has acted on me, — yes; she acts on every one. But I have been absolutely passive."

"You are too passive, then. You had better stir yourself, and be careful. Isabel is changing every day; she is drifting away, — right out to sea. I have watched her, and I can see it. She is not the bright American girl she was. She is taking different views, and turning away from her old ideals. I want to save those ideals, Mr. Touchett, and that is where you come in!"

"Not surely as an ideal?"

"Well, I hope not," Henrietta replied, promptly. "I have got a fear in my heart that she is going to marry one of these Europeans, and I want to prevent it."

"Ah, I see!" cried Ralph. "And to prevent it you want me to step in and marry her?"

"Not quite; that remedy would be as bad as the disease, for you are the typical European from whom I wish to rescue her. No; I wish you to take an interest in another person, — a young man to whom she once gave great encouragement, and whom she now does n't seem to think good enough. He's a noble fellow and a very dear friend of mine, and I wish very much you would invite him to pay a visit here."

Ralph was much puzzled by this appeal, and it is perhaps not to the credit of his purity of mind that he failed to look at it at first in the simplest light. It wore, to his eyes, a tortuous air; his fault was that he was not quite sure that anything in the world could really be as candid as this request of Miss Stackpole's appeared. That a young woman should demand that a gentleman whom she described as her very dear friend should be furnished with an opportunity

to make himself agreeable to another young woman, whose attention had wandered, and whose charms were greater, — this was an anomaly which for the moment challenged all his ingenuity of interpretation. To read between the lines was easier than to follow the text, and to suppose that Miss Stackpole wished the gentleman invited to Gardencourt on her own account was the sign not so much of a vulgar as of an embarrassed mind. Even from this venial act of vulgarity, however, Ralph was saved, and saved by a force that I can scarcely call anything less than inspiration. With no more outward light on the subject than he already possessed, he suddenly acquired the conviction that it would be a sovereign injustice to the correspondent of the Interviewer to assign a dishonorable motive to any act of hers. This conviction passed into his mind with extreme rapidity; it was perhaps kindled by the pure radiance of the young lady's imperturbable gaze. He returned this gaze a moment, consciously resisting an inclination to frown, as one frowns in the presence of larger luminaries. "Who is the gentleman you speak of?"

"Mr. Caspar Goodwood, from Boston. He has been extremely attentive to Isabel, — just as devoted to her as he can live. He has followed her out here, and he is at present in London. I don't know his address, but I guess I can obtain it."

"I have never heard of him," said Ralph.

"Well, I suppose you have n't heard of every one. I don't believe he has ever heard of you; but that is no reason why Isabel should n't marry him."

Ralph gave a little laugh. "What a rage you have for marrying people! Do you remember how you wanted to marry me the other day?"

"I have got over that. You don't know how to take such ideas. Mr. Goodwood does, however; and that's what I

like about him. He's a splendid man and a perfect gentleman; and Isabel knows it."

"Is she very fond of him?"

"If she is n't, she ought to be. He is simply wrapped up in her."

"And you wish me to ask him here," said Ralph, reflectively.

"It would be an act of true hospitality."

"Caspar Goodwood," Ralph continued, — "it's rather a striking name."

"I don't care anything about his name. It might be Ezekiel Jenkins, and I should say the same. He is the only man I have ever seen whom I think worthy of Isabel."

"You are a very devoted friend," said Ralph.

"Of course I am. If you say that to laugh at me, I don't care."

"I don't say it to laugh at you; I am very much struck with it."

"You are laughing worse than ever; but I advise you not to laugh at Mr. Goodwood."

"I assure you I am very serious; you ought to understand that," said Ralph.

In a moment his companion understood it. "I believe you are; now you are too serious."

"You are difficult to please."

"Oh, you are very serious indeed. You won't invite Mr. Goodwood."

"I don't know," said Ralph. "I am capable of strange things. Tell me a little about Mr. Goodwood. What is he like?"

"He is just the opposite of you. He is at the head of a cotton-factory, — a very fine one."

"Has he pleasant manners?" asked Ralph.

"Splendid manners, — in the American style."

"Would he be an agreeable member of our little circle?"

"I don't think he would care much about our little circle. He would concentrate on Isabel."

"And how would my cousin like that?"

"Very possibly, not at all. But it will be good for her. It will call back her thoughts."

"Call them back, — from where?"

"From foreign parts and other unnatural places. Three months ago she gave Mr. Goodwood every reason to suppose that he was acceptable to her, and it is not worthy of Isabel to turn her back upon a real friend simply because she has changed the scene. I have changed the scene, too, and the effect of it has been to make me care more for my old associations than ever. It's my belief that the sooner Isabel changes it back again the better. I know her well enough to know that she would never be truly happy here, and I wish her to form some strong American tie that will act as a preservative."

"Are you not a little too much in a hurry?" Ralph inquired. "Don't you think you ought to give her more of a chance in poor old England?"

"A chance to ruin her bright young life? One is never too much in a hurry to save a precious human creature from drowning."

"As I understand it, then," said Ralph, "you wish me to push Mr. Goodwood overboard after her. Do you know," he added, "that I have never heard her mention his name?"

Henrietta Stackpole gave a brilliant smile. "I am delighted to hear that; it proves how much she thinks of him."

Ralph appeared to admit that there was a good deal in this, and he surrendered himself to meditation, while his companion watched him askance. "If I should invite Mr. Goodwood," he said, "it would be to quarrel with him."

"Don't do that; he would prove the better man."

"You certainly are doing your best to make me hate him! I really don't think I can ask him. I should be afraid of being rude to him."

"It's just as you please," said Henrietta. "I had no idea you were in love with her yourself."

"Do you really believe that?" the young man asked, with lifted eyebrows.

"That's the most natural speech I have ever heard you make! Of course I believe it," Miss Stackpole answered, ingeniously.

"Well," said Ralph, "to prove to you that you are wrong, I will invite him. It must be, of course, as a friend of yours."

"It will not be as a friend of mine that he will come; and it will not be to prove to me that I am wrong that you will ask him, — but to prove it to yourself!"

These last words of Miss Stackpole's (on which the two presently separated) contained an amount of truth which Ralph Touchett was obliged to recognize; but it took the edge from too sharp a recognition that, in spite of his suspecting that it would be rather more indiscreet to keep his promise than it would be to break it, he wrote Mr. Goodwood a note of six lines, expressing the pleasure it would give Mr. Touchett the elder that he should join a little party at Gardencourt, of which Miss Stackpole was a valued member. Having sent his letter (to the care of a banker whom Henrietta suggested), he waited in some suspense. He had heard of Mr. Caspar Goodwood by name for the first time; for when his mother mentioned to him, on her arrival, that there was a story about the girl's having an "admirer" at home, the idea seemed deficient in reality, and Ralph took no pains to ask questions the answers to which would suggest only the vague or the disagreeable. Now, however the native admiration of which his cousin was the object had become more concrete: it took the form of a young man who had followed her to London; who was interested in a cotton-mill, and had manners in the American style.

Ralph had two theories about this young man. Either his passion was a sentimental fiction of Miss Stackpole's (there was always a sort of tacit understanding among women, born of the solidarity of the sex, that they should discover or invent lovers for each other), in which case he was not to be feared, and would probably not accept the invitation; or else he would accept the invitation, and in this event would prove himself a creature too irrational to demand further consideration. The latter clause of Ralph's argument might have seemed incoherent; but it embodied his conviction that if Mr. Goodwood were interested in Isabel, in the serious manner described by Miss Stackpole, he would not care to present himself at Gardencourt on a summons from the latter lady. "On this supposition," said Ralph, "he must regard her as a thorn on the stem of his rose; as an intercessor he must find her wanting in tact."

Two days after he had sent his invitation he received a very short note from Caspar Goodwood, thanking him for it, regretting that other engagements made a visit to Gardencourt impossible, and presenting many compliments to Miss Stackpole. Ralph handed the note to Henrietta, who, when she had read it, exclaimed, —

"Well, I never have heard of anything so stiff!"

"I am afraid he does n't care so much about my cousin as you suppose," Ralph observed.

"No, it's not that; it's some deeper motive. His nature is very deep. But I am determined to fathom it, and I will write to him to know what he means."

His refusal of Ralph's overtures made this young man vaguely uncomfortable; from the moment he declined to come to Gardencourt Ralph began to think him of importance. He asked himself what it signified to him whether Isabel's admirers should be desperadoes or lag-

gards; they were not rivals of his, and were perfectly welcome to act according to their peculiar temperaments. Nevertheless, he felt much curiosity as to the result of Miss Stackpole's promised inquiry into the causes of Mr. Goodwood's stiffness, — a curiosity for the present ungratified, inasmuch as when he asked her, three days later, whether she had written to London, she was obliged to confess that she had written in vain. Mr. Goodwood had not answered her.

"I suppose he is thinking it over," she said; "he thinks everything over; he is not at all impulsive. But I am accustomed to having my letters answered the same day."

Whether it was to pursue her investigations, or whether it was in compliance with still larger interests, is a point which remains somewhat uncertain; at all events, she presently proposed to Isabel that they should make an excursion to London together.

"If I must tell the truth," she said, "I am not seeing much at this place, and I should n't think you were, either. I have not even seen that aristocrat, — what's his name? — Lord Washburton. He seems to let you severely alone."

"Lord Warburton is coming to-morrow, I happen to know," replied Isabel, who had received a note from the master of Lockleigh in answer to her own letter. "You will have every opportunity of examining him."

"Well, he may do for one letter; but what is one letter, when you want to write fifty? I have described all the scenery in this vicinity, and raved about all the old women and donkeys. You may say what you please, scenery makes a thin letter. I must go back to London and get some impressions of real life. I was there but three days before I came away, and that is hardly time to get started."

As Isabel, on her journey from New York to Gardencourt, had seen even less of the metropolis than this, it appeared

a happy suggestion of Henrietta's that the two should go thither on a visit of pleasure. The idea struck Isabel as charming; she had a great desire to see something of London, which had always been the city of her imagination. They turned over their scheme together, and indulged in visions of æsthetic hours. They would stay at some picturesque old inn, — one of the inns described by Dickens, — and drive over the town in those delightful hansoms. Henrietta was a literary woman, and the great advantage of being a literary woman was that you could go everywhere and do everything. They would dine at a coffee-house, and go afterwards to the play; they would frequent the Abbey and the British Museum, and find out where Dr. Johnson had lived, and Goldsmith and Addison. Isabel grew eager, and presently mentioned these bright intentions to Ralph, who burst into a fit of laughter which did not express the sympathy she had desired.

"It's a delightful plan," he said. "I advise you to go to the Tavistock Hotel, Covent Garden, — an easy, informal, old-fashioned place, — and I will have you put down at my club."

"Do you mean it's improper?" Isabel asked. "Dear me, is n't anything proper here? With Henrietta, surely I may go anywhere; she is n't hampered in that way. She has traveled over the whole American continent, and she can surely find her way about this simple little island."

"Ah, then," said Ralph, "let me take advantage of her protection to go up to town as well. I may never have a chance to travel so safely!"

XIV.

Miss Stackpole would have prepared to start for London immediately; but Isabel, as we have seen, had been notified that Lord Warburton would come

again to Gardencourt, and she believed it to be her duty to remain there and see him. For four or five days he had made no answer to her letter; then he had written, very briefly, to say that he would come to lunch two days later. There was something in these delays and postponements that touched the girl, and renewed her sense of his desire to be considerate and patient, not to appear to urge her too grossly, — a discretion the more striking that she was so sure he really liked her. Isabel told her uncle that she had written to him, and let Mr. Touchett know of Lord Warburton's intention of coming; and the old man, in consequence, left his room earlier than usual, and made his appearance at the lunch-table. This was by no means an act of vigilance on his part, but the fruit of a benevolent belief that his being of the company might help to cover the visitor's abstraction, in case Isabel should find it needful to give Lord Warburton another hearing. This gentleman drove over from Lockleigh, and brought the elder of his sisters with him, — a measure presumably dictated by considerations of the same order as Mr. Touchett's. The two visitors were introduced to Miss Stackpole, who, at luncheon, occupied a seat adjoining Lord Warburton's. Isabel, who was nervous, and had no relish for the prospect of again arguing the question he had so precipitately opened, could not help admiring his good-humored self-possession, which quite disguised the symptoms of that admiration it was natural she should suppose him to feel. He neither looked at her nor spoke to her, and the only sign of his emotion was that he avoided meeting her eye. He had plenty of talk for the others, however, and he appeared to eat his luncheon with discrimination and appetite. Miss Molyneux, who had a smooth, nun-like forehead, and wore a large silver cross suspended from her neck, was evidently preoccupied with

Henrietta Stackpole, upon whom her eyes constantly rested in a manner which seemed to denote a conflict between attention and alienation. Of the two ladies from Lockleigh, she was the one that Isabel had liked best; there was such a world of hereditary quiet in her. Isabel was sure, moreover, that her mild forehead and silver cross meant something, — that she was a member of a High Church sisterhood, or was versed in works of charity and piety. She wondered what Miss Molyneux would think of her if she knew Miss Archer had refused her brother; and then she felt sure that Miss Molyneux would never know, — that Lord Warburton never told her such things. He was fond of her and kind to her, but on the whole he told her little. Such, at least, was Isabel's theory: when, at table, she was not occupied in conversation, she was usually occupied in forming theories about her neighbors. According to Isabel, if Miss Molyneux should ever learn what had passed between Miss Archer and Lord Warburton, she would probably be shocked at the young lady's indifference to such an opportunity; or no, rather (this was our heroine's last impression) she would credit the young American with a high sense of general fitness.

Whatever Isabel might have made of her opportunities, Henrietta Stackpole was by no means disposed to neglect those in which she now found herself immersed.

"Do you know you are the first lord I have ever seen?" she said, very promptly, to her neighbor. "I suppose you think I am awfully benighted."

"You have escaped seeing some very ugly men," Lord Warburton answered, looking vaguely about the table, and laughing a little.

"Are they very ugly? They try to make us believe in America that they are all handsome and magnificent, and that they wear wonderful robes and crowns."

"Ah, the robes and crowns have gone out of fashion," said Lord Warburton, "like your tomahawks and revolvers."

"I am sorry for that; I think an aristocracy ought to be splendid," Henrietta declared. "If it is not that, what is it?"

"Oh, you know, it is n't much, at the best," Lord Warburton answered. "Won't you have a potato?"

"I don't care much for these European potatoes. I should n't know you from an ordinary American gentleman."

"Do talk to me as if I were one," said Lord Warburton. "I don't see how you manage to get on without potatoes; you must find so few things to eat over here."

Henrietta was silent a moment; there was a chance that he was not sincere.

"I have had hardly any appetite since I have been here," she went on at last; "so it does n't much matter. I don't approve of *you*, you know; I feel as if I ought to tell you that."

"Don't approve of me?"

"Yes; I don't suppose any one ever said such a thing to you before, did they? I don't approve of lords, as an institution. I think the world has got beyond that, — far beyond."

"Oh, so do I. I don't approve of myself in the least. Sometimes it comes over me, — how I should object to myself if I were not myself, don't you know? But that's rather good, by the way, — not to be vainglorious."

"Why don't you give it up, then?" Miss Stackpole inquired.

"Give-up—a"—asked Lord Warburton, meeting her harsh inflection with a very soft one.

"Give up being a lord."

"Oh, I am so little of one! One would really forget all about it, if you wretched Americans were not constantly reminding one. However, I do think of giving up — the little there is left of it — one of these days."

"I should like to see you do it!" Henrietta exclaimed, rather grimly.

"I will invite you to the ceremony; we will have a supper and a dance."

"Well," said Miss Stackpole, "I like to see all sides. I don't approve of a privileged class, but I like to hear what they have got to say for themselves."

"Mighty little, as you see!"

"I should like to draw you out a little more," Henrietta continued. "But you are always looking away. You are afraid of meeting my eye. I see you want to escape me."

"No, I am only looking for those despised potatoes."

"Please explain about that young lady, — your sister, — then. I don't understand about her. Is she a Lady?"

"She's a capital good girl."

"I don't like the way you say that, — as if you wanted to change the subject. Is her position inferior to yours?"

"We neither of us have any position to speak of; but she is better off than I, because she has none of the bother."

"Yes, she does n't look as if she had much bother. I wish I had as little bother as that. You do produce quiet people over here, whatever you may do."

"Ah, you see, one takes life easily, on the whole," said Lord Warburton. "And then, you know, we are very dull. Ah, we can be dull when we try!"

"I should advise you to try something else. I should n't know what to talk to your sister about; she looks so different. Is that silver cross a badge?"

"A badge?"

"A sign of rank."

Lord Warburton's glance had wandered a good deal, but at this it met the gaze of his neighbor.

"Oh, yes," he answered, in a moment; "the women go in for those things. The silver cross is worn by the elder daughters of viscounts."

This was his harmless revenge for

having occasionally had his credulity too easily engaged in America.

After lunch he proposed to Isabel to come into the gallery and look at the pictures; and though she knew that he had seen the pictures twenty times she complied without criticising this pretext. Her conscience now was very easy; ever since she sent him her letter she had felt particularly light of spirit. He walked slowly to the end of the gallery, looking at the paintings and saying nothing; and then he suddenly broke out, —

“I hoped you would n’t write to me that way.”

“It was the only way, Lord Warburton,” said the girl. “Do try and believe that.”

“If I could believe it, of course I should let you alone. But we can’t believe by willing it; and I confess I don’t understand. I could understand your disliking me; that I could understand well. But that you should admit what you do” —

“What have I admitted?” Isabel interrupted, blushing a little.

“That you think me a good fellow; is n’t that it?” She said nothing, and he went on: “You don’t seem to have any reason, and that gives me a sense of injustice.”

“I have a reason, Lord Warburton,” said the girl; and she said it in a tone that made his heart contract.

“I should like very much to know it.”

“I will tell you some day when there is more to show for it.”

“Excuse my saying that in the mean time I must doubt of it.”

“You make me very unhappy,” said Isabel.

“I am not sorry for that; it may help you to know how I feel. Will you kindly answer me a question?” Isabel made no audible assent, but he apparently saw something in her eyes which gave him courage to go on. “Do you prefer some one else?”

“That’s a question I would rather not answer.”

“Ah, you *do* then!” her suitor murmured, with bitterness.

The bitterness touched her, and she cried out, —

“You are mistaken! I don’t.”

He sat down on a bench, unceremoniously, doggedly, like a man in trouble; leaning his elbows on his knees and staring at the floor.

“I can’t even be glad of that,” he said, at last, throwing himself back against the wall, “for that would be an excuse.”

Isabel raised her eyebrows, with a certain eagerness.

“An excuse? Must I excuse myself?”

He paid, however, no answer to the question. Another idea had come into his head.

“Is it my political opinions? Do you think I go too far?”

“I can’t object to your political opinions, Lord Warburton,” said the girl, “because I don’t understand them.”

“You don’t care what I think!” he cried, getting up. “It’s all the same to you.”

Isabel walked away, to the other side of the gallery, and stood there, showing him her charming back, her light, slim figure, the length of her white neck as she bent her head, and the density of her dark braids. She stopped in front of a small picture, as if for the purpose of examining it; and there was something young and flexible in her movement, which her companion noticed. Isabel’s eyes, however, saw nothing; they had suddenly been suffused with tears. In a moment he followed her, and by this time she had brushed her tears away; but when she turned round her face was pale, and the expression of her eyes was strange.

“That reason that I would n’t tell you,” she said, “I will tell it you, after all. It is that I can’t escape my fate.”

"Your fate?"

"I should try to escape it if I should marry you."

"I don't understand. Why should not that be your fate, as well as anything else?"

"Because it is not," said Isabel, femininely. "I know it is not. It's not my fate to give up, — I know it can't be."

Poor Lord Warburton stared, with an interrogative point in either eye.

"Do you call marrying me giving up?"

"Not in the usual sense. It is getting — getting — getting a great deal. But it is giving up other chances."

"Other chances?" Lord Warburton repeated, more and more puzzled.

"I don't mean chances to marry," said Isabel, her color rapidly coming back to her. And then she stopped, looking down with a deep frown, as if it were hopeless to attempt to make her meaning clear.

"I don't think it is presumptuous in me to say that I think you will gain more than you will lose," Lord Warburton observed.

"I can't escape unhappiness," said Isabel. "In marrying you, I shall be trying to."

"I don't know whether you would try to, but you certainly would: that I must in candor admit!" Lord Warburton exclaimed, with an anxious laugh.

"I must not, — I can't!" cried the girl.

"Well, if you are bent on being miserable, I don't see why you should make me so. Whatever charms unhappiness may have for you, it has none for me."

"I am not bent on being miserable," said Isabel. "I have always been intensely determined to be happy, and I have often believed I should be. I have told people that; you can ask them. But it comes over me, every now and then, that I can never be happy

in any extraordinary way; not by turning away, by separating myself."

"By separating yourself from what?"

"From life: from the usual chances and dangers; from what most people know and suffer."

Lord Warburton broke into a smile that almost denoted hope.

"Why, my dear Miss Archer," he began to explain, with the most considerate eagerness, "I don't offer you any exoneration from life, or from any chances or dangers whatever. I wish I could; depend upon it, I would! For what do you take me, pray? Heaven help me, I am not the Emperor of China! All I offer you is the chance of taking the common lot in a comfortable sort of way. The common lot? Why, I am devoted to the common lot! Strike an alliance with me, and I promise you that you shall have plenty of it. You shall separate from nothing whatever, — not even from your friend Miss Stackpole."

"She would never approve of it," said Isabel, trying to smile and take advantage of this side-issue; despising herself, too, not a little, for doing so.

"Are we speaking of Miss Stackpole?" Lord Warburton, asked impatiently. "I never saw a person judge things on such strange, such theoretic grounds."

"Now I suppose you are speaking of me," said Isabel, with humility; and she turned away again, for she saw Miss Molyneux enter the gallery, accompanied by Henrietta and by Ralph.

Lord Warburton's sister addressed him with a certain timidity, and reminded him that she ought to return home in time for tea, as she was expecting some company. He made no answer, — apparently not having heard her; he was preoccupied, — with good reason. Miss Molyneux looked lady-like and patient, and awaited his pleasure.

"Well, I never, Miss Molyneux!" said Henrietta Stackpole. "If I wanted

to go, he would have to go. If I wanted my brother to do a thing, he would have to do it."

"Oh, Warburton does everything one wants," Miss Molyneux answered, with a quick, shy laugh. "How very many pictures you have!" she went on, turning to Ralph.

"They look a good many, because they are all put together," said Ralph. "But it's really a bad way."

"Oh, I think it's so nice. I wish we had a gallery at Lockleigh. I am so very fond of pictures," Miss Molyneux went on, persistently, to Ralph, as if she were afraid that Miss Stackpole would address her again. Henrietta appeared at once to fascinate and to frighten her.

"Oh, yes, pictures are very indispensable," said Ralph, who appeared to know better what style of reflection was acceptable to her.

"They are so very pleasant when it rains," the young lady continued. "It rains so very often."

"I am sorry you are going away, Lord Warburton," said Henrietta. "I wanted to get a great deal more out of you."

"I am not going away," Lord Warburton answered.

"Your sister says you must. In America the gentlemen obey the ladies."

"I am afraid we have got some people to tea," said Miss Molyneux, looking at her brother.

"Very good, my dear. We'll go."

"I hoped you would resist!" Henrietta exclaimed. "I wanted to see what Miss Molyneux would do."

"I never do anything," said this young lady.

"I suppose in your position it's sufficient for you to exist!" Miss Stackpole rejoined. "I should like very much to see you at home."

"You must come to Lockleigh again," said Miss Molyneux, very sweetly, to

Isabel, ignoring this remark of Isabel's friend.

Isabel looked into her quiet eyes a moment, and for that moment seemed to see in their gray depths the reflection of everything she had rejected in rejecting Lord Warburton, — the peace, the kindness, the honor, the possessions, a deep security, and a great exclusion. She kissed Miss Molyneux, and then she said, —

"I am afraid I can never come again."

"Never again?"

"I am afraid I am going away."

"Oh, I am so very sorry," said Miss Molyneux. "I think that's so very wrong of you."

Lord Warburton watched this little passage; then he turned away and stared at a picture. Ralph, leaning against the rail before the picture, with his hands in his pockets, had for the moment been watching him.

"I should like to see you at home," said Henrietta, whom Lord Warburton found beside him. "I should like an hour's talk with you; there are a great many questions I wish to ask you."

"I shall be delighted to see you," the proprietor of Lockleigh answered; "but I am certain not to be able to answer many of your questions. When will you come?"

"Whenever Miss Archer will take me. We are thinking of going to London, but we will go and see you first. I am determined to get some satisfaction out of you."

"If it depends upon Miss Archer, I am afraid you won't get much. She will not come to Lockleigh; she does n't like the place."

"She told me it was lovely!" said Henrietta.

Lord Warburton hesitated a moment.

"She won't come, all the same. You had better come alone," he added.

Henrietta straightened herself, and her large eyes expanded.

"Would you make that remark to

an English lady?" she inquired, with soft asperity.

Lord Warburton stared.

"Yes, if I liked her enough."

"You would be careful not to like her enough. If Miss Archer won't visit your place again, it's because she does n't want to take me. I know what she thinks of me, and I suppose you think the same, — that I ought n't to bring in individuals."

Lord Warburton was at a loss; he had not been made acquainted with Miss Stackpole's professional character, and did not catch her allusion.

"Miss Archer has been warning you!" she went on.

"Warning me?"

"Is n't that why she came off alone with you here, — to put you on your guard?"

"Oh, dear, no," said Lord Warburton, blushing; "our talk had no such solemn character as that."

"Well, you have been on your guard, — intensely. I suppose it's natural to you; that's just what I wanted to observe. And so, too, has Miss Molyneux, — she would n't commit herself. *You* have been warned, any way," Henrietta continued, addressing this young lady; "but for you it was n't necessary."

"I hope not," said Miss Molyneux, vaguely.

"Miss Stackpole takes notes," Ralph explained, humorously. "She is a great satirist; she sees through us all, and she works us up."

"Well, I must say I never have had such a collection of bad material!" Henrietta declared, looking from Isabel to Lord Warburton, and from this nobleman to his sister and to Ralph. "There is something the matter with you all; you are as dismal as if you had got a bad telegram."

"You do see through us, Miss Stackpole," said Ralph, in a low tone, giving her a little intelligent nod, as he led the

party out of the gallery. "There is something the matter with us all."

Isabel came behind these two; Miss Molyneux, who decidedly liked her immensely, had taken her arm, to walk beside her over the polished floor. Lord Warburton strolled on the other side, with his hands behind him and his eyes lowered.

For some moments he said nothing; and then, —

"Is it true that you are going to London?" he asked.

"I believe it has been arranged."

"And when shall you come back?"

"In a few days; but probably for a very short time. I am going to Paris with my aunt."

"When, then, shall I see you again?"

"Not for a good while," said Isabel; "but some day or other, I hope."

"Do you really hope it?"

"Very much."

He went a few steps in silence; then he stopped, and put out his hand.

"Good-by."

"Good-by," said Isabel.

Miss Molyneux kissed her again, and she let the two depart; after which, without rejoining Henrietta and Ralph, she retreated to her own room.

In this apartment, before dinner, she was found by Mrs. Touchett, who had stopped on her way to the drawing-room.

"I may as well tell you," said her aunt, "that your uncle has informed me of your relations with Lord Warburton."

Isabel hesitated an instant.

"Relations? They are hardly relations. That is the strange part of it; he has seen me but three or four times."

"Why did you tell your uncle rather than me?" Mrs. Touchett inquired, dryly but dispassionately.

Again Isabel hesitated.

"Because he knows Lord Warburton better."

"Yes, but I know you better."

"I am not sure of that," said Isabel, smiling.

"Neither am I, after all; especially when you smile that way. One would think you had carried off a prize! I

suppose that when you refuse an offer like Warburton's it's because you expect to do something better."

"Ah, my uncle did n't say that!" cried Isabel, smiling still.

Henry James, Jr.

"YE TOMBE OF YE POET CHAUCER."

WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

ABBOT and monks of Westminster
 Here placed his tomb, in all men's view.
 "Our Chaucer dead?" — King Harry said, —
 "A mass for him, and burial due!"
 This very aisle his footsteps knew;
 Here Gower's benediction fell, —
Brother thou were and minstral trewe;
Now slepe thou wel!

There died with that old century's death,
 I wot, five hundred years ago,
 One whose blithe heart, whose morning art,
 Made England's Castaly to flow.
 He in whose song that fount we know,
 With every tale the sky-larks tell,
 Had right, Saint Bennet's wall below,
 To slumber well.

Eftsoons his master piously
 In Surrey hied him to his rest;
 The Thames, between their closes green,
 Parted these warblers breast from breast, —
 The gravest from the joyfulest
 Whose notes the matin chorus swell:
 A league divided, east and west,
 They slumber well.

Is there no care in holy ground
 The world's deep undertone to hear?
 Can this strong sleep our Chaucer keep
 When May-time buds and blossoms peer?
 Less strange that many a sceptred year,
 While the twin houses towered and fell,
 Alike through England's pride and fear,
 He slumbered well.