

I know what thou hast never known,
 Sad foresight to a soul allowed, —
 That not for life I spin alone,
 But day by day I spin my shroud.

Rose Terry Cooke.

THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY.

XIX.

As Mrs. Touchett had foretold, Isabel and Madame Merle were thrown much together during the illness of their host, and if they had not become intimate it would have been almost a breach of good manners. Their manners were of the best; but in addition to this they happened to please each other. It is perhaps too much to say that they swore an eternal friendship; but tacitly, at least, they called the future to witness. Isabel did so with a perfectly good conscience, although she would have hesitated to admit that she was intimate with her new friend in the sense which she privately attached to this term. She often wondered, indeed, whether she ever had been, or ever could be, intimate with any one. She had an ideal of friendship, as well as of several other sentiments, and it did not seem to her in this case — it had not seemed to her in other cases — that the actual completely expressed it. But she often reminded herself that there were essential reasons why one's ideal could not become concrete. It was a thing to believe in, not to see, — a matter of faith, not of experience. Experience, however, might supply us with very creditable imitations of it, and the part of wisdom was to make the best of these. Certainly, on the whole, Isabel had never encountered a more agreeable and interesting woman than Madame Merle; she had never met a woman who had less of that fault which is the principal obstacle to friend-

ship, — the air of reproducing the more tiresome parts of one's own personality. The gates of the girl's confidence were opened wider than they had ever been; she said things to Madame Merle that she had not yet said to any one. Sometimes she took alarm at her candor; it was as if she had given to a comparative stranger the key to her cabinet of jewels. These spiritual gems were the only ones of any magnitude that Isabel possessed; but that was all the greater reason why they should be carefully guarded. Afterwards, however, the girl always said to herself that one should never regret a generous error, and that if Madame Merle had not the merits she attributed to her, so much the worse for Madame Merle. There was no doubt she had great merits, — she was a charming, sympathetic, intelligent, cultivated woman. More than this (for it had not been Isabel's ill-fortune to go through life without meeting several persons of her own sex, of whom no less could fairly be said), she was rare, she was superior, she was preëminent. There are a great many amiable people in the world, and Madame Merle was far from being vulgarly good-natured and restlessly witty. She knew how to think, an accomplishment rare in women; and she had thought to very good purpose. Of course, too, she knew how to feel; Isabel could not have spent a week with her without being sure of that. This was, indeed, Madame Merle's great talent, her most perfect gift. Life had told upon her; she had felt it strong-

ly, and it was part of the satisfaction that Isabel found in her society that when the girl talked of what she was pleased to call serious matters her companion understood her so easily and quickly. Emotion, it is true, had become with her rather historic; she made no secret of the fact that the fountain of sentiment, thanks to having been rather violently tapped at one period, did not flow quite so freely as of yore. Her pleasure was now to judge rather than to feel; she freely admitted that of old she had been rather foolish, and now she pretended to be wise.

"I judge more than I used to," she said to Isabel; "but it seems to me that I have earned the right. One can't judge till one is forty; before that we are too eager, too hard, too cruel, and in addition too ignorant. I am sorry for you; it will be a long time before you are forty. But every gain is a loss of some kind; I often think that after forty one can't really feel. The freshness, the quickness, have certainly gone. You will keep them longer than most people; it will be a great satisfaction to me to see you some years hence. I want to see what life makes of you. One thing is certain, — it can't spoil you. It may pull you about horribly; but I defy it to break you up."

Isabel received this assurance as a young soldier, still panting from a slight skirmish in which he has come off with honor, might receive a pat on the shoulder from his colonel. Like such a recognition of merit, it seemed to come with authority. How could the lightest word do less of a person who was prepared to say of almost everything Isabel told her, "Oh, I have been in that, my dear; it passes, like everything else." Upon many of her interlocutors, Madame Merle might have produced an irritating effect; it was so difficult to surprise her. But Isabel, though by no means incapable of desiring to be effective, had not at present this motive. She

was too sincere, too interested in her judicious companion. And then, moreover, Madame Merle never said such things in the tone of triumph or of boastfulness; they dropped from her like grave confessions.

A period of bad weather had settled down upon Gardencourt; the days grew shorter, and there was an end to the pretty tea-parties on the lawn. But Isabel had long in-door conversations with her fellow-visitor, and, in spite of the rain, the two ladies often sallied forth for a walk, equipped with the defensive apparatus which the English climate and the English genius have between them brought to such perfection. Madame Merle was very appreciative; she liked almost everything, including the English rain. "There is always a little of it, and never too much at once," she said; "and it never wets you, and it always smells good." She declared that in England the pleasures of smell were great, — that in this inimitable island there was a certain mixture of fog and beer and soot which, however odd it might sound, was the national aroma and was most agreeable to the nostril; and she used to lift the sleeve of her British overcoat and bury her nose in it, to inhale the clear, fine odor of the wool. Poor Ralph Touchett, as soon as the autumn had begun to define itself, became almost a prisoner; in bad weather he was unable to step out of the house, and he used sometimes to stand at one of the windows, with his hands in his pockets, and, with a countenance half rueful, half critical, watch Isabel and Madame Merle as they walked down the avenue under a pair of umbrellas. The roads about Gardencourt were so firm, even in the worst weather, that the two ladies always came back with a healthy glow in their cheeks, looking at the soles of their neat, stout boots, and declaring that this walk had done them inexpressible good. Before lunch, Madame Merle was always en-

gaged; Isabel admired the inveteracy with which she occupied herself. Our heroine had always passed for a person of resources, and had taken a certain pride in being one; but she envied the talents, the accomplishments, the aptitudes, of Madame Merle. She found herself desiring to emulate them, and in this and other ways Madame Merle presented herself as a model. "I should like to be like that!" Isabel secretly exclaimed, more than once, as one of her friend's numerous facets suddenly took the light, and before long she knew that she had taken a lesson from this exemplary woman. It took no very long time, indeed, for Isabel to feel that she was, as the phrase is, under an influence. "What is the harm," she asked herself, "so long as it is a good one? The more one is under a good influence, the better. The only thing is to see our steps as we take them, — to understand them as we go. That I think I shall always do. I need n't be afraid of becoming too pliable; it is my fault that I am not pliable enough." It is said that imitation is the sincerest flattery; and if Isabel was tempted to reproduce in her deportment some of the most graceful features of that of her friend, it was not so much because she desired to shine herself as because she wished to hold up the lamp for Madame Merle. She liked her extremely; but she admired her even more than she liked her. She sometimes wondered what Henrietta Stackpole would say to her thinking so much of this brilliant fugitive from a sterner social order, and had a conviction that Henrietta would not approve of it. Henrietta would not like Madame Merle; for reasons that she could not have defined, this truth came home to Isabel. On the other hand, she was equally sure that, should the occasion offer, her new friend would accommodate herself perfectly to her old; Madame Merle was too humorous, too observant, not to do justice to Henrietta, and on becoming acquainted

with her would probably give the measure of a tact which Miss Stackpole could not hope to emulate. She appeared to have, in her experience, a touch-stone for everything, and somewhere in the capacious pocket of her genial memory she would find the key to Henrietta's virtues. "That is the great thing," Isabel reflected; "that is the supreme good fortune, — to be in a better position for appreciating people than they are for appreciating you." And she added that this, when one considered it, was simply the essence of the aristocratic situation. In this light, if in none other, one should aim at the aristocratic situation.

I cannot enumerate all the links in the chain which led Isabel to think of Madame Merle's situation as aristocratic, — a view of it never expressed in any reference made to it by that lady herself. She had known great things and great people, but she had never played a great part. She was one of the small ones of the earth; she had not been born to honors; she knew the world too well to be guilty of any fatuous illusions on the subject of her own place in it. She had known a good many of the fortunate few, and was perfectly aware of those points at which their fortune differed from hers. But if by her own measure she was nothing of a personage, she had yet, to Isabel's imagination, a sort of greatness. To be so graceful, so gracious, so wise, so good, and to make so light of it all, — that was really to be a great lady; especially when one looked so much like one. If Madame Merle, however, made light of her advantages as regards the world, it was not because she had not, for her own entertainment, taken them, as I have intimated, as seriously as possible. Her natural talents, for instance; these she had zealously cultivated. After breakfast she wrote a succession of letters; her correspondence was a source of surprise to Isabel when they sometimes

walked together to the village post-office, to deposit Madame Merle's contribution to the mail. She knew a multitude of people, and, as she told Isabel, something was always turning up to be written about. Of painting she was devotedly fond, and made no more of taking a sketch than of pulling off her gloves. At Gardencourt she was perpetually taking advantage of an hour's sunshine to go out with a camp-stool and a box of water-colors. That she was a brilliant musician we have already perceived, and it was evidence of the fact that, when she seated herself at the piano, as she always did in the evening, her listeners resigned themselves without a murmur to losing the entertainment of her talk. Isabel, since she had known Madame Merle, felt ashamed of her own playing, which she now looked upon as meagre and artless; and indeed, though she had been thought to play very well, the loss to society when, in taking her place upon the music stool, she turned her back to the room was usually deemed greater than the gain. When Madame Merle was neither writing, nor painting, nor touching the piano, she was usually employed upon wonderful morsels of picturesque embroidery, cushions, curtains, decorations for the chimney-piece, — a sort of work in which her bold, free invention was as remarkable as the agility of her needle. She was never idle, for when she was engaged in none of the ways I have mentioned, she was either reading (she appeared to Isabel to read everything important), or walking out, or playing patience with the cards, or talking with her fellow inmates. And with all this she always had the social quality; she never was preoccupied, she never was pressed too hard. She laid down her pastimes as easily as she took them up; she worked and talked at the same time, and she appeared to attach no importance to anything she did. She gave away her sketches and tapestries; she rose from the piano, or

remained there, according to the convenience of her auditors, which she always unerringly divined. She was, in short, a most comfortable, profitable, agreeable person to live with. If for Isabel she had a fault, it was that she was not natural; by which the girl meant, not that she was affected or pretentious, for from these vulgar vices no woman could have been more exempt, but that her nature had been too much overlaid by custom and her angles too much smoothed. She had become too flexible, too supple; she was too finished, too civilized. She was, in a word, too perfectly the social animal that man and woman are supposed to have been intended to be; and she had rid herself of every remnant of that wildness and acridity which we may assume to have belonged even to the most amiable persons in ages when social friction had lasted less long among mankind than it has to-day.

Isabel found it difficult to think of Madame Merle as an isolated figure; she existed only in her relations with her fellow mortals. Isabel often wondered what her relations might be with her own soul. She always ended, however, by feeling that having a charming surface does not necessarily prove that one is superficial; this was an illusion in which, in her youth, she had only just sufficiently escaped being nourished. Madame Merle was not superficial, — not she. She was deep; and her nature spoke none the less in her behavior because it spoke a conventional language. "What is language at all but a convention?" said Isabel. "She has the good taste not to pretend, like some people I have met, to express herself by original signs."

"I am afraid you have suffered much," Isabel once found occasion to say to her, in response to some allusion that she had dropped.

"What makes you think that?" Madame Merle asked, with a picturesque

smile. "I hope I have not the pose of a martyr."

"No; but you sometimes say things that I think people who have always been happy would not have found out."

"I have not always been happy!" said Madame Merle, smiling still, but with a mock gravity, as if she were telling a child a secret. "What a wonderful thing!"

"A great many people give me the impression of never having felt anything very much," Isabel answered.

"It's very true; there are more iron pots, I think, than porcelain ones. But you may depend upon it that every one has something; even the hardest iron pots have a little bruise, a little hole somewhere. I flatter myself that I am rather stout porcelain; but if I must tell you the truth, I have been chipped and cracked! I do very well for service yet, because I have been cleverly mended; and I try to remain in the cupboard—the quiet, dusky cupboard, where there is an odor of stale spices—as much as I can. But when I have to come out, and into a strong light, then, my dear, I am a horror!"

I know not whether it was on this occasion or some other that, when the conversation had taken the turn I have just indicated, she said to Isabel that some day she would relate her history. Isabel assured her that she should delight to listen to it, and reminded her more than once of this engagement. Madame Merle, however, appeared to desire a postponement, and at last frankly told the young girl that she must wait till they knew each other better. This would certainly happen; a long friendship lay before them. Isabel assented, but at the same time asked Madame Merle if she could not trust her,—if she feared a betrayal of confidence.

"It is not that I am afraid of your repeating what I say," the elder lady answered. "I am afraid, on the con-

trary, of your taking it too much to yourself. You would judge me too harshly; you are of the cruel age." She preferred for the present to talk to Isabel about Isabel, and exhibited the greatest interest in our heroine's history, her sentiments, opinions, prospects. She made her chatter, and listened to her chatter with inexhaustible sympathy and good nature. In all this there was something flattering to the girl, who knew that Madame Merle knew a great many distinguished people, and had lived, as Mrs. Touchett said, in the best company in Europe. Isabel thought the better of herself for enjoying the favor of a person who had so large a field of comparison; and it was perhaps partly to gratify this sense of profiting by comparison that she often begged her friend to tell her about the people she knew. Madame Merle had been a dweller in many lands, and had social ties in a dozen different countries. "I don't pretend to be learned," she would say, "but I think I know my Europe;" and she spoke one day of going to Sweden to stay with an old friend, and another of going to Wallachia to follow up a new acquaintance. With England, where she had often stayed, she was thoroughly familiar; and for Isabel's benefit threw a great deal of light upon the customs of the country and the character of the people, who "after all," as she was fond of saying, were the finest people in the world.

"You must not think it strange, her staying in the house at such a time as this, when Mr. Touchett is passing away," Mrs. Touchett remarked to Isabel. "She is incapable of doing anything indiscreet; she is the best bred woman I know. It's a favor to me that she stays; she is putting off a lot of visits at great houses," said Mrs. Touchett, who never forgot that when she herself was in England her social value sank two or three degrees in the

scale. "She has her pick of places; she is not in want of a shelter. But I have asked her to stay because I wish you to know her. I think it will be a good thing for you. Geraldine Merle has no faults."

"If I didn't already like her very much, that description might alarm me," Isabel said.

"She never does anything wrong. I have brought you out here, and I wish to do the best for you. Your sister Lily told me that she hoped I would give you plenty of opportunities. I give you one in securing Madame Merle. She is one of the most brilliant women in Europe."

"I like her better than I like your description of her," Isabel persisted in saying.

"Do you flatter yourself that you will find a fault in her? I hope you will let me know when you do."

"That will be cruel — to you," said Isabel.

"You need n't mind me. You never will find one."

"Perhaps not; but I think I shall not miss it."

"She is always up to the mark!" said Mrs. Touchett.

Isabel, after this, said to Madame Merle that she hoped she knew Mrs. Touchett believed she had not a fault.

"I am obliged to you, but I am afraid your aunt has no perception of spiritual things," Madame Merle answered.

"Do you mean by that that you have spiritual faults?"

"Ah, no; I mean nothing so flat! I mean that having no faults, for your aunt, means that one is never late for dinner, — that is, for *her* dinner. I was not late, by the way, the other day, when you came back from London; the clock was just at eight when I came into the drawing-room; it was the rest of you that were before the time. It means that one answers a letter the day

one gets it, and that when one comes to stay with her one does n't bring too much luggage, and is careful not to be taken ill. For Mrs. Touchett those things constitute virtue; it's a blessing to be able to reduce it to its elements."

Madame Merle's conversation, it will be perceived, was enriched with bold, free touches of criticism, which, even when they had a restrictive effect, never struck Isabel as ill-natured. It never occurred to the girl, for instance, that Mrs. Touchett's accomplished guest was abusing her; and this for very good reasons. In the first place, Isabel agreed with her; in the second, Madame Merle implied that there was a great deal more to say; and, in the third, to speak to one without ceremony of one's near relations was an agreeable sign of intimacy. These signs of intimacy multiplied as the days elapsed, and there was none of which Isabel was more sensible than of her companion's preference for making Miss Archer herself a topic. Though she alluded frequently to the incidents of her own life, she never lingered upon them; she was as little of an egotist as she was of a gossip.

"I am old, and stale, and faded," she said more than once: "I am of no more interest than last week's newspaper. You are young and fresh, and of to-day; you have the great thing, — you have actuality. I once had it, — we all have it for an hour. You, however, will have it for longer. Let us talk about you, then; you can say nothing that I shall not care to hear. It is a sign that I am growing old, that I like to talk with younger people. I think it's a very pretty compensation. If we can't have youth within us we can have it outside of us, and I really think we see it and feel it better that way. Of course we must be in sympathy with it, — that I shall always be. I don't know that I shall ever be ill-natured with old people, — I hope not; there are certainly some old people that I adore. But

I shall never be ill-natured with the young; they touch me too much. I give you *carte-blanche*, then; you can even be impertinent, if you like; I shall let it pass. I talk as if I were a hundred years old, you say? Well, I am, if you please; I was born before the French Revolution. Ah, my dear, *je viens de loin*; I belong to the Old World. But it is not of that I wish to talk; I wish to talk about the New. You must tell me more about America; you never tell me enough. Here I have been since I was brought here as a helpless child, and it is ridiculous, or rather it's scandalous, how little I know about the land of my birth. There are a great many of us like that, over here; and I must say I think we are a wretched set of people. You should live in your own country; whatever it may be, you have your natural place there. If we are not good Americans we are certainly poor Europeans; we have no natural place here. We are mere parasites, crawling over the surface; we have n't our feet in the soil. At least one can know it, and not have illusions. A woman, perhaps, can get on; a woman, it seems to me, has no natural place anywhere; wherever she finds herself she has to remain on the surface, and, more or less, to crawl. You protest, my dear? You are horrified? You declare you will never crawl? It is very true that I don't see you crawling; you stand more upright than a good many poor creatures. Very good; on the whole, I don't think you will crawl. But the men, the Americans, — *je vous demande un peu*, what do they make of it over here? I don't envy them, trying to arrange themselves. Look at poor Ralph Touchett; what sort of a figure do you call that? Fortunately, he has got a consumption; I say fortunately, because it gives him something to do. His consumption is his career; it's a kind of position. You can say, 'Oh, Mr. Touchett, he takes care of his

lungs; he knows a great deal about climates.' But without that who would he be, — what would he represent? 'Mr. Ralph Touchett, an American who lives in Europe.' That signifies absolutely nothing; it's impossible that anything should signify less. 'He is very cultivated, they say; he has got a very pretty collection of old snuff-boxes.' The collection is all that is wanted to make it pitiful. I am tired of the sound of the word; I think it's grotesque. With the poor old father it's different; he has his identity, and it is rather a massive one. He represents a great financial house, and that, in our day, is as good as anything else. For an American, at any rate, that will do very well. But I persist in thinking your cousin is very lucky to have a chronic malady, so long as he does n't die of it. It's much better than the snuff-boxes. If he were not ill, you say, he would do something? — he would take his father's place in the house? My poor child, I doubt it; I don't think he is at all fond of the house. However, you know him better than I, though I used to know him rather well, and he may have the benefit of the doubt. The worst case, I think, is a friend of mine, a countryman of ours, who lives in Italy, — where he also was brought before he knew better, — and who is one of the most delightful men I know. Some day you must know him. I will bring you together, and then you will see what I mean. He is Gilbert Osmond, — he lives in Italy; that is all one can say about him. He is exceedingly clever, a man made to be distinguished; but, as I say, you exhaust the description when you say that he is Mr. Osmond, who lives in Italy. No career, no name, no position, no fortune, no past, no future, no anything. Oh, yes, he paints, if you please, — paints in water-colors, like me, only better than I. His painting is pretty bad; on the whole, I am rather glad of that. Fortunately, he is very

indolent,—so indolent that it amounts to a sort of position. He can say, ‘Oh, I do nothing; I am too deadly lazy. You can do nothing to-day unless you get up at five o’clock in the morning.’ In that way he becomes a sort of exception; you feel that he might do something if he would only rise early. He never speaks of his painting—to people at large; he is too clever for that. But he has a little girl,—a dear little girl; he does speak of her. He is devoted to her, and if it were a career to be an excellent father he would be very distinguished. But I am afraid that is no better than the snuff-boxes; perhaps not even so good. Tell me what they do in America,” pursued Madame Merle, who, it must be observed, parenthetically, did not deliver herself all at once of these reflections, which are presented in a cluster for the convenience of the reader. She talked of Florence, where Mr. Osmond lived, and where Mrs. Touchett occupied a mediæval palace; she talked of Rome, where she herself had a little *piéd-à-terre*, with some rather good old damask. She talked of places, of people, and even, as the phrase is, of “subjects;” and from time to time she talked of their kind old host and of the prospect of his recovery. From the first she had thought this prospect small, and Isabel had been struck with the positive, discriminating, competent way which she took of the measure of his remainder of life. One evening she announced definitely that he would not live.

“Sir Matthew Hope told me so, as plainly as was proper,” she said; “standing there, near the fire, before dinner. He makes himself very agreeable, the great doctor. I don’t mean that his saying that has anything to do with it. But he says such things with great tact. I had said to him that I felt ill at my ease, staying here at such a time; it seemed to me so indiscreet; it was not as if I could nurse. ‘You must remain,

you must remain,’ he answered; ‘your office will come later.’ Was not that a very delicate way both of saying that poor Mr. Touchett would go, and that I might be of some use as a consoler? In fact, however, I shall not be of the slightest use. Your aunt will console herself; she, and she alone, knows just how much consolation she will require. It would be a very delicate matter for another person to undertake to administer the dose. With your cousin it will be different; he will miss his father sadly. But I should never presume to condole with Mr. Ralph; we are not on those terms.”

Madame Merle had alluded more than once to some undefined incongruity in her relations with Ralph Touchett; so Isabel took this occasion of asking her if they were not good friends.

“Perfectly; but he does n’t like me.”

“What have you done to him?”

“Nothing whatever. But one has no need of a reason for that.”

“For not liking you? I think one has need of a very good reason!”

“You are very kind. Be sure you have one ready for the day when you begin.”

“Begin to dislike you? I shall never begin.”

“I hope not; because if you do, you will never end. That is the way with your cousin; he does n’t get over it. It’s an antipathy of nature, if I can call it that when it is all on his side. I have nothing whatever against him, and don’t bear him the least little grudge for not doing me justice. Justice is all I ask. However, one feels that he is a gentleman, and would never say anything underhand about one. *Cartes sur table*,” Madame Merle subjoined in a moment; “I am not afraid of him.”

“I hope not, indeed,” said Isabel, who added something about his being the kindest fellow living. She remembered, however, that on her first asking him about Madame Merle he had an-

swered her in a manner which this lady might have thought injurious without being explicit. There was something between them, Isabel said to herself, but she said nothing more than this. If it were something of importance, it should inspire respect; if it were not, it was not worth her curiosity. With all her love of knowledge, Isabel had a natural shrinking from raising curtains and looking into unlighted corners. The love of knowledge co-existed in her mind with a still tenderer love of ignorance.

But Madame Merle sometimes said things that startled her, made her raise her clear eyebrows at the time, and think of the words afterwards.

"I would give a great deal to be your age again," she broke out once, with a bitterness which, though diluted in her customary smile, was by no means disguised by it. "If I could only begin again, — if I could have my life before me!"

"Your life is before you yet," Isabel answered gently, for she was vaguely awe-struck.

"No; the best part is gone, and gone for nothing!"

"Surely not for nothing," said Isabel.

"Why not? What have I got? Neither husband, nor child, nor fortune, nor position, nor the traces of a beauty which I never had!"

"You have friends, dear lady."

"I am not so sure!" cried Madame Merle.

"Ah, you are wrong. You have memories, talents" —

Madame Merle interrupted her.

"What have my talents brought me? Nothing but the need of using them still, to get through the hours, the years, to cheat myself with some pretense of action! As for my memories, the less said about them the better. You will be my friend till you find a better use for your friendship."

"It will be for you to see that I don't, then," said Isabel.

"Yes; I would make an effort to keep you," Madame Merle rejoined, looking at her gravely. "When I say I should like to be your age," she continued, "I mean with your qualities, — frank, generous, sincere, like you. In that case I should have made something better of my life."

"What should you have liked to do that you have not done?"

Madame Merle took a sheet of music — she was seated at the piano, and had abruptly wheeled about on the stool when she first spoke — and mechanically turned the leaves. At last she said, —

"I am very ambitious!"

"And your ambitions have not been satisfied? They must have been great."

"They were great. I should make myself ridiculous by talking of them."

Isabel wondered what they could have been, — whether Madame Merle had aspired to wear a crown. "I don't know what your idea of success may be, but you seem to me to have been successful. To me, indeed, you are an image of success."

Madame Merle tossed away the music with a smile.

"What is *your* idea of success?"

"You evidently think it must be very tame," said Isabel. "It is to see some dream of one's youth come true."

"Ah," Madame Merle exclaimed, "that I have never seen! But my dreams were so great, — so preposterous. Heaven forgive me, I am dreaming now!" and she turned back to the piano, and began to play with energy.

On the morrow she said to Isabel that her definition of success had been very pretty, but frightfully sad. Measured in that way, who had succeeded? The dreams of one's youth, — why, they were enchanting, they were divine! Who had ever seen such things come to pass?

"I myself, — a few of them," Isabel ventured to answer.

"Already! They must have been dreams of yesterday."

"I began to dream very young," said Isabel, smiling.

"Ah, if you mean the aspirations of your childhood, — that of having a pink sash and a doll that could close her eyes."

"No, I don't mean that."

"Or a young man with a mustache going down on his knees to you."

"No, nor that either," Isabel declared, blushing.

Madame Merle gave a glance at her blush which caused it to deepen.

"I suspect that is what you do mean. We have all had the young man with the mustache. He is the inevitable young man; he does n't count."

Isabel was silent for a moment, and then, with extreme and characteristic inconsequence, —

"Why should n't he count?" she asked. "There are young men and young men."

"And yours was a paragon, — is that what you mean?" cried her friend, with a laugh. "If you have had the identical young man you dreamed of, then that was success, and I congratulate you. Only, in that case, why did n't you fly with him to his castle in the Apennines?"

"He has no castle in the Apennines."

"What has he? An ugly brick house in Fortieth Street? Don't tell me that; I refuse to recognize that as an ideal."

"I don't care anything about his house," said Isabel.

"That is very crude of you. When you have lived as long as I, you will see that every human being has his shell, and that you must take the shell into account. By the shell I mean the whole envelope of circumstances. There is no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we are each of us made up of a cluster of appurtenances. What do you call one's self? Where does it begin? Where does it end? It overflows into every-

thing that belongs to us, and then it flows back again. I know that a large part of myself is in the dresses I choose to wear. I have a great respect for *things!* One's self — for other people — is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's clothes, the books one reads, the company one keeps, — these things are all expressive."

This was very metaphysical; not more so, however, than several observations Madame Merle had already made. Isabel was fond of metaphysics, but she was unable to accompany her friend into this bold analysis of the human personality.

"I don't agree with you," she said. "I think just the other way. I don't know whether I succeed in expressing myself, but I know that nothing else expresses me. Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; on the contrary, it's a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one. Certainly, the clothes which, as you say, I choose to wear, don't express me; and Heaven forbid they should!"

"You dress very well," interposed Madame Merle, skillfully.

"Possibly; but I don't care to be judged by that. My clothes may express the dressmaker, but they don't express me. To begin with, it's not my own choice that I wear them; they are imposed upon me by society."

"Should you prefer to go without them?" Madame Merle inquired, in a tone which virtually terminated the discussion.

I am bound to confess, though it may cast some discredit upon the sketch I have given of the youthful loyalty which our heroine practiced towards this accomplished woman, that Isabel had said nothing whatever to her about Lord Warburton, and had been equally reticent on the subject of Caspar Goodwood. Isabel had not concealed from her, however, that she had had opportunities of marrying, and had even let her know

that they were of a highly advantageous kind. Lord Warburton had left Lockleigh, and was gone to Scotland, taking his sisters with him; and though he had written to Ralph more than once, to ask about Mr. Touchett's health, the girl was not liable to the embarrassment of such inquiries as, had he still been in the neighborhood, he would probably have felt bound to make in person. He had admirable self-control, but she felt sure that if he had come to Gardencourt, he would have seen Madame Merle, and that if he had seen her he would have liked her, and betrayed to her that he was in love with her young friend.

It so happened that during Madame Merle's previous visits to Gardencourt — each of them much shorter than the present one — he had either not been at Lockleigh, or had not called at Mr. Touchett's. Therefore, though she knew him by name, as the great man of that country, she had no cause to suspect him of being a suitor of Mrs. Touchett's freshly-imported niece.

"You have plenty of time," she had said to Isabel, in return for the mutilated confidences which Isabel made her, and which did not pretend to be perfect, though we have seen that at moments the girl had compunctions at having said so much. "I am glad you have done nothing yet, — that you have it still to do. It is a very good thing for a girl to have refused a few good offers, — so long, of course, as they are not the best she is likely to have. Excuse me if my tone seems horribly worldly; one must take that view sometimes. Only don't keep on refusing for the sake of refusing. It's a pleasant exercise of power; but accepting is after all an exercise of power as well. There is always the danger of refusing once too often. It was not the one I fell into, — I did n't refuse often enough. You are an exquisite creature, and I should like to see you married to a prime minister. But, speaking strictly, you know you are not

what is technically called a *parti*. You are extremely good-looking and extremely clever; in yourself you are quite exceptional. You appear to have the vaguest ideas about your earthly possessions; but from what I can make out, you are not embarrassed with an income. I wish you had a little money."

"I wish I had!" said Isabel, simply, apparently forgetting, for the moment, that her poverty had been a venial fault for two gallant gentlemen.

In spite of Sir Matthew Hope's benevolent recommendation, Madame Merle did not remain to the end, as the issue of poor Mr. Touchett's malady had now come frankly to be designated. She was under pledges to other people which had at last to be redeemed, and she left Gardencourt with the understanding that she should in any event see Mrs. Touchett there again, or in town, before quitting England. Her parting with Isabel was even more like the beginning of a friendship than their meeting had been.

"I am going to six places in succession," she said, "but I shall see no one I like so well as you. They will all be old friends, however; one does n't make new friends at my age. I have made a great exception for you. You must remember that, and you must think well of me. You must reward me by believing in me."

By way of answer, Isabel kissed her, and though some women kiss with facility there are kisses and kisses, and this embrace was satisfactory to Madame Merle.

Isabel, after this, was much alone: she saw her aunt and cousin only at meals, and discovered that of the hours that Mrs. Touchett was invisible only a minor portion was now devoted to nursing her husband. She spent the rest in her own apartments, to which access was not allowed even to her niece, in mysterious and inscrutable exercises. At table she was grave and silent; but

her solemnity was not an attitude, — Isabel could see that it was a conviction. She wondered whether her aunt repented of having taken her own way so much; but there was no visible evidence of this, — no tears, no sighs, no exaggeration of a zeal which had always deemed itself sufficient. Mrs. Touchett seemed simply to feel the need of thinking things over and summing them up; she had a little moral account-book, — with columns unerringly ruled, and a sharp steel clasp, — which she kept with exemplary neatness.

“If I had foreseen this I would not have proposed your coming abroad now,” she said to Isabel, after Madame Merle had left the house. “I would have waited and sent for you next year.”

Her remarks had usually a practical ring.

“So that perhaps I should never have known my uncle? It’s a great happiness to me to have come now.”

“That’s very well. But it was not that you might know your uncle that I brought you to Europe.” A perfectly veracious speech; but, as Isabel thought, not so perfectly timed.

She had leisure to think of this and other matters. She took a solitary walk every day, and spent much time in turning over the books in the library. Among the subjects that engaged her attention were the adventures of her friend, Miss Stackpole, with whom she was in regular correspondence. Isabel liked her friend’s private epistolary style better than her public; that is, she thought her public letters would have been excellent if they had not been printed. Henrietta’s career, however, was not so successful as might have been wished even in the interest of her private felicity; that view of the inner life of Great Britain which she was so eager to take appeared to dance before her like an *ignis fatuus*. The invitation from Lady Pensil, for mysterious reasons, had never arrived; and poor Mr.

Bantling himself, with all his friendly ingenuity, had been unable to explain so grave a dereliction on the part of a missive that had obviously been sent. Mr. Bantling, however, had evidently taken Henrietta’s affairs much to heart, and believed that he owed her a set-off to this illusory visit to Bedfordshire. “He says he should think I would go to the Continent,” Henrietta wrote; “and as he thinks of going there himself I suppose his advice is sincere. He wants to know why I don’t take a view of French life; and it is a fact that I want very much to see the new republic. Mr. Bantling does n’t care much about the republic, but he thinks of going over to Paris, any way. I must say he is quite as attentive as I could wish, and at any rate I shall have seen one polite Englishman. I keep telling Mr. Bantling that he ought to have been an American; and you ought to see how it pleases him. Whenever I say so, he always breaks out with the same exclamation: ‘Ah, but really, come, now!’” A few days later she wrote that she had decided to go to Paris at the end of the week, and that Mr. Bantling had promised to see her off, — perhaps, even, he would go as far as Dover with her. She would wait in Paris till Isabel should arrive, Henrietta added; speaking quite as if Isabel were to start on her Continental journey alone, and making no allusion to Mrs. Touchett. Bearing in mind his interest in their late companion, our heroine communicated several passages from Miss Stackpole’s letters to Ralph, who followed with an emotion akin to suspense the career of the correspondent of the Interviewer.

“It seems to me that she is doing very well,” he said, “going over to Paris with an ex-guardsman! If she wants something to write about, she has only to describe that episode.”

“It is not conventional, certainly,” Isabel answered; “but if you mean that, as far as Henrietta is concerned, it

is not perfectly innocent, you are very much mistaken. You will never understand Henrietta."

"Excuse me; I understand her perfectly. I didn't at all at first; but now I have got the point of view. I am afraid, however, that Bantling has not; he may have some surprises. Oh, I understand Henrietta as well as if I had made her!"

Isabel was by no means sure of this; but she abstained from expressing further doubt, for she was disposed in these days to extend a great charity to her cousin. One afternoon, less than a week after Madame Merle's departure, Isabel was seated in the library with a volume to which her attention was not fastened. She had placed herself in a deep window-bench, from which she looked out into the dull, damp park; and as the library stood at right angles to the entrance-front of the house she could see the doctor's dog-cart, which had been waiting for the last two hours before the door. She was struck with the doctor's remaining so long; but at last she saw him appear in the portico, stand a moment, slowly drawing on his gloves and looking at the knees of his horse, and then get into the vehicle and drive away. Isabel kept her place for half an hour; there was a great stillness in the house. It was so great that when she at last heard a soft, slow step on the deep carpet of the room she was almost startled by the sound. She turned quickly away from the window, and saw Ralph Touchett standing there, with his hands still in his pockets, but with a face absolutely void of its usual latent smile.

She got up, and her movement and glance were a question.

"It's all over," said Ralph.

"Do you mean that my uncle" — And Isabel stopped.

"My father died an hour ago."

"Ah, my poor Ralph!" the girl murmured, putting out her hand to him.

XX.

Some fortnight after this incident Madame Merle drove up in a hansom cab to the house in Winchester Square. As she descended from her vehicle she observed, suspended between the dining-room windows, a large, neat wooden tablet, on whose fresh black ground were inscribed in white paint the words, "This noble freehold mansion to be sold," with the name of the agent to whom application should be made. "They certainly lose no time," said the visitor, as, after sounding the big brass knocker, she waited to be admitted; "it's a practical country!" And within the house, as she ascended to the drawing-room, she perceived numerous signs of abdication: pictures removed from the walls and placed in positions apparently less convenient, windows undraped and floors laid bare. Mrs. Touchett presently received her, and intimated in a few words that condolence might be taken for granted.

"I know what you are going to say, — he was a very good man. But I know it better than any one, because I gave him more chance to show it. In that I think I was a good wife." Mrs. Touchett added that at the end her husband apparently recognized this fact. "He has treated me liberally," she said; "I won't say more liberally than I expected, because I didn't expect. You know that as a general thing I don't expect. But he chose, I presume, to recognize the fact that though I lived much abroad, and mingled — you may say freely — in foreign life, I never exhibited the smallest preference for any one else."

"For any one but yourself," Madame Merle mentally observed; but the reflection was perfectly inaudible.

"I never sacrificed my husband to another," Mrs. Touchett continued, with her stout curtness.

"Oh, no," thought Madame Merle; "you never did anything for another!"

There was a certain cynicism in these mute comments which demands an explanation; the more so as they are not in accord either with the view — somewhat superficial, perhaps — that we have hitherto enjoyed of Madame Merle's character, or with the literal facts of Mrs. Touchett's history; the more so, too, as Madame Merle had a well-founded conviction that her friend's last remark was not in the least to be construed as a side-thrust at herself. The truth is that the moment she had crossed the threshold she received a subtle impression that Mr. Touchett's death had had consequences, and that these consequences had been profitable to a little circle of persons among whom she was not numbered. Of course it was an event which would naturally have consequences; her imagination had more than once rested upon this fact during her stay at Gardencourt. But it had been one thing to foresee it mentally, and it was another to behold it actually. The idea of a distribution of property — she would almost have said of spoils — just now pressed upon her senses and irritated her with a sense of exclusion. I am far from wishing to say that Madame Merle was one of the hungry ones of the world; but we have already perceived that she had desires which had never been satisfied. If she had been questioned, she would of course have admitted — with a most becoming smile — that she had not the faintest claim to a share in Mr. Touchett's relics. "There was never anything in the world between us," she would have said. "There was never *that*, poor man!" with a fillip of her thumb and her third finger. I hasten to add, moreover, that if her private attitude at the present moment was somewhat incongruously invidious she was very careful not to betray herself. She had, after all, as much sympathy for Mrs. Touchett's gains as for her losses.

"He has left me this house," the newly-made widow said; "but of course I shall not live in it; I have a much better house in Florence. The will was opened only three days since, but I have already offered the house for sale. I have also a share in the bank; but I don't yet understand whether I am obliged to leave it there. If not, I shall certainly take it out. Ralph, of course, has Gardencourt; but I am not sure that he will have means to keep up the place. He is left very well off, but his father has given away an immense deal of money; there are bequests to a string of third cousins in Vermont. Ralph, however, is very fond of Gardencourt, and would be quite capable of living there — in summer — with a maid-of-all-work and a gardener's boy. There is one remarkable clause in my husband's will," Mrs. Touchett added. "He has left my niece a fortune."

"A fortune!" Madame Merle repeated, softly.

"Isabel steps into something like seventy thousand pounds."

Madame Merle's hands were clasped in her lap; at this she raised them, still clasped, and held them a moment against her bosom, while her eyes, a little dilated, fixed themselves on those of her friend. "Ah," she cried, "the clever creature!"

Mrs. Touchett gave her a quick look. "What do you mean by that?"

For an instant Madame Merle's color rose, and she dropped her eyes. "It certainly is clever to achieve such results — without an effort!"

"There certainly was no effort; don't call it an achievement."

Madame Merle was rarely guilty of the awkwardness of retracting what she had said; her wisdom was shown rather in maintaining it and placing it in a favorable light. "My dear friend, Isabel would certainly not have had seventy thousand pounds left her if she had not been the most charming girl in the

world. Her charm includes great cleverness."

"She never dreamed, I am sure, of my husband's doing anything for her; and I never dreamed of it, either, for he never spoke to me of his intention," Mrs. Touchett said. "She had no claim upon him whatever; it was no great recommendation to him that she was my niece. Whatever she achieved, she achieved unconsciously."

"Ah," rejoined Madame Merle, "those are the greatest strokes!"

Mrs. Touchett gave a shrug. "The girl is fortunate; I don't deny that. But for the present she is simply stupefied."

"Do you mean that she does n't know what to do with the money?"

"That, I think, she has hardly considered. She does n't know what to think about the matter at all. It has been as if a big gun were suddenly fired off behind her; she is feeling herself, to see if she be hurt. It is but three days since she received a visit from the principal executor, who came in person, very gallantly, to notify her. He told me afterwards that when he had made his little speech she suddenly burst into tears. The money is to remain in the bank, and she is to draw the interest."

Madame Merle shook her head, with a wise and now quite benignant smile. "After she has done that two or three times she will get used to it." Then, after a silence, "What does your son think of it?" she abruptly asked.

"He left England just before it came out, — used up by his fatigue and anxiety, and hurrying off to the south. He is on his way to the Riviera, and I have not heard from him. But it is not likely he will ever object to anything done by his father."

"Did n't you say his own share had been cut down?"

"Only at his wish. I know that he urged his father to do something for the people in America. He is not in the

least addicted to looking after number one."

"It depends upon whom he regards as number one!" said Madame Merle. And she remained thoughtful a moment, with her eyes bent upon the floor. "Am I not to see your happy niece?" she asked at last, looking up.

"You may see her; but you will not be struck with her being happy. She has looked as solemn, these three days, as a Cimabue Madonna!" And Mrs. Touchett rang for a servant.

Isabel came in shortly after the footman had been sent to call her; and Madame Merle thought, as she appeared, that Mrs. Touchett's comparison had its force. The girl was pale and grave, — an effect not mitigated by her deeper mourning; but the smile of her brightest moments came into her face as she saw Madame Merle, who went forward, laid her hand on our heroine's shoulder, and, after looking at her a moment, kissed her as if she were returning the kiss that she had received from Isabel at Gardencourt. This was the only allusion that Madame Merle, in her great good taste, made for the present to her young friend's inheritance.

Mrs. Touchett did not remain in London until she had sold her house. After selecting from among its furniture those objects which she wished to transport to her Florentine residence, she left the rest of its contents to be disposed of by the auctioneer, and took her departure for the Continent. She was of course accompanied on this journey by her niece, who now had plenty of leisure to contemplate the windfall on which Madame Merle had covertly congratulated her. Isabel thought of it very often, and looked at it in a dozen different lights; but we shall not attempt to enter into her meditations, or to explain why it was that some of them were of a rather pessimistic cast. The pessimism of this young lady was transient; she ultimately made up her mind that to be

rich was a virtue, because it was to be able to *do*, and to do was sweet. It was the contrary of weakness. To be weak was, for a young lady, rather graceful, but after all, as Isabel said to herself, there was a larger grace than that. Just now, it was true, there was not much to do, — once she had sent off a check to Lily and another to poor Edith; but she was thankful for the quiet months which her mourning robes and her aunt's fresh widowhood compelled the two ladies to spend. The acquisition of power made her serious; she scrutinized her power with a kind of tender ferocity, but she was not eager to exercise it. She began to do so, indeed, during a stay of some weeks which she presently made with her aunt in Paris, but in ways that will probably be thought rather vulgar. They were the ways that most naturally presented themselves in a city in which the shops are the admiration of the world, especially under the guidance of Mrs. Touchett, who took a rigidly practical view of the transformation of her niece from a poor girl to a rich one. "Now that you are a young woman of fortune, you must know how to play the part, — I mean to play it well," she said to Isabel, once for all; and she added that the girl's first duty was to have everything handsome. "You don't know how to take care of your things, but you must learn," she went on; this was Isabel's second duty. Isabel submitted, but for the present her imagination was not kindled; she longed for opportunities, but these were not the opportunities she meant.

Mrs. Touchett rarely changed her plans, and having intended before her husband's death to spend a part of the winter in Paris she saw no reason to deprive herself — still less to deprive her companion — of this advantage. Though they would live in great retirement, she might still present her niece, informally, to the little circle of

her fellow-countrymen dwelling upon the skirts of the Champs Elysées. With many of these amiable colonists Mrs. Touchett was intimate; she shared their expatriation, their convictions, their pastimes, their *ennui*. Isabel saw them come with a good deal of assiduity to her aunt's hotel, and judged them with a trenchancy which is doubtless to be accounted for by the temporary exaltation of her sense of human duty. She made up her mind that their manner of life was superficial, and incurred some disfavor by expressing this view on bright Sunday afternoons, when the American absentees were engaged in calling upon each other. Though her listeners were the most good-natured people in the world, two or three of them thought her cleverness, which was generally admitted, only a dangerous variation of impertinence.

"You all live here this way, but what does it all lead to?" she was pleased to ask. "It does n't seem to lead to anything, and I should think you would get very tired of it."

Mrs. Touchett thought the question worthy of Henrietta Stackpole. The two ladies had found Henrietta in Paris, and Isabel constantly saw her; so that Mrs. Touchett had some reason for saying to herself that if her niece were not clever enough to originate almost anything she might be suspected of having borrowed that style of remark from her journalistic friend. The first occasion on which Isabel had spoken was that of a visit paid by the two ladies to Mrs. Luce, an old friend of Mrs. Touchett's, and the only person in Paris she now went to see. Mrs. Luce had been living in Paris since the days of Louis Philippe; she used to say jocosely that she was one of the generation of 1830, — a joke of which the point was not always taken. When it failed, Mrs. Luce used always to explain: "Oh, yes, I am one of the romantics;" her French had never become very perfect.

She was always at home on Sunday afternoons, and surrounded by sympathetic compatriots, usually the same. In fact, she was at home at all times, and led, in her well-cushioned little corner of the brilliant city, as quiet and domestic a life as she might have led in her native Baltimore. The existence of Mr. Luce, her worthy husband, was somewhat more inscrutable. Superficially, indeed, there was no mystery about it; the mystery lay deeper, and resided in the wonder of his supporting existence at all. He was the most unoccupied man in Europe, for he not only had no duties, but he had no pleasures. Habits certainly he had, but they were few in number, and had been worn threadbare by forty years of use. Mr. Luce was a tall, lean, grizzled, well-brushed gentleman, who wore a gold eye-glass and carried his hat a little too much on the back of his head. He went every day to the American banker's, where there was a post-office, which was almost as sociable and colloquial an institution as that of an American country town. He passed an hour (in fine weather) in a chair in the Champs Elysées, and he dined uncommonly well at his own table, seated above a waxed floor which it was Mrs. Luce's happiness to believe had a finer polish than any other in Paris. Occasionally he dined with a friend or two at the *Café Anglais*, where his talent for ordering a dinner was a source of felicity to his companions and an object of admiration even to the head-waiter of the establishment. These were his only known avocations, but they had beguiled his hours for upwards of half a century, and they doubtless justified his frequent declaration that there was no place like Paris. In no other place, on these terms, could Mr. Luce flatter himself that he was enjoying life. There was nothing like Paris, but it must be confessed that Mr. Luce thought less highly of the French capital than in earlier days. In the

list of his occupations his political reveries should not be omitted, for they were doubtless the animating principle of many hours that superficially seemed vacant. Like many of his fellow colonists, Mr. Luce was a high — or rather a deep — conservative, and gave no countenance to the government recently established in France. He had no faith in its duration, and would assure you from year to year that its end was close at hand. "They want to be kept down, sir, — to be kept down; nothing but the strong hand, the iron heel, will do for them," he would frequently say about the French people; and his ideal of a fine government was that of the lately-abolished Empire. "Paris is much less attractive than in the days of the Emperor; he knew how to make a city pleasant," Mr. Luce had often remarked to Mrs. Touchett, who was quite of his own way of thinking, and wished to know what one had crossed that odious Atlantic for but to get away from republics.

"Why, madam, sitting in the Champs Elysées, opposite to the Palace of Industry, I have seen the court carriages from the Tuileries pass up and down as many as seven times a day. I remember one occasion when they went as high as nine times. What do you see now? It's no use talking, the style's all gone. Napoleon knew what the French people want, and there'll be a cloud over Paris till they get the Empire back again."

Among Mrs. Luce's visitors on Sunday afternoons was a young man with whom Isabel had had a good deal of conversation, and whom she found full of valuable knowledge. Mr. Edward Rosier — Ned Rosier, as he was called — was a native of New York, and had been brought up in Paris, living there under the eye of his father, who, as it happened, had been an old and intimate friend of the late Mr. Archer. Edward Rosier remembered Isabel as a little

girl; it had been his father who came to the rescue of the little Archers at the inn at Neufchatel (he was traveling that way with the boy, and stopped at the hotel by chance), after their *bonne* had gone off with the Russian prince, and when Mr. Archer's whereabouts remained for some days a mystery. Isabel remembered perfectly the neat little male child, whose hair smelt of a delicious cosmetic, and who had a *bonne* of his own warranted to lose sight of him under no provocation. Isabel took a walk with the pair beside the lake, and thought little Edward as pretty as an angel, — a comparison by no means conventional in her mind, for she had a very definite conception of a type of features which she supposed to be angelic, and which her new friend perfectly illustrated. A small pink face, surmounted by a blue velvet bonnet, and set off by a stiff embroidered collar, became the countenance of her childish dreams; and she firmly believed for some time afterwards that the heavenly hosts conversed among themselves in a queer little dialect of French-English, expressing the properest sentiments, as when Edward told her that he was "defended" by his *bonne* to go near the edge of the lake, and that one must always obey to one's *bonne*. Ned Rosier's English had improved; at least, it exhibited in a less degree the French variation. His father was dead and his *bonne* was dismissed, but the young man still conformed to the spirit of their teaching, — he never went to the edge of the lake. There was still something agreeable to the nostril about him, and something not offensive to nobler organs. He was a very gentle and gracious youth, with what are called cultivated tastes, — an acquaintance with old china, with good wine, with the bindings of books, with the Almanach de Gotha, with the best shops, the best hotels, the hours of railway trains. He could order a dinner almost as well as Mr. Luce,

and it was probable that as his experience accumulated he would be a worthy successor to that gentleman, whose rather grim politics he also advocated in a soft and innocent voice. He had some charming rooms in Paris, decorated with old Spanish altar-lace, the envy of his female friends, who declared that his chimney-piece was better draped than many a duchess. He usually, however, spent a part of every winter at Pau, and had once passed a couple of months in the United States.

He took a great interest in Isabel, and remembered perfectly the walk at Neufchatel, when she would persist in going so near the edge. He seemed to recognize this same tendency in the subversive inquiry that I quoted a moment ago, and set himself to answer our heroine's question with greater urbanity than it perhaps deserved. "What does it lead to, Miss Archer? Why, Paris leads everywhere. You can't go anywhere unless you come here first. Every one that comes to Europe has got to pass through. You don't mean it in that sense so much? You mean what good it does you? Well, how can you penetrate futurity? How can you tell what lies ahead? If it's a pleasant road I don't care where it leads! I like the road, Miss Archer; I like the dear old asphalt. You can't get tired of it, — you can't if you try. You think you would, but you would n't; there's always something new and fresh. Take the Hôtel Drouot, now; they sometimes have three or four sales a week. Where can you get such things as you can here? In spite of all they say, I maintain they are cheaper, too, if you know the right places. I know plenty of places, but I keep them to myself. I'll tell you, if you like, as a particular favor; only you must not tell any one else. Don't you go anywhere without asking me first; I want you to promise me that. As a general thing avoid the Boulevards; there is very little to be done

on the Boulevards. Speaking conscientiously, — *sans blague*, — I don't believe any one knows Paris better than I. You and Mrs. Touchett must come and breakfast with me some day, and I'll show you my things; *je ne vous dis que ça!* There has been a great deal of talk about London of late; it's the fashion to cry up London. But there is nothing in it, — you can't do anything in London. No Louis Quinze, — nothing of the First Empire; nothing but their eternal Queen Anne. It's good for one's bed-room, Queen Anne, — for one's washing-room; but it is n't proper for a *saloon*. Do I spend my life at the auctioneer's?" Mr. Rosier pursued, in answer to another question of Isabel's. "Oh, no; I have n't the means. I wish I had. You think I'm a mere trifler; I can tell by the expression of your face, — you have got a wonderfully expressive face. I hope you don't mind my saying that; I mean it as a kind of warning. You think I ought to do something, and so do I, so long as you leave it vague. But when you come to the point, you see you have to stop. I can't go home and be a shopkeeper. You think I am very well fitted? Ah, Miss Archer, you overrate me. I can buy very well, but I can't sell; you should see when I sometimes try to get rid of my things. It takes much more ability to make other people buy than to buy yourself. When I think how clever they must be, the people who make *me* buy! Ah, no; I could n't be a shopkeeper. I can't be a doctor; it's a repulsive business. I can't be a clergyman; I have n't got convictions. And then I can't pronounce the names right in the Bible. They are very difficult, in the Old Testament particularly. I can't be a lawyer; I don't understand — how do you call it? — the American *procédure*. Is there anything else? There is nothing for a gentleman to do in America. I should like to be a diplomatist; but American diplomacy, —

that is not for gentlemen, either. I am sure if you had seen the last min—"

Henrietta Stackpole, who was often with her friend when Mr. Rosier, coming to pay his compliments, late in the afternoon, expressed himself after the fashion I have sketched, usually interrupted the young man at this point, and read him a lecture on the duties of the American citizen. She thought him most unnatural; he was worse than Mr. Ralph Touchett. Henrietta, however, was at this time more than ever prolific of superior criticism, for her conscience had been freshly alarmed as regards Isabel. She had not congratulated this young lady on her accession of fortune, and begged to be excused from doing so.

"If Mr. Touchett had consulted me about leaving you the money," she frankly said, "I would have said to him, 'Never!'"

"I see," Isabel had answered. "You think it will prove a curse in disguise. Perhaps it will."

"Leave it to some one you care less for, — that's what I should have said."

"To yourself, for instance?" Isabel suggested, jocosely. And then, "Do you really believe it will ruin me?" she asked, in quite another tone.

"I hope it won't ruin you; but it will certainly confirm your dangerous tendencies."

"Do you mean the love of luxury, — of extravagance?"

"No, no," said Henrietta; "I mean your moral tendencies. I approve of luxury; I think we ought to be as elegant as possible. Look at the luxury of our Western cities; I have seen nothing over here to compare with it. I hope you will never become sensual; but I am not afraid of that. The peril for you is that you live too much in the world of your own dreams; you are not enough in contact with reality, — with the toiling, striving, suffering, I may even say sinning, world that surrounds you. You are too fastidious;

you have too many graceful illusions. Your newly acquired thousands will shut you up more and more to the society of a few selfish and heartless people, who will be interested in keeping up those illusions."

Isabel's eyes expanded as she gazed upon this vivid but dusky picture of her future. "What are my illusions?" she asked. "I try so hard not to have any."

"Well," said Henrietta, "you think that you can lead a romantic life; that you can live by pleasing yourself and pleasing others. You will find you are mistaken. Whatever life you lead, you must put your soul into it, to make any sort of success of it; and from the moment you do that it ceases to be romance, I assure you; it becomes reality! And you can't always please yourself; you must sometimes please other people. That, I admit, you are very ready to do; but there is another thing that is still more important, — you must often *displease* others. You must always be ready for that, — you must never shrink from it. That does n't suit you at all; you are too fond of admiration, — you like to be thought well of. You think we can escape disagreeable duties by taking romantic views, — that is your great illusion, my dear. But we can't. You must be prepared, on many occasions in life, to please no one at all, — not even yourself!"

Isabel shook her head sadly; she looked troubled and frightened. "This, for you, Henrietta," she said, "must be one of those occasions!"

It was certainly true that Miss Stackpole, during her visit to Paris, which had been professionally more remunerative than her English sojourn, had not been living in the world of dreams. Mr. Bantling, who had now returned to England, was her companion for the first four weeks of her stay; and about Mr. Bantling there was nothing dreamy. Isabel learned from her friend that the two had led a life of great intimacy, and that

this had been a peculiar advantage to Henrietta, owing to the gentleman's remarkable knowledge of Paris. He had explained everything, shown her everything, been her constant guide and interpreter. They had breakfasted together, dined together, gone to the theatre together, supped together, really in a manner quite lived together. He was a true friend, Henrietta more than once assured our heroine; and she had never supposed that she could like any Englishman so well. Isabel could not have told you why, but she found something that ministered to mirth in the alliance the correspondent of the Interviewer had struck with Lady Pensil's brother; and her amusement subsisted in the face of the fact that she thought it a credit to each of them. Isabel could not rid herself of a suspicion that they were playing, somehow, at cross-purposes, that the simplicity of each of them had been entrapped. But this simplicity was none the less honorable on either side; it was as graceful on Henrietta's part to believe that Mr. Bantling took an interest in the diffusion of lively journalism and in consolidating the position of lady correspondents as it was on the part of her companion to suppose that the cause of the Interviewer — a periodical of which he never formed a very definite conception — was, if subtly analyzed (a task to which Mr. Bantling felt himself quite equal), but the cause of Miss Stackpole's coquetry. Each of these frank allies supplied, at any rate, a want of which the other was somewhat eagerly conscious. Mr. Bantling, who was of a rather slow and discursive habit, relished a prompt, keen, positive woman, who charmed him with the spectacle of a brilliant eye and a kind of bandbox neatness, and who kindled a perception of raciness in a mind to which the usual fare of life seemed unsalted. Henrietta, on the other hand, enjoyed the society of a fresh-looking, professionless gentleman, whose leisured state, though generally indefensible, was

a decided advantage to Miss Stackpole, and who was furnished with an easy, traditional, though by no means exhaustive, answer to almost any social or practical question that could come up. She often found Mr. Bantling's answers very convenient, and in the press of catching the American mail would make use of them in her correspondence. It was to be feared that she was indeed drifting toward those mysterious shallows as to which Isabel, wishing for a good-humored retort, had warned her. There might be danger in store for Isabel; but it was scarcely to be hoped that Miss Stackpole, on her side, would find permanent safety in the adoption of second-hand views. Isabel continued to warn her, good-humoredly; Lady Pensil's obliging brother was sometimes, on our heroine's lips, an object of irreverent and facetious allusion. Nothing, however, could exceed Henrietta's amiability on this point; she used to abound in the sense of Isabel's irony, and to enumerate with elation the hours she had spent with the good Mr. Bantling. Then, a few moments later, she would forget that they had been talking jocosely, and would mention with impulsive earnestness some expedition she had made in the company of the gallant ex-guardsman. She would say, "Oh, I know all about Versailles; I went there with Mr. Bantling. I was bound to see it thoroughly, — I warned him when we went out there that I was thorough; so we spent three days at the hotel, and wandered all over the place. It was lovely weather, — a kind of Indian summer, only not so good. We just lived in that park. Oh, yes; you can't tell me anything about Versailles." Henrietta appeared to have made arrangements to meet Mr. Bantling in the spring, in Italy.

Mrs. Touchett, before arriving in Paris, had fixed a day for her departure; and by the middle of February she had begun to travel southward. She

did not go directly to Florence, but interrupted her journey to pay a visit to her son, who at San Remo, on the Italian shore of the Mediterranean, had been spending a dull, bright winter, under a white umbrella. Isabel went with her aunt, as a matter of course, though Mrs. Touchett, with her usual homely logic, had laid before her a pair of alternatives.

"Now, of course, you are completely your own mistress," she said. "Excuse me; I don't mean that you were not so before. But you are on a different footing; property erects a kind of barrier. You can do a great many things if you are rich, which would be severely criticised if you were poor. You can go and come, you can travel alone, you can have your own establishment; I mean, of course, if you will take a companion, — some decayed gentlewoman with dyed hair, who paints on velvet. You don't think you would like that? Of course you can do as you please; I only want you to understand that you are at liberty. You might take Miss Stackpole as your *dame de compagnie*; she would keep people off very well. I think, however, that it is a great deal better you should remain with me, in spite of there being no obligation. It's better for several reasons, quite apart from your liking it. I should n't think you would like it, but I recommend you to make the sacrifice. Of course, whatever novelty there may have been at first in my society has quite passed away, and you see me as I am, — a dull, obstinate, narrow-minded old woman."

"I don't think you are at all dull," Isabel had replied to this.

"But you do think I am obstinate and narrow-minded? I told you so!" said Mrs. Touchett, with much elation at being justified.

Isabel remained for the present with her aunt, because, in spite of eccentric impulses, she had a great regard for what was usually deemed decent, and

a young gentlewoman without visible relations had always struck her as a flower without foliage. It was true that Mrs. Touchett's conversation had never again appeared so brilliant as that first afternoon in Albany, when she sat in her damp waterproof and sketched the opportunities that Europe would offer to a young person of taste. This, however, was in a great measure the girl's own fault; she had got a glimpse of her aunt's experience, and her imagination constantly anticipated the judgments and emotions of a woman who had very little of the same faculty. Apart from this, Mrs. Touchett had a great merit: she was as honest as a pair of compasses. There was a comfort in her stiffness and firmness; you knew exactly where to find her, and were never liable to chance encounters with her. On her own ground she was always to be found; but she was never over-inquisitive as regards the territory of her neighbor. Isabel came at last to have a kind of undemonstrable pity for her; there seemed something so dreary in the condition of a person whose nature had, as it were, so little surface, — offered so limited a face to the accretions of human contact. Nothing tender, nothing sympathetic, had ever had a chance to fasten upon it, — no wind-sown blossom, no familiar moss. Her passive extent, in other words, was about that of a knife-edge. Isabel had reason to believe, however, that as she advanced in life she grew more disposed to confer those sentimental favors which she was still unable to accept, — to sacrifice consistency to considerations of that inferior order for which the excuse must be found in the particular case. It was not to the credit of her absolute rectitude that she should have gone the longest way round to Florence, in order to spend a few weeks with her invalid son; for in former years it had been one of her most definite convictions that when Ralph wished to see her he was at liberty to remember that the Palazzo

Crescentini contained a spacious apartment which was known as the room of the signorino.

"I want to ask you something," Isabel said to this young man, the day after her arrival at San Remo, — "something that I have thought more than once of asking you by letter, but that I have hesitated, on the whole, to write about. Face to face, nevertheless, my question seems easy enough. Did you know that your father intended to leave me so much money?"

Ralph stretched his legs a little further than usual, and gazed a little more fixedly at the Mediterranean. "What does it matter, my dear Isabel, whether I knew? My father was very obstinate."

"So," said the girl, "you did know."

"Yes; he told me. We even talked it over a little."

"What did he do it for?" asked Isabel, abruptly.

"Why, as a kind of souvenir."

"He liked me too much," said Isabel.

"That's a way we all have."

"If I believed that I should be very unhappy. Fortunately, I don't believe it. I want to be treated with justice; I want nothing but that."

"Very good. But you must remember that justice to a lovely being is after all a florid sort of sentiment."

"I am not a lovely being. How can you say that at the very moment when I am asking such odious questions? I must seem to you delicate!"

"You seem to me troubled," said Ralph.

"I am troubled."

"About what?"

For a moment she answered nothing; then she broke out, —

"Do you think it good for me suddenly to be made so rich? Henrietta does n't."

"Oh, hang Henrietta!" said Ralph, coarsely. "If you ask me, I am delighted at it."

"Is that why your father did it, — for your amusement?"

"I differ with Miss Stackpole," Ralph said, more gravely. "I think it's very good for you to have means."

Isabel looked at him a moment with serious eyes. "I wonder whether you know what is good for me, — or whether you care."

"If I know, depend upon it I care. Shall I tell you what it is? Not to torment yourself."

"Not to torment you, I suppose you mean."

"You can't do that; I am proof. Take things more easily. Don't ask yourself so much whether this or that is good for you. Don't question your conscience so much; it will get out of tune, like a strummed piano. Keep it for great occasions. Don't try so much to form your character; it's like trying to pull open a rosebud. Live as you like best, and your character will form itself. Most things are good for you; the exceptions are very rare, and a comfortable income is not one of them." Ralph paused, smiling. Isabel had listened eagerly. "You have too much conscience," Ralph added. "It's out of all reason, the number of things you think wrong. Spread your wings; rise above the ground. It's never wrong to do that."

She had listened eagerly, as I say; and it was her nature to understand quickly.

"I wonder if you appreciate what you say. If you do, you take a great responsibility."

"You frighten me a little, but I think I am right," said Ralph, continuing to smile.

"All the same, what you say is very true," Isabel went on. "You could say nothing more true. I am absorbed in myself, — I look at life too much as a doctor's prescription. Why, indeed, should we perpetually be thinking whether things are good for us, as if we were patients lying in a hospital?"

Why should I be so afraid of not doing right? As if it mattered to the world whether I do right or wrong!"

"You are a capital person to advise," said Ralph; "you take the wind out of my sails!"

She looked at him as if she had not heard him, though she was following out the train of reflection which he himself had kindled: "I try to care more about the world than about myself, but I always come back to myself. It's because I am afraid." She stopped; her voice had trembled a little. "Yes, I am afraid; I can't tell you. A large fortune means freedom, and I am afraid of that. It's such a fine thing, and one should make such a good use of it. If one should n't, one would be ashamed. And one must always be thinking, — it's a constant effort. I am not sure that it's not a greater happiness to be powerless."

"For weak people I have no doubt it's a greater happiness. For weak people the effort not to be contemptible must be great."

"And how do you know I am not weak?" Isabel asked.

"Ah," Ralph answered, with a blush the girl noticed, "if you are, I am awfully sold!"

The charm of the Mediterranean coast only deepened for our heroine on acquaintance; for it was the threshold of Italy, the gate of admirations. Italy, as yet imperfectly seen and felt, stretched before her as a land of promise, — a land in which a love of the beautiful might be comforted by endless knowledge. Whenever she strolled upon the shore with her cousin — and she was the companion of his daily walk — she looked a while across the sea, with longing eyes, to where she knew that Genoa lay. She was glad to pause, however, on the edge of this larger knowledge; the stillness of these soft weeks seemed good to her. They were a peaceful interlude in a career which she had little warrant as

yet for regarding as agitated, but which nevertheless she was constantly picturing to herself by the light of her hopes, her fears, her fancies, her ambitions, her predilections, and which reflected these subjective accidents in a manner sufficiently dramatic. Madame Merle had predicted to Mrs. Touchett that after Isabel had put her hand into her pocket half a dozen times she would be reconciled to the idea that it had been filled by a munificent uncle; and the event justified — as it had so often justified before — Madame Merle's perspicacity. Ralph Touchett had praised his cousin for being morally inflammable; that is, for being quick to take a hint that was meant as good advice. His advice had perhaps helped the matter; at any rate, before she left San Remo she had grown used to feeling rich. The consciousness found a place in rather a dense little group of ideas that she had about her herself, and often it was by no means the least agreeable. It was a perpetual implication of good intentions. She lost herself in a maze of visions; the fine things a rich, independent, generous girl, who took a large, human view of her opportunities and obligations, might do were really innumerable. Her fortune therefore became to her mind a part of her better self; it gave her importance, — gave her even, to her own imagination, a certain ideal beauty. What it did for her in the imagination of others is another affair, and on this point we must also touch in time. The visions I have just spoken of were intermingled with other reveries. Isabel liked better to think of the future than of the past; but at times, as she listened to the murmur of the Mediterranean waves, her glance took a backward flight. It rested upon two figures which, in spite of increasing distance, were still sufficiently salient: they were recognizable without difficulty as those of Caspar Goodwood and Lord Warburton. It was strange how quickly these gentlemen had fallen into the

background of our young lady's life. It was in her disposition at all times to lose faith in the reality of absent things; she could summon back her faith, in case of need, with an effort, but the effort was often painful, even when the reality had been pleasant. The past was apt to look dead, and its revival to wear the supernatural aspect of a resurrection. Isabel, moreover, was not prone to take for granted that she herself lived in the mind of others; she had not the fatuity to believe that she left indelible traces. She was capable of being wounded by the discovery that she had been forgotten; and yet, of all liberties, the one she herself found sweetest was the liberty to forget. She had not given her last shilling, sentimentally speaking, either to Caspar Goodwood or to Lord Warburton, and yet she did not regard them as appreciably in her debt. She had, of course, reminded herself that she was to hear from Mr. Goodwood again; but this was not to be for another year and a half, and in that time a great many things might happen. Isabel did not say to herself that her American suitor might find some other girl more comfortable to woo; because, though it was certain that many other girls would prove so, she had not the smallest belief that this merit would attract him. But she reflected that she herself might change her humor, — might weary of those things that were not Caspar (and there were so many things that were not Caspar!), and might find satisfaction in the very qualities which struck her to-day as his limitations. It was conceivable that his limitations should some day prove a sort of blessing in disguise, — a clear and quiet harbor, inclosed by a fine granite breakwater. But that day could only come in its order, and she could not wait for it with folded hands. That Lord Warburton should continue to cherish her image seemed to her more than modesty should not only expect, but even desire. She had so definitely

undertaken to forget him, as a lover, that a corresponding effort on his own part would be eminently proper. This was not, as it may seem, merely a theory tinged with sarcasm. Isabel really believed that his lordship would, in the usual phrase, get over his feeling. It had evidently been strong, — this she believed, and she was still capable of deriving pleasure from the belief; but it was absurd that a man so completely absolved from fidelity should stiffen himself in an attitude it would be more graceful to discontinue. Englishmen

liked to be comfortable, said Isabel, and there could be little comfort for Lord Warburton, in the long run, in thinking of a self-sufficient American girl, who had been but a casual acquaintance. Isabel flattered herself that should she hear, from one day to another, that he had married some young lady of his own country, who had done more to deserve him, she should receive the news without an impulse of jealousy. It would have proved that he believed she was firm, which was what she wished to seem to him; and this was grateful to her pride.

Henry James, Jr.

THE SEVEN DAYS.

MONDAY.

(Day of the Moon.)

DIANA, sister of the Sun! thy ray
 Governs these opening hours. The world is wide;
 We know not what new evil may betide
 This six days' journey; by what unknown way
 We come at last unto the royal day
 Of prophecy and promise. O preside
 Propitious, and our doubting footsteps guide
 Onward and sunward. Long in shadows gray
 We have but slumbered, — hidden from our view
 Knowledge and wisdom in unfruitful night.
 But if upon the dawn's unfolding blue
 Thy hand this day our destiny must write,
 Once more our outer, inner life renew
 With Heaven's first utterance, — *Let there be light!*

TUESDAY.

(Day of the War-God.)

Fear not, O soul, to-day! Imperial Mars
 Leads on the hours, a brave and warlike train,
 Fire in his glance and splendor in his reign,
 From the first glitter through the sunrise bars
 Till his red banner flames among the stars!
 Thou, too, go forth, and fully armed maintain
 Duty and right. The hero is not slain,
 Though pierced and wounded in a hundred wars.