

did not do one's self any hesitation about the manner to bring him to his grave, and they made a coffin in the house. The corpse was put in the coffin, and then the coffin brought outside; and first now one did see with consternation that it was not possible to carry the corpse with them in this manner. What was to do then?

"At last they resolved to let the

coffin be left as a *memento mori*, and to place the dead upon a horse, his feet tied up under the belly of the horse; against the mane on the horse was fastened a well-stuffed fodder bag, that the corpse may lean to the same, to which again the corpse was tied. And so the dead must ride over the mountain to his resting-place by Fortun's church in Lyster."

H. H.

THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY.

XXXV.

ONE afternoon, towards dusk, in the autumn of 1876, a young man of pleasing appearance rang at the door of a small apartment on the third floor of an old Roman house. On its being opened he inquired for Madame Merle, whereupon the servant, a neat, plain woman, with a French face and a lady's maid's manner, ushered him into a diminutive room, and requested the favor of his name.

"Mr. Edward Rosier," said the young man, who sat down to wait till his hostess should appear.

The reader will perhaps not have forgotten that Mr. Rosier was an ornament of the American circle in Paris, but it may also be remembered that he sometimes vanished from its horizon. He had spent a portion of several winters at Pau, and as he was a gentleman of tolerably inveterate habits he might have continued for years to pay his annual visit to this charming resort. In the summer of 1876, however, an incident befell him which changed the current, not only of his thoughts, but of his proceedings. He passed a month in the Upper Engadine, and encountered at St. Moritz a charming young girl. For this young lady he conceived a peculiar

admiration; she was exactly the household angel he had long been looking for. He was never precipitate; he was nothing if not discreet; so he forbore for the present to declare his passion; but it seemed to him when they parted — the young lady to go down into Italy, and her admirer to proceed to Geneva, where he was under bonds to join some friends — that he should be very unhappy if he were not to see her again. The simplest way to do so was to go in the autumn to Rome, where Miss Osmond was domiciled with her family. Rosier started on his pilgrimage to the Italian capital, and reached it on the first of November. It was a pleasant thing to do; but for the young man there was a strain of the heroic in the enterprise. He was nervous about the fever, and November, after all, was rather early in the season. Fortune, however, favors the brave; and Mr. Rosier, who took three grains of quinine every day, had at the end of a month no cause to deplore his temerity. He had made to a certain extent good use of his time; that is, he had perceived that Miss Pansy Osmond had not a flaw in her composition. She was admirably finished, she was in excellent style. He thought of her in amorous meditation a good deal as he might have thought of a Dresden-china shep-

herdess. Miss Osmond, indeed, in the bloom of her juvenility, had a touch of the rococo, which Rosier, whose taste was predominantly for that manner, could not fail to appreciate. That he esteemed the productions of comparatively frivolous periods would have been apparent from the attention he bestowed upon Madame Merle's drawing-room, which, although furnished with specimens of every style, was especially rich in articles of the last two centuries. He had immediately put a glass into one eye and looked round; and then, "By Jove! she has some jolly good things!" he had murmured to himself. The room was small, and densely filled with furniture; it gave an impression of faded silk and little statuettes which might totter if one moved. Rosier got up and wandered about with his careful tread, bending over the tables charged with knickknacks and the cushions embossed with princely arms. When Madame Merle came in she found him standing before the fire-place, with his nose very close to the great lace flounce attached to the damask cover of the mantel. He had lifted it delicately, as if he were smelling it.

"It's old Venetian," she said; "it's rather good."

"It's too good for this; you ought to wear it."

"They tell me you have some better in Paris, in the same situation."

"Ah, but I can't wear mine," said Rosier, smiling.

"I don't see why you should n't! I have better lace than that to wear."

Rosier's eyes wandered, lingeringly, round the room again.

"You have some very good things."

"Yes, but I hate them."

"Do you want to get rid of them?" the young man asked quickly.

"No, it's good to have something to hate; one works it off."

"I love my things," said Rosier, as he sat there smiling. "But it's not

about them, nor about yours, that I came to talk to you." He paused a moment, and then, with greater softness, "I care more for Miss Osmond than for all the *bibelots* in Europe!"

Madame Merle started a little.

"Did you come to tell me that?"

"I came to ask your advice."

She looked at him with a little frown, stroking her chin.

"A man in love, you know, does n't ask advice."

"Why not, if he is in a difficult position? That's often the case with a man in love. I have been in love before, and I know. But never so much as this time, — really, never so much. I should like particularly to know what you think of my prospects. I'm afraid Mr. Osmond does n't think me a phoenix."

"Do you wish me to intercede?"

Madame Merle asked, with her fine arms folded, and her mouth drawn up to the left.

"If you could say a good word for me, I should be greatly obliged. There will be no use in my troubling Miss Osmond unless I have good reason to believe her father will consent."

"You are very considerate; that's in your favor. But you assume, in rather an off-hand way, that I think you a prize."

"You have been very kind to me," said the young man. "That's why I came."

"I am always kind to people who have good *bibelots*; there is no telling what one may get by it." And the left-hand corner of Madame Merle's mouth gave expression to the joke.

Edward Rosier started and blushed; his correct features were suffused with disappointment.

"Ah, I thought you liked me for myself!"

"I like you very much; but, if you please, we won't analyze. Excuse me if I seem patronizing; but I think you

a perfect little gentleman. I must tell you, however, that I have not the marrying of Pansy Osmond."

"I did n't suppose that. But you have seemed to me intimate with her family, and I thought you might have influence."

Madame Merle was silent a moment.

"Whom do you call her family?"

"Why, her father, and — how do you say it in English? — her *belle mère*."

"Mr. Osmond is her father, certainly; but his wife can scarcely be termed a member of her family. Mrs. Osmond has nothing to do with marrying her."

"I am sorry for that," said Rosier, with an amiable sigh. "I think Mrs. Osmond would favor me."

"Very likely, — if her husband does not."

Edward Rosier raised his eyebrows.

"Does she take the opposite line from him?"

"In everything. They think very differently."

"Well," said Rosier, "I am sorry for that; but it's none of my business. She is very fond of Pansy."

"Yes, she is very fond of Pansy."

"And Pansy has a great affection for her. She has told me that she loves her as if she were her own mother."

"You must, after all, have had some very intimate talk with the poor child," said Madame Merle. "Have you declared your sentiments?"

"Never!" cried Rosier, lifting his neatly-gloved hand. "Never, until I have assured myself of those of the parents."

"You always wait for that? You have excellent principles; your conduct is most estimable."

"I think you are laughing at me," poor Rosier murmured, dropping back in his chair, and feeling his small mustache. "I did n't expect that of you, Madame Merle."

She shook her head calmly, like a person who saw things clearly.

"You don't do me justice. I think your conduct is in excellent taste, and the best you could adopt. Yes, that's what I think."

"I would n't agitate her — only to agitate her; I love her too much for that," said Ned Rosier.

"I am glad, after all, that you have told me," Madame Merle went on. "Leave it to me a little; I think I can help you."

"I said you were the person to come to!" cried the young man, with an ingenuous radiance in his face.

"You were very clever," Madame Merle returned, more dryly. "When I say I can help you, I mean once assuming that your cause is good. Let us think a little whether it is."

"I'm a dear little fellow," said Rosier, earnestly. "I won't say I have no faults, but I will say I have no vices."

"All that is negative. What is the positive side? What have you got beside your Spanish lace and your Dresden tea-cups?"

"I have got a comfortable little fortune, — about forty thousand francs a year. With the talent that I have for arranging, we can live beautifully on such an income."

"Beautifully, no; sufficiently, yes. Even that depends on where you live."

"Well, in Paris. I would undertake it in Paris."

Madame Merle's mouth rose to the left.

"It would n't be splendid; you would have to make use of the tea-cups, and they would get broken."

"We don't want to be splendid. If Miss Osmond should have everything pretty, it would be enough. When one is as pretty as she, one can afford to be simple. She ought never to wear anything but muslin," said Rosier, reflectively.

"She would be much obliged to you for that theory."

"It's the correct one, I assure you; and I am sure she would enter into it. She understands all that; that's why I love her."

"She is a very good little girl, and extremely graceful. But her father, to the best of my belief, can give her nothing."

Rosier hesitated a moment.

"I don't in the least desire that he should. But I may remark, all the same, that he lives like a rich man."

"The money is his wife's; she brought him a fortune."

"Mrs. Osmond, then, is very fond of her step-daughter; she may do something."

"For a love-sick swain you have your eyes about you!" Madame Merle exclaimed, with a laugh.

"I esteem a *dot* very much. I can do without it, but I esteem it."

"Mrs. Osmond," Madame Merle went on, "will probably prefer to keep her money for her own children."

"Her own children? Surely she has none."

"She may have yet. She had a poor little boy, who died two years ago, six months after his birth. Others, therefore, may come."

"I hope they will, if it will make her happy. She is a splendid woman."

Madame Merle was silent a moment.

"Ah, about her there is much to be said. Splendid as you like! We have not exactly made out that you are a *parti*. The absence of vices is hardly a source of income."

"Excuse me, I think it may be," said Rosier, with his persuasive smile.

"You'll be a touching couple, living on your innocence!"

"I think you underrate me."

"You are not so innocent as that? Seriously," said Madame Merle, "of course forty thousand francs a year and a nice character are a combination to be

considered. I don't say it's to be jumped at; but there might be a worse offer. Mr. Osmond will probably incline to believe he can do better."

"He can do so, perhaps; but what can his daughter do? She can't do better than marry the man she loves. For she does, you know," Rosier added, eagerly.

"She does, — I know it."

"Ah," cried the young man, "I said you were the person to come to!"

"But I don't know how you know it, if you have n't asked her," Madame Merle went on.

"In such a case there is no need of asking and telling; as you say, we are an innocent couple. How did *you* know it?"

"I, who am not innocent? By being very crafty. Leave it to me; I will find out for you."

Rosier got up, and stood smoothing his hat.

"You say that rather coldly. Don't simply find out how it is, but try to make it as it should be."

"I will do my best. I will try to make the most of your advantages."

"Thank you so very much. Meanwhile, I will say a word to Mrs. Osmond."

"Gardez-vous en bien!" And Madame Merle rose, rapidly. "Don't set her going, or you'll spoil everything."

Rosier gazed into his hat; he wondered whether his hostess had been after all the right person to come to.

"I don't think I understand you. I am an old friend of Mrs. Osmond, and I think she would like me to succeed."

"Be an old friend as much as you like; the more old friends she has the better, for she does n't get on very well with some of her new. But don't for the present try to make her take up the cudgels for you. Her husband may have other views, and, as a person who wishes her well, I advise you not to multiply points of difference between them."

Poor Rosier's face assumed an expression of alarm; a suit for the hand of Pansy Osmond was even a more complicated business than his taste for proper transitions had allowed. But the extreme good sense which he concealed under a surface suggesting sprigged porcelain came to his assistance.

"I don't see that I am bound to consider Mr. Osmond so much!" he exclaimed.

"No, but you should consider her. You say you are an old friend. Would you make her suffer?"

"Not for the world."

"Then be very careful, and let the matter alone until I have taken a few soundings."

"Let the matter alone, dear Madame Merle? Remember that I am in love."

"Oh, you won't burn up. Why did you come to me, if you are not to heed what I say?"

"You are very kind; I will be very good," the young man promised. "But I am afraid Mr. Osmond is rather difficult," he added, in his mild voice, as he went to the door.

Madame Merle gave a light laugh.

"It has been said before. But his wife is not easy, either."

"Ah, she's a splendid woman!" Ned Rosier repeated, passing out.

He resolved that his conduct should be worthy of a young man who was already a model of discretion; but he saw nothing in any pledge he had given Madame Merle that made it improper he should keep himself in spirits by an occasional visit to Miss Osmond's home. He reflected constantly on what Madame Merle had said to him, and turned over in his mind the impression of her somewhat peculiar manner. He had gone to her *de confiance*, as they said in Paris; but it was possible that he had been precipitate. He found difficulty in thinking of himself as rash, — he had incurred this reproach so rarely; but it certainly was true that he had known

Madame Merle only for the last month, and that his thinking her a delightful woman was not, when one came to look into it, a reason for assuming that she would be eager to push Pansy Osmond into his arms, gracefully arranged as these members might be to receive her. Beyond this, Madame Merle had been very gracious to him, and she was a person of consideration among the girl's people, where she had a rather striking appearance (Rosier had more than once wondered how she managed it) of being intimate without being familiar. But possibly he had exaggerated these advantages. There was no particular reason why she should take trouble for him; a charming woman was charming to every one, and Rosier felt rather like a fool when he thought of his appealing to Madame Merle on the ground that she had distinguished him. Very likely, though she had appeared to say it in joke, she was really only thinking of his bibelots. Had it come into her head that he might offer her two or three of the gems of his collection? If she would only help him to marry Miss Osmond, he would present her with his whole museum. He could hardly say so to her outright, — it would seem too gross a bribe; but he should like her to believe it.

It was with these thoughts that he went again to Mrs. Osmond's, Mrs. Osmond having an "evening," — she had taken the Thursday of each week, — when his presence could be accounted for on general principles of civility. The object of Mr. Rosier's well-regulated affection dwelt in a high house in the very heart of Rome; a dark and massive structure, overlooking a sunny *piazza* in the neighborhood of the Farnese Palace. In a palace, too, little Pansy lived, — a palace in Roman parlance, but a dungeon to poor Rosier's apprehensive mind. It seemed to him of evil omen that the young lady he wished to marry, and whose fastidious father he doubted of his ability to conciliate, should be

immured in a kind of domestic fortress, which bore a stern old Roman name; which smelt of historic deeds, of crime and craft and violence; which was mentioned in Murray, and visited by tourists who looked disappointed and depressed; and which had frescoes by Caravaggio in the *piano nobile*, and a row of mutilated statues and dusty urns in the wide, nobly-arched *loggia* overlooking the damp court where a fountain gushed out of a niche. In a less preoccupied frame of mind he could have done justice to the Palazzo Roccanera; he could have entered into the sentiment of Mrs. Osmond, who had once told him that on settling themselves in Rome she and her husband chose this habitation for the love of local color. It had local color enough, and though he knew less about architecture than about Limoges enamel he could see that the proportions of the windows, and even the details of the cornice, had quite the grand air. But Rosier was haunted by the conviction that at picturesque periods young girls had been shut up there to keep them from their true loves, and, under the threat of being thrown into convents, had been forced into unholy marriages. There was one point, however, to which he always did justice, when once he found himself in Mrs. Osmond's warm, rich-looking reception-rooms, which were on the second floor: he acknowledged that these people were very strong in bibelots. It was a taste of Osmond's own, — not at all of hers: this she had told him the first time he came to the house, when, after asking himself for a quarter of an hour whether they had better things than he, he was obliged to admit that they had, very much, and vanquished his envy, as a gentleman should, to the point of expressing to his hostess his pure admiration of her treasures. He learned from Mrs. Osmond that her husband had made a large collection before their marriage, and that, though he had obtained a number of fine

pieces within the last three years, he had got his best things at a time when he had not the advantage of her advice. Rosier interpreted this information according to principles of his own. For "advice" read "money," he said to himself; and the fact that Gilbert Osmond had landed his great prizes during his impecunious season confirmed his most cherished doctrine, — the doctrine that a collector may freely be poor if he be only patient. In general, when Rosier presented himself on a Thursday evening, his first glance was bestowed upon the walls of the room; there were three or four objects that his eyes really yearned for. But after his talk with Madame Merle he felt the extreme seriousness of his position; and now, when he came in, he looked about for the daughter of the house with such eagerness as might be permitted to a gentleman who always crossed a threshold with an optimistic smile.

XXXVI.

Pansy was not in the first of the rooms, a large apartment with a concave ceiling and walls covered with old red damask; it was here that Mrs. Osmond usually sat, — though she was not in her customary place to-night, — and that a circle of more especial intimates gathered about the fire. The room was warm, with a sort of subdued brightness; it contained the larger things, and, almost always, an odor of flowers. Pansy on this occasion was presumably in the chamber beyond, the resort of younger visitors, where tea was served. Osmond stood before the chimney, leaning back, with his hands behind him; he had one foot up, and was warming the sole. Half a dozen people, scattered near him, were talking together, but he was not in conversation; his eyes were fixed, abstractedly. Rosier, coming in unannounced, failed to attract his atten-

tion ; but the young man, who was very punctilious, though he was even exceptionally conscious that it was the wife, not the husband, he had come to see, went up to shake hands with him. Osmond put out his left hand, without changing his attitude.

"How d'ye do? My wife's somewhere about."

"Never fear; I shall find her," said Rosier, cheerfully.

Osmond stood looking at him; he had never before felt the keenness of this gentleman's eyes. "Madame Merle has told him, and he does n't like it," Rosier said to himself. He had hoped Madame Merle would be there; but she was not within sight; perhaps she was in one of the other rooms, or would come later. He had never especially delighted in Gilbert Osmond; he had a fancy that he gave himself airs. But Rosier was not quickly resentful, and where politeness was concerned he had an inveterate wish to be in the right. He looked round him, smiling, and then, in a moment, he said, —

"I saw a jolly good piece of *Capo di Monte* to-day."

Osmond answered nothing at first; but presently, while he warmed his boot-sole, "I don't care a fig for *Capo di Monte*!" he returned.

"I hope you are not losing your interest?"

"In old pots and plates? Yes, I am losing my interest."

Rosier for a moment forgot the delicacy of his position.

"You are not thinking of parting with a — a piece or two?"

"No, I am not thinking of parting with anything at all, Mr. Rosier," said Osmond, with his eyes still on the eyes of his visitor.

"Ah, you want to keep, but not to add," Rosier remarked, brightly.

"Exactly. I have nothing that I wish to match."

Poor Rosier was aware that he had

blushed, and he was distressed at his want of assurance. "Ah, well, I have!" was all that he could murmur; and he knew that his murmur was partly lost as he turned away. He took his course to the adjoining room, and met Mrs. Osmond coming out of the deep doorway. She was dressed in black velvet; she looked brilliant and noble. We know what Mr. Rosier thought of her, and the terms in which, to Madame Merle, he had expressed his admiration. Like his appreciation of her dear little step-daughter, it was based partly on his fine sense of the plastic; but also on a relish for a more impalpable sort of merit, — that merit of a bright spirit, which Rosier's devotion to brittle wares had not made him cease to regard as a quality. Mrs. Osmond, at present, appeared to gratify all such tastes. The years had touched her only to enrich her; the flower of her youth had not faded; it only hung more quietly on its stem. She had lost something of that quick eagerness to which her husband had privately taken exception; she had more the air of being able to wait. Now, at all events, framed in the gilded door-way, she struck our young man as the picture of a gracious lady.

"You see I am very regular," he said. "But who should be if I am not?"

"Yes, I have known you longer than any one here. But we must not indulge in tender reminiscences. I want to introduce you to a young lady."

"Ah, please, what young lady?" Rosier was immensely obliging; but this was not what he had come for.

"She sits there by the fire, in pink, and has no one to speak to."

Rosier hesitated a moment.

"Can't Mr. Osmond speak to her? He is within six feet of her."

Mrs. Osmond also hesitated.

"She is not very lively, and he does n't like dull people."

"But she is good enough for me? Ah, now, that is hard."

"I only mean that you have ideas for two. And then you are so obliging."

"So is your husband."

"No, he is not, — to me," and Mrs. Osmond smiled vaguely.

"That's a sign he should be doubly so to other women."

"So I tell him," said Mrs. Osmond, still smiling.

"You see I want some tea," Rosier went on, looking wistfully beyond.

"That's perfect. Go and give some to my young lady."

"Very good; but after that I will abandon her to her fate. The simple truth is that I am dying to have a little talk with Miss Osmond."

"Ah," said Isabel, turning away, "I can't help you there!"

Five minutes later, while he handed a tea-cup to the young lady in pink, whom he had conducted into the other room, he wondered whether, in making to Mrs. Osmond the profession I have just quoted, he had broken the spirit of his promise to Madame Merle. Such a question was capable of occupying this young man's mind for a considerable time. At last, however, he became, comparatively speaking, reckless, and cared little what promises he might break. The fate to which he had threatened to abandon the young lady in pink proved to be none so terrible; for Pansy Osmond, who had given him the tea for his companion, — Pansy was as fond as ever of making tea, — presently came and talked to her. Into this mild colloquy Edward Rosier entered little; he sat by moodily watching his small sweetheart. If we look at her now through his eyes, we shall at first not see much to remind us of the obedient little girl who, at Florence, three years before, was sent to walk short distances in the Cascine, while her father and Miss Archer talked together of matters sacred to elder people. But after a moment we shall perceive that if at nineteen Pansy has become a young lady, she does not

really fill out the part; that if she has grown very pretty, she lacks in a deplorable degree the quality known and esteemed in the appearance of females as style; and that if she is dressed with great freshness, she wears her smart attire with an undisguised appearance of saving it, — very much as if it were lent her for the occasion. Edward Rosier, it would seem, would have been just the man to note these defects; and in point of fact there was not a quality of this young lady, of any sort, that he had not noted. Only he called her qualities by names of his own, — some of which, indeed, were happy enough. "No, she is unique, — she is absolutely unique," he used to say to himself; and you may be sure that not for an instant would he have admitted to you that she was wanting in style. Style? Why, she had the style of a little princess; if you could n't see it you had no eye. It was not modern, it was not conscious; it would produce no impression in Broadway; the small, serious damsel, in her stiff little dress, only looked like an Infanta of Velasquez. This was enough for Edward Rosier, who thought her delightfully old-fashioned. Her anxious eyes, her charming lips, her slip of a figure, were as touching as a childish prayer. He had now an acute desire to know just to what point she liked him, — a desire which made him fidget as he sat in his chair. It made him feel hot, so that he had to pat his forehead with his handkerchief; he had never been so uncomfortable. She was such a perfect *jeune fille*; and one couldn't make of a *jeune fille* the inquiry necessary for throwing light on such a point. A *jeune fille* was what Rosier had always dreamed of, — a *jeune fille* who should yet not be French, for he had felt that this nationality would complicate the question. He was sure that Pansy had never looked at a newspaper, and that, in the way of novels, if she had read Sir Walter Scott it was the very most. An

American *jeune fille*, — what would be better than that? She would be frank and gay, and yet would not have walked alone, nor have received letters from men, nor have been taken to the theatre to see the comedy of manners. Rosier could not deny that, as the matter stood, it would be a breach of hospitality to appeal directly to this unsophisticated creature; but he was now in imminent danger of asking himself whether hospitality were the most sacred thing in the world. Was not the sentiment that he entertained for Miss Osmond of infinitely greater importance? Of greater importance to him, — yes; but not probably to the master of the house. There was one comfort: even if this gentleman had been placed on his guard by Madame Merle, he would not have extended the warning to Pansy; it would not have been part of his policy to let her know that a prepossessing young man was in love with her. But he *was* in love with her, the prepossessing young man; and all these restrictions of circumstance had ended by irritating him. What had Gilbert Osmond meant by giving him two fingers of his left hand? If Osmond was rude, surely he himself might be bold. He felt extremely bold after the dull girl in pink had responded to the call of her mother, who came in to say, with a significant *simper* at Rosier, that she must carry her off to other triumphs. The mother and daughter departed together, and now it depended only upon him that he should be virtually alone with Pansy. He had never been alone with her before; he had never been alone with a *jeune fille*. It was a great moment; poor Rosier began to pat his forehead again. There was another room, beyond the one in which they stood, — a small room, which had been thrown open and lighted, but, the company not being numerous, had remained empty all the evening. It was empty yet. It was upholstered in pale yellow; there were several lamps;

through the open door it looked very pretty. Rosier stood a moment, gazing through this aperture; he was afraid that Pansy would run away, and felt almost capable of stretching out a hand to detain her. But she lingered where the young lady in pink had left them, making no motion to join a knot of visitors on the other side of the room. For a moment it occurred to him that she was frightened, — too frightened perhaps to move; but a glance assured him that she was not, and then he reflected that she was too innocent, indeed, for that. After a moment's supreme hesitation he asked her whether he might go and look at the yellow room, which seemed so attractive, yet so virginal. He had been there already with Osmond to inspect the furniture, which was of the first French empire, and especially to admire the clock (which he did not really admire), an immense classic structure of that period. He therefore felt that he had now begun to *manceuvre*.

“Certainly, you may go,” said Pansy; “and if you like, I will show you.” She was not in the least frightened.

“That’s just what I hoped you would say; you are so very kind,” Rosier murmured.

They went in together. Rosier really thought the room very ugly, and it seemed cold. The same idea appeared to have struck Pansy.

“It’s not for winter evenings; it’s more for summer,” she said. “It’s papa’s taste; he has so much.”

He had a good deal, Rosier thought; but some of it was bad. He looked about him; he hardly knew what to say in such a situation. “Does n’t Mrs. Osmond care how her rooms are done? Has she no taste?” he asked.

“Oh, yes, a great deal; but it’s more for literature,” said Pansy, “and for conversation. But papa cares also for those things: I think he knows everything.”

Rosier was silent a moment. “There is one thing I am sure he knows!” he

broke out presently. "He knows that when I come here it is, with all respect to him, with all respect to Mrs. Osmond, who is so charming, — it is really," said the young man, "to see you!"

"To see me?" asked Pansy, raising her vaguely-troubled eyes.

"To see you; that's what I come for!" Rosier repeated, feeling the intoxication of a rupture with authority.

Pansy stood looking at him, simply, intently, openly; a blush was not needed to make her face more modest.

"I thought it was for that," she said.

"And it was not disagreeable to you?"

"I could n't tell; I did n't know. You never told me," said Pansy.

"I was afraid of offending you."

"You don't offend me," the young girl murmured, smiling as if an angel had kissed her.

"You like me, then, Pansy?" Rosier asked, very gently, feeling very happy.

"Yes, — I like you."

They had walked to the chimney-piece, where the big cold empire clock was perched; they were well within the room, and beyond observation from without. The tone in which she had said these four words seemed to him the very breath of nature, and his only answer could be to take her hand and hold it a moment. Then he raised it to his lips. She submitted, still with her pure, trusting smile, in which there was something ineffably passive. She liked him, — she had liked him all the while; now anything might happen! She was ready, — she had been ready always, waiting for him to speak. If he had not spoken she would have waited forever; but when the word came she dropped like the peach from the shaken tree. Rosier felt that if he should draw her towards him, and hold her to his heart, she would submit without a murmur; she would rest there without a question. It was true that this would be a rash experiment in a yellow empire *salottino*. She

had known it was for her he came; and yet like what a perfect little lady she had carried it off!

"You are very dear to me!" he murmured, trying to believe that there was after all such a thing as hospitality.

She looked a moment at her hand, where he had kissed it. "Did you say that papa knows?"

"You told me just now he knows everything."

"I think you must make sure," said Pansy.

"Ah, my dear, when once I am sure of you!" Rosier murmured in her ear, while she turned back to the other rooms with a little air of consistency which seemed to imply that their appeal should be immediate.

The other rooms, meanwhile, had become conscious of the arrival of Madame Merle, who, wherever she went, produced an impression when she entered. How she did it the most attentive spectator could not have told you; for she neither spoke loud, nor laughed profusely, nor moved rapidly, nor dressed with splendor, nor appealed in any appreciable manner to the audience. Large, fair, smiling, serene, there was something in her very tranquillity that diffused itself, and when people looked round it was because of a sudden quiet. On this occasion she had done the quietest thing she could do: after embracing Mrs. Osmond, which was more striking, she had sat down on a small sofa to commune with the master of the house. There was a brief exchange of commonplaces between these two, — they always paid, in public, a certain formal tribute to the commonplace, — and then Madame Merle, whose eyes had been wandering, asked if little Mr. Rosier had come this evening.

"He came nearly an hour ago; but he has disappeared," Osmond said.

"And where is Pansy?"

"In the other room. There are several people there."

"He is probably among them," said Madame Merle.

"Do you wish to see him?" Osmond asked, in a provokingly pointless tone.

Madame Merle looked at him a moment; she knew his tones to the eighth of a note. "Yes, I should like to say to him that I have told you what he wants, and that it interests you but feebly."

"Don't tell him that; he will try to interest me more, — which is exactly what I don't want. Tell him I hate his proposal."

"But you don't hate it."

"It does n't signify: I don't love it. I let him see that, myself, this evening: I was rude to him on purpose. That sort of thing is a great bore. There is no hurry."

"I will tell him that you will take time and think it over."

"No, don't do that. He will hang on."

"If I discourage him, he will do the same."

"Yes; but in the one case he will try and talk and explain, which would be exceedingly tiresome; in the other he will probably hold his tongue, and go in for some deeper game. That will leave me quiet. I hate talking with a donkey."

"Is that what you call poor Mr. Rosier?"

"Oh, he's enervating with his eternal majolica."

Madame Merle dropped her eyes, with a faint smile. "He's a gentleman; he has a charming temper; and after all an income of forty thousand francs" —

"It's misery, — genteel misery," Osmond broke in. "It's not what I have dreamed of for Pansy."

"Very good, then. He has promised me not to speak to her."

"Do you believe him?" Osmond asked, absent-mindedly.

"Perfectly. Pansy has thought a great deal about him; but I don't suppose you think that matters."

"I don't think it matters at all; but neither do I believe she has thought about him."

"That opinion is more convenient," said Madame Merle, quietly.

"Has she told you that she is in love with him?"

"For what do you take her? And for what do you take me?" Madame Merle added in a moment.

Osmond had raised his foot, and was resting his slim ankle on the other knee; he clasped his ankle in his hand, familiarly, and gazed a while before him. "This kind of thing does n't find me unprepared. It's what I educated her for. It was all for this, — that when such a case should come up she should do what I prefer."

"I am not afraid that she will not do it."

"Well, then, where is the hitch?"

"I don't see any. But all the same I recommend you not to get rid of Mr. Rosier. Keep him on hand; he may be useful."

"I can't keep him. Do it yourself."

"Very good; I will put him into a corner, and allow him so much a day." Madame Merle had, for the most part, while they talked, been glancing about her; it was her habit, in this situation, just as it was her habit to interpose a good many blank-looking pauses. A long pause followed the last words I have quoted; and before it was broken again she saw Pansy come out of the adjoining room, followed by Edward Rosier. Pansy advanced a few steps, and then stopped, and stood looking at Madame Merle and her father.

"He has spoken to her," Madame Merle said, simply, to Osmond.

Her companion never turned his head. "So much for your belief in his promises. He ought to be horse-whipped."

"He intends to confess, poor little man!"

Osmond got up; he had now taken a sharp look at his daughter. "It does n't matter," he murmured, turning away.

Pansy, after a moment, came up to Madame Merle with her little manner of unfamiliar politeness. This lady's reception of her was not more intimate; she simply, as she rose from the sofa, gave her a friendly smile.

"You are very late," said the young girl, gently.

"My dear child, I am never later than I intend to be."

Madame Merle had not got up to be gracious to Pansy; she moved towards Edward Rosier. He came to meet her, and, very quickly, as if to get it off his mind, "I have spoken to her!" he whispered.

"I know it, Mr. Rosier."

"Did she tell you?"

"Yes, she told me. Behave properly for the rest of the evening, and come and see me to-morrow at a quarter past five."

She was severe, and in the manner in which she turned her back to him there was a degree of contempt which caused him to mutter a decent imprecation.

He had no intention of speaking to Osmond; it was neither the time nor the place. But he instinctively wandered towards Isabel, who sat talking with an old lady. He sat down on the other side of her; the old lady was an Italian, and Rosier took for granted that she understood no English.

"You said just now you would n't help me," he began, to Mrs. Osmond. "Perhaps you will feel differently when you know — when you know" —

He hesitated a little.

"When I know what?" Isabel asked, gently.

"That she is all right."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, that we have come to an understanding."

"She is all wrong," said Isabel. "It won't do."

Poor Rosier gazed at her half pleadingly, half angrily; a sudden flush testified to his sense of injury.

"I have never been treated so," he said. "What is there against me, after all? That is not the way I am usually considered. I could have married twenty times!"

"It's a pity you did n't. I don't mean twenty times, but once, comfortably," Isabel added, smiling kindly. "You are not rich enough for Pansy."

"She does n't care a straw for one's money."

"No, but her father does."

"Ah, yes, he has proved that!" cried the young man.

Isabel got up, turning away from him, leaving her old lady, without saying anything; and he occupied himself for the next ten minutes in pretending to look at Gilbert Osmond's collection of miniatures, which were neatly arranged on a series of small velvet screens. But he looked without seeing; his cheek burned; he was too full of his sense of injury. It was certain that he had never been treated that way before; he was not used to being thought not good enough. He knew how good he was, and if such a fallacy had not been so pernicious he could have laughed at it. He looked about again for Pansy, but she had disappeared, and his main desire was now to get out of the house. Before doing so he spoke to Isabel again; it was not agreeable to him to reflect that he had just said a rude thing to her, — the only point that would now justify a low view of him.

"I spoke of Mr. Osmond as I should n't have done, a while ago," he said. "But you must remember my situation."

"I don't remember what you said," she answered, coldly.

"Ah, you are offended, and now you will never help me."

She was silent an instant, and then, with a change of tone, —

“It’s not that I won’t; I simply can’t!” Her manner was almost passionate.

“If you could, just a little,” said Rosier, “I would never again speak of your husband save as an angel.”

“The inducement is great,” said Isabel gravely, — inscrutably, as he afterwards, to himself, called it; and she gave him, straight in the eyes, a look which was also inscrutable. It made him remember, somehow, that he had known her as a child; and yet it was keener than he liked, and he took himself off.

XXXVII.

He went to see Madame Merle on the morrow, and to his surprise she let him off rather easily. But she made him promise that he would stop there until something should have been decided. Mr. Osmond had had higher expectations; it was very true that as he had no intention of giving his daughter a portion such expectations were open to criticism, or even, if one would, to ridicule. But she would advise Mr. Rosier not to take that tone; if he would possess his soul in patience he might arrive at his felicity. Mr. Osmond was not favorable to his suit, but it would not be a miracle if he should gradually come round. Pansy would never defy her father, he might depend upon that; so nothing was to be gained by precipitation. Mr. Osmond needed to accustom his mind to an offer of a sort that he had not hitherto entertained, and this result must come of itself; it was useless to try to force it. Rosier remarked that his own situation would be in the mean while the most uncomfortable in the world, and Madame Merle assured him that she felt for him. But, as she justly declared, one could n’t have everything one wanted; she

had learned that lesson for herself. There would be no use in his writing to Gilbert Osmond, who had charged her to tell him as much. He wished the matter dropped for a few weeks, and would himself write when he should have anything to communicate which it would please Mr. Rosier to hear.

“He does n’t like your having spoken to Pansy. Ah, he does n’t like it at all,” said Madame Merle.

“I am perfectly willing to give him a chance to tell me so!”

“If you do that he will tell you more than you care to hear. Go to the house, for the next month, as little as possible, and leave the rest to me.”

“As little as possible? Who is to measure that?”

“Let me measure it. Go on Thursday evenings with the rest of the world; but don’t go at all odd times, and don’t fret about Pansy. I will see that she understands everything. She’s a calm little nature; she will take it quietly.”

Edward Rosier fretted about Pansy a good deal, but he did as he was advised, and waited for another Thursday evening before returning to the Palazzo Roccanera. There had been a party at dinner, so that although he went early the company was already tolerably numerous. Osmond, as usual, was in the first room, near the fire, staring straight at the door, so that, not to be distinctly uncivil, Rosier had to go and speak to him.

“I am glad that you can take a hint,” Pansy’s father said, slightly closing his keen, conscious eye.

“I take no hints. But I took a message, as I supposed it to be.”

“You took it? Where did you take it?”

It seemed to poor Rosier that he was being insulted, and he waited a moment, asking himself how much a true lover ought to submit to.

“Madame Merle gave me, as I understood it, a message from you, to the

effect that you declined to give me the opportunity I desire, — the opportunity to explain my wishes to you.”

Rosier flattered himself that he spoke rather sternly.

“I don’t see what Madame Merle has to do with it. Why did you apply to Madame Merle?”

“I asked her for an opinion, — for nothing more. I did so because she had seemed to me to know you very well.”

“She does n’t know me so well as she thinks,” said Osmond.

“I am sorry for that, because she has given me some little ground for hope.”

Osmond stared into the fire for a moment.

“I set a great price on my daughter.”

“You can’t set a higher one than I do. Don’t I prove it by wishing to marry her?”

“I wish to marry her very well,” Osmond went on, with a dry impertinence which, in another mood, poor Rosier would have admired.

“Of course I pretend that she would marry well in marrying me. She could n’t marry a man who loves her more, or whom, I may venture to add, she loves more.”

“I am not bound to accept your theories as to whom my daughter loves,” Osmond said, looking up with a quick, cold smile.

“I am not theorizing. Your daughter has spoken.”

“Not to me,” Osmond continued, bending forward a little, and dropping his eyes to his boot-toes.

“I have her promise, sir!” cried Rosier, with the sharpness of exasperation.

As their voices had been pitched very low before, such a note attracted some attention from the company. Osmond waited till this little movement had subsided, then he said very quickly, —

“I think she has no recollection of having given it.”

They had been standing with their faces to the fire, and after he had uttered these last words Osmond turned round again to the room. Before Rosier had time to rejoin he perceived that a gentleman, a stranger, had just come in, unannounced, according to the Roman custom, and was about to present himself to the master of the house. The latter smiled blandly, but somewhat blankly; the visitor was a handsome man, with a large, fair beard, — evidently an Englishman.

“You apparently don’t recognize me,” he said, with a smile that expressed more than Osmond’s.

“Ah, yes, now I do! I expected so little to see you.”

Rosier departed, and went in direct pursuit of Pansy. He sought her, as usual, in the neighboring room, but he again encountered Mrs. Osmond in his path. He gave this gracious lady no greeting, — he was too righteously indignant, — but said to her crudely, — “Your husband is awfully cold-blooded.”

She gave the same mystical smile that he had noticed before.

“You can’t expect every one to be as hot as yourself.”

“I don’t pretend to be cold, but I am cool. What has he been doing to his daughter?”

“I have no idea.”

“Don’t you take any interest?” Rosier demanded, feeling that she too was irritating.

For a moment she answered nothing. Then, —

“No!” she said abruptly, and with a quickened light in her eye which directly contradicted the word.

“Excuse me if I don’t believe that. Where is Miss Osmond?”

“In the corner making tea. Please leave her there.”

Rosier instantly discovered the young girl, who had been hidden by intervening groups. He watched her, but her

own attention was entirely given to her occupation.

"What on earth has he done to her?" he asked again, imploringly. "He declares to me that she has given me up."

"She has not given you up," Isabel said, in a low tone, without looking at him.

"Ah, thank you for that! Now I will leave her alone as long as you think proper!"

He had hardly spoken when he saw her change color, and became aware that Osmond was coming towards her, accompanied by the gentleman who had just entered. He thought the latter, in spite of the advantage of good looks and evident social experience, was a little embarrassed.

"Isabel," said Osmond, "I bring you an old friend."

Mrs. Osmond's face, though it wore a smile, was, like her old friend's, not perfectly confident. "I am very happy to see Lord Warburton," she said. Rosier turned away, and now that his talk with her had been interrupted felt absolved from the little pledge he had just taken. He had a quick impression that Mrs. Osmond would not notice what he did.

To do him justice, Isabel for some time quite ceased to observe him. She had been startled; she hardly knew whether she were glad or not. Lord Warburton, however, now that he was face to face with her, was plainly very well pleased; his frank gray eye expressed a deep, if still somewhat shy, satisfaction. He was larger, stouter, than of yore, and he looked older; he stood there very solidly and sensibly.

"I suppose you did n't expect to see me," he said. "I have only just arrived. Literally, I only got here this evening. You see I have lost no time in coming to pay you my respects; I knew you were at home on Thursdays."

"You see the fame of your Thurs-

days has spread to England," Osmond remarked, smiling, to his wife.

"It is very kind of Lord Warburton to come so soon; we are greatly flattered," Isabel said.

"Ah, well, it's better than stopping in one of those horrible inns," Osmond went on.

"The hotel seems very good; I think it is the same one where I saw you four years ago. You know it was here in Rome that we last met; it is a long time ago! Do you remember where I bade you good-by? It was in the Capitol, in the first room."

"I remember that myself," said Osmond; "I was there at the time."

"Yes, I remember that you were there. I was very sorry to leave Rome, — so sorry that, somehow or other, it became a melancholy sort of memory, and I have never cared to come back till to-day. But I knew you were living here, and I assure you I have often thought of you. It must be a charming place to live," said Lord Warburton, brightly, looking about him.

"We should have been glad to see you at any time," Osmond remarked, with propriety.

"Thank you very much. I have n't been out of England since then. Till a month ago, I really supposed my travels were over."

"I have heard of you from time to time," said Isabel, who had now completely recovered her self-possession.

"I hope you have heard no harm. My life has been a blank."

"Like the good reigns in history," Osmond suggested. He appeared to think his duties as a host had now terminated, he had performed them very conscientiously. Nothing could have been more adequate, more nicely measured, than his courtesy to his wife's old friend. It was punctilious, it was explicit, it was everything but natural, — a deficiency which Lord Warburton, who, himself, had on the whole a good deal

of nature, may be supposed to have perceived. "I will leave you and Mrs. Osmond together," he added. "You have reminiscences into which I don't enter."

"I am afraid you lose a good deal!" said Lord Warburton, in a tone which perhaps betrayed over much his appreciation of Osmond's generosity. He stood a moment, looking at Isabel with an eye that gradually became more serious. "I am really very glad to see you."

"It is very pleasant. You are very kind."

"Do you know that you are changed, — a little?"

Isabel hesitated a moment.

"Yes, — a good deal."

"I don't mean for the worse, of course; and yet how can I say for the better?"

"I think I shall have no scruple in saying that to you," said Isabel, smiling.

"Ah, well, for me — it's a long time. It would be a pity that there should n't be something to show for it."

They sat down, and Isabel asked him about his sisters, with other inquiries of a somewhat perfunctory kind. He answered her questions as if they interested him, and in a few moments she saw — or believed she saw — that he would prove a more comfortable companion than of yore. Time had laid its hand upon his heart, and, without chilling this organ, had discreetly soothed it. Isabel felt her usual esteem for Time rise at a bound. Lord Warburton's manner was certainly that of a contented man, who would rather like one to know it.

"There is something I must tell you without more delay," he said. "I have brought Ralph Touchett with me."

"Brought him with you?" Isabel's surprise was great.

"He is at the hotel; he was too tired to come out, and has gone to bed."

"I will go and see him," said Isabel, quickly.

"That is exactly what I hoped you would do. I had an idea that you had n't seen much of him since your marriage; that in fact your relations were a — a little more formal. That's why I hesitated, like an awkward Englishman."

"I am as fond of Ralph as ever," Isabel answered. "But why has he come to Rome?"

The declaration was very gentle; the question a little sharp.

"Because he is very far gone, Mrs. Osmond."

"Rome, then, is no place for him. I heard from him that he had determined to give up his custom of wintering abroad, and remain in England, in-doors, in what he called an artificial climate."

"Poor fellow, he does n't succeed with the artificial! I went to see him three weeks ago, at Gardencourt, and found him extremely ill. He has been getting worse every year, and now he has no strength left. He smokes no more cigarettes! He had got up an artificial climate, indeed; the house was as hot as Calcutta. Nevertheless, he had suddenly taken it into his head to start for Sicily. I did n't believe in it; neither did the doctors, nor any of his friends. His mother, as I suppose you know, is in America, so there was no one to prevent him. He stuck to his idea that it would be the saving of him to spend the winter at Catania. He said he could take servants and furniture, and make himself comfortable; but in point of fact he has n't brought anything. I wanted him at least to go by sea, to save fatigue; but he said he hated the sea, and wished to stop at Rome. After that, though I thought it all rubbish, I made up my mind to come with him. I am acting as — what do you call it in America? — as a kind of moderator. Poor Touchett's very moderate now. We left England a fortnight ago, and he has been very bad on the way. He can't keep warm, and the

further south we come the more he feels the cold. He has got a rather good man, but I'm afraid he's beyond human help. If you don't mind my saying so, I think it was a most extraordinary time for Mrs. Touchett to choose for going to America."

Isabel had listened eagerly; her face was full of pain and wonder.

"My aunt does that at fixed periods, and she lets nothing turn her aside. When the date comes round she starts. I think she would have started if Ralph had been dying."

"I sometimes think he is dying," Lord Warburton said.

Isabel started up.

"I will go to him now!"

He checked her; he was a little disconcerted at the quick effect of his words.

"I don't mean that I thought so to-night. On the contrary, to-day, in the train, he seemed particularly well; the idea of our reaching Rome — he is very fond of Rome, you know — gave him strength. An hour ago, when I bade him good-night, he told me that he was very tired, but very happy. Go to him in the morning; that's all I mean. I did n't tell him I was coming here; I did n't think of it till after we separated. Then I remembered that he had told me that you had an evening, and that it was this very Thursday. It occurred to me to come in and tell you that he was here, and let you know that you had perhaps better not wait for him to call. I think he said he had not written to you." There was no need of Isabel's declaring that she would act upon Lord Warburton's information; she looked, as she sat there, like a winged creature held back. "Let alone that I wanted to see you for myself," her visitor added, gallantly.

"I don't understand Ralph's plan; it seems to me very wild," she said. "I was glad to think of him between those thick walls at Gardencourt."

"He was completely alone there; the thick walls were his only company."

"You went to see him; you have been extremely kind."

"Oh, dear, I had nothing to do," said Lord Warburton.

"We hear, on the contrary, that you are doing great things. Every one speaks of you as a great statesman, and I am perpetually seeing your name in the Times, which, by the way, does n't appear to hold it in reverence. You are apparently as bold a radical as ever."

"I don't feel nearly so bold; you know the world has come round to me. Touchett and I have kept up a sort of parliamentary debate all the way from London. I tell him he is the last of the Tories, and he calls me the head of the Communists. So you see there is life in him yet."

Isabel had many questions to ask about Ralph, but she abstained from asking them all. She would see for herself on the morrow. She perceived that after a little Lord Warburton would tire of that subject, — that he had a consciousness of other possible topics. She was more and more able to say to herself that he had recovered, and, what is more to the point, she was able to say it without bitterness. He had been for her, of old, such an image of urgency, of insistence, of something to be resisted and reasoned with, that his reappearance at first menaced her with a new trouble. But she was now reassured; she could see that he only wished to live with her on good terms, that she was to understand that he had forgiven her, and was incapable of the bad taste of making pointed allusions. This was not a form of revenge, of course; she had no suspicion that he wished to punish her by an exhibition of disillusionment; she did him the justice to believe that it had simply occurred to him that she would now take a good-natured interest in knowing that he was resigned. It was the resignation of a healthy,

manly nature, in which sentimental wounds could never fester. British politics had cured him; she had known they would. She gave an envious thought to the happier lot of men, who are always free to plunge into the healing waters of action. Lord Warburton of course spoke of the past, but he spoke of it without implication; he even went so far as to allude to their former meeting in Rome as a very jolly time. And he told her that he had been immensely interested in hearing of her marriage; that it was a great pleasure to him to make Mr. Osmond's acquaintance, since he could hardly be said to have made it on the other occasion. He had not written to her when she married, but he did not apologize to her for that. The only thing he implied was that they were old friends, intimate friends. It was very much as an intimate friend that he said to her, suddenly, after a short pause which he had occupied in smiling, as he looked about him, like a man to whom everything suggested a cheerful interpretation, —

"Well, now, I suppose you are very happy, and all that sort of thing?"

Isabel answered with a quick laugh; the tone of his remark struck her almost as the accent of comedy.

"Do you suppose if I were not I would tell you?"

"Well, I don't know. I don't see why not."

"I do, then. Fortunately, however, I am very happy."

"You have got a very good house."

"Yes, it's very pleasant. But that's not my merit, — it's my husband's."

"You mean that he has arranged it?"

"Yes; it was nothing when we came."

"He must be very clever."

"He has a genius for upholstery," said Isabel.

"There is a great rage for that sort of thing now. But you must have a taste of your own."

"I enjoy things when they are done; but I have no ideas. I can never propose anything."

"Do you mean that you accept what others propose?"

"Very willingly, for the most part."

"That's a good thing to know. I shall propose you something."

"It will be very kind. I must say, however, that I have in a few small ways a certain initiative. I should like, for instance, to introduce you to some of these people."

"Oh, please don't; I like sitting here. Unless it be to that young lady in the blue dress. She has a charming face."

"The one talking to the rosy young man? That's my husband's daughter."

"Lucky man, your husband. What a dear little maid!"

"You must make her acquaintance."

"In a moment with pleasure. I like looking at her from here." He ceased to look at her, however, very soon; his eyes constantly reverted to Mrs. Osmond. "Do you know, I was wrong just now in saying that you had changed?" he presently went on. "You seem to me, after all, very much the same."

"And yet I find it's a great change to be married," said Isabel, with gayety.

"It affects most people more than it has affected you. You see I have n't gone in for that."

"It rather surprises me."

"You ought to understand it, Mrs. Osmond. But I want to marry," he added, more simply.

"It ought to be very easy," Isabel said, rising, and then blushing a little at the thought that she was hardly the person to say this. It was perhaps because Lord Warburton noticed her blush that he generously forbore to call her attention to the incongruity.

Edward Rosier, meanwhile, had seated himself on an ottoman beside Pansy's tea-table. He pretended at first to talk to her about trifles, and she asked him

who was the new gentleman conversing with her step-mother.

"He's an English lord," said Rosier. "I don't know more."

"I wonder if he will have some tea. The English are so fond of tea."

"Never mind that; I have something particular to say to you."

"Don't speak so loud, or every one will hear us," said Pansy.

"They won't heed us if you continue to look that way, as if your only thought in life was the wish that the kettle would boil."

"It has just been filled; the servants never know!" the young girl exclaimed, with a little sigh.

"Do you know what your father said to me just now? That you did n't mean what you said a week ago."

"I don't mean everything I say. How can a young girl do that? But I mean what I say to you."

"He told me that you had forgotten me."

"Ah, no, I don't forget," said Pansy, showing her pretty teeth in a fixed smile.

"Then everything is just the same?"

"Ah no, it's not just the same. Papa has been very severe."

"What has he done to you?"

"He asked me what *you* had done to me, and I told him everything. Then he forbade me to marry you."

"You need n't mind that."

"Oh, yes, I must, indeed. I can't disobey papa."

"Not for one who loves you as I do, and whom you pretend to love?"

Pansy raised the lid of the tea-pot, gazing into this vessel for a moment; then she dropped six words into its aromatic depths: "I love you just as much."

"What good will that do me?"

"Ah," said Pansy, raising her sweet, vague eyes, "I don't know that."

"You disappoint me!" groaned poor Rosier.

Pansy was silent a moment; she handed a tea-cup to a servant.

"Please don't talk any more."

"Is this to be all my satisfaction?"

"Papa said I was not to talk with you."

"Do you sacrifice me like that? Ah, it's too much!"

"I wish you would wait a little," said the young girl, in a voice just distinct enough to betray a quaver.

"Of course I will wait if you will give me hope. But you take my life away."

"I will not give you up, — oh, no!" Pansy went on.

"He will try and make you marry some one else."

"I will never do that."

"What, then, are we to wait for?"

She hesitated a moment.

"I will speak to Mrs. Osmond, and she will help us." It was in this manner that she for the most part designated her step-mother.

"She won't help us much. She is afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Of your father, I suppose."

Pansy shook her little head.

"She is not afraid of any one! We must have patience."

"Ah, that's an awful word!" Rosier groaned; he was deeply disconcerted. Oblivious of the customs of good society, he dropped his head into his hands, and, supporting it with a melancholy grace, sat staring at the carpet. Presently he became aware of a good deal of movement about him, and when he looked up saw Pansy making a courtesy — it was still her little courtesy of the convent — to the English lord whom Mrs. Osmond had presented.

XXXVIII.

It probably will not be surprising to the reflective reader that Ralph Touch-

ett should have seen less of his cousin since her marriage than he had done before that event, — an event of which he took such a view as could hardly prove a confirmation of intimacy. He had uttered his thought, as we know, and after this he had held his peace, Isabel not having invited him to resume a discussion which marked an era in their relations. That discussion had made a difference, — the difference that he feared, rather than the one he hoped. It had not chilled the girl's zeal in carrying out her engagement, but it had come dangerously near to spoiling a friendship. No reference was ever again made between them to Ralph's opinion of Gilbert Osmond, and by surrounding this topic with a sacred silence they managed to preserve a semblance of reciprocal frankness. But there was a difference, as Ralph often said to himself, — there was a difference. She had not forgiven him, she never would forgive him; that was all he had gained. She thought she had forgiven him; she believed she did not care; and as she was both very generous and very proud these convictions represented a certain reality. But whether or no the event should justify him, he would virtually have done her a wrong, and the wrong was of the sort that women remember best. As Osmond's wife, she could never again be his friend. If in this character she should enjoy the felicity she expected, she would have nothing but contempt for the man who had attempted, in advance, to undermine a blessing so dear; and if, on the other hand, his warning should be justified, the vow she had taken that he should never know it would lay upon her spirit a burden that would make her hate him. Such had been, during the year that followed his cousin's marriage, Ralph's rather dismal previsions of the future; and if his meditations appear morbid, we must remember that he was not in the bloom of health. He consoled himself as he

might by behaving (as he deemed) beautifully, and was present at the ceremony by which Isabel was united to Mr. Osmond, and which was performed in Florence in the month of June. He learned from his mother that Isabel at first had thoughts of celebrating her nuptials in her native land, but that, as simplicity was what she chiefly desired to secure, she had finally decided, in spite of Osmond's professed willingness to make a journey of any length, that this characteristic would best be preserved by their being married by the nearest clergyman in the shortest time. The thing was done, therefore, at the little American chapel, on a very hot day, in the presence only of Mrs. Touchett and her son, of Pansy Osmond and the Countess Gemini. That severity in the proceedings of which I just spoke was in part the result of the absence of two persons who might have been looked for on the occasion, and who would have lent it a certain richness. Madame Merle had been invited, but Madame Merle, who was unable to leave Rome, sent a gracious letter of excuses. Henrietta Stackpole had not been invited, as her departure from America, announced to Isabel by Mr. Goodwood, was in fact frustrated by the duties of her profession; but she had sent a letter less gracious than Madame Merle's, intimating that had she been able to cross the Atlantic she would have been present not only as a witness, but as a critic. Her return to Europe took place somewhat later, and she effected a meeting with Isabel in the autumn, in Paris, when she indulged — perhaps a trifle too freely — her critical genius. Poor Osmond, who was chiefly the subject of it, protested so sharply that Henrietta was obliged to declare to Isabel that she had taken a step which erected a barrier between them. "It is not in the least that you have married, — it is that you have married *him*," she deemed it her duty to remark; agreeing, it will be

seen, much more with Ralph Touchett than she suspected, though she had few of his hesitations and compunctions. Henrietta's second visit to Europe, however, was not made in vain; for just at the moment when Osmond had declared to Isabel that he really must object to that newspaper woman, and Isabel had answered that it seemed to her he took Henrietta too hard, the good Mr. Bantling appeared upon the scene, and proposed that they should take a run down to Spain. Henrietta's letters from Spain proved to be the most picturesque she had yet published, and there was one in especial, dated from the Alhambra, and entitled *Moors and Moonlight*, which generally passed for her masterpiece. Isabel was secretly disappointed at her husband's not having been able to judge the poor girl more humorously. She even wondered whether his sense of humor were by chance defective. Of course she herself looked at the matter as a person whose present happiness had nothing to grudge to Henrietta's violated conscience. Osmond thought their alliance a kind of monstrosity; he could not imagine what they had in common. For him, Mr. Bantling's fellow-tourist was simply the most vulgar of women, and he also pronounced her the most abandoned. Against this latter clause of the verdict Isabel protested with an ardor which made him wonder afresh at the oddity of some of his wife's tastes. Isabel could explain it only by saying that she liked to know people who were as different as possible from herself. "Why, then, don't you make the acquaintance of your washerwoman?" Osmond had inquired; to which Isabel answered that she was afraid her washerwoman would not care for her. Now Henrietta cared so much.

Ralph saw nothing of her for the greater part of the two years that followed her marriage; the winter that formed the beginning of her residence in Rome he spent again at San Remo,

where he was joined in the spring by his mother, who afterwards went with him to England, to see what they were doing at the bank, — an operation she could not induce him to perform. Ralph had taken a lease of his house at San Remo, a small villa, which he occupied still another winter; but late in the month of April of this second year he came down to Rome. It was the first time since her marriage that he had stood face to face with Isabel; his desire to see her again was of the keenest. She had written to him from time to time, but her letters told him nothing that he wanted to know. He had asked his mother what she was making of her life, and his mother had simply answered that she supposed she was making the best of it. Mrs. Touchett had not the imagination that communes with the unseen, and she now pretended to no intimacy with her niece, whom she rarely encountered. This young woman appeared to be living in a sufficiently honorable way, but Mrs. Touchett still remained of the opinion that her marriage was a shabby affair. It gave her no pleasure to think of Isabel's establishment, which she was sure was a very lame business. From time to time, in Florence, she rubbed against the Countess Gemini, doing her best, always, to minimize the contact; and the countess reminded her of Osmond, who made her think of Isabel. The countess was less talked about in these days, but Mrs. Touchett augured no good of that; it only proved how she had been talked about before. There was a more direct suggestion of Isabel in the person of Madame Merle; but Madame Merle's relations with Mrs. Touchett had suffered a marked alteration. Isabel's aunt had told her, without circumlocution, that she had played too ingenious a part; and Madame Merle, who never quarreled with any one, who appeared to think no one worth it, and who had performed the miracle of living, more

or less, for several years with Mrs. Touchett without a symptom of irritation, — Madame Merle now took a very high tone, and declared that this was an accusation from which she could not stoop to defend herself. She added, however (without stooping), that her behavior had been only too simple; that she had believed only what she saw; that she saw that Isabel was not eager to marry, and that Osmond was not eager to please (his repeated visits were nothing; he was boring himself to death on his hill-top, and he came merely for amusement). Isabel had kept her sentiments to herself, and her journey to Greece and Egypt had effectually thrown dust in her companion's eyes. Madame Merle accepted the event, — she was unprepared to think of it as a scandal; but that she had played any part in it, double or single, was an imputation against which she proudly protested. It was doubtless in consequence of Mrs. Touchett's attitude, and of the injury it offered to habits consecrated by many charming seasons, that Madame Merle, after this, chose to pass many months in England, where her credit was quite unimpaired. Mrs. Touchett had done her a wrong; there are some things that can't be forgiven. But Madame Merle suffered in silence; there was always something exquisite in her dignity.

Ralph, as I say, had wished to see for himself; but while he was engaged in this pursuit he felt afresh what a fool he had been to put the girl on her guard. He had played the wrong card, and now he had lost the game. He should see nothing, he should learn nothing; for him she would always wear a mask. His true line would have been to profess delight in her marriage, so that later, when, as Ralph phrased it, the bottom should fall out of it, she might have the pleasure of saying to him that he had been a goose. He would gladly have consented to pass for a goose in order to know Isabel's real situation. But now she

neither taunted him with his fallacies, nor pretended that her own confidence was justified; if she wore a mask, it completely covered her face. There was something fixed and mechanical in the serenity painted upon it; this was not an expression, Ralph said, — it was an invention. She had lost her child; that was a sorrow, but it was a sorrow she scarcely spoke of; there was more to say about it than she could say to Ralph. It belonged to the past, moreover; it had occurred six months before, and she had already laid aside the tokens of mourning. She seemed to be leading the life of the world; Ralph heard her spoken of as having a "charming position." He observed that she produced the impression of being peculiarly enviable; that it was supposed, among many people, to be a privilege even to know her. Her house was not open to every one, and she had an evening in the week, to which people were not invited as a matter of course. She lived with a certain magnificence, but you needed to be a member of her circle to perceive it; for there was nothing to gape at, nothing to criticise, nothing even to admire, in the daily proceedings of Mr. and Mrs. Osmond. Ralph, in all this, recognized the hand of the master; for he knew that Isabel had no faculty for producing calculated impressions. She struck him as having a great love of movement, of gayety, of late hours, of long drives, of fatigue; an eagerness to be entertained, to be interested, even to be bored, to make acquaintances, to see people that were talked about, to explore the neighborhood of Rome, to enter into relation with certain of the mustiest relics of its old society.

In all this there was much less discrimination than in that desire for comprehensiveness of development on which he used to exercise his wit. There was a kind of violence in some of her impulses, of crudity in some of her proceedings, which took him by surprise;

it seemed to him that she even spoke faster, moved faster, than before her marriage. Certainly she had fallen into exaggerations, — she, who used to care so much for the pure truth; and whereas of old she had a great delight in good-humored argument, in intellectual play (she never looked so charming as when in the genial heat of discussion she received a crushing blow full in the face, and brushed it away as a feather), she appeared now to think there was nothing worth people's either differing about or agreeing upon. Of old she had been curious, and now she was indifferent; and yet, in spite of her indifference, her activity was greater than ever. Slender still, but lovelier than before, she had gained no great maturity of aspect; but there was a kind of amplitude and brilliancy in her personal arrangements which gave a touch of insolence to her beauty. Poor human-hearted Isabel, what perversity had bitten her? Her light step drew a mass of drapery behind it; her intelligent head sustained a majesty of ornament. The free, keen girl had suffered a marked mutation; what he saw was the fine lady, who was supposed to represent something. What did Isabel represent? Ralph asked himself; and he could answer only by saying that she represented Gilbert Osmond. Good heavens, what a function! he exclaimed. He was lost in wonder at the mystery of things. He recognized Osmond, as I say; he recognized him at every turn. He saw how he kept all things within limits; how he adjusted, regulated, animated, their manner of life. Osmond was in his element; at last he had material to work with. He always had an eye to effect; and his effects were elaborately studied. They were produced by no vulgar means, but the motive was as vulgar as the art was great. To surround his interior with a sort of invidious sanctity, to tantalize society with a sense of exclusion, to make people believe his house was different from every

other, to impart to the face that he presented to the world a cold originality, — this was the ingenious effort of the personage to whom Isabel had attributed a superior morality. “He works with superior material,” Ralph said to himself; “but it's rich abundance compared with his former resources.” Ralph was a clever man; but Ralph had never, to his own sense, been so clever as when he observed, *in petto*, that, under the guise of caring only for intrinsic values, Osmond lived exclusively for the world. Far from being its master, as he pretended to be, he was its very humble servant, and the degree of its attention was his only measure of success. He lived with his eye on it, from morning till night, and the world was so stupid it never suspected the trick. Everything he did was *pose*, — pose so deeply calculated that if one were not on the lookout one mistook it for impulse. Ralph had never met a man who lived so much in the world of calculation. His tastes, his studies, his accomplishments, his collections, were all for a purpose. His life on his hill-top at Florence had been a pose of years. His solitude, his ennui, his love for his daughter, his good manners, his bad manners, were so many features of a mental image constantly present to him as a model of impertinence and mystification. His ambition was not to please the world, but to please himself by exciting the world's curiosity, and then declining to satisfy it. It made him feel great to play the world a trick. The thing he had done in his life most directly to please himself was his marrying Isabel Archer; though in this case, indeed, the gullible world was in a manner embodied in poor Isabel, who had been mystified to the top of her bent. Ralph of course found a fitness in being consistent; he had embraced a creed, and as he had suffered for it he could not in honor forsake it. I give this little sketch of its articles for what they are worth. It was certain that he was very

skillful in fitting the facts to his theory, — even the fact that during the month he spent in Rome at this period Gilbert Osmond appeared to regard him not in the least as an enemy. For Mr. Osmond Ralph had not now that importance. It was not that he had the importance of a friend; it was rather that he had none at all. He was Isabel's cousin, and he was rather unpleasantly ill: it was on this basis that Osmond treated with him. He made the proper inquiries: asked about his health, about Mrs. Touchett, about his opinion of winter climates, whether he was comfortable at his hotel. He addressed him, on the few occasions of their meeting, not a word that was not necessary; but his manner had always the urbanity proper to conscious success in the presence of conscious failure. For all this, Ralph had, towards the end, an inward conviction that Osmond had made it uncomfortable for his wife that she should continue to receive her cousin. He was not jealous, — he had not that excuse; no one could be jealous of Ralph. But he made Isabel pay for her old-time kindness, of which so much was still left; and as Ralph had no idea of her paying too much, when his suspicion had become sharp he took himself off. In doing so he deprived Isabel of a very interesting occupation: she had been constantly wondering what fine principle kept him alive. She decided that it was his love of conversation; his conversation was better than ever. He had given up walking; he was no longer a humorous stroller. He sat all day in a chair, — almost any chair would do, — and was so dependent on what you would do for him that, had not his talk been highly contemplative, you might have thought he was blind. The reader already knows more about him than Isabel was ever to know, and the reader may therefore be given the key to the mystery. What kept Ralph alive was simply the fact that he had not yet seen enough of

his cousin; he was not yet satisfied. There was more to come; he could not make up his mind to lose that. He wished to see what she would make of her husband, — or what he would make of her. This was only the first act of the drama, and he was determined to sit out the performance. His determination held good; it kept him going some eighteen months more, till the time of his return to Rome with Lord Warburton. It gave him indeed such an air of intending to live indefinitely that Mrs. Touchett, though more accessible to confusions of thought in the matter of this strange, unremunerative — and unremunerated — son of hers than she had ever been before, had, as we have learned, not scrupled to embark for a distant land. If Ralph had been kept alive by suspense, it was with a good deal of the same emotion — the excitement of wondering in what state she should find him — that Isabel ascended to his apartment the day after Lord Warburton had notified her of his arrival in Rome.

She spent an hour with him; it was the first of several visits. Gilbert Osmond called on him punctually, and on Isabel sending a carriage for him Ralph came, more than once, to the Palazzo Roccanera.

A fortnight elapsed, at the end of which Ralph announced to Lord Warburton that he thought after all he would not go to Sicily. The two men had been dining together, after a day spent by the latter in ranging about the Campagna. They had left the table, and Warburton, before the chimney, was lighting a cigar, which he instantly removed from his lips.

"Won't go to Sicily? Where, then, will you go?"

"Well, I guess I won't go anywhere," said Ralph, from the sofa, in a tone of jocosity.

"Do you mean that you will return to England?"

"Oh, dear, no; I will stay in Rome."

"Rome won't do for you; it's not warm enough."

"It will have to do; I will make it do. See how well I have been."

Lord Warburton looked at him a while, puffing his cigar, as if he were trying to see it.

"You have been better than you were on the journey, certainly. I wonder how you lived through that. But I don't understand your condition. I recommend you to try Sicily."

"I can't try," said poor Ralph; "I can't move further. I can't face that journey. Fancy me between Scylla and Charybdis! I don't want to die in the Sicilian plains, — to be snatched away, like Proserpine in the same locality, to the Plutonian shades."

"What the deuce, then, did you come for?" his lordship inquired.

"Because the idea took me. I see it won't do. It really does n't matter where I am now. I've exhausted all remedies, I've swallowed all climates. As I'm here, I'll stay; I have n't got any cousins in Sicily."

"Your cousin is certainly an inducement. But what does the doctor say?"

"I have n't asked him, and I don't care a fig. If I die here Mrs. Osmond will bury me. But I shall not die here."

"I hope not." Lord Warburton continued to smoke reflectively. "Well, I must say," he resumed, "for myself I am very glad you don't go to Sicily. I had a horror of that journey."

"Ah, but for you it need n't have mattered. I had no idea of dragging you in my train."

"I certainly did n't mean to let you go alone."

"My dear Warburton, I never expected you to come further than this!" Ralph cried.

"I should have gone with you, and seen you settled," said Lord Warburton.

"You are a very good fellow. You are very kind."

"Then I should have come back here."

"And then you would have gone to England."

"No, no; I should have stayed."

"Well," said Ralph, "if that's what we are both up to, I don't see where Sicily comes in!"

His companion was silent; he sat staring at the fire. At last, looking up, —

"I say, tell me this!" he broke out. "Did you really mean to go to Sicily when we started?"

"Ah, vous m'en demandez trop! Let me put a question first. Did you come with me quite — platonically?"

"I don't know what you mean by that. I wanted to come abroad."

"I suspect we have each been playing our little game."

"Speak for yourself. I made no secret whatever of my wanting to be here a while."

"Yes, I remember you said you wished to see the minister for foreign affairs."

"I have seen him three times; he is very amusing."

"I think you have forgotten what you came for," said Ralph.

"Perhaps I have," his companion answered, rather gravely.

These two gentlemen were children of a race which is not distinguished by the absence of reserve, and they had traveled together from London to Rome without an allusion to matters that were uppermost in the mind of each. There was an old subject that they had once discussed, but it had lost its recognized place in their attention; and even after their arrival in Rome, where many things led back to it, they had kept the same half-diffident, half-confident silence.

"I recommend you to get the doctor's consent, all the same," Lord Warburton went on, abruptly, after an interval.

"The doctor's consent will spoil it; I never have it when I can help it!"

"What does Mrs. Osmond think?"

"I have not told her. She will probably say that Rome is too cold, and even offer to go with me to Catania. She is capable of that."

"In your place I should like it."

"Her husband won't like it."

"Ah, well, I can fancy that; though it seems to me you are not bound to mind it. It's his affair."

"I don't want to make any more trouble between them," said Ralph.

"Is there so much already?"

"There's complete preparation for it. Her going off with me would make the explosion. Osmond is n't fond of his wife's cousin."

"Then of course he would make a row. But won't he make a row if you stop here?"

"That's what I want to see. He made one the last time I was in Rome, and then I thought it my duty to go away. Now I think it's my duty to stop and defend her."

"My dear Touchett, your defensive powers" — Lord Warburton began, with a smile. But he saw something in his companion's face that checked him. "Your duty, in these premises, seems to me rather a nice question," he said.

Ralph for a while answered nothing.

"It is true that my defensive powers are small," he remarked at last; "but as my aggressive ones are still smaller, Osmond may, after all, not think me worth his gunpowder. At any rate," he added, "there are things I am curious to see."

"You are sacrificing your health to your curiosity, then?"

"I am not much interested in my health, and I am deeply interested in Mrs. Osmond."

"So am I. But not as I once was," Lord Warburton added quickly. This was one of the allusions he had not hitherto found occasion to make.

"Does she strike you as very hap-

py?" Ralph inquired, emboldened by this confidence.

"Well, I don't know; I have hardly thought. She told me the other night that she was happy."

"Ah, she told *you*, of course!" Ralph exclaimed, smiling.

"I don't know that. It seems to me I was rather the sort of person she might have complained to."

"Complain? She will never complain. She has done it, and she knows it. She will complain to you least of all. She is very careful."

"She need n't be. I don't mean to make love to her again."

"I am delighted to hear it; there can be no doubt at least of *your* duty!"

"Ah, no," said Lord Warburton, gravely, "none!"

"Permit me to ask," Ralph went on, "whether it is to bring out the fact that you don't mean to make love to her that you are so very civil to the little girl?"

Lord Warburton gave a slight start; he got up and stood before the fire, blushing a little.

"Does that strike you as very ridiculous?"

"Ridiculous? Not in the least, if you really like her."

"I think her a delightful little person. I don't know when a girl of that age has pleased me more."

"She's extremely pleasing. Ah, she at least is genuine."

"Of course there's the difference in our ages, — more than twenty years."

"My dear Warburton," said Ralph, "are you serious?"

"Perfectly serious, — as far as I've got."

"I'm very glad. And, Heaven help us!" cried Ralph, "how tickled Gilbert Osmond will be!"

His companion frowned.

"I say, don't spoil it. I shan't marry his daughter to please him."

"He will have the perversity to be pleased, all the same."

"He's not so fond of me as that," said his lordship.

"As that? My dear Warburton, the drawback of your position is that people need n't be fond of you at all to wish to be connected with you. Now, with me, in such a case, I should have the happy confidence that they loved me."

Lord Warburton seemed scarcely to be in the mood for doing justice to general axioms; he was thinking of a special case.

"Do you think she'll be pleased?"

"The girl herself? Delighted, surely."

"No, no; I mean Mrs. Osmond."

Ralph looked at him a moment.

"My dear fellow, what has she to do with it?"

"Whatever she chooses. She is very fond of the girl."

"Very true, — very true." And Ralph slowly got up. "It's an interesting question, — how far her fondness for the girl will carry her." He stood there a moment with his hands in his pockets, with a rather sombre eye. "I hope, you know, that you are very — very sure — The deuce!" he broke off, "I don't know how to say it."

"Yes, you do; you know how to say everything."

"Well, it's awkward. I hope you are sure that among Miss Osmond's merits her being a — so near her step-mother is n't a leading one."

"Good heavens, Touchett!" cried Lord Warburton, angrily. "For what do you take me?"

Henry James, Jr.

WHAT IS MYTHOLOGY?

WHAT is mythology? Let us look into our dictionaries. It is defined by Worcester as "a system of *fables*, or a treatise upon *fables*; the collective body of traditions of any heathen nation respecting its gods and other fabulous supernatural beings." And the same lexicographer defines a myth as "a work of *fiction*; a *fabulous* story; a *fable*; an *invention*; a *parable*; an *allegory*," — though the latter part of the definition is qualified by the much-needed remark that, while "the allegory is a reflective and artificial process, the myth springs up spontaneously and by a kind of inspiration." But in spite of this important qualification, the definition seems, on the whole, very defective. It describes well enough the vague popular use of words according to which the existence of a bogus mine or a falsely alleged Kuklux outrage is said to be a "myth," but it fails to exhibit the word under

that aspect which, to a mind trained in the study of mythology, seems most important, if not even most prominent, of all. This short-coming is associated with the absence of any specific reference to the original sense of the Greek *μῦθος*, of which our English word is the abbreviated form; and it is by glancing for a moment at this original sense that we shall best come to a preliminary understanding of what mythology is. The word *μῦθος* does not primarily mean an "invention," or a "work of fiction," or a "fabulous story;" it primarily means "anything said," a "word" or "speech" in the most general sense. In the Homeric poems it is very frequently used, both in this general way and more specially, to signify a talk or conversation, a debate, a promise, or even a speech delivered before an audience. In Homer's language it also means a tale or story, — that is, "what people say," —