

writing, composing, admiring, and despairing, until 1869, when he died, a martyr to his musical faith. In the later years of his life he revived a youthful passion for a lady who never knew that she had been the object of his boyish love until she had lived long enough to see her own children married. The two old people — Berlioz was more than sixty years of age, though he was still young in heart and in intellect — cor-

responded affectionately, and on the last page of his strange memoirs Berlioz congratulates himself on the happiness that he derives from the mere fact of this lady knowing that he adores her. "I must console myself for having known her too late as I console myself for not having known Virgil, whom I should have loved so much, or Glück, or Beethoven, . . . or Shakespeare, . . . who might perhaps have loved me."

*Theodore Child.*

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## THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY.

### LIII.

IT was not with surprise, it was with a feeling which in other circumstances would have had much of the effect of joy, that as Isabel descended from the Paris mail at Charing Cross she stepped into the arms, as it were, or at any rate into the hands, of Henrietta Stackpole. She had telegraphed to her friend from Turin, and although she had not definitely said to herself that Henrietta would meet her, she had felt that her telegram would produce some helpful result. On her long journey from Rome her mind had been given up to vagueness; she was unable to question the future. She performed this journey with sightless eyes, and took little pleasure in the countries she traversed, decked out though they were in the richest freshness of spring. Her thoughts followed their course through other countries, — strange-looking, dimly-lighted, pathless lands, in which there was no change of seasons, but only, as it seemed, a perpetual dreariness of winter. She had plenty to think about; but it was not reflection, nor conscious purpose, that filled her mind. Disconnected visions passed through it, and dull sudden gleams of memory, of expectation. The past

and the future alternated at their will, but she saw them only in fitful images, which came and went by a logic of their own. It was extraordinary, the things she remembered. Now that she was in the secret, now that she knew something that so much concerned her, and the eclipse of which had made life resemble an attempt to play whist with an imperfect pack of cards, the truth of things, their mutual relations, their meaning, and, for the most part, their horror rose before her with a kind of architectural vastness. She remembered a thousand trifles; they started to life with the spontaneity of a shiver. That is, she had thought them trifles at the time; now she saw that they were leaden-weighted. Yet even now they were trifles, after all; for of what use was it to her to understand them? Nothing seemed of use to her to-day. All purpose, all intention, was suspended; all desire, too, except the single desire to reach her richly constituted refuge. Gardencourt had been her starting-point, and to those muffled chambers it was at least a temporary seclusion to return. She had gone forth in her strength; she would come back in her weakness; and if the place had been a rest to her before, it would be a positive sanctuary

now. She envied Ralph his dying; for if one were thinking of rest, that was the most perfect of all. To cease utterly, to give it all up, and not know anything more, — this idea was as sweet as the vision of a cool bath, in a marble tank, in a darkened chamber, in a hot land. She had moments, indeed, in her journey from Rome, which were almost as good as being dead. She sat in her corner, so motionless, so passive, simply with the sense of being carried, so detached from hope and regret, that if her spirit was haunted with sudden pictures it might have been the spirit disembarassed of the flesh. There was nothing to regret now, — that was all over. Not only the time of her folly, but the time of her repentance, seemed far away. The only thing to regret was that Madame Merle had been so — so strange. Just here Isabel's imagination paused, from literal inability to say what it was that Madame Merle had been. Whatever it was, it was for Madame Merle herself to regret it; and doubtless she would do so in America, where she was going. It concerned Isabel no more; she only had an impression that she should never again see Madame Merle. This impression carried her into the future, of which from time to time she had a mutilated glimpse. She saw herself in the distant years, still in the attitude of a woman who had her life to live, and these intimations contradicted the spirit of the present hour. It might be desirable to die; but this privilege was evidently to be denied her. Deep in her soul — deeper than any appetite for renunciation — was the sense that life would be her business for a long time to come. And at moments there was something inspiring, almost exhilarating, in the conviction. It was a proof of strength, — it was a proof that she should some day be happy again. It could n't be that she was to live only to suffer; she was still young, after all, and a great many things might

happen to her yet. To live only to suffer, only to feel the injury of life repeated and enlarged, — it seemed to her that she was too valuable, too capable, for that. Then she wondered whether it were vain and stupid to think so well of herself. When had it ever been a guarantee to be valuable? Was not all history full of the destruction of precious things? Was it not much more probable that if one were delicate one would suffer? It involved, then, perhaps, an admission that one had a certain grossness; but Isabel recognized, as it passed before her eyes, the quick, vague shadow of a long future. She should not escape; she should last. Then the middle years wrapped her about again, and the gray curtain of her indifference closed her in.

Henrietta kissed her, as Henrietta usually kissed, as if she were afraid she should be caught doing it; and then Isabel stood there in the crowd looking about her, looking for her servant. She asked nothing; she wished to wait. She had a sudden perception that she should be helped. She was so glad Henrietta was there; there was something terrible in an arrival in London. The dusky, smoky, far-arching vault of the station, the strange, livid light, the dense, dark, pushing crowd, filled her with a nervous fear, and made her put her arm into her friend's. She remembered that she had once liked these things. They seemed part of a mighty spectacle, in which there was something that touched her. She remembered how she walked away from Euston, in the winter dusk, in the crowded streets, five years before. She could not have done that to-day, and the incident came before her as the deed of another person.

"It's too beautiful that you should have come," said Henrietta, looking at her as if she thought Isabel might be prepared to challenge the proposition. "If you had n't — if you had n't — well, I don't know," remarked Miss Stack-

pole, hinting ominously at her powers of disapproval.

Isabel looked about, without seeing her maid. Her eyes rested on another figure, however, which she felt that she had seen before; and in a moment she recognized the genial countenance of Mr. Bantling. He stood a little apart, and it was not in the power of the multitude that pressed about him to make him yield an inch of the ground he had taken, — that of abstracting himself, discreetly, while the two ladies performed their embraces.

"There's Mr. Bantling," said Isabel, gently, irrelevantly, scarcely caring much now whether she should find her maid or not.

"Oh yes, he goes everywhere with me. Come here, Mr. Bantling!" Henrietta exclaimed. Whereupon the gallant bachelor advanced with a smile, — a smile tempered, however, by the gravity of the occasion. "Is n't it lovely that she has come?" Henrietta asked. "He knows all about it," she added. "We had quite a discussion: he said you would n't; I said you would."

"I thought you always agreed," Isabel answered, smiling. She found she could smile now; she had seen in an instant, in Mr. Bantling's excellent eye, that he had good news for her. It seemed to say that he wished her to remember that he was an old friend of her cousin, — that he understood, — that it was all right. Isabel gave him her hand; she thought him so kind.

"Oh, I always agree," said Mr. Bantling. "But she does n't, you know."

"Did n't I tell you that a maid was a nuisance?" Henrietta inquired. "Your young lady has probably remained at Calais."

"I don't care," said Isabel, looking at Mr. Bantling, whom she had never thought so interesting.

"Stay with her while I go and see," Henrietta commanded, leaving the two for a moment together.

They stood there at first in silence, and then Mr. Bantling asked Isabel how it had been on the Channel.

"Very fine. No, I think it was rather rough," said Isabel, to her companion's obvious surprise. After which she added, "You have been to Gardencourt, I know."

"Now, how do you know that?"

"I can't tell you, except that you look like a person who has been there."

"Do you think I look sad? It's very sad there, you know."

"I don't believe you ever look sad. You look kind," said Isabel, with a frankness that cost her no effort. It seemed to her that she should never again feel a superficial embarrassment.

Poor Mr. Bantling, however, was still in this inferior stage. He blushed a good deal, and laughed, and assured her that he was often very blue, and that when he was blue he was awfully fierce.

"You can ask Miss Stackpole, you know," he said. "I was at Gardencourt two days ago."

"Did you see my cousin?"

"Only for a little. But he had been seeing people. Warburton was there the day before. Touchett was just the same as usual, except that he was in bed, and that he looked tremendously ill, and that he could n't speak," Mr. Bantling pursued. "He was immensely friendly, all the same. He was just as clever as ever. It's awfully sad."

Even in the crowded, noisy station this simple picture was vivid. "Was that late in the day?"

"Yes; I went on purpose; we thought you would like to know."

"I am very much obliged to you. Can I go down to-night?"

"Ah, I don't think *she* 'll let you go," said Mr. Bantling. "She wants you to stop with her. I made Touchett's man promise to telegraph me to-day, and I found the telegram an hour ago at my club. 'Quiet and easy,' — that's what

it says; and it's dated two o'clock. So you see you can wait till to-morrow. You must be very tired."

"Yes, I am very tired. And I thank you again."

"Oh," said Mr. Bantling, "we were certain you would like the last news;" while Isabel vaguely noted that after all he and Henrietta seemed to agree.

Miss Stackpole came back with Isabel's maid, whom she had caught in the act of proving her utility. This excellent person, instead of losing herself in the crowd, had simply attended to her mistress's luggage, so that now Isabel was at liberty to leave the station.

"You know you are not to think of going to the country to-night," Henrietta remarked to her. "It does n't matter whether there is a train or not. You are to come straight to me, in Wimpole Street. There is n't a corner to be had in London, but I have got you one all the same. It is n't a Roman palace, but it will do for a night."

"I will do whatever you wish," Isabel said.

"You will come and answer a few questions; that's what I wish."

"She does n't say anything about dinner, does she, Mrs. Osmond?" Mr. Bantling inquired jocosely.

Henrietta fixed him a moment with her speculative gaze. "I see you are in a great hurry to get to your own. You will be at the Paddington station to-morrow morning at ten."

"Don't come for my sake, Mr. Bantling," said Isabel.

"He will come for mine," Henrietta declared, as she ushered Isabel into a cab.

Later, in a large, dusky parlor in Wimpole Street, — to do her justice, there had been dinner enough, — she asked Isabel those questions to which she had alluded at the station.

"Did your husband make a scene about your coming?" That was Miss Stackpole's first inquiry.

"No; I can't say he made a scene."

"He did n't object, then?"

"Yes; he objected very much. But it was not what you would call a scene."

"What was it, then?"

"It was a very quiet conversation."

Henrietta for a moment contemplated her friend.

"It must have been awful," she then remarked. And Isabel did not deny that it had been awful. But she confined herself to answering Henrietta's questions, which was easy, as they were tolerably definite. For the present she offered her no new information. "Well," said Miss Stackpole at last, "I have only one criticism to make: I don't see why you promised little Miss Osmond to go back."

"I am not sure that I see myself, now," Isabel replied. "But I did then."

"If you have forgotten your reason, perhaps you won't return."

Isabel for a moment said nothing; then, "Perhaps I shall find another," she rejoined.

"You will certainly never find a good one."

"In default of a better, my having promised will do," Isabel suggested.

"Yes; that's why I hate it."

"Don't speak of it now. I have a little time. Coming away was hard; but going back will be harder still."

"You must remember, after all, that he won't make a scene!" said Henrietta, with much intention.

"He will, though," Isabel answered gravely. "It will not be the scene of a moment; it will be a scene that will last always."

For some minutes the two women sat gazing at this prospect; and then Miss Stackpole, to change the subject, as Isabel had requested, announced abruptly, "I have been to stay with Lady Pen-sil!"

"Ah, the letter came at last?"

"Yes; it took five years. But this time she wanted to see me."

"Naturally enough."

"It was more natural than I think you know," said Henrietta, fixing her eyes on a distant point. And then she added, turning suddenly, "Isabel Archer, I beg your pardon. You don't know why? Because I criticised you, and yet I have gone further than you. Mr. Osmond, at least, was born on the other side!"

It was a moment before Isabel perceived her meaning; it was so modestly, or at least so ingeniously, veiled. Isabel's mind was not possessed at present with the comicality of things; but she greeted with a quick laugh the image that her companion had raised. She immediately recovered herself, however, and with a gravity too pathetic to be real, "Henrietta Stackpole," she asked, "are you going to give up your country?"

"Yes, my poor Isabel, I am. I won't pretend to deny it; I look the fact in the face. I am going to marry Mr. Bantling, and I am going to reside in London."

"It seems very strange," said Isabel, smiling now.

"Well, yes, I suppose it does. I have come to it little by little. I think I know what I am doing; but I don't know that I can explain."

"One can't explain one's marriage," Isabel answered. "And yours does n't need to be explained. Mr. Bantling is very good."

Henrietta said nothing; she seemed lost in reflection.

"He has a beautiful nature," she remarked at last. "I have studied him for many years, and I see right through him. He's as clear as glass; there's no mystery about him. He is not intellectual, but he appreciates intellect. On the other hand, he does n't exaggerate its claims. I sometimes think we do in the United States."

"Ah," said Isabel, "you are changed indeed! It's the first time I have ever

heard you say anything against your native land."

"I only say that we are too intellectual: that, after all, is a glorious fault. But I *am* changed; a woman has to change a good deal to marry."

"I hope you will be very happy. You will at last, over here, see something of the inner life."

Henrietta gave a little significant sigh. "That's the key to the mystery, I believe. I could n't endure to be kept off. Now I have as good a right as any one!" she added, with artless elation.

Isabel was deeply diverted, but there was a certain melancholy in her view. Henrietta, after all, was human and feminine, — Henrietta, whom she had hitherto regarded as a light, keen flame, a disembodied voice. It was rather a disappointment to find that she had personal susceptibilities, that she was subject to common passions, and that her intimacy with Mr. Bantling had not been completely original. There was a want of originality in her marrying him, — there was even a kind of stupidity; and for a moment, to Isabel's sense, the dreariness of the world took on a deeper tinge. A little later, indeed, she reflected that Mr. Bantling, after all, was original. But she did n't see how Henrietta could give up her country. She herself had relaxed her hold of it, but it had never been her country as it had been Henrietta's. She presently asked her if she had enjoyed her visit to Lady Pensil.

"Oh yes," said Henrietta. "She did n't know what to make of me."

"And was that very enjoyable?"

"Very much so, because she is supposed to be very talented. She thinks she knows everything; but she does n't understand a lady correspondent! It would be so much easier for her if I were only a little better or a little worse. She's so puzzled. I believe she thinks it's my duty to go and do something immoral. She thinks it's

immoral that I should marry her brother; but, after all, that is n't immoral enough. And she will never understand, — never!"

"She is not so intelligent as her brother, then," said Isabel. "He appears to have understood."

"Oh no, he has n't!" cried Miss Stackpole, with decision. "I really believe that's what he wants to marry me for, — just to find out. It's a fixed idea, a kind of fascination."

"It's very good in you to humor it."

"Oh well," said Henrietta, "I have something to find out, too!" And Isabel saw that she had not renounced an allegiance, but planned an attack. She was at last about to grapple in earnest with England.

Isabel also perceived, however, on the morrow, at the Paddington station, where she found herself, at two o'clock, in the company both of Miss Stackpole and Mr. Bantling, that the gentleman bore his perplexities lightly. If he had not found out everything, he had found out at least the great point, — that Miss Stackpole would not be wanting in initiative. It was evident that in the selection of a wife he had been on his guard against this deficiency.

"Henrietta has told me, and I am very glad," Isabel said, as she gave him her hand.

"I dare say you think it's very odd," Mr. Bantling replied, resting on his neat umbrella.

"Yes, I think it's very odd."

"You can't think it's so odd as I do. But I have always rather liked striking out a line," said Mr. Bantling, serenely.

#### LIV.

Isabel's arrival at Gardencourt on this second occasion was even quieter than it had been on the first. Ralph Touchett kept but a small household, and to the new servants Mrs. Osmond

was a stranger; so that Isabel, instead of being conducted to her own apartment, was coldly shown into the drawing-room, and left to wait while her name was carried up to her aunt. She waited a long time; Mrs. Touchett appeared to be in no hurry to come to her. She grew impatient at last; she grew nervous and even frightened. The day was dark and cold; the dusk was thick in the corners of the low brown rooms. The house was perfectly still, — a stillness that Isabel remembered; it had filled all the place for days before the death of her uncle. She left the drawing-room and wandered about; strolled into the library and along the gallery of pictures, where, in the deep silence, her footstep made an echo. Nothing was changed; she recognized everything that she had seen years before; it might have been only yesterday that she stood there. She reflected that things change but little, while people change so much, and she became aware that she was walking about as her aunt had done on the day that she came to see her in Albany. She was changed enough since then; that had been the beginning. It suddenly struck her that if her aunt Lydia had not come that day, in just that way, and found her alone, everything might have been different. She might have had another life, and to-day she might have been a happier woman. She stopped in the gallery in front of a small picture, a beautiful and valuable Bonington, upon which her eyes rested for a long time. But she was not looking at the picture; she was wondering whether, if her aunt had not come that day in Albany, she would have married Caspar Goodwood.

Mrs. Touchett appeared at last, just after Isabel had returned to the big, uninhabited drawing-room. She looked a good deal older, but her eye was as bright as ever and her head as erect; her thin lips seemed a repository of latent meanings. She wore a little gray

dress, of the most undecorated fashion ; and Isabel wondered, as she had wondered the first time, whether her remarkable kinswoman resembled more a queen regent or the matron of a jail. Her lips felt very thin indeed as Isabel kissed her.

"I have kept you waiting because I have been sitting with Ralph," Mrs. Touchett said. "The nurse had gone to her lunch, and I had taken her place. He has a man who is supposed to look after him, but the man is good for nothing ; he is always looking out of the window, — as if there were anything to see ! I did n't wish to move, because Ralph seemed to be sleeping, and I was afraid the sound would disturb him. I waited till the nurse came back ; I remembered that you know the house."

"I find I know it better even than I thought ; I have been walking about," Isabel answered. And then she asked whether Ralph slept much.

"He lies with his eyes closed ; he does n't move. But I am not sure that it's always sleep."

"Will he see me ? Can he speak to me ?"

Mrs. Touchett hesitated a moment. "You can try him," she said. And then she offered to conduct Isabel to her room. "I thought they had taken you there ; but it's not my house, it's Ralph's, and I don't know what they do. They must at least have taken your luggage ; I don't suppose you have brought much. Not that I care, however. I believe they have given you the same room you had before ; when Ralph heard you were coming, he said you must have that one."

"Did he say anything else ?"

"Ah, my dear, he does n't chatter as he used !" cried Mrs. Touchett, as she preceded her niece up the staircase.

It was the same room, and something told Isabel that it had not been slept in since she occupied it. Her luggage was there, and it was not voluminous ; Mrs.

Touchett sat down a moment, with her eyes upon it.

"Is there really no hope ?" Isabel asked, standing before her aunt.

"None whatever. There never has been. It has not been a successful life."

"No ; it has only been a beautiful one." Isabel found herself already contradicting her aunt ; she was irritated by her dryness.

"I don't know what you mean by that ; there is no beauty without health. That is a very odd dress to travel in."

Isabel glanced at her garment. "I left Rome at an hour's notice ; I took the first that came."

"Your sisters, in America, wished to know how you dress. That seemed to be their principal interest. I was n't able to tell them ; but they seemed to have the right idea, — that you never wear anything less than black brocade."

"They think I am more brilliant than I am ; I am afraid to tell them the truth," said Isabel. "Lily wrote me that you had dined with her."

"She invited me four times, and I went once. After the second time she should have let me alone. The dinner was very good ; it must have been expensive. Her husband has a very bad manner. Did I enjoy my visit to America ? Why should I have enjoyed it ? I did n't go for my pleasure."

These were interesting items, but Mrs. Touchett soon left her niece, whom she was to meet in half an hour at the midday meal. At this repast the two ladies faced each other at an abbreviated table in the melancholy dining-room. Here, after a little, Isabel saw that her aunt was not so dry as she appeared, and her old pity for the poor woman's inexpressiveness, her want of regret, of disappointment, came back to her. It seemed to her she would find it a blessing to-day to be able to indulge a regret. She wondered whether Mrs. Touchett were not trying, whether she had not a desire for the recreation of

grief. On the other hand, perhaps she was afraid; if she began to regret, it might take her too far. Isabel could perceive, however, that it had come over her that she had missed something; that she saw herself in the future as an old woman without memories. Her little sharp face looked tragical. She told her niece that Ralph as yet had not moved, but that he probably would be able to see her before dinner. And then in a moment she added that he had seen Lord Warburton the day before; an announcement which startled Isabel a little, as it seemed an intimation that this personage was in the neighborhood, and that an accident might bring them together. Such an accident would not be happy; she had not come to England to converse with Lord Warburton. She presently said to her aunt that he had been very kind to Ralph; she had seen something of that in Rome.

"He has something else to think of now," Mrs. Touchett rejoined. And she paused, with a gaze like a gimlet.

Isabel saw that she meant something, and instantly guessed what she meant. But her reply concealed her guess; her heart beat faster, and she wished to gain a moment. "Ah, yes, — the House of Lords, and all that."

"He is not thinking of the lords; he is thinking of the ladies. At least he is thinking of one of them. He told Ralph he was engaged to be married."

"Ah, to be married!" Isabel gently exclaimed.

"Unless he breaks it off. He seemed to think Ralph would like to know. Poor Ralph can't go to the wedding, though I believe it is to take place very soon."

"And who is the young lady?"

"A member of the aristocracy; Lady Flora, Lady Felicia, — something of that sort."

"I am very glad," Isabel said. "It must be a sudden decision."

"Sudden enough, I believe; a court-

ship of three weeks. It has only just been made public."

"I am very glad," Isabel repeated, with a larger emphasis. She knew her aunt was watching her, — looking for the signs of some curious emotion; and the desire to prevent her companion from seeing anything of this kind enabled her to speak in the tone of quick satisfaction, — the tone, almost, of relief. Mrs. Touchett of course followed the tradition that ladies, even married ones, regard the marriage of their old lovers as an offense to themselves. Isabel's first care, therefore, was to show that, however that might be in general, she was not offended now. But meanwhile, as I say, her heart beat faster; and if she sat for some moments thoughtful — she presently forgót Mrs. Touchett's observation — it was not because she had lost an admirer. Her imagination had traversed half Europe; it halted panting, and even trembling a little, in the city of Rome. She figured herself announcing to her husband that Lord Warburton was to lead a bride to the altar, and she was of course not aware how extremely sad she looked while she made this intellectual effort. But at last she collected herself, and said to her aunt, "He was sure to do it some time or other."

Mrs. Touchett was silent; then she gave a sharp little shake of the head. "Ah, my dear, you're beyond me!" she cried, suddenly. They went on with their luncheon in silence; Isabel felt as if she had heard of Lord Warburton's death. She had known him only as a suitor, and now that was all over. He was dead for poor Pansy; by Pansy he might have lived. A servant had been hovering about; at last Mrs. Touchett requested him to leave them alone. She had finished her lunch; she sat with her hands folded on the edge of the table. "I should like to ask you three questions," she said to Isabel, when the servant had gone.



"Three are a great many."

"I can't do with less; I have been thinking. They are all very good ones."

"That's what I am afraid of. The best questions are the worst," Isabel answered. Mrs. Touchett had pushed back her chair, and Isabel left the table and walked, rather consciously, to one of the deep windows, while her aunt followed her with her eyes.

"Have you ever been sorry you did n't marry Lord Warburton?" Mrs. Touchett inquired.

Isabel shook her head slowly, smiling. "No, dear aunt."

"Good. I ought to tell you that I propose to believe what you say."

"Your believing me is an immense temptation," Isabel replied, smiling still.

"A temptation to lie? I don't recommend you to do that, for when I'm misinformed I'm as dangerous as a poisoned rat. I don't mean to crow over you."

"It is my husband that does n't get on with me," said Isabel.

"I could have told him that. I don't call that crowing over *you*," Mrs. Touchett added. "Do you still like Serena Merle?" she went on.

"Not as I once did. But it does n't matter, for she is going to America."

"To America? She must have done something very bad."

"Yes, — very bad."

"May I ask what it is?"

"She made a convenience of me."

"Ah," cried Mrs. Touchett, "so she did of me! She does of every one."

"She will make a convenience of America," said Isabel, smiling again, and glad that her aunt's questions were over.

It was not till evening that she was able to see Ralph. He had been dozing all day; at least he had been lying unconscious. The doctor was there, but after a while he went away, — the local doctor, who had attended his father, and whom Ralph liked. He came three or four times a day; he was deeply in-

terested in his patient. Ralph had had Sir Matthew Hope, but he had got tired of this celebrated man, to whom he had asked his mother to send word that he was now dead, and was therefore without further need of medical advice. Mrs. Touchett had simply written to Sir Matthew that her son disliked him. On the day of Isabel's arrival, Ralph gave no sign, as I have related, for many hours; but towards evening he raised himself, and said he knew that she had come. How he knew it was not apparent, inasmuch as, for fear of exciting him, no one had offered the information. Isabel came in and sat by his bed in the dim light; there was only a shaded candle in a corner of the room. She told the nurse that she might go; that she herself would sit with him for the rest of the evening. He had opened his eyes and recognized her, and had moved his hand, which lay very helpless beside him, so that she might take it. But he was unable to speak; he closed his eyes again, and remained perfectly still, only keeping her hand in his own. She sat with him a long time, — till the nurse came back; but he gave no further sign. He might have passed away while she looked at him; he was already the figure and pattern of death. She had thought him far gone in Rome, but this was worse; there was only one change possible now. There was a strange tranquillity in his face; it was as still as the lid of a box. With this, he was a mere lattice of bones; when he opened his eyes to greet her, it was as if she were looking into immeasurable space. It was not till midnight that the nurse came back; but the hours, to Isabel, had not seemed long; it was exactly what she had come for. If she had come simply to wait, she found ample occasion, for he lay for three days in a kind of grateful silence. He recognized her, and at moments he seemed to wish to speak; but he found no voice. Then he closed his eyes again, as if he

too were waiting for something, — for something that certainly would come. He was so absolutely quiet that it seemed to her what was coming had already arrived; and yet she never lost the sense that they were still together. But they were not always together; there were other hours that she passed in wandering through the empty house, and listening for a voice that was not poor Ralph's. She had a constant fear; she thought it possible her husband would write to her. But he remained silent, and she only got a letter, from Florence, from the Countess Gemini. Ralph, however, spoke at last, on the evening of the third day.

"I feel better to-night," he murmured, abruptly, in the soundless dimness of her vigil. "I think I can say something."

She sank upon her knees beside his pillow; took his thin hand in her own; begged him not to make an effort, — not to tire himself.

His face was of necessity serious, — it was incapable of the muscular play of a smile; but its owner apparently had not lost a perception of incongruities. "What does it matter if I am tired, when I have all eternity to rest?" he asked. "There is no harm in making an effort when it is the very last. Don't people always feel better just before the end? I have often heard of that; it's what I was waiting for. Ever since you have been here, I thought it would come. I tried two or three times; I was afraid you would get tired of sitting there." He spoke slowly, with painful breaks and long pauses; his voice seemed to come from a distance. When he ceased, he lay with his face turned to Isabel, and his large unwinking eyes open into her own. "It was very good of you to come," he went on. "I thought you would; but I was n't sure."

"I was not sure, either, till I came," said Isabel.

"You have been like an angel beside my bed. You know they talk of the angel of death. It's the most beautiful of all. You have been like that, — as if you were waiting for me."

"I was not waiting for your death; I was waiting for — for this. This is not death, dear Ralph."

"Not for you, — no. There is nothing makes us feel so much alive as to see others die. That's the sensation of life, — the sense that we remain. I have had it, — even I. But now I am of no use but to give it to others. With me it's all over." And then he paused. Isabel bowed her head further, till it rested on the two hands that were clasped upon his own. She could not see him now; but his far-away voice was close to her ear. "Isabel," he went on, suddenly, "I wish it were over for you." She answered nothing; she had burst into sobs; she remained so, with her buried face. He lay silent, listening to her sobs; at last he gave a long groan. "Ah, what is it you have done for me?"

"What is it you did for me?" she cried, her now extreme agitation half smothered by her attitude. She had lost all her shame, all wish to hide things. Now he might know. She wished him to know, for it brought them supremely together, and he was beyond the reach of pain. "You did something once, — you know it. Oh, Ralph, you have been everything! What have I done for you, — what can I do to-day? I would die if you could live. But I don't wish you to live; I would die myself, not to lose you." Her voice was as broken as his own, and full of tears and anguish.

"You won't lose me, — you will keep me. Keep me in your heart; I shall be nearer to you than I have ever been. Dear Isabel, life is better; for in life there is love. Death is good, but there is no love."

"I never thanked you; I never

spoke; I never was what I should be!" Isabel went on. She felt a passionate need to cry out and accuse herself, to let her sorrow possess her. All her troubles, for the moment, became single and melted together into this present pain. "What must you have thought of me? Yet how could I know? I never knew, and I only know to-day because there are people less stupid than I."

"Don't mind people," said Ralph. "I think I am glad to leave people."

She raised her head and her clasped hands; she seemed for a moment to pray to him.

"Is it true, — is it true?" she asked.

"True that you have been stupid? Oh, no," said Ralph, with a sensible intention of wit.

"That you made me rich, — that all I have is yours?"

He turned away his head, and for some time said nothing. Then, at last, —

"Ah, don't speak of that; that was not happy." Slowly he moved his face toward her again, and they once more saw each other. "But for that — but for that" — And he paused. "I believe I ruined you," he added softly.

She was full of the sense that he was beyond the reach of pain; he seemed already so little of this world. But even if she had not had it she would still have spoken, for nothing mattered now but the only knowledge that was not pure anguish, — the knowledge that they were looking at the truth together.

"He married me for my money," she said.

She wished to say everything; she was afraid he might die before she had done so.

He gazed at her a little, and for the first time his fixed eyes lowered their lids. But he raised them in a moment, and then, —

"He was greatly in love with you," he answered.

"Yes, he was in love with me. But he would not have married me if I had

been poor. I don't hurt you in saying that. How can I? I only want you to understand. I always tried to keep you from understanding; but that's all over."

"I always understood," said Ralph.

"I thought you did, and I didn't like it. But now I like it."

"You don't hurt me; you make me very happy." And as Ralph said this there was an extraordinary gladness in his voice. She bent her head again, and pressed her lips to the back of his hand. "I always understood," he continued, "though it was so strange, so pitiful. You wanted to look at life for yourself, but you were not allowed; you were punished for your wish. You were ground in the very mill of the conventional!"

"Oh, yes, I have been punished!" Isabel sobbed.

He listened to her a little, and then continued, —

"Was he very bad about your coming?"

"He made it very hard for me. But I don't care."

"It is all over, then, between you?"

"Oh, no; I don't think anything is over."

"Are you going back to him?" Ralph stammered.

"I don't know, — I can't tell. I shall stay here as long as I may. I don't want to think, — I need n't think. I don't care for anything but you, and that is enough for the present. It will last a little yet. Here on my knees, with you dying in my arms, I am happier than I have been for a long time. And I want you to be happy, — not to think of anything sad; only to feel that I am near you and I love you. Why should there be pain? In such hours as this what have we to do with pain? That is not the deepest thing; there is something deeper."

Ralph evidently found, from moment to moment, greater difficulty in speaking; he had to wait longer to collect

himself. At first ne appeared to make no response to these last words; he let a long time elapse. Then he murmured simply, —

“You must stay here.”

“I should like to stay, as long as seems right.”

“As seems right, — as seems right?” He repeated her words. “Yes, you think a great deal about that.”

“Of course one must. You are very tired,” said Isabel.

“I am very tired. You said just now that pain is not the deepest thing. No, — no. But it is very deep. If I could stay” —

“For me you will always be here,” she softly interrupted. It was easy to interrupt him.

But he went on, after a moment: —

“It passes, after all; it’s passing now. But love remains. I don’t know why we should suffer so much. Perhaps I shall find out. There are many things in life; you are very young.”

“I feel very old,” said Isabel.

“You will grow young again. That’s how I see you. I don’t believe — I don’t believe” — And he stopped again; his strength failed him.

She begged him to be quiet now. “We need n’t speak, to understand each other,” she said.

“I don’t believe that such a generous mistake as yours — can hurt you for more than a little.”

“Oh, Ralph, I am very happy now!” she cried, through her tears.

“And remember this,” he continued: “that if you have been hated, you have also been loved.”

“Ah, my brother!” she cried, with a movement of still deeper prostration.

#### LV.

He had told her, the first evening she ever spent at Gardencourt, that if she should live to suffer enough she might

some day see the ghost with which the old house was duly provided. She apparently had fulfilled the necessary condition; for the next morning, in the cold, faint dawn, she knew that a spirit was standing by her bed. She had lain down without undressing, for it was her belief that Ralph would not outlast the night. She had no inclination to sleep; she was waiting, and such waiting was wakeful. But she closed her eyes; she believed that as the night wore on she should hear a knock at her door. She heard no knock, but at the time the darkness began vaguely to grow gray she started up from her pillow as abruptly as if she had received a summons. It seemed to her for an instant that Ralph was standing there, — a dim, hovering figure in the dimness of the room. She stared a moment: she saw his white face, his kind eyes; then she saw there was nothing. She was not afraid; she was only sure. She went out of her room, and in her certainty passed along dark corridors and down a flight of oaken steps that shone in the vague light of a hall window. Outside of Ralph’s door she stopped a moment, listening; but she seemed to hear only the hush that filled it. She opened the door with a hand as gentle as if she were lifting a veil from the face of the dead, and saw Mrs. Touchett sitting motionless and upright beside the couch of her son, with one of his hands in her own. The doctor was on the other side, with poor Ralph’s further wrist resting in his professional fingers. The nurse was at the foot, between them. Mrs. Touchett took no notice of Isabel, but the doctor looked at her very hard; then he gently placed Ralph’s hand in a proper position, close beside him. The nurse looked at her very hard, too, and no one said a word; but Isabel only looked at what she had come to see. It was fairer than Ralph had ever been in life, and there was a strange resemblance to the face of his father, which, six years before,

she had seen lying on the same pillow. She went to her aunt and put her arm round her; and Mrs. Touchett, who as a general thing neither invited nor enjoyed caresses, submitted for a moment to this one, rising, as it were, to take it. But she was stiff and dry-eyed; her acute white face was terrible.

"Poor aunt Lydia!" Isabel murmured.

"Go and thank God you have no child," said Mrs. Touchett, disengaging herself.

Three days after this a considerable number of people found time, in the height of the London "season," to take a morning train down to a quiet station in Berkshire, and spend half an hour in a small gray church, which stood within an easy walk. It was in the green burial-place of this edifice that Mrs. Touchett consigned her son to earth. She stood herself at the edge of the grave, and Isabel stood beside her; the sexton himself had not a more practical interest in the scene than Mrs. Touchett. It was a solemn occasion, but it was not a disagreeable one; there was a certain geniality in the appearance of things. The weather had changed to fair; the day, one of the last of the treacherous May-time, was warm and windless, and the air had the brightness of the hawthorn and the blackbird. If it was sad to think of poor Touchett, it was not too sad, since death, for him, had had no violence. He had been dying so long; he was so ready; everything had been so expected and prepared. There were tears in Isabel's eyes, but they were not tears that blinded. She looked through them at the beauty of the day, the splendor of nature, the sweetness of the old English church-yard, the bowed heads of good friends. Lord Warburton was there, and a group of gentlemen unknown to Isabel, several of whom, as she afterwards learned, were connected with the bank; and there were others whom she knew. Miss Stackpole was

among the first, with honest Mr. Bantling beside her; and Caspar Goodwood, lifting his head higher than the rest, bowing it rather less. During much of the time Isabel was conscious of Mr. Goodwood's gaze; he looked at her somewhat harder than he usually looked in public, while the others had fixed their eyes upon the church-yard turf. But she never let him see that she saw him; she thought of him only to wonder that he was still in England. She found that she had taken for granted that, after accompanying Ralph to Gardencourt, he had gone away; she remembered that it was not a country that pleased him. He was there, however, — very distinctly there; and something in his attitude seemed to say that he was there with a complex intention. She would not meet his eyes, though there was doubtless sympathy in them; he made her rather uneasy. With the dispersal of the little group he disappeared, and the only person who came to speak to her — though several spoke to Mrs. Touchett — was Henrietta Stackpole. Henrietta had been crying.

Ralph had said to Isabel that he hoped she would remain at Gardencourt, and she made no immediate motion to leave the place. She said to herself that it was but common charity to stay a little with her aunt. It was fortunate she had so good a formula; otherwise she might have been greatly in want of one. Her errand was over; she had done what she left her husband for. She had a husband in a foreign city, counting the hours of her absence; in such a case one needed an excellent motive. He was not one of the best husbands; but that did n't alter the case. Certain obligations were involved in the very fact of marriage, and were quite independent of the quantity of enjoyment extracted from it. Isabel thought of her husband as little as might be; but now that she was at a distance, beyond its spell, she thought with a kind

of spiritual shudder of Rome. There was a deadly sadness in the thought, and she drew back into the deepest shade of Gardencourt. She lived from day to day, postponing, closing her eyes, trying not to think. She knew she must decide, but she decided nothing; her coming itself had not been a decision. On that occasion she had simply started. Osmond gave no sound, and now, evidently, he would give none; he would leave it all to her. From Pansy she heard nothing, but that was very simple: her father had told her not to write.

Mrs. Touchett accepted Isabel's company, but offered her no assistance; she appeared to be absorbed in considering, without enthusiasm, but with perfect lucidity, the new conveniences of her own situation. Mrs. Touchett was not an optimist, but even from painful occurrences she managed to extract a certain satisfaction. This consisted in the reflection that, after all, such things happened to other people, and not to herself. Death was disagreeable, but in this case it was her son's death, not her own; she had never flattered herself that her own would be disagreeable to any one but Mrs. Touchett. She was better off than poor Ralph, who had left all the commodities of life behind him, and indeed all the security; for the worst of dying was, to Mrs. Touchett's mind, that it exposed one to be taken advantage of. For herself, she was on the spot; there was nothing so good as that. She made known to Isabel very punctually — it was the evening her son was buried — several of Ralph's testamentary arrangements. He had told her everything, had consulted her about everything. He left her no money; of course she had no need of money. He left her the furniture of Gardencourt, exclusive of the pictures and books, and the use of the place for a year; after which it was to be sold. The money produced by the sale was to constitute an endowment for a hospital for poor persons

suffering from the malady of which he died; and of this portion of the will Lord Warburton was appointed executor. The rest of his property, which was to be withdrawn from the bank, was disposed of in various bequests, several of them to those cousins in Vermont to whom his father had already been so bountiful. Then there were a number of small legacies.

"Some of them are extremely peculiar," said Mrs. Touchett; "he has left considerable sums to persons I never heard of. He gave me a list, and I asked then who some of them were; and he told me they were people who at various times had seemed to like him. Apparently, he thought you did n't like him, for he has not left you a penny. It was his opinion that you were handsomely treated by his father, which I am bound to say I think you were, — though I don't mean that I ever heard him complain of it. The pictures are to be dispersed; he has distributed them about, one by one, as little keepsakes. The most valuable of the collection goes to Lord Warburton. And what do you think he has done with his library? It sounds like a practical joke. He has left it to your friend, Miss Stackpole, 'in recognition of her services to literature.' Does he mean her following him up from Rome? Was that a service to literature? It contains a great many rare and valuable books, and, as she can't carry it about the world in her trunk, he recommends her to sell it at auction. She will sell it, of course, at Christie's, and with the proceeds she will set up a newspaper. Will that be a service to literature?"

This question Isabel forbore to answer, as it exceeded the little interrogatory to which she had deemed it necessary to submit on her arrival. Besides, she had never been less interested in literature than to-day, as she found when she occasionally took down from the shelf one of the rare and valuable

volumes of which Mrs. Touchett had spoken. She was quite unable to read; her attention had never been so little at her command. One afternoon, in the library, about a week after the ceremony in the church-yard, she was trying to fix it a little; but often wandered from the book she had in her hand to the open window, which looked down the long avenue. It was in this way that she saw a modest vehicle approach the door, and perceived Lord Warburton sitting, in rather an uncomfortable attitude, in a corner of it. He had always had a high standard of courtesy, and it was therefore not remarkable, under the circumstances, that he should have taken the trouble to come down from London to call upon Mrs. Touchett. It was of course Mrs. Touchett that he had come to see, and not Mrs. Osmond; and to prove to herself the validity of this theory, Isabel presently stepped out of the house and wandered away into the park. Since her arrival at Gardencourt she had been but little out-of-doors, the weather being unfavorable for visiting the grounds. This afternoon, however, was fine, and at first it struck her as a happy thought to have come out. The theory I have just mentioned was plausible enough, but it brought her little rest; and if you had seen her pacing about you would have said she had a bad conscience. She was not pacified when, at the end of a quarter of an hour, finding herself in view of the house, she saw Mrs. Touchett emerge from the portico, accompanied by her visitor. Her aunt had evidently proposed to Lord Warburton that they should come in search of her. She was in no humor for visitors, and if she had had time she would have drawn back behind one of the great trees. But she saw that she had been seen, and that nothing was left her but to advance. As the lawn at Gardencourt was a vast expanse, this took some time; during which she observed that, as he walked beside

his hostess, Lord Warburton kept his hands rather stiffly behind him and his eyes upon the ground. Both persons, apparently, were silent; but Mrs. Touchett's thin little glance, as she directed it toward Isabel, had even at a distance an expression. It seemed to say with cutting sharpness, "Here is the eminently amenable nobleman whom you might have married." When Lord Warburton lifted his own eyes, however, that was not what they said. They only said, "This is rather awkward, you know, and I depend upon you to help me." He was very grave, very proper, and for the first time since Isabel had known him he greeted her without a smile. Even in his days of distress he had always begun with a smile. He looked extremely self-conscious.

"Lord Warburton has been so good as to come out to see me," said Mrs. Touchett. "He tells me he did n't know you were still here. I know he's an old friend of yours, and as I was told you were not in the house I brought him out to see for himself."

"Oh, I saw there was a good train at 6.40, that would get me back in time for dinner," Mrs. Touchett's companion explained, rather irrelevantly. "I am so glad to find you have not gone."

"I am not here for long, you know," Isabel said, with a certain eagerness.

"I suppose not; but I hope it's for some weeks. You came to England sooner than — a — than you thought?"

"Yes, I came very suddenly."

Mrs. Touchett turned away, as if she were looking at the condition of the grounds, which indeed was not what it should be, while Lord Warburton hesitated a little. Isabel fancied he had been on the point of asking about her husband, rather confusedly, and then had checked himself. He continued immitigably grave, either because he thought it becoming in a place over which death had just passed, or for more personal reasons. If he was con-

scious of personal reasons, it was very fortunate that he had the cover of the former motive; he could make the most of that. Isabel thought of all this. It was not that his face was sad, for that was another matter; but it was strangely inexpressive.

"My sisters would have been so glad to come if they had known you were still here,—if they had thought you would see them," Lord Warburton went on. "Do kindly let them see you before you leave England."

"It would give me great pleasure; I have such a friendly recollection of them."

"I don't know whether you would come to Lockleigh for a day or two? You know there is always that old promise." And his lordship blushed a little as he made this suggestion, which gave his face a somewhat more familiar air. "Perhaps I'm not right in saying that just now; of course you are not thinking of visiting. But I meant what would hardly be a visit. My sisters are to be at Lockleigh at Whitsuntide for three days; and if you could come then—as you say you are not to be very long in England—I would see that there should be literally no one else."

Isabel wondered whether not even the young lady he was to marry would be there, with her mamma; but she did not express this idea. "Thank you extremely," she contented herself with saying; "I'm afraid I hardly know about Whitsuntide."

"But I have your promise, have n't I, for some other time?"

There was an interrogation in this; but Isabel let it pass. She looked at her interlocutor a moment, and the result of her observation was that, as had happened before, she felt sorry for him. "Take care you don't miss your train," she said. And then she added, "I wish you every happiness."

He blushed again, more than before, and he looked at his watch.

"Ah, yes, 6.40; I have n't much time, but I have a fly at the door. Thank you very much." It was not apparent whether the thanks applied to her having reminded him of his train, or to the more sentimental remark. "Good-by, Mrs. Osmond; good-by." He shook hands with her, without meeting her eye; and then he turned to Mrs. Touchett, who had wandered back to them. With her his parting was equally brief; and in a moment the two ladies saw him move with long steps across the lawn.

"Are you very sure he is to be married?" Isabel asked of her aunt.

"I can't be surer than he; but he seems sure. I congratulated him, and he accepted it."

"Ah," said Isabel, "I give it up!" while her aunt returned to the house, and to those avocations which the visitor had interrupted.

She gave it up, but she still thought of it,—thought of it while she strolled again under the great oaks whose shadows were long upon the acres of turf. At the end of a few minutes she found herself near a rustic bench, which, a moment after she had looked at it, struck her as an object recognized. It was not simply that she had seen it before, nor even that she had sat upon it; it was that in this spot something important had happened to her,—that the place had an air of association. Then she remembered that she had been sitting there six years before, when a servant brought her from the house the letter in which Caspar Goodwood informed her that he had followed her to Europe; and that, when she had read that letter, she looked up to hear Lord Warburton announcing that he should like to marry her. It was indeed an historical, an interesting bench; she stood and looked at it, as if it might have something to say to her. She would not sit down on it now; she felt rather afraid of it. She only stood before it, and while she



stood the past came back to her in one of those rushing waves of emotion by which people of sensibility are visited at odd hours. The effect of this agitation was a sudden sense of being very tired, under the influence of which she overcame her scruples and sank into the rustic seat. I have said that she was restless and unable to occupy herself; and whether or no, if you had seen her there, you would have admitted the justice of the former epithet, you would at least have allowed that at this moment she was the image of a victim of idleness. Her attitude had a singular absence of purpose; her hands, hanging at her sides, lost themselves in the folds of her black dress. Her eyes gazed vaguely before her. There was nothing to recall her to the house; the two ladies, in their seclusion, dined early, and had tea at an indefinite hour. How long she had sat in this position she could not have told you; but the twilight had grown thick when she became aware that she was not alone. She quickly straightened herself, glancing about, and then saw what had become of her solitude. She was sharing it with Caspar Goodwood, who stood looking at her, a few feet off, and whose footfall, on the unresonant turf, as he came near, she had not heard. It occurred to her, in the midst of this, that it was just so Lord Warburton had surprised her of old.

She instantly rose, and as soon as Goodwood saw that he was seen he started forward. She had had time only to rise, when, with a motion that looked like violence, but felt like she knew not what, he grasped her by the wrist, and made her sink again into the seat. She closed her eyes; he had not hurt her; it was only a touch that she had obeyed. But there was something in his face that she wished not to see. That was the way he had looked at her the other day in the church-yard; only to-day it was worse. He said nothing

at first; she only felt him close to her. It almost seemed to her that no one had ever been so close to her as that. All this, however, took but a moment, at the end of which she had disengaged her wrist, turning her eyes upon her visitant.

"You have frightened me," she said. "I did n't mean to," he answered; "but if I did, a little, no matter. I came from London a while ago by the train, but I could n't come here directly. There was a man at the station who got ahead of me. He took a fly that was there, and I heard him give the order to drive here. I don't know who he was, but I did n't want to come with him; I wanted to see you alone. So I have been waiting and walking about. I have walked all over, and I was just coming to the house, when I saw you here. There was a keeper, or some one, who met me; but that was all right, because I had made his acquaintance when I came here with your cousin. Is that gentleman gone? Are you really alone? I want to speak to you." Goodwood spoke very fast; he was as excited as when they parted in Rome. Isabel had hoped that condition would subside; and she shrank into herself as she perceived that, on the contrary, he had only let out sail. She had a new sensation; he had never produced it before; it was a feeling of danger. There was indeed something awful in his persistency. Isabel gazed straight before her; he, with a hand on each knee, leaned forward, looking deeply into her face. The twilight seemed to darken around them. "I want to speak to you," he repeated; "I have something particular to say. I don't want to trouble you, as I did the other day, in Rome. That was no use; it only distressed you. I could n't help it; I knew I was wrong. But I am not wrong now; please don't think I am," he went on, with his hard, deep voice melting a moment into entreaty. "I came here to-

day for a purpose; it's very different. It was no use for me to speak to you then; but now I can help you."

She could not have told you whether it was because she was afraid, or because such a voice in the darkness seemed of necessity a boon, but she listened to him as she had never listened before; his words dropped deep into her soul. They produced a sort of stillness in all her being; and it was with an effort, in a moment, that she answered him.

"How can you help me?" she asked, in a low tone, as if she were taking what he had said seriously enough to make the inquiry in confidence.

"By inducing you to trust me. Now I know, — to-day I know. Do you remember what I asked you in Rome? Then I was quite in the dark. But to-day I know on good authority; everything is clear to me to-day. It was a good thing when you made me come away with your cousin. He was a good fellow, — he was a noble fellow; he told me how the case stands. He explained everything; he guessed what I thought of you. He was a member of your family, and he left you, so long as you should be in England, to my care," said Goodwood, as if he were making a great point. "Do you know what he said to me the last time I saw him, as he lay there where he died? He said, 'Do everything you can for her; do everything she will let you.'"

Isabel suddenly got up.

"You had no business to talk about me!"

"Why not, — why not, when we talked in that way?" he demanded, following her fast. "And he was dying; when a man's dying it's different." She checked the movement she had made to leave him; she was listening more than ever; it was true that he was not the same as that last time. That had been aimless, fruitless passion; but at present he had an idea. Isabel scented his

idea in all her being. "But it does n't matter!" he exclaimed, pressing her close, though now without touching a hem of her garment. "If Touchett had never opened his mouth, I should have known, all the same. I had only to look at you at your cousin's funeral to see what's the matter with you. You can't deceive me any more; for God's sake, be honest with a man who is so honest with you! You are the most unhappy of women, and your husband's a devil!"

She turned on him as if he had struck her.

"Are you mad?" she cried.

"I have never been so sane; I see the whole thing. Don't think it's necessary to defend him. But I won't say another word against him; I will speak only of you," Goodwood added, quickly. "How can you pretend you are not heart-broken? You don't know what to do; you don't know where to turn. It's too late to play a part; didn't you leave all that behind you in Rome? Touchett knew all about it, and I knew it too, — what it would cost you to come here. It will cost you your life! When I know that, how can I keep myself from wishing to save you? What would you think of me if I should stand still and see you go back to your reward? 'It's awful, what she'll have to pay for it!' — that's what Touchett said to me. I may tell you that, may n't I? He was such a near relation!" cried Goodwood, making his point again. "I would sooner have been shot than let another man say those things to me; but he was different; he seemed to me to have the right. It was after he got home, when he saw he was dying, and when I saw it too. I understand all about it: you are afraid to go back. You are perfectly alone; you don't know where to turn. Now it is that I want you to think of me."

"To think of you?" Isabel said, standing before him in the dusk. The

idea of which she had caught a glimpse a few moments before now loomed large. She threw back her head a little; she stared at it as if it had been a comet in the sky.

"You don't know where to turn. Turn to me! I want to persuade you to trust me," Goodwood repeated. And then he paused a moment, with his shining eyes. "Why should you go back? Why should you go through that ghastly form?"

"To get away from you!" she answered. But this expressed only a little of what she felt. The rest was that she had never been loved before. It wrapped her about; it lifted her off her feet.

At first, in rejoinder to what she had said, it seemed to her that he would break out into greater violence. But after an instant he was perfectly quiet; he wished to prove that he was sane, that he had reasoned it all out. "I wish to prevent that, and I think I may, if you will only listen to me. It's too monstrous to think of sinking back into that misery. It's you that are out of your mind. Trust me as if I had the care of you. Why should n't we be happy, when it's here before us, when it's so easy? I am yours forever, — forever and ever. Here I stand; I'm as firm as a rock. What have you to care about? You have no children; that perhaps would be an obstacle. As it is, you have nothing to consider. You must save what you can of your life; you must n't lose it all simply because you have lost a part. It would be an insult to you to assume that you care for the look of the thing, for what people will say, for the bottomless idiocy of the world! We have nothing to do with all that; we are quite out of it; we look at things as they are. You took the great step in coming away; the next is nothing; it's the natural one. I swear, as I stand here, that a woman deliberately made to suffer is

justified in anything in life, — in going down into the streets, if that will help her! I know how you suffer, and that's why I am here. We can do absolutely as we please; to whom under the sun do we owe anything? What is it that holds us? What is it that has the smallest right to interfere in such a question as this? Such a question is between ourselves, — and to say that is to settle it! Were we born to rot in our misery? Were we born to be afraid? I never knew *you* afraid! If you only trust me, how little you will be disappointed! The world is all before us, and the world is very large. I know something about that."

Isabel gave a long murmur, like a creature in pain; it was as if he were pressing something that hurt her. "The world is very small," she said, at random; she had an immense desire to appear to resist. She said it at random, to hear herself say something; but it was not what she meant. The world, in truth, had never seemed so large; it seemed to open out, all round her, — to take the form of a mighty sea, where she floated in fathomless waters. She had wanted help, and here was help; it had come in a rushing torrent. I know not whether she believed everything that he said; but she believed that to let him take her in his arms would be the next best thing to dying. This belief, for a moment, was a kind of rapture, in which she felt herself sinking and sinking. In the movement she seemed to beat with her feet, in order to catch herself, to feel something to rest on.

"Ah, be mine, as I am yours!" she heard her companion cry. He had suddenly given up argument, and his voice seemed to come through a confusion of sound.

This, however, of course, was but a subjective fact, as the metaphysicians say; the confusion, the noise of waters, and all the rest of it were in her own

head. In an instant she became aware of this. "Do me the greatest kindness of all," she said. "I beseech you to go away!"

"Ah, don't say that! Don't kill me!" he cried.

She clasped her hands; her eyes were streaming with tears.

"As you love me, as you pity me, leave me alone!"

He glared at her a moment through the dusk, and the next instant she felt his arms about her, and his lips on her own lips. His kiss was like a flash of lightning; when it was dark again she was free. She never looked about her; she only darted away from the spot. There were lights in the windows of the house; they shone far across the lawn. In an extraordinarily short time — for the distance was considerable — she had moved through the darkness (for she saw nothing) and reached the door. Here only she paused. She looked all about her; she listened a little; then she put her hand on the latch. She had not known where to turn; but she knew now. There was a very straight path.

Two days afterwards, Caspar Goodwood knocked at the door of the house in Wimpole Street in which Henrietta Stackpole occupied furnished lodgings. He had hardly removed his hand from the knocker when the door was opened,

and Miss Stackpole herself stood before him. She had on her bonnet and jacket; she was on the point of going out.

"Oh, good morning," he said. "I was in hope I should find Mrs. Osmond."

Henrietta kept him waiting a moment for her reply; but there was a good deal of expression about Miss Stackpole even when she was silent.

"Pray, what led you to suppose she was here?"

"I went down to Gardencourt this morning, and the servant told me she had come to London. He believed she was to come to you."

Again Miss Stackpole held him, with an intention of perfect kindness, in suspense.

"She came here yesterday, and spent the night. But this morning she started for Rome."

Caspar Goodwood was not looking at her; his eyes were fastened on the door-step.

"Oh, she started" — he stammered. And, without finishing his phrase, or looking up, he turned away.

Henrietta had come out, closing the door behind her, and now she put out her hand and grasped his arm.

"Look here, Mr. Goodwood," she said; "just you wait!"

On which he looked up at her.

*Henry James, Jr.*

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### THE PARTING OF THE WAYS.

SAY not the eaglet never loved the nest,  
 Because, full-fledged, he cannot choose but know  
 True life is aspiration, and not rest.  
 With haunting eyes reproachful, to and fro  
 In my soul's sight forever come and go  
 The forms of those who loved me first and best.  
 Reproach me not! I could not love you so,  
 Were life not spent in Truth's eternal quest.