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DIARY OF A MAN OF FIFTY
AND
A BUNDLE OF LETTERS

BY
HENRY JAMES, JR.
AUTHOR OF
"DAISY MILLER" "AN INTERNATIONAL EPISODE" ETC.



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THE DIARY OF A MAN OF FIFTY

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text of my own young romance; the thing has been lying before me to-day as a clear, fresh page. There have been moments during the last ten years when I have felt so portentously old, so fagged and finished, that I should have taken as a very bad joke any intimation that this present sense of juvenility was still in store for me. It won't last, at any rate; so I had better make the best of it. But I confess it surprises me. I have led too serious a life; but that, perhaps, after all, preserves one's youth. At all events, I have travelled too far, I have worked too hard, I have lived in brutal climates, and associated with tiresome people. When a man has reached his fifty-second year without being, materially, the worse for wear—when he has fair health, a fair fortune, a tidy conscience, and a complete exemption from embarrassing relatives—I suppose he is bound, in delicacy, to write himself happy. But I confess I shirk this obligation. I have not been miserable; I won't go so far as to say that, or at least as to write it. But happiness—positive happiness—would have been something different. I don't know that it would have been better, by all measurements—that it would have left me better off at the present time.

But it certainly would have made this difference—that I should not have been reduced, in pursuit of pleasant images, to disinter a buried episode of more than a quarter of a century ago. I should have found entertainment more—what shall I call it?—more contemporaneous. I should have had a wife and children, and I should not be in the way of making, as the French say, infidelities to the present. Of course it's a great gain to have had an escape, not to have committed an act of thumping folly; and I suppose that, whatever serious step one might have taken at twenty-five, after a struggle and with a violent effort, and however one's conduct might appear to be justified by events, there would always remain a certain element of regret; a certain sense of loss lurking in the sense of gain; a tendency to wonder, rather wishfully, what *might* have been. What might have been, in this case, would, without doubt, have been very sad, and what has been has been very cheerful and comfortable; but there are, nevertheless, two or three questions I might ask myself. Why, for instance, have I never married? why have I never been able to care for any woman as I cared for that one? Ah, why are the mountains blue, and why

is the sunshine warm? Happiness mitigated by impertinent conjectures—that's about my ticket.

6th.—I knew it wouldn't last; it's already passing away. But I have spent a delightful day; I have been strolling all over the place. Everything reminds me of something else, and yet of itself at the same time; my imagination makes a great circuit and comes back to the starting-point. There is that well-remembered odor of spring in the air, and the flowers, as they used to be, are gathered into great sheaves and stacks all along the rugged base of the Strozzi Palace. I wandered for an hour in the Boboli Gardens; we went there several times together. I remember all those days individually; they seem to me as yesterday. I found the corner where she always chose to sit—the bench of sun-warmed marble in front of the screen of ilex, with that exuberant statue of Pomona just beside it. The place is exactly the same, except that poor Pomona has lost one of her tapering fingers. I sat there for half an hour, and it was strange how near to me she seemed. The place was perfectly empty—that is, it was filled with *her*. I closed my eyes and listened; I could almost hear the rustle of her dress on the gravel.

Why do we make such an ado about death? What is it, after all, but a sort of refinement of life? She died ten years ago, and yet, as I sat there in the evening stillness, she was a palpable, audible presence. I went afterwards into the gallery of the palace, and wandered for an hour from room to room. The same great pictures hung in the same places, and the same dark frescoes arched above them. Twice, of old, I went there with her: she had a great understanding of art. She understood all sorts of things. Before the Madonna of the Chair I stood a long time. The face is not a particle like hers, and yet it reminded me of her. But everything does that. We stood and looked at it together once for half an hour; I remember perfectly what she said.

8th.—Yesterday I felt blue—blue and bored; and when I got up this morning I had half a mind to leave Florence. But I went out into the street beside the Arno, and looked up and down—looked at the yellow river and the violet hills, and then decided to remain—or, rather, I decided nothing. I simply stood gazing at the beauty of Florence, and before I had gazed my fill I was in good humor again, and it was too late to start for Rome. I strolled along the

quay, where something presently happened that rewarded me for staying. I stopped in front of a little jeweller's shop, where a great many objects in mosaic were exposed in the window; I stood there for some minutes—I don't know why, for I have no taste for mosaic. In a moment a little girl came and stood beside me—a little girl with a frowzy Italian head—carrying a basket. I turned away, but, as I turned, my eyes happened to fall on her basket. It was covered with a napkin, and on the napkin was pinned a piece of paper inscribed with an address. This address caught my glance—there was a name on it I knew. It was very legibly written—evidently by a scribe who had made up in zeal what was lacking in skill. “Contessa Salvi-Scarabelli, Via Ghibellina”—so ran the superscription. I looked at it for some moments; it caused me a sudden emotion. Presently the little girl, becoming aware of my attention, glanced up at me, wondering, with a pair of timid brown eyes.

“Are you carrying your basket to the Countess Salvi?” I asked.

The child stared at me. “To the Countess Scarabelli.”

“Do you know the Countess?”

“Know her?” murmured the child, with an air of small dismay.

“I mean have you seen her?”

“Yes, I have seen her.” And then, in a moment, with a sudden soft smile, “*È bella!*” said the little girl. She was beautiful herself as she said it.

“Precisely; and is she fair or dark?”

The child kept gazing at me. “*Bionda—bionda,*” she answered, looking about into the golden sunshine for a comparison.

“And is she young?”

“She is not young—like me. But she is not old—like—like—”

“Like me, eh? And is she married?”

The little girl began to look wise. “I have never seen the Signor Conte.”

“And she lives in Via Ghibellina?”

“*Sicuro.* In a beautiful palace.”

I had one more question to ask, and I pointed it with certain copper coins. “Tell me a little—is she good?”

The child inspected a moment the contents of her little brown fist. “It’s you who are good,” she answered.

“Ah, but the Countess?” I repeated.

My informant lowered her big brown eyes, with an air of conscientious meditation that was inexpressibly quaint. “To

me she appears so," she said, at last, looking up.

"Ah, then she must be so," I said, "because, for your age, you are very intelligent." And having delivered myself of this compliment, I walked away, and left the little girl counting her *soldi*.

I walked back to the hotel, wondering how I could learn something about the Contessa Salvi-Scarabelli. In the doorway I found the innkeeper, and near him stood a young man whom I immediately perceived to be a compatriot, and with whom, apparently, he had been in conversation.

"I wonder whether you can give me a piece of information," I said to the landlord. "Do you know anything about the Count Salvi-Scarabelli?"

The landlord looked down at his boots, then slowly raised his shoulders with a melancholy smile. "I have many regrets, dear sir—"

"You don't know the name?"

"I know the name, assuredly. But I don't know the gentleman."

I saw that my question had attracted the attention of the young Englishman, who looked at me with a good deal of earnestness. He was apparently satisfied with

what he saw, for he presently decided to speak.

“The Count Scarabelli is dead,” he said, very gravely.

I looked at him a moment: he was a pleasing young fellow. “And his widow lives,” I observed, “in Via Ghibellina.”

“I dare say that is the name of the street.” He was a handsome young Englishman, but he was also an awkward one; he wondered who I was and what I wanted, and he did me the honor to perceive that, as regards these points, my appearance was reassuring. But he hesitated, very properly, to talk with a perfect stranger about a lady whom he knew, and he had not the art to conceal his hesitation. I instantly felt it to be singular that though he regarded me as a perfect stranger, I had not the same feeling about him. Whether it was that I had seen him before, or simply that I was struck with his agreeable young face—at any rate, I felt myself, as they say here, in sympathy with him. If I have seen him before, I don’t remember the occasion, and neither, apparently, does he; I suppose it’s only a part of the feeling I have had the last three days about everything. It was this feeling that made

me suddenly act as if I had known him a long time.

“Do you know the Countess Salvi?” I asked.

He looked at me a little, and then, without resenting the freedom of my question, “The Countess Scarabelli, you mean,” he said.

“Yes,” I answered; “she’s the daughter.”

“The daughter is a little girl.”

“She must be grown up now. She must be—let me see—close upon thirty.”

My young Englishman began to smile. “Of whom are you speaking?”

“I was speaking of the daughter,” I said, understanding his smile. “But I was thinking of the mother.”

“Of the mother?”

“Of a person I knew twenty-seven years ago—the most charming woman I have ever known. She was the Countess Salvi; she lived in a wonderful old house in Via Ghibellina.”

“A wonderful old house!” my young Englishman repeated.

“She had a little girl,” I went on; “and the little girl was very fair, like her mother; and the mother and daughter had the same name—Bianca.” I stopped and looked at

my companion, and he blushed a little. "And Bianca Salvi," I continued, "was the most charming woman in the world." He blushed a little more, and I laid my hand on his shoulder. "Do you know why I tell you this? Because you remind me of what I was when I knew her—when I loved her." My poor young Englishman gazed at me with a sort of embarrassed and fascinated stare, and still I went on. "I say that's the reason I told you this—but you'll think it a strange reason. You remind me of my younger self. You needn't resent that; I was a charming young fellow. The Countess Salvi thought so. Her daughter thinks the same of you."

Instantly, instinctively, he raised his hand to my arm. "Truly?"

"Ah, you are wonderfully like me!" I said, laughing. "That was just my state of mind. I wanted tremendously to please her." He dropped his hand, and looked away, smiling, but with an air of ingenuous confusion which quickened my interest in him. "You don't know what to make of me," I pursued. "You don't know why a stranger should suddenly address you in this way, and pretend to read your thoughts. Doubtless you think me a little cracked.

Perhaps I am eccentric, but it's not so bad as that. I have lived about the world a great deal, following my profession, which is that of a soldier. I have been in India, in Africa, in Canada, and I have lived a good deal alone. That inclines people, I think, to sudden bursts of confidence. A week ago I came into Italy, where I spent six months when I was your age. I came straight to Florence; I was eager to see it again on account of associations. They have been crowding upon me ever so thickly! I have taken the liberty of giving you a hint of them." The young man inclined himself a little in silence, as if he had been struck with a sudden respect. He stood and looked away for a moment at the river and the mountains. "It's very beautiful," I said.

"Oh, it's enchanting," he murmured.

"That's the way I used to talk. But that's nothing to you."

He glanced at me again. "On the contrary, I like to hear."

"Well, then, let us take a walk. If you, too, are staying at this inn, we are fellow-travellers. We will walk down the Arno to the Cascine. There are several things I should like to ask of you."

My young Englishman assented with an

air of almost filial confidence, and we strolled for an hour beside the river and through the shady alleys of that lovely wilderness. We had a great deal of talk: it's not only myself, it's my whole situation over again.

"Are you very fond of Italy?" I asked.

He hesitated a moment. "One can't express that."

"Just so; I couldn't express it. I used to try; I used to write verses. On the subject of Italy I was very ridiculous."

"So am I ridiculous," said my companion.

"No, my dear boy," I answered, "we are not ridiculous; we are two very reasonable, superior people."

"The first time one comes—as I have done—it's a revelation."

"Oh, I remember well; one never forgets it. It's an introduction to beauty.

"And it must be a great pleasure," said my young friend, "to come back."

"Yes; fortunately the beauty is always here. What form of it," I asked, "do you prefer?"

My companion looked a little mystified; and at last he said, "I am very fond of the pictures."

"So was I. And among the pictures, which do you like best?"

“Oh, a great many.”

“So did I; but I had certain favorites.”

Again the young man hesitated a little, and then he confessed that the group of painters he preferred, on the whole, to all others was that of the early Florentines.

I was so struck with this that I stopped short. “That was exactly my taste!” And then I passed my hand into his arm, and we went our way again.

We sat down on an old stone bench in the Cascine, and a solemn, blank-eyed Hermes, with wrinkles accentuated by the dust of ages, stood above us and listened to our talk.

“The Countess Salvi died ten years ago,” I said.

My companion admitted that he had heard her daughter say so.

“After I knew her she married again,” I added. “The Count Salvi died before I knew her—a couple of years after their marriage.”

“Yes, I have heard that.”

“And what else have you heard?”

My companion stared at me; he had evidently heard nothing.

“She was a very interesting woman: there are a great many things to be said about her. Later, perhaps, I will tell you. Has the daughter the same charm?”

“You forget,” said my young man, smiling, “that I have never seen the mother.”

“Very true. I keep confounding. But the daughter—how long have you known her?”

“Only since I have been here. A very short time.”

“A week?”

For a moment he said nothing. “A month.”

“That’s just the answer I should have made. A week, a month—it was all the same to me.”

“I think it is more than a month,” said the young man.

“It’s probably six. How did you make her acquaintance?”

“By a letter—an introduction given me by a friend in England.”

“The analogy is complete,” I said. “But the friend who gave me my letter to Madame de Salvi died many years ago. He, too, admired her greatly. I don’t know why it never came into my mind that her daughter might be living in Florence. Somehow I took for granted it was all over. I never thought of the little girl; I never heard what had become of her. I walked past the palace yesterday, and saw that it was

occupied, but I took for granted it had changed hands."

"The Countess Scarabelli," said my friend, "brought it to her husband as her marriage portion."

"I hope he appreciated it! There is a fountain in the court, and there is a charming old garden beyond it. The Countess's sitting-room looks into that garden. The staircase is of white marble, and there is a medallion by Luca della Robbia set into the wall at the place where it makes a bend. Before you come into the drawing-room you stand a moment in a great vaulted place, hung round with faded tapestry, paved with bare tiles, and furnished only with three chairs. In the drawing-room, above the fireplace, is a superb Andrea del Sarto. The furniture is covered with pale sea-green."

My companion listened to all this. "The Andrea del Sarto is there; it's magnificent. But the furniture is in pale red."

"Ah! they have changed it, then — in twenty-seven years."

"And there's a portrait of Madame de Salvi," continued my friend.

I was silent a moment. "I should like to see that."

He, too, was silent. Then he asked, "Why don't you go and see it? If you knew the mother so well, why don't you call upon the daughter?"

"From what you tell me, I am afraid."

"What have I told you to make you afraid?"

I looked a little at his ingenuous countenance. "The mother was a very dangerous woman."

The young Englishman began to blush again. "The daughter is not," he said.

"Are you very sure?"

He didn't say he was sure, but he presently inquired in what way the Countess Salvi had been dangerous.

"You must not ask me that," I answered; "for, after all, I desire to remember only what was good in her." And as we walked back I begged him to render me the service of mentioning my name to his friend, and of saying that I had known her mother well, and that I asked permission to come and see her.

9th.—I have seen that poor boy half a dozen times again, and a most amiable young fellow he is. He continues to represent to me, in the most extraordinary manner, my own young identity: the correspondence is

perfect at all points, save that he is a better boy than I. He is evidently acutely interested in his Countess, and leads quite the same life with her that I led with Madame de Salvi. He goes to see her every evening, and stays half the night: these Florentines keep the most extraordinary hours. I remember, towards 3 A.M., Madame de Salvi used to turn me out. "Come, come," she would say; "it's time to go. If you were to stay later, people might talk." I don't know at what time he comes home, but I suppose his evening seems as short as mine did. To-day he brought me a message from his Contessa—a very gracious little speech. She remembered often to have heard her mother speak of me: she called me her English friend. All her mother's friends were dear to her, and she begged I would do her the honor to come and see her. She is always at home of an evening. Poor young Staumer (he is of the Devonshire Stanmers—a great property) reported this speech verbatim, and, of course, it can't in the least signify to him that a poor grizzled, battered soldier, old enough to be his father, should come to call upon his *innamorata*. But I remember how it used to matter to me when other men came: that's a point of difference.

However, it's only because I'm so old. At twenty-five, I shouldn't have been afraid of myself at fifty-two. Camerino was thirty-four; and then the others! She was always at home in the evening, and they all used to come. They were old Florentine names. But she used to let me stay after them all; she thought an old English name as good. What a transcendent coquette! . . . But *basta così*, as she used to say. I meant to go to-night to Casa Salvi, but I couldn't bring myself to the point. I don't know what I'm afraid of; I used to be in a hurry enough to go there once. I suppose I am afraid of the very look of the place—of the old rooms, the old walls. I shall go to-morrow night. I am afraid of the very echoes.

10th.—She has the most extraordinary resemblance to her mother. When I went in I was tremendously startled; I stood staring at her. I have just come home; it is past midnight. I have been all the evening at Casa Salvi. It is very warm; my window is open; I can look out on the river, gliding past in the starlight. So of old, when I came home, I used to stand and look out. There are the same cypresses on the opposite hills.

Poor young Stanmer was there, and three or four other admirers; they all got up when

I came in. I think I had been talked about, and there was some curiosity. But why should I have been talked about? They were all youngish men—none of them of my time. She is a wonderful likeness of her mother; I couldn't get over it. Beautiful like her mother, and yet with the same faults in her face; but with her mother's perfect head and brow, and sympathetic, almost pitying, eyes. Her face has just that peculiarity of her mother's which, of all human countenances that I have ever known, was the one that passed most quickly and completely from the expression of gayety to that of repose. Repose in her face always suggested sadness; and while you were watching it with a kind of awe, and wondering of what tragic secret it was the token, it kindled, on the instant, into a radiant Italian smile. The Countess Scarabelli's smiles tonight, however, were almost uninterrupted. She greeted me—divinely, as her mother used to do; and young Stanmer sat in the corner of the sofa—as I used to do—and watched her while she talked. She is thin and very fair, and was dressed in light, vaporous black; that completes the resemblance. The house, the rooms, are almost absolutely the same; there may be changes

of detail, but they don't modify the general effect. There are the same precious pictures on the walls of the *salon*—the same great dusky fresco in the concave ceiling. The daughter is not rich, I suppose, any more than the mother. The furniture is worn and faded, and I was admitted by a solitary servant, who carried a twinkling taper before me up the great dark marble staircase.

“I have often heard of you,” said the Countess, as I sat down near her; “my mother often spoke of you.”

“Often?” I answered. “I am surprised at that.”

“Why are you surprised? Were you not good friends?”

“Yes, for a certain time, very good friends; but I was sure she had forgotten me.”

“She never forgot,” said the Countess, looking at me intently and smiling. “She was not like that.”

“She was not like most other women in any way,” I declared.

“Ah, she was charming,” cried the Countess, rattling open her fan. “I have always been very curious to see you. I have received an impression of you.”

“A good one, I hope.”

She looked at me, laughing, and not an-

swering this: it was just her mother's trick. "‘My Englishman,’ she used to call you, ‘*il mio Inglese.*’"

"I hope she spoke of me kindly," I insisted.

The Countess, still laughing, gave a little shrug, balancing her hand to and fro. "So, so; I always supposed you had had a quarrel. You don't mind my being frank like this, eh?"

"I delight in it; it reminds me of your mother."

"Every one tells me that. But I am not clever like her. You will see for yourself."

"That speech," I said, "completes the resemblance. She was always pretending she was not clever, and in reality—"

"In reality she was an angel, eh? To escape from dangerous comparisons, I will admit, then, that I am clever. That will make a difference. But let us talk of you. You are very—how shall I say it?—very eccentric."

"Is that what your mother told you?"

"To tell the truth, she spoke of you as a great original. But aren't all Englishmen eccentric? All except that one!" And the Countess pointed to poor Stanmer, in his corner of the sofa.

"Oh, I know just what he is," I said.

"He's as quiet as a lamb; he's like all the world," cried the Countess.

"Like all the world, yes. He's in love with you."

She looked at me with sudden gravity. "I don't object to your saying that for all the world, but I do for him."

"Well," I went on, "he's peculiar in this: he's rather afraid of you."

Instantly she began to smile; she turned her face towards Stanmer. He had seen that we were talking about him; he colored and got up, then came towards us.

"I like men who are afraid of nothing," said our hostess.

"I know what you want," I said to Stanmer. "You want to know what the Signora Contessa says about you."

Stanmer looked straight into her face, very gravely. "I don't care a straw what she says."

"You are almost a match for the Signora Contessa," I answered. "She declares she doesn't care a pin's head what you think."

"I recognize the Countess's style," Stanmer exclaimed, turning away.

"One would think," said the Countess,

“that you were trying to make a quarrel between us.”

I watched him move away to another part of the great *salon*; he stood in front of the Andrea del Sarto, looking up at it. But he was not seeing it; he was listening to what we might say. I often stood there in just that way. “He can’t quarrel with you any more than I could have quarrelled with your mother.”

“Ah, but you did. Something painful passed between you.”

“Yes, it was painful, but it was not a quarrel. I went away one day, and never saw her again. That was all.”

The Countess looked at me gravely. “What do you call it when a man does that?”

“It depends upon the case.”

“Sometimes,” said the Countess, in French, “it’s a *lâcheté*.”

“Yes, and sometimes it’s an act of wisdom.”

“And sometimes,” rejoined the Countess, “it’s a mistake.”

I shook my head. “For me it was no mistake.”

She began to laugh again. “*Caro signore*, you’re a great original. What had my poor mother done to you?”

I looked at our young Englishman, who still had his back turned to us, and was staring up at the picture. "I will tell you some other time," I said.

"I shall certainly remind you; I am very curious to know." Then she opened and shut her fan two or three times, still looking at me. What eyes they have! "Tell me a little, if I may ask without indiscretion. Are you married?"

"No, Signora Contessa."

"Isn't that at least a mistake?"

"Do I look unhappy?"

She dropped her head a little to one side. "For an Englishman—no!"

"Ah," said I, laughing, "you are quite as clever as your mother."

"And they tell me that you are a great soldier," she continued. "You have lived in India. It was very kind of you, so far away, to have remembered our poor dear Italy."

"One always remembers Italy; the distance makes no difference. I remembered it well the day I heard of your mother's death."

"Ah, that was a sorrow," said the Countess. "There's not a day that I don't weep for her. But *che vuole?* She's a saint in Paradise."

"*Sicuro,*" I answered, and I looked some

time at the ground. "But tell me about yourself, dear lady," I asked at last, raising my eyes. "You have also had the sorrow of losing your husband."

"I am a poor widow, as you see. *Che vuole?* My husband died after three years of marriage."

I waited for her to remark that the late Count Scarabelli was also a saint in Paradise, but I waited in vain.

"That was like your distinguished father," I said.

"Yes, he too died young. I can't be said to have known him; I was but of the age of my own little girl. But I weep for him all the more."

Again I was silent for a moment.

"It was in India too," I said, presently, "that I heard of your mother's second marriage."

The Countess raised her eyebrows. "In India, then, one hears of everything. Did that news please you?"

"Well, since you ask me—no."

"I understand that," said the Countess, looking at her open fan. "I shall not marry again like that."

"That's what your mother said to me," I ventured to observe.

She was not offended, but she rose from her seat, and stood looking at me a moment. Then: "You should not have gone away!" she exclaimed.

I stayed for another hour; it is a very pleasant house. Two or three of the men who were sitting there seemed very civil and intelligent; one of them was a major of engineers, who offered me a profusion of information upon the new organization of the Italian army. While he talked, however, I was observing our hostess, who was talking with the others; very little, I noticed, with her young *Inglese*. She is altogether charming—full of frankness and freedom, of that inimitable *disinvoltura* which in an Englishwoman would be vulgar, and which in her is simply the perfection of apparent spontaneity. But for all her spontaneity, she's as subtle as a needle-point, and knows tremendously well what she is about. If she is not a consummate coquette— What had she in her head when she said that I should not have gone away? Poor little Stanmer didn't go away. I left him there at midnight.

12th.—I found him to-day sitting in the Church of Santa Croce, into which I wandered to escape from the heat of the sun.

In the nave it was cool and dim; he was staring at the blaze of candles on the great altar, and thinking, I am sure, of his incomparable Countess. I sat down beside him; and after a while, as if to avoid the appearance of eagerness, he asked me how I had enjoyed my visit to Casa Salvi, and what I thought of the *padrona*.

"I think half a dozen things," I said; "but I can only tell you one now. She's an enchantress. You shall hear the rest when we have left the church."

"An enchantress?" repeated Stanmer, looking at me askance.

He is a very simple youth; but who am I to blame him?

"A charmer," I said; "a fascinatress."

He turned away, staring at the altar candles.

"An artist—an actress," I went on, rather brutally.

He gave me another glance. "I think you are telling me all," he said.

"No, no; there is more." And we sat a long time in silence.

At last he proposed that we should go out; and we passed into the street, where the shadows had begun to stretch themselves.

"I don't know what you mean by her being an actress," he said, as we turned homeward.

"I suppose not. Neither should I have known if any one had said that to me."

"You are thinking about the mother," said Stanmer. "Why are you always bringing *her* in?"

"My dear boy, the analogy is so great; it forces itself upon me."

He stopped, and stood looking at me with his modest, perplexed young face. I thought he was going to exclaim, "The analogy be hanged!" but he said, after a moment, "Well, what does it prove?"

"I can't say it proves anything; but it suggests a great many things."

"Be so good as to mention a few," he said, as we walked on.

"You are not sure of her yourself," I began.

"Never mind that — go on with your analogy."

"That's a part of it. You *are* very much in love with her."

"That's a part of it, too, I suppose?"

"Yes, as I have told you before. You are in love with her, and yet you can't make her out; that's just where I was with regard to Madame de Salvi."

“And she, too, was an enchantress, an actress, an artist, and all the rest of it?”

“She was the most perfect coquette I ever knew, and the most dangerous, because the most finished.”

“What you mean, then, is that her daughter is a finished coquette?”

“I rather think so.”

Stanmer walked along for some moments in silence.

“Seeing that you suppose me to be a—a great admirer of the Countess,” he said at last, “I am rather surprised at the freedom with which you speak of her.”

I confessed that I was surprised at it myself. “But it’s on account of the interest I take in you.”

“I am immensely obliged to you,” said the poor boy.

“Ah, of course you don’t like it. That is, you like my interest—I don’t see how you can help liking that—but you don’t like my freedom. That’s natural enough; but, my dear young friend, I want only to help you. If a man had said to me—so many years ago—what I am saying to you, I should certainly, also, at first have thought him a great brute. But after a little I should have been grateful—I should have felt that he was helping me.”

"You seem to have been very well able to help yourself," said Stanmer. "You tell me you made your escape."

"Yes, but it was at the cost of infinite perplexity—of what I may call keen suffering. I should like to save you all that."

"I can only repeat—it is really very kind of you."

"Don't repeat it too often, or I shall begin to think you don't mean it."

"Well," said Stanmer, "I think this, at any rate—that you take an extraordinary responsibility in trying to put a man out of conceit of a woman who, as he believes, may make him very happy."

I grasped his arm, and we stopped, going on with our talk like a couple of Florentines.

"Do you wish to marry her?"

He looked away, without meeting my eyes. "It's a great responsibility," he repeated.

"Before Heaven," I said, "I would have married the mother! You are exactly in my situation."

"Don't you think you rather overdo the analogy?" asked poor Stanmer.

"A little more, a little less—it doesn't matter. I believe you are in my shoes. But,

of course, if you prefer it, I will beg a thousand pardons, and leave them to carry you where they will."

He had been looking away, but now he slowly turned his face and met my eyes. "You have gone too far to retreat. What is it you know about her?"

"About this one—nothing. But about the other—"

"I care nothing about the other."

"My dear fellow," I said, "they are mother and daughter—they are as like as two of Andrea's Madonnas."

"If they resemble each other, then you were simply mistaken in the mother."

I took his arm, and we walked on again; there seemed no adequate reply to such a charge. "Your state of mind brings back my own so completely," I said, presently. "You admire her, you adore her, and yet, secretly, you mistrust her. You are enchanted with her personal charm, her grace, her wit, her everything; and yet in your private heart you are afraid of her."

"Afraid of her?"

"Your mistrust keeps rising to the surface; you can't rid yourself of the suspicion that at the bottom of all things she is hard and cruel, and you would be immensely re-

lieved if some one should persuade you that your suspicion is right."

Stanmer made no direct reply to this; but before we reached the hotel he said, "What did you ever know about the mother?"

"It's a terrible story," I answered.

He looked at me askance. "What did she do?"

"Come to my rooms this evening, and I will tell you."

He declared he would, but he never came. Exactly the way I should have acted!

14th.—I went again last evening to Casa Salvi, where I found the same little circle, with the addition of a couple of ladies. Stanmer was there, trying hard to talk to one of them, but making, I am sure, a very poor business of it. The Countess—well, the Countess was admirable. She greeted me like a friend of ten years, towards whom familiarity should not have engendered a want of ceremony; she made me sit near her, and she asked me a dozen questions about my health and my occupations.

"I live in the past," I said. "I go into the galleries, into the old palaces and the churches. To-day I spent an hour in Michael Angelo's chapel at San Lorenzo."

“Ah yes, that’s the past,” said the Countess. “Those things are very old.”

“Twenty-seven years old,” I answered.

“Twenty-seven? *Altro!*”

“I mean my own past,” I said. “I went to a great many of those places with your mother.”

“Ah, the pictures are beautiful,” murmured the Countess, glancing at Stanmer.

“Have you lately looked at any of them?” I asked. “Have you gone to the galleries with *him*?”

She hesitated a moment, smiling. “It seems to me that your question is a little impertinent. But I think you are like that.”

“A little impertinent? Never. As I say, your mother did me the honor more than once to accompany me to the Uffizzi.”

“My mother must have been very kind to you.”

“So it seemed to me at the time.”

“At the time, only?”

“Well, if you prefer, so it seems to me now.”

“Ah,” said the Countess, “she made sacrifices.”

“To what, *cara signora*? She was perfectly free. Your lamented father was dead,

and she had not yet contracted her second marriage."

"If she was intending to marry again, it was all the more reason she should have been careful."

I looked at her a moment; she met my eyes gravely, over the top of her fan. "Are *you* very careful?" I said.

She dropped her fan with a certain violence. "Ah yes, you are impertinent."

"Ah no," I said. "Remember that I am old enough to be your father, that I knew you when you were three years old. I may surely ask such questions. But you are right: one must do your mother justice. She was certainly thinking of her second marriage."

"You have not forgiven her that," said the Countess, very gravely.

"Have you?" I asked, more lightly.

"I don't judge my mother. That is a mortal sin. My stepfather was very kind to me."

"I remember him," I said; "I saw him a great many times—your mother already received him."

My hostess sat with lowered eyes, saying nothing; but she presently looked up. "She was very unhappy with my father."

“That I can easily believe. And your stepfather—is he still living?”

“He died—before my mother.”

“Did he fight any more duels?”

“He was killed in a duel,” said the Countess, discreetly.

It seems almost monstrous, especially as I can give no reason for it, but this announcement, instead of shocking me, caused me to feel a strange exhilaration. Most assuredly, after all these years, I bear the poor man no resentment. Of course I controlled my manner, and simply remarked to the Countess that as his fault had been, so was his punishment. I think, however, that the feeling of which I speak was at the bottom of my saying to her that I hoped that, unlike her mother's, her own brief married life had been happy.

“If it was not,” she said, “I have forgotten it now.” I wonder if the late Count Scarabelli was also killed in a duel, and if his adversary— Is it on the books that his adversary as well shall perish by the pistol? Which of those gentlemen is he, I wonder? Is it reserved for poor little Stanmer to put a bullet into him? No; poor little Stanmer, I trust, will do as I did. And yet, unfortunately for him, that woman is consum-

mately plausible. She was wonderfully nice last evening; she was really irresistible. Such frankness and freedom, and yet something so soft and womanly; such graceful gayety, so much of the brightness, without any of the stiffness, of good-breeding, and over it all something so picturesquely simple and Southern! She is a perfect Italian. But she comes honestly by it. After the talk I have just jotted down, she changed her place, and the conversation for half an hour was general. Stanmer, indeed, said very little; partly, I suppose, because he is shy of talking a foreign tongue. Was I like that? was I so constantly silent? I suspect I was when I was perplexed, and Heaven knows that very often my perplexity was extreme. Before I went away I had a few more words *tête-à-tête* with the Countess.

“I hope you are not leaving Florence yet,” she said; “you will stay a while longer?”

I answered that I had come only for a week, and that my week was over. “I stay on from day to day, I am so much interested.”

“Ah, it’s the beautiful moment. I’m glad our city pleases you.”

“Florence pleases me—and I take a paternal interest in our young friend,” I added,

glancing at Stanmer. "I have become very fond of him."

"*Bel tipo inglese,*" said my hostess. "And he is very intelligent; he has a beautiful mind."

She stood there resting her smile and her clear, expressive eyes upon me.

"I don't like to praise him too much," I rejoined, "lest I should appear to praise myself; he reminds me so much of what I was at his age. If your beautiful mother were to come to life for an hour, she would see the resemblance."

She gave me a little amused stare.

"And yet you don't look at all like him."

"Ah, you didn't know me when I was twenty-five. I was very handsome. And, moreover, it isn't that, it's the mental resemblance. I was ingenuous, candid, trusting, like him."

"Trusting? I remember my mother once telling me that you were the most suspicious and jealous of men."

"I fell into a suspicious mood, but I was, fundamentally, not in the least addicted to thinking evil. I couldn't easily imagine any harm of any one."

"And so you mean that Mr. Stanmer is in a suspicious mood?"

“Well, I mean that his situation is the same as mine.”

The Countess gave me one of her serious looks. “Come,” she said, “what was it—this famous situation of yours? I have heard you mention it before.”

“Your mother might have told you, since she occasionally did me the honor to speak of me.”

“All my mother ever told me was that you were a sad puzzle to her.”

At this, of course, I laughed out; I laugh still as I write it.

“Well, then, that was my situation—I was a sad puzzle to a very clever woman.”

“And you mean, therefore, that I am a puzzle to poor Mr. Stanmer?”

“He is racking his brains to make you out. Remember it was you who said he was intelligent.”

She looked round at him, and, as fortune would have it, his appearance at that moment quite confirmed my assertion. He was lounging back in his chair with an air of indolence rather too marked for a drawing-room, and staring at the ceiling with the expression of a man who has just been asked a conundrum. Madame Scarabelli seemed struck with his attitude.

“Don’t you see,” I said, “he can’t read the riddle?”

“You yourself,” she answered, “said he was incapable of thinking evil. I should be sorry to have him think any evil of *me*.”

And she looked straight at me—seriously, appealingly—with her beautiful candid brow.

I inclined myself, smiling, in a manner which might have meant “How could that be possible?”

“I have a great esteem for him,” she went on; “I want him to think well of me. If I am a puzzle to him, do me a little service. Explain me to him.”

“Explain you, dear lady?”

“You are older and wiser than he. Make him understand me.”

She looked deep into my eyes for a moment, and then she turned away.

26th.—I have written nothing for a good many days, but meanwhile I have been half a dozen times to Casa Salvi. I have seen a good deal also of my young friend—had a good many walks and talks with him. I have proposed to him to come with me to Venice for a fortnight, but he won’t listen to the idea of leaving Florence. He is very happy, in spite of his doubts, and I confess

that in the perception of his happiness I have lived over again my own. This is so much the case that when, the other day, he at last made up his mind to ask me to tell him the wrong that Madame de Salvi had done me, I rather checked his curiosity. I told him that if he was bent upon knowing, I would satisfy him, but that it seemed a pity just now to indulge in painful imagery.

“But I thought you wanted so much to put me out of conceit of our friend.”

“I admit I am inconsistent, but there are various reasons for it. In the first place—it’s obvious—I am open to the charge of playing a double game. I profess an admiration for the Countess Scarabelli, for I accept her hospitality, and at the same time I attempt to poison your mind. Isn’t that the proper expression? I can’t exactly make up my mind to that, though my admiration for the Countess and my desire to prevent you from taking a foolish step are equally sincere. And then, in the second place, you seem to me, on the whole, so happy! One hesitates to destroy an illusion, no matter how pernicious, that is so delightful while it lasts. Those are the rare moments of life. To be young and ardent in the midst of an Italian spring, and to be-

lieve in the moral perfection of a beautiful woman—what an admirable situation! Float with the current; I'll stand on the brink and watch you."

"Your real reason is that you feel you have no case against the poor lady," said Stanmer. "You admire her as much as I do."

"I just admitted that I admire her. I never said she was a vulgar flirt; her mother was an absolutely scientific one. Heaven knows I admired that! It's a nice point, however, how much one is bound in honor not to warn a young friend against a dangerous woman because one also has relations of civility with the lady."

"In such a case," said Stanmer, "I would break off my relations."

I looked at him, and I think I laughed. "Are you jealous of me, by chance?"

He shook his head emphatically. "Not in the least; I like to see you there, because your conduct contradicts your words."

"I have always said that the Countess is fascinating."

"Otherwise," said Stanmer, "in the case you speak of, I would give the lady notice."

"Give her notice?"

"Mention to her that you regard her with

suspicion, and that you propose to do your best to rescue a simple-minded youth from her wiles. That would be more loyal." And he began to laugh again.

It is not the first time he has laughed at me; but I have never minded it, because I have always understood it.

"Is that what you recommend me to say to the Countess?" I asked.

"Recommend you!" he exclaimed, laughing again. "I recommend nothing. I may be the victim to be rescued, but I am at least not a partner to the conspiracy. Besides," he added, in a moment, the "Countess knows your state of mind."

"Has she told you so?"

Stanmer hesitated. "She has begged me to listen to everything you may say against her. She prefers that; she has a good conscience."

"Ah," said I, "she's an accomplished woman!"

And it is, indeed, very clever of her to take that tone. Stanmer afterwards assured me explicitly that he has never given her a hint of the liberties I have taken in conversation with—what shall I call it?—with her moral nature: she has guessed them for herself. She must hate me intensely, and

yet her manner has always been so charming to me! She is truly an accomplished woman!

May 4.—I have stayed away from Casa Salvi for a week, but I have lingered on in Florence, under a mixture of impulses. I have had it on my conscience not to go near the Countess again; and yet, from the moment she is aware of the way I feel about her, it is open war. There need be no scruples on either side. She is as free to use every possible art to entangle poor Stanmer more closely as I am to clip her fine-spun meshes. Under the circumstances, however, we naturally shouldn't meet very cordially. But as regards her meshes, why, after all, should I clip them? It would really be very interesting to see Stanmer swallowed up. I should like to see how he would agree with her after she had devoured him. (To what vulgar imagery, by-the-way, does curiosity reduce a man!) Let him finish the story in his own way, as I finished it in mine. It is the same story; but why, a quarter of a century later, should it have the same denouement? Let him make his own denouement.

5th.—Hang it, however, I don't want the poor boy to be miserable.

6th.—Ah! but did my denouement then prove such a happy one?

7th.—He came to my room late last night; he was much excited.

“What was it she did to you?” he asked.

I answered him first with another question. “Have you quarrelled with the Countess?”

But he only repeated his own. “What was it she did to you?”

“Sit down, and I’ll tell you.” And he sat there beside the candle, staring at me. “There was a man always there—Count Camerino.”

“The man she married?”

“The man she married. I was very much in love with her, and yet I didn’t trust her. I was sure that she lied; I believed she could be cruel. Nevertheless, at moments, she had a charm which made it pure pedantry to be conscious of her faults; and while these moments lasted I would have done anything for her. Unfortunately they didn’t last long. But you know what I mean: am I not describing the Scarabelli?”

“The Countess Scarabelli never lied!” cried Stanmer.

“That’s just what I would have said to any one who should have made the insinu-

ation! But I suppose you are not asking me the question you put to me just now from dispassionate curiosity?"

"A man may want to know," said the innocent fellow.

I couldn't help laughing out. "This, at any rate, is my story: Camerino was always there; he was a sort of fixture in the house. If I had moments of dislike for the divine Bianca, I had no moments of liking for him. And yet he was a very agreeable fellow, very civil, very intelligent, not in the least disposed to make a quarrel with me. The trouble, of course, was simply that I was jealous of him. I don't know, however, on what ground I could have quarrelled with him, for I had no definite rights. I can't say what I expected—I can't say what, as the matter stood, I was prepared to do. With my name and my prospects, I might perfectly have offered her my hand. I am not sure that she would have accepted it; I am by no means clear that she wanted that. But she wanted, wanted keenly, to attach me to her; she wanted to have me about. I should have been capable of giving up everything—England, my career, my family—simply to devote myself to her, to live near her and see her every day."

“Why didn’t you do it, then?” asked Stanmer.

“Why don’t you?”

“To be a proper rejoinder to my question,” he said, rather neatly, “yours should be asked twenty-five years hence.”

“It remains perfectly true that at a given moment I was capable of doing as I say. That was what she wanted—a rich, susceptible, credulous, convenient young Englishman established near her *en permanence*. And yet,” I added, “I must do her complete justice. I honestly believe she was fond of me.” At this Stanmer got up and walked to the window; he stood looking out a moment, and then he turned round. “You know she was older than I,” I went on. “Madame Scarabelli is older than you. One day, in the garden, her mother asked me, in an angry tone, why I disliked Camerino; for I had been at no pains to conceal my feeling about him, and something had just happened to bring it out. ‘I dislike him,’ I said, ‘because you like him so much.’ ‘I assure you I don’t like him,’ she answered. ‘He has all the appearance of being your lover,’ I retorted. It was a brutal speech, certainly, but any other man in my place would have made it. She took it very strangely;

she turned pale, but she was not indignant. 'How can he be my lover after what he has done?' she asked. 'What has he done?' She hesitated a good while; then she said, 'He killed my husband.' 'Good heavens!' I cried; 'and you receive him?' Do you know what she said? She said, '*Che vuole?*'"

"Is that all?" asked Staumer.

"No; she went on to say that Camerino had killed Count Salvi in a duel, and she admitted that her husband's jealousy had been the occasion of it. The Count, it appeared, was a monster of jealousy; he had led her a dreadful life. He himself, meanwhile, had been anything but irreproachable; he had done a mortal injury to a man of whom he pretended to be a friend, and this affair had become notorious. The gentleman in question had demanded satisfaction for his outraged honor; but for some reason or other (the Countess, to do her justice, did not tell me that her husband was a coward) he had not as yet obtained it. The duel with Camerino had come on first; in an access of jealous fury, the Count had struck Camerino in the face, and this outrage, I know not how justly, was deemed expiable before the other. By an extraordinary arrangement (the Italians have certainly no

sense of fair play) the other man was allowed to be Camerino's second. The duel was fought with swords, and the Count received a wound of which, though at first it was not expected to be fatal, he died on the following day. The matter was hushed up as much as possible, for the sake of the Countess's good name, and so successfully that it was presently observed that, among the public, the other gentleman had the credit of having put his sword through M. de Salvi. This gentleman took a fancy not to contradict the impression, and it was allowed to subsist. So long as *he* consented, it was, of course, in Camerino's interest not to contradict it, as it left him much more free to keep up his intimacy with the Countess."

Staumer had listened to all this with extreme attention. "Why didn't *she* contradict it?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "I am bound to believe it was for the same reason. I was horrified, at any rate, by the whole story. I was extremely shocked at the Countess's want of dignity in continuing to see the man by whose hand her husband had fallen."

"The husband had been a great brute, and it was not known," said Staumer.

"Its not being known made no difference.

And as for Salvi having been a brute, that is but a way of saying that his wife and the man whom his wife subsequently married didn't like him."

Stanmer looked extremely meditative; his eyes were fixed on mine. "Yes, that marriage is hard to get over. It was not becoming."

"Ah," said I, "what a long breath I drew when I heard of it! I remember the place and the hour. It was at a hill station in India, seven years after I had left Florence. The post brought me some English papers, and in one of them was a letter from Italy, with a lot of so-called 'fashionable intelligence.' There, among various scandals in high life and other delectable items, I read that the Countess Bianca Salvi, famous for some years as the presiding genius of the most agreeable *salon* in Florence, was about to bestow her hand upon Count Camerino, a distinguished Bolognese. Ah, my dear boy, it was a tremendous escape! I had been ready to marry the woman who was capable of that! But my instinct had warned me, and I had trusted my instinct."

"'Instinct's everything,' as Falstaff says," and Stanmer began to laugh. "Did you tell Madame de Salvi that your instinct was against her?"

“No; I told her that she frightened me, shocked me, horrified me.”

“That’s about the same thing. And what did she say?”

“She asked me what I would have. I called her friendship with Camerino a scandal, and she answered that her husband had been a brute. Besides, no one knew it; therefore it was no scandal. Just *your* argument. I retorted that this was odious reasoning, and that she had no moral sense. We had a passionate quarrel, and I declared I would never see her again. In the heat of my displeasure, I left Florence, and I kept my vow. I never saw her again.”

“You couldn’t have been much in love with her,” said Stanmer.

“I was not—three months after.”

“If you had been, you would have come back—three days after.”

“So, doubtless, it seems to you. All I can say is that it was the great effort of my life. Being a military man, I have had on various occasions to face the enemy. But it was not then I needed my resolution; it was when I left Florence in a post-chaise.”

Stanmer turned about the room two or three times, and then he said, “I don’t understand; I don’t understand why she should

have told you that Camerino had killed her husband. It could only damage her."

"She was afraid it would damage her more that I should think he was her lover. She wished to say the thing that would most effectually persuade me that he was not her lover—that he could never be. And then she wished to get the credit of being very frank."

"Good heavens! how you must have analyzed her!" cried my companion, staring.

"There is nothing so analytistic as disillusionment. But there it is. She married Camerino."

"Yes, I don't like that," said Stanmer. He was silent awhile, and then he added, "Perhaps she wouldn't have done so if you had remained."

He has a little innocent way!

"Very likely she would have dispensed with the ceremony," I answered, dryly.

"Upon my word," he said, "you *have* analyzed her!"

"You ought to be grateful to me. I have done for you what you seem unable to do for yourself."

"I don't see any Camerino in my case," he said.

"Perhaps among those gentlemen I can find one for you."

“Thank you!” he cried, “I’ll take care of that myself!” And he went away—satisfied, I hope.

10th.—He’s an obstinate little wretch; it irritates me to see him sticking to it. Perhaps he is looking for his Camerino. I shall leave him, at any rate, to his fate; it is growing insupportably hot.

11th.—I went this evening to bid farewell to the Scarabelli. There was no one there; she was alone in her great dusky drawing-room, which was lighted only by a couple of candles, with the immense windows open over the garden. She was dressed in white; she was deucedly pretty. She asked me, of course, why I had been so long without coming.

“I think you say that only for form,” I answered. “I imagine you know.”

“*Che!* what have I done?”

“Nothing at all. You are too wise for that.”

She looked at me awhile. “I think you are a little crazy.”

“Ah, no; I am only too sane. I have too much reason rather than too little.”

“You have, at any rate, what we call a fixed idea.”

“There is no harm in that, so long as it’s a good one.”

“But yours is abominable,” she declared, with a laugh.

“Of course you can’t like me or my ideas. All things considered, you have treated me with wonderful kindness, and I thank you and kiss your hands. I leave Florence to-morrow.”

“I won’t say I’m sorry,” she said, laughing again. “But I am very glad to have seen you. I always wondered about you. You are a curiosity.”

“Yes, you must find me so. A man who can resist your charms! The fact is, I can’t. This evening you are enchanting; and it is the first time I have been alone with you.”

She gave no heed to this; she turned away. But in a moment she came back and stood looking at me, and her beautiful solemn eyes seemed to shine in the dimness of the room.

“How *could* you treat my mother so?” she asked.

“Treat her so?”

“How could you desert the most charming woman in the world?”

“It was not a case of desertion; and if it had been, it seems to me she was consoled.”

At this moment there was the sound of a step in the antechamber, and I saw that the Countess perceived it to be Stanmer’s.

“That wouldn’t have happened,” she murmured. “My poor mother needed a protector.”

Stanmer came in, interrupting our talk, and looking at me, I thought, with a little air of bravado. He must think me, indeed, a tiresome, meddlesome bore; and, upon my word, turning it all over, I wonder at his docility. After all, he’s five-and-twenty; and yet, I *must* add, it *does* irritate me—the way he sticks! He was followed in a moment by two or three of the regular Italians, and I made my visit short.

“Good-bye, Countess,” I said; and she gave me her hand in silence. “Do *you* need a protector?” I added, softly.

She looked at me from head to foot, and then, almost angrily, “Yes, signore.”

But, to deprecate her anger, I kept her hand an instant, and then bent my venerable head and kissed it. I think I appeased her.

BOLOGNA, 15th.—I left Florence on the 12th, and have been here these three days. Delightful old Italian town; but it lacks the charm of my Florentine secret.

I wrote that last entry four days ago, late at night, after coming back from Casa Salvi. I afterwards fell asleep in my chair; the

night was half over when I woke up. Instead of going to bed, I stood a long time at the window, looking out at the river. It was a warm, still night, and the first faint streaks of sunrise were in the sky. Presently I heard a slow footstep beneath my window, and, looking down, made out, by the aid of a street lamp, that Stanmer was but just coming home. I called to him to come to my rooms, and, after an interval, he made his appearance.

“I want to bid you good-bye,” I said; “I shall depart in the morning. Don’t go to the trouble of saying you’re sorry. Of course you are not; I must have bullied you immensely.”

He made no attempt to say he was sorry, but he said he was very glad to have made my acquaintance.

“Your conversation,” he said, with his little innocent air, “has been very suggestive.”

“Have you found Camerino?” I asked, smiling.

“I have given up the search.”

“Well,” I said, “some day when you find that you have made a great mistake, remember I told you so.”

He looked for a minute as if he were try-

ing to anticipate that day by the exercise of his reason. "Has it ever occurred to you that *you* may have made a great mistake?"

"Oh yes; everything occurs to one, sooner or later."

That's what I said to him; but I didn't say that the question, pointed by his candid young countenance, had, for the moment, a greater force than it ever had before.

And then he asked me whether, as things had turned out, I myself had been so especially happy.

PARIS, *December 17.*—A note from young Stanmer, whom I saw in Florence—a remarkable little note, dated Rome, and worth transcribing:

"MY DEAR GENERAL,—I have it at heart to tell you that I was married a week ago to the Countess Salvi-Scarabelli. You talked me into a great muddle; but a month after that it was all very clear. Things that involve a risk are like the Christian faith; they must be seen from the inside.

"Yours ever, E. S.

"P.S.—A fig for analogies—unless you can find an analogy for my happiness!"

His happiness makes him very clever. I

hope it will last—I mean his cleverness, not his happiness.

LONDON, *April 19, 1877.*—Last night, at Lady H——’s, I met Edmund Stanmer, who married Bianca Salvi’s daughter. I heard the other day that they had come to England. A handsome young fellow, with a fresh, contented face. He reminded me of Florence, which I didn’t pretend to forget; but it was rather awkward, for I remember I used to disparage that woman to him. I had a complete theory about her. But he didn’t seem at all stiff; on the contrary, he appeared to enjoy our encounter. I asked him if his wife was there. I had to do that.

“Oh yes, she’s in one of the other rooms. Come and make her acquaintance; I want you to know her.”

“You forget that I do know her.”

“Oh no, you don’t; you never did.” And he gave a little significant laugh.

I didn’t feel like facing the *ci-devant* Scarrabelli at that moment; so I said that I was leaving the house, but that I would do myself the honor of calling upon his wife. We talked for a moment of something else, and then, suddenly breaking off and looking at me, he laid his hand on my arm. I must do him the justice to say that he looks felicitous.

“Depend upon it, you were wrong,” he said.

“My dear young friend,” I answered, “imagine the alacrity with which I concede it.”

Something else was again spoken of, but in an instant he repeated his movement. “Depend upon it, you were wrong.”

“I am sure the Countess has forgiven me,” I said, “and in that case you ought to bear no grudge. As I have had the honor to say, I will call upon her immediately.”

“I was not alluding to my wife,” he answered. “I was thinking of your own story.”

“My own story?”

“So many years ago. Was it not rather a mistake?”

I looked at him a moment; he’s positively rosy.

“That’s not a question to solve in a London crush,” and I turned away.

22d.—I haven’t yet called on the *ci-devant*. I’m afraid of finding her at home. And that boy’s words have been thrumming in my ears: “Depend upon it, you were wrong. Wasn’t it rather a mistake?” *Was I wrong? was it a mistake? Was I too cautious—too suspicious—too logical? Was it really a protector she needed?—a man who might have*

helped her? Would it have been for his benefit to believe in her? and was her fault only that I had forsaken her? Was the poor woman very unhappy? God forgive me, how the questions come crowding in! If I marred her happiness, I certainly didn't make my own. And I might have made it—eh? That's a charming discovery for a man of my age!

A BUNDLE OF LETTERS

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A BUNDLE OF LETTERS.

I.

FROM MISS MIRANDA HOPE, IN PARIS, TO
MRS. ABRAHAM C. HOPE, AT
BANGOR, MAINE.

September 5, 1879.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—

I have kept you posted as far as Tuesday week last, and, although my letter will not have reached you yet, I will begin another before my news accumulates too much. I am glad you show my letters round in the family, for I like them all to know what I am doing, and I can't write to every one, though I try to answer all reasonable expectations. But there are a great many unreasonable ones, as I suppose you know — not yours, dear mother, for I am bound to say that you never required of me more than was natural. You see you are reaping your reward; I write to you before I write to any one else.

There is one thing, I hope—that you don't show any of my letters to William Platt. If he wants to see any of my letters, he knows the right way to go to work. I wouldn't have him see one of these letters, written for circulation in the family, for anything in the world. If he wants one for himself, he has got to write to me first. Let him write to me first, and then I will see about answering him. You can show him this if you like; but if you show him anything more, I will never write to you again...

I told you in my last about my farewell to England, my crossing the Channel, and my first impressions of Paris. I have thought a great deal about that lovely England since I left it, and all the famous historic scenes I visited; but I have come to the conclusion that it is not a country in which I should care to reside. The position of woman does not seem to me at all satisfactory, and that is a point, you know, on which I feel very strongly. It seems to me that in England they play a very faded-out part, and those with whom I conversed had a kind of depressed and humiliated tone; a little dull, tame look, as if they were used to being snubbed and bullied, which made me want to give them a good shaking. There are a

great many people — and a great many things, too—over here that I should like to perform that operation upon. I should like to shake the starch out of some of them, and the dust out of the others. I know fifty girls in Bangor that come much more up to my notion of the stand a truly noble woman should take than those young ladies in England. But they had a most lovely way of speaking (in England), and the men are *remarkably handsome*. (You can show this to William Platt, if you like.)

I gave you my first impressions of Paris, which quite came up to my expectations, much as I had heard and read about it. The objects of interest are extremely numerous, and the climate is remarkably cheerful and sunny. I should say the position of woman here is considerably higher, though by no means coming up to the American standard. The manners of the people are in some respects extremely peculiar, and I feel at last that I am indeed in *foreign parts*. It is, however, a truly elegant city (very superior to New York), and I have spent a great deal of time in visiting the various monuments and palaces. I won't give you an account of all my wanderings, though I have been most indefatigable; for I am keeping, as I told

you before, a most *exhaustive* journal, which I will allow you the *privilege* of reading on my return to Bangor. I am getting on remarkably well, and I must say I am sometimes surprised at my universal good fortune. It only shows what a little energy and common-sense will accomplish. I have discovered none of those objections to a young lady travelling in Europe by herself of which we heard so much before I left, and I don't expect I ever shall, for I certainly don't mean to look for them. I know what I want, and I always manage to get it.

I have received a great deal of politeness—some of it really most pressing—and I have experienced no drawbacks whatever. I have made a great many pleasant acquaintances in travelling round (both ladies and gentlemen), and had a great many most interesting talks. I have collected a great deal of information, for which I refer you to my journal. I assure you my journal is going to be a splendid thing. I do just exactly as I do in Bangor, and I find I do perfectly right; and, at any rate, I don't care if I don't. I didn't come to Europe to lead a merely conventional life; I could do that at Bangor. You know I never *would* do it at Bangor; so it isn't likely I am going to make myself

miserable over here. So long as I accomplish what I desire, and make my money hold out, I shall regard the thing as a success. Sometimes I feel rather lonely, especially in the evening; but I generally manage to interest myself in something or in some one. In the evening I usually read up about the objects of interest I have seen during the day, or I post up my journal. Sometimes I go to the theatre; or else I play the piano in the public parlor. The public parlor at the hotel isn't much; but the piano is better than that fearful old thing at the Sebago House.

Sometimes I go down-stairs and talk to the lady who keeps the books—a French lady, who is remarkably polite. She is very pretty, and always wears a black dress, with the most beautiful fit; she speaks a little English; she tells me she had to learn it, in order to converse with the Americans who come in such numbers to this hotel. She has given me a great deal of information about the position of woman in France, and much of it is very encouraging. But she has told me, at the same time, some things that I should not like to write to you (I am hesitating even about putting them into my journal), especially if my letters are to be

handed round in the family. I assure you they appear to talk about things here that we never think of mentioning at Bangor, or even of thinking about. She seems to think she can tell me everything, because I told her I was travelling for general culture. Well, I *do* want to know so much that it seems sometimes as if I wanted to know everything; and yet there are some things that I think I don't want to know. But, as a general thing, everything is intensely interesting; I don't mean only everything that this French lady tells me, but everything I see and hear for myself. I feel really as if I should gain all I desire.

I meet a great many Americans, who, as a general thing, I must say, are not as polite to me as the people over here. The people over here — especially the gentlemen — are much more what I should call *attentive*. I don't know whether Americans are more *sincere*; I haven't yet made up my mind about that. The only drawback I experience is when Americans sometimes express surprise that I should be travelling round alone; so you see it doesn't come from Europeans. I always have my answer ready: "For general culture, to acquire the languages, and to see Europe for myself;" and

that generally seems to satisfy them. Dear mother, my money holds out very well, and it is real interesting.

II.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

September 16.

SINCE I last wrote to you I have left that hotel, and come to live in a French family. It's a kind of boarding-house combined with a kind of school; only it's not like an American boarding-house, or like an American school either. There are four or five people here that have come to learn the language—not to take lessons, but to have an opportunity for conversation. I was very glad to come to such a place, for I had begun to realize that I was not making much progress with the French. It seemed to me that I should feel ashamed to have spent two months in Paris and not have acquired more insight into the language. I had always heard so much of French conversation, and I found I was having no more opportunity to practise it than if I had remained at Bangor. In fact, I used to hear a great deal

more at Bangor, from those French Canadians that came down to cut the ice, than I saw I should ever hear at that hotel. The lady that kept the books seemed to want so much to talk to me in English (for the sake of practice, too, I suppose) that I couldn't bear to let her know I didn't like it. The chambermaid was Irish, and all the waiters were German, so that I never heard a word of French spoken. I suppose you might hear a great deal in the shops; only, as I don't buy anything—I prefer to spend my money for purposes of culture—I don't have that advantage.

I have been thinking some of taking a teacher, but I am well acquainted with the grammar already, and teachers always keep you bothering over the verbs. I was a good deal troubled, for I felt as if I didn't want to go away without having, at least, got a general idea of French conversation. The theatre gives you a good deal of insight, and, as I told you in my last, I go a good deal to places of amusement. I find no difficulty whatever in going to such places alone, and am always treated with the politeness which, as I told you before, I encounter everywhere. I see plenty of other ladies alone (mostly French), and they generally seem to

be enjoying themselves as much as I. But at the theatre every one talks so fast that I can scarcely make out what they say; and, besides, there are a great many vulgar expressions which it is unnecessary to learn. But it was the theatre, nevertheless, that put me on the track. The very next day after I wrote to you last I went to the Palais Royal, which is one of the principal theatres in Paris. It is very small, but it is very celebrated; and in my guide-book it is marked with *two stars*, which is a sign of importance attached only to *first-class* objects of interest. But after I had been there half an hour I found I couldn't understand a single word of the play, they gabbled it off so fast, and they made use of such peculiar expressions. I felt a good deal disappointed and troubled; I was afraid I shouldn't gain all I had come for. But while I was thinking it over—thinking what I *should* do—I heard two gentlemen talking behind me. It was between the acts, and I couldn't help listening to what they said. They were talking English, but I guess they were Americans.

“Well,” said one of them, “it all depends on what you are after. I'm after French; that's what I'm after.”

“Well,” said the other, “I'm after Art.”

“Well,” said the first, “I’m after Art too; but I’m after French most.”

Then, dear mother, I am sorry to say the second one swore a little. He said, “Oh, damn French!”

“No, I won’t damn French,” said his friend. “I’ll acquire it—that’s what I’ll do with it. I’ll go right into a family.”

“What family ’ll you go into?”

“Into some French family. That’s the only way to do—to go to some place where you can talk. If you’re after Art, you want to stick to the galleries; you want to go right through the Louvre room by room; you want to take a room a day, or something of that sort. But if you want to acquire French, the thing is to look out for a family. There are lots of French families here that take you to board and teach you. My second cousin—that young lady I told you about—she got in with a crowd like that, and they booked her right up in three months. They just took her right in, and they talked to her. That’s what they do to you; they set you right down, and they talk *at* you. You’ve got to understand them; you can’t help yourself. That family my cousin was with has moved away somewhere, or I should try and get in with them.

They were very smart people, that family. After she left, my cousin corresponded with them in French. But I mean to find some other crowd, if it takes a lot of trouble!"

I listened to all this with great interest, and when he spoke about his cousin I was on the point of turning around to ask him the address of the family that she was with; but the next moment he said they had moved away; so I sat still. The other gentleman, however, didn't seem to be affected in the same way as I was.

"Well," he said, "you may follow up that if you like; I mean to follow up the pictures. I don't believe there is ever going to be any considerable demand in the United States for French; but I can promise you that in about ten years there'll be a big demand for Art! And it won't be temporary, either."

That remark may be very true, but I don't care anything about the demand; I want to know French for its own sake. I don't want to think I have been all this while without having gained an insight. . . . The very next day I asked the lady who kept the books at the hotel whether she knew of any family that could take me to board and give me the benefit of their conversation. She instantly threw up her hands, with several little shrill

cries (in their French way, you know), and told me that her dearest friend kept a regular place of that kind. If she had known I was looking out for such a place, she would have told me before; she had not spoken of it herself, because she didn't wish to injure the hotel by being the cause of my going away. She told me this was a charming family, who had often received American ladies (and others as well) who wished to follow up the language, and she was sure I would be delighted with them. So she gave me their address, and offered to go with me to introduce me. But I was in such a hurry that I went off by myself, and I had no trouble in finding these good people. They were delighted to receive me, and I was very much pleased with what I saw of them. They seemed to have plenty of conversation, and there will be no trouble about that.

I came here to stay about three days ago, and by this time I have seen a great deal of them. The price of board struck me as rather high, but I must remember that a quantity of conversation is thrown in. I have a very pretty little room—without any carpet, but with seven mirrors, two clocks, and five curtains. I was rather disappointed after I arrived to find that there are several

other Americans here for the same purpose as myself. At least there are three Americans and two English people, and also a German gentleman. I am afraid, therefore, our conversation will be rather mixed, but I have not yet time to judge. I try to talk with Madame de Maisonrouge all I can (she is the lady of the house, and the *real* family consists only of herself and her two daughters). They are all most elegant, interesting women, and I am sure we shall become intimate friends. I will write you more about them in my next. Tell William Platt I don't care what he does.

III.

FROM MISS VIOLET RAY, IN PARIS, TO MISS
AGNES RICH, IN NEW YORK.

September 21.

WE had hardly got here when father received a telegram saying he would have to come right back to New York. It was for something about his business—I don't know exactly what; you know I never understand those things, and, what's more, I don't want to. We had just got settled at the hotel, in

some charming rooms, and mother and I, as you may imagine, were greatly annoyed. Father is extremely fussy, as you know, and his first idea, as soon as he found he should have to go back, was that we should go back with him. He declared he would never leave us in Paris alone, and that we must return and come out again. I don't know what he thought would happen to us; I suppose he thought we would be too extravagant. It's father's theory that we are always running up bills, whereas a little observation would show him that we wear the same old *rags* FOR MONTHS. But father has no observation; he has nothing but theories. Mother and I, however, have, fortunately, a great deal of *practice*, and we succeeded in making him understand that we wouldn't budge from Paris, and that we would rather be chopped into small pieces than cross that dreadful ocean again. So, at last, he decided to go back alone, and to leave us here for three months. But, to show you how fussy he is, he refused to let us stay at the hotel, and insisted that we should go into a *family*. I don't know what put such an idea into his head, unless it was some advertisement that he saw in one of the American papers that are published here.

There are families here who receive American and English people to live with them, under the pretence of teaching them French. You may imagine what people they are—I mean the families themselves. But the Americans who choose this peculiar manner of seeing Paris must be actually just as bad. Mother and I were horrified, and declared that *main force* should not remove us from the hotel. But father has a way of arriving at his ends which is more efficient than violence. He worries and fusses; he “nags,” as we used to say at school; and when mother and I are quite worn out, his triumph is assured. Mother is usually worn out more easily than I, and she ends by siding with father; so that at last, when they combine their forces against poor little me, I have to succumb. You should have heard the way father went on about this “family” plan; he talked to every one he saw about it; he used to go round to the banker’s and talk to the people there—the people in the post-office; he used to try and exchange ideas about it with the waiters at the hotel. He said it would be more safe, more respectable, more economical; that I should perfect my French; that mother would learn how a French household is conducted; that he should feel more

easy; and five hundred reasons more. They were none of them good, but that made no difference. It's all humbug his talking about economy, when every one knows that business in America has completely recovered, that the prostration is all over, and that *immense fortunes* are being made. We have been economizing for the last five years, and I supposed we came abroad to reap the benefits of it.

As for my French, it is quite as perfect as I want it to be. (I assure you I am often surprised at my own fluency, and, when I get a little more practice in the genders and the idioms, I shall do very well in this respect.) To make a long story short, however, father carried his point, as usual: mother basely deserted me at the last moment; and, after holding out alone for three days, I told them to do with me what they pleased! Father lost three steamers in succession by remaining in Paris to argue with me. You know he is like the parson in Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" — "e'en though vanquished, he could argue still." He and mother went to look at some seventeen families (they had got the addresses somewhere), while I retired to my sofa, and would have nothing to do with it. At last they made

arrangements, and I was transported to the establishment from which I now write you. I write you from the bosom of a Parisian *ménage*—from the depths of a second-rate boarding-house.

Father only left Paris after he had seen us what he calls comfortably settled here, and had informed Madame de Maisonrouge (the mistress of the establishment—the head of the “family”) that he wished my French pronunciation especially attended to. The pronunciation, as it happens, is just what I am most at home in; if he had said my genders or my idioms, there would have been some sense. But poor father has no tact, and this defect is especially marked since he has been in Europe. He will be absent, however, for three months, and mother and I shall breathe a little more freely; the situation will be less intense. I must confess that we breathe more freely than I expected in this place, where we have been for about a week. I was sure, before we came, that it would prove to be an establishment of the *lowest description*; but I must say that in this respect I am agreeably disappointed. The French are so clever that they know even how to manage a place of this kind. Of course it is very disagreeable to live with

strangers; but as, after all, if I were not staying with Madame de Maisonrouge I should not be living in the Faubourg St.-Germain, I don't know that, from the point of view of exclusiveness, it is any great loss to be here.

Our rooms are very prettily arranged, and the table is remarkably good. Mamma thinks the whole thing—the place and the people, the manners and customs—very amusing; but mamma is very easily amused. As for me, you know, all that I ask is to be let alone, and not to have people's society *forced upon me*. I have never wanted for society of my own choosing, and, so long as I retain possession of my faculties, I don't suppose I ever shall. As I said, however, the place is very well managed, and I succeed in doing as I please, which, you know, is my most cherished pursuit. Madame de Maisonrouge has a great deal of tact—much more than poor father. She is what they call here a *belle femme*, which means that she is a tall, ugly woman, with style. She dresses very well, and has a great deal of talk; but, though she is a very good imitation of a lady, I never see her behind the dinner-table, in the evening, smiling and bowing as the people come in, and looking all the while at

the dishes and the servants, without thinking of a *dame de comptoir* blooming in a corner of a shop or a restaurant. I am sure that, in spite of her fine name, she was once a *dame de comptoir*. I am also sure that, in spite of her smiles and the pretty things she says to every one, she hates us all, and would like to murder us. She is a hard, clever Frenchwoman, who would like to amuse herself and enjoy her Paris, and she must be bored to death in passing all her time in the midst of stupid English people who mumble broken French at her. Some day she will poison the soup or the *vin rouge*; but I hope that will not be until after mother and I shall have left her. She has two daughters, who, except that one is decidedly pretty, are meagre imitations of herself.

The "family," for the rest, consists altogether of our beloved compatriots, and of still more beloved Englishers. There is an Englishman here with his sister, and they seem to be rather nice people. He is remarkably handsome, but excessively affected and patronizing, especially to us Americans; and I hope to have a chance of biting his head off before very long. The sister is very pretty, and, apparently, very nice; but in costume she is Britannia incarnate. There is a

very pleasant little Frenchman—when they are nice they are charming—and a German doctor, a big blond man, who looks like a great white bull; and two Americans, besides mother and me. One of them is a young man from Boston—an æsthetic young man, who talks about its being “a real Corot day,” etc., and a young woman—a girl, a female, I don’t know what to call her—from Vermont, or Minnesota, or some such place. This young woman is the most extraordinary specimen of artless Yankeeism that I ever encountered; she is really too horrible. I have been three times to Clémentine about your underskirt, etc.

IV.

FROM LOUIS LEVERETT, IN PARIS, TO HARVARD TREMONT, IN BOSTON.

September 25.

MY DEAR HARVARD,—

I have carried out my plan, of which I gave you a hint in my last, and I only regret that I should not have done it before. It is human nature, after all, that is the most interesting thing in the world, and it only re-

veals itself to the truly earnest seeker. There is a want of earnestness in that life of hotels and railroad trains which so many of our countrymen are content to lead in this strange Old World, and I was distressed to find how far I myself had been led along the dusty, beaten track. I had, however, constantly wanted to turn aside into more unfrequented ways; to plunge beneath the surface and see what I should discover. But the opportunity had always been missing. Somehow, I never meet those opportunities that we hear about and read about—the things that happen to people in novels and biographies. And yet I am always on the watch to take advantage of any opening that may present itself; I am always looking out for experiences, for sensations—I might almost say for adventures.

The great thing is to *live*, you know—to feel, to be conscious of one's possibilities; not to pass through life mechanically and insensibly, like a letter through the post-office. There are times, my dear Harvard, when I feel as if I were really capable of everything—*capable de tout*, as they say here—of the greatest excesses as well as the greatest heroism. Oh, to be able to say that one has lived—*qu'on a vécu*, as they say here:

that idea exercises an indefinable attraction for me. You will, perhaps, reply, it is easy to say it; but the thing is to make people believe you! And then I don't want any second-hand, spurious sensations; I want the knowledge that leaves a trace—that leaves strange scars and stains and reveries behind it! But I am afraid I shock you; perhaps even frighten you.

If you repeat my remarks to any of the West Cedar Street circle, be sure you tone them down as your discretion will suggest. For yourself, you will know that I have always had an intense desire to see something of *real French life*. You are acquainted with my great sympathy with the French; with my natural tendency to enter into the French way of looking at life. I sympathize with the artistic temperament; I remember you used sometimes to hint to me that you thought my own temperament too artistic. I don't think that in Boston there is any real sympathy with the artistic temperament; we tend to make everything a matter of right and wrong. And in Boston one can't *live*—*on ne peut pas vivre*, as they say here. I don't mean one can't reside—for a great many people manage that; but one can't live æsthetically, I may almost venture to

say sensuously. This is why I have always been so much drawn to the French, who are so æsthetic, so sensuous. I am so sorry that Théophile Gautier has passed away; I should have liked so much to go and see him and tell him all that I owe him. He was living when I was here before; but, you know, at that time I was travelling with the Johnsons, who are not æsthetic, and who used to make me feel rather ashamed of my artistic temperament. If I had gone to see the great apostle of beauty, I should have had to go clandestinely—*en cachette*, as they say here; and that is not my nature; I like to do everything frankly, freely, *naïvement*, *au grand jour*. That is the great thing—to be free, to be frank, to be *naïf*. Doesn't Matthew Arnold say that somewhere—or is it Swinburne, or Pater?

When I was with the Johnsons everything was superficial; and, as regards life, everything was brought down to the question of right and wrong. They were too didactic; art should never be didactic; and what is life but an art? Pater has said that so well, somewhere. With the Johnsons I am afraid I lost many opportunities; the tone was gray and cottony, I might almost say woolly. But now, as I tell you, I have determined to

take right hold for myself; to look right into European life, and judge it without Johnsonian prejudices. I have taken up my residence in a French family, in a real Parisian house. You see I have the courage of my opinions; I don't shrink from carrying out my theory that the great thing is to *live*.

You know I have always been intensely interested in Balzac, who never shrank from the reality, and whose almost *lurid* pictures of Parisian life have often haunted me in my wanderings through the old, wicked-looking streets on the other side of the river. I am only sorry that my new friends—my French family—do not live in the old city—*au cœur du vieux Paris*, as they say here. They live only in the Boulevard Haussman, which is less picturesque; but in spite of this they have a great deal of the Balzac tone. Madame de Maisonrouge belongs to one of the oldest and proudest families in France; but she has had reverses, which have compelled her to open an establishment in which a limited number of travellers, who are weary of the beaten track, who have the sense of local color—she explains it herself, she expresses it so well—in short, to open a sort of boarding-house. I don't see why I should not, after all, use that expression, for

it is the correlative of the term *pension bourgeoise*, employed by Balzac in the "Père Goriot." Do you remember the *pension bourgeoise* of Madame Vauquer, *née* De Conflans? But this establishment is not at all like that: and, indeed, it is not at all *bourgeoise*; there is something distinguished, something aristocratic, about it. The Pension Vauquer was dark, brown, sordid, *graisseuse*; but this is in quite a different tone, with high, clear, lightly-draped windows, tender, subtle, almost morbid colors, and furniture in elegant, studied, reed-like lines. Madame de Maisourouge reminds me of Madame Hulot—do you remember "la belle Madame Hulot?"—in "Les Parents Pauvres." She has a great charm; a little artificial, a little fatigued, with a little suggestion of hidden things in her life; but I have always been sensitive to the charm of fatigue, of duplicity. . . .

I am rather disappointed, I confess, in the society I find here; it is not so local, so characteristic, as I could have desired. Indeed, to tell the truth, it is not local at all; but, on the other hand, it is cosmopolitan, and there is a great advantage in that. We are French, we are English, we are American, we are German; and I believe there are some Russians and Hungarians expected.

I am much interested in the study of national types; in comparing, contrasting, seizing the strong points, the weak points, the point of view of each. It is interesting to shift one's point of view—to enter into strange, exotic ways of looking at life.

The American types here are not, I am sorry to say, so interesting as they might be; and, excepting myself, are exclusively feminine. We are *thin*, my dear Harvard; we are pale, we are sharp. There is something meagre about us; our line is wanting in roundness, our composition in richness. We lack temperament; we don't know how to live: *nous ne savons pas vivre*, as they say here. The American temperament is represented (putting myself aside, and I often think that my temperament is not at all American) by a young girl and her mother, and another young girl without her mother—without her mother or any attendant or appendage whatever. These young girls are rather curious types; they have a certain interest, they have a certain grace; but they are disappointing too. They don't go far; they don't keep all they promise; they don't satisfy the imagination. They are cold, slim, sexless; the physique is not generous, not abundant; it is only the drapery—the skirts

and furbelows (that is, I mean in the young lady who has her mother)—that is abundant. They are very different: one of them all elegance, all expensiveness, with an air of high fashion, from New York; the other a plain, pure, clear-eyed, straight-waisted, straight-stepping maiden from the heart of New England. And yet they are very much alike, too—more alike than they would care to think themselves; for they eye each other with cold, mistrustful, depreciating looks. They are both specimens of the emancipated young American girl—practical, positive, passionless, subtle, and knowing, as you please, either too much or too little. And yet, as I say, they have a certain stamp, a certain grace; I like to talk with them, to study them.

The fair New-Yorker is sometimes very amusing; she asks me if every one in Boston talks like me—if every one is as “intellectual” as your poor correspondent. She is forever throwing Boston up at me; I can’t get rid of Boston. The other one rubs it into me too, but in a different way; she seems to feel about it as a good Mohammedan feels towards Mecca, and regards it as a kind of focus of light for the whole human race. Poor little Boston, what nonsense is talked

in thy name! But this New England maiden is, in her way, a strange type; she is traveling all over Europe alone—"to see it," she says, "for herself." For herself! What can that stiff, slim self of hers do with such sights, such visions! She looks at everything, goes everywhere; passes her way, with her clear, quiet eyes wide open, skirting the edge of obscene abysses without suspecting them; pushing through brambles without tearing her robe; exciting, without knowing it, the most injurious suspicions; and always holding her course, passionless, stainless, fearless, charmless! It is a little figure in which, after all, if you can get the right point of view, there is something rather striking.

By way of contrast, there is a lovely English girl, with eyes as shy as violets, and a voice as sweet! She has a sweet Gainsborough head, and a great Gainsborough hat, with a mighty plume in front of it, which makes a shadow over her quiet English eyes. Then she has a sage-green robe, "mystic, wonderful," all embroidered with subtle devices, and flowers and birds of tender tint; very straight and tight in front, and adorned behind, along the spine, with large, strange, iridescent buttons. The revival of taste, of

the sense of beauty, in England interests me deeply. What is there in a simple row of spinal buttons to make one dream—to *donner à rêver*, as they say here? I think that a great æsthetic renaissance is at hand, and that a great light will be kindled in England for all the world to see. There are spirits there that I should like to commune with; I think they would understand me.

This gracious English maiden, with her clinging robes, her amulets and girdles, with something quaint and angular in her step, her carriage—something mediæval and Gothic in the details of her person and dress—this lovely Evelyn Vane (isn't it a beautiful name?) is deeply, delightfully picturesque. She is much a woman—*elle est bien femme*, as they say here; simpler, softer, rounder, richer, than the young girls I spoke of just now. Not much talk—a great, sweet silence. Then the violet eye—the very eye itself seems to blush; the great shadowy hat, making the brow so quiet; the strange, clinging, clutching, pictured raiment! As I say, it is a very gracious, tender type. She has her brother with her, who is a beautiful, fair-haired, gray-eyed young Englishman. He is purely objective; and he, too, is very plastic.

V.

FROM MIRANDA HOPE TO HER MOTHER.

September 26.

YOU must not be frightened at not hearing from me oftener; it is not because I am in any trouble, but because I am getting on so well. If I were in any trouble, I don't think I should write to you; I should just keep quiet and see it through myself. But that is not the case at present; and if I don't write to you, it is because I am so deeply interested over here that I don't seem to find time. It was a real providence that brought me to this house, where, in spite of all obstacles, I am able to do much good work. I wonder how I find the time for all I do; but when I think that I have only got a year in Europe, I feel as if I wouldn't sacrifice a single hour.

The obstacles I refer to are the disadvantages I have in learning French, there being so many persons around me speaking English, and that, as you may say, in the very bosom of a French family. It seems as if

you heard English everywhere; but I certainly didn't expect to find it in a place like this. I am not discouraged, however, and I talk French all I can, even with the other English boarders. Then I have a lesson every day from Miss Maisonrouge (the elder daughter of the lady of the house), and French conversation every evening in the *salon* from eight to eleven, with Madame herself, and some friends of hers that often come in. Her cousin, Mr. Verdier, a young French gentleman, is, fortunately, staying with her, and I make a point of talking with him as much as possible. I have *extra private lessons* from him; and I often go out to walk with him. Some night, soon, he is to accompany me to the opera. We have also a most interesting plan of visiting all the galleries in Paris together. Like most of the French, he converses with great fluency, and I feel as if I should really gain from him. He is remarkably handsome, and extremely polite—paying a great many compliments, which I am afraid are not always *sincere*. When I return to Bangor, I will tell you some of the things he has said to me. I think you will consider them extremely curious and very beautiful *in their way*.

The conversation in the parlor (from eight to eleven) is often remarkably brilliant, and I often wish that you, or some of the Bangor folks, could be there to enjoy it. Even though you couldn't understand it, I think you would like to hear the way they go on, they seem to express so much. I sometimes think that at Bangor they don't express enough (but it seems as if, over here, there was less to express). It seems as if, at Bangor, there were things that folks never *tried* to say; but here, I have learned from studying French that you have no idea what you *can* say before you try. At Bangor they seem to give it up beforehand; they don't make any effort. (I don't say this, in the least, for William Platt, *in particular*.)

I am sure I don't know what they will think of me when I get back. It seems as if, over here, I had learned to come out with everything. I suppose they will think I am not sincere; but isn't it more sincere to come out with things than to conceal them? I have become very good friends with every one in the house—that is (you see, I *am* sincere), with *almost* every one. It is the most interesting circle I ever was in. There's a girl here, an American, that I don't like so much as the rest; but that is only because

she won't let me. I should like to like her, ever so much, because she is most lovely and most attractive; but she doesn't seem to want to know me or to like me. She comes from New York, and she is remarkably pretty, with beautiful eyes and the most delicate features. She is also remarkably elegant—in this respect would bear comparison with any one I have seen over here. But it seems as if she did not want to recognize me or associate with me—as if she wanted to make a difference between us. It is like people they call “haughty” in books. I have never seen any one like that before—any one that wanted to make a difference; and at first I was right down interested, she seemed to me so like a proud young lady in a novel. I kept saying to myself all day, “haughty, haughty,” and I wished she would not keep on so. But she did keep on; she kept on too long; and then I began to feel hurt. I couldn't think what I had done, and I can't think yet. It's as if she had got some idea about me, or had heard some one say something. If some girls should behave like that, I shouldn't make any account of it; but this one is so refined, and looks as if she might be so interesting, if I once got to know her, that I think about it a good

deal. I am bound to find out what her reason is, for of course she has got some reason; I am right down curious to know.

I went up to her to ask her, the day before yesterday; I thought that was the best way. I told her I wanted to know her better, and would like to come and see her in her room (they tell me she has got a lovely room), and that if she had heard anything against me, perhaps she would tell me when I came. But she was more distant than ever, and she just turned it off—said that she had never heard me mentioned, and that her room was too small to receive visitors. I suppose she spoke the truth; but I am sure she has got some reason, all the same. She has got some idea, and I am bound to find out before I go, if I have to ask everybody in the house. I *am* right down curious. I wonder if she doesn't think me refined, or if she had ever heard anything against Bangor? I can't think it is that. Don't you remember when Clara Barnard went to visit in New York, three years ago, how much attention she received? And you know Clara *is* Bangor to the soles of her shoes. Ask William Platt—so long as he isn't a native—if he doesn't consider Clara Barnard refined.

Apropos (as they say here) of refinement,

there is another American in the house—a gentleman from Boston—who is just crowded with it. His name is Mr. Louis Leverett (such a beautiful name, I think), and he is about thirty years old. He is rather small, and he looks pretty sick; he suffers from some affection of the liver. But his conversation is remarkably interesting, and I delight to listen to him, he has such beautiful ideas. I feel as if it were hardly right, not being in French; but, fortunately, he uses a great many French expressions. It's in a different style from the conversation of Mr. Verdier; not so complimentary, but more intellectual. He is intensely fond of pictures, and has given me a great many ideas about them which I should never have gained without him; I shouldn't have known where to look for such ideas. He thinks everything of pictures. He thinks we don't make near enough of them. They seem to make a good deal of them here; but I couldn't help telling him the other day that in Bangor I really don't think we do.

If I had any money to spend, I would buy some and take them back to hang up. Mr. Leverett says it would do them good—not the pictures, but the Bangor folks. He thinks everything of the French, too, and

says we don't make nearly enough of *them*. I couldn't help telling him, the other day, that, at any rate, they make enough of themselves. But it is very interesting to hear him go on about the French; and it is so much gain to me, so long as that is what I came for. I talk to him as much as I dare about Boston, but I do feel as if this were right down wrong—a stolen pleasure.

I can get all the Boston culture I want when I go back, if I carry out my plan, my happy vision, of going there to reside. I ought to direct all my efforts to European culture now, and keep Boston to finish off. But it seems as if I couldn't help taking a peep now and then, in advance, with a Bostonian. I don't know when I may meet one again; but if there are many others like Mr. Leverett there, I shall be certain not to want when I carry out my dream. He is just as full of culture as he can live. But it seems strange how many different sorts there are.

There are two of the English who, I suppose, are very cultivated too; but it doesn't seem as if I could enter into theirs so easily, though I try all I can. I do love their way of speaking; and sometimes I feel almost as if it would be right to give up trying to learn French, and just try to learn to speak our

own tongue as these English speak it. It isn't the things they say so much—though these are often rather curious—but it is in the way they pronounce and the sweetness of their voice. It seems as if they must *try* a good deal to talk like that; but these English that are here don't seem to try at all, either to speak or do anything else. They are a young lady and her brother. I believe they belong to some noble family. I have had a good deal of intercourse with them, because I have felt more free to talk to them than to the Americans, on account of the language. It seems as if, in talking with them, I was almost learning a new one.

I never supposed, when I left Bangor, that I was coming to Europe to learn *English!* If I do learn it, I don't think you will understand me when I get back, and I don't think you'll like it much. I should be a good deal criticised if I spoke like that at Bangor. However, I verily believe Bangor is the most critical place on earth; I have seen nothing like it over here. Tell them all that I have come to the conclusion that they are *a great deal too fastidious*. But I was speaking about this English young lady and her brother. I wish I could put them before you. She is lovely to look at, she seems so modest and

retiring. In spite of this, however, she dresses in a way that attracts great attention, as I couldn't help noticing when, one day, I went out to walk with her. She was ever so much looked at; but she didn't seem to notice it, until at last I couldn't help calling attention to it. Mr. Leverett thinks everything of it; he calls it the "costume of the future." I should call it rather the costume of the past—you know the English have such an attachment to the past. I said this the other day to Madame de Maisonrouge—that Miss Vane dressed in the costume of the past. "*De l'an passé, vous voulez dire?*" said Madame, with her little French laugh (you can get William Platt to translate this—he used to tell me he knew so much French).

You know I told you, in writing some time ago, that I had tried to get some insight into the position of woman in England, and, being here with Miss Vane, it has seemed to me to be a good opportunity to get a little more. I have asked her a great deal about it; but she doesn't seem able to give me much information. The first time I asked her, she told me the position of a lady depended upon the rank of her father, her eldest brother, her husband, etc. She told me her own position was very good, because her father was

some relation — I forget what — to a lord. She thinks everything of this; and that proves to me that the position of woman in her country cannot be satisfactory; because, if it were, it wouldn't depend upon that of your relations, even your nearest. I don't know much about lords, and it does try my patience (though she is just as sweet as she can live) to hear her talk as if it were a matter of course that I should.

I feel as if it were right to ask her as often as I can if she doesn't consider every one equal; but she always says she doesn't, and she confesses that she doesn't think she is equal to "Lady Something-or-other," who is the wife of that relation of her father. I try and persuade her all I can that she is; but it seems as if she didn't want to be persuaded; and when I ask her if Lady So-and-so is of the same opinion (that Miss Vane isn't her equal), she looks so soft and pretty with her eyes, and says, "Of course she is!" When I tell her that this is right down bad for Lady So-and-so, it seems as if she wouldn't believe me, and the only answer she will make is that Lady So-and-so is "extremely nice." I don't believe she is nice at all; if she were nice, she wouldn't have such ideas as that.

I tell Miss Vane that at Bangor we think

such ideas vulgar; but then she looks as though she had never heard of Bangor. I often want to shake her, though she *is* so sweet. If she isn't angry with the people who make her feel that way, I am angry for her. I am angry with her brother, too, for she is evidently very much afraid of him, and this gives me some further insight into the subject. She thinks everything of her brother, and thinks it natural that she should be afraid of him, not only physically (for this *is* natural, as he is enormously tall and strong, and has very big fists), but morally and intellectually. She seems unable, however, to take in any argument, and she makes me realize—what I have often heard—that if you are timid nothing will reason you out of it.

Mr. Vane, also (the brother), seems to have the same prejudices; and when I tell him, as I often think it right to do, that his sister is not his subordinate, even if she does think so, but his equal, and, perhaps, in some respects his superior; and that if my brother, in Bangor, were to treat me as he treats this poor young girl, who has not spirit enough to see the question in its true light, there would be an indignation meeting of the citizens to protest against such an outrage.

to the sanctity of womanhood — when I tell him all this, at breakfast or dinner, he bursts out laughing so loud that all the plates clatter on the table.

But at such a time as this there is always one person who seems interested in what I say—a German gentleman, a professor, who sits next to me at dinner, and whom I must tell you more about another time. He is very learned, and has a great desire for information. He appreciates a great many of my remarks, and after dinner, in the *salon*, he often comes to me to ask me questions about them. I have to think a little, sometimes, to know what I did say, or what I do think. He takes you right up where you left off, and he is almost as fond of discussing things as William Platt is. He is splendidly educated in the German style, and he told me the other day that he was an “intellectual broom.” Well, if he is, he sweeps clean; I told him that. After he has been talking to me, I feel as if I hadn’t got a speck of dust left in my mind anywhere. It’s a most delightful feeling. He says he’s an observer; and I am sure there is plenty over here to observe. But I have told you enough for to-day. I don’t know how much longer I shall stay here; I am getting on so fast

that it sometimes seems as if I shouldn't need all the time I have laid out. I suppose your cold weather has promptly begun, as usual; it sometimes makes me envy you. The fall weather here is very dull and damp, and I feel very much as if I should like to be braced up.

VI.

FROM MISS EVELYN VANE, IN PARIS, TO
THE LADY AUGUSTA FLEMING,
AT BRIGHTON.

PARIS, *September 30.*

DEAR LADY AUGUSTA,—

I am afraid I shall not be able to come to you on January 7, as you kindly proposed at Homburg. I am so very, very sorry; it is a great disappointment to me. But I have just heard that it has been settled that mamma and the children are coming abroad for a part of the winter, and mamma wishes me to go with them to Hyères, where Georgina has been ordered for her lungs. She has not been at all well these three months, and now that the damp weather has begun, she is very poorly indeed; so that last week

papa decided to have a consultation, and he and mamma went with her up to town and saw some three or four doctors. They all of them ordered the South of France, but they didn't agree about the place; so that mamma herself decided for Hyères, because it is the most economical. I believe it is very dull, but I hope it will do Georgina good. I am afraid, however, that nothing will do her good until she consents to take more care of herself; I am afraid she is very wild and wilful, and mamma tells me that all this month it has taken papa's positive orders to make her stop indoors.

She is very cross (mamma writes me) about coming abroad, and doesn't seem at all to mind the expense that papa has been put to—talks very ill-naturedly about losing the hunting, etc. She expected to begin to hunt in December, and wants to know whether anybody keeps any hounds at Hyères. Fancy a girl wanting to follow the hounds when her lungs are so bad! But I dare say that when she gets there she will be glad enough to keep quiet, as they say that the heat is intense. It may cure Georgina, but I am sure it will make the rest of us very ill.

Mamma, however, is only going to bring

Mary and Gus and Fred and Adelaide abroad with her: the others will remain at Kingscote until February (about the 3d), when they will go to Eastbourne for a month with Miss Philpotts, the new governess, who has turned out such a very nice person. She is going to take Miss Travers, who has been with us so long, but who is only qualified for the younger children, to Hyères, and I believe some of the Kingscote servants. She has perfect confidence in Miss P.; it is only a pity she has such an odd name. Mamma thought of asking her if she would mind taking another when she came; but papa thought she might object. Lady Battle-down makes all her governesses take the same name; she gives £5 more a year for the purpose. I forget what it is she calls them; I think it's Thompson (which to me always suggests a lady's maid). Governesses shouldn't have too pretty a name; they shouldn't have a nicer name than the family.

I suppose you heard from the Desmonds that I did not go back to England with them. When it began to be talked about that Georgina should be taken abroad, mamma wrote to me that I had better stop in Paris for a month with Harold, so that she could

pick me up on her way to Hyères. It saves the expense of my journey to Kingscote and back, and gives me the opportunity to "finish" a little, in French.

You know Harold came here six weeks ago, to get up his French for those dreadful examinations that he has to pass so soon. He came to live with some French people that take in young men (and others) for this purpose; it's a kind of coaching-place, only kept by women. Mamma had heard it was very nice; so she wrote to me that I was to come and stop here with Harold. The Desmonds brought me and made the arrangement or the bargain, or whatever you call it. Poor Harold was naturally not at all pleased; but he has been very kind, and has treated me like an angel. He is getting on beautifully with his French; for though I don't think the place is so good as papa supposed, yet Harold is so immensely clever that he can scarcely help learning. I am afraid I learn much less; but, fortunately, I have not to pass an examination, except if mamma takes it into her head to examine me. But she will have so much to think of with Georgina that I hope this won't occur to her. If it does, I shall be, as Harold says, in a dreadful funk.

This is not such a nice place for a girl as for a young man, and the Desmonds thought it *exceedingly odd* that mamma should wish me to come here. As Mrs. Desmond said, it is because she is so very unconventional. But, you know, Paris is so very amusing! and if only Harold remains good-natured about it, I shall be content to wait for the caravan (that's what he calls mamma and the children). The person who keeps the establishment, or whatever they call it, is rather odd, and *exceedingly foreign*; but she is wonderfully civil, and is perpetually sending to my door to see if I want anything. The servants are not at all like English servants, and come bursting in, the footman (they have only one) and the maids alike, at all sorts of hours, in the *most sudden way*. Then when one rings, it is half an hour before they come. All this is very uncomfortable, and I dare say it will be worse at Hyères. There, however, fortunately, we shall have our own people.

There are some very odd Americans here, who keep throwing Harold into fits of laughter. One is a dreadful little man, who is always sitting over the fire and talking about the color of the sky. I don't believe he ever saw the sky except through the window-

pane. The other day he took hold of my frock (that green one you thought so nice at Homburg) and told me that it reminded him of the texture of the Devonshire turf. And then he talked for half an hour about the Devonshire turf, which I thought such a very extraordinary subject. Harold says he is mad. It is very strange to be living in this way with people one doesn't know—I mean that one doesn't know as one knows them in England.

The other Americans (besides the mad gentleman) are two girls, about my own age, one of whom is rather nice. She has a mother; but the mother is always sitting in her bedroom, which seems so very odd. I should like mamma to ask them to Kingscote, but I am afraid mamma wouldn't like the mother, who is rather vulgar. The other girl is rather vulgar, too, and is travelling about quite alone. I think she is a kind of school-mistress; but the other girl (I mean the nicer one, with the mother) tells me she is more respectable than she seems. She has, however, the most extraordinary opinions—wishes to do away with the aristocracy, thinks it wrong that Arthur should have Kingscote when papa dies, etc. I don't see what it signifies to her that poor Arthur

should come into the property, which will be so delightful—except for papa dying. But Harold says she is mad. He chaffs her tremendously about her radicalism, and he is so immensely clever that she can't answer him, though she is rather clever too.

There is also a Frenchman, a nephew, or cousin, or something, of the person of the house, who is extremely nasty; and a German professor, or doctor, who eats with a knife, and is a great bore. I am so very sorry about giving up my visit; I am afraid you will never ask me again.

VII.

FROM LÉON VERDI, IN PARIS, TO PROSPER
GOBAIN, AT LILLE.

September 28.

MY DEAR PROSPER,—

It is a long time since I have given you of my news, and I don't know what puts it into my head to-night to recall myself to your affectionate memory. I suppose it is that when we are happy the mind reverts instinctively to those with whom formerly we shared our exultations and depressions, and

je t'en ai trop dit, dans le bon temps, mon gros Prosper, and you always listened to me too imperturbably, with your pipe in your mouth, your waistcoat unbuttoned, for me not to feel that I can count upon your sympathy to-day. *Nous en sommes nous flanquées des confidences*—in those happy days when my first thought in seeing an adventure *poindre à l'horizon* was of the pleasure I should have in relating it to the great Prosper. As I tell thee, I am happy; decidedly, I am happy, and from this affirmation I fancy you can construct the rest. Shall I help thee a little? Take three adorable girls . . . three, my good Prosper—the mystic number—neither more nor less. Take them and place thy insatiable little Léon in the midst of them! Is the situation sufficiently indicated, and do you apprehend the motives of my felicity?

You expected, perhaps, I was going to tell you that I had made my fortune, or that the Uncle Blondeau had at last decided to return into the breast of nature, after having constituted me his universal legatee. But I needn't remind you that women are always for something in the happiness of him who writes to thee—for something in his happiness, and for a good deal more in his

misery. But don't let me talk of misery now; time enough when it comes. *Ces demoiselles* have gone to join the serried ranks of their amiable predecessors. Excuse me—I comprehend your impatience. I will tell you of whom *ces demoiselles* consist.

You have heard me speak of my *cousine de Maisonrouge*, that *grande belle femme*, who, after having married, *en secondes nocces*—there had been, to tell the truth, some irregularity about her first union—a venerable relic of the old noblesse of Poitou, was left, by the death of her husband, complicated by the indulgence of expensive tastes on an income of 17,000 francs, on the pavement of Paris, with two little demons of daughters to bring up in the path of virtue. She managed to bring them up; my little cousins are rigidly virtuous. If you ask me how she managed it, I can't tell you: it's no business of mine, and, *a fortiori*, none of yours. She is now fifty years old (she confesses to thirty-seven), and her daughters, whom she has never been able to marry, are respectively twenty-seven and twenty-three (they confess to twenty-two and eighteen). Three years ago she had the thrice-blessed idea of opening a sort of *pension* for the entertainment and instruction of the blundering barbarians who

come to Paris in the hope of picking up a few stray particles of the language of Voltaire—or of Zola. The idea *lui a porté bonheur*; the shop does a very good business. Until within a few months ago it was carried on by my cousins alone; but lately the need of a few extensions and embellishments has caused itself to be felt. My cousin has undertaken them, regardless of expense; she has asked me to come and stay with her—board and lodging gratis—and keep an eye on the grammatical irregularities of her *pensionnaires*. I am the extension, my good Prosper; I am the embellishment! I live for nothing, and I straighten up the accent of the prettiest English lips. The English lips are not all pretty, Heaven knows, but enough of them are so to make it a gaining bargain for me.

Just now, as I told you, I am in daily conversation with three separate pairs. The owner of one of them has private lessons; she pays extra. My cousin doesn't give me a sou of the money; but I make bold, nevertheless, to say that my trouble is remunerated. But I am well, very well, with the proprietors of the other two pairs. One of them is a little *Anglaise* of about twenty—a little *figure de keepsake*; the most adorable miss

that you ever, or at least that I ever, beheld. She is decorated all over with beads and bracelets and embroidered dandelions; but her principal decoration consists of the softest little gray eyes in the world, which rest upon you with a profundity of confidence—a confidence that I really felt some compunction in betraying. She has a tint as white as this sheet of paper, except just in the middle of each cheek, where it passes into the purest and most transparent, most liquid, carmine. Occasionally this rosy fluid overflows into the rest of her face—by which I mean that she blushes—as softly as the mark of your breath on the window-pane.

Like every *Anglaise*, she is rather pinched and prim in public; but it is very easy to see that when no one is looking *elle ne demande qu'à se laisser aller!* Whenever she wants it, I am always there, and I have given her to understand that she can count upon me. I have every reason to believe that she appreciates the assurance, though I am bound in honesty to confess that with her the situation is a little less advanced than with the others. *Que voulez-vous?* The English are heavy, and the *Anglaises* move slowly, that's all. The movement, however, is perceptible; and once this fact is established, I

can let the pottage simmer. I can give her time to arrive, for I am overwell occupied with her *concurrentes*. *Celles-ci* don't keep me waiting, *par exemple!*

These young ladies are Americans, and you know that it is the national character to move fast. "All right—go ahead!" (I am learning a great deal of English, or, rather, a great deal of American.) They go ahead at a rate that sometimes makes it difficult for me to keep up.

One of them is prettier than the other; but this latter (the one that takes the private lessons) is really *une fille prodigieuse*. *Ah, par exemple, elle brûle ses vaisseaux, celle-la!* She threw herself into my arms the very first day, and I almost owed her a grudge for having deprived me of that pleasure of gradation, of carrying the defences one by one, which is almost as great as that of entering the place.

Would you believe that at the end of exactly twelve minutes she gave me a rendez-vous? It is true it was in the Galerie d'Apollon, at the Louvre; but that was respectable for a beginning, and since then we have had them by the dozen—I have ceased to keep the account. *Non, c'est une fille qui me dépasse.*

The little one (she has a mother somewhere, out of sight, shut up in a closet or a trunk) is a good deal prettier, and, perhaps, on that account *elle y met plus de façons*. She doesn't knock about Paris with me by the hour; she contents herself with long interviews in the *petit salon*, with the curtains half-drawn, beginning at about three o'clock, when every one is *à la promenade*. She is admirable, this little one; a little too thin, the bones rather accentuated, but the detail, on the whole, most satisfactory. *Non, elle est bien gentille*. And you can say anything to her. She takes the trouble to appear not to understand; but her conduct, half an hour afterwards, reassures you completely—oh, completely!

However, it is the tall one, the one of the private lessons, that is the most remarkable. These private lessons, my good Prosper, are the most brilliant invention of the age, and a real stroke of genius on the part of Miss Miranda! They also take place in the *petit salon*, but with the doors tightly closed, and with explicit directions to every one in the house that we are not to be disturbed. And we are not, my dear Prosper; we are not! Not a sound, not a shadow, interrupts our felicity. My *cousine*

is really admirable; the shop deserves to succeed.

Miss Miranda is tall and rather flat; she is too pale; she hasn't the adorable *rougeurs* of the little *Anglaise*. But she has bright, keen, inquisitive eyes, superb teeth, a nose modelled by a sculptor, and a way of holding up her head and looking every one in the face which is the most finished piece of impertinence I ever beheld. She is making the *tour du monde*, entirely alone, without even a *soubrette* to carry the ensign, for the purpose of seeing for herself *à quoi s'en tenir sur les hommes et les choses*—on *les hommes* particularly. *Dis donc*, Prosper, it must be a *drôle de pays* over there, where young persons animated by this ardent curiosity are manufactured! If we should turn the tables some day, thou and I, and go over and see it for ourselves! It is as well that we should go and find them *chez elles*, as that they should come out here after us. *Dis donc, mon gros Prosper. . . .*

VIII.

FROM DR. RUDOLF STAUB, IN PARIS, TO DR.
JULIUS HIRSCH, AT GÖTTINGEN.

MY DEAR BROTHER IN SCIENCE,—

I resume my hasty notes, of which I sent you the first instalment some weeks ago. I mentioned then that I intended to leave my hotel, not finding it sufficiently local and national. It was kept by a Pomeranian, and the waiters, without exception, were from the Fatherland. I fancied myself at Berlin, in Unter den Linden; and I reflected that, having taken the serious step of visiting the headquarters of the Gallic genius, I should try and project myself as much as possible into the circumstances which are in part the consequence and in part the cause of its irrepressible activity. It seemed to me that there could be no well-grounded knowledge without this preliminary operation of placing myself in relations, as slightly as possible modified by elements proceeding from a different combination of causes, with the spontaneous home-life of the country.

I accordingly engaged a room in the house of a lady of pure French extraction and education, who supplements the shortcomings of an income insufficient to the ever-growing demands of the Parisian system of sense-gratification by providing food and lodging for a limited number of distinguished strangers. I should have preferred to have my room alone in the house, and to take my meals in a brewery of very good appearance which I speedily discovered in the same street; but this arrangement, though very lucidly proposed by myself, was not acceptable to the mistress of the establishment (a woman with a mathematical head), and I have consoled myself for the extra expense by fixing my thoughts upon the opportunity that conformity to the customs of the house gives me of studying the table manners of my companions, and of observing the French nature at a peculiarly physiological moment, when the satisfaction of the *taste*, which is the governing quality in its composition, produces a kind of exhalation, an intellectual transpiration, which, though light, and perhaps invisible to a superficial spectator, is nevertheless appreciable by a properly adjusted instrument.

I have adjusted my instrument very sat-

isfactorily (I mean the one I carry in my good, square German head), and I am not afraid of losing a single drop of this valuable fluid, as it condenses itself upon the plate of my observation. A prepared surface is what I need, and I have prepared my surface.

Unfortunately, here also I find the individual native in the minority. There are only four French persons in the house—the individuals concerned in its management, three of whom are women, and one a man. This preponderance of the feminine element is, however, in itself characteristic, as I need not remind you what an abnormally developed part this sex has played in French history. The remaining figure is apparently that of a man, but I hesitate to classify him so superficially. He appears to me less human than simian, and whenever I hear him talk I seem to myself to have paused in the street to listen to the shrill clatter of a hand-organ, to which the gambols of a hairy *homunculus* form an accompaniment.

I mentioned to you before that my expectation of rough usage, in consequence of my German nationality, had proved completely unfounded. No one seems to know or to care what my nationality is, and I am treated, on the contrary, with the civility which

is the portion of every traveller who pays the bill without scanning the items too narrowly. This, I confess, has been something of a surprise to me, and I have not yet made up my mind as to the fundamental cause of the anomaly.

My determination to take up my abode in a French interior was largely dictated by the supposition that I should be substantially disagreeable to its inmates. I wished to observe the different forms taken by the irritation that I should naturally produce; for it is under the influence of irritation that the French character most completely expresses itself. My presence, however, does not appear to operate as a stimulus, and in this respect I am materially disappointed. They treat me as they treat every one else; whereas, in order to be treated differently, I was resigned in advance to being treated worse.

I have not, as I say, fully explained to myself this logical contradiction; but this is the explanation to which I tend. The French are so exclusively occupied with the idea of themselves that, in spite of the very definite image the German personality presented to them by the war of 1870, they have at present no distinct apprehension of its existence. They are not very sure that there are any

Germans; they have already forgotten the convincing proofs of the fact that were presented to them nine years ago. A German was something disagreeable, which they determined to keep out of their conception of things. I therefore think that we are wrong to govern ourselves upon the hypothesis of the *revanche*; the French nature is too shallow for that large and powerful plant to bloom in it.

The English-speaking specimens, too, I have not been willing to neglect the opportunity to examine; and among these I have paid special attention to the American varieties, of which I find here several singular examples. One of the most remarkable is a young man who presents all the characteristics of a period of national decadence, reminding me strongly of some diminutive Hellenized Roman of the third century. He is an illustration of the period of culture in which the faculty of appreciation has obtained such a preponderance over that of production that the latter sinks into a kind of rank sterility, and the mental condition becomes analogous to that of a malarious bog.

I learn from him that there is an immense number of Americans exactly resembling

him, and that the city of Boston, indeed, is almost exclusively composed of them. (He communicated this fact very proudly, as if it were greatly to the credit of his native country; little perceiving the truly sinister impression it made upon me.)

What strikes one in it is that it is a phenomenon, to the best of my knowledge—and you know what my knowledge is—unprecedented and unique in the history of mankind; the arrival of a nation at an ultimate stage of evolution without having passed through the mediate one; the passage of the fruit, in other words, from crudity to rottenness without the interposition of a period of useful (and ornamental) ripeness. With the Americans, indeed, the crudity and the rottenness are identical and simultaneous; it is impossible to say, as in the conversation of this deplorable young man, which is one and which is the other; they are inextricably mingled. I prefer the talk of the French *homunculus*; it is at least more amusing.

It is interesting in this manner to perceive, so largely developed, the germs of extinction in the so-called powerful Anglo-Saxon family. I find them in almost as recognizable a form in a young woman from

the State of Maine, in the province of New England, with whom I have had a good deal of conversation. She differs somewhat from the young man I just mentioned, in that the faculty of production, of action, is in her less inanimate; she has more of the freshness and vigor that we suppose to belong to a young civilization. But, unfortunately, she produces nothing but evil, and her tastes and habits are similarly those of a Roman lady of the lower Empire. She makes no secret of them, and has, in fact, elaborated a complete system of licentious behavior. As the opportunities she finds in her own country do not satisfy her, she has come to Europe "to try," as she says, "for herself."

It is the doctrine of universal experience professed with a cynicism that is really most extraordinary, and which, presenting itself in a young woman of considerable education, appears to me to be the judgment of a society.

Another observation which pushes me to the same induction—that of the premature vitiation of the American population—is the attitude of the Americans whom I have before me with regard to each other. There is another young lady here who is less abnormally developed than the one I have just

described, but who yet bears the stamp of this peculiar combination of incompleteness and effeteness.

These three persons look with the greatest mistrust and aversion upon each other; and each has repeatedly taken me apart and assured me, secretly, that he or she only is the real, the genuine, the typical American. A type that has lost itself before it has been fixed—what can you look for from this?

Add to this that there are two young Englanders in the house, who hate all the Americans in a lump, making between them none of the distinctions and favorable comparisons which they insist upon, and you will, I think, hold me warranted in believing that, between precipitate decay and internecine enmities, the English-speaking family is destined to consume itself, and that with its decline the prospect of general pervasiveness, to which I alluded above, will brighten for the deep-lunged children of the Fatherland!

IX.

MIRANDA HOPE TO HER MOTHER.

October 22.

DEAR MOTHER,—

I am off in a day or two to visit some new country; I haven't yet decided which. I have satisfied myself with regard to France, and obtained a good knowledge of the language. I have enjoyed my visit to Madame de Maisonrouge deeply, and feel as if I were leaving a circle of real friends. Everything has gone on beautifully up to the end, and every one has been as kind and attentive as if I were their own sister, especially Mr. Verdier, the French gentleman, from whom I have gained more than I ever expected (in six weeks), and with whom I have promised to *correspond*. So you can imagine me dashing off the most correct French letters; and if you don't believe it, I will keep the rough draft to show you when I go back.

The German gentleman is also more interesting the more you know him; it seems sometimes as if I could fairly drink in his

ideas. I have found out why the young lady from New York doesn't like me! It is because I said one day at dinner that I *admired* to go to the Louvre. Well, when I first came, it seemed as if I *did* admire everything!

Tell William Platt his letter has come. I knew he would have to write, and I was bound I would make him! I haven't decided what country I will visit yet; it seems as if there were so many to choose from. But I shall take care to pick out a good one, and to meet plenty of fresh experiences.

Dearest mother, my money holds out, and it is most interesting!

THE END.




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