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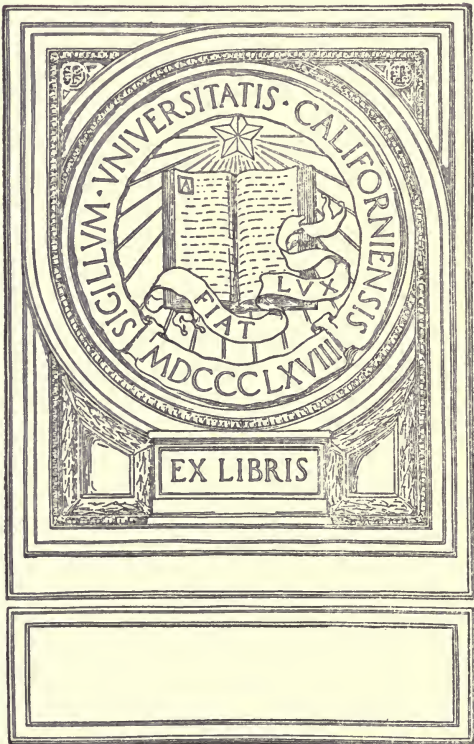
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SOCIAL
SILHOUETTES

A decorative border featuring a branch of a grapevine with clusters of grapes and leaves, rendered in a light, textured style.

EDGAR FAWCETT

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SOCIAL SILHOUETTES

(BEING THE IMPRESSIONS OF
MR. MARK MANHATTAN)

EDITED BY

EDGAR FAWCETT

AUTHOR OF "THE ADVENTURES OF A WIDOW," "TINKLING CYMBALS,"
"AN AMBITIOUS WOMAN," ETC.



BOSTON
TICKNOR AND COMPANY

1885

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To My Friend,

WHITELAW REID,

WHOSE VALUED ENCOURAGEMENT HAS STIMULATED ALL
THAT MAY BE OF WORTH IN THIS
VOLUME,

I CORDIALLY DEDICATE IT.

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SOCIAL SILHOUETTES.

I.

THE LADY WHO HATES TO BE FORGOTTEN.

I USED finely to take for granted, when I first cast the most casually observing eye upon social New York matters, that in the gaudy and dizzy whirl which is summed up by "going everywhere," the person or persons who went everywhere always felt the sure and keen spur of a permanent enjoyment. It did not seem credible that the special development which cynic, optimist, moralist, or denunciator have all frankly conceded to mean "society" could exist without a universal desire and aptitude for sincere recreation. Those who drank of the effervescing waters were thirsty, and they drank because they thirsted. I had no suspicion that they drank for any other reason. I was young, and I had not yet learned my fellowship with mortals who were like mills plashing in an almost empty stream, and productive of no appreciable grist. The apartments of my hosts

were as yet, for me, halls dedicated to unmixed diversion. I was prepared for inordinate folly and for untold flippancy. I prided myself upon being wise in my generation, and upon having my wisdom as ready and tangible as the modish flower in my button-hole. I felt within me a vast capacity for sneering and depreciating. I had cultivated a certain upward flourish of the hand toward my mustache, and a certain sarcastic elevation of the eyebrows. In my fresh and fervid adolescence, I took the scriptural Solomon at his word. It was all vanity. Of course it was. Miss Van Dam, who had a neck like a swan's, and little red-gold curls clustering dense and delightful just at the milky nape of it — who gave me a smile by six good degrees brighter than that which she gave to the famed despot of flirts, Dick Alleghaney — who had “talked the German” with me for three successive balls when at least twenty men would have mortgaged the gloss of their radiant boots to have had her as a partner — yes, even that sweet reigning bit of feminine deity, Miss Van Dam, was all vanity, like all the rest of it. Such was my superb, placid theory then. I knew very well that there were many people in the gay crowd who did not begin to get the nice zest from it that I secured. But I accepted unthinkingly the innocent belief that everybody attained some sort of positive pleasure. I never thought otherwise. It never occurred to me to think otherwise, at first. But ultimately I drifted into the habit of observ-

ing. Observation, for a man of brains, is a dangerous mental mood. With the average man of fashion it is quite harmless, and for reasons needless to state.

Those who affirm that I became an ironical and merciless critic of New York society because Lucy Van Dam rejected me and married that recent importation of English idiocy, Lord Slantingforehead, are at liberty to circulate their fatuous dogmas. I care nothing for such baseless gossip. I esteem it, indeed, a proof of weakness that I, Mark Manhattan, should even respond by vague allusion to their acrid aspersions. I have become an observer for various reasons. Prominent among these, I think, is a tendency toward preferring a sensible book and a big, elastic lounge in my nice suite of rooms at "The Bolingbroke," to inane babble and suicidal brandy-and-soda at the Metropolitan Club long after reputable hours. I suppose that if I had not become an observer, these impressions, which I now hand to my good friend, Mr. Edgar Fawcett (and which he will publish at his discretion, and with whatever alterations in the way of syntax or elimination his trusted taste may find proper), would never have been written.

My first exploit as regards pure and simple observation is directly traceable to Mrs. Ridgeway Bridgeway. No one had ever before known the Bridgeways until this lady insisted upon having their importance brilliantly transpire. It was said,

after she had successfully stormed the portals of patrician favor, that she had effected her determined purpose of "knowing people" because society, languidly gazing at her ubiquitous card, had half made up its mind that she must be a Ridgeway before soundly deciding that she was in reality a Bridgeway. Everybody had, of course, heard of the Ridgeways; there had been a Ridgeway in New York as far back as 1830. It was a pretty good distance to recollect, but a few Knickerbocker grandmothers had been able to revive their senile intelligences and state that a family of Ridgeways had once taken a house in Bond Street, had "got about," and had afterward gone abroad. The name had a certain half-spurious familiarity, drowsily indorsed by fading grandmammas. But Mrs. Bridgeway, who was not at all a Ridgeway, profited by this dubious investigation. There is no doubt that she rapidly secured a distinct prestige. She had a large basement house in Thirty-Seventh Street, and she issued cards to receptions and dinners with a grandly reckless hospitality. She introduced people to her husband, and in a measure Mr. Bridgeway (who was a pale, quiescent man, with a probably ample fortune made in some New England city) became mildly popular. But he never achieved the salience (I will not say popularity) of his wife. He was always a kind of matrimonial shadow. I can see him now, while I write these confessions, looming at six good feet of lank height, with his roseate baldness, his timid

articulation, his sallow visage, his tremulous eye-glasses, his long, thin, restless hands, and his perpetual roll of two rather glutinous, dead-gray eyes in the direction of his dominating wife.

Dominating, in a connubial sense, Mrs. Ridgeway Bridgeway indeed was. She had evidently long ago put her husband in the background, and he made a most conveniently neutral and unobtrusive one. But she herself was an immense and comprehensive foreground. Not physically speaking, but in the sense of a vivacious, feverish, and literally ebullient personality. She always impressed me as a woman on the verge of the emotional boiling-point. She had achieved her purpose when I met her. She had got into society. She knew pretty nearly everybody. I had the fancy that she was civil to me because I had not *got* into society, but because I had taken a hereditary position there, and did not only know pretty nearly everybody, but knew (or had the easy claim to know) all people who were of the least note. But if Mrs. Bridgeway was a strenuous snob, I never found it out. Others may have made such discovery; I did not. It takes a snob to catch a snob, as it takes a thief to catch a thief. Mrs. Bridgeway and I met, and became undoubted friends. I saw her everywhere. She never missed a kettledrum, even; there is enormous significance in that simple statement, for the leaves of Vallambrosa are not more multitudinous than at certain seasons are the kettledrums of New York. I once retrospec-

tively decided, at the end of a very festal February, that I had taken Mrs. Bridgeway in to dinner twelve distinct times since the thirty-first day of the preceding January. We were still excellent friends, but I had now fully recognized and accepted one unpalatable fact: Mrs. Bridgeway bored me. I failed wholly, at first, to comprehend why.

She was unquestionably pretty. Her figure was spare, and with a hint of angularity; but it was very graceful, and she knew how to move and pose it with a distinction that quite escaped glaring assertiveness. She matted her blond hair in a sort of fuzz low over her straight eyebrows and neatly-cut nose; she had eyes that were as actively gray as her husband's were tamely so; she possessed a mouth whose smile might have been more ample in its disclosures of white and shapely teeth, without losing that charm which hid in the winsome curl of its pink lips, or the nestling dimple at either of its corners. And yet this woman bored me. Not by any means that she was naturally stupid or dull; I had long ago decided that she was dowered with a capable brain. Not by any means that she chose heavy conversational subjects; she always, on the contrary, revealed a perfect willingness to discuss the most ordinary flippancies. Not by any means that she carried propriety to the verge of prudishness; for although her line, in this respect, was unmistakably drawn, it lay just at the bounds of a pretty and whole-

some female dignity. Why, then, did Mrs. Ridgeway Bridgeway bore me? I reflected; I ratiocinated; I summarized. And at length the truth burst, vivid and indisputable.

Mrs. Bridgeway was bored herself. There lay the succinct and lucid reason for my own *ennui*. She was living a life of complete insincerity. Her heart was not in her work. Her fashionable career was conducted on automatic and mechanical principles. She did not go out because she liked to go out. She went out because she had a morbid hatred of being forgotten.

The more I mused upon my discovery, the more convinced I became of its vital truth. And narrow watching served only to fix my belief. She enjoyed nothing in the sphere to which she had dedicated her best energies and talents. She found the pleasure of triumph, of having it said and accepted that she was *dans le monde*, but she found no other pleasure whatever. There was something almost ghastly in her rigid adherence to what she detested. She lacked the courage to fling away her hand and quit the game. She went on playing because others played — because it was the approved thing to do. She had been bitten by a craving to have herself conceded an aristocrat. She had lost the power of securing any comfort from obscurity. If the whole system of fashionable society had been swept out of existence, she would have rejoiced. While it continued, she must be in it and of it. She

secretly despised and loathed it. She thought it a vast pretension and sham. But she must pretend among the pretenders, and sham among the shamers.

I remember very clearly the special evening on which I resolved to tell Mrs. Bridgeway of my convictions. Of course, I meant to do so with all due courtesy and discretion. It was after a particularly splendid dinner, of which we had been common participants. When the gentlemen rejoined the ladies in the great drawing-room, I dropped into a soft easy-chair at Mrs. Bridgeway's side.

"You did not enjoy the dinner at all," I boldly began. "I was watching you across the table. You seemed *distraine*, out of spirits."

She looked at me with unconcealed surprise. Then she gave one of her high, clear, quick laughs. She always had the same nervous mode of laughing as of speaking.

"You were too far away," she said. "That accounted for everything."

"Ah, you don't mean what you tell me!" I ventured. "I am afraid, Mrs. Bridgeway," I went on with unwonted earnestness and gravity, "that you failed to enjoy the dinner for widely different reasons."

"What reasons?" she sharply asked.

"Very general ones, — those which make you fail to care for society under any of its conditions."

“Who told you that?” she questioned with tart briskness of tone.

“My own imagination is my sole informant,” I said, summoning all my amiability as I leaned several degrees nearer to where she sat.

She drew a long breath, as though one of relief, slightly closing her eyes. Presently she started into a new posture. She laid one slim hand, in its long glove, upon my arm, and then instantly withdrew it. She was looking at me with excessive earnestness.

“I see,” she said, low of voice but quite rapidly; “you have read me. You have found out my secret. I often have wondered that nobody ever did so before.”

“Is it, then, a secret?” I asked.

“Oh! a deep one. But I don’t mind letting you know it—especially since you have guessed it. I *don’t* enjoy society. I abominate society. There, the truth is laid bare.”

“But you go into society. You go more than most women.”

She shook her head in an odd way for an instant. I perceived, too, that she was covertly biting her lip. I realized that for once in her life of form and ceremony she was radically sincere. She no longer bored me now; she interested me extremely. I was prepared for her next words, when they sounded, fleet, somewhat faint, and rather close to my listening ear.

“I do go into society more than most women;

you are perfectly right in saying so. But I hate it, all the same. I can't leave it; it clings to me like a burr. It was a sort of craze with me at first. I sha'n't assume any airs with you; you're a Manhattan; you know I was n't anybody at the start. I began in fine earnest; I thought it splendid to be an aristocrat, to look down on the *bourgeoisie*, to shine among the social elect. Well, do I think so still? That is hard to answer. No and yes. I have my moments of vast democratic yearning. I have my convictions that I was never meant by nature to move along in the pompous and meaningless masquerade. Ah, Mr. Manhattan, I have my *resolves* also."

"Your resolves?" I queried.

"Yes. Indeed, yes! I determine, on a certain afternoon, let us say, to quit the whole nonsense—to make domesticity, repose, tranquillity, my future aim and incentive. But when it becomes evening, I ring for my maid; I have myself dressed for this or that ball and dinner. My good intentions vanish in an hour or two. And there is only one explanation of their departure. *I hate the idea of being forgotten.* I could manage my good intentions so easily if it were not for that one wretched proviso—*being forgotten!* You will say that such feeling implies a respect for the fashionable world. But I have n't the remotest respect for it. I think its frivolity disgusting and shocking. Yet I can't help dreading the idea of not being seen in it hereafter. There is a certain

vogue, *chic*, atmosphere, fascination, about it, that will not let me leave it, try hard as I may. And the whole matter comes simply to this: I hate to have it forget me. If I were sure it would still recollect me as one of its important members, I would forswear all its festivities now and forever."

"You want to reconcile distinction with oblivion," I said, perhaps a bit sententiously, but with no lack of sympathy in my response; for I had a strong sympathy with Mrs. Bridgeway from that moment. I had completely understood her. She ceased, thenceforward, to bore me. Indeed, she always afterward interested me, and we became better friends than ever.

Later on I grew convinced that Mrs. Bridgeway was, and still remains, a very typical personage. The woman who hates to be forgotten forms a most emphatic element of our modern society. She does not care a button for the high place that she has won, and yet you could not tempt her to abate one jot of her supremacy. She is not a votary of fashion; she is a self-made martyr to it. *Décolleté* as may be her robe of shimmering satin, or scant as may be her bosom-gear of tulle, there is always a little chafing undergarment hidden somewhere beneath, if only what one might describe as a chemisette of serge. She scans the morning paper, after every ball, with an avid eye. If her name is not mentioned, if her costume is not recorded, she suffers pangs of chagrin. Her

matutinal roll becomes lead, and her draught of fragrant coffee nauseous. Her crown is a thorny one, but she would not give the ache of its wounds for all the painless serenity you could offer. She has borne off her palm from the struggle, and though it now seems only a crackling, withered leaf, she prizes and cleaves to it. Her intoxication is severely and terribly simple; for the woman who hates to be forgotten dreads the peril of illicit flirtation, of reckless tampering with respectability. She knows that one false step may make her austere and irrevocably forgotten, and so she keeps her foot well aloof from any such imperilling abyss. For this reason her monotonous goings and comings have a doleful tedium. She is a voluntary captive who has long ago ceased to find one note of music in the clank of her own chains. But she cannot make the resolve to bravely rise up and revolt against their bondage. If she did so, her next step would be the attainment of freedom. And what would the poor creature do with her freedom, while incessantly stung by the thought of how all her former fellow-prisoners were quietly learning to forget that she had once shared their durance? *Learning to forget!* Ah, there would lie the worst of tortures for this woman who hates, above all things, to be forgotten!

II.

THE YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO SUCCEEDS.

BEFORE I began to observe in any critical sense, I had got to know Verplanck Schenectady very well indeed. From childhood I had always invested his name with a certain reverence, which even now, when I am thirty-four, I find that no amount of republican radicalism and mature common sense will entirely overcome. My poor, dear dead mother used to say to me, when I was surely not older than twelve, "Mark, I hear that young Verplanck Schenectady has such excellent manners. His mamma is very proud of him. She thinks he is going to be a great credit to the family."

As years went on, this promise became fulfilment. I don't know how Schenectady acquitted himself at Oxford; I did not go to Oxford myself, but to Harvard. And a short time after his return from abroad I met him. We were re-introduced, one evening, at the Metropolitan Club. He was nearly six feet tall, and excessively blond. He had a pale face, with well-chiselled features, and a pair of mild, dark-blue eyes. His hair, brushed in two straight lines from its central parting rigidly over either temple till it met either ear, expressed

the sheen and compactness of metal. You had no sense of any individual hairs; it was all a miracle of glossy attrition. He wore trousers and coat of a faultless fit; they had vertical creases in them, here and there, as if they had been recently exhumed from a foreign trunk, though perhaps this effect was due solely to the sedulous iron of his valet. He held a pair of tawny dogskin gloves in one white hand, on which glittered more than a single costly ring. It had been roundly stated at the Metropolitan, not many hours ago, that he was the undoubted possessor of seventy thousand dollars a year, through his long-deceased father. "I know it for a fact—a *fact*, sir," had affirmed old Vanderveer, who is the most dogmatic of our many elderly genteel club gossips. "But I have long been a bristling sceptic with relation to all Vanderveer's "facts," and his present confidence of statement made me feel secure in placing Schenectady's income at no higher than thirty thousand dollars.

The young Oxonian shook hands with me very warmly. "I'm awfully glad to meet you, old chap," he said, with the most broadly British of accents. He talked, afterward, for a good hour. At the close of our converse I found it impossible to recollect anything that my companion had said. I could recollect his manner, however, and the guttural drawl of his pronunciation, very clearly. He seemed, indeed, to express nothing except manner and pronunciation. He was not by any means

a caricature; I should deplore implying that he was in the faintest degree a caricature. The effect which he produced upon me was one of prodigious and overwhelming gentlemanliness. I can find no other word than "gentlemanliness," and yet I do not like the word. I have a fancy that an absolute gentleman should never give you the idea that he is one at all, — that the belief of his being one should rest latent and unobtrusive until some suggested doubt calls it into activity, and then that your assent should be cordially vehement, while you remembered just how perfect a gentleman he was. But with Schenectady, the assertion, in this respect, became professionally manifest. He shifted his feet, clad in their effulgent pointed shoes; he squared his elbows, in their tight-fitting broad-cloth; he changed the postures of his well-attired person; he slapped his leg carelessly with his grasped dogskin gloves; he threw back his small head, balustraded at the throat by its high, stiff collar, — he did, in short, every minor thing of this unimportant kind, as though the movement were a result of some special patrician art and tact, and had been studiously cultivated, as well, from vigilant watching of some valued model. He seemed to me like a person of the most placidly magnificent confidence in his own correctness. There was something enviable about his disciplined security. All his little acts and gestures appeared to have a pretty *cachet* upon them, like the embroidered crest on a handkerchief. He

employed the words "beastly," and "swagger," and "filthy," and "jaw," and "rot," with so much evident serene certainty in their entire fitness for polite usage, that I began to acquire a reflective confidence myself in his flawless behavior. He must be right, I thought, because he was so calmly convinced of his own decorum. If he had put his feet upon the back of a chair, or dropped a fragmentary cigarette into my hock-and-seltzer, or skilfully upset one of our democratic spittoons by a single kick, I don't know that I should have viewed these acts at all harshly, in my present enthralled mood. A little later, it is true, I might have questioned the exact English authority for their commission; but perhaps even then I should have had a lurking faith that they had all been done before by exalted transatlantic dignitaries. Schenectady drank nothing himself but Vichy. "Thanks, no," he said, when asked to partake of stronger refreshment; and the laconic refusal seemed to convey an impressive hint that he drank Vichy at this particular hour from no inclination so trivial as a merely personal one, but because the drinking of it just now was sanctioned by lofty foreign precedent. "I got away with a lot of tippie where I dined," he was good enough to add; and this kindly admission saved me, in the nick of time, from a sense of unpardonable inebriety.

But distance dissolved the aristocratic spell he had wrought over me. I reflected upon him; I

subjected him (if the words do not carry an inevitable sarcasm) to careful analysis. It was, indeed, like tearing a butterfly to pieces — and one whose dust was gold-dust. On what subjects had he spoken, after all? A severe effort of recollection, during which memory pushed its reluctant probe through a solid crust of assertive mannerism, assured me, that, outside of horses, dogs, “huntin’,” “yachtin’,” “rowin’,” “drivin’ a coaoch,” and “boxin’,” Mr. Schenectady had touched upon no appreciable theme. His individuality was summed up for me in three items: clothes, deportment, and athletics. Take from him these three cults, and he would be as much among what we call the lower order of animal life as were any of his own favorite brutes. And yet, possessing these cults, he was so representatively human! Of intellect, in its better grades, he gave not a sign. How he had ever managed to have himself graduated at Oxford seemed a marvel to me. This conjecture also woke my sharp curiosity. When we next met, which was soon, I had grown invulnerable to his charms of artificial etiquette and punctilio, although I had already heard his praises as “a devilish fine fellow,” and “a real thoroughbred gentleman,” sounded widely throughout the club. But I was not to be blinded by popular adulation. I wanted to see and judge and deduce for myself. I had more than once heard it said of handsome, fashionable fools, over-fligreed with smart embellishments, that “they could be clever enough when

they chose," or that "they had plenty of brains if they only cared to use them, and don't you make any mistake." I had grown seriously doubtful, of late, as to any men possessing brains and not caring to use them. I had stoutly made up my mind that all men who possess brains are quite sure to show and to use them, unless they are mad enough to drug them with drink, or luckless enough to have them enfeebled by illness.

I determined to confirm my theory now, or to see it shattered. The next time that Schenectady and I were seated together, I made a polite conversational plunge. "Did you read hard while you were at Oxford?" I asked. I had not been a member of the Metropolitan ten years for nothing. The Anglican current sets our way with a pretty steady flow. I had long since learned that to "read hard" at an English university is its insular slang for respecting academic requirements.

Schenectady showed surprise. I had not seen him show any till now. It was a very felicitous and graceful quality of surprise, like everything else about him. I am not sure just how he accomplished it, whether with a wave of his cigarette, or a dexterous, transient little flurry of his trim eyebrows. But it was very nice. If I had still staid under his spell, I should have felt a dumb longing to have him teach me how one could get to be surprised in the same elegant way.

"Oh, I read rurther hard toward the larst," he presently replied. "I had an awfully good chap

for mee tewter. By Jove! what a good chap he was! One o' the best riders in the country."

"I was n't aware," said I, mildly satirical, "that good riding is one of the qualifications for a degree at Oxford."

"Oh, bless my soul, no! But Ferguson — that was his name, Ferguson, an awfully good chap — was n't merely a scholar, you know."

"Ah," I murmured, with a sly emphasis that doubtless passed unnoticed, "not *merely* a scholar, eh?"

"Oh, Lord, no! He was a frightful sport. He had n't a shillin' of his own, poor devil, and had to caoach us 'varsity men for a livin'."

"And to pass your final examination, I suppose you were required to be conversant with the most difficult of the classic authors, — Tacitus, Terence, Sophocles, Æschylus, Theocritus, and others?"

Schenectady crossed his legs. He was in evening dress, and as he made this slight motion a little shimmer of light went down the broad silken braid that overlay one seam of his black trousers, meeting with a sort of tributary sympathy the luminous shoe at its limit.

"Oh, yes!" he said. "A feller's got to be up on a lot o' stuff like that. I can't think haow I quite managed it, now it's all over."

"Have you retained a preference for any one particular author?" I relentlessly inquired.

He burst into a laugh, which was very dulcet and mellow, and showed his white teeth most advantageously.

“Oh, by Jove! they ’re all the same to *me*,” he jovially declared. “I say, I carn’t remember one from another, now I ’ve done with ’em all.”

“Really?” I interpolated with amiable gravity.

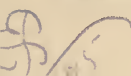
“Quite so, I assshore you. I slipped through, some ’aough. I carn’t think, now it’s all parst, just haow I did it. I farney it was Ferguson’s extrawdnerry caoachin’. We had an American chap in my yeah, however, who carst nearly all of us into the shade. He took a double-ferst. I used to tell ’im he ’d redeemed the country, and arsk him for a bit of his laurels to weah in mee coat. I said it for charf, you know. His name was Pratt; he came from somewer in the West — I think it was Cincinnaati. He was awfully clever, but a most horrid duffer — not a gentleman a bit, don’t you know? He used to wear false cuffs and collars to his sherts, and change ’em of a mornin’ without changin’ the shert. The other chaps would charf ’im abaout that, but I never did. I used to tell ’em it was none of their business whether he were derty or no. But, on mee werd, I never saw ’im derty, though he said he read so hard that he could n’t spare the time for his barth — and a lot o’ rubbish like that.”

“If he took a double-first,” I said (with perhaps a little unconscious fatigue that some of my acquaintances have construed as irony), “let us hope he is now remorsefully bathing three or four times a day.”

From that evening I gave up Schenectady in

despair. I satisfied myself that all the historic loveliness of Oxford had fallen as flat upon him as the night dews of Parnassus might fall upon a browsing goat. After this I got to asking myself how the girls of New York society would receive him. Would he be able to hold his own among those five or eight elect belles who were in the habit of lifting their pretty noses disdainfully at every male admirer except a scant and superfine twenty? Would he "take," as the phrase goes? There have been cases where millionnaires did not take. I ran over in my mind such cases, and found that I could remember only five. One stuttered agonizingly, another lisped abnormally, a third was semi-idiotic, a fourth suffered from partial blindness, and a fifth limped with hereditary chronic gout. Schenectady, I concluded, after mature reflection, would stand a chance of at least fair social success.

But I soon found myself keenly in error. Schenectady began his career of fashion at a small german, given by his august reigning aunt, Mrs. Poughkeepsie. He had not been in the rooms more than half an hour before I saw him visibly beamed upon by the one supreme belle of the season. After this he did not merely succeed; he was literally overwhelmed with admiration. Femininity laid its choicest tributes at his shining feet. He was thought faultless, exquisite, delightful, superb. He never dined at the Metropolitan; invitations to dine elsewhere were showered upon



him. He rarely had occasion to do more than exchange a civil word or two with a wall-flower: the splendid exotics, the Maréchal Niels and Jacqueminots of enchanting maidenhood, were but too happy to bend toward him the full favor of their exceptional and brilliant bloom. He had come, he was seen, and he had conquered. I should also add that he was heard before conquering. I often marvelled how he could have been heard to any conceivable advantage. But, marvel as I would, his victory was in every sense a certainty.

It was a victory that set me thinking. I had conclusively proven to myself that, apart from his happy, graceful air, this young gentleman was a mental vacancy. He expressed nothing, he represented nothing, he imparted nothing, he decided nothing. All that sways and impels our great century was a sealed book and a dead letter to his drowsy, flaccid, viscous intelligence. He had been in near contact with great minds, and had brought away not even a glimmering reflection of their greatness. "How scorching," I mused, "is the comment his income of flattery makes upon the tone and quality of that social body which so bows before him! If he is the man who succeeds in New York society, how worthless are the equipments required for success! In Europe this triumph of manner over matter, this petty surrender of sense to superficiality, this worship of natal accident and physical daintiness in the place of solid merit and mental superiority, might be well

enough. They have cringed so long, over there, to mindless despotism and titled incompetence, that all the follies they commit are clothed with a sort of indulgent romanticism, like the ivy on their feudal prisons and the gloom about their great ecclesiastical paintings. But I don't think that the brave little "Mayflower" steered its pale, half-starved inmates through bleak storm of angry seas to help them find an ancestry for such idle dallyers as Verplanck Schenectady. I think we meant more than this when we bled at Lexington. I believe we meant more when we held our own at Yorktown. But, after all, we Americans have grown old enough to have learned about the ingratitude of republics. Perhaps Schenectady — the man who succeeds — is one of its living incarnations.

III.

THE DEMOCRATIC ARISTOCRAT.

WHENEVER I think of Mrs. Abercrombie Smith, I am always reminded of Mohammed's coffin, with its legendary suspension between heaven and earth. And my reason for such reminder is by no means a recondite or a subtle one. Mrs. Abercrombie Smith (it has never occurred within the recollection of any friend or acquaintance of this lady to have heard her called the plain "Smith" without the ornamenting and qualifying "Abercrombie") has incessantly refused to be socially defined. I don't assert that she has consciously opposed such definition. It is my belief that she has allowed herself to drift securely along on the current of her own complex personality.

I call it a complex personality, because she is a matron of no single discernible aim. With other women of her distinct place and rank, you can tell just what they desire to accomplish. They are somebody, and they propose to remain somebody. Empowered with precious prerogative, they retain this through an unflinching determination. You cannot woo or wheedle them into an imprudent concession. Their drawing-room is their castle,

and to storm their castle is to receive a prompt broadside of imposing rebuke. They have their unpurchasable smiles, their incorruptible clemencies. Whom they will to receive, they receive; and, if by strategy you enforce from them reluctant hospitalities, they know how to revenge themselves by a future disfavor as polite as it is relentless.

But with Mrs. Abercrombie Smith I found this order of affairs most amusingly reversed. She was about five and forty when I first met her, and handsome with that mature beauty which an unaggressive *embonpoint*, a pair of unfaded hazel eyes, two positively time-defying dimples and a complexion of soft memorial bloom, will make any woman of her admitted years. There was no question about her right to rule and reign. She was a Smith, but a special, particular, and even phenomenal Smith. Multitudes of other Smiths had obscurely lived and died. But her late husband, who had also lived and died, had been the near relative of untold Knickerbocker grandees. I never saw him; he was dead before my time, so to speak. Nor have I ever known just why he was so remarkable and exceptional a Smith; but I assure the incredulous reader of these confessions that there is not a grain of doubt regarding his flawless origin. I cannot record who Mrs. Abercrombie Smith had herself been. Derogatory whispers may once have sounded, but these had long ago drowsed into respectful silence. The overshadowing power of her matrimonial name

may have covered any sort of hereditary origin. It is my private opinion that Mrs. Abercrombie Smith sprang from a very unknown stock. I like to take this view, since it accounts for and justifies the sinewy republicanism in her which I am on the verge of chronicling.

She went everywhere. Nobody ever presumed to question her right to go everywhere. Here lay the pregnant and bitter source of her continuous quarrel with society. It was a silent and furtive quarrel, but it was none the less a pronounced one. She ought to have been very popular, and she could certainly have made herself so, with a little circumspect effort, among the magnates who now wholly mistrusted and dreaded her. I soon got to know at least ten feminine leaders who would with joy have erased her name from their visiting books. But this was not possible. She was too important an aversion. Everybody would instantly have understood why they had dropped her. Such a proceeding would have raised a hue and cry from which the boldest legitimist in our dear democratic city modestly shrank. It would have been to dislocate a pillar of society; the whole classic edifice would have quivered from the shock. She must be endured, therefore, and courteously detested.

She represented a perpetual irreparable breach in the walls of aristocracy. She was a foe in the camp of the select. If she had worked her treasons insidiously, from without, she might have been met by a wrathful phalanx of opponents. But she

worked them openly, from within. She was incessantly bidding the enemy enter, with a cool courage that exasperated while it nonplussed her natural allies. She never proclaimed herself either forgetful or scornful of what is meant by caste. She simply assumed toward the whole matter a kind of rebellious innocence, blent with a good deal of sweet yet secure dignity. If you put to her an adroit question or two on the subject of her "position," she would respond with the nonchalant serenity of a queen explaining some nice point of usage to an interrogative courtier.

"She has always got some nobody in tow," said a man of the gilded cliques to me, when I first asked for a direct definition of her unconvention-
alism. "It is quite as often a man as a woman. She gets people from the highways and hedges, and drags them into decent places. She is forever making society swallow somebody whom it does n't want to swallow. I don't wonder that she tires its abused larynx. Some day it ought to revolt against another plebeian morsel. Some day I suppose it will, and, for my part, I earnestly hope so."

A little later, one of my aunts—a certain Mrs. Rensselaer Rivington—said to me, with a gentle wail in her usually decorous tones, "My dear Mark, I do think that something *should* be done to stop that dreadful Mrs. Abercrombie Smith."

"To stop her, aunt?" I inquired iteratively.

"Yes. You know I am going to give my Gertrude a Blue Room next Monday." (This was in

the days of the old Fourteenth Street Delmonico's, when a "Blue Room" at that charming edifice of festivity meant a small evening entertainment whence all the social strugglers were proscribed.) "Of course I wanted it to be nice. But here is Mrs. Abercrombie Smith, who writes me, requesting invitations for her 'two dear, intimate young friends, Miss Nutt and Mr. Blumenthal.' There are certainly two hundred people, of the sort that one knows and visits, whom I would much rather have than either Miss Nutt or Mr. Blumenthal — whoever they may be, with their outrageous names. But my affair was to be a small one, and Mrs. Abercrombie Smith was fully aware of it. Yet she forces me to receive two strangers. It is simply abominable! Still, I might have been prepared for her. She has done this horrid kind of thing for years."

I followed up my aunt's grievance, so to speak, and observed the lady and gentleman whom Mrs. Abercrombie Smith had thrust upon her unwilling civilities. The first was a pale girl with a rectilinear band of flaxen hair across either temple, and a notably demoralized way of carrying her fan. She looked as if she might have come yesterday from Topeka. Her large, mild blue eyes stared upon her brilliant surroundings as though she were at some kind of gaudy provincial fair, and every guest were a decorated booth of special equipment. I had a sensation, quite disconnected with irony, of asking her whether she would permit me to procure

her a tumbler of lemonade. Her loose, wide smile had so saccharine a suggestion, that I am sure I should have ordered the lemonade to be nice and sweet. As for Mr. Blumenthal, he had a keen, smooth-shorn face, whose small features, all strikingly close together, gave the appearance of their having fled from some sort of affright occasioned by his large, expansive ears; it looked, indeed, as if his ears were something which had carried a threat, like the inclosing vans of a carnivorous bird, and thus caused a huddling together of brows, nose, mouth, and even forehead as well. To narrate more briefly, both of Mrs. Abercrombie Smith's companions had the air of not being either native or educated to their present surroundings. But their suave patron apparently failed to perceive this. She introduced them, as it were, broadcast. She insisted upon their recognition, for the time at least.

They were short-lived favorites. I soon afterward met her with a professorial person whose riotous amber beard incited the most uncharitable thoughts regarding his evening toilet, and whose green glasses made two specks of dense shadow on all the airy, light-tinted gayety which prevailed. The new *protégé* was a person of scholarly distinction. All her comrades, of whatever sex, were usually distinguished. They were always from "somewhere," and had either done something extraordinary themselves or boasted connection with friends or ancestors who had a formidable claim upon peculiar heed.

But Mrs. Abercrombie Smith had another glaring fault. She did not merely insist upon your reception of her variant constituency of followers. She wanted you to meet within her own drawing-rooms whomsoever she might chance to invite there. "It is a perfect rabble," declared Caroline Ten Eyck to me, while we stood together in a throng assembled by this unparalleled hostess. "All sorts of people are here. There is danger of meeting your tailor or your dressmaker."

I could not help somewhat satirically answering that this might be the reason for some well-known masculine and feminine faces being absent.

"Oh, that's just like you!" exclaimed Caroline, who has always accused me of cynicism, and who is some sort of a cousin of mine, and therefore privileged to break an occasional lance upon my defensive cuirass. "But you know perfectly what I mean, Mark. A few minutes ago I saw a man with a lavender satin cravat."

"Is there any dark crime in wearing a lavender satin cravat of an evening?" I replied.

Caroline tossed her comely auburn head, which has such a curly grace just where the peachy tint of her temple meets the dry, crisp tresses themselves.

"O Mark!" she cried irritably, "I did n't say it was a *dark* crime! Call it whatever *color* you please."

"I'll call it a lavender crime, then," I returned flippantly.

Caroline is clever. She looked at me with her lips prettily pursed, for an instant, and then said, slightly misquoting Tennyson:

“I object to the person’s cravat, all the same. ‘There was that across his throat which one would hardly care to see.’”

I laughed, enjoying the bright nonsense, and encouraged her in her random misquotation.

“Come, now, my sweet Lady Clara Vere de Vere,” I said, “let me tell you that you put strange fancies in my head.”

Caroline eyed me quizzically. “Don’t ask me to teach the orphan boy to read, or the orphan girl to sew, Mark,” she exclaimed, “for I do both. I belong to a mission school, which includes” —

“Refrain from vaunting your public charities,” I interrupted, “and give our hostess, Mrs. Abercrombie Smith, a little more private charity. She is, in her way, a reformer, Caroline, quite as much and — pardon me if I presume to say it — considerably more than you are.”

My cousin gave a haughty smile. “I can’t see a trace of reformation,” she exclaimed, “in ridiculously mixing sets.”

“Of course you can’t see it. I wish you could.”

“How nice of you to pity me!” softly cried Caroline, who had her hot funds of spite. “Everybody knows, Mark, that you are getting to be a — what is the new word? — crank. You are said to read Herbert Spencer and Duxley and Harwin, and all those awful atheists, on the sly. You are

said to be"— Here my lovable, winsome little cousin paused, and gave me a glance that was meant to be pensively reproachful. "You are said to be—oh, yes, Mark! you *are* said to be an actual out-and-out *Free-thinker!*"

Under this *anathema maranatha*, I should perhaps have had the civility to succumb; but I did not, and went on talking with Caroline in a way that no doubt shocked her vastly, and was in dread disaccord with the merry waltz music not far distant.

Yet of course my cousin was right, from the point of view of modern New York society, in what we call its upper realms. Thus judged, Mrs. Abercrombie Smith did have a rabble there that evening.

But I don't think that because a good many of the unfamiliar figures of the men could n't ride a steeple-chase at Jerome Park in the garb of jockeys and be rapturously applauded for doing so they were necessarily deserving of this truly brutal substantive. Nor do I think that because not a few of the ladies were dressed with vague regard for the sovereign mode of the hour they were for this reason contemptible. But I did not tell Caroline Ten Eyck so. I find there is no earthly use of telling any one so who is clutched by the mordant preference as to "who is who" and "what is what."

I afterward felt a solid, wholesome respect for Mrs. Abercrombie Smith. I could not help paying her this allegiance. There was something

almost epical in the way she ignored the disapproving groans of those who constantly surrounded her. All the great poets have won their renown, posthumous as it has usually been, from daring popular disesteem. Mrs. Abercrombie Smith was not a great poet; I am convinced that a large share of mundane prose entered into her well-governed and cordial disposition. But she was, nevertheless, whether consciously or unconsciously, a perceptible and uncorrupted reformer.

Nothing could make her swerve. She continued her career as a democratic aristocrat with unaltering consistency. She directed the bright, firm ray of her genial smile well over the reach of her detractors, but she somehow managed to turn it, with a glowing condescension, down into the eyes of all her friends.

She remains supreme until the present day. She is the visible lament of the exclusionists. As I wrote before, she pushes from within, and not from without. But she is comfortably and ineradicably within. She is like the presidential levee at Washington: you may dislike her, but you can't abolish her.

It seems to me that she is by no means the necessary evil which I hear her so frequently called. I should name her, on the contrary, an accidental but cogent good. She might have been an uncompromising and feudal snob. She remains, and will remain, a generous-handed dispenser of social passports.

Long may she *viser* them with the sunny and careless indulgence!

If she were outside of the small, restricted world in which her intrinsic gifts of dominance yet keep her a power, — if she were, in fact, a political head or a stanch pioneer in any great question of popular zeal and heat, — I should fling off my cap to her (though it is n't a cap, but only a glossy, modern-shaped cylinder of a "stove-pipe") and cry with stout ardor, like any of the historic rebels we read about, "Long live Mrs. Abercrombie Smith, the democratic aristocrat!"

IV.

THE YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO ASPIRES.

I SOON found that New York society represents continuous change. It is like that development from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous of which we are so ably told in Spencerian philosophy. Certain portions are in an incessant state of disintegration, it is true, wrought by all kinds of circumstantial causes, from a departure abroad to a financial felony, from a commercial disaster to the great levelling ill of death itself. But these adverse forces, affecting the whole system destructively, only confirm the justice of my evolutionary parallel. As fast as fashion dies, so fast is it born again. As fast as it fades, so fast does it bud. Newly-gotten wealth and newly-acquired ambition feed it with an unfailling current. It always has its people who are "beginning to get about." It does not know the solid debt which it owes to this auxiliary power. But I suppose its perennial ingratitude is only a part of the entire wise and beautiful plan. As individuals, we rarely cast a thought upon the wholesome fuel of air which we breathe into our lungs, — how many times out of every twenty-four hours, I am not physiologist

enough to record. And no doubt aristocracy would be darkly shocked if it were once called upon to realize its truly vital kinship with plebeianism. Perhaps its dainty nerves merit better treatment than even a vague allusion to this frigid fact. There is something so actually grisly, for the loyal scion of caste, in being reminded that such loud, rude thoroughfares as the Bowery and Third Avenue and Avenue A contain not a few living ancestors of exquisite future ball-givers and ball-goers! I confess that the contemplation of so austere a truth must be horrifying to any well-ordered patrician mind. And yet I, who like to face all social truths, cannot help feeling it extremely probable that my grandchildren may one day intermarry (and perhaps somewhat triumphantly at that) with the grandchildren of the man who shovels snow from my smart doorstep in winter for fifty cents, or of the shabbier fellow-citizen who dumps my auroral ashes into his cart for no wage whatever.

When Mr. Lysander Dingley first swam into my ken, I recollect wondering whether his energetic fins were not of a most humble inherited fibre. But I afterward discovered that this young gentleman had followed a more gradual impulse of progress, and that, instead of springing directly from "the people," he had been saved the calamity of this direct contact by having had a single generation kindly intervene.

The senior Dingley had made a neat fortune as

a retail furrier, and was quite destitute of proud aspirations. I never saw him, but I can picture him as philosophically settling down among the soft accommodations of his mink-skins, ermines and sables, to ignore those rigorous exposures which, for a man who would scale, late in life, the bleak ramparts of aristocracy, are sometimes little less than arctic. But his son, Lysander, had no such placid wisdom. Lysander had been festally inclined from the age of one and twenty. The facts which I am about to narrate concerning his career were secured some time after my first acquaintance with him; but as a faithful biographer, who would nothing extenuate nor set down aught in malice, I shall give them their early and due place in his written history.

Like so many of our New York youths, Lysander had entered Columbia College at the absurdly immature age of sixteen. He was quick and clever at his studies, and rapidly took a high place in his class. He was very ambitious, too, of all sorts of distinction. There were some sorts of distinction regarding which he had only the most indefinite views. At the same time he had the generally definite view that he wished to excel wherever excellence was possible. Early in his freshman year, Lysander made a distressing discovery. He had joined the wrong secret society. In Columbia this has a most piercing significance. At his especial period there were two dominant and co-regent secret societies in the college, whose

members were mostly chosen for claims of lofty and influential parentage. The young men belonging to these two organizations (whose private deeds or misdeeds were wrapped in severe darkness) wore little gold enamelled pins on the lappets of their waistcoats, bearing two or three Greek letters of most ennobling importance. Members of the other, less-honored bands wore little pins as well; but between their sacred insignia and those of the truly elect dwelt chasms of difference. It was like comparing the Garter and the Golden Fleece with certain obscure European orders. Lysander Dingley soon felt that he was emphatically one of those who had neither been called nor chosen. But it was too late for rebellion or restitution. He had taken his weird vows of eternal allegiance to the Sigma Omega, and a Sigma Omega he must remain till Doom's Day — or at least Commencement Day — and even after. He rapidly perceived that he had but one consolatory course left. He must be stoutly loyal to the Sigma Omegas, and yet seek outside affiliation and intimacy with the sleek, dapper, dandified young Omicron Psis and Beta Alphas. But in this nice scheme he utterly failed. He gradually recognized the bitter and galling fact of his stigmatized position. Harry Van Corlear and Johnny Weehawken were not to be propitiated. He murmured to them in the class-room the required second-aorist which saved them from recitational disgrace; he whispered to them with adroit benevo-

lence, while standing at a contiguous blackboard, the magic "open sesame" to some stubborn enigma in Legendre. But his good offices were of no avail. Harry and Johnny always accepted such favors with easy suavity. They scarcely ever had time to study; they were immensely fashionable, in their beardless, adolescent way; they had repeatedly been to some "affair" the night before, and would sometimes drop into the college grounds with a rather stale and limp-looking rosebud for a *boutonnière*, as if they had selected it from a number of others procured in the german recently danced. They thought Lysander wholly interested in his courtesies, which he indeed was, and so chose to value them accordingly. Harry was an Omicron Psi, and Johnny was a Beta Alpha, and they were both unconscionable young snobs, after that remorseless and reasonless manner in which only very young persons, of whatever sex, dare to be snobs.

Lysander Dingley used to find himself wishing that he had been where those wilted rosebuds had been the night before, and wishing it with a force that gradually took an almost monomaniacal form. Most metropolitan colleges are of slight academic worth. They are colleges which are in reality mere high schools, as often has been said. The *esprit de corps* among their disciples is a shadow, and the professorial influence, discipline, supervision, becomes of necessity a nominal form. Lysander might have left Dartmouth or Rutgers a

sensible fellow. He was graduated from Columbia—a pushing, striving, selfish time-server, bitten by the feverish desire to do nothing better in the world than get himself “asked out.” He stood as a conspicuous and lamentable type. I feel sure that his kind are being graduated every year just as he was, and preparing for an ignoble struggle with useless assailants, just as he did. He means one of our many astonishing republican evils. Of course he is not to be blamed. He is not a cause: he is an effect. You may tell me, if you please, that you have found him in Europe. To this I will only answer, that if he is found there after six or seven centuries, all the more reason why he should *not* be found here after one century.

His first efforts were pitiable. I used to witness some of them: so I can now continue this precious memoir with renewed confidence. It had transpired that he was the son of “Dingley the Fur-Man.” Everybody knew or had known “Dingley the Fur-Man.” He had warmed more of our New York dowagers in their sleighs and coaches than it would be easy to tell. This was doubtless only an added reason why they should receive his son coldly. And they certainly did so.

But Lysander persevered. I saw and closely watched him while he was persevering. At this time he had a tall and rather well-made figure, a supple and decisive way of moving about a room, and an apparel of distinct elegance. But his face was plainly against him. It has been left last in

my description, and deserves to be. It was ruggedly irregular of feature, and its nose had an abnormal aquiline curve. Its lack of beauty was indeed a presence of ugliness. It was a sharp and incisive impediment against success. "How homely he is!" became a current comment as soon as he had compelled people to admit that he was at all. But his genial and full smile, disclosing unflawed teeth, was by no means against him; it was indeed with him, and he smiled very often.

I used to wonder how he could smile so amply, considering his constant rebuffs. "I will not know him," said Rose Rivington to me one evening, with her facile curl of as pretty a lip as ever nature gave to any girl yet on the verge of her twenty-third birthday. "I think a line should be drawn somewhere, and I propose to draw it just there."

But Rose was asked to know him before that evening was over, and murmured an unwilling consent. He had got somebody to present him. He was always getting somebody to present him. I was standing not far away from Rose, and witnessed the introduction. He asked her to dance—and, by the way, he danced extremely well. Rose refused. I caught the words "so tired" from her languid lips, and that was all. About ten minutes later I saw her dancing with that caddish little Englishman, Tom Steeplechaser, whose only possible matrimonial *renseignement* was that he

could introduce any rich American girl who might marry him to a Scotch third-cousin, Lord Willothewisp. But still later, during the progress of the german (which, by the way, our hostess kindly asked me to lead myself), I saw Lysander Dingley approach the haughty Rose and "take her out" with a splendid amiability. Lysander danced himself, that evening, with Lucy Hackensack, — a young girl of supernatural height and proverbial stupidity. Poor Miss Lucy was a wall-flower of six acknowledged seasons, and had gone home partnerless from more balls than it would be decorous or even gallant for me now to chronicle, especially if I had kept count of their mortifying number.

The season ended. Lent laid its lulling shadow upon all festivity. Lysander Dingley had aspired, and had not succeeded. We all knew this. And yet we all conceded the fact that somehow — it was useless to unravel the complicated problem of "how" — Lysander had managed to make his face and figure and name a fact, if not a factor, in polite select assemblages.

During the ensuing summer, his father died. It afterward fell to my knowledge that "Dingley the Fur-Man" had been very parsimonious with his son as regarded all personal expenditures. But at last the old gentleman was as dead as one of his own minks or otters. Lysander, long motherless, was left the whole bulk of the fortune. I realized something which had not previously dawned upon

me. Lysander, though eager enough to thrust himself among the holy of holies, had never, to my knowledge, laid more than a very occasional bunch of Cornelia Cook or *Gloire de Paris* roses at the feet of any lady — no, not even at those of the ostracized Lucy Haekensack. But now — in perhaps the last week of Lent — who but Rose Rivington herself should say to me at an afternoon tea, whither I had rather aimlessly strolled:

“I got such lovely flowers from poor Mr. Dingley this morning. I have a few of them in my dress now, — this great *Gloire de Paris* kind. Don't you think them sweet? Poor fellow, he's feeling so dreadfully about his father!”

I looked at Rose firmly. She is a sort of cousin of mine; all the Rivingtons are more or less related to all the Manhattans. But Rose did not flinch. That amber eye of hers, which has in it the ray of the topaz, and so matches her sweet, negligent opulence of tawny hair, wore as cool a gleam under her Parisian bonnet as though I had just ventured something blankly commonplace, like the prophecy of an early spring. Rose was the heiress of at least three millions. Everybody knew the blocks of houses owned by her dead grandfather, of whom she was the sole grandchild. Her refusal, two seasons ago, of Lord Romp, eldest son of the Duke of Pomp, is almost a matter of history.

“Do — do you actually *like* Lysander Dingley?” I murmured, almost aghast.

Rose froze me with one of her polar looks. "I think Mr. Dingley charming," she said with an audacity that had in it the element of the sublime. "And I do hope, Mark," she went on, assuming a manner of amazing confidence, "that if you have any disagreeable things to say about him, you will reserve them for some one who is not his *friend*."

A little later Johnny Weehawken (now a full-grown grandee of four and twenty) said to me one afternoon in the hall of the Metropolitan Club:

"Just been to such a lovely breakfast at Delmonico's. Ly Dingley gave it."

"Yes?" I murmured, raising my brows, involuntarily surprised. (Lysander had now become "Ly" to this Columbian foe — this relentless Beta Alpha of former days.) "Was it a large breakfast?" I questioned.

"Not very," came the drawled response. "Miss Rose Rivington was there, and the two Desbrosses girls, and a little Miss Riverside (of the Hudson-Riversides, you know, just back from abroad), and Harry Van Corlear."

"Harry Van Corlear!" I thought. "The relentless, the implacable Omicron Psi!"

But I said nothing, and presently Johnny Weehawken resumed, while lighting a new cigarette: "Poor Ly made it small because he's in mourning for his gov'nor, don't you know?"

"Dingley the Fur-Man," I said, without betraying myself by the quiver of a muscle.

“Eh? Ah? Yes,” said Johnny, puffing industriously at his cigarette. But I saw that he did not like it at all. I saw that he thought I was in very bad taste. Still, he soon broke into a little compulsory laugh, and clapped me on the shoulder. “I say, Mark!” he exclaimed, “we must n’t think of all that stuff any more. Ly’s an awfully good chap. We were in college together — Columbia, you know. I always liked him then, and stood up for him. And, by Jove! I’m going to do it now.”

Johnny Weehawken looked me full in the eyes as he made this last remark. He did not flinch any more than Rose Rivington had flinched. His gaze was honesty itself.

I have concluded that the quailing eye is all a myth. There is nothing so honest as the calm, clear, frank gaze of the man who knows he is acting the part of a fraud, and that you seriously suspect it, and that he must do his best to make you believe the contrary. . . . Next autumn, in a dog-cart of surpassing nicety and style, attired in the deepest mourning, and having Miss Rose Rivington beside him, I saw Lysander Dingley at the Jerome Park races.

I am always rather abrupt with Rose. Perhaps I have always presumed too boldly upon our kinship. However this may be, I got near her at the Grand Stand, and contrived to have a little old-time sort of chat.

“Are you bringing that fellow Dingley out in

good earnest?" I asked her presently with a cousinly familiarity.

Rose turned her back upon me, and would not speak to me for the rest of that day.

The autumn faded into winter. When the entertainments began, I met Lysander Dingley everywhere. His father had left him, they said, two millions. I halved the two millions, as I always do, in cases of florid report. One was comfortable, at least.

I expressed this sentiment openly to Johnny Weehawken at the club. I still opposed the son of "Dingley the Fur-Man." Besides, I had heard of how attentive he was to Rose. And in spite of all intense republican theories, when it comes to mating our kinsmen or kinswomen to people "outside our set," the very best of us rationalists and radicals *will* recoil.

"Oh, Ly's got two good millions, Mark, and don't forget it," said Johnny, illuming a new cigarette. "And don't *you* run down his fortune, of all men. Have n't you heard the news?"

"What news?" I queried.

"Why, his engagement. He's engaged to your cousin, the great heiress and belle, Rose Rivington. It was announced at the Fyshkilles' dinner to-night. Absolute fact, my dear fellow; I've just come from there. I assure you there's no mistake."

There *was* no mistake, as I soon learned. I kept a very straight face while I afterward congratu-

lated Lysander Dingley. I tried to keep a very straight face, also, while I congratulated Rose. But perhaps I broke down a little in this last attempt.

Several months later, when the marriage took place, I found myself called to Washington — or was it Philadelphia? But I sent Rose a wedding present. It was as handsome a sable muff as I could procure.

But Mrs. Lysander Dingley never acknowledged the gift, though I made sure that she had received it.

V.

THE YOUNG LADY WITH A MOTHER.

I SOMETIMES think that there is a mighty amount of surreptitious heroism in the world. Especially in the narrow sphere allotted to women, does one often find indomitable traits of pluck, nerve, energy, which might have made an actual historic fame for their possessors if directed in channels of philanthropy, ethics, or even, let us say, of righteous revolt. But feminine capability is too often like a plant of hardy and wholesome vigor, that, instead of striking deep roots into as much rich earth as it may choose for sustenance, must bound its desires by the cylindrical duress of a common flower-pot. It frequently does very well in the flower-pot; it thrives there with a wondrous thrift; it unfolds for us leafage of unrivalled texture, and stars its greenery with perfect blooms. But we feel, nevertheless, how stouter might have been the fibres of its stem, how much more luxuriant and assertive the whole personality of the plant.

Miss Fanny Williams has always suggested to me this idea of cramped opportunities. I have always thought that she did wonderfully well in her flower-pot, but have concluded that she would

have flourished more brilliantly, if not better, in a wide, unrestricted soil. I am afraid that those who care to observe this little fragment which I shall now present from her brave and noteworthy biography, will be prone to accuse me of very cynic and worldly views. They will declare her as duteous in her way as if she had been a new Jeanne d'Arc. But after all this has been admitted of Miss Fanny, the stern fact still remains that her allotted world was a narrow world, and that her efforts were under the ban of a severe circumstantial veto.

She was scarcely more than eighteen when I first met her. It was quite a fortuitous meeting. I had spent a day of successful and exhilarating blue-fishing with my friend Jack Gramercy in his yacht, on Long Island Sound. At evening we disembarked just where Jack's beautiful estate of White Sand shelves its pure beach down to the sea, from a lawn so green and trim that I fancy a stray daisy would glare discreditably on its neat slopes, and entered his ancestral home by that dire portico of his, with its appalling Grecian pillars of white-painted wood. Jack knows very well how I loathe that portico, reared as an insult to architecture by one of his Knickerbocker grandfathers. He used to argue with me that it was not dire, but he does so no longer. He once urged, in the heat of dispute, that it was Ionic, and I dare say my laugh was impertinently shrill. As there are a good many horrors of the same sort on Long Island and in Westchester County, Jack felt himself priv-

ileged to cheaply accuse me of sneering at my own land with random satire, because it was n't Europe. We nearly had a quarrel then, over that awful travesty on the calm, grand Greek style by which one is permitted to enter the most hospitable and lovely interior that I know. But something saved us from a quarrel that day; if I rightly remember, it was some turn of phrase that I made about an American Parthenon, to which my friend replied by a sombrely unwilling giggle that ruined his cause and made us shake hands in armistice if not precisely truce.

On this special evening we passed from the yacht under the bastard portico without an *arrière pensée* of former disputes. Perhaps we were both too anxious for the welcome change of linen and the welcome dinner which awaited us. At dessert, over our coffee and cigars, Jack rather drowsily murmured something about "a hop at the hotel" that same evening.

"I know what 'a hop' means, Jack," I said somewhat airily; "and I think it such a hateful, petty little word when used to tell of men and women meeting together for a social dance, that I devoutly regret it is an Americanism. But as for the 'hotel,' I confess that I don't at all know about that. How long since there has been a hotel within miles of your White Sand?"

"Oh, ages," said Jack. "We'll drive over, if you say so. It's a drowsy, disconsolate old building, with a ball-room that has a wainscoting painted

in shiny drab, like an ancient cupboard, and some evil prints on its wall of Washington crossing the Delaware, taking the oath, and doing numerous other memorable acts."

I found Jack's sketch of the ball-room by no means too caustic a one, when we both entered it, about two hours later. I suppose there must have been at least sixty people present. I at once noticed a preponderance of elderly ladies with worsted shawls.

They sat glued against the drab wainscoting in various attitudes of observation, rumination or depression. It seemed to me that few of them expressed anything like approbation. I wondered why they did not go to bed or go elsewhere, since they apparently had no concern with the merry little children who whirled about together in hoydenish disregard of the gallantry between sexes, or with the numerous very pretty damsels whose male partners were mostly dapper and volatile, but by no means prepossessing.

It was on this evening, and amid these environments, that I drifted into the acquaintance of Fanny Williams. I can see her now, as if I held a photograph instead of a pen. She was standing under a high kerosene lamp, and she had just finished dancing with a young gentleman in very ample white pantaloons and a sack-coat of ethereal alpaca. She did not want to dance any more, and the young gentleman, in some satyric mood induced by the rasping fiddle and the husky trom-

bone, apparently wanted her to dance more. I saw her shake her head with decision just before I was presented, and I recall being struck with the way in which she moved it. There was grace blent with the refusal. Her gesture indicated a distinct knowledge of her own mind, even on this trivial subject.

When I was presented to her, and had talked with her a little while, I concluded that she was not at all handsome. She had not a perfect feature in her face, nor even a suggestion of beauty as regarded coloring. I must now use an almost amazing word with which to describe her, and I would not use it if I could conscientiously substitute any other, in my capacity of faithful chronicler. It is the word "cleanliness." Everything about the girl expressed the idea of an extreme physical purity. She had not a hint of coquetry; her eyes were a neutral and rather rayless gray; her figure was not striking in outline; her hands and arms were not moulded at all exceptionally; although she was not awkward in the least, you would never have called her graceful; in her dress she gave no impression of attempted adornment; and yet, when you looked upon her you somehow felt that the freshness of maidenhood had never been more charmingly embodied in a feminine shape. A little later, while we talked together, I leaned in my interest perhaps a trifle nearer to her face than the etiquette of this hotel "hop" allowed. And as I did so I caught a wafture of the breath

which came from her somewhat large mouth, with its two rows of clear white, even teeth. That little moment made me think of thyme, clover, new-mown grass. It is an absurd thing to record, I know, but I devoutly do not want it to be deemed a coarse thing. And I place it thus in my portraiture of Fanny Williams because I believe it will make her fascination more plain to those who will affirm that a girl who is only to be described in negatives must of necessity have no fascination whatever.

She spoke with great volubility; but she was far from being garrulous in a silly way. It struck me that she had made up her mind concerning everything she said. There were no halfway measures in her converse. She disliked the "hotel" (I think it was called "The Pavilion" or "The Beach House," or something like that), and roundly asserted her dislike. She was entirely discontented with her present surroundings. She envied the people at Newport. Did I know Newport? Oh, yes! she felt sure that I must, for I had the manner of knowing "all about nice people."

To my amazement, this little unforeseen compliment made me almost tingle with gratification. She paid me a few more during the evening, with similar results. She somehow made me decide that I had said a number of clever things to her, though, on afterward recalling our conversation, I felt assured that she herself had talked with scarcely a breathing-space. During the next few minutes I learned that she was a graduate of Mrs.

Laurent's well-known school in Fifty-Eighth Street. She knew Tilly This and Jenny That. Did I know them? Some of them were my cousins, others were friends of my cousins, and still others I had met in their first New York season, of the previous year.

"Oh, yes! it was very gay last winter, was it not?" hurried Miss Williams, after permitting from me an allusion to the social gayeties of former months. "I heard a good deal about all that was going on. And, now that I remember, I heard of you. . . . Oh, yes, of course! Carrie Houston told me that she led the german with you at that great Delmonico ball given by the Ostrandens last year."

"Carrie Houston is also a sort of cousin of mine," I said. I sometimes feel an actual diffidence at confessing the immensity of my New York cousinship.

"Is she? Oh, yes! Now that you mention it, I think that she told me so. Carrie had such a lovely time! I saw her the next day. She told me — Well, mamma?"

That "Well, mamma," on the part of poor Fanny Williams, acted for me as a burst of revelation.

"Mamma" had just approached her daughter by a sort of *détour*. I did not see the new-comer until she had made her presence quite unavoidable.

She was a lady of about forty. She did not wear a worsted shawl; indeed, the dark plainness

of her garb looked as if even so commonplace an embellishment would have seemed unduly fantastic there. She had a face that bore no resemblance to her daughter's, except in a certain vague expression about the eyes, which made it possible to concede that she might be Fanny's mother. It was the nearest approach to a perfectly square face that I ever recollect seeing; either temple and either jaw just missed describing an actual point or corner. The chin was so unnecessarily long that you wondered whether some enthusiast on the origin of species could not give it a distinct scientific reason for existing. But the whole sallow and high-cheeked visage was withal so melancholy, that it put me in mind of a jaded omnibus horse, which has all sorts of secret grudges against its drivers, its bit, and the extensive patronage of its particular "line."

I soon found that Mrs. Williams was as much dissatisfied and *distracte* as I had rapidly predicated of her.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Manhattan!" she said to me, after Fanny had made us known to one another, "I dare say you *do* think the hop is nice. Young folks usually like hops: I did when I was a girl."

It flashed across me what an abnormal, equine girl the lady would have made. Her voice seemed to complete my parallel: it was a kind of doleful whinny, but its complaint had no trace of weakness; it was querulous without being at all

pathetic. You at once perceive that it could rebuke no less than lament, that it could scold, exact, threaten, or satirize, all in the same lugubrious key. And it was a very nasal voice indeed: it was *la voix pleurnicheuse* to perfection, pealing from a decidedly American organ.

Mrs. Williams now looked at her daughter, and proceeded: "Fanny, here, thinks it elegant fun to prance and gallivant round this room, sir, and pay no more attention to her poor ma'n'r if I was in Kamskattica." (I give the lady's pronunciation just as it left — I was going to say her nostrils.) "Well, I s'pose it's half my fault, and half her poor dead pa's. We sent her to a fashnable school, Maddom Laureng's, where she was taught more French flummery than you can shake a stick at, and made to consider her swell girl friends of more consequence 'n her own flesh and blood."

I looked at Fanny. I expected to see her bathed in blushes of mortification at this shockingly ill-bred speech. But her color had not varied in the least. I thought, however, that her smile, which had notably deepened, hid a positive distress, and that she had made it both deepen and brighten from this cause.

"Why, mamma," she said very amiably, "I supposed you were having a pleasant chat with Mrs. Todd. You seemed to be getting on charmingly together."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Williams. "I guess you know by this time, Frances, that I think that

woman about the vulgarest piece I've come across in years. Why, she's always bragging 'bout her house in town an' her servants. W'at 's she doing here at 'leven dollars a week, then, I'd like to know? She — she — sets me *all on edge*, that woman does. An' you w'isked off an' left me with her, 'cause you was asked by that little w'ippersnapper of a w'at-'s-his-name to dance the gallup. — But that 's the way it is *always*," continued Mrs. Williams, suddenly addressing herself to me. "I 'm nobody *at all*. I 'm the dirt under that girl's feet. I don't care if I'm talkin' before a stranger or not. If she's mortified, she deserves to be mortified. *I* did n't want to come to this hole. I wanted to go to Lake Mairpac this summer." ("Mairpac" was presumably "Mahopac.") "But no, Fan thought it was common there. I've got lots of lady friends there, sir. — Yes, Frances, I'll just *tell* the gentleman; *I* don't care a bit: you can like it or lump it, just as you choose. — I 'm tired o' being made a mere *stool-pigeon* of, for that 's w'at I *am* made by that girl. I'm sat upon by her from morning till night. It's 'Ma, do this,' and 'Ma, don't do that.' *She 'll* never intrerdooce her mother to a living soul. I'm to be shoved out o' sight and kep' in the background, *always*. All I'm good for is to be alluded to as 'mammaah,' or 'deah mammaah,' when she 's with her swell friends. Oh, I don't care, sir, if my blood *is* up. It's *her* blood, if she *is* ashamed of it. If" —

“I am not ashamed of it,” said Fanny Williams, for the first time making any interruption. “You know I am not.”

I have never seen such perfect self-control, in all my dealings either with men or women, as I now saw in this young girl’s face and manner. Her smile had wholly gone; her face had taken a sad and keenly weary look; I almost imagined there was a gleam of despair in the gaze that she momentarily turned upon my own. But her restraint, her equipoise, her command of every thing like anger, resentment, or even annoyance, was something truly magnificent. I felt myself by a swift intuition in the presence of a brave, splendid little creature.

She met her mother’s spiteful glance with one calm and soft. Then she stretched out her hand and laid it lightly on my arm.

“Will you come with me — somewhere else?” she faltered.

I gave her my arm instantly. It was one of the most gallantly protective impulses that I have ever had, and I don’t think I am backward in giving help where I believe a good woman needs it.

We both saw Mrs. Williams recoil a little, while we moved away, as if this departure were a crowning insolence from her abominable offspring. But we moved away, nevertheless; and I suppose that I was responsible for changing our quarters from the hot, ugly little ball-room, a few minutes

later, to a long, low piazza, charming enough now, whatever it may have been by day.

Some dense honeysuckles clung to the rails and pillars in dusky, scented tangles. A late moon had risen, and lay near the horizon, with its red, broken disk giving it the pathos of some far, strange, ruined world. But its beams were strong enough to make a path of mild splendor on the sleeping Sound, and to show us one or two eerie sails in the lighted offing. Out on the lawn a salty breeze was waving the unseen boughs of the foliage with that tender melody which is perhaps the most spiritual of all nature's many rhythmic voices.

"I am very sorry that you did not ask me to come away sooner," I said to Fanny Williams, and I felt her hand tremble a little against my arm while I spoke. "I would gladly have gone with you."

She was silent for quite a while, as we paced the dim, void piazza. I stole a look at her drooped face. Presently I saw her lift it; and then she said, in tones that were more composed than I had expected to hear:

"It is very good and kind of you, Mr. Manhattan, to show so much quiet sympathy with me. . . . Now, pray do not say that you have not shown it, for, if you have not, then I have divined it; and I like to think I have divined it, all the same, even if it is not there. . . . My mother was very angry to-night: it was one of her moods. She has them

now and then. I was terribly mortified. She becomes perfectly reckless before people at times, and nearly always when I least expect her to be so. I think these moods have grown upon her since my father died, about four years ago. It is not true that I neglect her. I do everything that I can. Your cousin, Carrie Houston, knows that: I am sure she will tell you if you ask her. I have a number of real, true friends in her set, as I may say. I love the refined pleasure that makes up so much of their life. I should like to be one of them, to have the same harmless happiness which they enjoy. And they are so good about it, too; they have offered to get me invitations to places; they have even procured them for me; they are my warm, devout friends,—about seven or eight of them. I could tell you their names, and I am sure you would know them all; but it is of no use. My mother would make my life a misery if I went where she did not. As it is, I have to be almost clandestine in my visits to these girls. They are my ‘swell friends,’ as you heard her say not long ago. . . . I suppose you thought me strangely cold under that last attack. But I have been through so many; and then”— Here Fanny Williams paused, and looked at me with a gaze as gentle as it was noble and patient. “Then, too,” she went on, “I must always remember that she is — my mother.”

“Good heavens!” I exclaimed indignantly. “I should think you had every reason for *not* remem-

bering it. Such a persecution as this is purely monstrous!"

She shook her head in eager negative. "Oh, do not think it is always so!" she answered. "My mother is very pleasant for days. We get along together nicely enough then. She may be a little *exacting*, you know, but I don't mind that."

"Indeed!" I answered quite hotly. "You are a saint to endure what you do. I—I have never heard a more vulgar piece of bravado—a more scandalous exhibition of bad taste—than I witnessed this evening on the part of your"—

"Stop!" broke in Fanny Williams. The moonlight showed me that her eyes were sparkling, and that her face expressed decided anger now, if it had given no trace of any before.

"You have no right to speak in that way," she went on crisply and sternly enough. "That lady, please recollect, is my mother, and you now address her daughter."

After what I had seen and heard, this outburst struck me as incomprehensible. But of course I changed my tone to one almost of apology, as I said:

"True enough, Miss Williams. But you must be sensible of"—

"I am sensible of but one thing," broke in Fanny Williams with a little stamp of her foot as graceful as it was irate. "You must not speak of my mother like that in my presence. None of the girls dare to do it: they know that I would

not stand it for an instant. . . . Besides" . . . (and here Fanny's voice quivered, telling me of the coming tears, that soon came in full flood), "*being* my own mother, how — how can I help loving her with all my heart, as — as I *do* love her, and *shall* love her, no matter *what* she does, or *what* she says?"

I half turned away. There was something about all this that struck me as more than merely lovely. It was very nearly sublime as well.

What might such patience, courage, fidelity, continence, and self-respect all have resulted in, if Fanny Williams had been given a wider sphere for their exercise than this sweet, heroic endurance of a torturing, termagant mother?

VI.

THE GENTLEMAN WHO LISTENS.

I THINK I could not have been older than nine years when I first heard that Mr. Prescott Southgate was a thoroughly solid man. He used to dine with my parents in those earlier days, at our old family mansion in Washington Square. I would be permitted to come down to dessert and gaze at him with boyish awe across my nibbled banana or my fascinating ice-cream. I used to connect him with all that was prosperous and luxurious, and I suppose that the festal association clung about him forever afterward. Mamma always spoke of him in a hushed tone; and papa, though somewhat given to cynical comments upon every other friend he possessed, would always reserve for "Southgate" a slow approving nod of the head and a satisfied smile, as if in merely mentioning that gentleman's name he was indicating a personality so far removed from all the aspersions of ordinary disparagement that even fervid eulogy could not express his solid excellence. I find myself, while dipping among these remote memories, still employing that epithet of "solid." And, now that I recall my boyish ideas concerning Mr. Pres-

cott Southgate, it occurs to me that I connected the term with his personal appearance, and used to compare his massive frame and his big fleshly but not ungainly limbs with those of other guests at our board, in most cases quite disadvantageously to the other guests. He rose in our drawing-rooms like a Jupiter. When he warmed himself at one of our fireplaces, he wholly obscured the glow or the blaze there. But his mildness and geniality were as immense as his person. He was not corpulent then; but, even if he had been, you would no more have remarked such a change than if they were to put a bay-window in one of the upper stories of the Fifth Avenue Hotel. He had a soft brown beard, and the mildest of gray eyes; and a smile lessened or greatened on his large, serene face, but never quite left it. I think, that, if he had ever been very angry at anybody or anything, that gray eye of his would have preserved a residuary twinkle, to tell you, like the rainbow in a storm, that it would soon be clear weather again.

The domestic hearsay of childhood always exerts a vast influence. I grew up in a reverential attitude toward Mr. Prescott Southgate. It never occurred to me that he was not a gentleman of marked mental gifts. It never so far as crept into my intelligence that he was not dowered with all known or possible gifts, of whatever nature. I might, under stress of artful suasion, have been induced to doubt the capability of the sun in

heaven ; but I do not think any subtlety or momentum of argument could have led me to disbelieve in the stanch and over-towering merits of Mr. Southgate.

And yet all this time I had no definite recollection of his possessing a voice. I was very familiar with the pat of his large hand on the crown of my head ; I could shut my eyes and see his rich, ample smile ; I was intimately acquainted with his grave, seigniorial nod ; I knew past error the drowsy, comfortable creak of his boots. But when it came to recalling his conversation, or even the quality of the tone in which he uttered the most ordinary statement, I should have found myself at a grievous retrospective loss.

The inevitable changes took place. I went to Harvard, as I have before recorded ; my poor mother passed away ; a dolorous time of mourning ensued, sharply accentuated by that paralytic stroke which levelled my remaining parent ; I was a devoted nurse to poor father for many months ; finally the last worldly exit came also for *his* loved life ; I was immersed in legal matters concerning the settlement of my large lot of property ; and at length I went abroad, remaining for a good while among scenes and people that wrought their due effect of wholesome change.

In this way several years passed without my meeting or hearing of Mr. Prescott Southgate. But the old reverence continued dormant within my spirit. If I had been called upon, while

abroad, to instance a pillar of American social worthiness, I should instantly have bethought myself of Mr. Southgate.

When I returned to this country, I found myself rather promptly made a member of the Metropolitan Club. The doors of the Metropolitan were not so besieged then as now by yearning aspirants. I was slipped quite easily into membership; and I recollect, that, on the first evening this honor was enjoyed, I felt a desire to meet and claim acquaintance with my father's old idol.

Of course he still lived. If he had died, I must have heard about it. I confess to an odd sense of conviction, that, if I had been either in Egypt or at the Cape of Good Hope, I still must have heard about it had Mr. Southgate died.

To be in the Metropolitan was naturally to remember him. Youthful experiences inseparably connected him with the Metropolitan. He had always "an engagement at the Metropolitan;" or he was listening to some opinions of my father respecting the proper government of the Metropolitan; or he was blandly smiling upon my dear mother while she playfully scolded the Metropolitan for keeping papa out till abnormal hours; or he was receiving an urgent note from the Metropolitan, where somebody must see him just at the wrong time, before his good old Madeira was thoroughly sipped and his heady post-prandial cigar thoroughly smoked. He had been clad for me with a kind of Metropolitan nimbus, like that of

the Virgilian deities. And so, naturally, entering the halls of this long-respected club for the first time, I not only anticipated him as an event, but expected him as a certainty.

“Oh, he’s somewhere about,” said my old Harvard classmate, Charley Tremont. “He always is.” Charley, who dawdles through life as a confirmed scoffer at nearly everything sacred that it holds, dropped his voice and lowered his cigarette, as if with some instinctively respectful meaning, while he now added: “Magnificent old chap! Pride of the club, Mark! Wish we had more like him. He’s been elected a governor four successive times. Fifth time he would n’t run: they could n’t get him to do it. A little aged now, but still the same fine, solid, old-school trump.”

“Oh, yes — yes *indeed!*” I replied, catching at the word “solid.” That word had such a homely, pleasant, recognizable sound!

A little later I met Mr. Southgate. Of course I had changed since he had last seen me. I told him that I must have done so, while I grasped his big, soft hand. (They said it had made over a million dollars, that hand, in the East India trade, though you would never have supposed so from its unroughened plumpness.) He beamed upon me while I talked with him. He had changed too: he had got, to put it plainly, a palpable stomach, which he carried with a really superb majesty. You had to run your eye downward along his stately person to be quite sure that you

had made no error about his altered anatomy. But there was no doubt concerning his wrinkles, and the airy, frosty gray of his beard.

I talked to him for a good while. I dealt in early reminiscences. I had a foolish feeling that I wanted him to see I was no longer young — no longer even adolescent. Doubtless I was very garrulous, but always in the most courteous and even allegiant way. And meanwhile he listened and also smiled. I forgot that he had merely listened and smiled. It seemed to me that he had made a great many audible responses, besides listening and smiling. He finally pressed my hand in farewell, saying (or did he only smile it?) something about being called away and seeing me some other time. Yes, I am sure that he must have *said* it, though on leaving him, and rejoining Charley Tremont, I had no positive impression of his having made any distinct vocal sound whatever.

“Glorious old fellow!” said Charley, as I reseated myself at his side.

“Oh, glorious!” I responded. I was thinking a good deal of old times. The dead days were alive again with me, no doubt, and the dear dead faces were peering into my spirit from that black shadow which for so long had clad them.

A short time after this I had my little difficulty with that club cad and nuisance, Jones Jones. Everybody knows what Jones Jones is. He has a way of dropping into the club wretchedly intoxi-

cated at almost any hour, and saying the most rudely familiar things. With his very slim shape, his unnaturally pale face, his high, shrill voice, his silly lisp, his cackling laugh, his violation of all polite usage, he is about as complete a bore as it is possible to conceive. He picked a quarrel with me, on this special occasion, in the most unprovoked way. His rudeness was so flagrant and personal, that I simply rose and told him in a few words, as calm as I could command, my intention of insisting upon an apology.

I detest scenes; I abhor publicity. But this was a case in which common self-respect seemed to imperatively demand a single determined course. I waited for my apology two days, and it did not arrive. Meanwhile I had made it plain, through spoken message, that an *amende* of some sort must be given. Duelling in this country is ludicrous, and in all countries it is barbarous. And yet what could I do? Jones Jones had sent me an insolent response, had repeated his offensive words. In point of physical power he was so thoroughly my inferior (I believe the fellow was dying then of the consumption which drink had brought him to, and which ended his life less than a year later), that any hostile assault on my part would have been judged as rank cowardice.

It was a very difficult and awkward position. My indignation had meanwhile transpired, and gossip boiled and bubbled at the Metropolitan. I had but one course to take, and I took it. I ap-

pealed to the government of the club in as discreet and unimpassioned a letter as I could write.

But Jones Jones had two cousins and a brother-in-law on the governing committee. My complaint roused hot dispute and strong partisan feeling. I was distressed and mortified by certain rumors that soon reached my ears. I was summoned before a conclave of governors, and asked questions which hurt my dignity as a man and my sense of right as a wholly blameless plaintiff. Twenty different counsellors urged me to defend myself in twenty different ways. I merely wanted ordinary justice,—that supreme boon which man has for centuries so often craved, and so often missed; and, if I should fail to secure it, my resolve was fixed regarding a resignation from the club.

The whole affair distressed and annoyed me deeply. I slept ill; I felt myself becoming undoubtedly irritable; a cloud of gloom hung over my spirits; I was that unpleasant member of society, a man with a grievance. I knew myself the victim of capricious report, and was conscious that many unheard tongues were dealing idly and recklessly with my name. The decision of the committee remained obscure. Jones Jones frequented the club, with all his old swagger and license. It was at length Charley Tremont who said to me one afternoon:

“Mark, you ’re a new member here, but you have one good, stanch friend. And your friend is

a man of great influence. I need hardly tell you that I mean Prescott Southgate. Why don't you go to him? You should have gone to him before."

"True," I said. I grasped Charley's hand; his advice had seemed like the timely plank flung to the man who sinks. And I was really sinking, in a certain way. The delay of the committee's decision had engendered a sort of dreary despair.

I waited that afternoon for the arrival of Mr. Southgate. As soon as he entered the club, I secured him, so to speak. I held his hand while I looked into his genial, fatherly face, that wakened such tender and indeed holy reminiscences. I felt that I should have gone to him before now in my trouble. We passed toward a lounge together, and sat there for a long time. I told him everything. He listened with the most irreproachable attention.

There is not the vestige of a doubt that Mr. Prescott Southgate listened with the most irreproachable attention.

And presently I ended my statement, my plea, my defence. I fancy that I was rather eloquent. I am sure that I had spoken without wayward ire or foolish discomposure. And after speaking I waited Mr. Southgate's answer.

"I dare say the committee will make you all right," he said.

That was all. He had nothing more to say. He somehow left me no doubt that he sided with my

cause. His superb smile, and his almost magnetic cordiality of demeanor, thus assured me. But he had nothing more to say. He had listened. He had listened, I may add, unexceptionably. I do not think it would be possible for any mortal to listen so well. He had revealed just enough gravity, just enough suavity, just enough gentle gayety, just enough serious appreciation; but it had all been revealed through silence. I am totally unable to explain how this sympathetic condition was suggested to me. I am not aware that it is possible for silence to convey it. And yet nothing except silence *did* convey it on the occasion to which I refer.

The club righted me a few days later. I was exonerated from all blame, and Jones Jones received the punishment of a year of suspension for his unprovoked insolence. The poor fellow died, as I have said, during the next year. His death bit into my conscience, somehow, though for no cause. If I had caned him in the public streets, as certain friends had urged me to do, I might have had real food for remorse.

Meanwhile Mr. Prescott Southgate's treatment had set me diligently thinking. I ascribed many causes to his odd reticence, finally concluding that he had had some cogent reason for remaining non-committal concerning the whole affair.

I said this one evening to Herbert Winslow. Herbert is a sallow, placid, self-contained man about forty-five years old. He is not popular in

the club: he is considered somewhat arrogant and exclusive. The Wall Street clique (and how many cliques there are in the Metropolitan!) particularly dislike him; but he, in turn, particularly dislikes the Wall Street clique. He has a comfortable inherited fortune; he is not at all a snob, yet picks and chooses his associates; he is a bachelor of the most methodic and unalterable habits; he reads a good deal, and especially enjoys the reading of the best French books; he is scrupulously neat about his dress; he has the most admirable manners; and, when he cares to talk, in his easy, mellow, deliberate voice, he can talk with good effect and notable shrewdness.

"My dear Manhattan," he now said to me, laying one hand for an instant on my arm, "you should not drift into the general error about Prescott Southgate. You are quite too clever a man for that. You are quite too keen an observer too."

I looked at Winslow surprisedly. "The general error?" I said. "What do you mean?"

Winslow smiled. His hard, lean, impassive face seemed to soften for a moment with much furtive amusement.

"Why, Southgate," he murmured to me, "is a supreme fool. I don't at all mean an ordinary fool. An ordinary fool could never have had his amazing social success. You went to him with your little story. He listened to it, of course. He is the prince of listeners. You had approached

him at a point of special strength. He is, *par excellence*, the man who listens. He has acquired a truly immense reputation for just that quality. Some men are brilliant in other ways. Southgate is brilliant through his silence. He has the marvellous gift of making an amiable monosyllable go further than a hundred earnest sentences from other lips. It has always been just this way with him. His deft employment of silence explains his popularity, his high standing, his universal tribute of respect and admiration. I called him a fool, but remember that I qualified my assertion. He is the most strikingly clever fool I have ever known. He is wholly without ideas, and yet he has contrived to make hundreds of people believe that he teems with ideas. Behind his serenity, his warm pressure of the hand, his twinkle of the eye, his benevolent massiveness, corpulence, stateliness, you will find absolutely nothing. I solemnly believe that he never thinks; he has the power, however, to make other people think that he thinks. His great social success has always been a great mystery to me. There was never so absurd a fraud as Prescott Southgate, and there was never a fraud that managed to keep so perpetually undiscovered. He did not reply to you the other day, because he had no rejoinder to give you except what he has been giving mankind at large for over sixty years, under all possible circumstances. I mean his silence. He has made more steady and rich capital out of silence — as a cloak for mental

stupidity — than nine-tenths of his race have made out of brains, speech, and opinion.”

A light had burst upon me when Herbert Winslow ended. I felt as if I had been watching the cool cut and thrust of a surgeon's scalpel. I have never spoken since then to Prescott Southgate; but I have bowed to him a great many times, and I always try to make my bow deferential and courteous. One cannot but respect certain humbugs. Their time-honored repute is a challenge against disesteem.

VII.

THE LADY WHO GROWS OLD UNGRACEFULLY.

IT was not hard to separate Mrs. Croton Nyack from the idea of saying or doing anything awkward. She was at all times the pink of high-breeding. Even her little rudenesses and cruelties were done without a touch of vulgarity. I sometimes think that she has been the most purely successful woman of society that New York has ever known. Gifted with a neat, acute wit, with a grace, a vivacity, a *désinvolture* quite irresistible, and with something so nearly approaching absolute beauty that its defects took an actual charm on this account, Lydia Chichester must have been well equipped as a girl to shine in the world of caste and fashion. As a girl, I never knew her: as a woman, I have admired and almost loved her; and, for two or three years after our acquaintance had become a friendship, I used to marvel at the way in which she contrived to blend the girl and the woman. So subtle, in truth, was this conjunction, that you could not tell where the one ended and the other began. If it were a question of chaperonage, of quiet self-assertion, of superintendence over some charitable ladies' committee,

Mrs. Croton Nyack was very apt to be both called and chosen. If it were a question of dancing the german, of being enthroned on a drag, of dining, riding, driving, or lawn-tennis playing, the result was similar. She enjoyed all the privileges and dignities of matronhood and all the gallant favors and compliments which maidenhood so prizes.

Her figure was slender, her movements were harmony itself, her hands were white and beautiful. She made all her steps and gestures briskly: her small, trim-shod foot seemed to strike the floor with a delicate decision and assertion. She spoke with speed, too; for her ideas flowed rapidly, and their expression was an unconscious and often an extremely winning process. She had no affectations, no *minauderies*. Her alert eyelid, sheathing a bright gray eye, could not have languished or fluttered. There was something crisp and clean-cut about her personality. I have known days in early autumn that reminded me of her, with their sharp yet tender outlines of foliage, their limpid skies, their swift, fresh breezes. In all things she was the reverse of inactive, languid, or dubious. Zest, vigor, energy, had a secure home in her capable mind, her supple, agile frame; and yet the needed repose of demeanor and action was never unpleasantly absent. I have never seen such vivacity, such pliability, wedded to so secure an effect of self-possession and easy elegance. If I have sketched Mrs. Nyack with anything like clearness, it will be granted that she must have

promptly conveyed to an observer the impression of distinct if not extreme youth.

And yet when I first met her she had passed her thirty-ninth year. You might easily have taken her for five and twenty. I don't know what she did to her wrinkles: I am sure that she did not paint or powder them; I am doubtful, indeed, if the most minute ones had yet begun to trouble her. She had married Croton Nyack (who was by inheritance twice or thrice a millionaire) at the age of about one and twenty. A single child had been born of their union,—a girl, named Natalie. Natalie was a pretty, soft-eyed creature, with a somewhat timid manner, not a tithe of her mother's brains, and almost the image of her lazy, blond, gentlemanly papa. Lydia Nyack had not married happily. If she had loved her husband on her wedding-day, she was wholly indifferent to him now. They lived about as much apart from one another as husband and wife not legally separated can live. Croton had by no means the reputation of conjugal fidelity. Fifty scandals had been set afloat concerning him, some of them doubtless as arrant falsehoods as gossip and rumor know how to coin. He had his yachts, his stables of blooded horses, his coaching interests, his racing interests, his hundred and one pleasurable distractions. Mrs. Nyack never showed the slightest concern in his goings and comings. When they appeared publicly together, they seemed to be on the most amicable terms. But she never made

the least reference to her matrimonial life. She herself had always been the soul of decorum. Her friendships with men had never even lapsed into flirtations, however mild. She had locked the key on all sentiment of this sort, and bid it an eternal farewell. I think that was why she stood so unassailably high with her countless friends. Her powers of entertainment were almost princely, and she was forever lavishing them upon society. She had two or three superb country homes, and one noble mansion on Fifth Avenue, where service was a positively ideal matter, and the fine things that can be done with great wealth aptly and deftly managed were shown in a most brilliant yet unglaring way. If the past had dealt her wounds, she gave no sign of them now. Her husband's follies had been accepted with philosophy: it was hard to imagine her not accepting any reverse with philosophy and good sense.

During the winter of Natalie's entrance into society, I was a good deal at Mrs. Nyack's house. She scarcely ever dined at home without three or four guests. I had always liked Natalie Nyack, and had always enjoyed her timid little expressions of nervousness and distrust regarding the great balls at which she must soon appear.

"Natalie is not a bit like you," I said to her mother one evening.

Mrs. Nyack shrugged her shoulders. "You are quite right. She is her father's own daughter. But I can't think why she should so dread to go

into society. She will be very well *lancée*. I shall make her coming-out ball a very pretty affair."

She made it a truly magnificent affair. The spacious drawing-rooms were decked with the costliest flowers, wherever such adornment was possible. Natalie's timidity visibly lessened as the evening wore on. I saw that she had begun to drink and relish the *vin capiteux* of the flattery and attention which met her on every side.

But her mother was by no means in good spirits. Mrs. Nyack had scarcely referred more than once or twice to the present ball, and I now perceived that either the festivity itself, or some event closely related to it, had affected her with an unwonted gloom. A dulling and depressing spell seemed to have fallen upon her old volatile gayety. She was still perfect as a hostess; she still bore herself with much of the former gentle, enticing cordiality. Perhaps my more familiar and friendly eyes detected the change where it escaped many others. Just before the german began I found a chance of saying to her:

"Natalie has quite conquered her bashfulness; and she looks bewilderingly pretty, in her simple white dress, with those big pearls. Have you noticed?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Mrs. Nyack. She had done me the honor of asking me to lead the *cotillon* that evening with her daughter. "Shall you begin presently?" she went on.

“The german?” I said. “Yes. It is almost one o’clock—By the way, with whom are you dancing?”

She gave a little toss of her graceful head. “Oh! I make a surrender to-night,” she answered.

“A surrender?” I repeated.

“Certainly. In favor of my daughter Natalie.” She looked at me for a moment with the most unaccustomed seriousness. “The idea of mother and daughter dancing together in the same german! It is absurd. It is even ridiculous.”

“I don’t at all agree with you,” I said warmly. “Is not your husband going to dance?”

She gave another laugh, so chill and odd that I could hardly believe it had issued from her lips. “Croton? Oh! of course he will dance. He will dance, I suppose, until he is quite bald and toothless. In a certain way, Croton will always be a sort of overgrown boy. But—with me—well, with me it is wholly different.”

“I don’t at all see that it is different!” I exclaimed. “You have never thought before of giving up dancing. You know very well that you will be immensely missed: you are usually up in every figure—What on earth, pray, do you intend to do all through the coming winter? You must go about with Natalie to places. You can’t surely mean that you will suddenly settle down like this?”

“Yes, I shall settle down,” she replied. She was not smiling at all now, as she tapped my arm

with her fan. "You have just hit upon the right phrase. I shall settle down." Immediately after thus speaking, she glided away from me.

We met constantly during the next few weeks at a number of different entertainments. Mrs. Nyack never danced at any of them. It struck me that she was by no means enjoying herself. She had always before appeared to enjoy herself with such an extreme heartiness! You seldom heard her laugh sound above the music; you did not see the bright flash of her smile half so often as before. I had never thought of her age previously, but I somehow thought of it now. Had it suddenly made itself manifest in her countenance? I was not sure; and yet, with the cessation of her former buoyancy, new lines, or the suggestions of lines, seemed to have stolen out on cheek, brow, and temple with a vaguely marring effect.

Natalie, meanwhile, had lost every trace of her maidenly shyness. As a matter of course, the only child of Croton Nyack had become a belle. But Natalie deserved to be a belle. She had no wit, no power to be adroit, *rusée*, captivating; but she thoroughly liked all the pomp and ceremony of fashion, and had frank, girlish charms, which, when her devotees remembered them as stoutly backed by her father's wealth, were in no danger of being undervalued.

"I see that Natalie tolerates that shocking little Ten Broeck boy," I said to Mrs. Nyack one afternoon at a tea.

"Tolerates him!" was the unexpected answer. "I suspect that she likes him very much indeed."

"Really?" I murmured. "I should never have imagined it. Of course he is sole heir to the massive Ten Broeck fortune. But he" —

"Pray, say no more," broke in Mrs. Nyack with quick interruption.

I had intended to add that Bond Ten Broeck was a silly babbler, with white eyelashes and the brain of a kitten; but I did not add this, for a sudden surmise kept me silent.

One evening not long afterward, I dined at Mrs. Nyack's house. There were several other guests. Natalie sat low-lidded and pre-occupied all through dinner. I had no chance of addressing her until afterward, in the drawing-room, when the men came in to join the ladies.

"You are somehow not your bright self this evening," I said. We occupied a rather remote lounge together. If I had spoken much more loudly than I did speak, I still would not have been heard by any one save her whom I addressed.

Natalie lifted her soft eyes, and let them dwell very disconsolately upon mine. Her lip quivered for an instant. I perceived, somehow, that she had the impulse of making me a confidence, and then that she restrained this impulse, as though it were not to be sensibly entertained.

"I *have n't* been feeling just right," she said.

I leaned a little closer to Natalie then. "Is

it ill health?" I questioned, "or is it some trouble?"

She started, and laid her hand on my arm. "It—it is some trouble," she faltered. Then she turned quickly for an instant toward where her mother was seated. "I—I am very unhappy," she gently continued.

"You've no reason to be," I ventured, perhaps a good deal too callously and tentatively.

"No reason!" echoed Natalie. She looked at me with great earnestness for a very short space of time. I don't know what she saw in my face, I fancy that she saw considerable sympathy there. I had begun to do more than suspect how matters stood.

"Are you going to the Westerveldts' party to-night?" I asked.

"No," said Natalie, shaking her head. "Mamma does not wish me to go." She suddenly regarded me with a feverish intentness. "Don't *tell* mamma I said that," she proceeded. "But I'm afraid you will, for you and mamma are such good friends."

"I promise you that I will say nothing," came my answer. "Has your mother forbidden you to go?"

"Oh, not at all!" said Natalie, furtively brightening. She lowered her voice to a whisper now. "But mamma has given reasons. The Westerveldts are not specially desirable people. It is a very small affair, at which only a few unmarried girls will be present. I—I was asked (so *she* says) only because I am Miss Nyack. But I understand

it all. How can I help understanding it all? I—I have seen it for weeks—for months. I saw it when there was first the least talk of my going out into society. It—it has been a stone round my neck. It—it was this that made me so timid when I was a *débutante*. It has always been distressing me ever since.”

These last sentences were so excitedly uttered that I could scarcely believe them delivered by the placid, obedient little girl whom I had thus far always known. I mused for a short while before I spoke again. I am afraid that I had a latent motive in my demur.

“Do you mean,” I said very quietly, “that your mother is not your good friend?”

Natalie curled her lip in a covert yet bitter way. “I mean,” she declared vehemently under her breath, “that mamma is my enemy. Yes, I know it is horrible for me to say so. I have lain awake at night, thinking just how horrible it is. But I can’t help saying it now, for it is true. I don’t mean that mamma hates *me*: it is something *else* that she hates; and I represent that ‘something else.’ I show her that she is growing old; and growing old is horrible to her. She shrinks from it as if it were a pest. I dare say she can’t help it. She clings so to her youth—to her repute for being young! It is agony for her to be placed among the matrons, the dowagers. I should never have been her child. She should never have *had* a child. But I grew up, I became of age, and

she had to bring me out. And now she has but one aim, one desire, one intention."

"What intention?" I asked. I was shocked as I put my question, for I knew that the poor girl suffered greatly.

"Don't you *know*?" Natalie answered with as bitter a little roll of laughter as I have ever heard leave feminine lips. "Mamma wants to marry me. I—I *don't* wish to give you the idea that she *hates* me; but she hates me to be as I am,—to show her *monde* that she must take a back seat, as the phrase goes,—to appear in the motherly *rôle*. She was alway charming to me till I grew up; she is always charming to everybody. But, since I have begun to share her reign with her, all is altered. I make her suffer by my very presence. She wishes me away. She cannot endure me. And now" (here Natalie's voice broke miserably), "now she wants me to—to marry Bond"—

"Good-evening, Miss Natalie," said a voice quite near us.

Bond Ten Broeck, with his uneasy little figure, his white eyelashes, his preposterously self-satisfied manner, had just put out a lank, gloved hand toward my companion.

"Carn't you spare me even a look?" chattered Bond Ten Broeck. "Of cawse, I know you're talking with Mr. Manhattan, and I suppose that means you're enjoying yourself desperately; but still"—

I did not hear any more of Mr. Ten Broeck's con-

ventional jargon. I rose and excused myself; and I felt immeasurably sorry for poor little Natalie as I did so.

Less than three months later I went to her wedding. Ten Broeck was the bridegroom. Everybody said it was such an admirable match. Natalie made a very pale bride; but she was loaded with costly laces, and she glittered with noble diamonds.

Her mother was in high spirits at the wedding. I happened to find myself quite near to her just before the bride and groom departed. She knew nothing of her poor little daughter's pathetic interview with myself weeks ago. She was regally dressed, in violet velvet, with a blaze of turquoise-stones about her slender throat. She looked like a queen or a crown-princess.

"I feel quite young," she said to me, laughing. "I am no longer a dowager, you know. I have taken a new lease of youth. After this I shall be able to grow old at my leisure."

I looked her full in the eyes. What I said I could not help saying, and I don't know that I have ever really regretted saying it.

"Grow old slowly or as quickly as you please," I murmured, "but hereafter take care that you grow old more gracefully than you have done thus far."

She stared at me haughtily for an instant. I saw the color rush to her face. She never forgave me.

Since then Mrs. Croton Nyack and I have been on the most distant terms of acquaintanceship.

VIII.

A MILLIONNAIRE MARTYR.

I FIRST met Mr. Amasa G. Pancoast at Sharon about four years ago, and he at once deeply interested me. I became acquainted with his wife, his daughter, and his son before I met the gentleman himself. They did not interest me at all. They belonged each one to a class with which American association had thus far rather drearily familiarized me.

Mrs. Pancoast was certainly fifty, almost obese in her extreme stoutness, and perpetually fanning herself. She had small, plump hands that were never tired, morning, noon, or night, of swaying a fan before her large, plump face. She was afflicted with perspiration; and little drops of it would trickle downward along the full curve of her florid cheek, even when a brisk breeze was blowing and when everybody else felt comparatively cool. I suspected from the first that Mrs. Pancoast's trouble came from tight lacing, and I have never had reason to reverse my decision. She always exhibited her fleshy person in close-clinging robes of great apparent price. She did not so much impress me as being vulgar: she seemed, rather, to

have once been excessively vulgar and to have made a reformatory change. She produced upon me the effect of always holding herself in. My allusion has no physical importance, for she always, with her glistening and costly bodices, gave one the idea of being *held* in, as regarded an almost corpulent person. But in speech, in action, in gesture, I detected an incessant underhand effort at self-control. When she addressed me with a sentence of ordinary civility, I always had an idea that she was grammatically steering among shoals and quicksands. I can't just tell why this feeling assailed me, for her syntax never, to my knowledge, contained any gross fault. She was, in truth, a wonderfully clever woman. She had been a nobody in past years, without a doubt. There was a story circulated that she had been a factory-girl before her marriage with Amasa G. Pancoast; but, if this be true, she was certainly a very efficient and capable factory-girl. She had evidently risen from some grade much lower than that which she now occupied. The traces of her quick progress were somehow manifest in everything that she did or said. She was the most positive and salient type of an American woman. She was common without showing a trace of actual commonness. She did not say "you was" for "you were," and yet one constantly fancied that she was on the verge of doing so. She had used her prosperity with an enormous vigor and cleverness. She had rapidly incrust-

ed herself with a film of spurious and factitious culture.

I thought her execrable. I am not a bit of a *dilettante*, and I usually keep my offended shudders for things which justly invoke them. But Mrs. Pancoast, with her loud toilets, with her oscillating fan, with her evident struggle of flesh to escape its stylish bounds, with her enigmatical arrangement of tresses that were, perhaps, three good parts not her own, affected me as wholly unpleasant.

Her daughter, Maud, pleased me still less. The usual people whom you meet at Sharon thought Mrs. Pancoast altogether undesirable; but I am afraid that they thought Miss Maud Pancoast an actual horror. This young lady resembled her mother; she was not yet stout, but a little close scrutiny would have convinced you that she must soon be very stout indeed. Like her mother, Miss Maud dressed with remarkable richness and splendor. She had rather square shoulders, and she kept them always heightened, as if, in some military manner, she were constantly on a sort of parade. She was indeed constantly on a sort of dress-parade. When she wanted to use her cambric handkerchief (or perhaps I should say when she did *not* want to use it), she flirted it forth from her pocket with a most ostentatious crook of the elbow. She had large, hard, cold black eyes, that she was forever rolling. I have never seen eyes "used" more pertinaciously. She could not

glance at a hotel waiter without some suggestion of a desire to enmesh and snare him. She was what you call bad style, from the toe of her absurdly-heeled French boot to the daintiest curl of her bandolined hair, plastered close against her low, broad forehead. You felt, as you looked at her, that she considered herself immensely *four-rée* in fashionable habits and occupations. She had never been visited, this pranksome and restive Miss Maud, with the vaguest premonition that she was atrociously out of taste. She looked upon her mother as a great lady, a thorough-paced patrician. This was by no means a case where the American daughter had shot ahead of and overtowered the American mother. Nothing could be more filially decorous than the attitude of Maud toward her mother. I am convinced that she thought her a superb and brilliant personage; it was like a hollyhock envying a sunflower. They would occasionally meet on the piazza of the hotel in their rustling, crackling, befurbelowed robes; and then Maud would always take one of her mother's hands in both her own, and say with her cold, black eyes, if she did not say it with her lips, "You are perfect. There is nobody like you. I would give anything to be so stylish and showy and truly grand." Sometimes she would pick, at these meetings, some little shred or speck from her mother's dress, and with an air of fond solicitude, as though a being so superfine should not have the least flaw upon her raiment.

The son and brother, Augustus (or Gussie) Pancoast, was about two years, I should say, the junior of Maud. I do not recall ever having seen him twice in the same trousers. He had a thin, pale face, with a tiny waxed mustache, and he used to look at you over the stiff, high band of his collar as though he knew some clever way of popping his head down below it, like a startled turtle's. You could not closely regard him without perceiving that he was enormously wise in a worldly sense. He was incessantly smoking cigarettes, which I am sure increased his sickly pallor; but through their smoke gleamed his little black, sharp eyes with an irony of acuteness. I sometimes had an idea that he hid a vast Mephistophelian knowledge of everything evil. For a youth of eighteen, his life was certainly a most unhealthy one. He haunted the bar-room of the hotel a good deal, and looked at me with incredulity when I told him that I was not in the habit of taking a morning "cocktail." Mr. Gussie took morning, noon, and night "cocktails," I am nearly sure, and a quantity of intermediate ones besides. He always donned the most festal-looking shoes; they were either topped with drab cloth and dotted with pearl buttons, or they were of some tawny undressed leather blent with canvas, or they were marvels of brilliancy and decorative stitching. It seemed to me, also, that if he had a fresh pair of trousers for every day, he had a fresh necktie for every hour. He appeared to be on

intimate terms with all the functionaries of the hotel. I suspected that he flung his fees and perquisites ostentatiously broadcast, and so won their almost cringing courtesies. His walk was a loitering swagger, and he rarely got through a sentence without some touch of pointed slang.

One more figure completed this rather unique family group. It was Mr. Amasa G. Pancoast himself, the husband and father. If the other members of his race challenged sarcasm and even contempt, Mr. Pancoast was very far from doing so; but he seemed to challenge the sarcasm and contempt of his wife and children, and to provoke it as well.

Their disrespect toward him was undisguised and flagrant. There appeared to be a relentless and continued conspiracy in the matter of brow-beating him. I learned certain facts concerning his life a few weeks later, which it will be best to record here and now. He had acquired a very large fortune years ago as a ready-made clothier, which he had afterward doubled and quadrupled by discreet investments in real estate. He must have been considerably past sixty. His clean-shorn face, with its arched and rather shrivelled nose, its wide, pink, benevolent lips, its kindly, dim eyes, its pale, sparse growth of locks at either temple, and its general expression of patient gentleness, I found peculiarly agreeable. He would sit for hours on one special portion of the piazza, silent, ruminative, and yet giving you the im-

pression that he would be glad to talk, if you chose to engage him in conversation.

I chose one morning thus to engage him. I acted partly from curiosity and partly from pity. He seemed so aloof from all the young blood, the pleasure-seeking, the *insouciance*, of the crowded hotel! And, moreover, his own kith and kin at all times had so elbowed him aside, so discountenanced and repulsed him!

I found him a kind of sweetly loquacious old gentleman. I discovered that he liked very much to talk, after his own rambling, grammarless, yet wholly human and genuine fashion.

"My eyes ain't very smart," he presently told me, "and, ef I read the papers much, I have to pay for it. I used allus to read three or four o' the papers of a day. But I don't miss 'em, somehow. I ain't interested in stocks no more, and I've settled most o' my money-dealin's in a solid, s'cure way. I jest come up here t' please my folks. I dessay you know one or two of 'em, eh?"

"I think that I know them all," I answered.

Mr. Pancoast put his head on one side while he now gazed at me. There was plaintiveness and yet pride in his manner and gaze. "I guess you ain't found a lady in this country more stylish 'n my wife is," he said. "Don't you think she's pretty stylish? Come, now."

"I think she's very stylish indeed," I answered propitiatingly, though not quite untruthfully.

“And Maud?” Mr. Pancoast proceeded. “She’s a reg’lar picture, ain’t she?”

“Oh! of course.”

“And then that son o’ mine, — Guss. What that young rascal don’t know ain’t worth forgettin’.”

“Your son certainly seems to have had a very great experience,” I conceded.

Mr. Pancoast gave a little suggestive nod. “Don’t you make any mistake,” he said. He now rubbed both his wrinkled hands together with a gleeful restlessness. He also winked at me, and I soon perceived that he had a great capacity for winking. At the same time there was a decided undercurrent of melancholy in his demeanor. “They don’t allus treat me right, any of ’em. I ain’t come up to their ellergant habits, you see. I’m ’fraid they kinder impose on me. Yes, sir, I’m a good deal ’fraid they do. But I don’t kick much. I guess I don’t kick ’t all. I s’pose I begun wrong with the children, — Maud and Gussie. I got married a little later ’n I ought, p’r’aps, and I felt so proud of ’em when I’d had ’em, that they kinder got the upper hand o’ me ’fore I knew it. I ain’t the same ’s I used to be neither. I bin sick, sir, for three or four years. My wife don’t b’lieve it, nor the children either; but my — my head ain’t what it was, and so I can’t show much spunk. A sick man most allus can’t; *you* know how *that* is. But I’m proud of ’em all. I’m genooine proud of ’em. They all

cut a dash. I watch 'em, and I can see *that*. It's as plain as the nose on your face."

A moment later Mrs. Pancoast joined her husband and myself. The former relapsed into meek silence as soon as she appeared. She had evidently heard the recent words of her husband from some unsuspected ambush.

"Amasa," she said, "it's time you took your nap."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Gussie Pancoast, who strutted and lounged up to us almost immediately. "You *had* better go and take your nap, dad. This air makes you sleepy. The doctor says you ought to get all the rest you can."

Mr. Gussie Pancoast and his mother now each took one of the old gentleman's arms, assisted him to rise, and coolly led him away.

Just as they were doing so, Miss Maud appeared at my side. She gave a little high and shrill laugh as she fixed her black eyes upon me.

"You must n't mind what pa says," the young lady now declared to me. "Pa's a little queer." And Maud significantly touched her forehead, where the bandolined curls were.

As Mr. Pancoast was disappearing with his wife and son, I noticed that he walked uncertainly, insecurely, in one leg. But just as he was passing into the house he turned and looked at Maud and myself, where we stood together. His face expressed great kindness.

"I have not seen that your father is 'queer,' in

the way you evidently mean," I said to Maud, and no doubt I spoke rather scornfully. "But I know what I would do, if I were he. I would n't be taken into the house like that. I would n't do anything against my will."

"Who says it's against his will?" exclaimed Maud with not a little heat.

"I say so," was my response.

Maud gave a toss of the head. Then she measured me, with hostility, from crown to sole. Her voice was now sullenly defiant.

"I guess *we* know how to take care of him better than *you* do," she affirmed gloomily and doggedly.

I smiled. "No doubt you do," I said. "Or, rather, no doubt you ought to know. But I think a good doctor might know better than either of us."

"Oh, pshaw!" declared Maud. "Don't tell *us* about *doctors!* We've tried lots of doctors for pa. He is n't half so sick as he looks. He'll drop off some day, of course. He's had one stroke, and he's bound to have another. We're as kind to him as we know how." Here Maud drew herself up haughtily. "Upon my word," she continued, "I do believe that ma knows how to manage her own husband, and Gussie and I know how to manage our own father!" Maud looked very black, but I was not at all intimidated.

"Your father needs medical attendance," I said, as politely as I could frame the words. "There is a very skilful doctor here in the hotel, but I have not ever seen him speak to Mr. Pancoast."

Maud frowned. "That's *our* business!" she retorted, sweeping away from me with excessive disdain.

I thought over the Pancoasts that evening, while I smoked a cigar at my window, before going to bed.

"They want him to die," I told myself with a shudder. "It's horrible, but it's true. He's worth several millions, and though he does not hug them closely, though he lets that flaring wife flare with them, that pretentious daughter pretend with them, that dissipated son dissipate with them, he still guards them from actual possession by a sort of proprietary instinct which none of these three harpies can destroy. He is ill, and they know it, and they would be glad if death ended his illness and unearthed the will which leaves each one of them independently rich. It is n't murder—oh, no! of course it is not! Skilled physicians have prolonged lives for years after they have been maimed and hurt just as his life has been. But the three Pancoasts do not concern themselves with skilled physicians, or with unskilled. They watch and wait. They have never exchanged a word together of what they mean and what they want. But they watch and wait. It is horrible, but it is true!"

In the following autumn Mr. Amasa G. Pancoast died somewhat suddenly. His three bereaved relatives went abroad very soon after the funeral.

They had all been social failures here. But I heard last winter that Miss Maud Pancoast was about to marry the second son of the Earl of Sillery, thè Honorable Edward Froth.

I bitterly wondered what her father would have said about this marriage, if he had still been alive. And yet I could not help concluding that he would have added, in his sweetly gentle way, one more arrow to the pessimist's quiverful of those he is always so glad to use against the mockery and sin and shame of human nature, by amiably murmuring:

"I'm proud of 'em all. I'm genooine proud of 'em. They all cut a dash. I watch 'em, and I can see *that*. It's as plain as the nose on your face."

IX.

A NINETEENTH CENTURY TITANIA.

I DO not think there is a more unpopular man in the Metropolitan Club than Horace Dilloway. And yet this fact has always been an enigma to me. I know a number of men there who deserve the dislike of their fellows far more than he. True, Horace is saliently objectionable. He has a perfectly round face, guiltless of the least hairy appendage, and usually inflamed by constant potations in a very florid way. His body is obese and ungainly. His trousers always look as if his fat limbs were too large for them, and sag loosely at the knees, leaving his boots unduly exposed. If he rises from a chair, he has to pull them down; otherwise there would be danger of their exposing his thick ankles. He has little pink, flabby excrescences on the knuckles of his small, pudgy hands. His stomach describes so large and positive a curve that when he is erect it seems as if all the rest of his body were in an attitude of support, no doubt existing for the observer as to what it is supporting. He is very communicative, very loquacious, very gregarious. No club member is exempt from him. He has not the slightest concern about asso-

ciating with any particular set. He knows all sets intimately, and is equally disapproved by all. The most austere governor is liable to be buttonholed by him; the most retiring and unsocial man is in daily danger of his company. You may barricade yourself behind a copy of the "Tribune," anxious to read it, and feeling in a mood which even the possible society of your twin-brother would not please; or you may have the inclination for companionship which would make you chat with the waiter who pours out your soda and brandy. It is all one with Horace Dilloway. He is inevitable as the three fatal Greek sisters. You never know when he may not ensconce himself at your side. That you are pleased to see him, he magnificently takes for granted. He does not solicit your civility: he demands it. There is something royal and imperial about his intrusiveness.

I fell to almost liking him on this account. His unconsciousness of being a dreadful bore prevented him from boring me. He seemed to me an exquisite study. The cool broadsides that he levelled against all my outworks of reserve made me smile inwardly at my own disarray. You could no more discountenance or suppress him than if he had been a fog or a rainy afternoon.

He seemed wofully unlettered, though there had been excellent reason for an opposite result. His father, a man of fortune, had sent him to college, and he had afterward travelled abroad. He had married two or three years later. I knew that his

wife had been one of the Van Wagenens, and that she was already the mother of several children. But I had never met her. She went out very little into society. If I thought of her at all, it was with a thrill of pity. Of course, being a Van Wagenen, she had married Horace Dilloway solely because of his money. What else could it possibly have been? Everybody knew how her father, gay, spendthrift Louis Van Wagenen (I can see his jaunty little pointed white mustache now, and his gold eyeglass, and his perennial rosebud), had died, leaving almost nothing but debts. What girl, so placed, could have refused such an offer as Horace's?

But it was not surprising that she rarely went out. I found myself pitying her more and more as I became better acquainted with Horace. I made a few inquiries among people as to what she was like. Was she pretty? Had she elegance and style? Could it be possible that she possessed brains and culture? But no one could answer my questions. I happened each time, I suppose, to hit upon the wrong person. After a while I began to feel myself the prey of a morbid, curious, haunting fancy. This fancy concerned the unknown and compassionated Mrs. Horace Dilloway. I wondered whether she did not need advice, encouragement, support. It was no common calamity for a woman of refinement to be linked in lifelong bondage with such a distressing creature as Horace Dilloway. And I had known her father so well,

here in these very walls; had laughed at his quaint, worldly-wise sayings; had giggled (I shame to record) over some of the naughty French stories which old Louis told so inimitably below his pointed white mustache! (And I used sometimes to marvel, by the way, that it should not have turned any other hue than that beautiful chaste white.)

I felt certain that Horace's young wife was enduring martyrdom. As a return for all the keen social enjoyment that her father had given me, did I not owe his daughter some sort of friendly and helpful office?

The words "my wife" were not seldom on Horace's lips. But for a long time I refrained from asking him the least question concerning Mrs. Dilloway. How could he speak of her with proper respect, when his daily existence was one continued scorn of her claims to it? I dreaded the shock of being called upon to infer from what he might tell me that young Mrs. Dilloway was simply trampled into the earth. At least three times a week Horace would leave the club in a cab long after midnight, and with a mind whose condition even the most charitable critic must have pronounced cloudy. What torture, on these occasions, must his poor spouse be experiencing! Or was she indifferent to all his wretched irregularities? Far better, I decided, that she should be so; and yet how improbable, since she was the mother of his children, and no doubt a woman

sensitive under the insult of such vulgar neglect and disdain! At length, one afternoon, when he had joined me in the large smoking-room of the club, I mentioned the fact of Mrs. Dilloway's rare appearances in society. "She does not suffer from ill health, I hope," were my concluding words.

Horace threw back his head and gave an amused chuckle! "Health!" he exclaimed. "O Lord! she's never sick a bit. She's 'as strong as a four-year-old. She don't look it, but she is." Here he seemed to ruminate for a moment, if any really meditative mood can truthfully be chronicled concerning him. Then he burst into his coarse guffaw of a laugh. "Oh! she's a whole team, Isabel is," he proceeded. "She beats me all holler. I tell her so. I ain't much on books: I s'pose you know that, Manhattan, old boy. But *she!* why, there ain't a book that comes out, I guess, that my wife don't read. And *talk* about 'em after she's *read* 'em! Why, I've heard her argue about Henry W. Emerson and Ralph Waldo Longfellow with friends o' mine that knew what they were a-talkin' of, don't you understand? — *well*, as I guess pretty few ladies in America could dream o' doin'."

"Indeed!" I murmured.

"And this man," I thought, "was graduated not very long ago from Columbia College. What a sarcastic comment upon the refining and scholarly influences of our republican universities!"

"Oh, yes!" continued Horace Dilloway. "Isa-

bel's a reg'lar stunner at all that kind o' thing." Here he paused, and suddenly put his roseate, moony face very much on one side. Then as suddenly he drew forth a big watch bearing his monogram in diamonds, opened it, and regarded it. "I say, old boy, come round and dine with us to-night. Got any other engagement?"

"No," I said; "but I have not yet dressed for dinner. I thought of dining a little late this evening, as I went to a large lunch at Delmonico's this afternoon, which has played havoc with my appetite. You know, my quarters are just in the next street, and" —

Horace here clapped my knee with one of his pink, puffy hands. "Oh, never mind about a dress-coat!" he interrupted. "Come around. It's all right. I never dress for dinner. *She* won't mind. It's nearly dinner-time now. Let's just jump into a cab."

We did. Horace lived in a handsome basement house in Twenty-Eighth Street. A spruce butler opened the door for us. We presently entered a tasteful little reception-room, where Mrs. Dilloway waited.

"This is my wife," said Horace in his bluff, almost brutal way. "Isabel, you've heard me talk about Mr. Manhattan. Well, here he is. He's come to eat some dinner with us. I hope we've got something decent; I'm devlish hungry; I had a cocktail or two this afternoon, and it makes me feel kind o' peckish. — Well, now, Manhattan,

you washed your hands at the club, and I did n't. I 'll just go up stairs and wash 'em, and then I 'll join you in the dinin'-room. — By the way, Iz, is dinner ready? ”

“Yes, Horry,” said Mrs. Dilloway. “Dinner is served.”

The voice with which this brief reply was given could not well have been more musical, and the lady who delivered it seemed to me a most exquisite type of feminine beauty. I at once detected her resemblance to her dead father. She had his straight patrician nose, his delicate lips, his finely moulded temples. She was quite blond, and wore her glossy tresses banded in plaits about her graceful, symmetrical head. She had an enchanting smile; her large, soft blue eyes were full of intelligence; her figure had true Greek curves in its pliant slenderness. Her dress was of some black lace-like fabric, and she had a knot of golden flowers at her breast. Her long, supple, aristocratic hands were cased in gloves of a dark hue, that reached high up her arm, whose perfect contour the flowing sleeve left apparent. I do not think it hyperbole to call her angelic. And this was Horace Dilloway's wife! And I had just heard her address him by the endearing name of “Horry.”

We had a little conversation together before going into the dining-room. I was positively dazed by what I heard her say. It was almost exactly of this meaning, if I lose the precise phrase :

“Yes, Mr. Manhattan, I have heard my husband speak of you. Dear Horry tells me about nearly all his club friends. I am sure that you make it very pleasant for him, there at the Metropolitan. He enjoys it so! He tells me what charming times he has.”

“And you, Mrs. Dalloway?” I then ventured. “Have you as charming times as he?”

She smiled radiantly for an instant. She looked like a lovely picture by Greuze as she did so. “Oh, I manage to amuse myself,” she answered with a sweet, demure confidence. “I don’t mind when Horry is away, because I am sure that he is having a pleasant time. And then I have my books—I am a great reader. My books and the care of my dear children,—these occupy me quite thoroughly whenever my husband is away.”

“Horace told me you were fond of books,” I now said.

“Immensely,” returned Mrs. Dalloway. She drooped her soft eyes for a moment, and then lifted them, liquid and gleaming. “I have been so interested lately,” she gently exclaimed in that voice of hers which was so exquisite for its delicious modulation and cadence, “by a work that you may not yet have seen! It is an attempted refutation of Herbert Spencer’s ‘Philosophy.’” She here named the book and its author. “The view taken,” she went on, “is entirely from the standpoint of the German philosophers. Now, I

am intensely averse to the German philosophers. I feel that the Baconian inductive theory is the only stable and secure one. I read German with a good deal of ease, and I can never bring myself to repose the least faith in Kant, Hegel, or Fichte. They are all such shadowy personages. Bacon, to my thinking, refutes them all. But this work, while it deals very fairly with the Baconian theory, still " —

" Well! Both o' you here yet! Why ain't dinner served? Iz, had n't you better ring and see? "

This interruption was made by Horace, who now abruptly appeared. A little later we all three passed into the dining-room, where a dinner of excellent quality was served us, with every desirable nicety of attendance. Mrs. Dalloway looked like a young queen — and a very pure and lovely one — as she sat there at the head of her husband's board, with her curve of slim white throat and her classic profile gleaming so fair and calm above her black-lace draperies. I should be almost afraid to speculate upon what Horace looked like, seated opposite this fragile and adorable creature. His "cocktail or two," so candidly admitted not long ago, had encrimsoned his spacious and circular face. Seen just above an *épergne* full of loose flowers and fern-sprays, the effect was peculiar: it made me think of a sunset in the tropics.

" Well, Manhattan, I s'pose you and my wife

have been havin' a reg'lar booky talk, eh? I guess I must polish up my lit'rature if I 'm going to have readin' chaps like you come round to dinner. — Before I married you, Iz, I used to read nearly every novel that came out. Lemme see — there was one fellow that just took the cake with me. George Eliot — yes, that was the one. Did n't he write 'The Woman in White,' and 'Foul Play'?"

Mrs. Dilloway immediately began, in her placid voice, to set Horace right regarding these questions of authorship. She did so without a sign of annoyance or embarrassment. She seemed totally unconscious that he was ridiculous or grotesque. His illiterate manner, which really sprang less from ignorance than from a certain distinctly American recklessness of speech and deportment, did not appear to occasion her a qualm. Now and then her sweet eyes rested on his inflamed face, which fresh draughts of claret had not rendered by any means paler, and I thought there was something more than mere fondness in her gaze.

"Portrey's the big thing with *you*, Iz, ain't it?" presently broke forth Horace. (He pronounced the word "poetry" as nearly like what I have written as possible.) "Look here, Manhattan, my wife can string you off about half what the famous poets have written, from Tennyson to Byron — Oh, lemme see — Tennyson came before Byron, did n't he?"

"Yes, Horry, considerably before," said Mrs.

Dilloyay with a light, suave, careless laugh. "Are you fond of Tennyson, Mr. Manhattan?" she continued, exclusively addressing myself.

"Excessively fond," I answered.

"Right, sir, every time!" declared Horace, while he devoured an olive. "Tennyson beats 'em all, don't he? I can't ever read his 'Hiawatha' without I cry. It's a fact. I think it's the most elegant poem I ever read."

Mrs. Dilloyay again corrected her husband—not at all as though he had made an absurd blunder, but with the quiet *aplomb* of one who points an ordinary error. "I am glad that you like Tennyson," she afterward said, addressing myself. "He is to me very great. His 'In Memoriam' always affects me like the sea. It seems to break on countless shores of thought; it washes untold regions of speculation and philosophy. I disagree with its conclusion, which is orthodox; I should prefer an agnostic ending. Should not you, Mr. Manhattan?"

I almost stammered as I answered. I am not by any means sure just what conclusion to "In Memoriam" I told Mrs. Dilloyay that I should have preferred. I was lost in bewilderment, amazement. I had been unprepared for her in every way; I was now unprepared to hear her speak of Tennyson. There seemed such an enormous gulf between Tennyson and Horace Dilloyay!

I suppose that I must have said a few words

about Browning. People are very apt to do so when they are at a loss for something to respond, and as confused as I undoubtedly was at present.

“Browning!” exclaimed Mrs. Dilloway. “Do you really mean that you put him above Tennyson? I can hardly believe that anyone should rank him higher. He is to me a poet who has flung away nearly all chances of permanent future greatness. He has, it is true, done extraordinary things. But the surest literary preservative is style. Browning, in my opinion, has no style. He wilfully wraps himself in obscurity. No great poet has ever done that. He is, I think, surrounded by an adulating English clique who will lose their fervor of esteem as soon as he dies. He is not a true artist. Only the true artists live. Slipshod *technique*, careless rhyme, contempt for the understanding of one’s readers, may create, if properly set before the public, a *clientèle*, an adorning *côterie*. Browning deserves no immortality—not because he has not the genius to secure one, but because he has served his genius foolishly. He has done that unfortunate thing for a great man; he has preferred to make himself a fashion. I grow sad when I think of this man’s wasted ability. He might have been supreme. He might have been” —

Just then we were interrupted by a sonorous snore. Horace had fallen into a profound sleep. His head hung on one side. There was no doubt about his somnolence.

Mrs. Dilloway rose. "Poor Horry!" she murmured. "He is so tired!"

I sat astounded. I saw her go up to her husband, and pass one hand over his coarse, dark hair. Horace awakened, straightened himself, and mumbled something.

Mrs. Dilloway looked at me. "Poor, dear Horry is very tired," she said. A moment afterward she stooped and kissed his forehead.

They were an immense contrast as I watched them side by side. It was delicacy and vulgarity brought into close nearness; it was intellect, education, enlightenment, standing at the elbow of stupidity, idle loquacity, self-assertive fatuity.

And yet this woman loved this man. She was happy with him. There could not be a doubt that she was happy with him. This lily loved this weed of the mire. It was all one of nature's odd arrangements. I saw it in the way her hand smoothed his bristly and unpoetic locks. I saw it in her exquisite smile, which a man of twenty times finer calibre than Horace Dilloway's might have been proud to win.

That dinner remained indestructibly memorable with me. He and she were the most ill-mated couple under the sun. Some mad fantasy had gained rule over Mrs. Dilloway. In time she would wake up to a sense of her own dreadful mistake. She was still very young. Yes, in time she would wake up. Thus I then believed.

About six months later I heard that Horace's

wife had borne him another child. I remembered Bottom and Titania. Must there not ultimately, I asked myself, be a revival, an alteration? But although I patiently waited, neither came. Mrs. Dilloway remained stanch and loyal to her lord. She loved him, and that expressed it all. The magic juice had been squeezed into her eyes. Yes, she was Titania, he Bottom. It was, in its way, one of those incredible arrangements, a perfect marriage. All my pity, all my prognostications, had been thrown away. She had her opinions, her views, her ideals. He went to the club and drank untold whiskey: she analyzed the relative genius of Tennyson or of Browning. He tumbled, lounged, bored you, talked of nothing: she staid at home, and read Herbert Spencer. He was utterly unworthy of her: she found him wholly delightful. She was vestal in her fidelity: he was daringly disloyal in his hourly deeds. Nothing sure or safe can be postulated of human nature. I began to feel very certain, a few months after that almost epical dinner, that marriages often have a motive and a meaning, here on earth, which the shrewdest of us might spend vast useless effort in trying to fathom. Titania, as we all know, wakes up, in the play, and declares:

“Methought I was enamoured of an ass.”

But as yet I have not had the slightest reason to believe that my nineteenth century Titania has shown the least sign of disenchantment.

X.

A TYPICAL NEW YORK MAN.

It is possible wholly to disapprove of a person, and yet stoutly to like him. I should say that this antithesis just described my feelings toward Mr. Johnston Gillespie. *Johnston Gillespie*,—what an ostentatious kind of strut the name has! How it seems to issue from the lips that pronounce it as some haughty turkey-gobbler might leave the aperture of some fence! and how much personality seems to dwell behind it, whether for good or evil!

Well, in fancy at least, a human figure dwells behind it, of somewhat medium height and a good deal of *embonpoint*, especially in the region of the waist. Mr. Gillespie has a round face, with a sort of sanguine glaze on either cheek, which I am sure would not be there if his taste for cold water were stronger than it is. He has honest blue eyes, which I have seen a little bloodshot on certain mornings, and a good, straight, manly nose. But his mustache is the crowning personal glory of Mr. Johnston Gillespie. It is of an almost brilliantly yellow tint, and its hairs are so wiry in their coarseness that you can clearly distinguish

each separate one. It is a mustache, too, of surprising fidelity to the countenance which it adorns. Nothing seems to disarray it or discompose it. When wiped by the silken kerchief with which its possessor usually wipes it, either pear-shaped division will at once resume its place, almost in the elastic and precise way of an unbent whalebone. Mr. Gillespie has an extremely small foot, of which he is very proud. I suspect him of a good deal of foppery, after a certain kind, and I think it probable that his beaming and dapper boots have cost him some cogent pangs. His hands are chubby, like his person; and he wears several rings, one of which is a diamond very conspicuously set, and of great value, for Mr. Johnston Gillespie is exceedingly rich. He always looks, somehow, whenever I meet him, as if he had just put on a "new suit" for the first time. He puts on a good many new suits in the course of a year, I have not a doubt; but there is a difference between the man and his clothes which makes you observe his clothes, very often, before you notice him, in a way that no subtlety of description could adequately explain. I am sure that, if he had a speck on the flawless broadcloth which overspreads his spheroidal stomach, one would espy it with instantaneous speed; and when he stands before you, clad as smartly as possible, you seem to see the scissors of some adroit tailor ploughing and snipping its way as the chalked outlines and hieroglyphs of the latest fashion have indicated. His hat is always

of the glossiest, and he has a multiplicity of overcoats. But no matter what he wears, it is perpetually the same with him: he looks *endimanché* and freshly varnished. He wears nothing gracefully, and always as if he not only thought you were watching how it became him, but as if he rather desired that you should so watch.

I should not think of Mr. Gillespie as being an American, but rather as being a New-Yorker. I don't know whether he ever reflects upon the question of living in the largest city in the United States; but it appears singularly appropriate that he should live there, for in his daily life and dealings he always insists upon "the best of everything." I am certain that his bootmaker undergoes agonies in accommodating those slender feet to the sanctioned sheathings of patent leather or calfskin. It is my belief that his tailor has borne from him vituperation and bullying; for he can bully his inferiors as badly as the worst cad will sometimes do, though his heart is large and his nature intrinsically generous. His charities, too, are profuse though careless, and suffer from his great essential fault, — ostentation.

I knew him at college. He was a senior when I was a freshman, and we were both members of the same select and caste-conferring secret society. He always made me feel that I was two good classes below him. Afterward, of course, all this changed, and we have met on equal terms. And yet it is hard to say that any one ever meets Johnston Gil-

lespie on equal terms. It is an absolute fact that you must permit him to patronize you in order to show you what an excellent fellow he can be. I have known men to curl their lips in disdain at him behind his back, but I never knew any of these to refuse him a smile when he shook their hands.

His career is peculiar. Two or three years after leaving college he lived fast, drank hard, and seriously impaired his health. Then, recognizing the folly of all this, he genuinely reformed and spent a year in travelling abroad. I saw him soon after his return. He invited me to dine at Delmonico's. There was no one except ourselves, but the dinner was sumptuous, — a sheer waste, in fact, of viands and wines.

"America's good enough for me," he declared during our repast. "If you leave out the picture-galleries and the churches, I don't see that they've got anything better than we've got. All Europe's kind of a big graveyard, anyway. They're always showing you what somebody's done who's been dead a thousand or two years. Look here, Mark, I don't like this Burgundy, do you?"

"I think it's good *Clos de Vougeot*, Johnsty," I said, "and as soft as velvet."

He smiled wisely under his copious yellow mustache. "Not for a cent," he said, his year abroad no more having taken from him his ineradicable native slang than I believe twenty such years could have done. "No, my boy, it's *turned*." He

snapped his fingers loudly to attract the attention of a waiter. The waiter not hearing this sound (though a number of adjacent diners heard it), he pounded with mild violence upon the table, using the handle of his fork. A waiter rushed to him.

“You ain’t *my* waiter.”

“No, monsieur.”

“Well, then, get *my* waiter. I want him. Un-derstand?”

“Yes, monsieur.”

When “*my* waiter” came, the Burgundy was anathematized. The waiter presumed to defend its quality, and was met with a volley of remarks like these:

“Look here, don’t you talk such rot to me! I know good wine when I drink it, and bad too! What do you take me for, anyhow? When I say a wine ’s turned, it ’s your business to listen, an’ not shoot your mouth off. Bring another bottle, and take this away—quick as you can! If you ain’t careful, my fine fellow, I ’ll complain of you to Mr. Delmonico.”

The new wine was brought, and the old removed. While this substitution was in process, Gillespie made several growling comments on the *filet*, which he pronounced over-done. But when the waiter brought the bill, he discovered that the denounced Burgundy had not been charged upon it. He insisted that the bill should be changed, and paid for the wine which he had recently reviled. He also gave the waiter a much larger fee than usual.

He has an immense lurking respect for "swell society," as he calls it, which the position of his dead parents, apart from his great inherited wealth, would easily have enabled him to enter. But he never "goes out." I think he inwardly feels that the restrictions and requirements of fashionable life would yoke and cramp his liberty-loving spirit much too severely.

"I envy you, Mark," he once said to me in his nasal yet cordial voice. "You can put on a swallow-tail and go round, night after night, here, there, everywhere, among all the stuck-up girls and half-witted fops. By ——! I don't see how you do it, old boy! And they tell me you lead their germans for 'em too. I don't dance—never could; but if I was to tackle a german just one night, I'd have 'bout ten fights on my hands for the next day. When I boss things, I boss 'em. I would n't have these young simpletons taking extra skips whenever my head was turned."

"Nor do I, Johnsty," I said. "I rule them by kindness; but I rule them."

"So you do," he exclaimed, putting a hand on my shoulder. "I've *heard* you do, and I believe it. But I can't rule that way. The kindness is all *in* me, I guess you know that; but the devil is in showing it at the right time. . . . Say! got anything to do to-morrow evening? . . . Well, then, come and dine with me in my own rooms at the Bolingbroke. Party of six—all good fellows. You'll make the seventh—lucky number."

It is forever thus with him. We scarcely ever meet that he has not some festal proposition of the sort to make. He lavishes hospitality upon his friends; he has indeed given thousands away in the form of nominal loans to men for whom pecuniary assistance was a positive injury. But, alas! I recollect that this very dinner at the Bolingbroke turned out a most unfortunate affair. A musical gentleman, who occupied adjoining apartments, chanced to hold on the same evening a private concert, whose programme consisted of German compositions which our host esteemed an ear-splitting outrage. He was very fond of Italian music; he thought "Trovatore" the most enchanting opera in all the world.

As the fumes of his own excellent champagne went to his head, he determined upon having the concert silenced. Yes, he would. We counselled him eloquently to the contrary, but without avail. It was a damned shame: it spoiled his dinner, and he was going to see whether he'd have to put up with it. Mr. X., the proprietor of the hotel, would stand by him: they'd been friends for ten years; and X. knew he paid his way, and was n't going to be bulldozed. Nothing would do but we must have Mr. X. up. Our host left his seat, and strutted about with an absurd pomposity, while we all awkwardly sipped our wines, and some of us (including myself) thought the blending of violin, trombone, and piano, in the next room, a rare treat.

Mr. X. appeared. He was very courteous, but justifiably firm. He refused to have the concert interfered with in the slightest manner. Gillespie stormed and fumed, and spoke about his rights as a guest in the hotel. The proprietor employed a low voice, — too low for us to hear much of his defence, — and no doubt answered by protesting against the rights of his other guests being interfered with. Gillespie finally sat down in a white heat, and our dinner was a complete failure. Shortly afterward I learned that he had changed his quarters.

He is very fond of using the word “wrinkle” as expressive of preferment in a hundred matters of purchase and general patronage. He likes to tell you that he “knows the ropes” at certain cafés or restaurants, that the employees there save him a private bottle, that they reserve for him a special dish never on the *carte du jour*, that a particular brand of claret or species of *liqueur* is kept solely for the tickling of his own and his friends’ palates. He takes keen pleasure in receiving a note from his tailor that certain goods have just arrived from “the other side” which no one shall see till he has personally examined them; or from his haberdasher, stating that the last invention in collars or neckties at present awaits his critical survey. Of course, he is very often cheated by these politic tradespeople, and I dare say he knows it; but the gratification to his curious vanity remains quite the same. If he had been a New York poli-

tician, he would have been a terribly corrupt one, he is so fond of partiality and favoritism.

There are some men whom, in the usual meaning of that word, it is impossible to educate, and Gillespie is one of them. The instruction of his professors at Columbia has all fallen completely flat upon him. It is a mystery how he ever traversed the full collegiate curriculum. He has undoubted mental capacity, but it is entirely of the practical, commercial, arithmetical sort. He has no sense of the charms of literature, and apparently no respect for them. He said to me one evening, in a moment of confidence: "I don't see what the deuce people find in poetry to admire. I never can understand a word of it, unless it's something devilish simple, like 'Sweet By and By,' or funny, like the things in 'Pinafore.' Of course, I except Shakespeare; he's poetry, but then he lays over all the rest."

(It is extraordinary how often we hear persons who have just Gillespie's feeling toward poetry make precisely this same point with regard to Shakespeare. The truth is, that they are simply ashamed of including in their category of dislikes a poet whom all the civilized world now agrees in worshipping. There are hundreds, thousands of people, loud to-day in Shakespeare's praise whenever his name is mentioned, who never glance into his works, who have not read half his plays, and who rather avoid, than otherwise, seeing them acted. But the scorpion-whip of public opinion must

not be too daringly braved. We are not permitted to pass adverse judgments with impunity nowadays on the subject of Shakespeare. The fashion is profound and universal homage—and may it last for many centuries! But I sometimes ask myself what these prudent panegyrists would have had to say about the great William, if they had lived when old gossipy Pepys wrote so sneeringly of him, or even when Oliver Goldsmith, in “The Vicar of Wakefield,” referred to him almost with contempt.)

But Gillespie is extremely fond of the drama. He witnesses nearly all the plays that appear, good, bad, or indifferent. I do not believe he has read a book through for three years; but I doubt if he has missed, during that time, a single play of ordinary importance. He is an excellent critic, from a popular stand-point: he usually takes pains to prophesy that a play will or will not “draw,” and he is usually right. But occasionally he forgets, on leaving a theatre, to mildly express the disgust which the performance has inspired. Perhaps it would be putting the matter with more truth to state that he forgets the theatre is not his theatre, and the play produced by him and enacted by his own performers. On one such occasion, when he and I were leaving a certain very well known theatre together, he spoke with high-voiced displeasure.

“The *worst* rot I’ve ever seen! First act palaver, second act bosh, and third milk and water.”

“Johnsty,” I whispered to him, “please recollect that there may be friends of the manager all round you.”

“I’m a friend of the manager myself,” he retorted, as if my admonition were the most unmerited thing in the world. “I’ve known him for an age.”

“Well, then, there may be friends of the performers, who” —

“I’m as good a friend of *nearly* every man or woman you saw to-night as any they’ve got. And I guess some of ’em ain’t got much reason to forget it.” (This was one of the few allusions I ever heard him make to his own liberality.)

“Oh! very well,” I rejoined, “you know perfectly why this sort of thing is n’t the right form in leaving a theatre.”

But, no: he could not understand it—at least, not in his own case. For some time afterward his demeanor toward me was what he himself would have called “huffy.” I think that from any one but a friend he would have resented my very gentle rebuke as an impertinence. His own conduct, if observed in another, would have seemed unwarrantable. Invested with the filigree of his own egotism, he could perceive nothing wrong about it. I do not mean that he merely did not: I mean literally that he could not. He was an exceptional theatre-goer, just as he was an exceptional diner, an exceptional lodger at his hotel, an exceptional being generally. The ordinary rules

and penalties did not apply to him. Once more to borrow his own form of phrase, he had "the inside track" everywhere. I would occasionally speculate upon the possible change which might result in him from the loss of his fortune. As it is, he pays for every one of his presumptions, his exactions, and pays double. His path through life is paved with fees, emoluments, perquisites. Even some of his best friends regard him (though unconsciously, perhaps) through the delicate mist rising from a perfect *consommé*, or the smoke of an incomparable Reina Victoria. And, after all, the talk about New York millionnaires possessing such great powers of entertainment very often hits wide of the truth. With our enormous expenses of living, a man must be twice a millionaire, if married, and dwelling in sumptuous surroundings, to regale his friends *en garçon* as Johnston Gillespie does. Well, I now and then muse, strip Johnston Gillespie of his power to do this. Bring him face to face with the world as it really exists,—its bare, hard facts, demands, necessities, unglided and unembellished. Bend his plump and prosperous shoulders beneath the galling wheel of actual economy. Let him bargain with his tailor instead of patronizing that tradesman. Let him furtively weigh the chances of receiving a Delmonico dinner instead of nonchalantly extending invitations to one. Let him calculate the amount on deposit at his bank instead of dashing off a cheque without the least thought of making an over-draft. What

a lesson it would teach him, — this dauntless autocrat, this typical New-Yorker, the product of a great city in a great country, whose most crying fault is its worship of the money he would then have lost!

I should like to make him poor for two or three days, and then reinstate him in his old opulence. I am too fond of him to wish him any longer or severer punishment than this. And there would be a certain experimental gratification in watching how he bore his adversity, — what sunken qualities of good or evil it called to the surface of his character, what optimism or pessimism, what energy or despair, what resignation or revolt, what serenity or disturbance, it might have the effect of developing.

We often speak of people as purse-proud. A good many men in New York — the most unrefined city, in proportion to its size and civilization, that has probably ever existed — strongly resemble Johnston Gillespie. That is why I have termed him a typical New-Yorker. And these others, like or unlike him in many minor details of temperament or disposition, do not deserve the term of purse-proud any more than he does. They are simply reliant upon their purses, — a very different condition. They have learned to mistake their wealth for themselves, — an easy enough matter here, where it confers almost every degree of human importance. They have lost the discriminating tact to perceive just where they end and

their bank accounts begin. Kings, however petty, have always had their "divine rights" to steady themselves against. But such pettier princelings as Johnston Gillespie, failing in any similar convenient refuge, grow to rate as a consequence of their own personality the court so amply paid them. They forget the terrible social momentum of riches, and the equally terrible paralysis of poverty. They are like men sailing in a magnificent ocean-steamer, for whom even the great surges have a toss, a flash, a glory, and indeed an amusement, not felt by the inmates of smaller craft.

But I don't think there is any very serious chance that Johnston Gillespie will ever lose his money. It is remarkably well invested. If I am not mistaken, he has got a "wrinkle" there too, in the way of political influence or of some noted capitalist's vigilant friendship. It would be almost extraordinary if this were not the case. Yes, it is extremely likely that for years to come, my friend, with all his faults and all his virtues, will remain a typical New York man.

XI.

THE YOUNG GENTLEMAN WHO SAYS "OH, MY!"

THERE are some people of whom one can never think without having a special dominant trait instantly suggest itself. I believe it is the great Taine who says, in speaking of Shakespeare's gift of character-drawing, that the people made to live by his dramatic contemporaries always stand for a single quality, as revenge, hate, veracity, mendacity, and so on through the whole gamut of vices, virtues, foibles, sins, or peccadilloes; while the one master wrought complex personalities, in which fault and excellence, flaw and purity, were wondrously and humanly interblended. From this point of view, it is not my opinion regarding Mr. Josiah Spicer that Shakespeare would have cared very much about handling *him*. I think the master would have passed him over to Ben Jonson, or some lesser luminary, without a murmur. The moment you saw him or recollected him you were reminded of a single fact, — his excessive modesty. It seemed, indeed, a sort of boldness, because it so mantled him, so distinguished him, so emphasized him.

He was not more than two and thirty when I first met him. He went to all the places where I went. His tough prosaic name, Josiah Spicer, was an old one in New York, as old names go here. There had surely been five anterior Josiah Spicers, and since the first had made himself important, well over a century ago, in mercantile dealings, all the others had done something, or been something, preservative of the family prestige. There was not, however, any prestige at all about *my* Josiah. The money which usually went with the name had not gone with his. It had drifted off into a channel of somewhat remote cousins, and the existent Josiah had to get along on a rather moderate bank clerkship. I have always thought this a decided pity. He would have taken care of a fortune so conscientiously and neatly, if he had had one! He took care of himself so conscientiously and neatly! He was quite short of stature, and had a long, pale, beardless face, with a mustache that was a little timid, downy, flaxen curve. He dressed with great precision, which, after all, was not shingly to his credit, as there was really so little of him to dress. His shoulders were so slight and drooping, his chest was so narrow and puny, his figure was so spare and fragile, that you could not help fancying his tailor and shirtmaker must reap solid profit from their limited proportions.

If he was not liked in society, he was certainly not disliked there. It might be recorded of him

that he was most genially and indulgently tolerated. The haughtiest young belle would not have dreamed of snubbing him, though her adorers were a score and her bouquets legion. He would never have put himself in an attitude to be snubbed. At parties he was always a nimble, bland, obliging convenience. All that he apparently wanted to do in the gay world was to hand an opportune ice, to slip forward a desired chair, to propel his lithe, alert little shape through voracious crowds at the supper-table, and bring calmly, securely but never triumphantly, a glass of iced water, perhaps, to some parched maiden. He filled a place, and he filled it with consummate fidelity and thoroughness. He accepted social life not merely as a pleasure, but as a duty. He was very much in earnest about it; he had not a shadow of the ordinary affectations which one meets; he knew everybody, everybody's grandfather, everybody's lack of a grandfather, everybody's claim, rank, status. But he was not at all snobbish: he simply took the fashionable New York world as he found it, and danced with it, talked inanities to it, waited on it, fed it, carried its fans, called its carriages, enjoyed it, respected it, and in his way supported, befriended, ameliorated it. I used sometimes to watch the numerous bored people about Josiah (we always called him "Josiah" in full, as if by a sort of harmless ironic pleasantry), and ask myself whether, with all his insignificance, absence of repose, unaristocratic good humor and willing-

ness to let people make use of him, he was not having decidedly the best time of it; whether, in short, among all the futile maze and babble and masquerade of the thing, he had not been lucky enough to find the one true talisman of hearty enjoyment, the illusive yet tangible *secret de bonheur*.

I always liked to have him near me when I led the *cotillon*. He would give me little practical hints that were of no mean worth; he would aid me, by a wise whisper, in the generalship of my flying artillery, my light infantry, my phalanxes of rosebud damsels and Columbia College striplings. He nearly always danced with an uncompassionated wall-flower. He had not income enough to engage a partner beforehand and send the imperative bouquet. But I don't think he cared. It was part of his phenomenal modesty and humility not to care.

That hard, cold, handsome Anne Trinitychapel, with a smile like lit steel and a wit like the stab of a needle, once spoke of Josiah to me as "the young gentleman who says 'Oh, my!'" I bit my lip with vexation, being a sworn ally of Josiah's; but it hit him off so aptly and shrewdly that its cruel echo never left my brain. Anne Trinitychapel had sketched him enduringly for me by a single Hogarthian stroke.

He certainly did say "Oh, my!" a great deal. He exclaimed it, he murmured it, he prattled it, he even looked it when he did not say it. His voice

was naturally high and thin: no other voice could have been expected from so meagre a *personnel*. I grew to be so haunted by this caustic little epigram concerning him that one evening in Lent, when he dropped into my room with me after a small dinner at the Jerseyflats', I was on the verge of telling Josiah frankly to guard against his beloved vocative.

But I soon discovered, this same evening, that he had become unwontedly melancholy, and soon learned the cause of his depression. This put all thought of his "Oh, mys!" out of my head; and I even forgot his peculiarity while he began, in familiar though subdued falsetto:

"Oh, *my!* Mark, it's dreadful! Yes, it's perfectly dreadful! The older I grow, the more I get to think how dreadful it *is!* I mean about my never having been abroad, you know."

"Never having been abroad, Josiah?" I repeated. "Well, really, I don't see anything so very dreadful in it, do you?"

"*Do I?*" Here Josiah gave a little sneeze, for we were sitting rather close together, and the smoke of my cigar took a course straight into his minute pink nostrils. He hates tobacco, though he says he does n't. "Oh, *my!*" he pursued with extreme seriousness, "it seems to follow me, Mark, everywhere. Yes, it does. I never meet any stranger, and talk ten minutes, that I don't dread some reference to Paris, or London, or Vienna. I don't mind Vienna so much, because lots of

Americans, you know, have n't been there. But London and Paris, — *everybody* has seen *them*. Everybody except me! And I 'm always afraid they 're going to find out the truth, and they nearly always *do*. Then they open their eyes and stare at me. 'What!' they say, 'never been!' And I have to answer, 'No, but I hope to go soon.' And that sounds so lame and silly! And they always pity me. I 'm sure that nice Lizzie Bleecker, whom I took in to dinner to-night, pitied me. And, oh, *my!* Mark, I 'm *so* tired of being pitied! I *must* go. I *must* go as soon as I can manage."

This unaccustomed lamentation from Josiah evoked my own pity. I felt very much like offering to loan him funds, and would gladly have done so if I had not been sure of the lifted hand, and the shocked start, and the fluttered "Oh, my!" for I well knew that Josiah would just as soon take a plunge off a house-top as dive into the hazardous regions of debt.

As it was, his absurd and yet serious cause of unhappiness was one which I could understand and appreciate. Of the many kinds of snobbery rampant within our brave republic, that of perpetually referring to foreign travels can by no means be ranked as least odious. Poor Josiah was one of its victims. He had long suffered in silence, and at length his misery had burst its bonds. He had had every country of Europe more or less in coalition against him for years. Among the people whom he met, I can perfectly

comprehend the isolation from which he suffered. In some obscure Western town, where the travelled resident is exceptional, and to mention the National Gallery or the Louvre is to throw an awed silence over rustic tea-tables, his position might have been wholly different. But here in New York he was engirt by a dreary invisible solitude, not to be measured by any mechanical process, and yet as wide as the Atlantic Ocean, which he had never crossed. Subsequent questioning of Josiah resulted in the most harrowing disclosures. Naturally of a very honest turn, he had been tempted by *mauvaise honte* into painful hypocrisies. He was very much ashamed of them, but he had employed them, none the less. More than once he had concealed for a whole evening the fact of his never having been abroad, when the person with whom he talked had evidently a contrary idea, and had several times clearly indicated as much by distinct statements; as, for example, by saying during the narration of some story which dealt with Paris, "You remember how the Boulevard des Capucines runs close by the Madeleine?" or, "You of course recollect, Mr. Spicer, how dry one can keep one's self under those arcades of the Palais Royal on a rainy day?" And to remarks like these poor Josiah owned that he had more than once responded with a palpable "Yes." I felt the situation to be damning, of course.

"Oh, my!" Josiah now went on. "The worst

part of it, Mark, is that my remorse will not prevent me from doing it again."

"That is absolutely horrible, Josiah," I said under my mustache. "I don't know what ought to be done with you. I think I shall get a little placard and pin it secretly upon you behind. The placard shall read: 'This young man has never been abroad, and, if he says that he has been, people are warned against him as a shameful fictionist.'"

"Oh, my!" said Josiah with a shudder, as if he really expected me to carry out this threat. "But I *must* go, Mark," he continued. "I don't see just how I can manage it at present, but I *must* go."

He did manage it, however, the next spring. His employers granted him a vacation, and his past economies granted him a five-hundred-dollar tour with Cook's tickets everywhere. I burst into an irrepressible laugh when he told me about the Cook's tickets. Knowing Josiah's affability and companionability as I did, it was so easy to imagine him on terms of expansive intimacy with about twenty shabby-genteel tourists, flying over the Continent in their company, and perhaps being willingly imposed upon and made a commodity of by all their feminine members. I thought regretfully of how pleasant it would be to take him decently through Europe, and hear his enthusiastic "Oh, mys!" in Trafalgar Square, or the Place de la Concorde, or on the Piazza San Marco. But as it was, I knew just what fate lay in store for him. He would be whirled through Antwerp,

scarcely getting his breath before he had "done" the tomb of Rubens and the "Descent from the Cross;" then he would be whirled again through Brussels, till the lovely Sainte Gudule, with its pillars and cloisters and tracery, was all a sculpturesque blur to him, and the Wiertz gallery and the Musée Royal were pictorial shadows; and then he would perhaps dash through Switzerland, seeing Chamouni for two hours, Interlaken for one, Lucerne for fifty minutes, and various other charming spots for periods of lesser duration. That is what would happen to poor little Josiah, for that is the way the Cook's tourists usually rush things. I am not writing anything against them as an idea, an enterprise, a civilizing factor, and I think it much better to go that way than not to go at all. But there are superior ways of going, and I felt sorry enough that Josiah could not have experienced one of these.

His method of travel was divulged to me as a prodigious secret. "Oh, my! Mark," he said on the eve of his departure, "don't tell a single soul, or it will be perfectly dreadful!" And I did not tell a single soul. I respected little Josiah's secret as though it were the precious enjoiner of a dying kinsman. His absence lasted nearly till autumn; and when anybody asked me concerning him, I said, "Oh, Josiah's gone abroad, you know," with as grand an air as if he had had the captain's stateroom on the "Alaska" all to himself, and two body-servants on the same steamer besides.

It was delightful to consider that the poor little fellow's woes would soon be over, — that all his pathetic embarrassments and concealments and make-shifts would shortly terminate in a calm consciousness of having "been abroad." Henceforth the thorn was to be removed from his flesh, the rankling dart from his bosom. He would have been abroad when he returned to us. If people spoke to him about Norway and the midnight sun, he could shake his head, and answer with respectable frankness: "No — a — I did n't get as *far* as that." If they tried to blind him with the sands of Egypt, or prod him with the toe of the Italian boot, he could candidly admit their right to do either. But London, Paris, even Switzerland, — these were to make him proof against their polite yet galling surprise forever afterwards.

He returned in early September, and I was almost the first to shake his slim, cool little hand. When I asked him how he had enjoyed himself, it was just as I had expected. There was immediately a torrent of "Oh, mys!" He showed me the inevitable packet of photographs, — the Strasbourg Cathedral, and the Jungfrau, and the Arc de Triomphe. I examined them all with religious interest, and did not say anything about their being purchasable in Broadway, or even Sixth Avenue. I was genuinely glad at Josiah's gladness, and thankful that the weight of his distress had been removed. He showed me on the map of Europe the course "they" had taken, and I confess that

this portion of the map has never seemed to me quite the same since. It has always been frescoed, from Liverpool circuitously to Paris, with a tiny scroll of "Oh, mys!"

During the next winter Josiah and I often met. He was quite unchanged in his pretty civilities, his miniature knight-errandries. He gave himself no airs because he had "been abroad." He had been a passionate pilgrim, but he made no parade of his enthusiasm. He handed ices and he held fans with the same loyalty, agility, and decorum as of old. And yet I clearly perceived, after a while, that little Josiah was not happy.

I observed him, I watched him, and finally, being determined to pierce the root of his new dissatisfaction, I roundly questioned him one evening concerning it.

"Josiah," I said solemnly, "something weighs on your mind. Are you in love? Can it be that you are in love? If so, tell me the worst."

We were standing together at the corner of his street. It was a late hour of the night; we had been to a protracted dance at the Macdougals' in Washington Square. Josiah looked up at me—he always had to look up at me when we stood together—startledly in the obscure lamplight.

"No, Mark," he said, "I'm not in love. Oh, no! it's not that. But what makes you—you think it's *anything*?"

"I certainly do think it's something, Josiah," was my reply. His own had pricked curiosity.

"A little while ago you were wretched because you 'd never been abroad. And now"—

He suddenly laid his hand upon my arm. He looked up into my eyes with what in anybody else I should have considered a terrible gravity.

"And *now*, Mark," he murmured, "I feel that I—I have been *only once!*"

"Only once?" I repeated confusedly. "Of course you have. Well, what of it? Who said you had been twice?"

Josiah had drooped his head, and he now sombrely shook it. "The fact is, Mark, that I thought if I'd been I'd *been*, and there would be an end. But nothing of the sort. Always before, people were tormenting me with their amazement that I *had n't* been; but now they 're tormenting me with their amazement that I 've been *only once*. Oh, my! it's *too* dreadful! I thought I could talk about Piccadilly, and the view from the Rigi, and the Avenue de l'Opera, to my heart's content. But there's something—I don't know what it is—that makes them always ask, after I've spoken just a few minutes, 'Was this your *first* time, Mr. Spicer?' For a little while I did n't mind. I used to say 'yes' quite carelessly. But I've discovered that when I say it *was* my first time, they look at me with just as much pity and just as much astonishment as when I used to confess that I had n't been at *all*. And now I've grown to dread 'Was this your *first* time, Mr. Spicer?' quite as much as I used to dread

‘Have n’t you *ever been*?’ . . . Oh, my! I don’t see why they can’t leave that other question alone, do you, Mark? If I’ve been, I’ve *been*; and what earthly difference ought it to make whether I’ve been only once or a dozen times?”

“What earthly difference ought it to make, indeed!” I mused, after I had left poor little Josiah, with this his new lamentation ringing oddly in my ears.

We are a great republic — or declare ourselves to be. Washington founded us: Lincoln died for us. Had not the wail of Josiah Spicer a very subtle and satirical meaning? Why do we think and talk so much about “the other side,” from which (as we affirm) we have broken away so gloriously, and to which (as we also affirm) we compare so handsomely? We victimize little Josiah. Let us be careful how we stultify ourselves. If democracy means anything, it means consistency and self-respect. Rome never bowed to Greece till after she had conquered it. In St. James’s and Kensington and Chelsea they don’t make it a *cachet* of respectability to have been to “the States.” There is a good deal in so valuing ourselves that others will value us.

“Might we not learn,” I asked myself as I strolled homeward through the late New York darkness, “a rather wholesome lesson, if we chose, from the wail of the persecuted little gentleman who says ‘Oh, my’?”

XII.

THE LADY WHO INVADED NEW YORK.

IF there is any living woman with whom, on ordinary principles of judgment, I should not connect the idea of despondency or cynicism, it is Mrs. Brummagem Baker. True, I recollect the time (I was then a mere youth) when she was the target of many scornful little arrows from society's replete quiver. Even when I first began to go about, her ostracism was by no means an ended matter. There were still certain "good houses" that refused to receive her. Stories of her pertinacious pushing were still current. Echoes of the old jeering laughter yet lived and reverberated. She had not merely sought to pass the gates: hundreds had done that, and could still do it with success. She had fixed her eyes upon a high place in the citadel itself. She wanted to reign and not serve. She wanted to climb, and climb high. Her intent soon transpiring, opposition had met her at every step. It might picturesquely be said that she used the alpenstock of resolve to cross the icy glaciers of pride and the deep crevasses of snobbery. But it had been an alpenstock of gold: she was very rich. If she had

not so soon shown her hand in the game, I think she might have won it more easily; for when has money, with a little decent breeding behind it, failed to find favor among our sham New York *noblesse*? But for some reason this lady preferred to show her hand. She was not at all ashamed of her struggle: it was almost as if she wanted to have it made very public, thus heightening her triumph when this should arrive, and giving herself a sort of historic note in the future unwritten annals of our metropolitan life.

Her money had not been that of her dead husband. Mr. Brummagem Baker, as far as I could learn, had been a cad and a sot, and had led her a wretched life somewhere in the West, until finally his death freed her far more desirably than the divorce which she is said to have been on the verge of securing. And very soon afterward the stars themselves had fallen into her threadbare lap. It must have been a very threadbare lap indeed, for she had just got an ill-paid post-office appointment in an Ohio town, when the news reached her that a California uncle whom she had never seen had died, leaving her his share of a silver-mine. She sold out her share rather promptly, and got three millions of dollars by the sale. She might, it was declared, have reaped triple this sum if she had kept her possession for a few years longer. But three round millions were all she wanted, and she had no wish to dwell in the West. Her ambition, leaping into active life with her sudden prosperity,

tended exclusively eastward. And eastward her course of empire took its way.

She was then considered by no means a handsome woman, though she must undoubtedly have had what is called "a presence." For a year or two she lived quietly, observing keenly. She seems to have been born with a vast natural aristocratic impulse. In this country of ours, which is a complex reproduction, as regards its people, of every nationality and every personality under the sun, you often find individual traits and qualities manifest which would appear wholly without precedent. But heredity accounts for everything in character, and the knowledge of a great-grandfather is a rare species of information throughout our monstrous masses; the instinct to shine among patricians is no more inconsistent with birth in a log-cabin than is a salient aptitude for making shoes or rearing cattle.

Mrs. Brummagem Baker's first attempt at entering society in New York was a magnificent defeat. She must then have been about five and thirty. She had rented a roomy mansion in the lower part of Fifth Avenue. She had heard (I shall not give the names of her male counsellors and advisers, though some of them were enough *dans le monde* to have known better) that money and assurance would carry everything, and that all she need do was to throw open her doors and invite the proper sorts of people. She did not know any of the proper sorts of people. She did not know any sort

of people whatever, except a few pleasure-hunting club-men whom she had fallen in with, Heaven knows how, and who used to give her thirsty ears delicious bits of gossip about the select world where she longed to shine. Report declared that she borrowed a long list of names from Brown, the now deceased sexton of Grace Church, and in this way learned whom to invite; but I do not believe that or similar stories of poor, corpulent, eccentric Brown. I do not believe that with all his oddities of deportment, his extraordinary impudence, his remarkable candor, this man, who for years was spoiled and petted by our so-called "old families," and made to believe that none of their entertainments were complete without his bulky form sat in their doorways and shrieked bullyingly to the terrified coachmen of their guests, ever so forgot or so cheapened his position, such as it was. "Brown's lists" used to be a good deal talked about in other days,—his "list of dancing-men," his "list of heavy swells," his list of the second, third, or fourth rate Amphytrions. But they are in one respect like the Junius letters: you could never meet a person who had seen them, signed, in the original manuscript.

However, some one gave Mrs. Brummagem Baker a list. It must have been very copious; it included "everybody," from the inevitable Spuytenduyvils, Poughkeepsies, and Amsterdams, to the last Smiths, Smitherses, or Smithsons who had succeeded in being considered *des nôtres*.

The evening of the ball arrived. Brown had been secured. The spacious house (it belonged to the Gramercys, or the Madisons, or some such family, who were then in Europe) was beautifully decorated with flowers. Mrs. Brummagem Baker, gowned with splendor, stood to receive her guests. She had had no acceptances and no regrets, for her festivity was an "At Home," and hence no reply was expected. A little after ten o'clock her guests began to arrive. They arrived in considerable and increasing numbers. Mrs. Baker bowed and smiled at her gracious best. The concourse augmented; the rooms became at least fairly filled. But an awful fact at length dawned upon the mind of the bland hostess. Her ball was *almost wholly composed of gentlemen!* The men had all come, but with exasperatingly rare exceptions they had left their wives at home—or their wives had preferred to remain at home.

It was a severe blow. If such an affair should occur now, a hundred newspapers would have printed accounts of it from our present ubiquitous "New York correspondent." But then matters were different. The "society column," in all its classic grace and taste, was yet to be reared amid modern journalism. Mrs. Brummagem Baker's next step was to purchase a very attractive villa on the Newport Cliffs. She drove in charming equipages through Bellevue Avenue, when the afternoon light slanted over the sea, and the breezes freshened with a marine coolness. She

must have looked very impressive, leaning back in her landau, with her arched nose and her imperial poise of head, and her large, creamy eyelids. But no one bowed to her except a few of the men. She fought desperately that year, but without avail. Every door was closed against her.

“What shall I do?” she thought, as the autumn was coming on. She had not in the slightest degree lost courage. She understood perfectly that she had flown her kite so very high in the beginning as to make other kites, which had serenely floated aloft for a long time, both astonished and indignant. She had marched upon the enemy boldly, with a flourish of trumpets. And now she must take the punishment for her frank presumption. Strategy and deft manœuvre might have been forgiven her; but the bearing of one who demands, and the step of one who conquers, were quite another matter.

“What shall I do next?” she thought. She had soon decided on what to do, and she did it.

All this happened long before my time, as the phrase goes. When I knew Mrs. Baker, she was a woman of stately maturity (“stately maturity” expresses her age so much better than “fifty-five” or “fifty-seven” could do), and she was everywhere accepted as a reigning social dignitary. I have always thought her a very brilliant and delightful woman. I “took to her” from the first hour of our acquaintance. In appearance she was faded: you could judge her past bloom by the

tarnish time had put upon it now. It had never been a winsome or fascinating bloom. It had had the demureness and all the coldness of a dahlia, never the delicate intoxication of a rose. When her tall, well-moulded figure first dawned upon me, and I looked into the hard, bright black of her eyes, noted the flowing yet inflexible line of her lips, observed the strongly intellectual development at her temples, I told myself that here was a woman who had never known the first thrill of real passion. Power had been her god, and power of a certain sort only. And I was right.

We became excellent friends. She was just the sort of friend I needed, too, at the beginning of my social career. She saw through her own sex as one sees through glass, and could tell their foibles and their faults as one might count the stones at the bottom of a very clear spring. I will not speak of the golden warnings and wise hints that she gave me. It was like getting "points" from some shrewd Wall Street operator. I hope that I listened with a due respect for my precious opportunities, since Mrs. Baker was not wont to distribute them broadcast. Whether I have duly profited by them or no, I leave to those who have watched with any interest the rising of my fashionable star, as Disraeli might have said in his earlier novels.

But it was not long before Mrs. Baker astonished me by the depth of weariness and even disgust which she betrayed. To the world at large

she was the bright personification of contentment, self-satisfaction, success. To me and a few others she revealed an irony of fatigue and disillusion. Her bitterness made me almost shudder when I was first brought face to face with it. It was like finding a nest of rats behind a sumptuous velvet arras. We were seated in her almost regal drawing-rooms at the time. We had been talking about some charitable amateur theatricals, of which she was one of the foremost lady patronesses, and I had consented (Oh, dire and never-repeated experience!) to act as secretary. We had dropped business for the present. We had drifted into a sort of semi-philosophic train of conversational gossip. We were asking each other what, after all, the lives and aims of Mrs. This and Mr. That (people whom we both knew well) had amounted to. We were saying very uncharitable things, but perhaps a good many true things as well. If our friends had been behind the door, they would no doubt have hated us. But I am sure they would have secretly admitted, deep down beyond the ferment of their wrath, that some of our charges were full of justice.

"Well," suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Brummagem Baker, "and what has *my* life amounted to? Have you ever thought at all on that subject?"

I looked at her with surprise. "I've thought a good deal on the subject," I soon replied, "and my conclusion is that you are one of the most notably successful women of your period."

She gave a light laugh. She always had a crisply epigrammatic way of speaking on every subject. They had said years ago that her voice was nasal and "American." (It is astonishing how fond certain Americans are of turning that national adjective into a contemptuous significance.) But there was no nasal tone in Mrs. Baker's voice now. She spoke, indeed, with a slightly foreign accent — or at least with a short, tripping treatment of her syllables, and an occasional upward inflection at the end of a sentence. She had a breezy, indolent manner, too, as if nothing that she heard or saw were quite important enough to be serious about. Her style was decidedly French; it was, moreover, a trifle English now and then; but it was not ever in the slightest degree American.

"You're so good to say that!" she declared. "I suppose everybody thinks me *successful*. What an odious little word, by the way! It implies straining and struggling. I detest it."

"Then I am very sorry to have used it," was my reply.

She changed the subject soon afterward, and I understood that she was disinclined to talk further regarding herself. But repeatedly, in other succeeding interviews, she would drop certain innuendoes regarding her own mental *ennui*. At last I said to her:

"Frankly, Mrs. Baker, are you not satisfied with your career?"

“Satisfied?” she murmured, looking downward and seeming to consider the word. Then she raised her eyes. “No,” she said slowly, looking at me with great intentness, “I am prodigiously *dissatisfied*.”

There had been a multitudinous dinner that evening at the Lexingtons’ in Lexington Avenue. The Lexingtons always give their dinners in the most ridiculous way. No one who has ever wanted to “take in” anybody else has ever, even by accident, managed to do so. Everybody is placed uncongenially next everybody else. If I had an arch-enemy of the feminine sex, and had accepted a dinner at the Lexingtons’, I should not be surprised to find a card on the hall table (as I squeezed down my *chapeau bras* and got the footman to disarray me of my wraps) giving the name of this girl or matron as my future companion through ten or twelve tedious courses. As it chanced that evening, I had to seat myself beside Minnie Maidenlane, who is at once the most amiable and vapid of young virgins. I had escaped from the men as soon as possible after coffee and cigars were served, and had joined the ladies in that exquisite front room of the Lexingtons’, where, as everyone knows, they have a hundred good things in the way of ornament, and some pictures that it needs almost the purse of Fortunio to hang on their nice walls, decorated by the æsthetic Marcotte. I found Mrs. Baker near a big palm, which towered in front of an

alcove window where there were tufted cushions piled quite orientally. We were seated here together as she gave me her last recorded response.

"You, of all women living," I said to her meaningly (it was so pleasant to say something meaningly to some one, after those hollow inanities with Minnie Maidenlane!), should be the last to speak of your life with dissatisfaction."

"How droll you are!" was the answer, given with a shrug of the shoulders. "I *know* you to have ideas, to be outside of this dreary fashionable rabble, — for it is nothing else, — and yet you now and then seem to be conventionally a part of it. The older I grow, Mark Manhattan (and I am growing very old, if the lamentations of my hairdresser are at all credible), I find myself more and more convinced of how I have wasted my life."

"Wasted your life!" I ejaculated.

"Yes, just what I tell you, dear boy, wasted my life. Let me be autobiographical; let me dip into a real confession. What did I attempt to do? . . . Oh, you need not look as if you had not heard all about my past. It has been cried from the house-tops, and you have surely heard many of the shouts. I made a grand, silly attempt to be — what I am now, a New York leader. If I had devoted my brains (and you know very well that I *have* brains, just as *I* know that *you* have) to something profitable, sensible, intellectual, truly womanly, I might have accomplished results to be proud of. But what did I do? I flung everything away

on a mere craze, — a flimsy caprice. What is it to be what I now am? I have gained it, but what have I gained? Ashes and dust! Do you not suppose that I *feel* this? The nonsense never seemed to me nonsense till I had grasped it in my hand. Then I realized what a bauble my coveted jewel really was. To reign in New York society! Bah! To be a queen with a crown of pasteboard! To have a kingdom of snobs! To mean an unrepugnant product of a country that has tried to be a genuine republic and has failed! To have it said of me that I was a great lady in a land whose great ladies are laughed at abroad as mere silly copies of European aristocracy! Oh, this is what it all comes to! You need n't look polite, Mark Manhattan. I don't know anyone who *can* look polite and sympathetic, and all that sort of thing, better than you can if you wish. What I tell you is perfectly true. I was a fool, and I see it all now as I never dreamed of seeing it before. But there is my wretched trouble!—I see it all *now*, when I am too old to cast it aside and begin anew. With my money, I'd give a million to be twenty years younger. Just twenty years, — that would suit me perfectly. I've wasted my life, as I told you. If I'd done the same that I *have* done, either in London or Paris, I might have had a real *salon* by this time; I might have been a *châtelaine*, with Gladstone, and Browning, and Ruskin, and Froude, and Huxley, and Daudet, and François Coppée, and even Victor Hugo, for my guests and friends. I had it

in me to do this sort of thing; but the immense mistake was that I came to New York from the West, and caught the absurd fever of wanting to be a *grande dame* here. And how pitifully I struggled—the more shame for me! Oh, I don't mind telling you just how pitifully I did struggle in this big little New York, this village with over two millions of inhabitants! Why, when I had my cottage on the Newport Cliffs, Mrs. Northriver Hastings had a cottage next me. I wanted so much to have Mrs. Northriver Hastings—you know that little woman with lemon-colored eyelashes, who always looks at you as if she were going to sneeze—I wanted so much to have Mrs. Northriver Hastings notice me and call on me, that I did the most ludicrous thing! I can hardly realize *now* having done it, but I did it, nevertheless. I had heard that Mrs. Hastings was passionately fond of dogs. I got poor old Sam Hackensack, who died last year, to find me the loveliest white setter in the world. He found it. That dog, with his charming curled hair, like spun silk, used to follow me out on the lawn whenever I felt certain Mrs. Hastings was there, airing herself, with her parasol and her long gloves and her mighty self-importance. My dog was very obedient. Just when he had got within a few yards of Mrs. Hastings, I would give a faint chirp, and he would come bounding to my side. It made Mrs. Hastings almost insane, she wanted to pat him so. But *I* wanted *her* to come and make

friends with *me*. 'It was 'Love me, love my dog.' But she loved my dog, and would *not* love me. That little *ruse* failed, as every other had done, though I was never one to try such tricks, as a rule. . . . Well, I only confide to you that event as an instance of my folly. . . . By and by I got more sensible. I managed it in a different way."

Mrs. Baker paused. I waited, thinking she might wish to resume her phenomenal confession. Then I said quite gently, —

"You managed it. Of course you managed it. But — how *did* you manage it?"

"Don't you know?" she briskly resumed. "Did you never hear?"

I shook my head. "No," I answered. "Remember that when I swam into your ken you *had* managed it."

She broke into a kind of musing laugh. "So I had," she replied. "After I found that New York would not notice me, I — well, I conceived an idea."

"And your idea?"

"Was to invade America with a coalition of European powers. Oh, don't smile! I assure you that I did it. I went abroad. I went first to London. I brought a few letters from some of the men here — you know, perhaps, that from the first a good many of the men were on my side. I took a house in Piccadilly during the season. I drove rather nicely in Hyde Park. I was noticed. The Marquis of Middlesex — an immense London

swell—got somebody who knew me to present him. That made me. The marquis presented other friends of his. The women took me up. I was an American, but you know very well that in London an American means as much a Jones or a Brown as it means a Knickerbocker or a Manhattan. After I was thoroughly *lancée* there, I went to Paris. An earl crossed with me from Newhaven to Dieppe. The earl was in love with me, I think—but I forget, it is so long ago now. However, he presented me to some French cousins of his in the Faubourg St. Germain—stupid hole that it is! . . . I returned to New York stamped as the friend, the intimate, of foreign nobility. I invaded New York with an Anglo-French alliance. I conquered at once. I had not been here two days, before Mrs. Zero, who had known the Duchess of Cavendish, and Mrs. Blank, who had met the Countess of Berkeley, called upon me with effusive protestations of cordiality. And in this way I *managed it*. But how horrid to look back upon this mode of managing it! How horrid to think that I ever managed it at all!”

“You invaded New York,” I said with a smile, “and conquered.”

“Conquered! And what is my victory? To reign in a society of adventurers, upstarts, pretenders, humbugs,—all as bad as I am, if not worse.”

I frowned at this. “You are far too severe on New York society,” I said. “If you invaded New

York, as you admit, then you should also show the mercy of a conqueror."

Mrs. Brummagem Baker laughed. Her dark mood was ended. "Here comes the man with tea," she said. "Go and get me a cup—and mind, only one lump of sugar. When you have got it, I promise to speak well of New York society—to tell you the good things that I know about it. That is, provided the tea suits my taste."

I brought the tea. But I am afraid, from results, that it did *not* suit the taste of Mrs. Brummagem Baker,—the lady who had invaded New York.

XIII.

A NEPHEW OF MINE.

"I SEE that your Bradford is beginning to go out," I said to my sister Pauline one day.

"Beginning, my dear Mark!" was the answer. "Why, it seems to me as if he could not be more immersed in all kinds of social engagements than he is at present."

My sister said this with a certain melancholy pride, as though her son's new importance entailed his filial alienation, while at the same time it dealt its distinct self-gratulating thrill.

Pauline is Mrs. Scoharie Putnam, and married the dead millionaire who was her husband when I had reached the age of about nine. I remember her wedding at Grace Church so well and yet so oddly! I can see her standing at the side of an elderly gentleman who looked as wiry as a spider, and had a little nebulous beard of grayish pink, with eyelashes of the same color. Scoharie Putnam was a great match for her, or any girl, as I recollect clearly comprehending even then; for, besides having a very large fortune, he was either a Scoharie or a Putnam—I was not quite sure precisely which he was, in the sense of high ances-

tral distinction, and no doubt compromised with my own ignorance by splendidly ranking him as a little of both. There stood Pauline at his side, in the big dusky church with its painted windows, wearing the densely flowered, costly heirloom of a veil in which her own mother had been married. How fresh and modest and lovely she looked then! And, ah, me! how twenty years or so have played the mischief with her roses and lilies! But that marriage morning of hers was my first realization of what Balzac, the arch-cynic, somewhere calls "a faulty institution tempered by affection." The whole sweet and stately ceremonial makes a charming picture in my memory, — one that is framed with macaroons, and viewed through a yellow mist of lemonade. I was painfully though not dangerously ill on the day which followed Pauline's wedding. Good heavens! how these trifles mingle with larger and sterner events, as we sweep a retrospective eye over our lives! How many of that blithe patrician wedding-party are gone to-day where it has been said there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage! For how many years has Scoharie Putnam, the elderly bridegroom, been laid away there in the family vault of St. Mark's-in-the-Bowery! And here am I, actually making a little chronicle of the son and heir who reigns in his stead! I sometimes think that this panorama we call life used to move along on much slower rollers than now. Perhaps the first perception that we are getting to be middle-aged — that the

vie de garçon should end, and something more serious begin — is embodied in a desire to pluck old Time by the forelock or scythe-handle, whichever it may be, and assure him that he is really in a devil of a hurry. Only yesterday, at my dressing-mirror, I discovered seven new, assertive, unpropitiable gray hairs. Alas! it seems fitting enough that I should write this avuncular memoir about a grown-up nephew. Soon enough, no doubt, I shall play, in the large, whirling drama of things, a still maturer *rôle*.

My sister had been right. Bradford Putnam was certainly immersed in social engagements. It would be hard to find any one more actively *dans le mouvement*. He is, at the present writing, just three and twenty years old. He has a delicate, downy mustache, whose color may be called an hereditary pink. He is very slender, though not ill made. He has passed about five years of his life in England, where he made an attempt to enter Cambridge, and signally failed. At the age of twenty he was graduated, very low in his class, from Harvard. Rejoining his mother in New York at the age of one and twenty, he promptly became a young gentleman of fashion. He has continued so ever since.

Notwithstanding his residence in England, he is not at all English. I mean in speech, deportment, personality. In dress he is English throughout. His collar is rigid, lofty, lustrous, uncompromising. It is strange how the soft, beardless cheek which

comes into incessant contact with this pure and stern ridge of linen, ever manages to preserve itself so nicely unscathed. His clothes fit him as if they were kid instead of cloth. They are always ironed before he puts them on; and his tall silk hat has a preternatural gloss, created by some deft combination of vaseline and ironing, which is a secret of vital importance between himself and his valet. I think that if you saw upon his vestments a bit of thread as large as the nail of your smallest finger, you would be sure to observe it. I should fear the charge of exaggeration if I were to record the number of his overcoats. In this respect he is prepared for every varying mood of our mutable American winter. From saffron-drab with huge pearl buttons, to bottle-green with a hint of seal-skin at the edges to show the luxurious lining inside, they run through many grades of hue and pattern. It is much the same thing with his multiplicity of boots, gloves, shirt-studs, and scarf-pins. He is a child of opulence and of prosperous, capricious, high-stepping comfort. He has his victoria, his brougham, his dog-cart; he has at least eight horses at his command, for driving or riding. Whenever you see him, you notice something that is different about his immediate surrounding from what you noticed when he last entered into your consciousness; if it is not a new horse, it is a new groom; if it is not a new watch-chain, it is a new cigar-case; if it is not a new cane, it is a new pocket-book; and so on, through vistas,

as one might say, of sumptuous and inexhaustible novelty. On all articles of a purely personal sort he is fond of having some costly *cachet*,—his monogram in diamonds, if the bauble permits; or in twisted gold or silver, if taste thus decrees; or in some more subtle device of jewelry, wrought both to startle and to delight.

His manner is reticence and imperturbability in their supreme forms. I am aware of a word, recently coined, which fills, as the struggling newspaper would say, “a needed want.” This word, of contested etymology, though widely accepted significance, does not apply to my nephew. Bradford, with all his circumambient elegance and modishness, is emphatically not a “dude.” The dude prattles; Bradford is a sphinx of reserve. The dude pauses decorously upon the threshold of vice; Bradford suggests, with a sort of dark dignity, the most comprehensive yet languid corruption. The dude owns to fresh, untried realms of sensation; Bradford has, in this respect, traversed the known globe, and awaits a new sea to explore, a new isthmus to discover. The dude has unkindled passions; Bradford is an extinct volcano, with a crater that now and then lifts to air no stronger sign of its being than a lazy curl of smoke,—cigarette-smoke, if you will. The dude has hopes, even ambitions; Bradford has nothing but a fatigued experience and a spacious despair. The dude still enjoys his youth; Bradford dimly recollects that once, at some remote epoch, he was young.

He is not yet a regular member of the Metropolitan Club, but was made, after his return from Harvard, a six-months' visitor at my own favorite social resort. Being a good many years his senior, and also secretly feeling the mortification that I was his uncle, I once or twice addressed him with what I believed all proper and needful courtesy. His unruffled composure, his weary self-possession, on each occasion, quite disarranged me. I was prepared, of course, to be genial, effusive, even mildly affectionate. I remember so well the first time that I met him in one of the doorways of the Metropolitan. We exchanged greetings. His mother had told me that he was in town. It seemed so queer to think of him at all as grown up! Some one pointed him out to me; I had not seen him since he was a little boy, and acted accordingly.

"Braddy," I said, holding his hand, "you are like your father, but" —

He interrupted me. I think he did it, in some peculiar way, by means of his eyelids. I was conscious of their quietly haughty droop before I became aware of his voice (placid, a little nasal, much more American than English of intonation), while he said:

"Look here! Just drop that. I'm not called 'Braddy.' Have n't been for a hundred years, more or less."

"But I always used" — I began.

He tapped me on the shoulder. "Of course you

always used, old man," he said with a paralyzing smile.

"Uncle" would not have been agreeable. I was prepared, I may even state that I had nerved myself, to meet "uncle." But "old man" wholly disarmed me by its piercing suggestiveness.

"I hear you 're no end of a chap among the swells," Bradford now continued. "You must get me about—that's a good fellow. I should like to get about a little. Boston's pretty slow; I hope there's more go in New York. Excuse me. Let me look at your stick."

I mutely handed him my cane. "Good stick," he said, examining it—and then he stopped short, handing it back to me. "Beg pardon," he went on. "Thought it was a real blackthorn. 'Tis n't. Dined, old chap?"

"I have just dined," I said.

Bradford blew some cigarette-smoke, and concealed a yawn—or tried to do so—behind its transient cloud.

"Have n't dined yet myself. Dinner just announced. Hope I'll see more of you. Be here later?"

"Possibly," I articulated.

My nephew then placidly vanished. One or two more meetings like this were sufficient to inform me how the land would lie between Bradford and myself.

I am now, on all occasions, equipped for an encounter with him. Of course, I have been obliged

to help him in the matter of introductions among what are termed the best people. I had anticipated something that might at least resemble gratitude for these services. I have found that my nephew no more dreams of gratitude than he does of pecuniary recompense. He always refers to his mother as "the old lady," and I am her brother. That is all. He goes everywhere now, and he is a conspicuous success. He nods to me in a crowded ball-room; at a dinner-party, after the ladies have left the dining-room, he will sometimes condescend to join me for a cigarette. His manners have an outside grace and decorum, but beyond this they are simply barbaric. It is amazing with how coldly sardonic a view he regards all society, — all woman-kind.

"Going to dance to-night?" he said to me one evening at a ball given by the Marchleys in their charming Madison Avenue mansion.

"I lead the german," I said sombrely, "with Miss Ada Marchley."

"Shan't dance myself," returned my nephew.

"No?"

"No. Don't like the gang."

"The *what?*" I faltered dubiously.

"Gang. Beastly crowd here. These people don't know anybody to speak of. Of course *you* understand. I hate these pushers. Sorry I came."

"I'd go then, Bradford," I said.

"*Am* going. Lots o' men here. They've got all the men. But who cares for *them*? No girls. Have some wine?"

We were standing near the supper-table. "No," I said. He stretched out a hand toward a champagne-bottle as I moved away from him.

But he never dares to adopt this style with ladies.

A few nights afterward, I chanced to stand near him in a great crush at the Yorkvilles'. I had an opportunity of observing then what style he does dare to adopt with ladies. I am not sure that it is, after all, much less execrable than the demeanor he assumes toward those of his own sex.

He had paused before that pretty, Madonna-like blonde, Ethel Van Buskirk. Ethel is poor, and I suppose that hard-faced, black-eyed mother of hers has long ago told her how many thousands a year my nephew will have when my sister dies.

"You look bored to death," I heard him say.

Then came poor little Ethel's voice. "O Mr. Putnam! I *hope* you don't mean it!"

"Do — really. Rather becoming, though, for *you* to look bored."

Ethel, whose brain is not massive, here gave a sweet trill of laughter. "That's a great deal nicer than what you *just* said," she affirmed.

"Will you talk the german with me?" now asked my nephew.

"I — I can't," hesitated Ethel, who, as I am certain, loves dancing, like the dear little buoyant *débutante* that she is. "I — I'm engaged."

"Who to?" inquired Bradford. His grammar is a bit of my faithful realism.

“Mr. Georgy Weehawken,” answered Ethel timidly.

“Oh! drop him,” said my nephew.

“I — I can’t *possibly*. What *do* you mean, Mr. Putnam?”

“Drop him,” persisted Bradford glacially.

“He’s sent me this bouquet. Look! isn’t it lovely? Violets. I’m so fond of violets, too. The idea of your *asking* such a thing! Why, it’s quite dreadful. What *could* I say to Mr. Weehawken?”

“I’ll tell you what to say.”

This was the last that I heard of my nephew’s conversation with Miss Van Buskirk. They moved off together immediately afterward arm in arm. But Ethel did not dance the german that night. Most probably she “talked it,” as the slangy current phrase goes, with my nephew.

He is totally without any sense of the hospitality anywhere bestowed upon him. When he enters a house of entertainment, it is always with the arrogant understanding that he confers a favor by his presence there. Every sip of wine that he condescends to take, means, in his estimation, a kind of careless compliment paid his host or hostess. They have invited him; that he has deigned to notice the invitation by his acceptance is in itself an immense favor. The old gallantry, the time-honored recognition of *devoir*, of gentlemanly allegiance and submissive suavity, is as foreign to his nature as pliancy would be to an oaken staff.

The merely pleasure-seeking element in New York society is condemned to-day by sensible people more severely than ever before. I think that such members of this society as my nephew (cold, egotistical, unblessed with a single trait of the sweet and manly deuteousness which makes all worthy intercourse between the sexes bloom and thrive) is a potent reason for this growing disfavor.

He has no recognition, no appreciation, of any inherent natural excellence in a woman. Not long ago he said to me :

“I see that Miss Jerseyheight is going to be quite a belle.”

“She deserves to be one,” I answered. “She is very handsome, and has a most charming disposition.”

“I hear she’ll have a million some day,” he said reflectively. “Is it true?”

“Possibly,” I replied.

“That explains it.”

And “that,” with my nephew, explains countless things. No one in his creed is genuine. He takes all falsity and insincerity for granted. His pessimism is something as positive and secure as an ice-peak in the arctic zones. All the wisdom of all the sages since Plato could not shake it. It colors the universe for him. You could not surprise him by any deed of treachery or meanness or arrant selfishness, and you could not convince him that any deed of worth and nobility was purely disinterested.

He is wholly without a grain of chivalry. Age, in either male or female, stirs nothing except his disdain. To be old, in his code, is to be more or less ridiculous. "Who 's giving this party, anyhow?" he murmured to me the other night at a certain house.

"Is it possible you have not yet been presented to the hostess?" I asked. It was then nearly one o'clock.

"No. I looked about when I came in, but the only person I saw who might be Mrs. Rockaway was a thin old woman in blue, standing all alone. I do so hate old women, you know. But to have to talk with one till somebody else comes up and relieves you, — that 's simply damnable."

"Did I not see you talking for a good while with one last night at the Effinghams', Bradford?" I could not help slyly questioning.

"Last night? I?" he questioned in return. Then he shook his head. "No, I 'll *bet* you did n't!" he asserted roundly. But then he underwent a sudden change of expression. "Oh!" he said again, "I remember."

"You see I was right," I reminded him.

"Of course you were," he conceded with a flutter of the eyelids and a slight backward motion of the head. "That was a howling old swell, though; there's a lot of difference between an old woman like Lady Tenniscourt and a good many others. Thought you knew her," he went on. "I used to know her son Jack when I was at Harrow, and

once I staid with him at her house in Surrey. She's on her way to visit another son out in Manitoba or Cheyenne, or somewhere; that's why she's here now, you know. Her husband's the eighth or ninth earl: they're really dreadful swells over in England."

"I perceive," I said, with tones that were no doubt curt, and a look that was rather hard, "why you condescended to make an old lady, in this one exceptional case, the recipient of your politeness."

I dare say he had no idea that I meant to deal him a thrust. He certainly regarded me as if he had no such idea. It would have to be a fierce thrust indeed that would disjoint a single hinge in that panoply he wears. Its plates are all of solid self-esteem, and they are riveted together with assurance.

Philosophers usually insist that people of elevated souls and high moral standards get what is best out of life. I should have liked the great Emerson to tell me what he thought about this nephew of mine. Very possibly he would have said some brilliant, wise, philosophic thing, if he had been called upon to give an estimate of Bradford's true relations toward society, and the place that he really holds among his fellows. But Bradford, who would doubtless not have understood the apothegm even if he had heard it, would have gone on in his career precisely the same. If he is to be pitied he is very loftily ignorant of it. He may be a mote in a sunbeam; but he has got into

a particularly warm sunbeam, nevertheless, and he has no consciousness whatever of being anything so small as a mote. Profoundly selfish, and rather proud than ignorant of his selfishness, I should like to learn in what respect my nephew is not more happy than many — very many — virtuous, generous, self-sacrificing men. As I watch him, favored and even petted of fortune, with his worst faults so easily condoned, with his minutest atoms of goodness so charitably magnified, with the world eager to bend upon him its most indulgent smile, with a conscience as pellucid and as flinty as glass, with a heart as calm and as frigid as marble, with nerves that can sensuously tingle to all appetite, with an intellect exempt from all troublous problems because well below the level of all noteworthy thought, — as I watch him in this unaltering and self-contained state of human ease, I am forced to remember the thousands after thousands of his fellow-beings who yearly drop maimed and weary and jaded into their graves.

Such individuals as my nephew would seem to give every tenet and axiom of ethical philosophy the lie. I do not say that they *do*; I only say that they *seem*. We are told that there is always a Nemesis waiting somewhere in the shadow of every life, — a Fury, who will one day bind our vices and follies into a merciless scorpion-whip. Meanwhile, where is my nephew's Nemesis? where is his Fury? He may lose health; but saints have had to bear that calamity. He may lose his

wealth ; but magnanimous reformers of the purest type have thus suffered. And meanwhile he drives, rides, dines, and does not even dream of a doubled rose-leaf under his mattress. *En effet*, he could sleep peacefully over a cobble-stone, he is so blunt and unsensitive, this nephew of mine !

What does it all mean ? I ask myself again and again. Are there such absurdly short cuts as this to the long-sought realm of earthly happiness ? When the mightiest of our race spend lifetimes in seeking that *summum bonum*, does it now and then fall, a willing star, in the lap of some idling sybarite ? We sneer nowadays at the doctrine of the elect. But how tyrannical is that strange elective agency from which, every hour in the day, Mr. Bradford Putnam reaps so full and unfailing a profit ! We constantly speak of America as a young country, but I am sometimes of the opinion that we are wrong in ever alluding to her youth. Certainly she produces types now and then which would seem the result of hoary centuries. As a confirmation of this judgment, I have only to look at my nephew. Old before his time, without a single republican instinct or impulse, with not a gleam of spontaneity, freshness, or juvenility, he might stand to-day for the latest civilized outgrowth of some half-crumbled monarchy, ancient as India, corrupt as France, as patrician as England, and (I had almost added) cruel as Russia.

XIV.

THE LADY WITH A SON-IN-LAW.

ABOUT four summers ago, while I was making a rather extended tour of the Catskills, I stopped for several days at a populous country boarding-house quite in the heart of these charming hills. I found myself nearly the sole "transient" guest; all the others were people who had resolved upon a permanent stay. They were about twenty in all, and a great amount of intimacy existed between them, with the usual revelation of antipathy and enmity as well. They were mostly New-Yorkers; and yet, as it happened, I had never met any of them before, or even heard their names. Many of the ladies were very refined and even high-bred, and not a few of the men had not only excellent manners but were thoroughly good fellows as well. It struck me that most of them must have been possessed of limited incomes, or they would never have chosen an inn of sojourn where, notwithstanding cloud-shadowed slopes, lovely alternations of mist and sunbeam, delightful enchantment of purple afternoons and gorgeous twilights, a relentless monotony existed in the way of doughy bread, sanguinary beefsteak, apocryphal coffee,

and scandalous butter. I suppose I would not have thought of their worldly wealth if I had not also thought of their unknown social places, and told myself what a farce it meant when we heeded the question, here in America, of who was or who was not "in society." The whole absurd scheme of our transatlantic aristocracy had never met me in such candid colors as it did there, at this obscure Catskill boarding-house. There was Miss Howson, who had a face of dainty freshness, and dressed in cool, modish muslins; there was Miss Thompson, who painted leaves and flowers prettily, and sang sweet, silvery songs of an evening about Killarney's lakes and fells, and the lass who married her own love, her own love, and — well, I forget the graceful refrain of the song, more shame to me; there was Miss Pansy Trott, who was clever and had been graduated at Vassar, and thought that although the great modern thinkers were men of grand intellect, their lack of a sound spiritual faith was gravely to be deplored; there was ethereal, slim-handed Miss Clingley, who could have kept the classic suitors waiting much longer, I am sure, than Penelope did, with her marvellous needle-work effects in every tint and design (I remember once offending her by asking her whether she did n't think she could do the balcony scene from "Romeo and Juliet," with a moon of white sewing-silk and a balcony of brown braid); there was airy, *piquante* Miss Tinkle, who could say saucy things with such a winsome pout, and flirt in cor-

ners of piazzas with such a mundane innocence; there was, in short, a bevy of nice girls, who differed only from the nice girls whom I had met where fashion and snobbery reigned and tyrannized by no discoverable trait except their freedom from a certain silly and irritating exclusiveness. Every one of them had the same right to call herself "swell," and "good form," and "in the proper set," which the Misses Spuytenduyvil and Amsterdam and Hackensack possess, since it is obvious enough that the slightest patrician claim, not founded upon mere vulgar wealth, is mean and cheap in a country whose very bulwark and safeguard should be an avoidance of European imitations. And yet these young ladies put forward no such claim, and were all the more charming because they did not. I often think that it is just such girls as these who make our country endurable for a man of mind and sincerity. If all our young women were like the haughty and yet hare-brained minxes whom one is so apt to meet in New York ball-rooms, Heaven knows how many sensible American bachelors would make a determined stand against matrimony!

The men were less engaging, as a body; but some of them I found most companionable and attractive. They were rarely versed—the younger ones, I mean—in those mighty mysteries of the toilet which make it a crime to wear a tall hat with a sack-coat, or to don a low one with a double-breasted frock-coat. I don't believe that any of

them knew when it was a dark sin to appear in gloves, and when it was a shining act of probity to be without gloves. A minority of them were engrossed in matters more trivial, like the search for botanical specimens, or the desire to study geological formations, or the aim to spend a vacation from less congenial pursuits in solid and profitable reading. One of them was a pale, slender fellow of about six and twenty, who had made a rather fair literary success, considering his age, by a series of articles in a well-known New York journal. His name was Reuben Rodd, and he aimed to be a novelist. I think he would have been a good one if he had lived; but even then he was consumptive, and I saw his death the following year recorded in the very newspaper which was at this time publishing his bright, able sketches.

But Reuben Rodd was fearfully sensitive to the mosquito-stings of that multitudinous band of scribblers which we call "the critics." Even then, as I have said, he was ill; and I don't doubt that these vicious human insects, hatched by the sunshine of his brief success, bit and harassed him unto his death. They kill a weak life sometimes: it is only the man of good health who can flatten them into extinction with a few lusty slaps of his palm. Poor Reuben, when we first got to know each other, was suffering from the assault of one of those New York comic journals which are always coming and going in this country, and which can never live here, because when not vulgarly personal they are stupidly tame.

Through the young man's distress I came to have long chats with his excellent mother, a widow, Mrs. Rodd. She was a little less than forty, with a fair, bright, amiable face, and a tendency toward stoutness. She was very fond of Reuben, as she was very fond, also, of her remaining child, Rebecca, aged about sixteen. I thought Rebecca, with her folded hands, her really perfect complexion, her bashfulness, and her unquestionable simper, not a little depressing. But I liked Mrs. Rodd, who seemed to me typically an American matron, with assertiveness yet with modesty, and with self-assurance yet with self-respect.

"I feel so for Reuben!" she said to me one evening. "Of course, being his mother, Mr. Manhattan, I can't help *that*. But I think it is so horrid for that little comic journal to have called his work 'trash'! and I'm sure I should think so if I were *not* his mother."

"I am not his mother, Mrs. Rodd," I replied, "and I think it horrid too. I am not an author myself; but I can't imagine any author, who has the least belief in his own ability (without which he should not write at all), reading or noticing anything the droves of pitiful reviewers may write about it. All modern so-called literary journals are mediums of advertisement. In America this is so true that not one of those which now exist could live three months without the Messrs. This advertised their new patent sewing-machine there, or the Messrs. That their latest perfumery

or piano. The very condition of the being of these organs puts a premium upon injustice. This little comic journal, which so hurts your son by reviling his work, feeds its little life through two means, — insult and advertisement. It will die of its own poison and its commercial enterprise.”

“And so will my son die, I fear,” sighed Mrs. Rodd. He did die, in a year afterward, as I have recorded.

But Mrs. Rodd did not die; and, although nearly three years elapsed between the time I parted from her there in the Catskills and the period of our next meeting, I found myself repeatedly recalling her genial face and presence. I never met her in my New York goings and comings. Yet somehow I never forgot her. She was not an intellectual woman in any sense. But she was full of heartiness, of spontaneity, of unaffected charm. She had impressed me as being one of those people who are thoroughly satisfied with life, because the blood runs warm, the heart beats free yet with temperate strokes, the digestion is exempt from all retardment, the brain is well swept of all illusory cobwebs. I fancy that I liked her because she put forth no effort to make me do so, but somehow took for granted that I naturally would like her. She was so healthful, so normal, so unassailed by caprices or moods! Her daughter Rebecca had seemed to me a milky-complexioned nonentity, and nothing more. And I am afraid that I had quite forgotten she had a daughter, until I received a

card one day to the wedding of Miss Rebecca Rodd and Mr. Faulkner Castlegarden.

Of course, I knew the Castlegardens. There are always about ten or twelve of them actively in society, and their name is legion. I could not go to the wedding of this particular scion: some engagement or other averting event occurred—I do not recall just what. A little later, however, I learned that the Castlegardens had collectively rather frowned upon this match. It was considered by them a misalliance; it was not the sort of way that a Castlegarden had usually married. I remembered one who was reported to have married his cook, and another who wedded considerably worse; but I refrained from reviving these melancholy family annals. The Castlegardens have always been noted for ignoring their own faults superbly. I think that surely ten of their male members must lie prematurely in that big vault up in Westchester County, with drink as the sole and certain cause. But the Castlegardens never call it drink. Hereditary gout sounds so much better! And, indeed, I rather agree with them there. But you can't help smiling sometimes, when you hear them mention this little trouble as though it were one of the quarterings on their escutcheon. Miss Rodd had certainly not brought her lord a fortune. I suppose this formed the major reason why she was held an undesirable bride for Faulkner. But as I thought of Mrs. Rodd, with her wholesome, unjaundiced views of life, I assured myself that

any of the Castlegardens who attempted to handle her without gloves would run the risk of burnt fingers.

Perhaps six months after her daughter's marriage, I met her at an afternoon reception, — one of those crushes that are bedlams of empty chatter, besides seeming as though above their doorways had been placed some Dantesque legend, like, "He who enters here leaves average intelligence behind." The affair had been given by a certain Mrs. Trillington, a lady whose origin is nebulous, and whose success, though beyond dispute a fact, always has seemed to me extraordinary. Mrs. Trillington is artificiality itself. "I am so delighted to see you, my dear Mr. Manhattan!" she will exclaim to me while grasping my hand, and at the same time she will be peering over her shoulder at some one else. Her hand-shake rarely goes with her glance; to receive both simultaneously, you must indeed be fortunate.

To-day I rather copied Mrs. Trillington's divided method of salutation, and found myself looking across my own shoulder at Mrs. Rodd. She was charming when I reclaimed acquaintance with her; but she was charming in such an altered way! I could not account for it: it was so different from what I had expected. She was still stout; I fancied that she was by some degrees stouter than when I had last met her. The smile which I had liked still beamed about her full, calm lips. But she was not the Mrs. Rodd whom I had remembered and expected.

She shook my hand quite warmly. "I'm so sorry," she said, "that you did not see my Rebecca married! You did not. Don't deny that you did not, for I am sure — perfectly sure — about the matter."

"You are right, Mrs. Rodd," I answered. "I wanted so much to be at the wedding, but" —

"No 'buts,'" she broke in. "You did n't come, and that is the end of it. I suppose you heard" — and her voice softened noticeably — "about poor Reuben's death?"

"Yes," I said, "I heard. It was most unfortunate."

"Poor Reuben! He passed away very quietly at the last moment. By the by, have you met my son-in-law, Mr. Faulkner Castlegarden?"

"Not yet," I replied.

"Come and dine with us this evening," said Mrs. Rodd. "A little informal dinner, you know. Can you come?"

"Yes, thanks," I said.

I went. The dinner startled me. Faulkner Castlegarden appeared at it. He appeared nearly drunk. He was very civil to me; but his red face and his thick speech told me the truth at once. Mrs. Rodd and her daughter gave no sign of the real truth. They both ate what was before them in quiet unconcern. Faulkner drooped and almost slept during dinner. As soon as decency would permit, I left him; and joined the ladies in the drawing-room, with hard thoughts about him as a fat, drowsy, and incoherent host.

"I hope you had a nice chat with dear Faulkner," said Mrs. Rodd as I approached her after my escape.

"Oh, yes!" I answered, lying conventionally. "I think he will come in soon. He's a bit sleepy, I fancy."

Mrs. Rodd and her daughter both laughed.

"Dear Faulkner!" said his mother-in-law. "He may be wanting a nap, poor fellow! Do you know, Mr. Manhattan," she added, "that one thing is really a fact about all the Castlegardens? They all require a nap after dinner. I've noticed it in his cousin, Audubon, and his second-cousin, Lothrop, and his — what is the relationship, Rebecca, of *Clyde* Castlegarden, my dear?"

Rebecca shook her head reflectively, and did not answer. Mrs. Rodd did not seem to require an answer, however. I thought, as I regarded her, that I had never seen a woman so completely changed. All her old calm, secure independence was altered. There was something tremulous and insecure in her demeanor.

"You know," she said to me, resuming her previous discourse, "that these Castlegardens are a very remarkable family."

"Yes?" I replied.

"They are all *very* aristocratic. I have n't ever thought much on this subject, Mr. Manhattan. I don't suppose that I ever really knew anything at all about it until Rebecca married a Castlegarden. I imagined that there was no social good, better,

best, don't you know, until my eyes were opened by Faulkner's courtship. And since then I've seen so much! I've seen that there are grades and differences in society. The Castlegardens, you know, are a great family for us to marry into. We, the Rodds, were never very much, to be really frank with you. I was only a poor Indiana girl before I married my late husband. I am very thankful that Rebecca has done so well. Of course, I never dreamed, Mr. Manhattan, when I met you there at Blanford's boarding-house in the Catskills, that you were one of the real old Knickerbocker people! But you *are* — and Faulkner says you are — and that, of course, settles it. We met, you know, at Mrs. Trillington's. I don't know anything about her. Rebecca and I don't know much yet; I mean who exactly is who. But Faulkner tells us — he directs us; he's a Castlegarden, you know, and of course the Castlegardens are just the *very* highest. I leave my cards everywhere now, with Rebecca, and I find that it's just the same as if I had left them alone by myself. All the old Knickerbocker families call on us and recognize us. Rebecca did a good thing. They all treat me politely because of *her*. You never said anything about yourself, there in the Catskills, Mr. Manhattan. You never gave us an idea that you were *well*, — that you belonged among the good old families. You seem so different now! I can scarcely realize that you're the same being. But Faulkner has told us. And — ”

I interrupted Mrs. Rodd here. I stretched forth a hand and took her own. "My dear Mrs. Rodd," I murmured, "you are *so* changed!"

"Changed!" she repeated.

"Yes," I pursued. "From the candid, liberal, untrammelled woman whom I met that summer in the Catskills."

She perceptibly recoiled. Her sunny brow darkened. She looked at me as if she wanted to quarrel with me.

"How am I different?" she queried annoyedly.

"You have a son-in-law," I replied with untold impudence.

She tossed her head. The gesture was so unlike the Mrs. Rodd of the Catskills, — the Mrs. Rodd whom no folly of caste or vaunted superiority of position could assail, — the Mrs. Rodd who had loved her dying son so fondly, and had so hated the gnats and gad-flies that had set their little stings into his failing life.

"I have a son-in-law," she said with vast pride of tone, "who is a Castlegarden."

I laughed. I think I laughed cruelly. I could not help it. It seemed to me so worthy of scorching contempt. All the comprehension of how ill all humanity stands any great tests appeared concentrated in that one last sentence of Mrs. Rodd's. What she had once been to me flashed upon me in swift retrospect. What she had now become, in her cringing before gross idols, filled me with a just sorrow.

“You have a son-in-law,” I said, “who is drunk with wine.”

She gave a great start. “How dare you!” she cried.

“This is how you are changed,” I pursued relentlessly. “This is how you have bettered your place and fame from what they both were when we met in the Catskills, — when you spoke to me with tears of the dead boy whom those cruel adventurers of the pen helped to slay. This is how you have bettered yourself, — you and the daughter who crouches yonder in tremor, in distress. You have a son-in-law. You have achieved something. You have a son-in-law, beyond doubt.”

Mrs. Rodd’s eyes flashed. “My son-in-law will answer your insolence!” she cried.

“He can’t,” I said quietly. “He is drunk in the dining-room.”

It is really wonderful that Mrs. Rodd and I should still be good friends. But we somehow are. And yet she still stays loyal to her son-in-law. I meet her constantly. I am sometimes so near her that I can hear her refer to him — at receptions, I mean, and at an occasional large ball. But she always refers to him with respect. She is always, to my mind (regretfully and pathetically), the lady with a son-in-law.

XV.

THE YOUNG MAN WHO IMAGINES.

ONE day at the Metropolitan Club I became conscious of Mr. J. Morton Studwell. I use this phrase because, although I had met and even spoken with the gentleman before, his personality had not in any way appealed to me. Perhaps I had observed that he was dark and slim, yet I am not sure that I had made either observation. But on the day now mentioned I had talked with him, and been somewhat attracted by him.

His appearance was very gentlemanly and alluring. He spoke with a low, musical voice. He had extremely white hands, which he used very often in stroking a rather copious black mustache. He was not a member of the Metropolitan, but had been introduced there as a visitor by an elderly club man who rarely left domestic quarters. He had been living for several years abroad, though a native of Charleston, S. C. He spoke enough like an Englishman not to be taken for an American, and yet he had no trace of salient British mannerism.

"I find everything very new and strange here," he told me with a gentle, suave air of confidence.

“I lived a good while abroad, you know — principally in Paris. The life there is so different!”

“Oh, very different!” I assented.

“One must breathe the true French social atmosphere,” he continued, “to thoroughly enjoy Paris. One must get to know the Faubourg St. Germain people, and all that.”

“I suppose you know them, Mr. Studwell?”

He smiled. He had quite a sweet smile, and I fancied that it now wore a gleam of courteous pity.

“Many of them are my warm personal friends,” he said.

“And shall you remain here in America permanently?” I questioned.

He lifted his eyebrows a little, and slightly shrugged his shoulders. “I must remain for the present. I have no alternative. My stay concerns a—well, Mr. Manhattan, a protracted lawsuit about certain inherited property.”

I felt that this was a magnificent way of silencing me, and refrained from asking a single other question. There was certainly something impressive, even to the most republican mind, about a young gentleman who had torn himself from the aristocratic circles of the Faubourg St. Germain for reasons which concerned a litigated inheritance.

I soon discovered that in his quiet, modest way, he had not a few thrilling experiences to relate. He had fought a duel in Belgium with the fiery

young Duc de D——, and received a rather severe wound. A fiery young count would have startled me far less than a duke of similar temper. We are always hearing of duels with counts, but a ducal encounter carries with it to the American mind a sense of distinction and rarity. Then, again, I learned that Mr. Studwell had saved the life of Prince Colonna, his dear friend, when the yacht of the latter had been terribly jeopardized in a squall off Guernsey. The prince had given his friend an amethyst ring set in silver. "It is somewhere among my traps, that ring," said Mr. Studwell in careless comment upon the gift. "It's exceedingly pretty; I would not part with it for anything; but I don't wear it, because I hate all except the plainest jewelry." He confided to me, also, that he had taken active part with the French during the siege of Paris. "My wound there," he proceeded, "was a serious one. The bullet came very near my heart. I was carried off by that excellent friend of mine, the Viscount Cluny, covered with blood and in an unconscious condition. My life hung by a thread for weeks afterward. But I am rather tough; I pulled through, as the English say."

These tales of hair-breadth 'scapes were delivered with such hesitating reluctance that I often felt as if I had unduly stimulated and persuaded their narration. I never dreamed of doubting their absolute authenticity. To do so would have struck me as the rankest heresy. They appeared

so utterly apart from the least vainglorious vaunting! Mr. Studwell never seemed, as the phrase goes, to sound his own horn. What he sounded was more like an unpretentious little flageolet, and at the earnest invitation of myself.

His term of sojourn at the club expired. For more than a fortnight I completely lost sight of him. We had not bid each other any formal farewells. I had failed to see him for a day or two before his enforced departure from the Metropolitan.

But one evening I chanced to meet him in the hall of the Fifth Avenue Hotel. It instantly occurred to me that he looked dejected, sombre, depressed; but his bright smile soon dissipated this idea. "With your charming club," he said, "I wonder that you should drop in here."

"Now and then I do so," I answered. "The Fifth Avenue Hotel attracts a man sometimes as he passes by it. It has such a cosmopolitan sort of glitter! One is visited, at special early hours in the evening, by a fancy that he may meet here some long-lost European acquaintance."

"But one so seldom does," said Mr. Studwell with a soft, full smile, that showed his white teeth under his dark, drooping mustache. "My apartments are not far from here, and so I occasionally drop in."

"My apartments," pronounced by his placid lips, gave me a feeling that he had just referred to something of especial elegance and luxury.

“Do you live very near?” I inquired with a sense of rather reckless interrogation even while I spoke.

“Just in Twenty-Fourth Street,” was the reply. And here he laughed, with an upward momentary wave of both hands. “To tell the truth, until my affairs are settled, I am living rather — obscurely.”

“Obscurely!” I repeated, catching at the word. “You mean that you are seeing very few people?”

“Not just that — not just that,” he murmured, scanning the marble floor as we strolled forth side by side toward the great populous doorway of the hotel. “I mean that my lodgings are a bit modest, and — primitive. That is all. To tell the truth, I had a fancy for something plain and simple in this way. I am a fellow of rather odd caprices. I sometimes grow tired of too prosperous living, and long for a change. Can you explain the feeling? I confess that I cannot. It occasionally sweeps over me, for no apparent reason.”

We were now in the open street, walking northward in the direction of those massed irregular buildings, the Albemarle and the Hoffman House, — two structures that I have always thought must interblend their architectural identities to the extent of forgetting which is which. “I suppose your caprice is like all others,” I said. “It is not, from its very nature, to be accounted for. However, I begin to think this New York craze for household decoration an extremely tiresome affair.”

Mr. Studwell laid his hand upon my arm. His eyes sparkled as they met mine in the rather dubious lamplight. "You express my own opinions to the letter" he exclaimed. "Nothing is more wearisome than this inundation of decorative appointments. One gets positively sick of Eastlake furniture and mediæval tapestry. The whole thing affects me, at times, like a feverish disease. I find myself yearning for a cane-bottomed chair and a plain unembellished interior."

"And you have practically indulged your prejudice?" I laughed.

"At present I am doing so," he answered. He gave a quick start a moment later, as though some new thought had struck him. We were now on the corner of Twenty-Fourth Street and Broadway. Once more he laid his hand upon my arm. "Do you mind witnessing how Spartan I have become?" he said. "My lodgings are but a step from here. You have told me that you like to study human nature, Mr. Manhattan. Pray, study me in a new phase for a few minutes, and afterward reflect at your leisure."

I was interested, and still perfectly unsuspecting. I accompanied Mr. Studwell into a certain house not far away. He opened the door with a latch-key, and we ascended three flights of stairs. I concede that the chamber into which he presently ushered me was a sharp surprise, notwithstanding all my friend's preparatory admissions. It contained a small bed in one corner, a gaunt,

dingy wardrobe in another, and an effete wooden washstand in still another. Its carpet was faded and threadbare. Its chairs were not cane-bottomed, but upholstered in some sort of frayed and discolored chintz that would not ill have suited the back apartment of a Seventh Avenue pawnbroker. I soon perceived that my host was intently watching me, as my amazed look comprehended all these shabby details.

“You are astounded!” he exclaimed, sinking into one of the faded chairs. “Of course, I knew that you would be. I can’t tell you how I enjoy your surprise! The most ridiculous scene took place between myself and my valet when I decided upon renting this room. I have had Oswald in my employ for a number of years. He is a most faithful fellow, is that Oswald of mine. I found him in Vienna; the Grand Duke Frederick recommended him highly, and so I took him. He thinks this caprice of mine something horrible.”

I refrained from indorsing the views of the absent Oswald. The grace, grandeur, and ease of Mr. Studwell’s manner still disarmed in me the least suspicion. He looked, acted, and spoke as a being so utterly different from this unwholesome environment, that I readily accepted the belief of his performing, at present, a sort of whimsical masquerade! And the oddity of such a proceeding rather captivated me than otherwise. It appeared to be such a perfectly gentlemanly piece of picturesqueness! It struck such a new note in the hum-

drum drone of things! Perhaps my mood was just then of the properly receptive kind. One does n't live in New York permanently, as a rule, without having moments of melancholy irritation that Fifth Avenue would bisect Twenty-Third Street at so positive a right angle. The element of fancy is wholly lacking from our daily existence. I felt almost grateful to Mr. Studwell, as I looked about the prosaic plainness of his apartment, and realized with what a romantic glamour he had suddenly clothed it.

Not long afterward, however, my state of amused acquiescence underwent a slight shock. I am not usually given to observing the attire of men — or women either — at all closely. Not to know what your friends wear, I have generally considered a proof that they are well dressed. But as I passed from Mr. Studwell's chamber the light of the adjacent hall struck in an oblique way the sleeve of one uplifted arm. I could not fail to notice that this sleeve was glazed in the unmistakable manner of a coat the worse for time. Could it be that I was merely confronted by another phase of the young gentleman's caprice? Had he chosen to robe himself in shabby garments because bored by the spruceness and smartness of modern fashionable attire?

“By the way,” he said to me a little later, as we stood together on the pavements, not far from his abode, “is it so very difficult to gain admission into your club, — the Metropolitan?”

“Decidedly,” I answered, laughing, “for the reason that over three hundred candidates are now waiting admission.”

“Ah — yes,” mused Mr. Studwell, looking down and stroking his mustache. “It was very much the same, I remember, at both the Reform in London and the Jockey Club in Paris, just before I joined them.”

“You are fortunate to be a member of two such excellent clubs,” I replied with a good deal of congratulatory fervor. The forlorn bedroom and the shiny coat-sleeve once more seemed like the agreeable proofs of a dainty and diverting little escapade. I forgot that my credulity had been for an instant clouded. “If you are to remain in New York only a year or so,” I resumed, “perhaps you might care to be made what we call a six-months’ visitor at the Metropolitan. In that case you would be balloted for without regard to those seeking regular membership. I would gladly be your proposer, if you so desired.”

He thanked me quite warmly, and with that air of exquisite breeding which accompanied all his most trifling acts. He accepted my proposition, and it was settled between us that I should at once propose his name as that of a six-months’ visitor. Just as I held out my hand to him in farewell that evening, he said to me with a genial little laugh: “I am going to ask you for a cigarette, my dear Manhattan. Do you chance to have one?”

I echoed his laugh. “A few days ago,” was my

reply, "I could have supplied you with a fat package of them. But for five good days past I have renounced them as vilely pernicious. Perhaps when my throat becomes even moderately well again, I may be rash enough to resume their use. That, I find, is my usual stupid course."

"Ah!" said Mr. Studwell, "then you have not dealt in oaths, like myself?"

"Dealt in oaths!" I repeated.

He nodded with mock solemnity. "I have never suffered from cigarette-smoking until I came here. There is something in this climate, I fancy, which makes the practice especially harmful. About a fortnight since, I promised myself that I would not spend for a year another centime — I mean another dime — in purchasing the wicked weed. But feeling considerably recovered from its ill effects, I now deplore my vow. Really, I am going to request that you will buy me, Mr. Manhattan, *with your own money* (ah! there is the difficult point, showing my state of shameless desperation), a package of — well, of any brand you please. All brands are alike to me now. I have reached that reckless condition when one has no preferences."

His manner, while he thus spoke, was keenly humorous. The best comedy always conveys, I have decided, an impression of sincerity. We laugh the most over the absurd troubles of our fellow-creatures when we are convinced of their being genuine, in spite of their absurdity.

“You shall have your cigarettes purchased for you,” I responded, “provided you tell me your favorite brand. Yonder I see a tobacconist’s window. Come, now, Mr. Studwell. I have an engagement at half-past nine, and it wants twenty minutes past that hour. My resolution is unalterable, like your vow.”

He told me his favorite brand; and presently, with suppressed laughter at the mock-gravity of his thankful expression, I handed him the desired cigarettes. We soon afterward parted, but not until I had assured him of my earnest co-operation with regard to his proposed club visitorship.

“What a quaintly attractive fellow he is!” I thought, as I sped to keep my engagement. “How charming to meet a man out of the old beaten conventional ruts! His long foreign residence has given him this air, half of the *grand ennuyé*, half of the genial gentleman. Of course that cigarette business was mere posing. But how delightfully he poses! There is no ostentation about it; it is such a deliciously sincere sort of humbug! After I get him back into the Metropolitan, I shall narrate before his face this nonsensical *boutade* about the wretched room in Twenty-Fourth Street.”

Two days later I received a brief note from Brockholst Hyde, requesting me to call upon him for urgent reasons. I knew Brockholst Hyde but slightly. His very prominent position in social circles could not, however, have escaped me. I went to his fine Madison Avenue residence the next morn-

ing with a sense of wonderment at the summons. I was conducted to the library of this gentleman, — a beautiful apartment, appointed in ebony and silver, with row after row of books along its walls, and a green carpet, not only resembling moss, but so deadening to the footstep that such illusion was almost perfect.

“I was an old friend of your father’s, Mr. Manhattan,” said Brockholst Hyde, rising feebly from an immense chair to greet me. “I am very glad indeed to see his son. My physicians of late have forbidden me nearly all society. But I have somewhat daringly made an exception in your case.”

It struck me, while I looked at the gentleman, that a greater Physician than any his own wealth would have power to employ might soon veto for him society of every description. His face was haggard from evident illness. The hand which motioned me to seat myself at his side trembled from excessive debility.

“You must pardon me, Mr. Manhattan,” my host began as soon as we were both seated, “for requesting that this interview shall not be prolonged. Physical reasons imperatively command me to make it as short as possible. I have recently heard that you have proposed Mr. John Morton Studwell as a six-months’ visitor at the Metropolitan Club. I learned it from my friend, Mr. Preston, whom you doubtless know, and who is good enough to drop in upon me during my hours of illness. Now, I must beg you to cancel this

whole matter. I must beg you to treat it as if it had never been. Not very long ago, as you are aware, I introduced Mr. Studwell into the Metropolitan. I did so foolishly and rashly. His father and I had known each other intimately in past years. I could not help having a fondness for the son, though aware that he had already spent a handsome fortune, inherited from his mother, at the gaming-tables of Europe. For his dead father's sake I have done everything to help, to rehabilitate Morton. But he is incorrigible, he is not to be aided. Every dollar that I have supplied him with has been spent in gambling-dens here. That is his only vice, — that and lying."

"Lying!" I faltered.

"Oh, yes! But perhaps the word is, after all, severe. I read an article by a certain famous authority on brain-diseases, not long ago, and discovered that a morbid tendency to mendacious statement was a form of well-known insanity. If that be fact, Morton Studwell should go to an asylum forthwith. Almost nothing that he says is actual truth. His patrician European friends — princes, dukes, *et cetera* — are all a complete myth. He has never had the least real position abroad. I have talked with him; I have waylaid him; I have caught him up; and I now conclude that his imagination is in the most abnormal state. There is the precise necessary word, — 'imagination.' I verily believe that he is not a culpable falsifier."

“Not culpable, Mr. Hyde!” I exclaimed indignantly. “Not culpable, when he told me that he had come here to settle a litigated inheritance! Not culpable, when he talked of having moved intimately among the *vieille noblesse* of France, of having fought a duel with a French duke, of having saved the life of an Italian prince during a squall off Guernsey! Not culpable, when” —

“Stop!” interrupted my listener with a hollow cough that at once roused my pity and repressed my contradictory ardor. “I must implore of you not to argue, not to oppose. I claim the tyranny of an invalid. I insist upon your respecting my weakness as if it were a strength. And I assert that Mr. Studwell is simply a young man who imagines. He imagines vastly, exorbitantly; but he does not imagine maliciously. I have studied him, and I know. If he had possessed the literary gift, I think he might have made a remarkable novelist; not of the realistic school, perhaps, but the romantic—decidedly the romantic. Really, Mr. Manhattan, you must excuse me from saying much more. But what I do wish greatly to say is that you had better cross out all record on the books of the Metropolitan Club which concern your having proposed Mr. J. Morton Studwell there for a six-months’ visitor. It would never do to have him one. He—well, *he imagines too much*. Imagination in the right place is very good and proper, but” —

“But the Metropolitan is no place for it,” I

broke in with speed and not a little irony. "You are perfectly correct, Mr. Hyde. I shall accept your counsel and act upon it unhesitatingly."

It is almost needless to add that I did so at my earliest opportunity.

XVI.

THE LADY WHO CAN BE VULGAR WITH SAFETY.

“YOU don’t like Mrs. Pedigree Pendleton, do you?” said Marion Bland to me one evening at Daly’s Theatre. We were seated together in that lovely home of mirth. An *entr’acte* had just followed the glittering comedy of Lewis, the vivid piquancy of Ada Rehan, the sly fun of Mrs. Gilbert, the crisp elegance of John Drew. I had made one of a most agreeable “theatre party.” We had dined sumptuously at the beautiful home of that sparkling little widow, Mrs. Chalcourt, and afterward we had gone in a merry, careless bevy to Daly’s Theatre. The play was one of those adroit, buoyant things that one wishes to be critical about, and yet cannot help liking uncritically, so novel are its situations, so witty its dialogue, so genial and refined its atmosphere.

This theatre always puts one into a good humor. I had been put into a good humor. But Miss Bland perilously threatened it by a reference to Mrs. Pedigree Pendleton.

She sat in one of the boxes. She had spoken so loudly during the performance, that not to hear her shrill, strident voice was almost not to attend the

perfect art of the actors. She is very stout; she indubitably laces; she wears bonnets that are horrors of millinery, and to-night she had on a bonnet entirely composed of small sunflowers. Her face is attractive. It has three distinct chins, and an arch of nose, white as marble, whose end nearly touches the clean-cut and red-tinted upper lip. The instant you look upon her, you know that she is an American. She might be lost for days in the Desert of Sahara, and at once identified as an American by any wandering party of rescuers who might chance upon her. I am sure that her first cry for bread would be so nasal, so acute, so harshly individual, that her nationality would admit of no possible dispute. Her age is surely fifty-five.

She is one of my aversions, and Marion Bland knows it. Marion has no aversions herself. She is comprehensively and vastly amiable. She is not at all clever, but her exquisite sympathy constantly makes her appear so. She has an oval face of delicate coloring, and two deliciously facile dimples. When she smiles upon you, all criticism is sent to the winds. You feel that it is so much better and rarer to be able to smile like that than to have hoards of opinions, views, impressions. I have never known anybody who did not like Marion Bland. To be her enemy would mean an extraordinary kind of grudge, like a quarrel with sunlight, or a misunderstanding with salubrious weather.

"I *don't* like Mrs. Pedigree Pendleton," I now said to my companion, "and, if I talked at present with almost anyone else in the world, I think that I could make my reasons for this dislike perfectly clear; but there is no use attempting it with you. You are too indulgently genial."

Marion nodded. "I think that I understand you, however," she said.

"Oh, I don't doubt it," was my reply. "If you could be human or unsaintly, you would probably share my opinions."

Marion gave me her best smile. "Don't you think," she said in a slow and somewhat musing way, "that Mrs. Pendleton has a very good heart?"

I laughed. "That is so like you!" I said. "I never thought at all about Mrs. Pendleton's heart. Her manners are what she always makes me remember, whenever her face dawns upon my vision, or her name upon my memory."

"Tell me why you so disapprove of her," said Marion Bland, fixing upon me a pair of eyes as brown as an autumn oak-leaf. "I suppose you mean that she is vulgar."

"Vulgar!" I repeated. Well, how can one possibly think otherwise?"

"She was a Miss Hudsonbank, you know," said Marion seriously.

"Of course she was," I assented. "Is not the fact of her having been a Miss Hudsonbank perpetually recorded to her credit? Is it not *because*

of her having been a Hudsonbank that she is permitted to do and say all sorts of unconventional things? If she had been a Brown, Jones, Smith, or Robinson, she would long ago have been publicly execrated. As it is, with her money and her prestige of name, she prances rough-shod through New York society."

"Ah!" said Marion Bland gently, "that is very severe."

The play recommenced soon afterward, and when it had ended our little company became crowded in its exit against that of Mrs. Pedigree Pendleton. The lady was brought face to face with Marion Bland and myself. She shook hands with both of us.

"Ain't this just the loveliest theatre in all the world?" she began excitedly to rattle. "I guess they had better put their wits together if they want to beat it on the other side. I just feel as if I could take that Ada Rehan and hug and kiss her. Ain't she sweet? I almost split, laughing at that last act. We came round ever so unexpectedly. I gave a little dinner-party, and thought about sending for a box only just at the last minute. I was awfully lucky to get it. Cousin Tom Knickerbocker had engaged it for to-night; and you know, of course, how his poor dear little wife dropped off with pneumonia yesterday. So, as Tom could n't go, I got our butler, Patrick, to secure the tickets. I dare say it was n't just the

right sort of thing to do, as Delia Knickerbocker and I were so nearly related. Still, good gracious! a person can't *always* be standing on ceremony. I was ever so fond of poor Delia, you know; she was my second-cousin through the Riverdale branch of our family. You 're looking as sweet as a peach, Marion: you always do. I says to ma, the other day — you know ma, of course, dear old ma, Mrs. Highbridge Hudsonbank — I says to her the other day, 'Ma,' I says, 'there ain't a girl anywheres that I think as much of as I do of Marion Bland.' You 're a regular trump, Marion, and the man that gets you 'll get a wife to be proud of. — Now, don't smirk like that, Mr. Manhattan; you 're sceptical p'haps, and p'haps you ain't. I don't know. Marion can make her pick — can't you, Marion? — By the way, drop in for a cup o' tea with me to-morrow at 'bout five, both of you. 'Tain't anything big, you know. Just a few. Lizzie Somerset's coming. How funny it sounds, don't it, to say Lizzie Somerset! I mean Lizzie Peekskill, my first cousin, you know, who married Lord Percy Somerset a year or so ago. Do come, both o' you."

No one appeared to think all this sort of thing vulgar. It was spoken in a voice of keen shrillness; it was accompanied by quick turns of the head to right and left; it was lacking in every vestige of ladylike repose, decorum, or tact. And yet no one appeared to think it vulgar. It was so essentially vulgar, that, if Mrs. Pedigree Pendleton

had not been hedged about with the social eminence of the Hudsonbanks, lips would have curled in disdain at her raw crudeness. As it was, she could be vulgar with safety.

Marion Bland and I both accepted her invitation. It was by no means an ordinary one. Hundreds of New York people would have bowed before her to secure it. Only certain guests had been asked, and these were of the kind not easily obtainable. Mrs. Pendleton's bustling vernacular "just a few" had meant what is usually termed by fashionable journals the cream of society. Ladies were seated in her drawing-room whose tyranny as regarded their visiting-lists had a Lycurgan strictness. These ladies were scattered about the apartments in various postures of patrician tranquillity. They interfolded their long-gloved hands; they softly moved their graceful heads; they raised or lowered their discreet eyebrows; they spoke in voices of the most delicate modulation; they smiled with a disciplined suavity, as though some aristocratic law had been passed against any over-cordial excesses in smiling. They were all models of nicety, of serenity, of high-bred exactitude. And yet they seemed wholly oblivious of how their bluff, hoydenish, *roturière* hostess was continually violating all their own beloved principles of deportment.

The whole experience struck me as so amusingly quaint that I forgot my sworn antipathy to Mrs.

Pedigree Pendleton. I had the desire to receive a few strong and biting impressions from this extraordinary social free-lance — this woman who could be vulgar with such a positively superb safety. I watched my chance, and addressed Mrs. Pendleton in the most affably courteous tones I could employ.

“You have a very charming house,” I said; “but doubtless you are tired of being told that very obvious truth.”

I was at once disarrayed. My outworks of refined civility, so to speak, were promptly demolished. Mrs. Pendleton answered me with a rather violent blow of her fan on my left arm.

“Oh, you get right along, Mark Manhattan!” she cried, with a joviality that came little short of waking my awe. “Don’t you come any o’ your ridic’lous airs over *me*, talkin’ ’bout my house as if you ain’t had the *entrée* to it” (the French word was pronounced excellently) “since you were a youngster in frocks! But you’ve never come here till to-day, an’ I just want to tell you, sir, that I think it’s pretty shabby you have n’t.”

“Shabby!” I faltered. “Really, Mrs. Pendleton, I” —

The fan was once more applied to my person. It is my belief that I was now smitten on the right arm instead of the left.

“Oh, don’t you ‘really, Mrs. Pendleton’ *me!* I ain’t goin’ to stand it. I knew that poor, dear,

darling mother o' yours before you were born. Yes, I did. You see, I give myself away, as they put it nowadays. But it's true, an' I don't care. I tell my husband, I tell him if *he*'s satisfied with me as I am, I guess I ain't 'fraid to pass for an old woman anywheres. An' you ought to be ashamed, Mark Manhattan, not to have come here more. It's the same old house I've always lived in since I was married, — and that's half a century ago, more or less, — so don't say you did n't know it. Besides, this Washington Square house was ma's long beforehand, and everybody knows where the old Hudsonbank family mansion is. So don't you put on airs and say you could n't find me. I don't believe you ever came to Sally's ball, when I brought her out at Delmonico's in '79; though I'll give in if you say you *were* there, for it was such a big crush, and I got so flustered receivin', that p'haps I may have missed you. But still, *anyhow*, you have n't been sociable a bit. And you ought to have remembered me as your mother's old friend. Besides, we're related; the Mannhattans an' the Hudsonbanks have always been sort o' cousins, though *your* branch is n't so near us as the Gracechurch one is. Old Betsy Manhattan, your great-grandmother married a Hudsonbank, though. Now, Mark, look here. I don't want to talk family; I guess it's better not to talk it just now, when Tom, Dick, and Harry are pushin' and scramblin' to get into everything

that 's given. It 's nothin' nowadays but money, money, money. I d'clare, I get just sick at the way things are!" (Here, if I mistake not, my right shoulder was vehemently assaulted with the fan.) "'Pon my word, I don't know what New York *is* coming to! Some people say I 'm snob-bish. I ain't a bit. But I 'm opposed to havin' a reg'lar rabble in place o' the good old stock. *We're* the good old stock. Don't you ever forget that. We 've got the real 'ristocratic blood in our veins. Why, I d'clare to goodness, I'd rather see my Sally a corpse than have her marry one o' those young Wall Street upstarts that might go to smash before the honeymoon 's over. *There!* There 's Lord Percy at last! I was 'fraid he could n't get here. He had to see some horrid feller from out West who 's been takin' care of his cattle-ranch there. 'Xcuse me a minute."

Away darted Mrs. Pendleton. My glance followed her in melancholy dismay. But nobody else's glance so followed her. She was the lady who could be safely vulgar. I cannot conceive why, unless because of the devout snobbery which revered her position and name. It was not to be questioned that her deplorable style remained unnoticed; but I am really of the opinion that it always remained uncriticised. She made people forget what she was because of recollecting who she was.

I left her entertainment that afternoon in com-

pany with old Courtlandt Canal. I suppose Courtlandt Canal must be sixty-five if a day, and yet he carries his years as he carries his jaunty, breezy little gray mustache, nonchalantly and buoyantly. He has been a great beau in his time, and is still very popular. He is flippant, but he is, after a manner, wise. He knows his narrow world well; and he has so many neat, apt things to say about it, that you are sometimes almost led to regard it as a wide world.

“A very lovely woman, Mark,” said Courtlandt Canal to me as we strolled along together. He was answering a bit of rather bold scorn which I had delivered concerning Mrs. Pedigree Pendleton. “A very lovely woman, and a woman you should not sneer at.”

I put my hand on his arm, thin as a cane, and hard as a nut. “Good heavens!” I said, “do you not think her stupendously vulgar?”

My companion frowned, and shook his head in brisk negative. “Vulgar?” he said almost stammeringly. “Why — why — damn it, Mark, do you know that she was a Hudsonbank?”

“Oh, yes!” I replied dryly. “I am very well aware that she was a Hudsonbank. I ought to be.”

“Vulgar?” continued Courtlandt Canal, scanning my face with his dim, senile, kindly eye. “Not at all — not at all. You young chaps get very funny ideas. Mrs. Pendleton — ahem! — belongs — well, we’ll say that she belongs to a past

generation. She has n't the modern way of speaking or acting. I'll — I'll grant you that. And, indeed, now that you remind me of it, I should say that — ahem! — looked at from a — a modern point of view, she might even be called — well, yes, *vulgar*. But then, my dear Mark, Mrs. Pendleton, recollect, is a lady who " —

He paused. I laughed as he did so, and ended his sentence for him. "She is a lady who can be vulgar with safety," I said.

XVII.

AN ANGLO-MANIAC WITH BRAINS.

THERE were various opinions regarding Mr. Somers Cliffe when he first appeared in New York society. He was then about two and thirty. He had lived in England perhaps half his life. Having been graduated at Columbia College with high honors, he had crossed the Atlantic to matriculate at Oxford, and from twenty till twenty-four he had shone with a good deal of scholarly brilliancy at the famed university. It was surely a most exceptional and noteworthy career; and, as Somers Cliffe came of a family who had all held their heads high in New York for at least three generations or so, a good deal of renown accompanied his final *ren-trée* into the city of his birth. He was invited everywhere, dined excessively, courted assiduously; but after a little while he had failed to make himself popular.

He had not, indeed, the appearance of seeking to "make himself" anything. His look and manner were the very refinement of gentlemanliness. I have never seen a man to whom the term of 'gentlemanly' so strikingly and promptly applied. It was somehow the first thing you thought of

after you had become conscious of him, — how gentlemanly he was. He dressed with extreme taste; but there was no one feature of his costume that you could recall as having made you pass this judgment. He had no florid excesses in cravats, no decorative subtlety in scarf-pins. It was all perfect, and yet you could not divide its details. He was not handsome, though his firm, pure-cut features, his blond, curly hair, his rippling mustache of a slightly darker shade, and his tall, lithe figure, narrowly escaped the verdict of manly beauty. I think he would have been called handsome if he had smiled more — if he had not shown, in some peculiar and unexplainable way, that he was trying very decorously and duteously not to look bored. That is how he appealed to me, and he did appeal to me as soon as I met him. He was doing his best not to look bored. Later I became convinced that he had even pondered this question, given it his serious attention, and put himself rather conscientiously upon his guard concerning it.

Perhaps it explained why certain people grew to dislike him. He was not the sort of man who is openly disliked in New York society. He had come over to attend the management of a very large estate, left him on the sudden death of a bachelor uncle, and he had previously been possessed of an ample income. In a city like New York, where money is revered and genuflected to, and where its possession so easily gilds a tar-

nished repute and a rusty education, a man like Somers Cliffe could of course find it a shield and buckler against the least uncivil hint.

Nevertheless, I soon discovered that gossip boiled with regard to him, and threw up some of its most malodorous fumes. He had been accused of saying (though I was certain he had too much sense and tact to dream of saying it) that he had always respected the memory of Washington because that celebrated patriot had had the advantage of being an Englishman. He was accused of saying (though I believed the charge also to be one of spite and spleen) that America was a very short distance from England, but that England's distance from her former colonies could not justly be measured on any known chart. I am confident that these and similar *canards* were all of the most fabulous origin. I have a good many hard things to record against Mr. Somers Cliffe before I shall have done with him; but I believe in giving, as one might put it, Satan the credit for shapely bat's wings and symmetrical talons.

One of his worst detractors — not Satan's, but Mr. Cliffe's — was, I soon discovered, a certain Mr. Amos Brooklynheight. Of course, everybody knows the Brooklynheights; and Amos, with his vast volubility and his little feathery, insignificant body, does his best to perpetuate their *ton*. Privately, I think that Amos quite fails, and that it would have been better for his race (sprung from an ambitious butcher, sneers calumny, less than

seventy years ago) if the volatile and expansive Amos had never been born. I wonder if the martinetts of etymology will permit me to coin a new word. I want very much to coin it (so much *is* coined nowadays, that, though spurious, passes current), and I offer humble apologies to any stray pundit whose spectacled eye might chance upon my writing. It gives me pleasure, therefore, to write Amos Brooklynheight down as an Americano-maniac. I think, with a sort of paternal fondness, now that I have written the word, that it looks quite as correct as "Anglo-maniac," which the usual newspaper fag knows so well, and hurls at us so often.

Well, Amos was *that* — I won't write the loved derivative again, proud as I feel of having created it. He soon made up his mind that Somers Cliffe was abominable. And he went about, with his drooping shoulders and his short stature and his pug-nose and his ethereal slimness, circulating all sorts of slanderous stories about his aversion.

"You don't like Somers Cliffe," I said to him on a certain evening at the supper-table of the Harlems', just before one of the most unruly and coltish *cotillons* that ever taxed my politeness as a leader. "Pray, why don't you like him?"

Amos stood on his tiptoes. He was constantly standing that way when he addressed people of ordinary size, because his gushes of feeling seemed to demand it. He snapped his tiny black eyes at me, and at once said:

“No, I don’t like him. And I guess there ain’t many people that do.” Amos was a Wall Street broker, by the way. I have heard many eccentricities of speech from Wall Street brokers, and many marvels of slang, but it is my impression, that, for solid vulgarity, little prattlesome Amos surpasses them all. “Look here, Mark,” he rattlingly proceeded. “I ain’t a Brooklynheight for nothin’. Ev’rybody knows who *I* am, don’t you make any mistake. I ’m talkin’ to a man that knows me, ain’t I?”

“Oh! of course.”

“Very well. I guess my people’s been in New York s’ciety as long as ever the Cliffes were there. Ain’t I right? Well, *I* ain’t any slouch, an’ you can just bet yer bottom dollar *that* way!”

This was enigmatical. It had an Œdipean flavor: it suggested the Sphinx herself. I was not sure that I at all knew what a “slouch” meant. But I hazarded an assumed acquaintance with the word. Since the lively Amos had declared that he was *not* it, I ventured to think that it was something which correct people did not desire to be.

“Oh, no!” I acquiesced, “you ’re — you ’re not, of course. Oh, no! of course.”

“Well,” retorted Amos, still on tiptoe, “I ain’t goin’ to have that feller treat me ’s if I was the poor relation of his footman, am I? W’at’s he, anyhow, comin’ over t’ this glorious country, and settin’ himself up for an Englishman?”

“Does he set himself up for an Englishman?”

“*Don't* he! You can jus' bet he does!” And then followed from the lips of the indignant Amos (who must be so invaluable in that howling Stock Exchange, because he is nearly always indignant about something or somebody) a torrent of vituperation regarding Somers Cliffe.

Of course, I minded no more what this testy little Americo-maniac said about his last object of national hatred than I would have minded the strident chirp of one of our own transpontine katydids. If I am not wrong, it was on that same evening — after the Harlems' horrid prancing german — that I drank a late brandy-and-soda with Cliffe at the club. I got to like him better then, as I got to like him better every fresh time that we met and talked together.

“He is an Anglo-maniac,” I told myself, “but he is one of a wholly new type in this country. He is an Anglo-maniac with brains. We see them by scores here, but they are all the same — as scores of other animals usually are. They simper, and twirl canes, and drawl, and are cumulatively idiots. To be an Anglo-maniac has got to mean, of late, being an idiot. When we hear the charge flung at a fellow-creature, we are at once prepared for fatuity. But Somers Cliffe, although meriting the charge, is widely removed from fatuity: therefore he interests me; and therefore, as a new individuality, an unexpected personage, I am anxious to observe him, to investigate him, to classify him.”

Fate soon afterward gave me this chance. I attended a dinner-party at Delmonico's, composed wholly of men, where the superabundant wines put us all into a good humor, and the *finesse* of the cookery made digestion a delight. Somers Cliffe was among the guests at this dinner, and chance placed us side by side. We talked of many things, and in all that he said I perceived no trace of the superciliousness which Amos Brooklynheight had denounced. At last I inquired of him:

"Shall you go abroad soon again?"

He gave a perceptible start, and his mild blue eyes swept my face in a rather searching way. "I sometimes tell myself," he slowly answered, "that I shall never cross the ocean again."

Of all possible answers, this from Somers Cliffe was the most sharply unexpected. "Never cross again!" I exclaimed. "Why, what can have suggested the making of such a resolve?"

He thoughtfully watched a curl of smoke from his own cigar, that had drifted round a garnet wineglass, and was making a little nimbus over it, as though it were the goblet of some Olympian feast. Then he lifted his gaze once more, and let it meet mine with a most serious directness.

"To go back, and yet not to go back feeling that I am permanently to remain there," he said, "is always a pain for me."

I smiled. "And you cannot permanently remain?"

"No. My affairs here render it impossible. I

cannot trust them to agents or clerks. There are two or three charitable institutions, as you may perhaps have heard, which were founded by my late uncle, and whose superintendence I considered a sacred charge. You can form no idea of the responsibility, the care, the vigilance, which these entail."

I smiled again, and this time with a touch of sarcastic commiseration, as I said, "So, then, you will be doomed to the hard fate of living here?"

"I am afraid it is inevitable."

"And you do not like it here?"

"If I told you how little I like it here," he answered, again looking at me earnestly, "I am afraid you would feel personally displeased."

"Oh, I never resent any hard things said about America," I laughed, "unless some one who is not an American says them. If you told me how little you like it here, Mr. Cliffe," I went on, "I should by no means feel personally displeased. But I am certain, that, if you were to tell me *why* you like it so little, I should be a good deal interested."

"And, pray, for what reason?" he swiftly queried, with his English accent and his graceful English way of leaning the body forward.

"Because," I said, "it is my impression that you are able to make out a very good case, as the lawyers phrase it. I should like very much to hear your frank opinion of this country."

He shook his head. "I have never put it in words," he said. "I don't know that I could;

and I feel convinced, that, if I did, you would not be inclined to hear me through."

"Then I should be simply showing myself a worthless partisan. The man who will listen only to praise of America's virtues does not deserve to benefit by them. He should be punished for his prejudice by having some of her faults rise up and hurt him."

"Quite so," said Mr. Cliffe absently, as though he were thinking of something else. "I say!" he presently continued, "would you be able to stand hearing America pitched into most mercilessly?"

"Yes," I answered. "I think I could if you did the pitching-in."

"Oh! that's very kind of you, I'm sure."

"Not at all. It's rather selfish, on the whole. I suppose you know this new word, 'Anglo-maniac,' which the newspapers are popularizing, and which people are beginning to use as glibly as if it were a century old. Well, of all the Anglo-manics whom I have thus far met in life, I have seen but one who possessed brains. All the rest have been distinct and complete fools. I hope, by the way, that you will pardon me for suggesting that you *are* an Anglo-maniac. And let me add that you are the exception to which I referred."

This appeared by no means to displease Mr. Cliffe, though its candor was perhaps a trifle uncivil in me, considering our limited acquaintance. But somehow from that evening our acquaintance ripened rather speedily into an intimacy. Still,

Somers Cliffe never alluded to his own country; and I, being perhaps a little piqued that he should have repelled my endeavors to hear his true views frankly expressed, forbore from asking him a single question that touched on this subject. Meanwhile, knowing him better, I knew better how intensely English he was. His whole life seemed modelled on a transatlantic plan. It would be foolish for me to attempt a specification of the hundred and one minor details to which I now allude. The more intimate I became with him, the more my respect for his mind and character deepened. I found myself constantly listening to him with a desire for actual enlightenment,—a wish to be set squarely and safely right on certain vexed and baffling questions. I suppose that any man whose life has chiefly been passed in the *haute volée* of New York circles may be said to possess a meagre experience of educated people. However, judged by this sort of experience, it seemed to me that Somers Cliffe was the most efficiently and thoroughly educated man I had ever met.

One evening, while we were smoking together in my library, I said to him with rather bold abruptness:

“Upon my word, Cliffe, it is a shame you have to live here.”

I think for a moment he suspected me of a random, slurring satire. Doubtless he had heard some of those tales afloat about him — or at least

had been told by one or two sweet, kind friends that they existed. His cheek had slightly flushed, I observed, as he now replied, without a tinge of annoyance in his smooth tones:

“Pray, why do *you* think it a shame that I have to live here?”

“Oh, come, now!” I replied, “don’t take me up quite so sharply.”

“But your comment was a very expressive one — and inclusive as well.”

“I know that you abominate living in America,” I laughed. “There, old fellow, that is still more expressive and inclusive. But you would never give me the reasons for either your preference or your antipathy.”

“The reasons!” murmured Cliffe. He was buried in a tufted arm-chair of black velvet, against which his blond head gleamed in the red flashes of a near fire. I wonder why it is that blond hair always has so patrician a suggestion when it is near black velvet. I cannot explain why, but I am convinced of the fact.

“The reasons!” again murmured Cliffe, who had been staring straight into the red crumbled logs of my wood fire. He suddenly turned and looked at me. “Why, there are hundreds, thousands of reasons!”

“For liking England better than America?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“I should like to hear a few of them,” I said.

“Some of them are very plain and positive. Others are so elusive and shadowy that they escape you from hour to hour. The truth is, my dear Manhattan, we call ourselves a country, and we are not a country at all.”

(At last! I was finally to hear Anglo-mania plead its own cause from the lips of Mr. Somers Cliffe, as I had wanted to hear for so long.)

“Not a country!” I repeated. “What are we, then?”

“A colony. I assure you that this is true. Every feature of our civilization is distinctly colonial. Our government, our art, our literature,—they all belong, like our language, to other lands. We might just as well concede it, for it is irrefutably true. There is nothing original about us except our vulgarity. As soon as we become refined, we are European. Unconsciously to ourselves, we speak with contempt of each other’s sins against taste and good-breeding as ‘so American.’ We wave our star-spangled banner, (and, by the way, what a flashy, paltry epithet ‘star-spangled’ is!) and declare great things concerning our land, on the 4th of every July. But the truth is, Manhattan, that we are an immense failure. I do not know a single prophecy that America has fulfilled, a single great promise that she has kept. She was to be a grand improvement on the feudalisms and bitter social inequalities of Europe. In New York, Boston, and all her larger cities, to-day, caste is digging deeper intrenchments, building

stouter defences. They call it the aristocracy of money. It is nothing of the sort. Money has always fed and helped all aristocracies. It is the old, patrician, 'I am born above you' impulse, and it is nothing more or less. Look at our political life. It is one huge scandal and mockery. We cannot urge our youth as an excuse for the sad lack of *morale* there, for, indeed, we are not young at all. We are very old in precedent, in the power to profit by example. We had all the hideous wrongs of Europe for centuries to warn us. We started out magnificently, and what have we accomplished? A weak and miserable imitation, nothing more. We are wholly without independence of thought, though we have a monstrous assumption of it, a loud braggadocio, a terrible swagger. Foreign plays fill our theatres, foreign books crowd our libraries, for whose production we will not give their authors even a decent wage; foreign garments are worn by us with an eager preference; foreign manners are cultivated by us with a slavish allegiance. I cannot conceive why we are so boastful, since we are so stupidly unoriginal. Not long ago a great statue was presented to us in the name of the great French nation, and our Congress has disgraced itself by making no appropriation toward the erection of a proper pedestal. We rush abroad in droves every year, and stare at famed pictures, chatter in stately cathedrals. But we return with no desire to have the same on these shores — no national or muni-

incipal desires, I mean, to make art a culture here, a purpose, an illuminative project. It is only necessary for one to travel in our West for one to realize how we revel in ugliness. But we revel also in vanity. Some day, when we are really a country and not a colony, we may learn" —

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, stop!" I cried, jumping up from my seat. "I can't let you go on like this! I really can't!"

Cliffe threw his cigar into the fire. "I knew you would grow wrathful," he said with his cool, suave smile, "if I ever told you my reasons for detesting this country; and that is why I have delayed doing it for so long a time."

"I am not wrathful!" I exclaimed. "And you *must* pardon my telling you in my own house that I think anger would be a very foolish answer to sentiments as unsound as these."

"Which plainly shows one that you are very angry indeed," said Cliffe with perfect composure. "On the whole, I am rather sorry," he proceeded, "for I have a great many more things to say about this country, and" —

"Then in God's name don't say them!" I broke in, dropping back into my arm-chair. . . .

He did not. We are still the best of friends, but we never discuss international questions. Some day we shall, however. I feel myself slowly warming for a great fight. I am collecting my

weapons. Still, I hope it will be a fight ending in friendly truce. I am afraid that it may not be, but I sincerely hope it will; for I am honestly and admiringly fond of Somers Cliffe, the Anglo-maniac with brains.

XVIII.

THE YOUNG LADY WHO TRIES TOO HARD.

“WHY does that Louisa Lowther go out?” people had almost grown tired of asking. And since I have first clearly learned who and what “that Louisa Lowther” is, I have felt inclined to echo the question. When I try to recall having first met her, I find that she seems to have dawned upon me gradually, through a series of rather vague apparitions. I may, indeed, say that I never positively observed her until she had become to me an unconsciously familiar figure. It then struck me that she had been present at numerous entertainments which I, too, had attended. I had a sense of having seen her stand or sit, walk or talk, ever since I had first gone at all into gay circles. She was somehow a factor of gay circles. I discovered that few festal recollections were complete without her. I do not mean that I ever met her at dinner-parties, large or small, but rare was the tea or ball that failed to attract Miss Louisa Lowther.

She was inclined to be thin, with a restless, vivacious face. Indeed, there looked from her pale blue eyes an eagerness that was unwholesome in

its fervor. She appeared to be wanting something very much indeed, and always glancing round with a brisk flutter of the eyelids to see if it were not coming. Presumably it never came; but, if it had been a partner for the german, it would at least now and then have come, though by no means always. There could be no doubt that Miss Lowther was not a success in society; there could be no doubt that people avoided her. I began to wonder just why they did so, as I watched her. Of course, I must here mention that the fact of her father's moderate income had fully transpired. But several girls whose fathers had moderate incomes were not at all unpopular. Then, on the other hand, Miss Lowther, though not strikingly fair, was by no means notably plain. As I rather covertly regarded her, it seemed to me that society ought to consider her a nice girl. But society evidently did nothing of the sort. She went out incessantly, yet the only persons who appeared to regard her presence with anything like actual concern were those male prowlers about the borderland of frivolity who had no visible motive for accepting invitations except the drearily egotistic one of showing that they had received them. More than once I have seen Miss Lowther, when I myself was leader of a german, slip up at the last moment, clinging to some partner whom she had just providentially secured. Her eyelids, on these occasions, would flutter more than ever; her liberal and continual smile would have brightened.

To regard her was to feel sure that she tingled with achievement, if not precisely victory. And what a petty victory it was — especially when one bore in mind the philosophic truth that all triumphs of the ball-room are petty! How small did the success of this self-gratulating girl look to the belle with her seven bouquets and her score of admirers!

Before seeking presentation to Miss Lowther, I made a few tentative inquiries concerning her. My proposed informant was an unfortunate selection. I might have known that Amanda Pinckney would have taken *ex parte* views on the subject of her unvalued sister. Amanda, with her proud, cold, white face, her shining coils of coal-black hair, and the facile sneer that hovers round her thin, pink lips, has about as much icy snobbery in her nature as one human soul can well accommodate. It is a trait of those Pinckneys that they none of them wear their good birth with the least grace; they are constantly flirting it at you as if it were a fat purse, and they were people of yesterday. "The accident of birth," in their case, is more like a calamity. If their blood is blue in one sense, I cannot help fancying that it is not red in another. Miss Amanda had very decided opinions regarding Miss Lowther. She curved her long throat a little, looking down at a *corsage* of leafless white camellias, — cold flowers, that, as they rose and fell with the breathings of her cold breast, made me think of snow fallen upon snow.

"I don't see why the girl should be liked, Mr. Manhattan," she said. "In the first place, you know, she is quite nobody."

"I did not know, Miss Pinckney. And, indeed, I am at a loss to understand how anybody can be 'quite nobody.' It seems like a contradiction in terms, don't you think so?"

Amanda, who is not at all intelligent, having only the brilliancy of ice, looked as if she did not at all understand. However, if she had understood, I am certain that she would have considered my demurrer worth nothing except her civil disdain.

"It is odd how the girl got about," she proceeded. "I have heard that she pushed and strained to a frightful extent several years ago. This is about her fifth season. Of course, she goes everywhere — that is, to all the large affairs. I wish that she did n't. I suppose everybody wishes that she did n't. Now that she has managed to thrust herself in, however, no one has the courage to drop her."

"Poor girl!" I murmured.

"Why do you call her that?" queried Miss Amanda. "I don't see any occasion for lavishing pity upon her."

"To me there is great occasion for pity," I returned. "If, as you say, she has pushed and strained to a frightful extent, her wasted effort is all the more deplorable."

Amanda fluttered her white eyelids objectingly.

"I don't just see what you mean by wasted effort," she said dryly. "Success has crowned it in a most liberal manner, I should imagine."

"Success!" I repeated. "You don't really connect the word with that ill-fated girl! She has gained nothing, as far as I can see, except toleration. The potentates merely agree not to discountenance her, and that is all. And she appears very grateful for this left-handed courtesy, one must admit."

"She ought to be grateful," said Amanda Pinckney with freezing curtness.

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed; "you speak of her as if she were an adopted pauper." I now looked in Miss Lowther's direction. "She seems to have very good manners," I pursued.

"They might be better."

"So might yours, my lofty lady," I thought, yet did not say. But aloud I went on, "She has nothing at all objectionable about her appearance: indeed, I consider her quite attractive; I think it strange that she should be so shunned. Can you tell me why she *is* shunned? why she is not more sought by the men? why she should be the unaccountable failure that I begin to perceive she is?"

Miss Pinckney gave a chill smile. "I have not endeavored to account for her unpopularity," she replied, "and, for that matter, I am not sufficiently interested in it to do so."

This notable bit of *hauteur* wholly failed to impress me. A little later I secured an introduc-

tion to Miss Lowther. To my surprise, she received me with an almost demoralized mien.

“I—I am so *very* glad to—to meet you, Mr. Manhattan,” she said excitedly. She had been seated a few moments before, but she had risen during our mutual introduction, and she now remained standing. “Of—of course, I know *all* about you. How could I help doing so?” Here the young lady gave a highly nervous little laugh. “You are such a *leader*, you know. It was very kind of you—exceedingly kind.”

“I don’t think that I quite understand in what way I have been kind,” was my rather astonished answer. Miss Lowther started, and then put her head exaggeratedly sideways. “Oh! now I am sure you’re not in earnest,” she affirmed. “I—I did not expect such a great *compliment* as this.”

“Compliment!” I repeated almost confusedly.

“Why, yes. You—you have so many *other* claims upon your attention. But, as I said, I—I am *very* glad.”

I began to see the drift of things, and I did not at all like their drift. Miss Lowther’s manner had struck me as adulating. It wounded me far more than her possible frigid patronage might have done.

“It gives me pleasure,” I said as demurely as I could manage, “to find that you welcome my acquaintanceship; but I must warn you in time that it will prove no important advantage in any sense. You have only met a very usual and conventional man.”

“Conventional — certainly, I hope!” was the quick reply. “But *usual!* Oh, how can you employ such a word, even about *yourself!* I—I have heard that you were not at all *conceited*; but I—I was not prepared for such *humility* as this. Still, I suppose that is only one of your charms — only one of the many reasons why you are such a noteworthy person.”

“I am by no means a noteworthy person,” I replied, and perhaps a trifle crisply; for I began to suspect satire on Miss Lowther’s part — that she was making me wear asses’ ears, while she won me to believe her complimentary broadsides were sincerely delivered. “Surely,” I went on, “there is no real fame or honor in having a neat waltz-step.”

“But that is not *all*, you know. That is such a *slight part* of your accomplishments — your attractiveness. You have matters quite your *own* way, Mr. Manhattan. Oh, don’t deny that you do! You came, saw, and conquered in New York. Why, I believe — yes, upon my word I do — that if you were actually *rude* to some of our girls, they would rather accept *your* rudeness than the *civility* of other gentlemen.”

I no longer suspected satire now. Miss Lowther’s face expressed the spirit of ardent and effusive candor. At the same time this whole speech made me bite my lips with annoyance. An adherent whom I did not know — a person with a blank face and a sleepy, milky eye — still remained

at her side. The german was about to begin : so I soon bowed myself away, and joined my partner. When it came Miss Lowther's turn to dance, she took me out. After the figure was completed, and while we danced together, she murmured in my ear :

“Now that you *know* me, Mr. Manhattan, I hope you will not entirely *forget* me.”

“Forget you !” I responded as gallantly as I could. “That is, of course, quite impossible.”

“Oh, how charming of you ! But I need not tell you that I have *heard* you were charming.”

A few days later I received an invitation to dine at Miss Lowther's residence. I accepted. She lived in a small, pretty house not far from Fifth Avenue. The drawing-rooms struck me as a trifle over-decorated, it is true ; there were too many screens, rugs, and sofa-cushions ; there was too evident an effort to be telling and *chic*. But it was all quite charming, nevertheless. I had a little chat with Miss Lowther before dinner ; the guests had been invited for seven, and nearly all came, as usual, at half-past. The young lady's manner almost shocked me ; it went beyond the bounds of hospitable concern ; it was, in a way, literally servile. And yet I somehow could not help liking her. I found myself mentally insisting that she was a nice girl. But, if so, she was a nice girl hid behind a mist of her own making. I pictured her to myself without this overplus of affability ; I thought how pleasant she might be if she had

merely been glad to see me, and not so preposterously glad. Her welcome, her geniality, defeated themselves by their own vehemence.

And it was just the same with regard to her other guests. Whomever Miss Lowther greeted, she greeted too warmly and cordially. Before her little dinner had ended that evening, I had solved the riddle of her non-success. *She tried too hard to succeed.*

Yes, the whole secret lay there. She tried too hard. If her endeavors had been only a few shades less energetic, she would have easily reached a far higher plane of attainment. My friend, Mrs. Stonington, — tried woman of the world, — gave one of her soft, amused laughs, about three evenings later, when I communicated to her this discovery.

She is one of the most serenely elegant women whom I know, is Mrs. Stonington. She treats life as if it were an easy, rolling landau, in which she had nothing to do except lean comfortably backward and be driven along. No danger of *her* being *gênée* by too profuse a politeness toward either foes or friends. She looked at me with her large, soft, tawny-brown eyes for a moment after I had spoken, and then said in her smooth, lazy voice :

“You are very extraordinary.”

“How extraordinary?” I asked.

“Oh, in treating men and women just as if they were problems in algebra.” Here she tapped one dainty foot impatiently on the floor. We were

seated together in that beautiful little Japanese room of hers ; I had dined with her *à deux* ; I was to take her to the opera in a little while ; we were waiting for her carriage to come. She had on a cloak of some white woolly stuff threaded with gold ; her arch, indolent face lifted itself on a slender stem of neck from a snowy circlet of swan's-down ; she held a bunch of big pink roses in one gloved hand ; she looked enchantingly patrician, and as *mondaine* as possible, besides ; you would never have suspected her of not getting the best from society ; you could tell by a glance that she was the woman to take for granted, and receive rather as a matter of course, not a little solid and sincere homage ; the feverish struggles of a Miss Lowther were unknown to such as she.

“But one would not so much mind this fury of observation and analysis,” my hostess went on with a somewhat impudent drawl, “if one were not so certain that you are ‘collecting material.’ It is so tiresome to meet a person who is ‘collecting material !’—I mean for a novel, of course.”

“I have not the remotest idea of perpetrating a novel,” I said. “There are too many bad ones already.”

Mrs. Stonington raised her brows in surprise. “What refreshing modesty !” she exclaimed. “But if such is the fact, why on earth do you bore yourself trying to find a reason for the unpopularity of that Lowther girl ?”

“Because I was impressed by her being a girl

who ought to succeed. But I am convinced that I have hit upon the true reason why she does not. She betrays her anxiety; she tries too hard. Yes, I am sure it is that."

"You are quite right," now said Mrs. Stonington, whom I expected to be on the verge of contradicting me. "When we show that we want a thing very greatly, the world has a trick of coolly refusing it us. Miss Lowther has more brains than I have—and I suppose you know that I don't think myself by any means a fool. I have watched her for some time—half unconsciously, perhaps. I could have explained her to you long ago. She was born outside of the fashionable sets. She strove to get in among them, and distinctly did *not* fail. But her success, so to speak, went to her head. Of course, she is a nice girl; you are perfectly right in thinking her so; if I were at some quiet country hotel in the summer, I should prefer her company to that of any reigning belle whom I know. But in society I can't endure her. She is ridiculous there—almost a caricature, in fact. She does nothing with grace or tact; and grace and tact are two things that society—always thinking so much more of manner than matter—holds indispensable. A less frivolous career would become her far better. There are a hundred worthier modes of life in which she might play her part to far greater advantage. But, as it is, she is bitten by the fashionable craze, and her recovery—her sensible recognition of her own

grievous mistake — is uncertain, if not absolutely impossible.”

“Poor girl!” I said, half to my own thoughts. “Poor, foolish, unreasoning girl!”

Mrs. Stonington rose at this point, drawing her opera-cloak closer about her handsome figure, with one of her light, melodious, indifferent laughs. The butler had just appeared in the doorway, announcing her carriage.

“Bah! there are plenty of really miserable people in the world,” she said, “who truly merit your compassion. Don’t fling it away broadcast. And come — let us go to the opera and hear that divine Patti. *She* tries and succeeds. She is not like your Miss Louisa Lowther, who tries too hard — and fails.”

XIX.

A PILLAR OF VIRTUE.

“I WISH to present you to my mother,” said Miss Lilian Holdridge one evening at a party, while I was having a little chat with her about something, — the weather, last night’s ball somewhere, the voice of the newly imported prima-donna, — I forget wholly, in short, the subject of our converse.

“Certainly,” I said. “It will give me great pleasure.”

This was one of those conventional white lies which we are forever called upon to utter, if we would preserve anything like peace in our social dealings, and retain a shred of reputation for even decent amiability. The truth was that I did not at all want to meet Mrs. Holdridge. I had heard a great deal about this lady, and I had made up my mind that during the coming season, while she appeared in public as the chaperon of her *débutante* daughter, I would use all polite means of avoiding her. This daughter had pleased me at first sight; and the lily in her soft name struck me as appropriate enough to have been prompted when she was christened by some fairy sure of her sweetness

yet in bud. She was a little taller than the common maidenly stature, but so slightly above it that this trait gave the pale, chiselled purity of her face a new and gentle dignity. Her meekness and her chastity appealed to you the instant your gaze dwelt on her; she made one think of "Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable;" her hair would have been flaxen but for certain glistening threads in its dense, banded folds. She had all the innocence of a Greuze, and all the saintliness of a Fra Angelico. She usually dressed in white, and wore no jewels; her mother did not approve of jewels in an unmarried woman. Her pure gowns were never *decolletés*; her mother did not approve of their being worn thus by women of any sort, married or unmarried. She was not clever; but you did not expect cleverness to issue from her delicate tea-rose of a mouth; you would as soon have expected a pearl to flash like a diamond. I have never seen one of her sex so delightfully free from the least trace of vanity — and it has at no time been my wont to set down this fault as one distinctively feminine. She was not a belle in society; she appeared to stand apart from the belles, rather through a winsome reluctance to join their artificial throng than from any incapacity to shine and attract there. One look at her convinced you that she was good and honest, and I fear that not a few of her simpering and wily sisters only looked at her with twinges of compunction on this account. She would not use the manifold adroit devices

which to so many girls of her place and caste are shield and panoply. She danced like the sylph she was, and always had a partner for the german, and a bouquet besides. But the young men with white waistcoats, and assured incomes, and superfine reputations for conferring special honor by their civilities, appeared, as a rule, a little afraid of her. Besides, the Holdridges were not by any means people of note.

“Her mother gave her all the position she has,” said Scorch, a cynical old snob of a club-man, to me one evening at the Metropolitan. “It’s very funny how that Holdridge woman got about. I remember perfectly when it first happened. It was all on account of her diplomatic piety.”

“What are you saying?” I exclaimed with a burst of laughter in spite of myself.

“Fact, I assure you, Manhattan,” said my bitter companion. “She secured a pew in Dr. Z——’s fashionable church on the avenue. She was enormously *dévoté*; in this way she aroused interest among certain patrician pew-holders. Her next move was to establish a Bible-class for little girls. She was very particular what little girls reaped the benefit of her scriptural teachings. At first the thing was rather a *fiasco*. The swells were puzzled; they did n’t know just what to make of it. They found themselves attacked from a totally new quarter. People had ‘got in’ by almost every conceivable method except this. If it was a *ruse de guerre*, it was horrible; and, if it

was n't, then the suspicion of its being so was shamefully unjust. After a little demur, they surrendered. Mrs. Holdridge and piety and the Bible-classes won the day. This was about ten years ago. Lilian was only eight or nine then; but before she was three years older she had a lot of 'dear little intimate friends,' as her mamma used to call them. They were all selected with an immense prudence. No English duchess, presiding over the list of Almack's, was ever more careful than Mrs. Holdridge with the members-elect of her holy re-unions." Here my friend repressed a yawn. "Well, she did it," he continued, "and that's the whole story. Her scholars have all grown up, and the saintly Lilian has grown up with them, and is *lancée*. Nothing is given that they don't get cards for, mamma and daughter. There is n't any papa, you know."

"Mrs. Holdridge is a widow?"

"Yes; she has been one since the Flood. Nobody ever knew her spouse. It is darkly murmured that he once kept a gentlemen's furnishing-store in Fulton Street. But this may be only the slanderous coinage of some infidel brain. Perhaps it was started by the aggrieved parent of some little girl who could n't get into the aristocratic Bible-class."

I laughed once more, against my will, as the lazy insolence of Scorch has so often made me. "Mamma's occupation must be gone at present," I said,

“Her real occupation’s begun,” replied Scorch. “Now she’s going to marry off her girl. But as she has n’t got any money to speak of, and never had any real position to speak of, she still keeps up her monstrous virtue to give herself an individuality among the other dowagers. She winked an eyelid to me to-day in the park, and I lifted my whip-hand just three inches. That’s the way Piety and Vice bow to each other. We do it four or five times a week. She disapproves of me, and I abominate her. She thinks I’m a reprobate, because I sit up all night here in the card-room now and then; and I think her a horrid old arch-hypocrite, and one of the most venomous gossips in town besides. That’s the way we stand.” Here Scorch drew out his watch, and rose. “Halloo!” he added, “it’s euchre-time. I hope talking to you’ll bring me luck to-night, Mark; for, by Jove! they cleaned me out of three hundred the last time I played.”

Scorch’s comments were by no means my reason for wishing not to know Lilian Holdridge’s mother. My card-loving friend never has a good word for living mortal, and not seldom wags his cruel tongue about dead ones as well. Yet it was impossible to move in the same general set with Mrs. Holdridge and not discover that she was a person who not only assumed a vast personal morality, but sat in perpetual judgment upon the deeds and misdeeds of her contemporaries.

Still, it was written that I should know her;

and I soon discovered that she herself, as one might say, had so written it. She always made it a rule to know, if possible, the gentlemen whom her daughter met in society. I confess, there was a tang of impudence in this pronunciamiento which stirred my spleen.

“You remind me of a certain gentleman whom both of us know, Mrs. Holdridge,” I said after my presentation, “and who never permits either of his two extremely plain daughters to walk in the street unattended by a maid.”

She raised her glossy black eyebrows, indicating puzzlement. “I do not understand you,” she said.

Her voice had a cold ring at all times, and was a trifle higher than the customary tone in which even American ladies talk. She was in every way the opposite of her lovely, blond, mild-mannered daughter; and yet a vague resemblance, as so often happens in these cases, betrayed the relationship. She had a matronly figure, and strong, severe, almost commanding features. It was a perfectly uncompromising countenance; its arched nose, keen, large black eyes, thin, flexible lips, and somewhat acute chin, expressed determination, energy, austerity. Whether or no from some peculiarly erect mode of holding herself, she seemed at nearly all times to be more clearly defined against her background than most other women. Her costume was rich but plain; it would be hard to tell just how she managed to combine so much richness with so much plainness.

I had already, after this brief meeting, begun to account for that whispered nickname, "the pillar of virtue," by which not a few of the merry-making throng had recently designated her.

"My parallel was rather an obscure one," I now said. "Let me explain it."

"Be good enough to do so," said Mrs. Holdridge. In such a voice she might have asked some pupil of her previous Bible-class, "How many sons had Noah?" or, "State what was the calamity which befell Jonah."

"The explanation is simple," I returned. "Prudence prompts Mr. D—— to protect his daughters in a case where prudence seems especially needless, since instances are rare here of a lady being insulted, or even annoyed, in our public streets. Equally, — if you will pardon my saying so, — I should think there was an overplus of prudence in taking such extreme care as to what gentlemen your charming daughter may meet at entertainments like the present, where doubt of any gentleman's fitness for her acquaintanceship is to somewhat undervalue the good faith of your host."

I spoke very quietly, and with as courteous an accent as I could employ; but I saw that my words dealt a sting, and I did not at all regret this result.

"Has it occurred to you that I might have other than prudential reasons for wishing to know Lilian's male friends?" she inquired with rather a wintry smile.

“That is the view I took of your attitude,” I said. “But, of course, it is useless for me to add that Miss Holdridge’s admirers must always congratulate themselves upon the rule you have set, whatever its origin.”

“I have heard that you can turn a compliment neatly, Mr. Manhattan,” she answered. She laughed as she spoke, but there was still frost in her voice and her look. “To be frank with you, I do *not* wish that Lilian should meet *every* gentleman now in society. Or, rather, if she *meets* certain of them, I prefer that there should be no *intimacy*. My ground—and I take pride in admitting it—is entirely a moral ground.”

“Ah?” I said, biting my mustache.

“Yes—truly, yes. The habits, tendencies, occupations of some young men of the day distress and shock me. I have always been very particular with Lilian. I do not wish to set myself up as a preacher of decorum—far be it from *me*, Mr. Manhattan, to assume any such pharisaical part. But if society is not built upon a sound, religious, reputable basis, it surely behooves every mother to use great care in watching the interests and welfare of her child. Now, I know—I positively *know*—that lines of conduct are pursued by girls of the present time which it would break my heart if I thought *my* dear child could ever fail to shrink from.”

“I should be very sorry to find myself on the list of your aversions,” I now said.

“Oh, but you are *not!* pray, do not for an instant think so.”

“But I am very much afraid that I am not built upon a sound, religious, and reputable basis.”

The “pillar of virtue” shook her glossy black head quite seriously. “Ah, do not jest upon such a subject!” she admonished, with what struck me as the most irritating and ill-timed patronage. “I *have* heard — if you will excuse my saying it on so short an acquaintance — that you sometimes show sympathy with those dreadful atheistical writers, — I scarcely know their names, even, — the Free-thinkers, I mean, who wish to do away with all religion, and tell us that we were originally monkeys, and that, instead of being made by our Lord in seven days, the world has been gradually developing for millions and millions of years, and that miracles like the turning of water into wine were impossible and *never took place*, and — Oh, my *dear* Dr. Fossilcreed! what a surprise to meet *you* here to-night! I thought you had quite given up going into the gay world.”

While these latter words of effusive welcome were being addressed to the stately white-neck-clothed divine, Dr. Fossilcreed, I took the chances of dexterous retreat. All Scorch’s past acerbity of comment regarding “the pillar of virtue” seemed to me, just then, literal truth. At the same time I could not, without injustice, rob Mrs. Holdridge of sincerity. This did not prevent her from being very disagreeable: so many people are

that with entire sincerity. I could not denounce her, however much I disliked her, as a hypocrite. It was not necessary for her to be one in order to be almost repulsive in my sight. We have all known people who possess the courage of their opinions. She appeared to possess not only the courage, but the arrogance and presumption, of hers. The truth is, I fear, she had touched me in rather a sore spot when she had begun to assail me with the usual cudgel-flourish of bigoted ignorance.

As the season grew older, this lady became more and more unpopular. It began to be discovered that her "moral" views on most points took the form of most assiduous and unremitting scandals. There were several powerful dames in the world of fashion whom her virtue had appalled into a loyal friendship, and these she induced to adopt measures of strictness and punctilio which I am sure they would not have dreamed of but for her puritanic counsellings. There is no doubt that she maintained a kind of position by this course. She managed to make herself hated, but she also managed to make herself feared. I believe it is Balzac who somewhere says, "*Un pouvoir impunément bravé touche à sa ruine*;" and Mrs. Holdridge, who had now undoubtedly become a power, had never thus far been braved with impunity. She was instrumental in causing more than one young man to be actually dropped from the ordinary visiting-list. It is said that she employed a little

corps of detectives who reported to her the peccadilloes of their male friends; and a witty young merry-maker at length changed the mode of referring to her as the "pillar of virtue" by one night mentioning her as "the police headquarters."

To her own sex she was equally merciless. And yet it soon was apparent to me that her covert attacks were never made against any one, man or woman, whose place in life was high and assured. By this time I had nourished decided doubts of her sincerity. Besides, I had grown to be quite intimate with her lovable and almost infantile daughter. Poor Lilian was unquestionably persecuted, and stood in immense awe of her mother. Toward the latter part of January she had got to know my friend, Tom Abernethy, very well indeed, and I more than half suspected that the two young people were genuinely in love with one another.

Tom was in every way a desirable match for such a girl as Lilian Holdridge. He was doing fairly well in his business as a cotton-broker; he came of an excellent family; he was good-looking, cultivated, and of a rarely genial disposition; there was, in short, nothing matrimonially against him, and (although he was not what calculating ambition would call a great *parti*) there stood a good deal definitely in his favor.

But Mrs. Holdridge, just when his attentions became marked and pointed, chose to lay upon them her parental veto. I saw that Tom was miserable;

and the pain which it now cost Lilian to front the gayeties of her first season was not hidden from me, though she tried hard to let no one discern it.

"Tom," I said to my old classmate at Harvard one evening, while we sat in a corner of the club together, "you're gloomy as a sexton, and of course I know why." There is a certain abruptness, a sudden cleaving of the ceremonious ice, as it were, which, between such friends as Tom and I, serves better than the most careful and guarded approach. Tom turned and looked a hand-clasp at me with his mellow gray eyes. "You like the girl," I went on, with the large recklessness, now, of one who has made a successful *coup de phrase*, "and I'm nearly sure she likes you."

"She does, Mark," whispered Tom with an excited flutter in his throat that I had never observed there before.

"Ah! I suppose you have it from the best of all authorities," I said.

"Well, — yes."

"And the old lady refuses her consent?"

"Point-blank."

"Have you any idea why? Have any of her myrmidons seen you drinking before a bar, or playing billiards here after twelve?"

I had never known Tom's face so cloudy (and I have witnessed him during the horrors of examination day at college more than once) as when he made an inclination of the head toward a rather distant doorway, and answered:

“Here comes Mrs. Holdridge’s reason. What do you think of it?”

I understood in a flash. The Honorable Rodney Blantyre had just entered the room where we sat. He had been here about a month. He was the third or fourth son of the Earl of Dundalk, and he was understood to be the possessor of a large income, derived from some maternal branch of his ancient Irish family. He had come here to shoot buffalo in the Far West; but he had stopped in New York, never getting any farther. He was declared to have been greatly captivated by the young ladies of New York, and I have no doubt (with that passion for marrying into noble foreign families which casts so dismal a slur upon our republican name) the young ladies of New York had treated him much more cordially than those of England. He did not look as if he deserved to be treated well by any kind of young lady. He had a beardless, mindless, inane face, a very receding forehead, and a limp, shambling figure. I had once sat next him at a dinner-party, and recalled what he had said to me as the most utter stupidity. I have met so many manly, charming, and brilliant Irishmen in my life, that I now feel almost like apologizing to them for this record of Rodney Blantyre’s nationality.

Yes, the fiat of Mrs. Holdridge was quite explainable now. Lord Dundalk’s son had of late been paying rather conspicuous court to Miss Lilian. Affairs, as I soon learned from Tom, were even

more serious. He had asked the girl in marriage of her mother, after true foreign fashion.

But for once Lilian had made a firm stand. Her last interview with Tom had been a heart-breaking one. It was the old story, that is yet forever new. I thought it all over after Tom had made me his full confidence that night. I wondered if I could do anything. Perseus slew the Gorgon, but could I overthrow "the pillar of virtue"? I really loved Tom Abernethy, and my feelings toward Lilian were as tenderly respectful as any that I had ever borne for living woman.

"Go and have a talk with Mrs. Holdridge," I counselled Tom. "Show her that the course of conduct which she is now pursuing makes all her past piety and morality a sham and a falsehood. But show this with self-control, always remembering that, whatever *she* may be, *you* are a gentleman, born and bred."

Tom took my advice. . . . "It's no use," he said to me three or four days later. "I kept my temper, but she was hard as a rock. She regards her conduct from a purely moral stand-point. She says it is her duty, as a loving mother, to make Lilian's future as bright as possible. She presumed to tell me that she considered that booby a young man of stainless character and much intellectual promise."

I took Tom's arm, and we walked together a good many times up and down the large hall of the Metropolitan Club. After we had finished talking, Tom had made up his mind,

That night the Chamberlaynes gave a great ball in their fine new house near Central Park. It was a mansion full of lovely alcoves, and alluring, retired little nooks. I managed to get Lilian and Tom into one of these, and kept guard upon them. I made sure that they had a good hour together. I saw the Honorable Rodney Blantyre move about the drawing-rooms a good many times with Mrs. Holdridge, august and imposing, on his lank arm. It was a great crush, and they were looking for their lost Lilian. Once Mrs. Holdridge fixed her black eyes upon me. I bowed to her with a somewhat skilful blending of suavity and innocence. When the occasion was propitious, I rustled a blue satin curtain, and Tom and Lilian glided safely forth, the latter with a pink spot in each cheek, and eyes full of a dewy sparkle.

That was Wednesday night. On Friday morning Lilian left her home, and joined Tom and myself at young Mrs. Paul Madison's pretty basement house in Twenty-Third Street. We made a very quiet wedding-party, and a very expeditious one. The whole thing was over in less than an hour; we had driven to church, accomplished our dark, clandestine deed, and returned again by about one o'clock that morning.

And then, according to a pre-arranged plan, I started for Mrs. Holdridge's house. It had been decided that I should break the awful tidings. I was perfectly acquiescent. I don't think I ever performed any task with a more complete willingness.

Mrs. Holdridge was at home, and received me smilingly. "I come from your daughter," I said; and then, without pausing more than an instant, I told of Lilian's marriage to Tom.

She grew white as death while she heard me. I thought at first that she was going to swoon; but here I was disagreeably in error. The pallor meant merely rage. Her black eyes shot out lambent fire. She rose and regarded me for a minute or two in silence. And then she poured forth upon me a stream of wrathful invective, so monstrously vulgar and unladylike that it nearly took my breath away with sheer amazement.

I will not write a word that she said. There are women who dwell amid the worst surroundings of uneducated poverty who would have been ashamed to show such rabid anger as this pious lady showed then, or to speak some of the sentences that she then spoke.

"Scorch was right," I thought as I watched her and listened to her.

When she sank back into her seat, quivering and colorless, I felt it my turn to rise.

"You wanted to make your lovely daughter marry a titled fool," I said, "in place of the good, worthy fellow whom she has married. If I aided her and him, I am not at all ashamed of it. While all that you have just uttered is still fresh in my memory, I shall write it down, and take pains to acquaint with the contents of my manuscript some of the ladies whose children you once permitted to

enter your very select Bible-class. Good-afternoon, madam."

But I never did anything of the sort, and never intended to do it. Mrs. Holdridge stood in mortal terror of me for several weeks, as I could well see whenever we met; and finally, after having become reconciled with her happy daughter, she wrote me one day a letter full of contrite and even supplicatory fervor. I answered the letter briefly and coldly, but with a distinct assurance that my threat would never be kept.

She still has her believers, her supporters, her eulogists. One often sees her name on charitable committees—but always where the other names are those of ladies whom "everybody visits."

Scorch was balefully gleesome over the elopement. "Serves her right," he chuckled to me at the club. "She wanted to get over to London, you know, and swell it as a connection of Lord Dundalk."

"But all is not lost," I said. "She can still remain here and be a pillar of virtue."

"Yes, a brass one," said old Scorch in his throat.

XX.

THE YOUNG MAN WHO PUSHES HIS WAY.

“NEW YORK society is so monotonous!” said Miss Ella Carlisle to me one evening. “I do so long to meet somebody who is fresh and original!”

Ella Carlisle is just the girl who might express such a sentiment. The Carlisles are Pennsylvania people, who have got into New York society through their reputed millions in coal, and who have spent at least five good years abroad. Miss Ella is the veriest type of that young American girl who has been everywhere throughout Europe, and who has returned to America with added respect for her own country. She is pretty, with her black eyes, like jet beads, set in a low, broad forehead, over which the silky auburn hair droops in frizzled abundance. She has a very nasal voice, a very lovely figure, and a careless, daring, unconventional manner that is an acknowledged success. Everybody likes her, and everybody disapproves of her. She has made herself a sort of power through universal disapproval. She is considered very bad style, and yet nobody ever tells her that she is so — not even her most intimate feminine friends. Of course, from the stand-point of pure

money, she is a great match. But it is not solely this that makes her so decided a belle. I suppose it is because she is so internationally amusing. Nearly all that she says, in her sharp, light, brisk way, has a sort of patriotic sting in it. They tell me that she refused a young duke in England because he presumed to sneer at America. It would be just like her to do so. She is always waving her national flag as other women flirt their fans. I think her vulgar, and yet I like her. That is just what everybody else does, I find. They all think her vulgar, and yet they all like her.

“In England,” she now continued, “I met so many original people! I dare say I did n’t go into the swell set. It’s very hard to do that, you know, the English put on such awful airs. They are like their houses in Piccadilly and Pall Mall, — not a decoration showing; everything as plain as a pipe-stem, but an awful amount of quiet conceit and self-importance inside.”

“All this,” I answered quietly, “is *à propos* of my dislike for Mr. Rodney Clamp?”

“Of course it is!” exclaimed Miss Carlisle. “Rodney Clamp *is* original. He goes about New York without an English drawl, which is saying a good deal nowadays, and with a conspicuous amount of brains, which is saying still more.”

“But he is detested,” I objected, “and for an excellent reason. He makes capital out of society. He writes for newspapers all sorts of gossip concerning the people who admit him to their enter-

tainments. It is said that he lives in this way. No one knows how else he lives, if he does *not* live in this way."

Miss Carlisle tossed her head. The gesture reminded me of a mettlesome colt's. "Who cares how he lives? I'm sure *I* don't. Let him live as he pleases." Here the young lady fixed her eyes upon me with an impudent seriousness. "You are English — dreadfully English," she affirmed. "I don't like you for being so. I don't mean that I dislike you for being other things. That is why I *do* like you — because you *are* other things besides being English."

This remarkable piece of grammar interested while it perplexed me. Its inaccuracy, however, was not hard of comprehension. I hastened to reply:

"Only three months of my life, Miss Carlisle, were ever passed in England. But if it is English to feel disgusted with a person of shocking style, then I must plead guilty to your indictment."

My companion laughed. "Never mind how much of English life you've seen!" she declared. "You're full of British propriety. Now, I hate British propriety as much as I hate Britain itself. The idea of a country where you can't get ice-water! And no soda-water fountains! And then just think of their horrid little railway compartments, and their locomotives with silly, thin screams, instead of our splendid, noisy engines! They're so *sluggish* over there! They've got no

go — not a bit. And their hotels! They have n't *one* that can touch our Fifth Avenue, or Brunswick, or Brevoort! But, as I said, their best people are all so tame and un-go-aheadative!"

"Did you say that?" I asked. I felt that she had never used the last word until now, for its amazing novelty would surely have caused me to remember it.

However, this bitter outburst had no concern with Mr. Rodney Clamp. And it is of Mr. Rodney Clamp that I now propose to make disclosures. I had already met the young gentleman. He was not more than five and twenty years old. He had a composed, sedate face, a slim fringe of flaxen mustache, a somewhat dull gray eye, and a neat, compact figure. He was thoroughly commonplace in appearance. You would never have given him a second thought if you had met him in a throng. And yet, the moment you heard him speak, you had a sense of aggression, of assertiveness, of impudence. I constantly encountered him, and constantly shunned him. But shunning him was of no avail. Whom he knew he cultivated, solicited, and buttonholed. There was no escaping him. He held you with his lazy and opaque eye, as the Ancient Mariner used to do with his glittering one. He somehow had the sinister art of paralyzing my desires to treat him rudely. Just when I was on the point of giving him a stern rebuff, he would say something so amazingly self-confident and audacious that I forgot indignation in sheer surprise.

There was no doubt that Mr. Clamp pushed his way everywhere. It was necessary for him to push stoutly, too, since he usually met the solid resistance of disapproval and dislike. But the steadiness with which he pushed was phenomenal. It never relaxed or wavered. It was like the resolute motion of a heavy barge through a creek full of obstructive logs.

I have few hatreds, and not many aversions; but it is safe to say that I execrated Mr. Rodney Clamp. His connection with the "society column" of the newspapers had always struck me as specially odious. I considered him as the worst type of the American adventurer; he had not even the saving grace of suavity. A little plausible adroitness might have made him far more endurable. As it was, he went to work rough-handed and dogged. He seemed to mutter between set teeth, "I *will* get myself received;" and he unquestionably succeeded. His unpopularity was something pitiable; but he bore himself as though quite unconscious of it. I suspected that he secretly enjoyed it as a grim and solemn joke.

"Pretty mixed here to-night, Manhattan, is n't it?" he said to me a few evenings after my conversation with the Europe-hating Miss Carlisle regarding him. We were both guests at a large ball given by a certain family whose name there is no need of recalling. I suppose that the scathing phrase of "new people" applied pertinently enough to our entertainers. I had not given the

matter of their recent social origin a thought myself; I had come there to meet two or three good friends of the other sex. I did not care whether the ball was mixed or not; and I did not at all relish the idea of Mr. Clamp informing me so.

“I am not in the habit,” I now replied off-handedly, “of saying or thinking hard things about my hosts and hostesses.”

“That’s a pretty good snub,” said my assailant in his slow, torpid way. He then laughed, and it was always, when he laughed, as though this sound were made without the slightest real mirth; the clatter of peas in a tin measure would have had quite as much human significance. “I say!” he went on imperturbably, “won’t you introduce me to Miss Westchester? I’d be very much obliged if you would.”

I felt nonplussed in spite of myself. Miss Westchester was a reigning belle; she usually chose her acquaintances with a good deal of saucy arrogance; she was permitted all sorts of caprices because of her beauty and personal fascination. I felt sure that she would not desire to know Mr. Clamp, and that after I had obtained her sanction of the introduction she would regard me as having inflicted upon her an undeserved annoyance. But I introduced Mr. Clamp, nevertheless. I felt that he was gaining his point in a coldly reckless way; that he was using me; that he was giving me the choice between a definite insolence to him and a courteous concession. I knew perfectly well that

he would not much have minded my being rude, and that he reckoned, so to speak, upon my aversion toward any rudeness. Just so far as my wish to behave like a gentleman would go, he was stolidly willing to employ and profit by it. My principles and theories were so many rungs of a ladder to him. As long as the ladder held out, he would climb it, determinedly and nimbly. If I had considered him in any sense a good fellow, if I had not thought him a person whose blood was ichor and whose views and tenets were wholly coarse and ignoble, I should have looked on his request as one to be granted with the best good will.

"Your friend has won a victory over me," I said a little later to Miss Carlisle, who chanced to be among the assembled company. And when I had explained myself, Miss Carlisle gave her pretty head a decisive toss, and exclaimed:

"Why on earth should he *not* ask you to present him to Miss Westchester?"

"Oh, for no reason on earth," I conceded. "True, I scarcely know him. However, it makes no difference. If you do not choose to understand, you will not, I suppose."

"Understand!" echoed Miss Carlisle. "I understand excellently. And yet you maintain that you are not cut after an English pattern."

"Oh, come!" I said. "Leave poor England alone. You can't, though, I am afraid. You are always making occasions to fling a slur at her. If one should talk of the weather in America to you,

it would be an excuse for reviling the London fogs."

Miss Carlisle made a grimace. "The London fogs!" she exclaimed. "Ugh! how loathsome they are! I hope you don't compare Mr. Clamp to one!"

"Well," I laughed, "the comparison is tempting. He seems desirous of penetrating everywhere."

My harmless bit of repartee was quite ignored. Miss Carlisle had found an opportunity of reviling England, and that was enough to make her forget even Mr. Rodney Clamp. I listened as politely as I could to the tirade that now left her charming, rose-tinted lips. "They presume to compare their Hyde Park with *our* Central Park!" she excitedly shrilled, among other explosive sentences. "It is so nonsensical! A flat piece of stupid country contrasted with a beautiful rolling landscape! And their horrid, grim houses of Parliament too, — what *are* they beside our magnificent marble Capitol at Washington? And their Thames beside our Hudson! — a muddy little stream put on an equality with a glorious, noble river!"

It was amusing enough to hear the fervid discourse of this impassioned patriot. She was interesting as the extreme reverse type of the Anglo-maniac; she once more represented the sharpest possible re-action against that worship of English ideas which has so often been charged against our people. But her vehemence did not at all concern Mr. Rodney Clamp, whom I had begun to regard

as a purely American institution, not in any way to be dealt with from an international stand-point.

The next encounter between Mr. Clamp and myself took place in Fifth Avenue one afternoon, just as I was making my way toward the Metropolitan Club. He joined me, saluted me in his dull, determined way, and, before I knew it, had asked me to propose him as a member of the club itself.

"I can get Frank Hackensack to second me, I'm nearly sure," he pitilessly proceeded. "I'd like to be in there, and I don't know any one with more influence than you've got to give me the right start. Come, now, what do you say?"

What *could* I say? There is no exaggeration in stating that this speech caused me to tingle with dislike. I fixed my eyes upon Mr. Clamp's sedate, neutral face. I hated what I had to answer, and I hated him still more for having forced me to answer it.

"The simple truth is," I said, "that you have made enemies on the governing committee of the Metropolitan. Or, if you have done nothing to make them, Mr. Clamp, you are believed to have done a good deal."

"What do you mean?" he asked in his hard, smooth, repressed way, pausing, and thus compelling me to pause as well.

I spoke now with what was perhaps a pardonable impatience. "I mean," was my somewhat sharp reply, "that you are credited with the author-

ship of certain very bitter personal comments upon more than one of these gentlemen, in the so-called social columns of a particular New York journal."

His dull eyes avoided mine as I finished, but he laughed his chilly, sombre laugh. "Oh!" he said, "if you feel that way about it, I won't trouble you. Good-afternoon."

I saw him talking with Miss Carlisle at the Effinghams' party that same evening. As I passed them both, I felt sure, from the way his look followed me, that I was the subject of their converse. A little later, when he had taken his leave of Miss Carlisle, I joined her.

"I suppose your friend, Mr. Clamp," I said, "has been telling you that I treated him badly this afternoon."

"Do you say that from a guilty conscience?" she asked with a quick, challenging little frown.

"Not at all," I answered. "You and Clamp seem to be so *liés*, however, that I fancied he had confided to you that he forced me into giving him a rebuff."

"Well, he *did* say something of the matter," assented Miss Carlisle. "You accused him of writing personalities in the newspapers. But, good gracious! what if he does? Men do it in England, and yet belong to the good London clubs, go to lots of swell houses, hold their own nearly everywhere."

"It is always poor England with you," I mur-

mured, smiling. "You seem to live in a perpetual atmosphere of transatlantic comparisons. I am sure I should think the persons to whom you refer no less objectionable for being English."

"Oh, not a bit of it!" asseverated Miss Carlisle. "If poor Mr. Clamp had come over here from London, and said 'I farney' for 'I guess,' and turned up his nose immensely at America, you would" —

But I was mercifully saved from listening further to this incorrigible partisan; for just then two gentlemen approached us, and, while they were greeting my companion, I seized the chance of discreetly if not valorously slipping away.

A few days later I happened to skim over the columns of a well-known New York newspaper. Under the heading of "society news," I read an almost virulent paragraph concerning myself. It called me a snob, a prig, an egotist, and a person who had aims to become a member of the governing committee of the Metropolitan Club, which would by no means encourage any such aspirations on the part of this "conceited young Knickerbocker."

I immediately surmised the authorship of the distressing lampoon; and I was very angry. I at once jumped into a cab, and drove to the editorial office of the newspaper which had printed the objectionable lines. The editor-in-chief received me, and after an interview of a good hour I succeeded in getting at the positive truth. Mr. Rod-

ney Clamp had wreaked his vulgar vengeance, just as I had supposed.

That night I led the german at an entertainment given by a relative of mine, young Mrs. Matchwell. She had been Elsie Manhattan, and she had married John Matchwell, an Englishman in a good shipping-house here, and one of the best and kindest fellows I know. Elsie, my third or fourth cousin, is the most amiable and genial of young matrons. I don't think there is any horrid imposition that you could not put upon her with impunity. I soon saw that Mr. Clamp was present among the guests, and I made bold to inquire of my meek, sweet kinswoman why she had asked him.

Elsie shook her flaxen head, and told me that she had not consciously asked him. "You say that his name is Clamp?" she went on. "No, Mark, I am quite sure that nobody sent in any request for an invitation to a person of that name. A number of invitations were desired of me, as is usually the case. The gentleman came in with Miss Carlisle. I think she *must* have brought him *without* an invitation."

"Really?" I muttered under my mustache.

I sought Miss Carlisle quite promptly. "Can it be possible," I said, "that you have brought Mr. Clamp here without an invitation?"

She gave a defiant little shrug of the shoulders, but her face almost crimsoned as she did so.

"He—he *came* with me," she began to stammer. "I—I did not imagine that I would be held to

account for bringing him. In your beloved England" —

I shot in a quiet interruption here. "England is *not* especially beloved of me," I said, "though very far from hated. And if you mean to tell me that what you have done in the case of Mr. Clamp is done by English people of good standing, then I must assure you of your mistake — of your very great mistake. As regards holding you to account, I have no intention of doing so. That could be only a matter for our host and hostess."

I presently glided on, thanking my good stars that I had committed no discourtesy in word or tone; for my anger was excessive, not to say desperate.

The abominable "push" — I almost shame to call it "the American push" — of this offensive Clamp had risen before me in all its complete and hideous crudity. I felt spurred by a desire to humiliate and punish him. He deserved no mercy, and I meant to give him none.

A little later I saw him. The rooms were by no means crowded, and he was crossing one of them as I approached him. He drew backward as he perceived me, but I was soon face to face with him. I at once addressed him without an instant of hesitation.

"You have no right, sir, to be here," I said in curt undertone.

He grew several shades paler. But a sullen, spiteful look swiftly answered my own. "*You*

have no right to tell me so," he muttered, equally low of voice.

"Oh, yes, I have!" was my reply. "Mrs. Matchwell is my relation, and has just informed me that you came here without a card. Mr. Matchwell is my friend, and will indorse whatever measures I may take. What I desire is simply explained. It is that you go up stairs, get your hat and coat, and leave this house without the least delay."

"For — for God's sake, don't send me away like that!" he faltered. His demeanor had suddenly become abject. I saw the sweat glisten on his forehead. He glanced uneasily from side to side, as if in mortal dread of observation. He looked like a hunted thing at bay. "I — I am engaged for the german," he went on. "It — it will ruin me if you — let people know. And, after all, what's the odds? I suppose you're mad that I wrote that paragraph in 'The Asteroid.' Well, *I* was mad at *you*, or I would n't have written it. You — you've got me in your power. But you're far ahead of me, — you're so *much* ahead of me that you — you should n't stoop to such small game as I am! I — I've got to push my way. Leave me alone this time — only this once — and I — I'll promise I'll never repeat the offence again. I'll — I'll never mention your name in print as long as I live. As I said, I've got to push my way. I — I give in that I've done wrong. You've got me where the hair's short, and I give in. Do let me have a last chance! *You've* never had to push

your way. You don't know what it is to want all this sort of thing and have to struggle for it. You were born to it, and I was n't. Those newspaper articles are nearly all I have to live by. I grant I had a grudge against you, but still it's just that sort of work that the editor of 'The Asteroid' likes and wants. So, you see, I had a double temptation. But I promise you—yes, I promise you upon my word of honor—that I will never"—

I turned on my heel. I did not care to hear what Mr. Rodney Clamp (the young man who "pushed his way") had to tell me about his "word of honor." I felt shocked, disgusted, sickened. And yet his miserable appeal had roused my pity. I suppose it is absurd to mention pity in connection with him, but I somehow could not help feeling it. I thought of what hereditary and circumstantial forces had gone to the making of this human nuisance, who "pushed his way."

He never troubled me again; but he troubled others. And when at last he came to public grief, and fiery young Jack Nassau horsewhipped him at the entrance of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and when everybody (even including his old supporter, Miss Carlisle) had a contemptuous word for him, I still retained my compassionate feeling. Indeed, I continually realized and insisted that the times in which we live are mainly responsible for such a malign and darksome development as Mr. Clamp, the young man who "pushes his way."

XXI.

THE LADY WHO REFORMED.

I USED to say, when I first pecked the shell of my hobbledehoyhood and went out into gay New York society, that Julia Clymer was the nicest girl in the whole world. This conviction remained an article of faith with me for several years. You might exhaust a copious list of adjectives in searching for that which better expressed Miss Julia's qualities than the plain and homely term of "nice." Of course, her orbit was one of frivolity; but then, she appeared to make frivolity sensible. She was garrulous and a little loud-voiced, as nearly all American girls, when clever, are apt to be. She moved and walked with a restlessness that implied the nervous temperament. She was exceedingly blond, and had eyes that were like two great shining amethysts in their lucid and lovely color. But I should not have called her pretty. Her chin was a little too sharp for that, and her cheek-bones rose a trifle too high. Her arms were of awkward outline, and strongly inclined to redness. She was forever assailing them, those poor arms, with a pathetic kind of satire. She would say to you, perchance, while you stood

beside her some evening at ball or party, "Do you think my arms *very* dreadful to-night?" And when you responded with the most eager and chivalrous of negatives, she would look at you with a sceptical toss of the head, and perhaps exclaim, "No nonsense, now! You know very well that my unfortunate arms *are* a horror." But she had an exquisite foot, slender, arched at the instep, and just small enough to harmonize with her height and figure. And this foot, with a most elastic and graceful tread, could glide over ball-room floors in tireless activity. Miss Clymer was passionately fond of dancing, and she danced with wondrous elegance, buoyancy, and skill.

But this gift did not explain her popularity. I do not know if any particular gift could be said to explain it. Perhaps the secret lay in her extreme worldliness having made her, after all, so little of a real *mondaine*. She looked at you trustfully with her amethyst eyes; she made you think how insincere other women were beside herself; she impressed you as having a warm, large, sympathetic heart, and a plenteous fund of common sense. It is true that her conversation was largely made up of sheer, unadulterated gossip; but then she gossiped, somehow, without the touches of spleen, the *mauvais langage*, that so many other women employ unconsciously. She now and then gave me flashes of intellect too; she made me certain that she was capable of insight, reflection, mature judgment. I sometimes

had the idea that she was a girl who did everything that she attempted thoroughly, and that in playing the *rôle* of a fashionable idler she acquitted herself to perfection within its narrow limits through an instinct that whatever was worth doing at all was worth doing well. It struck me, at such times, that she could have done better and higher things with an equal success.

She had no coquetries, no sly arts, no covert methods of fascination. The beam of her gaze was a direct one; she possessed an almost provoking candor, simplicity, innocence. She made open avowal of her love for society. The most monotonous male bore was sure of her courtesy. She had her marked preferences, but she contrived never to let these wound the unpreferred. I should not use that term "contrived," for she contrived nothing. All was frank, spontaneous, voluntary with her. As a result, the most vicious envier, the most malign scoffer, had for her no weapon in his armory of spleens. Her smile was magical: it blunted all the poniards of rancor.

New York — that city which is the most careful of all others in the world to ask your right to be called aristocratic, because, of all very large cities, it probably has the least right itself to think about aristocracy at all — New York, I say, forgot to make an inquiry concerning the "position" of Julia Clymer. For myself, I forgot to ask because everybody else forgot. Possibly, if I had made investigations, I might have hit upon a Poughkeep-

sie, an Amsterdam, or a Van Tassal, as one of her near relatives. But I am sure that such illustrious kindred could have had nothing whatever to do with her bright and genial supremacy. She was a belle by a very sweet personal and presumptive right. She went everywhere; she knew everybody. The careful dinner-givers constantly numbered her among their chosen guests; the proudest feminine leaders liked to have her seated beside them in their opera-boxes. Her superiority of place was astonishing, because she made no effort to secure it. Her stamp of selection, of ultra-fineness, of social rarity and importance, were still more astonishing, for the reason that there were no half-shunned, half-discountenanced people who could lay one pang of hurt self-love to her account.

“I think Julia Clymer has mastered the secret of how a woman can triumph socially,” I once told myself in a ruminative mood. “I don’t know how she *has* mastered it, but the result is certain. I don’t believe that she herself knows either. I fancy it is more than half just there,—that she herself does not know either.”

While I was abroad she married, and when I returned I heard of this marriage. It had been rather sudden. I asked people about it. The conservatives lifted their brows and shrugged their shoulders. The liberals (alas! I regret to say, much fewer of number in New York society) answered me with a few respectful facts. I soon gathered the truth. Miss Clymer had married

“out of her set.” She was living with her husband at Yonkers; he had a small estate there. Her wedding had been quiet; she had sent many cards, but had asked few guests. Her husband was a lawyer, and had written a work on political economy several years ago. He was stated to be rather plain of appearance; it was hard to find any one who really knew him. His name was Kingdon.

Another good year passed before I met Mrs. Kingdon, *née* Clymer. One evening, at a well-known New York theatre, I chanced to occupy an orchestra chair during the performance of a certain play which had been damned by current criticism, and which a very good and dear friend of mine had written. I wanted to like the play, and perhaps for this reason I did like the first two acts of it much better than I would otherwise have done. As the curtain fell for the second time, a gentleman just in front of me spoke to a neighbor with voice unduly and perhaps unwittingly raised. The gentleman had what we call a Bohemian air; I have scarcely seen a more crumpled shirt-bosom or a more murderously crimson necktie.

“What rubbish this piece is!” said the gentleman to his companion. “I always knew that F—— had not a ray of dramatic talent. Why could he not content himself with writing bad verses and worse novels? But, no; F—— stops at nothing. His ambition is Napoleonic, and his ability is Tupperian. Don’t let us wait for another act of buncombe.”

It was on my lips to declare, "By all means, *do not!*" for I have a deep and sound fund of loyalty to my friends; and F——'s placid scorn of his critics had long ago roused my admiration, while it tempted my championship. I repressed the hostile impulse, however, and turned with an exasperated sigh to the person next me. It was a lady, and she, too, had evidently caught the acrid outburst just in front of her. A moment later I heard her say to some one sitting on her right:

"How rare a virtue justice is! Do you remember, Wallace, how delightfully clever I thought Mr. F——'s last novel?"

In another instant I had recognized Julia Clymer. I am afraid that my glad surprise caused me speedily to forget all defensive wrath concerning my poor friend, F——. She, in turn, was apparently well pleased to discover that I was really I. The critical gentleman with the fiery neck-gear must have had vengeance visited upon him by our many mutual sentences during the continuance of F——'s damned play. I saw him fidget and look round towards us once or twice; but, if he had presumed to show any stouter annoyance, I should doubtless have asked him, with sarcastic but polite impudence, why he remained here to be doubly bored.

Mrs. Kingdon was stopping in New York for a few weeks. She and her husband had temporarily deserted their Yonkers home for winter quarters in town. Would I not come and see them at their

little house in Thirty-Seventh Street? We would have so many things to talk about! I must promise.

Of course I did promise. It was very pleasant to resume my old acquaintance with the blithe, unique Julia Clymer. Meanwhile she had presented me to her husband. I was not prepossessed by Mr. Kingdon. His smooth, long, tranquil face suggested to me a vast emotionless gravity, and nothing more. Later on he impressed me less as a man than as a kind of incarnate human silence. I have nothing further to write regarding him personally. He may have been a very noteworthy mental force, and I am inclined to believe that he was. But I saw him only through his effects. I saw what he had done to the woman whom he had married. Like steam, electricity, or any natural power which we gauge solely by its results, I learned to feel for him a solid, wholesome respect.

The change from Julia Clymer to Mrs. Kingdon simply astounded me. I shall never forget the afternoon that I dropped into her pretty drawing-room to drink tea with her. She was outwardly just the same. She laughed, smiled, spoke, walked, with the same characteristic, individual charm; but every touch of the old frivolity had fled from her. There were several ladies present. I had never seen any of them before; they were all elderly ladies, and they had by no means a fashionable appearance. I sat amazed when I heard Mrs. Kingdon say to one of them:

“What you told me just now, Mrs. Rowth, — a moment before Mr. Manhattan entered, — I cannot grant that I entirely indorse. The strongly ethical and humane element in George Eliot’s writings appears to me sufficient in itself. If the pietistic motive be lacking from it, the religious one is not. The brilliant Huxley somewhere says — I forget just where — that the clergy are now divided into three sections, — an immense body who are ignorant and speak out; a small proportion who know and are silent; and a minute minority who know and speak according to their knowledge. Though not of the clergy, I think George Eliot knows and speaks according to her knowledge; but she puts no restraint upon grand moral *feeling*. Her text is abstract righteousness, and it does not need the authority of any dead prophet or preacher.”

Not long afterward she said to another of the ladies:

“Yes, my instincts are all truly republican. But I am always averse to the least violence in the way of forcing human development. Comte has expressed his aversion to this tampering with the slow amelioration of humanity by direct progressive law. Russia only rivets her bonds closer for a century each time she massacres a Czar. Herbert Spencer is of the same opinion, you remember, he drew so much from Comte. For my part, I consider” —

It is my impression that just at this point I be-

gan to feel a slight yet indistinct humming in the ears. Was the voice that I now heard dealing with George Eliot and abstract righteousness, and the folly of forcing human development, and the indebtedness of Herbert Spencer to Comte — was it truly the same voice that I had heard, not so very long ago, assure me that a Blue Room party at Delmonico's was a good deal pleasanter than one of those big balls in the grand salon, and that Amy Van Horn had decided positively to announce her engagement next week to Tom East-river, and that the latest dainty commands from Paris were that ladies would wear heels a quarter of an inch higher than ever before?

Could I be dreaming it all, or was this radical change a clear, tangible fact?

A little later all the ladies had left us. The short February day had begun to darken. I sat alone with Julia Clymer Kingdon in the pleasant fire-lit drawing-room. I had asked her certain questions; she had answered me with her old fresh and sweet laugh; she had spoken of herself, of her marriage, of her husband, of the change that a comparatively brief time had made. It is useless to add that I had listened with keen attention. And I was listening still as she said:

“Oh, yes! Mr. Manhattan, my dear Wallace woke me up. Those giddy, silly days seem as if I had lived them in another star. What I do, I always do thoroughly. You used to say that of me. You remember?” (Ah, how like the *other* Julia

she was, as she put her head a little sideways, and murmured, "You remember?") "You always seemed different from the rest of the men I met. That is why I asked you to come and drink tea with me to-day. Well, as I did everything that I did thoroughly then, so, when I reformed, I reformed thoroughly. I'm not a bit of a blue-stocking; I don't pose a particle; I detest all intellectual shams and attitudes. But I have an immense contempt for the way American women let their brains go to waste. I think it horrible that brains should be out of fashion in American society. I am afraid that I think American society horrible too. I knew it pretty thoroughly, you recollect. Boston, Washington, Philadelphia, — I have seen them all, besides New York. And I shudder when I recall *what I saw*. I am so much happier now than I was then. I was always secretly troubled before. I could not explain the unrest; it was like an inward fever. I am calm now. I have found the intellectual life. I" —

She suddenly ceased. A hand-organ outside had paused just before the window near which we sat. It was playing — and not absolutely badly — one of Strauss's waltzes, — a waltz that we had often danced to, she and I, in past pleasant evenings together.

My friend burst into her sweetest and gayest laugh. Our eyes met. We both rose simultaneously. I put my arm about her waist, and we took several turns together, keeping time to the

street music outside. Still laughing, she presently disengaged herself from my clasp, and sank into an arm-chair.

“Well?” she exclaimed; “is my reformation as perfect as you supposed?”

“It is more attractive,” I replied, “because it is a little *imperfect*. I see that you are still not wholly *dévoté*. A lively spark of the original Eve remains.”

“I told you that I did not pose or attitudinize,” she said. “You will find me quite sincere and natural; though, after we have met several times more, you will confess the change in me to be very great.”

I took her hand, and bent over it with expansive gallantry.

“No change,” I murmured, “could transform you to anything different from the most charming woman of your time.”

XXII.

THE DESTROYER OF FIRESIDES.

THERE is no greater proof, I think, that a man who has known New York well in its nocturnal aspects at length begins to find himself growing old, than when he feels memorial and retrospective sensations about the "Fourteenth Street Delmonico's." That haunt of mirth, relaxation, and luxury is no more. *Ilium fuit*. It is true, we can meet with Delmonico *redivivus* on the corner of Twenty-Sixth Street and Fifth Avenue. But to us whose side-locks are getting quite maturely blanched, whose foreheads are in some cases rather beamingly denuded, the new resort is very far from being the old one. I fancy, liberally speaking, that we somewhat maunder and prattle when we praise the former restaurant so greatly to the discredit of the present. But we can't help it; we are getting old; the afternoon shadows are stealing upon us; and it is only fair that we should be let to have our fling at what is no longer clad with the rosy haze of youth, just as once, with our college diplomas yet freshly framed and our digestions capable of a Welsh rare-bit at midnight, we had our fling at the elderly papas and uncles who

praised to us the cakes and ale of the past. Still, I think that we can now make a good case. The *café* in Fourteenth Street was more spacious and commodious; the dining-room was more modest and cosey; the upper ball-rooms were more conveniently disposed for a festal crush, and more agreeably suited for a small entertainment. Of course, I admit that the old edifice represented a sort of fashionable emergence, for New York, from its long previous provincialism. And how New York did emerge there! What a sequence of glittering balls! What a glory of magnificent banquets! The balls are all danced away forever, and the banquets forever eaten and gone. Many of their guests are dust. The old story of all great cities repeats itself with ours. A huge carpet-store flaunts its wares on the site of that well-remembered and most sumptuous of inns. Already our children (so aggressively grown up) point to it as they pass, and tell each other that "Delmonico's used to be *there*." I think we ought to have the place called Delmonico Square. We don't pay this tribute very often to our poets or famous writers; perhaps there is a better reason (as the cynic might protest) why we should pay it to the cook who has so successfully set so many national palates tingling. Who was the French wit who said that one of the shortest ways to the human heart was through the human stomach? I confess I don't recall; I am not enough of a devout *gourmet*.

It was in the *café* of the Fourteenth Street Delmonico's that I first met Mr. Archibald Joyce. He was eating a mutton-chop, cooked in some sort of fragrant white sauce, with a little curl-paper about its bone, and he was talking to me about my father, whom he had greatly admired. That is the way his image dawns upon me through the mists of memory. Somehow I had drifted into a chair near him; I believe my dead cousin, Bleeker Manhattan, had presented me to him, and then hurried away; and I, if it be not an error, was waiting for some male friend of one or two and twenty to join me and go to some theatre. But meanwhile Mr. Joyce was very civil while he ate his mutton-chop, and washed it down with red wine. He must then have been about five and thirty,—an immense age to my adolescent thinking of those days. He struck me then, as he always did afterward, and as I suppose he had always struck everybody else, to be of extremely unprepossessing person. His figure was lank and ungainly, though very slim. His nose was a severe beak, and under it grew a scant black mustache, while above it gleamed small slaty-tinted eyes. He was dressed in evening garb, and with great care. You would never mistake him (how one is perpetually dropping into that worn rut of phrase) for anything except a gentleman. I had heard of him as a person of social note, I could not recollect just when or how, and in my rather self-important juniority I thought it a fine thing to be seen chatting with him. (There

was so much pleasure once in the triumph of being *seen* with this or that accredited nabob! If Carlyle had said that all *young* people are snobs, I think he might have come more closely to a universal truth.)

Archibald Joyce quite won me that evening, and on leaving him I could scarcely tell why. His appearance was so much against him that I never thought of him for days afterward without sharply re-invoking it. On the other hand, he had said nothing at all clever; but he had in a way drawn me out. He had made me fancy that I myself was clever; that I could get along with tried men of the world like himself, and be liked by them. He had taken an apparent keen interest in me. He had asked me questions, put in such a manner that I could answer them with a touch of humor or gayety that seemed both apt and fresh. He gave a slow, wise laugh at them, as if he thought them both apt and fresh, yet did not quite reveal to me what a good opinion I had made him form of my native wit. Later that evening I talked of him with my friend, Tom Gramercy, during the *entr'actes* of the theatre. Tom was of my own age, but his knowledge of New York society was something which I then thought marvellous. He had three elder sisters, all reigning fashionable matrons, besides having been reared from childhood in an atmosphere of active dinner-giving and party-going.

“Yes,” declared Tom Gramercy, “I’ve often

heard Kate and Maggie and Elvira speak of him. He's death on the women, you know."

"Good heavens!" I said, as yet unused to the vernacular of society. "You speak of him as if he were King Herod, or Thalaba the Destroyer."

"They *call* him 'the destroyer of firesides,'" giggled Tom. "What a funny name, is n't it? They say that he's brought more trouble between husbands and wives than any other man in the country. Nobody knows much about his origin. He seems to have come from nowhere. Nobody ever heard of his having a mother, father, or any relation whatever. He stands entirely alone by himself, as it were; and he stands very well, I can tell you."

"Is he rich?" I questioned.

"He is seemingly quite well off; it's not known just where his money comes from, as he is a complete *flaneur*. I don't mean that he makes a mystery of it; I dare say he'd be willing enough to tell, if he were asked. But nobody thinks to ask. He is taken quite as a matter of course. Apparently, too, he has no age, like Zanoni and Cagliostro. I believe that he once declared himself to be forty, and immediately about twenty-five people were found willing to swear that he was fifty-five. Some even asserted him to be sixty-five. But of course *that* is absurd. It's equally absurd to give him any age at all," continued Tom, who had a turn for saying odd, crisp things that had made him rather unpopular at college. "In the

beginning he was, you know. Year after year bachelors drop away, wearied from festivities, and give youngsters like ourselves, Mark, a chance. But Archibald Joyce has never dropped away. I suppose that off in remote primordial ages he had vast difficulty to get among us, and, once there, he intends to stay on indefinitely. Then there 's another reason," pursued my informant with his driest intonation: "he has such a good time going about."

"Why a better one than other men have?" I questioned.

"Oh, I mean destroying firesides, you know," said Tom.

I felt like breaking into a volley of laughter. "How ludicrous!" I exclaimed. "You can't mean it!"

"I do mean it."

"*He!*"

"He."

"But he 's as ugly as a gargoyle."

"I suppose if a gargoyle were made alive, and wanted to attract a woman, it would succeed after a few lessons from Archibald Joyce. Exactly what he *does* has not yet been discovered; but it is something dreadfully 'fetching,' I assure you." Here Tom Gramercy lowered his voice, looking about him among the orchestra-stalls which surrounded us. "Why, my dear Mark," he went on, a-brim with the gossip which his pleasure-loving, feather-weight family of modish idlers had poured

into him for years, "I know not less than four houses in New York which that man is forbidden to enter: if he did enter any of them, there 'd be a divorce or a separation. And I know at least six women in New York who have seriously compromised themselves by his attentions."

"Oh!" I murmured almost incredulously, "is New York ever like *that*?" I soon had reason to discover that New York, as regarded certain of its cliques, was very decidedly like that. But I was thinking then of my pure, sweet mother, with her high-bred air and her sound hatred of all social laxities. She had given me a different account of New York morals from what later experiences in certain directions supplied to me. But then there is a feminine chastity that throws a sort of white light on what it nears; and I think hers glowed with just that kindly beam.

Shortly after my conversation with Tom Gramercy on the subject of Mr. Archibald Joyce, the latter gentleman departed for Europe, where he remained for several years. I felt like a veteran of the ball-room when I again shook hands with him. I had aged, developed, improved, degenerated,—whatever you will,—to a great extent, in the seasons between our last meeting and now. But Mr. Joyce looked precisely the same as when I watched him eat his chop *en papillote*, and heard him tell me that my father was the best whist-player at the Metropolitan Club. His masterly ugliness had not abated one degree. His prepos-

terous nose still existed unchanged, and his dull, small eyes were opaque as ever. I still thought him one of the ugliest men I had ever seen.

I soon found out that he had accompanied home a certain Mrs. Gordon Adriance. Mrs. Adriance, as I learned, had been living for two or three years abroad. She had married her husband in some rather obscure German town, and had at length returned with Mr. Joyce as her persistent devotee. Her husband was an American, but an American whom no one in New York knew. Noses were turned up haughtily in Upper Ten-
dom; (how I hate to write the coarse, thread-bare slang!) and caste decided, in a body, not to know this obscure Mrs. Gordon Adriance.

But Archibald Joyce coolly and firmly introduced his new friend, and in a few weeks he had made her a belle. She was undoubtedly pretty. She had the sort of blond hair that could be lifted loosely over a head of such graceful outline that the dense, shining breadth gave its contour an added charm; and she always wore her hair thus arranged. Gossip rioted as to who Mrs. Gordon Adriance was. Discovery soon satisfied itself that she had been the daughter of a Sixth Avenue milliner. But this dire fact did not disturb the gay world half as much as one might have supposed. Archibald Joyce was seen with her in opera-boxes, in stalls of theatres, in the street, everywhere.

He gave her a certain *cachet*; he procured invitations for her; he made her a person of impor-

tance. She was not by any means a social success; she was too determinedly stupid. But she was notable, and had devotees, if not admirers.

Her husband went where she went, as a rule, and he was unquestionably vulgar and coarse. He had a squat figure, a little, unshapely nose, a pair of fiery red whiskers, an eye as dull as zinc. He did not seem at all fond of his wife, and, when I got to know him and talk with him, I soon became convinced that he cared more for the champagne and terrapin that he found at entertainments than for any other attraction. He was horrid; and I dare say that I showed him I thought so.

Meanwhile his wife continued a sort of novelty. I was civil to her, and perhaps my civility helped to preserve her popularity. At the same time I was sorry for her. I knew very well that Archibald Joyce's devotion meant either her ruin or her misery. He was perpetually at her side; he was like her shadow. I understood him now. I had found out just what sort of man he was. I felt a sincere hate for him, and I had a strong desire to tell him of this hate.

The indifference of Mrs. Adriance's husband rather increased my secret ire. The more I thought of just what a man Archibald Joyce was, and just what he was now doing, the more I felt my spleen swell.

I spoke of the matter to one or two intimate friends. They laughed in my face. "Archibald Joyce!" they said. "Why, my dear Manhattan,

how foolish you are! He's been known for years as just that sort of fellow. You surely won't set yourself up as a teacher of morals to a man like that! If you do, you'll find it dangerous work. Better let the whole thing alone. Be sensible, and don't say a word or do a thing."

But I did not choose to take such advice. If Gordon Adriance had been a real man, and not a common, worthless creature, I might have done nothing whatever. As it was, I took the chance to meet Archibald Joyce one evening in the Metropolitan Club. I joined him just as he was about ordering a cup of coffee, after dining.

"Won't you have something, Manhattan?" he said to me, seeing that I was close at his side.

"Thanks, no," I answered. I dropped into a seat immediately afterward. I fixed my eyes very deliberately and steadily upon his ugly face. "Don't you think you ought to be ashamed of yourself?" I said.

He started as I have hardly ever seen a man start before.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean that you are at your old tricks," I said very calmly. "How long ago did you get the name of the destroyer of firesides? A very picturesque name, Joyce, is n't it? I think you got it a good many years ago. Eh?"

He turned as white as the cigarette that he was rolling.

"You are insolent, sir," he said to me under his breath.

"Do you think so?" I answered.

"I do think so."

"As you please."

He rose. I remained seated. But my gaze did not leave his face. I saw that he was trembling.

"There are rules in this club, Mr. Manhattan," he said, "which protect a member from insolence."

"You are perfectly right," I replied. "I have not insulted you. If you think that I have done so, you have the right of appealing to the governing committee."

"I shall appeal to them," he returned, hoarse with anger.

"I don't think that you will," I said. I was still quite composed. "I don't think you will dare."

He met my look squarely. He tossed his cigarette away, and then sank on the lounge beside me. I had always thought him ugly, but I had never seen him so ugly as then, in his agitation, his disarray.

"For God's sake! Mark Manhattan," he said huskily, "what do you mean? What — what are you driving at?"

I felt very cruel. I don't know that I have ever had a more thoroughly heartless mood than just then.

"Destroyer of firesides," I said. I laughed as the words left my lips.

He scowled at me. He was trembling so that he could not conceal the tremor.

"Come, now," he stammered, "tell me what you're up to. You—you wish to insult me, do you, Mark? Why don't you have some witnesses, then? Why do you speak like this without anybody to hear you?"

"Do *you* want witnesses?" I asked.

"I want you to explain yourself."

"There is no necessity of that."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you should cease trying to destroy the reputation of a perfectly pure woman."

I heard him grind his teeth. He was so choked with rage that he could make no answer. I put my hand on his arm, and felt it recoil as I did so.

"You are a scamp, Joyce," I said very quietly. "You have been rather priding yourself on being a scamp for a good many years past. There are several men like you in New York society,—vampires, whom people somehow permit to exist here. You spoke of the governing committee of this club. Let me see you dare to speak of this matter before them. And never address a word to Mrs. Gordon Adriance again—never one word, remember. If you do, I will publicly cane you. I promise you that I will. Your reputation as the destroyer of fire-sides may be very well founded and secure, but I propose to interfere with its permanence."

I rose as I finished speaking. I had used a very low tone of voice. Archibald Joyce remained

seated, and looked up into my face with an expression that surprised me for its mildness. I had expected some sort of outburst; but none came, and I walked away.

Shortly afterward I left the club and went home. I did not sleep a wink that night. I told myself that I had behaved like a bully, that I had disgraced myself as a gentleman. Then came the re-action. I declared to myself that I had done right; that I had used the bludgeon where the bludgeon was needed; and that no one could really blame me, all circumstances of the case being considered.

I became so distressed with the whole affair, I decided so often that I had been a Quixotic fool, I fumed in secret so much, and had so many twinges of conscience, that more than once I was on the verge of going up to Archibald Joyce and begging his pardon.

Ought I to have done so?

If I had attempted it, I don't think he would have done anything but turn his back on me. When we meet now, his face is usually a thundercloud. I think I have made about as solid an enemy in that quarter as it would be possible to conceive of.

But he has never spoken to Mrs. Gordon Adriance since then. I know this from her own pretty lips. Is he afraid of my cane? Is he a coward as well as a destroyer of firesides? I think most destroyers of firesides *are* cowards.

XXIII.

A TYPICAL NEW YORK GIRL.

I HAVE been repeatedly asked by foreigners visiting this country whether caste and all its attendant snobberies exist here as they exist in other lands. I usually, on these occasions, pretend to meditate before answering. A reply always seems to gain in trustworthiness if not too glibly spoken. But there is no necessity for any meditation whatever. My response is really quite at the tip of my tongue.

"For the country at large," I say, "I should find it hard to speak. I know Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and all those important cities, but ill. My sojourn in each has been only for a brief while. But New York I know very well. I have reason to do so. And I believe it to be about as positively snobbish a city as the globe possesses."

But once I was asked whether the young ladies of New York were specially marked by this same defect.

"Yes," I replied, "much more, as a rule, than our married women. Youth is the imaginative period, and all ideas connected with caste appeal to the imagination. The patrician element in New

York society is to-day principally made up from the descendants of Dutch immigrants. There are very few cases in which these Dutch forefathers of our so-called leading families were people of the slightest note in their own country. The Amsterdams and the Van Schuylkills delude themselves otherwise, and, if the delusion were a harmless one, there would be no objection to their hugging it."

"And why is it not harmless?" asked my foreign friend, who was a most relentless questioner, and who entertained the secret project, I am sure, of writing a book about this country after he returned to his own.

"It is not a harmless delusion," I answered, "because these people, by assuming to represent an aristocracy of birth, strike an ironical blow at the very roots of democracy. How many hundreds of Europeans, in the year 1776, would have confidently prophesied for us an almost ideal society when a century had passed! And now a century has passed."

"That is not much for a nation."

"It is a great deal for ours. We were never born like other nations. We were in one sense a colony, in another a usurpation, and in a third an inheritance. We had no language to develop, no barbarism to civilize, no feudalism to break down. We have named thousands of our towns and a few of our great cities (as, for example, *New York*, *New Orleans*, *Boston*, etc.) after foreign places. Our one century should have been what five were

to ancient Rome. Politically our air was full of warnings; we had nothing to live down, and everything to live up to. Socially we had uncounted European blunders to admonish us and keep us on our guard. Yes, our century should have meant at least half a chiliad, as far as concerns actual progress. Above all things, pride of *birth* had no place in our great metropolitan centres. It is absurd, it is preposterous, it is self-contradictory and grossly inconsistent."

"But *is* it pride of birth?" asked my friend.

"Unquestionably. New York society is constantly called plutocratic. It is no more so to-day than the society of London or Berlin. Money feeds and stimulates its aristocratic energies,—that is all. And every year makes affairs worse. Every year it is a matter of greater value to have possessed a creditable grandfather. A man's or a woman's genealogical tree—the old souvenirs, the *vieux galons*, of a good descent—are constantly becoming more and more matrimonially salable. 'Salable' is a horrible word in this connection, I admit, but I can think of none less brutal and at the same time less expressive."

"This brings us to the original subject of our discussion," said my friend with a smile.

"Ah! you mean the young ladies," I answered, "the typical New York girls."

"Yes, of your"— And here he paused.

"Of our aristocracy," I said, finishing his sentence for him. "You foreigners can't concede us

one, and I don't blame you that you cannot. I wish that we were only unable to concede it to ourselves." I mused for a moment just here, and then continued: "The vision of a certain very typical New York girl, of precisely the class which you mean, rises before me at this moment; and a rather pretty story is connected with her. I say pretty story, because it has so picturesque and unexpected an ending."

"I should be charmed to hear it," said my friend, with a show of interest which I needed no vanity to detect as genuine.

"The heroine," I began, "was one of my innumerable female cousins. Her name, like mine, was Manhattan. She was the daughter of my father's eldest brother, a man who had received from *his* father the bulk of a really enormous fortune, made somewhat suddenly by the great rise of real estate in our city. This custom of giving the giant's share of a large heritage to the eldest son of a family is far more common with us than you probably suppose, and grows more general as Anglo-mania strikes deeper roots into our soil.

"Mr. Augustus Manhattan, my uncle, had lived for ten years in England and France when he at length returned to this country with a daughter aged nineteen and a son of about nine. Three years previously his wife, who had been a Miss Fairfax of Virginia, and a noted beauty, had died in Paris. Immediately upon his arrival here, my uncle re-opened his spacious mansion in the lower

part of Fifth Avenue, which had remained vacant during his absence. Cards were issued to all his old friends, and many more people besides. Georgine, his daughter, was about to make her *début* in the fashionable world. I expected to find her a thorough-paced foreigner in every respect; but, to my surprise, I found her nothing of the sort. She was just as American as if she had spent the last ten years in New York instead of Europe. She had met many Americans in Paris, and had principally associated with these during the two last years which she had spent exclusively in the great capital.

“‘You are a typical New York girl, Georgine,’ I remember saying to her after we had had several talks together. Those, I recall, were my precise words, and they rather pleased her, for she had (as you will afterward think singular) a great respect for her native city.

“‘That is what I should like to be, cousin Mark,’ she replied. ‘I belong here, you know, by birth and antecedents. I like to wear the mark of my nativity, so to speak. But why do you call me what you have just called me?’

“‘You ask so many questions,’ I said, ‘about who is who; you are so determined to have only such and such people at your house; you’ve such a prodigious horror of not being select.’

“‘Of course I have,’ returned Georgine primly and a little crisply. In the twinkling of an eye she could make herself haughty and even austere.

But her beauty (given her in all its rare bloom by the dead mother of whom she was an image) clad this mood in a most bewitching enticement. She was a veritable little tyrant, was Georgine; her father had spoiled her, and nearly every friend whom she had, indorsed his indulgence. She was the most enchanting creature to look at; she was like a swan; her neck and bust had curves to set a sculptor dreaming about them; her coloring was the lily's rather tinted than blended with the rose's; her gold-shaded chestnut hair fell about her delicate head with a splendid natural wave and a lovely abundance. She had almost created an enthusiasm at the one or two balls to which her father had thus far taken her.

“She was, without exception, the most absolute little snob it is possible to imagine. But you did not think of her as one; you paid her involuntary homage, as you would have paid it to some beautiful young princess. I shall never forget her at her first few balls of the opening season. She would enter the rooms, loaded with bouquets, gliding along in the most exquisitely graceful way, between her father and myself. She would not permit us to leave her for more than half an hour at a time. We were her royal guards, so to speak, the sentinels who defended her approaches. She would constantly murmur little questions in my ear. . . . ‘Who is that?’ she would ask; ‘I like his way of dancing; there is something about his smile that pleases me,’ and words to this effect.

She remembered all the names of people who had been prominent here in past days ; her recollection in this respect was extraordinary ; but, besides recollecting, she had studied and investigated 'lists.' Men besieged her hostesses for introductions to her, and she was a sovereign belle before she had been in her first public *salon* ten minutes. But though she never refused permission to have Mr. This or Mr. That presented, she would always make sure of accurately hearing the name of each aspirant, and sometimes, when she found herself unfamiliar with it, or when its bearer had already been known unfavorably to her, she would give little arch and audacious excuses which rendered such acquaintanceship for the time impossible. It was her desire to know intimately only the most prominent and notable men. She aimed at a tyrannical exclusiveness. She was always charming to those of her own sex whom she considered her equals in birth and position ; but, if she suspected them of the least inferiority, she would put into her smile an icy gleam, and into her air a merciless, indifferent languor.

"After a while her daring became intensified. She had chosen her court, so to speak, and established her reign. Her self-possession was now superb, and her occasional rudenesses were simply abominable. Those admirers whom she regarded with clemency were like vassals to her. It is no hyperbole to state that in the little realm where she ruled the wave of her hand or the toss of her

head was like the swaying of a sceptre. She was preposterously self-willed; she insisted upon having her way in everything; but she did it all with such a winsome originality, such a fascinating *chic*, that her courtiers obeyed rather gladly than otherwise.

“‘She has no manners, Mark,’ her father would say to me in his grave, reserved way. My uncle had sustained a deep sorrow in the loss of his wife, and he bore his days like a man who tries to carry a rather awkward burden with as much gentlemanly ease as he can assume. He was wondrously gentlemanly, without doubt; he looked as if he might have been a distinguished general, tall and gray and a good deal furrowed, but always imperturbably placid. ‘Her mother was not like Georgine. Your aunt Alma had a peculiar repose and dignity. I wish you could dissuade Georgine from showing her likes and dislikes in so glaring a fashion; it vexes and tries me very much, I assure you.’

“‘It vexed and tried me, also, but I found all argument and counsel wholly futile. My cousin usually paid me the compliment of listening to me for a brief while, and then her despotic interruptions assailed me.

“‘Mark, pray, what have I to do with your horrid theories?’ she would ask. ‘You make me think of my little brother’s tutor, Mr. Cobb. What a dreadful name, — Cobb! Mr. Cobb has theories too. I don’t propose to bore myself being

civil to men with whom I am not *d'accord*. I can't do it, and I will not — *voilà tout!* There are plenty of other girls whom these creatures can talk to. I have my preferences, my favorites. Of course I am snobbish. I desire to be. Some people are vulgar when they are snobbish; I could not be vulgar if I tried. And of course I am conceited; but in Heaven's name, if they think so, why do they not leave me alone? The other evening I heard an old dowager say as I passed her, "She has the face of an angel;" but a companion replied, "She stops there, however." Now, I have not the least ambition to be considered an angel; I was rather pleased by that bit of repartee. Nearly all the very good women have been dull. When I was abroad, I heard that the great Duke of Wellington was once asked if he had ever known fear. "Yes," he replied, "I am terribly afraid of Lady So-and-So. She once refused me two extra tickets to Almack's." I envy Lady So-and-So for being the subject of that delightful epigram. The secret of enjoying life, as I take it, is to make one's self rare. I wish that good society was a walled place with only one gate, and that I always carried the key in my pocket; I assure you that I should take excellent care of that key; I would never lend it to a soul, for fear of having a duplicate manufactured. You're a great believer in science, Mark. Well, I have a scientific explanation of what you are pleased to consider my snobbery. Poor dear mamma came from a family of Virginian planters.

They knew how to hold their heads high; I've inherited the tendency — that is all. And of course I prefer living out my real nature here rather than abroad. In Europe all sorts of American *canaille* are taken up. It is no honor to have a duchess smile on one there; she is sure to smile the next instant on some dreadful person from Kansas City, or East Jerusalem, O. Besides, society in London now is so frightfully mixed. When papa and I were on our way from Paris to Liverpool, in order to take the steamer home, we stopped a few days in London, and went to a ball at the Countess of Goutyjoint's great mansion, Portwine House. We met literary people there, and journalists, and artists. Such a rabble — it was perfectly *épatant*! We should set them a lesson over here. How I would like to do it! I only wish I had an unlimited opportunity!

“Heaven help us all if you had, my dear Georgine,” I said. “Pray, tell me, do you ever expect to marry?”

“She tossed her graceful head. Then she appeared to reflect for a moment. ‘I have seen two or three men here whom I *might* marry,’ she replied. ‘I shall always positively insist, however, on three attributes in my husband, — immense wealth, unexceptionable birth, and exquisite breeding.’

“You are modest in your demands, truly!”

“Not at all: I am rational — nothing more or less.”

“That summer my uncle and his two children went to live on a fine though somewhat retired estate overlooking the Hudson. Georgine’s winter gayeties had unsettled her health, and the doctor had forbidden her Newport, at which decision she grumbled not a little. Mr. Cobb, the tutor of little Augustus, went with the family. Perhaps earlier in my tale I should have described Mr. Cobb. He was a slim, pale, scholarly-looking man, neat in his dress, slow and grave in his movements, and given to expansive silences. He was devoted to the little heir of millions under his charge. Augustus was a rather stupid boy, as little heirs of millions, by some curious arrangement of fate, are often apt to be. My uncle valued Mr. Cobb’s services, and would not, as he once told me, have parted with him on any inducement. Up to the time of her departure for the country, the haughty Georgine had apparently noticed Mr. Cobb but in one way, — by visibly shuddering at his name.

“Soon after her arrival at Riverview, my cousin was taken seriously ill. Almost every day she was seized with a kind of nervous fainting-fit, and my uncle wrote me two or three letters, in which he expressed severe anxiety. Once he wrote words to this effect: ‘Our life here is very quiet, as of course you will surmise. We have no visitors, though remember there is always a room and a bed for you, whenever you choose to seek us. Mr. Cobb is a most interesting companion in this solitude. He not only has a mind stored with facts,

but much sly humor, and clear, sensible views on many subjects. What a reader and thinker the man has been! You would never suspect it if you were not intimately thrown with him. I am happy to say that Georgine has entirely conquered the old hostility she felt for him. She often permits him to read aloud to her; and yesterday (the weather being particularly cool and agreeable) she actually walked about the lawn with him, under the great pine-trees, leaning, for support, *upon his arm.*'

"When I reached Riverview, toward the latter portion of August, Georgine's health had greatly improved. She was now quite strong again, and only a trifle paler than when I had seen her in the heyday of her fashionable tyrannies and caprices. She welcomed me very heartily, and asked fewer questions than I had expected to receive about the people whom I had recently left in Newport. I soon became aware that a striking change had taken place in her treatment of Mr. Cobb. That gentleman was often present in our little group; and the more that his singularly reserved nature betrayed itself through the medium of conversation, the more I grew convinced of my uncle's correct estimate. I soon learned that his relatives were nearly all living in Kansas City, but that he, through peculiar force of circumstance, had found himself at an early age placed under the care of a Swiss uncle on his mother's side, a person living in Zürich. Here, at the University, he had been educated.

“‘You now call yourself no longer an invalid, I suppose,’ I said to Georgine a day or two after my coming, while we sat together on the breezy piazza of the big old-fashioned homestead.

“‘Oh, no!’ she replied, ‘I am in excellent health.’

“‘You will be all ready for next winter’s campaign?’

“She did not make me any answer. I watched her half-drooped face, and then I added:

“‘But you must not overdo things this time. You must be more careful than you were last winter.’

“She raised her head and looked at me. ‘I intend to be much more careful,’ she said. Something in her tones really startled me. I could hardly have told, just then, what induced me to say:

“‘You appear to have struck up quite a friendship for Mr. Cobb.’

“She colored vividly. For the first time in my experience of her, I saw that she was embarrassed. ‘Yes,’ she presently returned, ‘Mr. Cobb and I are excellent friends.’

“‘How monstrously funny!’ I observed.

“‘What do you mean?’ she asked sharply enough. Her embarrassment was taking the easy refuge of annoyance. ‘How is it so funny, if you please?’

“‘Why, your noticing him at all. He is so radically different from your ideal.’

“‘I never told you I had an ideal!’ she exclaimed.

“I quietly quoted her own words, uttered not so many weeks before ‘I shall insist, always positively insist, on three attributes,—immense wealth, unexceptionable birth, and exquisite breeding.’

“There was a pause again, and I heard the sound of her unseen foot as it nervously tapped the piazza. ‘Is n’t it true,’ I said at length, ‘that these were to be the attributes of your future husband? Or can I be mistaken?’

“She rose suddenly, and flashed a glance at me full of unutterable things. Then she burst forth, ‘Oh, how irritating you can be, Mark, when you choose!’ and abruptly darted into the house.

“This was my first inkling of the real truth. But the rest came speedily. Georgine had fallen in love with Mr. Cobb, her brother’s tutor, and Mr. Cobb warmly reciprocated the attachment. I think my uncle was a little stunned when the inevitable news broke on him; I am sure *I* was considerably more than stunned. If tidings from over sea had reached me that Queen Victoria was going to let the Princess Beatrice marry a Wall Street broker, I don’t think I could have been more astounded.

“My uncle demurred a little, and then gave his full consent. Mr. Cobb had nothing but his salary; Georgine would probably have a million, at the least. The whole affair set society agog for several weeks. It seemed so incredible that a young woman with my cousin’s ultra-aristocratic views

and feelings could ever have stepped down from the pedestal she had made of them. Our *beau monde* finds much difficulty in believing that pure love can ever sway its disciples, at least before wedlock. But that it should have worked such marvels in two short months, produced universal bewilderment.

“There was a wide flutter of curiosity to see Mr. Cobb after his quiet wedding with Georgine in the middle of the following autumn; but the married pair slipped off to Europe, and are traveling there still. All this is not so very long ago. I should like to show you a letter which I received from my cousin last month. It is uxorious beyond description. Erastus is the only man in the world to her. I forgot to tell you, by the way, that his name is not merely Cobb, but also Erastus. And so ends my story. I promised you that it should have a picturesque and unexpected ending.”

“But it spoils your case against the typical New York girl,” said my friend, laughing. “If you still declare Miss Georgine to have been one, you must admit that she represents a class whose faults lie very much on the surface.”

“No, I won’t admit that,” I argued. “Love is a marvellous transformer. It can make the leopard change his spots. I still maintain that my cousin *was* a typical New York girl (though more attractive, more original, and more outrageously snobbish, perhaps, than most of those who resemble her) before she married Mr. Cobb for love.”

“And do not any others of those who resemble her marry Mr. Cobbs for love?” inquired my friend.

I shook my head in solemn negative. “Those who do,” I answered dismally, “are as rare as white crows.”

XXIV.

THE LADY WHO IS CONSERVATIVE.

I SUPPOSE that the extreme saliency of Mrs. Varick Van Tassell's position is in its way as noticeable as if it were Trinity Church steeple or the Fifth Avenue Hotel. She somehow represents "position," and nothing else. You never think of her as hoping, loving, enduring, and suffering like other people. You always summon her before your inner vision as in the act of entering a ball-room, or sitting down amid the polite preliminary rustle of a dinner-party, or sipping tea from diaphanous porcelain at an afternoon reception. She has a very large house "on the avenue," where she has lived for many years. She has also a husband, whom I should have mentioned before the house if I had not grown somehow to place him after it and secondary to it; but he is so distinctly an adjunct that I am not to blame. Mrs. Van Tassell has her mansion, her husband, her carriages, her footmen, *et cetera*, all being possessions over which she presides with distinguished grace. Mr. Varick Van Tassell adores her; and he is such a shadowy, incomplete, indefinite person, that I am sure his most ardent adoration could not have occasioned

her a moment's inconvenience. No doubt he has been of far less trouble to her judicial, superintendent mind than the dynasty of butlers who have poured wine for her guests through thirty years of her wedded life. She did not at all benefit herself by her marriage. There lies the chief secret of her supreme prestige in New York; everything and everybody has been tributary to her; she has never bowed to circumstance, but has always had it approach her with a kind of salaam, as though it were an oriental ambassador and bore a gift. It is true, she married a Van Tassell; but, when you ask who she had been before this marriage, you immediately learn that it conferred no new dignity of a merely patrician kind, since she had been a Van Tassell herself; and, more than this, she was quite as rich a Van Tassell as her husband. Nor were they cousins; not even this faint objection to their union had existed. On the contrary, though of the same valued Knickerbocker name, they were but distantly connected.

Ever since the first year of her marriage, Mrs. Van Tassell has entertained splendidly and profusely; but she has also entertained with a most rigid carefulness. She never discusses the question of who Smith and Jones are, but she permits you to form your own conclusions of her estimate in this respect by the fact of whether you meet one, neither, or both of them in her drawing-rooms.

"She is the most absolutely swell woman in New York," said Mrs. Douglass Pranceley of her

one day. "I admit that. With her slenderness, her rose-leaf complexion, her graceful walk, her repose, her little silvery laugh, she makes an astonishingly aristocratic figure; but I detest her. She is such a bigot of conservatism."

Mrs. Pranceley is not at all conservative; and I could not help noticing just then, as she sat in her own cosey chocolate-and-gold reception-room at my side, how entirely her physical traits differed from all those which she had recently accorded to Mrs. Van Tassell. *She* was by no means slender, but almost buxomly plump; she had not a rose-leaf complexion, but rather a peony-like glow and flush; her walk was in no sense graceful; she completely lacked repose; and as for her laugh, the genuine heartiness of its peals alone excused their dauntless discords.

"Certainly, Mrs. Van Tassell is conservative," I assented. "She could not be a marked leader in society if she were otherwise. Wherever the patrician idea flourishes, there you find the motto, 'Let things alone.' All thrones have been built upon this theory. Dislodge it, and they begin to totter."

Mrs. Pranceley looked at me fixedly with her sparkling black eyes. "I think it simply dreadful," she protested, "that any human being should express so much mental and moral stagnation as that woman does, in our awakened nineteenth century and in a progressive republican land like this. The other day, as I hear, she was asked to become

one of the lady patrons of the new Friday evening dancing-class. She consented provisionally."

"Provided somebody else was *not* made a lady patron?" I asked with a smile.

"Yes; and that somebody else was your humble servant," declared Mrs. Pranceley. "She could n't have any social objections against me, you know. I am as well born as she — if one cares for that kind of humbug here; we're second or third cousins, on the Fyshkille side of her family. No, it was n't that: she objected to my advanced opinions."

"Is that what she called them?"

"Yes. She did n't realize the sarcasm in that word 'advanced,' as she employed it. But I believe the principal horror that she laid at my door was a sympathy with female suffrage. She considers any tendency on the part of her own sex toward its emancipation from old barbaric prejudices to be immodest and vulgar. Well, I readily withdrew my name from the list of patronesses. When one begins actually to think and read for one's self, it's remarkable how much contempt one gets for these assemblages of mere babbling, prattling snobs. But I mean to have my revenge on Lydia Van Tassell."

"And, pray, what is your revenge to be?" I asked.

"I shall send her a polite request to join a certain woman's rights society, of which I have lately become a member. I shall write her a really

cousinly, affectionate note. It will be like dynamite to her, I verily believe!" And Mrs. Pranceley threw back her head with a gleeful explosion of laughter.

"She will write you a terrible, scathing rebuke, no doubt," I said.

"Bah!" cried my hostess. "She has n't the brains to write anything terrible or scathing. She will probably ignore my letter altogether. Silence will be her best refuge, she will decide. And she will be right. Silence may be the mantle of wisdom, but it may also be the safeguard of stupidity."

Mrs. Van Tassell adopted the course of silence, as I afterward learned; but Mrs. Pranceley had made a mistake in her kinswoman. She is not devoid of brains. I have reason for this statement, as I hope soon to reveal. In her general social attitude there is an extraordinary taste and discretion. The high place that she fills is filled with a striking capability. Her consistency, so to speak, is perfect. Her individuality as a woman who represents what is select, exclusive, palpably and keenly unplebeian, shines out so clear that you cannot for an instant err or doubt concerning its accuracy. To be anything, in the eyes of your fellows, of such a vividly positive nature that all misunderstanding about it is impossible, means to accomplish what is difficult and rare. Mrs. Van Tassell, to my thinking, has done that. She has achieved a personality so distinct, that whether

you like or dislike, approve or disapprove her, you can never fail to realize with exactitude precisely what she is. She admits of no misconception. She has the most sharp-lined opinions, and she possesses the courage of them in the most clean-cut way. Call her a power for bad, if you will, but she is at least that unshrinkingly and incisively. She believes herself to be right; and, though you laid at her feet the wealth of Ormus and Ind, you could not convert her to any other faith.

It is not so much that she does not think or reason: it is that thought and reason have both stood still with her since girlhood. All novelty of view regarding the great problems of life are to her abomination, even blasphemy. She is a ritualistic Episcopalian. In her heart she holds all people who are not ritualistic Episcopalians as pitifully wrong. She learned years ago to worship caste, pedigree, position. In her heart she holds that all people who omit to do this are a luckless lot. She regards radical inquiry on every subject, the failure to accept society and moral law as they are now existent, to be dangerous, foolish, insensate. All people, again, who are not with her on these vital questions, she holds as culpably against her. Everything has been settled in the world, and she placidly lifts the standard of conservatism, signifying that this is a granitic fact.

Of course, I knew very well that Mrs. Pranceley had offended her past all propitiation by that re-

vengeful letter, and it even occurred to me that her wrath might be visited upon myself as a widely recognized friend of the rationalistic little lady who had roused it. Not so, however. She gave one of her superb state balls a few weeks later, and sent me the usual card. She had been a friend of my mother in the old days; I have even heard that my father was once one of her gallant admirers when she was Miss and not Mrs. Van Tassell. For whatever reason, she has always shown me marked favor, and as yet there was no sign of its diminution.

Few "invitations for friends" were ever asked when she gave her entertainments. The guests who came were only too glad that their own names had not been dropped. Mrs. Pranceley (whose letter had been a sort of *lettre de cachet*, and who received no cards to the special ball which I mention) vented her fund of scorn by telling me a story which she assured me was entirely authentic.

"Two summers ago, my dear Mr. Manhattan," she said, "this mighty Mrs. Van Tassell issued cards for a ball at her handsome Newport villa. No less a magnate than Stuyvesant Amsterdam himself (you of course know whom I mean) called upon her a week before the ball occurred, and requested an invitation for a relative of his wife, a Miss Pickerel, who had lately come to Newport. Now, Stuyvesant Amsterdam, as you have probably heard, married somebody from Elmira, or some-

where like that, who had no money, and who, as report affirmed, had actually occupied the degrading position of a school-teacher. The moment that Mr. Amsterdam had mentioned the name of his wife's cousin, Mrs. Van Tassell gently frowned.

“‘What a really dreadful name Pickerel is!’ she murmured. Then she looked at him with a smile as cold as snow, and added, ‘I—I rarely entertain people whom I do not *know*; but of course, if you put it in the form of a—a *request*, Mr. Amsterdam, I will make an exception to my—my customary rule.’

“‘Madam!’ cried Stuyvesant Amsterdam, with that red face of his in a sudden blaze of embarrassment and fury, ‘do not say another word. Miss Pickerel will remain away from your ball—with my wife and myself!’”

“And did they remain away?” I inquired.

“Oh, yes!” replied Mrs. Pranceley. “And I have no doubt that Mrs. Van Tassell rather congratulated herself on the success of her delicate insolence. She had always objected to Stuyvesant's marriage, and had only received his wife (he is a relation of hers, by the way) under protest. She doubtless knew that the tale of her rebuff would be circulated, and perhaps felt that it would act in the future as a preventive against similar atrocious presumption. And it did.”

A little while after the ball given by Mrs. Van Tassell, I was surprised to receive from her a note requesting that I would dine at her house quite

informally on a near evening. It was then the first week in Lent. I accepted her invitation, and found my hostess the only lady present. Varick Van Tassell was there, with his vapory whisker, his watery smile, his conventional, neutral insignificance. And besides himself and me, there were two other gentlemen. I had never met either of them before; they were a Mr. Potts and a Mr. Dodson. They were both young, smooth-shaven, inconspicuous, and rather bashful. They had very little to say during dinner; and afterward, when the opportunity came, Mrs. Van Tassell briefly explained to me that they were two young theological friends of hers, who were studying to be clergymen in Brooklyn. Her husband's relations, the Brooklynheights, had "taken them up," and Mr. Van Tassell was to accompany them on a visit that same evening to Bishop L—— ("dear Bishop L——," my hostess put it) for the purpose of making them acquainted with that famous divine.

Meanwhile, on my reception of this information, the two students had departed with Mr. Van Tassell. I now understood why the dinner had been given at the unusually early hour of six o'clock. Mrs. Van Tassell and I had left the dining-room, and had seated ourselves in a middle drawing-room which adjoined it. Everything had been, as usual, elegant, refined, faultless. I wanted to smoke, as I always do want after dinner, but there seemed no possible chance for it. Notwith-

standing the perfection of our repast, it had been brief. The hour was now scarcely later than seven.

"We have had a real Lenten dinner, have we not?" Mrs. Van Tassell presently said. "I mean, it has been so short." She now looked at me with soft earnestness. "But I fear you do not think much about Lent," she added.

I had somehow felt that something of this sort was in the air. It is possible that I furtively bit my lip as I answered:

"No, frankly, I am not pious."

"She drew a long, deep sigh. She was still earnestly regarding me. "Your mother, Mark," she said, "always paid heed to Lent."

I slowly inclined my head. I could have said much; I chose to remain silent.

Mrs. Van Tassell had been drawing on her gloves. She always wore them when in her *salon*. She now buttoned the last of their many buttons, and once more lifted her face to mine.

"Mark," she said very gently, "I hear bad things about you."

I met her look then, and met it full. "Pray, what do you hear?" I asked.

She folded both her slim, ladylike hands in her lap. She leaned her pink, *fade*, high-bred face toward mine. "I hear," she said, "that you are letting yourself drift."

"Letting myself drift!" I exclaimed. "Well, I'm sorry if you've heard *that*, Mrs. Van Tassell. I want to sail, not drift. I want to move capably, not float."

She slightly drooped her head, and shook it as she did so. "Ah!" she replied, "to move may mean to move either forward or backward."

"And do you prefer to be always stationary?"

Her eyes, which were gray and tender, and had been not the least of her youthful charms, now took a light into their depths almost as keen as that of the superb diamond cross lying brilliant among the laces on her bosom.

"I prefer an anchorage," she said.

I now began to have the feelings of a shy creature that has been deftly entrapped. I began to perceive with great clearness why I had been asked to dinner. The whole affair had been neatly arranged beforehand. Varick Van Tassell was to disappear after dinner, with the two embryo clergymen, and I was to be left alone, at the mercy of his wife, who desired to preach me a sermon. Somehow, while I quickly reflected that all this was quite true, I felt no rising choler. I was determined to be *bon enfant*. I had no wish either to offend or become offended. What, after all, was Mrs. Van Tassell's conservatism to me? I could not repose much confidence in my own liberalism, if I were to treat seriously any rebuke she might administer.

"I suppose you mean," I said, "that one should take the world as it is. But I am not of that kind. I believe that we are still, in a hundred matters, merely upon the threshold of progress. As for your own sex, Mrs. Van Tassell" —

She had straightened herself in her chair, and she now stretched forth one hand, making with it a gesture that I must have been rude to disregard.

“Don’t!” she almost gasped. “I can’t bear *that!* I think that I could nerve myself to *hear* anything but *that!* Oh, it is so brazen for women to dream of having the same rights as men! *I* have all the rights that I want. I have always had.”

“Ah! you forget,” I could not help saying at this preposterous point in her remarks, “that many millions of women exist on the globe whose fate is quite different from your own.”

She lifted her head somewhat haughtily, compressing her lips. “I see—you wish to argue with me. But I cannot endure that on such a subject I should be led into an argument.”

I smiled as I answered her. I felt my good nature to be impregnable against javelins like these.

“You mistake,” I said; “I do not at all wish to argue. And you must pardon me when I add that you are too uninformed on this most important question to make argument possible between us.”

“Uninformed!” she exclaimed with a smile of surpassing pity. “O Mark! if your poor mother knew that you *valued* information of this miserable sort! And in what does it consist, such information? In a knowledge of nearly all that is infamous and degrading among womankind. Women’s rights,—what are they? The rights to unsex themselves—to trample marriage under

their feet — to become free-lovers — to dress like men — to . . . Ah!" she suddenly broke off, rising, "it is too horrible! There has never been a serious view of this shameful matter taken by any guest of mine before, and I cannot tolerate that even you, the son of my old friend, should begin."

I had also risen. I was still not in the least angry. The whole exhibition of ignorance and bigotry was too sad for that.

"Pray, do not for an instant imagine," I said very calmly and firmly, "that you are taking a serious view of the rights of women by such wholesale misrepresentation as that which you have just employed."

"Misrepresentation!" she repeated offendedly, and with the air of a person whom there is peril in offending.

"The grossest misrepresentation," I said with much emphasis. "I don't believe you are aware of it, but you have insulted a great many women who are as pure and honest as yourself, by the reckless language you have just used."

She turned pale. A great sorrow seemed to fill her look, but there was no anger there. She clasped both hands together as she now fixed her eyes searchingly on my face. I have often remembered her as she stood thus, with her costly dinner-robe flowing about her fragile and wholly elegant figure. As a type, she had such imaginative worth: the romance of the old *grandes dames* seemed clinging to her as I watched her thus confront me

there in her splendid drawing-room. "Is this America?" I almost asked of my own thoughts. If all history loves to repeat itself, does not the mere individual, who is like a line in one of her mighty volumes, undergo perpetual reduplication as well?

"I—I am so sorry!" she said to me. "I have always liked you, Mark, and never wanted to be anything except your good friend. When I first heard that you had taken to reading books by that arch-fiend, Herbert Spencer (yes, I can call him nothing *but* an arch-fiend), and that you were becoming the unhappy and desperate being called a Free-thinker, I—I longed to try and *help* you. But now"—

"But now," I broke in as her grave voice paused for a moment, "I dare say that you have found me past help." I was again smiling as I thus spoke.

"Past help!" she repeated. "*Don't* tell me that! It is so awful! And you smile as if you despised anything like counsel or advice." She paused once more, and her face grew very solemn. "Mark," she presently continued, "*are* you—answer me truthfully and candidly—a Free-thinker?"

"On all subjects," I at once answered, "yes, truthfully and candidly, yes."

She bowed her head for an instant, and visibly shuddered. When she raised it, I saw that her look was even more sorrowful than it had been.

“You have just said something,” I continued, “about a man who is the supreme master of modern English thought, that, if I were inclined to be discourteous, I should call immeasurably silly. You worship a god whose name is Conventionality; and, in order properly to serve him, you blind your eyes and deafen your ears. You have made the attempt to lecture me, Mrs. Van Tassell, from your stand-point of unflinching conservatism; but, with the greatest respect and the most thorough politeness, I must decline to be lectured. I am far from denying my own faults. They may be legion. Some one, who had presumption enough, might mention a few of your faults in your presence. He might say (you will pardon me, since I speak only of remote possibilities) that your assumption of caste and superiority over your fellow-creatures is contrary to the spirit of all high religious teaching. He might say that even in being as tenaciously conservative as you are, you failed to fulfil such obligations as your defined conservative attitude should entail. He might be presumptuous to the extent of stating that you wholly lacked, as a self-declared Christian, the extremely Christian virtue of humility. He might (pray, remember that I still deal with possibilities alone) assert that you assumed an immense *un-Christian* superiority over your fellows. He might” —

I ceased; for the suave, stately, decorous butler had just entered the apartment.

“The carriage, Thomas?” said Mrs. Van Tassell, looking at her servant.

“Yes, Mrs. Van Tassell,” said Thomas, with a bow that can be learned only in the society of the great.

“Very well.” The voice of my hostess was husky as she dismissed her servant. “I am going to evening service,” she continued, addressing myself; and her voice was still husky. “It is Lent, you know. I always go in Lent to evening service. You will excuse me?”

“Certainly,” I responded, bowing. My bow, I am sure, had not half the majesty and grace of Thomas’s.

She went to evening service, and I went—away.

I wonder if Mrs. Van Tassell will ever invite me to her house again. I should say that she will not. I had trodden somewhat bruskiy upon the toes of conservatism. Why should I expect further hospitality from the lady who thinks a rascal in the New York slums better entitled to a vote regarding the government of her country than she herself, or who has denounced Mr. Herbert Spencer (that most wonderful of philanthropists) as an arch-fiend?

Well, it is surprising what torments the human organization *can* endure at a pinch. I have my private impression, that, if Mrs. Varick Van Tassell never again invites me to her handsome house in Fifth Avenue, I shall still live.

XXV.

THE GENTLEMAN WHO IS GLIB.

I HAD for several years accepted as a clear fact the excessive cleverness of Mr. Peabody Crisp, the well-known lawyer. Doubt on this subject is held by perhaps two hundred of the gentleman's leal worshippers as an impossibility. I know of few men in New York more socially sought after than Mr. Peabody Crisp. I think it probable that he could dine out every day in the year if so disposed. I am sure that his company at dinner is solicited to an enormous extent. He represents, as regards popularity and influence, the almost ideally successful man. He is considered the best of good company, the king of good fellows. When he begins to speak, there is always a respectful and interested silence. His reputation for wit and brilliancy amounts to a positive fame. Nor does it stop there; he is esteemed a person of sound and solid views on all the larger and more important questions. He is known to be extremely orthodox and conservative. His detestation of liberal principles in politics and religion has become proverbial. He is thought especially noteworthy as an after-dinner speaker.

When his name is pronounced by the master of ceremonies, you are certain to hear a round of rapturous applause. He rises with drooped eyes, stroking a smooth-shaven chin. He begins to speak in a very nasal, loitering voice. He is exceedingly tall, of lank and ungainly figure, and he possesses a pair of immense, salient-knuckled hands, which he waves and flourishes more and more during the heat of his oratory. Usually, at the completion of his first sentence, he is greeted by a roar of laughter. The roars continue, at intervals of brief duration, until he has seated himself. Nobody else ever receives the same warm welcome, the same loving appreciation. I believe that he will pass to his grave with a cohort of the most devout and admiring mourners. Eulogy will exhaust itself in recording his marvellous qualities of companionship, geniality, and secure intellectual merit.

And yet I am convinced that Mr. Peabody Crisp is a complete and absolute sham.

The conviction flashed upon me one evening when I heard him deliver an after-dinner speech. The speech was thought a striking triumph. It touched upon several "questions of the day," and what it touched it was evidently believed to adorn. Just as the applause which had followed his final sentence was subsiding, I turned to the gentleman next me.

"I have never heard Mr. Crisp speak before," I said.

The gentleman's face was wreathed in smiles. "Is it possible?" he murmured. "Well, you *are* unfortunate!"

"I shook my head with a good deal of decision. "I can't agree with you," was my reply. "That is, provided Mr. Crisp never acquits himself more brilliantly than he has done to-night."

"Brilliantly!" echoed my companion, who was one of the recent orator's most ardent devotees. "Well, sir, I should like to know what real brilliancy *is*, if we did not meet with it a few minutes ago."

"I think we did not meet with it," I returned. I secretly felt as if I had had my pockets picked of considerable small change. It seemed to me that this Mr. Peabody Crisp had no right to inflict on more than a dozen pre-occupied digestions his truly aggravating platitudes. And I now went on to say, with the unhesitating boldness which I always employ when I feel myself justified by the occasion:

"I call everything which I heard from Mr. Peabody Crisp's lips the flimsiest sort of 'gallery talk.' I believe that I know 'gallery talk' when I hear it. We Americans ought. We manage to fall in with so much of it."

My neighbor visibly bristled. I confess that I enjoyed his dismay and disgust. If there is anything in the world especially annoying to me, it is genuflection before an unworthy ideal. I have a good deal of honest sympathy with hero-worship,

notwithstanding many of its ludicrous and even grotesque phases; but, when I suspect the tribute of devotion to be paid where it is ill deserved, I am prepared for not a little tough belligerence.

"Oh, I see! Mr. Manhattan," came the rather tart response: "you disagree with the ideas *expressed* by Mr. Crisp."

"Pardon me," I said. "I perceived no ideas with which I could disagree."

Somehow this little assertive outburst on my part got to be rather widely known. Several people mentioned to me that they had heard of my strong aversion for Mr. Peabody Crisp.

"It is not a strong aversion," I usually said. "It is a sense of the man being a complete intellectual fraud. His popularity I admit; but that, with me, is no argument. I have seen a good many popular people and popular things undeserving of notice. I shall never forget the speech which I heard him make at G——'s large dinner. There is no doubt that nearly everybody present thought that speech a brilliant one. I am sure that it was held to be representative of what the gentleman usually does in that way. Am I wrong there?"

"Well, no," usually came the answer. "It was certainly very funny, besides being excessively clever."

"Its fun," I replied, "was a matter of taste. I think you get the same kind of fun in the comic column of most vulgar newspapers. Its wisdom

I could not at all see. Shallow epigram is not wisdom."

The worshippers of Mr. Crisp naturally did not like this sort of plain statement. I had already met their idol; and one day I was invited to dine in his society by a Mr. Gentian, who ranked among his devoutest admirers. Unsuspectingly I accepted, and it was not until I found myself in the drawing-room of my host that I began to feel myself the object of a conspiracy. Perhaps this is too strong a word. But as Mr. Crisp shook hands with me, I fancied that there was a kind of metallic challenge in his full, acute, prominent eye, and a satiric smile about his thin, clean-shorn lips. As I looked round the apartment, too, I saw eight guests of known allegiance to Mr. Crisp. Mr. Gentian's allegiance was something that belonged to municipal history. Mr. Gentian held numberless bonds in a noted city railway. Between himself and the railway company had arisen, several years ago, a sharp quarrel. Serious charges of something more than merely high-handed monopoly had been brought against Mr. Gentian, the renowned Wall Street grandee. Mr. Peabody Crisp had defended him in court, and won his case.

Mr. Gentian was a mild-mannered little man, with a superabundant forehead very bald indeed, and a tapering flaxen goatee. We had nothing in common together; I detest "stock" talk, and I think he knew it; I rarely did more than coolly

nod to him in the club. I had thought it somewhat odd that he should ask me to dinner; but then, a good many people do ask me to dinner for no definite reason.

It was a remarkably fine dinner. The wine sparkled, and the choice viands diffused rich aromas. I soon observed that I sat on Mr. Gentian's left, and that Mr. Peabody Crisp sat on his right. I also made another observation before the repast had reached its third course. Whenever I spoke, the eight sworn adherents of Mr. Crisp gave marked evidence of attention. Mr. Crisp also gave such evidence. At first I doubted this fact; I fancied it a mere hallucination. But presently I became convinced that it was nothing of the sort. Mr. Crisp, so to speak, had been set upon me. I was to be conversationally pulverized. I had not a supporter present. Mr. Gentian, silent as usual (I never heard him speak more than three consecutive sentences), wore a steadfast factitious smile. If the smile altered during dinner, I am not aware of such alteration. As a tribute to his decent hospitality, I record this neutral trait of deportment.

When I had positively decided that a trap had been laid for me, it is no exaggeration to state that my indignation was intense. To be pitted in this way against a man whom I held in thorough disesteem struck me as keenly odious. But I knew that indignation could now profit me nothing, and I rapidly grew calm as I made this re-

flection. My calmness, too, was that of wary antagonism. I found myself suddenly at bay. I had openly presumed to state my opinions of Mr. Crisp, and I was now called upon to publicly defend them. If there had been any manifest discourtesy shown by my companions, I should have simply guarded myself with a haughty silence, and taken my leave as soon as occasion would permit. But the hostility was somehow in the air; I could feel it; I could breathe it in; it was intangible and yet apparent. And for this reason, no doubt, I was put on my mettle; I was covertly stung into an attitude of careful, vigilant defence.

The first direct gun, as it were, was fired by Mr. Crisp.

"My dear Gentian," he said with a sidelong look at myself, while everybody listened, "have you read that delightful new book by the Rev. Boanerges Brittle, entitled 'Scientific Monkey-Making'? It is a wonderful work."

"No, I have not seen it," said our host demurely and sedately.

"It contains much splendid reasoning," continued Mr. Crisp. "It completely destroys that humbug, Darwin."

I bit my lip. If there is any intellect which I thoroughly respect, it is that of the great dead English thinker just named. I looked straight at Mr. Crisp and smiled as amiably as I could while I asked:

"Why do you call Darwin a humbug?"

Mr. Crisp leaned back in his chair and surveyed me. He cleared his throat very audibly indeed. "Why do I call Darwin a humbug?" he repeated. He twitched one side of his face in a manner which everybody must have thought comic, for a universal laugh followed the grimace. I waited till the laugh had ended; then I shot in these words, without a shadow of revealed annoyance, but with about as much hard, sharp force as I have ever employed:

"Pardon me, but that was my question, and I did not know that your hearing was defective."

"Oh!" said my combatant, stroking his clean, bluish chin with one large hand. "It is n't defective. No, not at all. I've got about a hundred answers to that question of yours, and I was pausing to think of the weakest one. It'll be quite enough of a crusher, I can tell you that."

Another loyal and hearty laugh instantly followed from the assemblage. But here Mr. Crisp waved his right hand, bidding the laugh subside. His face had become very serious. He was evidently meditating upon his "crusher." He had a voice of great bass volume and compass when he chose to call forth its deeper qualities, and he chose to call them forth now.

"I guess I'm a good deal of a plainer man than you are, Mr. Manhattan. I dare say I have n't got much *modern* brains or much *modern* education; but I think the most honest way of telling you why I consider Darwin a humbug is to state

that he has presumed to fling insults at the Almighty."

It is my impression that I slightly curled my lip here. I was very cool, very self-possessed. And I said, without raising my voice above the ordinary tone:

"Your brains, and education are too widely conceded for your own disparagement of either to affect so secure a reputation regarding both. At the same time, if your statement that Darwin has ever insulted the Almighty is your weakest answer to my question, I must beg that you will supply me with a stronger one—among the hundred others which you profess to have at your command."

"Indeed! And why?"

"Why?" I gently repeated. "Because I absolutely deny that the great philosopher mentioned has in any printed page of his writings acquitted himself with the silliness you record against him."

A dead silence ensued. The favorite had waved his hand. There was to be no more laughter. My extinction, my annihilation, was to be accomplished in a wholly grave and sober way.

"Just wait," I heard one adherent whisper to another. "He'll let himself loose in a minute."

He did "let himself loose" promptly, and to this effect, leaning still farther back in his chair, and frowning upon me with a mighty grandeur:

"Oh, so you think it *silliness*, do you, my friend? Well, now, there you and I agree. I think it sil-

liness, but I think it *more!* Yes, sir, I think it *blasphemy*, when any man tries to assert that Adam and Eve were a pair of male and female gorillas."

His frown suddenly changed to a smile. He looked about among his fraternity. This was their permission to laugh. And they did laugh uproariously. I laughed too, but with a scorn perhaps as weary as it was bitter. And the instant that the silence allowed me, I said:

"Like many men of extraordinary wit, I fear you have let this gift lead you into a temptation."

He was very nonchalant now. He had apparently conquered. He could afford to be humorously interrogative.

"Ah? Indeed? *What* temptation?"

"That," I replied, "of putting a mask upon ignorance."

"Ignorance? Oho!" He laughed in his nasally genial way. "A minute ago I was silly. Now I'm ignorant, am I?"

I took up an olive and bit it, shrugging my shoulders the least in the world. I am sure that I have never been more placidly controlled of demeanor than when I answered:

"I did not call you silly. The accusation is quite one of your own invention. But I must plead guilty to having called you ignorant. I do not believe you have ever read a single work of the scholar whom you denounce. I believe you have got all your knowledge of him at second-hand from the blatant and fanatical Mr. Boanerges

Brittle, whose feverish tirades you so admire. If you can mention to me the titles of four separate works by the late Mr. Darwin, — a writer honored throughout Europe for his magnificent attainments, — I will pay you public apology here at this table for having called you ignorant.”

He noticeably winced now. He straightened himself in his chair. He almost glowered upon me as he fumed:

“Young man, you are strangely personal!”

“Of course I am personal,” I replied. “In the sense of accusing you of not knowing anything at all about a very wonderful scientist — whom you assail with much abuse — I *wish* to be personal.”

He waved his hands again. His large lips had grown pale. It was plain that he was very angry. “Oh, come!” he almost stammered. “I — I will oblige you a second time, sir, since you are so polite about it. I’ll — I’ll *mask my ignorance* once again.”

“That is not fair,” I persisted. “You are bound to answer my question.”

“Oh, I’m bound, am I?” he muttered. “And who or what binds me, if you please?”

“Consistency, fairness, justice, all bind you,” I said. “Come, sir, if *you* please. I want those four titles. Or you need not even give so much. You can indicate — with your natural fluency and facility of diction — what the works are, provided your memory temporarily fails you regarding their exact names.”

My glance was riveted upon his own as I spoke. I saw it shift. I was certain that the fact of his confusion and embarrassment had transpired among his friends, and that they were themselves exchanging surprised looks.

"I—I deny your right to make this demand," he soon declared with uncharacteristic bustle and flurry of manner.

"You never read a line of Darwin's noble writings in your life," I retorted. "Deny that if you can."

"I'll not even deny it," he said with rather lame disdain. "I'll mask my ignorance, as I told you, young man."

"You can't do so with bravado," I returned quietly.

My host's hand grasped my arm restrainingly here, but I went on with firm eye and speech:

"You are very glib, Mr. Crisp, but I do not find that you are ever anything more than glib. You are forever trying to bully people with your glibness. You know little, and you think less. I am not fond of telling my fellow-creatures their faults; but this is a case where provocation has been pushed to extremity. If you had as many ideas as you have words, you would be a great person. And I am confident that those who are now deceived into rating you as a great person need only use a little shrewdness to discover their striking error."

He was furious; my host was furious; it looked

as if his bevy of adorers would devour me in their fury. I walked from the room, and presently from the house ; I suppose I was somewhat furious then myself.

Afterward I repented of my final attack, and wrote Mr. Gentian an apologetic note. But I never retracted a word of what I said to Mr. Peabody Crisp. If the same thing were to do over again, I don't think I would do it; but, being done, I did not waste much regret upon it. It made me enemies, but not of the sort I especially dread. And, after all, I am of opinion that I had my justification, — my *causa belli*. There is always somebody to tell a man he has had that. I need not state that the large constituency of Mr. Crisp never told me so. They still, most probably, preserve their strict servitorship to the gentleman who is glib.

XXVI.

THE LADY WHO IS SENSATIONAL.

I WAS once seated in the lower *café* of Solari's (a restaurant which we are too apt to let the larger fame of Delmonico overshadow while we record the growing importance of New York as a city of faulty politics but fine eating), when my attention was oddly attracted by a pane of glass in the window near at hand. It was of the deepest blood-red, and it gave me a strange, lurid, unearthly glimpse of University Place, lying just outside. University Place, as the most heedless observer will admit, is a street of excessive ugliness; but this crimson segment of it that I now saw through the dyed pane transfigured it into something curiously repulsive. Fascinated by the oddity and quaintness of the fiery *vignette* thus afforded, I rose and took a nearer yet broader view. I seemed to be gazing upon an absolutely infernal thoroughfare. The most commonplace shop-fronts assumed a glaring extravagance of outline. Everything was violently and oppressively red. I re-seated myself with a smile, as the companion with whom I had been lunching surprisedly watched me. He was Wilford Oldfield, a man

twice my own age, stout, rubicund, genial, with a large knowledge of men and a habit of occasional cynicism as delicate as it was unobtrusive.

"My dear Mark," said Oldfield, taking an olive, "have you had your first experience in looking through a pane of red glass?"

"Not exactly," I answered, in what was perhaps a musing tone. "But that little glimpse I just gained gave me a sensation, an impression."

"Really? If it idealized the dinginess and shabbiness of University Place, I should be inclined to congratulate you."

"It did n't idealize University Place," I replied; "it intensified and exaggerated it. The whole stupidity and monotony of it became sensationally sanguine. It resembled a street in the planet Mars."

Oldfield laughed. "You always were a sort of poet in embryo, Mark," he said. "If you'd been born to a garret and a crust instead of—how many thousands is it a year?—you might have died moderately famous. One does n't meet every day a man who would be reminded of anything so extraordinary by merely looking through a bit of dyed glass in one of Solari's windows."

"Oh, it reminded me of something else," I said, "besides the planet Mars."

"What?" asked Oldfield quizzically. "The planet Jupiter?"

"No," I returned. "Of Miss Judith Merivale." My friend started, looked at me wonderingly,

and then burst into one of his full, blithe laughs. Oldfield has a laugh which is so like his stout, comfortable body that I feel almost privileged to call it corpulent.

"I see," he said. "And yet perhaps I miss some point of your intended analogy. Explain."

"You know her as well as I do," I replied. "Indeed, you ought to know her much better, Oldfield. You've been about town for a century or so, and when I emerged from boyhood, only a few years since, Judith Merivale was still a wealthy spinster of established reputation."

"Reputation for what?" he questioned, with a twinkle of his mellow brown eye under its fat, wrinkled lid.

"For doing everything with red fire, just like my window-pane here."

Oldfield nodded. "I do see. And I take back what I said about your being an undeveloped poet. 'Novelist' would have been better. Miss Judith *is* sensational. She is colored by her convictions."

"And burningly," I struck in. "There are some people whose lives resemble a milky, meandering serial by Anthony Trollope, where nothing more dramatic occurs than a visit of the new rector's wife upon the baronet's maiden daughter in the first chapter, and a visit of the baronet's maiden daughter upon the new rector's wife in chapter the eighty-second. There are other people who remind one of the analytical, immoral, sentimental, or lach-

rymose novels by various other authors. But Miss Judith Merivale suggests the story in the 'penny dreadfuls.' She is nothing, if not flamboyant."

"Do you mean that she is vulgar, Mark?"

"Oh, no!" I said.

And he was right. She is not. She is simply flamboyant, as certain flowers are (such as a gaudy marigold or a spotted dahlia), which we cannot help admiring, with discreet, reserved sympathies for a violet or a tea-rose. It chanced that I had an engagement to drop in for some tea that same afternoon at Miss Judith Merivale's house (no one ever forgot the oriental "Judith," somehow, in naming her), and this fact may have helped to incite the rather uncharitable fervor of my recent comparison.

I went to see Miss Judith an hour or two later, and was received by her with a smile full of mystery, subtlety, and magnetism. A few other guests were present, drinking tea, and chatting together; but Miss Judith chose to ignore the presence of these ladies and gentlemen, and devote herself, for some time, exclusively to myself.

She always receives quite alone. She has a mother who is never visible, and she stands, as one might say, a relieved, solitary, original figure in the midst of New York social life. She "got in" (as the coarse phrase puts it) among people who concern themselves with select surroundings, a number of years ago. Some people assert that she made her first success in Rome: she is very

fond of telling you about her days, weeks, or months in Rome. However this may have been, she is now so securely placed that nobody ever thinks of asking a word with regard to her antecedents. The invisible mother, and the pretty basement house in Thirty-Third Street, and Miss Judith herself, with her positively enormous and overwhelming personality, now completely blunt all snobbish inquiry. She is as much taken for granted in active and existent society as one of the velvet-leaved roses at one of her own tasteful little dinner-parties.

You might have thought of a rose as you looked at her; yet, if you had done so, it would have been one of those sultry Jacqueminots, with petals not as fresh as they once had been, but a little curled and *flétries* at the edges. She had once had a really brilliant complexion; but a few tiny and stealthy wrinkles about her large, soft gray eyes, and at the corners of her full, sweet, expressive lips, now somewhat mar this precious charm. Her nose, in its abandonment of symmetry, should perhaps not be recorded of her, so to speak: there seems even a sort of ungallantry in mentioning it, since the rest of her face is a sort of wistful feminine apology for her having it at all. She has a figure which I can no better describe than in recalling a flower (it seems to me that I am always in some way comparing her to a flower) that has lost the first natural bend upon its stem. She is full of curves; but they are curves that imply an undue relaxation,

—a limpness, in fact, hardly noticed before controlled and corrected. She possesses a real glory of hair; it is red in the way that the hair of Rubens's women is sometimes red, and she wears it in a kind of sumptuous turmoil over her broad white forehead and her sheer, sybil-like, blue-veined temples. She dresses oddly, but not at all æsthetically. Whistler and Alma Tadema had not yet palpably transpired as motives of reform when she began to robe herself, and I think that, even if they had, Miss Judith would possibly have eschewed their tenets.

She received me with a burst of cordiality. She had a hoarse note in her voice, which was not unlike the dulcet though novel *timbre* in the voice of Ellen Terry, that mistress of luring vocalism.

"You came," she said, as we sank on one of the lounges, side by side. "I feared you would not come. I am so glad that you *did* come!"

I was prepared for something vivid and piercing. "Why?" I inquired.

Miss Judith lowered her voice. "Oh, because I wanted to ask your advice," she responded, devouring me with her tragic gray eyes. "You know of Mabel Wainwright's engagement to Charlie Northriver having been broken off?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Poor Mabel did it herself, in a fit of foolish petulance at nothing. And now she wants me — *me*, to act as an emissary in setting matters right between them."

“Well?” I inquired as Miss Judith paused. “Shall you not do so?”

“Do so!” My companion drooped her gaze, and stared down at a snake of green enamel, with rubies for eyes, which she wore clasped about one of her wrists. “Oh, you don’t know — you don’t *understand*, Mr. Manhattan! It was because of this request that I sent for you. Ah! poor Mabel thinks that a lover’s quarrel is easily mended. But she does not dream of the truth.”

I seemed to see the glare of the footlights between Miss Judith and myself as I answered, “What truth?”

“Charles Northriver no longer *cares* for Mabel,” she whispered. “*She* does not dream of this, but I *know* it. He welcomes his freedom, while she believes him eating out his heart with remorse. And yet what am I to do? *Think* of my position!”

I tried to look as if I were thinking of her position, and Miss Judith continued in tones of extreme yet smothered fervor:

“On the one hand I am swayed by every dutiful feeling of loyalty towards the friend whom I prize. On the other I am thrilled — yes, *thrilled* — by indignation at the treachery of the man she worships. Can I go to this man and calmly say: ‘Mabel repents of her severity; she awaits you; seek her’? *Can* I do this? No! And why? Because that man is not only glad of his escape, but because he loves another. Yes; he loves Daisy Yonkers!”

“Are you quite sure that he does?” I ventured, feeling that my first step as a so-called counsellor should be a patient inquiry into facts.

“Sure! I am absolutely confident. Daisy herself has dropped more than one pointed hint to this effect. Ah! what a subtle creature that girl is! She always makes me think of Vivien, while poor Mabel — *she* makes me think of Elaine. Have you ever watched Daisy and Charlie Northriver when they chance to meet? At the Highbridges’ dinner, last Tuesday, he sat next to her. I *saw* him let a rosebud fall into her lap when he thought no one was looking. And she cleverly hid it, a little later, in the heart of her bouquet. O Mr. Manhattan! what a cruelly deceitful world this is! I often turn sick when I think of all the misery that human beings are perpetually causing each other. And now what *shall* I do? how *shall* I act?”

This whole lamentation on the part of Miss Judith had a purely chimerical origin. The estrangement between Charlie Northriver and Mabel Wainwright was a merely temporary affair. He was no more in love with Miss Daisy Yonkers than he was in love with the Queen of Great Britain. They were simply good friends, and for several years past had enjoyed pleasant, intimate *tête-à-têtes* together, and would so enjoy others in the future, perhaps, for years to come. The intercession of Miss Judith between the bleeding heart of Mabel and the loveless, triumphant one

of Charlie, had never been solicited or even conceived by either of the pair. They were perfectly capable of effecting their own reconciliation. Miss Judith imagined that she had been called upon to act as mediator. I don't mean that she fabricated any spurious story to me; I mean that she merely took plain truths and clad them in the mythical phosphorescence of her own fancy.

And so it is with her always. "You are late for dinner, my dear Judith," some friendly hostess will say to her, when she arrives at half-past seven instead of seven o'clock.

"Caroline," she will perhaps reply, with a gentle clutch of the lady's arm, and a look from the big gray eyes full of sombre eloquence, "it is miraculous that you have me here at all. Just as my *coupé* was turning the corner of Twenty-Third Street, a sudden horrible, dislocating shock occurred. What saved my head from being dashed through the pane of the front window and deluging me with my own blood, I cannot imagine. As it was, half mad with alarm, I flung open the carriage-door, and committed the wild folly of leaping forth upon the pavement. Luckily the carriage had by this time stopped, or I should now" —

And so on, with every resource of florid and pyrotechnic narration. The unvarnished (shall I say the unfigreed?) truth would have been that the cab-horse had stumbled badly in taking Miss Judith to her dinner-party, and that she was so

frightened that she got out of the cab after it had stopped. This, and nothing more.

There are some people of whom we say that their geese are all swans. Miss Judith Merivale is a person of whom it might be declared that her barnyard fowls are all birds of paradise. Nothing happens to her just as it happens to the remainder of purblind and articulate-speaking humanity. She garnishes the commonest incidents with fantastic impromptu adornments quite her own. All her acts might be described as the ordinary and unusual performance, plus a kind of emotional cupola. She has undoubtedly received marked attention from certain members of the male sex. Every episode of this sort has acquired an exceptional and startling saliency. If she ever received the passionate devotion of even one particular suitor whose impetuosity made her repeated refusals each one a separate ordeal of pain, is not accurately known. But she certainly has managed somehow to invest herself with a reputation for having more than once weathered severe spiritual tempests. Her residence in Europe is vaguely understood to have been rendered stormy by the importunities of desperate admirers.

“What a remarkably handsome man!” I once said, pausing at a certain page in her album of photographs. “He is an Italian, surely, with that crinkled hair and that sensitive cut of feature.”

She leaned over the book, which I held, as if to make sure of the likeness to which I alluded.

Then, seeing it, she suddenly withdrew, giving an almost audible shudder.

"Yes," she presently murmured. "He had marvellous beauty. I—I don't know why I let his picture remain there. Some souvenirs have not the right to exist for us, except in ashes. I should have burned that one long ago. I—I have no idea why I did not. Have you?"

"Not the slightest," I returned with uncompromising dryness.

"You are always so matter-of-fact with me," she said, after a pause, during which I turned over the leaves of the album, and knew perfectly well that she was regarding me with solemn fixity. "And yet I know that you have sympathy with depths and heights of feeling in others; that you can *tirer sur le mors*, just as that poor Julio did, when your mood pleases."

"Really?" I questioned bluntly enough. "Who told you anything so absurd about me as that I could or would *tirer sur le mors*?"

She gave a soft, long laugh. "Do you suppose that I have not heard certain things as well as others?" she went on. "Do you suppose I am ignorant of that little rosy incident in your life when you were so infatuated with Cora"—

I prevented her from finishing the name by dropping her heavy album upon the floor. I did it as if by accident, and while I picked the volume up I said apologetically:

"I beg pardon, Miss Judith, for nearly breaking

your album. But it was a little too ponderous for my knees."

She immediately saw (or chose to see) me in her light. Her manner would now have done for that of a leading lady in one of Sardou's or Augier's most bristling comedies. She raised her forefinger and shook it. She drooped her head sideways, and gave all her figure a languid curve.

"Ah! you are supernaturally clever," she said. "What a diplomatist you would have made! You have every device of concealment *au bout des lèvres* — and at your fingers' ends as well. And yet how idle to try and deceive me, who read you so well! I have learned to read both men and women — ah, *too* well! It so often fatigues me to think of my own dreary and ravaging experiences."

It also fatigued me to think of them — especially as I distrusted them. I am afraid that on this occasion I made my *ennui* only too clearly manifest.

"I sometimes believe that she has no heart — that she is entirely made up of this melodramatic affectation," I once said to a sensible woman who knows her well, and likes her — as I confess that I do, in spite of every rational and tantalizing objection to such a result.

"You mistake," said the lady — my friend and Miss Judith's as well. "She has a very good and honest heart. She is a woman both of large natural feelings and capable talents."

"Oh, I admit her talents."

"But she has more than those. *Au fond* she is

thoroughly genuine. She rings true when you sound her vigorously."

"I have never sounded her vigorously. I should not dare. I have an idea that it might cause a clamor which would be heard from here to Philadelphia."

"Not at all," came the reply.

"Are you serious?" I said interestedly.

"Yes. Judith is simply of the romantic temperament. It is her temperament that makes people laugh at her. She has never done a really wrong thing in her life; she is, on the contrary, brimming with good and wholesome impulses. I distrust all her suggestions regarding that eventful Roman and Parisian past. I don't believe she has ever known a man to be really very much in love with her since she left school."

"Truly? Do you think it could have been her unsympathetic nose?"

"Now, don't be cruel. It is n't like you. Judith does n't deserve it, either. She can't resist posing. If she had been a man, she would have done the most *outré* and abnormal things."

"She does them now."

"Not at all. She merely indicates them. Perhaps she even persuades herself that she has done them. In any case, she refers to imaginary exploits as if they were real."

"Oh!" I laughed, "that sort of conduct is sometimes called by a bad name."

"I know. You mean that it is called hypocrisy."

But Judith's hypocrisy is only skin-deep. 'A primrose by the river's brim' is not a primrose to her at all: it is a flaunting peony or a flaring margold. I grant all that nonsense in her. But she has deeper, truer traits, which make such superficiality of little import to those who know her well."

I pondered these tidings after having received them. Their source made them worthy of consideration.

Possibly our mutual friend is right. Still, I retain my doubts. However, I may be wrong. Women know women best. Allowing that this last merciful judgment is the true one, I nevertheless maintain that to pass through life wrapped in such an emblazoned garment of outward insincerity is hardly excused by the possession of rich feminine virtues behind it.

I am at present awaiting a change for the better in Miss Judith's daily deportment. I want to hear of her that she has walked from the Brunswick Hotel to Central Park without thinking the act worthy of special and agitated chronicling. I want to feel that I am not forever looking at her through that blood-red pane of glass in Solari's window. Our friend assures me that the moment she falls fairly and firmly in love, she will forsake all her distressing and tedious caprices.

"But meanwhile," I ask, "who is to fall fairly and firmly in love with *her*? I anticipate with interest and anxiety the lover who shall work this incredible change."

“Oh, he will come,” says my friend confidently.

“He will come, some day.”

“But what will he be when he does come?” I question.

“He will be — a man, of course.”

“Excuse me,” I respond, still thinking of the window at Solari’s. “I have my belief that he will be — well, let us say some stray inhabitant of the planet Mars.”

XXVII.

THE GENTLEMAN WHO LIVED TOO LONG.

WHAT man who has ever gone into the whirl and glitter of his first ball does not clearly remember it? I remember mine. I was about twenty-three, and I appeared in a room filled with lights, flowers, music, dancing or sitting guests, hilarious festivity, and yet I did not know a soul with whom I could exchange a single authorized word.

True enough, I was Mark Manhattan. But who knew or cared for that? I was young, and I had never been seen before. I had bowed to my hostess, and passed on. Other people, I perceived, were bowing and passing on. But nobody passed on as I did, without finding somebody else whom he could pause beside and talk to. I could not find a soul. I roamed hither and thither, *en martyr*.

And yet everyone was staring at me, or so I felt. I sidled near an alcove, and found that my back had come into contact with two male and female beings seated there. I blundered away, murmuring an apology, which was perhaps unheard above the brisk and dulcet waltz. I discovered a small knot of observant gentlemen, and shrank behind one of them, whose shoulders were shieldingly

broad, and whose general physical height and bulk offered a most tempting ambuscade. But suddenly this gentleman, just as I had cleverly ensconced myself in his rear, made a dash forward for the purpose of joining some passing lady, and I was once more left mercilessly and glaringly revealed. It seemed to me that the wide, critical stare at once began again. Was I quite sure that there was nothing in my costume out of order? Had I given sufficient attention to my white necktie? Might it not have drooped, sagged, grown demoralized? Did my new coat fit me rightly? Were my trousers bagging at the knees? Had my chaste oval of shirt-bosom become wrinkled? Some of the beautiful young girls, with their milky necks and arms, and their ethereal dresses, seemed to pass me in a sort of lovely disdain. "Why do you come here at all, you horrid young hobbledehoy?" their red, smiling lips seemed to inquire. I wondered whether it would look very strange if I slipped out of the rooms by a back door, thence up stairs, and thence, after procuring my wraps, down again to the street. Of course, such a proceeding would be noticed at this early hour of the evening, and especially as my appearance had caused so universal and extraordinary a scrutiny. But, even if it *did* make them talk a little, why should I care? I meant never, never to go into society again. I was not fitted for it; perhaps I was above its flippancies; perhaps I was below its graces and felicities. However this might be, I had emphat-

ically seen my last evening of mirth and melody, of revelry and roses.

While this gloomy resolution was shaping itself within my spirit, I found myself affably addressed by a person standing at my elbow. He was an elderly gentleman, and he then appeared to my grateful mind the most charming elderly gentleman in all the world. It was so delightful to be noticed at last in a conversational way — to feel one's self an appreciable unit in the ignoring throng. I looked into the face of my companion while he spoke, and at first decided that he was a *personnage*. His pure white mustache flowed toward either pink cheek in rippling fulness; his white hair, still abundant, gleamed above a pair of restless hazel eyes; his form was compact and of good apparent capability. He had a bunch of violets in the lappel of his coat, and he posed his arms with a jaunty curve. He was clearly old, and yet a most elastic and potent vitality still dwelt in him. You felt that his foot was planted upon the floor with a firmness to which his actual age did not correspond.

But closer observation soon resulted in a new judgment. His impressiveness was wholly physical and facial. It was indeed hardly even the latter; for when you looked well into his countenance you saw there a certain vacancy that matched the inane quality of his words. Later it became plain to me that he would just as soon make himself audible in my society as in that of

anyone else. He had really nothing to say; it was all a stream of copious, artless prattle. It was about the weather, about the heat of the rooms, about the temperature desirable at a ball, about a ball last night where the temperature was just high enough, about the new way in which young girls wore their hair, about the prevalence of white dresses causing the whole festival to lack gayety. And sometimes it was about absolutely nothing, in so far as I could ascertain, while he babbled on in his short, jerky sentences, and in his guttural, monotonous, but entirely genial tones.

I noticed that he bowed often, as the ladies with their escorts moved past us, and that many bows were given him in return. He appeared to know everybody, as the phrase goes. I had said very little myself thus far; but feeling that he doubtless had it in his power to make me acquainted with at least three-quarters of the assembled guests, if so disposed, I ventured to sound his good nature on this important point. I began by telling him that I had hoped to meet a few of my relations there that night, but that none of them chanced to be present,—a circumstance which I was compelled to regret, as it prevented me from securing an introduction to any of the attractive young ladies whom I saw on all sides. “And to-night,” I finished, “is really my first appearance in New York society.”

“I know nearly everybody,” he secretly gladdened me by saying in his rapid, spasmodic, cordial

way. "I guess I could fix things for you. Let's see — you said your name was" —

I had not said what my name was, but on hearing it the gentleman grasped my hand and declared himself on the best of terms with about fifty of my relations. He talked so much of the large Manhattan family, flying from members of it who lived to members of it who had long ago been dead, that I conceived a fear lest he should quite forget his previous offer.

But he did not forget it; or rather a gentle reminder on my part stopped the ample current of his reminiscences, and I was subsequently made to know several of the ladies present. I owe to him my launching, as it were, upon the social stream. And I soon learned just who the gentleman was by whose kindness I had benefited.

His name was Billington, and for years he had been called Old Beau Billington. His age was estimated to be seventy, if a day, though he might even have been older. There was a time when he appeared in the exclusive circles of New York, and received many sidelong looks of distrust. Few strangers ever crossed, in those days, our quiet Knickerbocker limits. Mr. Billington was reported to have come originally from an Eastern State, but he had lived several years abroad. It was such a picturesque thing, then, to have lived several years abroad! But a great deal of suspicion at first attached to the brilliant new-comer, who danced the antique *cotillon* with so ravish-

ingly graceful a pigeon's-wing, who wore his stock with so modish an elegance, and who whispered compliments garnished by so novel an embellishment of dainty French idiom. But for some time Beau Billington had to carefully work his way. Our grandmothers remember being cautioned against him in their girlhood. Bowling Green was then the Madison Square of our little provincial, semi-Dutch New York, and more than one pretty girl was instructed by her sedulous mother to turn her face in another direction when she met Mr. Billington strolling in beflowered waistcoat and with nicely-poised cane along the streets bordering on that miniature park. The Amsterdams, Ten Eycks, and Van Twillers for the most part disapproved of him. He lived on an income of his own, and did no business. It was such an unprecedented thing for any young gentleman, at that time, to do no business! It seemed quite shocking that he should haunt the breezy Battery of an afternoon, while all the scions of respectable families were poring decorously over ledgers and accounts in the offices of their merchant parents.

But the blooming daughters of Knickerbockerdom did not all obey the parental behest. Some of them rankly and daringly disobeyed it. They found Beau Billington, whose clothes fitted him to such perfection and whose foreign touches were so irresistibly winsome, a great deal more interesting than their brothers and cousins and friends, who held it disreputable to be seen smoking a cigar in

“business hours,” and who cared as much for a verse of poetry as for the Koran or the Talmud. Beau Billington cared for poetry, and could write stanzas of it that were simply adorable. He had met Lord Byron abroad, and had once spent an evening in his company. There was a fascinating wickedness about this fact — if fact it could really be termed. His stanzas all had the most romantic ring. They were full of phrases like, “Fair lady, at thy shrine I lay my heart,” and

“ When silver Dian beams above,
And summer dewdrops glisten clear,
I drop, in memory of my love,
A tender but respectful tear.”

Certain copies of Mr. Billington’s poetic tributes went fluttering like little insidious doves among the genteel maidens of old New York. But, unlike doves, they carried trouble instead of peace below their sly literary wings. And one day society woke to the alarming news that Miss Elizabeth Manhattan (very probably one of my own direct ancestresses) had openly braved the wrath of both her parents, and declared that she would either marry Beau Billington or live and die a spinster. The young lovers had been caught, one spring afternoon, together, wandering in sweet converse far out into the country. They had crossed the sluggish little canal that is now Canal Street, and before the cruel destroyers of their peace pounced upon them they must have reached those leafy, rural regions which lay where Union Square now

lifts to an unmindful public its libellous statue of Lincoln.

But they were dragged apart, and a great scandal followed. Beau Billington, deluged with sentimental sympathy from one source, and pelted with animadversions from another, remained majestically constant to his aristocratic sweetheart. Popular feeling ran high; everybody took either one side or another. The entire Van Horn family cut every member of the Schenectady family, one Sunday morning, at the door of Old Trinity, just after church, in consequence of different opinions on this mighty and absorbing subject. There was even some talk of a duel between Beau Billington and a fiery young brother of poor Elizabeth Manhattan. The duel was to take place somewhere "across the river;" report even named the precise historic spot in which Burr had killed Hamilton. But I believe there is no doubt that the duel failed to take place.

Something sadder took place, however. Elizabeth paled, faded, and drooped in her captivity. Her parents continued relentless. She was a great heiress — great, that is, for those days; she would probably inherit, if she lived, the massive sum of fifty thousand dollars. Her father was a very rich man; he had four children, and it was confidently expected that they would receive a fortune of at least two hundred thousand dollars between them.

But poor, love-lorn Elizabeth inherited nothing. It is stated that she died literally of a broken

heart. I am writing of generations ago. Hearts were more brittle in New York society then than now. They broke then sometimes; now they get sprained a little, like a wrist or an ankle, and ultimately recover.

Beau Billington's fidelity survived the death of his Elizabeth. He never married. He went to Boston and lived there for two or three years, and at length returned to New York. All the slanderous stories about his being a moneyless adventurer were slowly and thoroughly refuted. He had been in every respect what he had represented himself. His attachment to the young heiress, from whom he was so mercilessly torn, clad him with a new charm, melancholy and delicate, as years slipped on. His fealty to her memory kept his popularity forever fresh. He was still young, and still unusually handsome. He wrote new verses for the albums of many devout feminine friends. But they were all tinged with the same hue of sadness. "The loved and the lost" recurred again and again amid their funereal iambics.

And here comes the real pathos of my history. Beau Billington gradually grew old; but he grew old in the most unskilful and injudicious way. If he had died at forty, his fame as a new Abelard of constancy might have been preserved intact. If he had retired from the world at forty-five, there might still have remained a rich chance for his future poetic and legendary coronation as hero and martyr. Years of gout and rheumatism,

passed in seclusion, would still have left his chivalrous renown untarnished. But he chose to linger in drawing-rooms until every vestige of youth had departed from him. His superabundant physical health, and his undying love for the pomp and glitter of fashion, had ruined him as a type of manly devotion. He became a senile bachelor, whom everyone tolerated and laughed at.

Thus he stood on the evening we met. The grandchildren and the great-grandchildren of all those who once made his name a sort of social war-cry, lazily recollected his old prestige while they yawned at the dreary figments of his wandering brain. He was like a theatre from which the audience have departed, and in which the lights of the auditorium burn no longer, while, strangely enough, the performance on the stage still continues, but with what mockery of its old alertness, vigor, and vivacity! How tame and thin it looks and sounds beside the energy and ring of the old entertainment!

The romance lingering about this plaintive little story of the old Beau's past devotion appealed to me at once. I don't pretend to declare why. I suppose it was because one has grown to expect nothing of this sort in our big, hard, cold city, which imports its sentiment as it does its *bric-à-brac*. I have always had a tenderness for Bowling Green, too, and the Battery. Any affair of the heart which occurred there a good many years ago was like finding, when I heard it, a

pretty picture to fit a quaint frame long in my possession. I tried to forget that Beau Billington had been displumed as a potential gallant of song and story; that he had played his *beau rôle* quite too continuously; that he resembled a tenor whose *Gennaro* and *Manrico* have once drawn forth wildest plaudits, but who has long outsung his prime, and gets the bitter wage of silence where golden enthusiasm cheered him. I tried to forget this, and very fairly succeeded. Instead of encouraging such disillusionment, I dipped the brush of fancy, as one might say, into colonial coloring, and saw the lovers strolling together on the airy Battery, — he with a ruffled shirt-bosom, and she in a poke-bonnet and mitts. I saw the rows of prim houses near by, with their plain black iron railings and their white arched doorways and the dormer-windows standing forth from their sloped roofs. Beau Billington and his sweetheart were so much more agreeable to think of than if they had been two modern lovers promenading along the brown-stone smartness of Fifth Avenue, — she with French heels that hurt *her*, and he with an English collar that hurt *him*!

I was very kind to Beau Billington for a year or two after that. And sometimes being kind to him meant being talked to by him for perhaps twenty good minutes in some such strain as the following:

“Yes, that little thing over there in blue (or is it pink?—yes, pink—I declare I forgot to call the color by the right name—yes, really I did).

Well, now, what was I just saying? Oh, yes! you need n't tell me" (Beau Billington hated an interruption as though it were a troublesome insect), "for I recollect perfectly well. It was about that little thing over there in blue—I mean pink—yes, pink. Who'd ever suppose she could be Margaret Cartwright's great-grandchild? I—I do believe there must be some mistake. I used to know Margaret Cartwright as *well!* Why, bless my soul, she married a man old enough to be her father—Colonel Preston, a Southerner, who'd been all through the Revolution. Made her an excellent husband, though. Poor fellow, he died long before she did. But not of old age—died from one of his wounds—caught cold in it going one very cold night to the firemen's ball. We used to have firemen's balls in those days, and some of the biggest folks in the city would go to 'em, too. You see, the whole fire department was different then from what it is now. They did n't have any horses hitched to the engines, you understand—no horses at all—and"—

Perhaps I would break in just here with a polite statement that I knew well how the old fire department in New York had been managed (or mismanaged, should I have said); and then, backing away with a smile or a wave of the hand, I would leave Beau Billington to find some other recipient of his garrulity. For, on the whole, being kind to him was by no means always a sinecure.

At length I awoke one evening to the fact that I had not seen the old gentleman for several weeks. Learning his residence, I called there. I found him lying back in an arm-chair, quite alone. The chamber bore no signs of poverty, but it was grim and stiff in all its appointments. It needed the evidence of a woman's touch. I thought of the dead and gone Elizabeth. How different everything would have been if — But, good heavens! of what was I thinking? Elizabeth, even if she had married Beau Billington, might have lived to a good old age and still long ago have been in her grave.

The old invalid smiled when he saw me; but while I sat down beside him and took his hand, he gave me no further sign of recognition. His old voluble tongue was silent forever. His paralysis had affected him most of all in that way. Every morning he would be dressed and go to his chair, walking feebly, but still walking. And there he would sit all day, never speaking, yet smiling his dim, vacant, pathetic smile, if the doctor or the landlady or his valet addressed him.

He was quite deserted by all his friends. No; I should say that he had no friends left to desert him. He had lived too long. There was no one to come except me. And I, strangely enough, was a Manhattan, — a kinsman of his long-lost Elizabeth. Of course, if he had had any kindred here, it would have been otherwise. But there was not a soul to whom one could say, "Old Beau

Billington is dying at last, and the tie of blood makes it your duty to seek him out and watch beside him." As for his kindred in other cities or States, no one knew them. And if any had been found there, they would doubtless have been perfect strangers to him, the children and grandchildren of vanished cousins.

He had lived too long!

Often during the days that followed, while I sat beside his arm-chair, I told myself that there was infinitely more sadness in a fate like his than in having died too early. The gods had never loved any human life of which they were willing to make so lonely and deserted a wreck as this.

At last, one spring evening, at about six o'clock, I chanced to be sitting in his chamber. He had dozed much during the day, they told me; but I fancied, that, as I took his hand and looked into his hazel eyes, there was a more intellectual gleam on his face than he had shown for weeks past. A window was open near his arm-chair; the air was bland as June that evening, though as yet it was only early May. I had brought some white and pink roses, and had set them in a vase on the table at his side, and now their delicious odor blent in some subtile way with the serenity of the chamber, the peace and repose of its continual occupant, the drowsy hum of the great city as it ceased from its daily toil, and the slant, vernal afternoon light.

Suddenly he turned and looked at me; and I

at once saw a striking change in his face. I could not have explained it; I simply understood it, and that was all.

I bent over his chair, taking his hand. It occurs to me now, as I recall what happened, that I could not possibly have been mistaken in the single faintly-uttered word which appeared to float forth from under his snow-white mustache. And that word (unless I curiously underwent some delusion) was "*Elizabeth.*" —

The next instant his eyes closed. And then, only a short time later, I stood by his arm-chair and smelt the roses as they scented the sweet, fresh spring twilight, and thought, with no sense of death's chill or horror, —

"Perhaps there is a blessing, after all, in having lived too long, if only one can pass away at the end as peacefully as Old Beau Billington."

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