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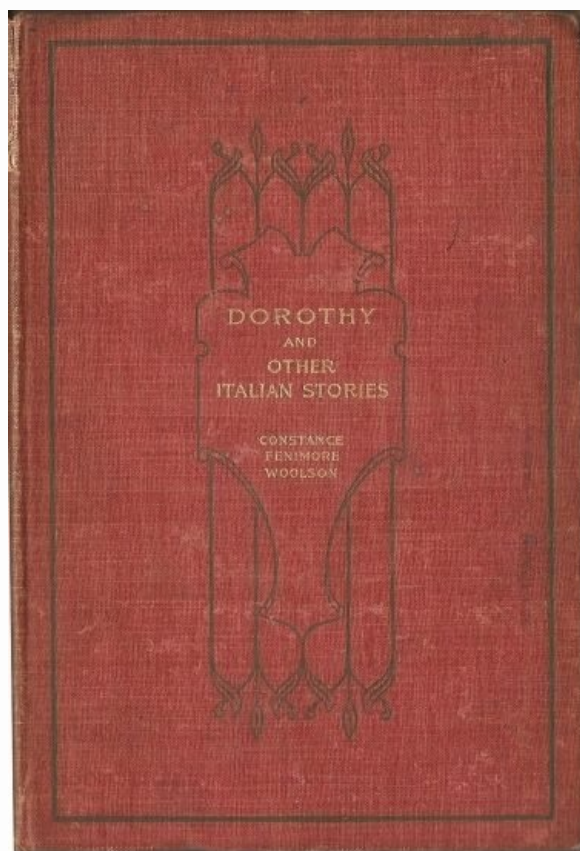
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DOROTHY

DOROTHY
AND
OTHER ITALIAN STORIES

BY
CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON

ILLUSTRATED



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1896

By CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON.

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NOTE

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DOROTHY**I**

As it was Saturday, many visitors came to the villa, Giuseppe receiving them at the open door, and waving them across the court or up the stone stairway, according to their apparent inclination, murmuring as he did so: "To the garden; the Signora North!" "To the salon; the Signora Tracy!" with his most inviting smiles. Dorothy probably was with Mrs. North in the garden. And everybody knew that the tea and the comfortable chairs were up-stairs. The company therefore divided itself, the young people as far as possible, the men who like to appear young, and the mothers who have heavier cares than the effects of open-air light on a middle-aged complexion, crossing the paved quadrangle to the north hall, while the old ladies and the ladies (not so old) who detest gardens ascended the stairs, accompanied by, first, the contented husbands; second, the well-trained husbands; third, other men, bond or free, who cherish no fondness for damp belvederes, for grassy mounds, or for poisoning themselves on a parapet which has a yawning abyss below.

Giuseppe was the gardener; he became a footman once a week, that is, on Saturday afternoons, when the American ladies of the Villa Dorio received those of their friends who cared to come to their hill-top above the Roman Gate of Florence—a hill-top bearing the appropriate name of Bellosguardo. For fair indeed is the outlook from that supremely blessed plateau, whether towards the north, south, east, or west, with perhaps an especial loveliness towards the west, where the Arno winds down to the sea. Enchanting as is this Occidental landscape, Mrs. Tracy had ended by escaping from it.

"When each new person begins: 'Oh, what lovely shadows!' 'Oh, the Carrara Mountains!' we cannot look at each other, Laura and I," she explained; "it's like the two Roman what-do-you-call-ems—augurs. I'm incapable of saying another word about the Carrara Mountains, Laura; and so, after this, I shall leave them to you."

This was the cause of Giuseppe's indicating the drawing-room, and not the garden, as Mrs. Tracy's domain.

It was not difficult for Giuseppe to turn himself into a footman; Raffaello, the butler (or cameriere), could have turned himself into a coachman, a cook, a laundress, a gardener, or even a parlor-maid, if occasion had so required; for Italian servants can do anything. And if Mrs. Sebright sighed, "Ah, but so badly!" (which was partly true from the English point of view) the Americans at least could respond, "Yes, but so easily!" In truth, it was not precisely in accordance with the English standard to be welcomed by smiles of personal recognition from the footman at the door, nor to have the tea offered by the butler with an urgent hospitality which was almost tender. But Italy is not England; radiant smiles from the servants accord perhaps with radiant sunshine from the sky, both things being

unknown at home. As for the American standard, it does not exist, save as a vacillating pennon.

The Villa Dorio is a large, ancient structure of pale yellow hue; as is often the case in Tuscany, its façade rises directly from the roadway, so that any one can drive to the door, and knock by simply leaning from the carriage. But privacy is preserved all the same by the massive thickness of the stone walls, by the stern iron cages over the lofty lower windows, and by an entrance portal which resembles the gateway of a fortress. The villa, which, in the shape of a parallelogram, extends round an open court within, is large enough for five or six families; for in the old days, according to the patriarchal Italian custom, the married sons of the house, with their wives and children, were all gathered under its roof. In these later years its tenants have been foreigners, for the most part people of English and American birth—members of that band of pilgrims from the land of fog and the land of haste, who, having once fallen under the spell of Italy, the sorcery of that loveliest of countries, return thither again and yet again, sometimes unconscious of their thralldom, sometimes calling it staying for the education of the children, but seldom pronouncing the frank word "living." Americans who have stayed in this way for twenty years or more are heard remarking, in solemn tones, "In case I die over here, I am to be taken home to my own country for burial; nothing less could content me." This post-mortem patriotism probably soothes the conscience.

Upon the Saturday already mentioned the Villa Dorio had but one tenant; for Mrs. Tracy had taken the entire place for a year—the year 1881. She could not occupy it all, even with the assistance of Mrs. North and Dorothy, for there were fifty rooms, besides five kitchens, a chapel, and an orange-house; she had selected, therefore, the range of apartments up-stairs which looked towards the south and west, and the long, frescoed, echoing spaces that remained were left to the ghosts. For there was a ghost, who clanked chains. The spectre of Belmonte, another villa near by, was more interesting; he was a monk in a brown gown, who glided at midnight up the great stairway without a sound, on his way to the tower. The American ladies had chosen for their use the northwestern garden. For the Villa Dorio has more than one garden; and it has also vineyards, olive groves, and the fields of the podere, or farm, in the valley below, with their two fountains, and the little chapel of the Holy Well. The northwestern garden is an enchanting spot. It is not large, and that adds to the charm, for its secluded nearness, so purely personal to the occupier, yet overhangs, or seems to, a full half of Tuscany; from the parapet the vast landscape below rolls towards the sunset as wide and far-stretching as the hidden shelf, one's standing-point, is private and small. When one ceases to look at the view—if one ever does cease—one perceives that the nook has no formal flower-beds; grass, dotted with the pink daisies of Italy, stretches from the house walls to the edge; here and there are rose-bushes, pomegranates, oleanders, and laurel, but all are half wild. The encircling parapet is breast-high; but, by leaning over, one sees that on the outside the ancient stones go plunging down, in course after course, to a second level far below, the parapet being in reality the top of a massive retaining-wall. At the corner where this rampart turns northward is perched a little belvedere, or arbor, with vines clambering over it. It was upon this parapet, with its dizzy outer descent, that the younger visitors were accustomed to perch themselves when they came to Villa Dorio. And Dorothy herself generally led them in the dangerous experiment. But one could never think of Dorothy as falling; her supple figure conveyed the idea that she could fly—almost—so lightly was it poised upon her little feet; in any case, one felt sure that even if she should take the fancy to throw herself off, she would float to the lower slope as lightly as thistle-down. The case was different regarding the Misses Sebright; they, too, were handsome girls, but they would certainly go down like rocks. And as for Rose Hatherbury, attenuated though she was, there would be, one felt certain, no floating; Rose would cut the air like a needle in her swift descent. Rose was thin (her aunts, the Misses Wood, called it slender); she was a tall girl of twenty-five, who ought to have been beautiful, for her features were well cut and her blue eyes lustrous, while her complexion was delicately fair. Yet somehow all this was without charm. People who liked her said that the charm would come. The Misses Wood, however, spent no time in anticipation; to them the charm was already there; they had always believed that their niece was without a fault. These ladies had come to Florence twenty years before from Providence, Rhode Island; and they had remained, as they said, "for art" (they copied as amateurs in the Uffizi Gallery). Of late they had begun to ask themselves whether art would be enough for Rose.

At five o'clock on this April afternoon the three Misses Sebright, Rose, Owen Charrington—a pink-cheeked young Englishman, long and strong—Wadsworth Brunetti, and Dorothy were all perched upon the parapet, while Miss Maria Wood hovered near, pretending to look for daisies, but in reality ready to catch Rose by the ankles in case she should lose her balance. Miss Jane Wood was sitting with Mrs. North in the aquish belvedere. With remarkable unanimity, the group of men near by had declared that, in order to see the view, one must stand.

"Your garden is like an opera-box, Mrs. North," said Stephen Lefevre; "you sit here at your ease, and see the whole play of morning, noon, and night sweeping over Tuscany."

"A view like this is such a humanizer!" remarked Julian Grimston, thoughtfully. "One might indeed call it a hauberk."

To this mysterious comparison Miss Jane Wood responded, cheerfully, "Quite so." She did not ask for explanations (Julian's explanations were serious affairs); she spoke merely on general principles; for the Misses Wood considered Julian "such an earnest creature!" Julian, a wizened little American of uncertain age, was protected by a handsome mother, who possessed a firm eye and a man-like mouth; this lady had almost secured for her son an Italian countess of large circumference and ancient name. Julian so far held back; but he would yet go forward.

"Its most admirable quality, to my mind, is that it's here," Mr. Illingsworth remarked, after Julian's "hauberk." "Generally, when there is a noble view, one has to go noble miles to see it; one has to be out all day, and eat hard-boiled eggs on the grass. You can't think how I loathe hard-boiled eggs! Or else one has to sleep in some impossible place, and be routed out at dawn. *Can* any one admire anything at dawn?"



THE VILLA DORIO

"There isn't much dawn in this," answered Daniel Ashcraft. "Up to noon the view's all mist, and at noon everything looks too near. It doesn't amount to much before four o'clock, and only shows out all its points as the sun goes down."

"And have you discovered that, Mr. Ashcraft, on your third day in Florence?" demanded Illingsworth, with admiration. "But it's only another instance of the quick intelligence of your wonderful nation. Now I have lived in the town for twenty-five years, and have never noticed that this Carrara view was an afternoon affair. Yet so it is—so it is!"

Daniel Ashcraft surveyed the Englishman for a moment. "Oh yes—our quick intelligence. It makes us feel as though we were being exhibited. Sixpence a head."

More visitors appeared; by half-past five there were forty persons in the garden. Mrs. North received them all very graciously without stirring from her belvedere. Dorothy, however, was everywhere, like a sprite; and wherever Dorothy was Owen Charrington soon appeared. As for Wadsworth Brunetti, his method was more direct—he never left her side.

"They are both her *shadows*," said Beatrice Sebright, in an undertone, to Rose Hatherbury, as they sat perched side by side on the parapet.

"She is welcome to them," answered Rose. "A burly creature like Owen; and that Waddy!"

"Waddy?" repeated Beatrice, inquiringly.

"A simpleton," pronounced Rose, with decision.

Honest Beatrice surveyed her companion with wonder, into which crept something almost like envy; if she, Beatrice, could only think that Owen was burly; and if it were but possible, by trying hard, to regard Wadsworth Brunetti as a simpleton, how much easier life would be! As it was, she was convinced that Owen was not burly at all, but only athletic. And as to Waddy Brunetti, he was simply Raphael's young St. John in the Tribune of the Uffizi—the St. John at twenty-two, and in the attire of to-day. Wadsworth Brunetti's American mother had done her best to make an American of her only child; Waddy could speak the language of New York (when he chose); but in all other respects—his ideas, his manner, his intonations, his hair arranged after the fashion of King Humbert's, his shoes, his collar and gloves—he was as much a Florentine as his father. The Misses Sebright were not mistaken in their estimation of his appearance; he was exceedingly handsome. And the adverb is used advisedly, for his beauty exceeded that degree of good looks which is, on the whole, the best for every-day use; one hardly knew what to do with young Brunetti in any company, for he was always so much handsomer than the other guests, whether women or men.

"Isn't it enough that he allows himself to be called Waddy?" Rose had demanded in the same contemptuous undertone. "Waddy—wadding. What a name!"

"But Madame Brunetti tells us that Wadsworth is one of the very best of American names?" objected Beatrice, timidly, still clinging to her idol.

"She's mad; there are no best American names—unless one cares for those attached to the Declaration of Independence. The thing is, the best American men; and do you call Waddy that?"

Beatrice did. But she dared not confess it.

"Dorothy, I have forgotten my shawl," said Mrs. North, as Dorothy happened to pass the arbor.

"I'll go for it," said Charrington.

"Is it in the drawing-room?" inquired Julian Grimston. "A blue and white, with knotted fringe?"

Dorothy, meanwhile, was crossing the grass towards the house; Lefevre followed her; Waddy accompanied her.

"Nobody can get it but Dorothy—thanks; it is in my own room," said Mrs. North.

Charrington and Julian paused; Lefevre came back. Mrs. North said to Lefevre, "Praise my prudence in sending for a shawl." Then she added, laughing, "You dare not; prudence is so elderly!"

She could afford to make a joke of age; tall, thin, with abundant drab-colored hair and a smooth complexion, she did not look more than thirty-five, though she was in reality ten years older. She was a widow; her husband, Richard North, had been an officer in the American navy, and Dorothy was her step-daughter.

Dorothy and Waddy had gone on, and were now entering the north hall. This vacant stone-floored apartment, as large as a ball-room, with a vaulted ceiling twenty-four feet high, was the home of an energetic echo; spoken words were repeated with unexpected force, in accents musical but mocking. It was one thing for Waddy to murmur, "Give me but a grain of hope, only a grain," in pleading tones, and another to have the murmur come back like an opera chorus. Dorothy paused demurely, as if waiting for the conclusion of the sentence. But her picturesque suitor, still hearing his own roaring "grrrrrain," bit his lips and tried to hasten their steps towards the other door.

"Oh, I thought you had something to say!" remarked Dorothy, innocently, when they reached the arcade within. "But you never have, have you."

And with this she crossed the quadrangle to welcome four new guests who were about to ascend the stairway in answer to Giuseppe's "The salon! Signora Tracy!" Waddy went up the stairs also. But he could not hope to follow to the remote region of Mrs. North's chamber, so he accompanied the new guests through the anterooms to the drawing-room at the end of the suite, where Mrs. Tracy, the second hostess, received them all with cordial greetings. Mrs. Tracy's years were fifty. She hoped that she was fine-looking, that epithet being sometimes applied to tall persons who hold up their heads, even if they are stout; even, too, if their noses are not long enough for classical requirements. She certainly held up her head. And she was always very well dressed; so well that it was too well. After saying a few words to Waddy, she passed him on to Miss Philipps, who stood near her. Felicia Philipps despised the beautiful youth. But she was willing to look at him for a few minutes as one looks at—a statue? Oh no, that would never have been Felicia's word; at wax-works, that was more like it; Felicia had a sharp tongue. She now chaffed the wax-works a little, pretending to compliment its voice; for Waddy could sing.

"As I sing too, Mr. Brunetti, we're companions in soul," she said. "But, unfortunately, when *I* sing, my soul does not come to my eyes, as yours does."

"The comfort of Waddy is that you can make mince-meat of him to his face, when you feel savage, and he never knows it," she had once remarked.

There was, however, another side to this: Waddy did not know, very possibly, but the reason was that he never paid sufficient heed to Miss Felicia Philipps to comprehend what she might be saying, good or bad; to his mind, Felicia was only "that old maid." Mrs. Tracy, for the moment not called upon to extend her tightly gloved hand to either arriving or departing guests, expanded her fingers furtively, in order to rest them, and glanced about her. Her rooms were full; there was a steady murmur of conversation; the air was filled with the perfume of flowers and the aroma of tea, and there were suggestions also of the *petits fours*, the *bouchées aux confitures*, and the delicate Italian sandwiches which Raffaello was carrying about with the air of an affectionate younger brother. Waddy, who cherished a vision of Dorothy coming to get a cup of tea for her mother (Waddy had noticed upon other Saturdays that "my shawl" meant tea), detached himself as soon as he could from Felicia, and made his way towards the tea-table in the opposite corner. Here Nora Sebright was standing behind a resplendent samovar. Mrs. Tracy had purchased this decorative steam-engine in Russia; but she had not dared to use it until Nora, seeing it at the villa one day, had offered to teach her its mysteries. Mrs. Tracy never learned them; but Nora came up every Saturday, and made the tea in her neat, exact way. She was number one of the Misses Sebright. Six sisters followed her. But this need not have meant that Nora was very mature, because hardly more than a year separated the majority of the Sebright girls (one could say the majority of them or the minority, there were so many). As it happened, however, Nora was twenty-nine, although Peggy, the next one, was barely twenty-five; for the six younger sisters were between that age and sixteen. These younger girls were tall, blooming, and handsome. Nora was small, insignificant, and pale; but her eyes were charming, if one took the trouble to look at them, and there was something pretty in her soft, dark hair, put back plainly and primly behind her ears, with a smooth parting in front; one felt sure that she did not arrange it in that way from a pious contentment with her own appearance, but rather from some shy little ideal of her own, which she would never tell.

"Do you think they have all had tea?" she was saying anxiously as Waddy came up. She addressed a gentleman by her side who had evidently been acting as her assistant.

"I think so," he answered, looking about the room with almost as much solicitude as her own.

Her face cleared; she laughed. "It's so kind of you! You have carried cups all the afternoon."

"I only hope I haven't broken any," responded her companion, still with a trace of responsibility in his tone.

"It is terribly dangerous, with so many people pushing against one. How you can do it so cleverly, I can't think. But indeed, Mr. Mackenzie, I do not believe you *could* let anything drop," Nora went on, paying him her highest compliment. "This is the fourth Saturday you have given to these teacups; I am afraid it has been tiresome. Raffaello ought to do it all; but Italian servants—"

"They are not like yours in England; I can understand that. But Raffaello, now— Raffaello has seemed to me rather a good fellow," said Mackenzie.

At this moment Dorothy, carrying a shawl, appeared at the door; she made her way to the table. "May I have some tea, Miss Sebright, please, for mamma?"

"I will carry it for you," said Waddy, eagerly.

"Won't you take some tea yourself, Miss Dorothy, before you go back to the garden?" suggested Mackenzie, in his deferential tones.

"I? Do you think I take tea? And how can you like it, Mr. Mackenzie? You're not an Englishman."

Waddy thanked fate that his mother had entered human existence in New York. Charrington, who was now near the table also, only laughed good-naturedly. On the whole he was of the opinion that Dorothy liked him. Her ideas about tea, or about other English customs, were not important; he could alter them.

"I am afraid I must acknowledge that I do like it," Mackenzie had answered.

"Do you take it in the morning—for breakfast?" inquired Dorothy, with the air of a judge.

Mackenzie confessed that he did.

"Then you are lost. Oh, coffee, lovely coffee of home!" Dorothy went on. "Coffee that fills the house at breakfast-time with its delicious fragrance. Not black, as the Italians make it. Not drowned in boiled milk, as the French drink it. As for the English beverage— But ours, the American—brown, strong, and with real cream! I wish I had a cup of it now—three cups—and six buckwheat cakes with maple syrup!"

The contrast between this evoked repast and the girl herself was so comical that the Americans who heard her broke into a laugh. Dorothy was very slight; there was something ethereal in her appearance, although the color in her cheeks, the brilliancy of her hazel eyes, and the bright hue of her chestnut hair indicated a vivid vitality. As a whole, she was charmingly pretty. The Americans who had laughed were but two—Mackenzie himself and Stephen Lefevre, who had now joined the group. Lefevre wished that his adorable little countrywoman would not say "lovely coffee." But Lefevre was, no doubt, a purist.

Felicia Philipps now came to the table with out-stretched hands. "*Poor* Nora, I have only just observed how tired you are! You must have one of your fearful headaches?"

"Oh dear, no," answered Nora, surprised. "I haven't a headache in the least."

"Fancy! But you are overtired without knowing it; you must be, or you would not look so pale. I am sure Mr. Mackenzie sees it. Don't you think, Mr. Mackenzie, that Miss Sebright has been here quite long enough? I'm so anxious to relieve her."

"It's very good of you, I'm sure," replied Mackenzie.

And then Felicia, pulling off her gloves, came round behind the table and took possession of the place with an amiability and a rearrangement of the cups that defied opposition.

"I am afraid this tea will be cold," Waddy meanwhile had suggested to Dorothy.

"Yes, do take it down to mamma, Mr. Brunetti. And take this shawl too, won't you?"

"Aren't you coming?" said Waddy, in a discomfited voice, as, shawl in one hand and teacup in the other, he stood waiting.

"In five minutes; I have taken a fancy for spending just five minutes in that big yellow chair."

"That is wise; I'm very pleased to hear you say it," remarked Nora, who, though dispossessed, still lingered near. "We come up here, stay awhile, and then go away; but you are kept on your feet for three or four hours at a time."

"*You* don't go away, do you, Nora?" said Felicia. "You are so kind. I dare say you have been here since noon?"

"The samovar—" began Nora.

"Dear samovar!" commented Felicia, smiling.

And then Nora, at last understanding the sarcasm of the tone, left the table and crossed the room, her cheeks no longer colorless. Alan Mackenzie, who had heard this little dialogue, thought that the two ladies had been very kind to each other.

Mrs. Tracy, on her way back from the anteroom, whither she had gone to escort Julian Grimston's mother, who was taking leave, now stopped at the tea-table. She drew Felicia aside. "Stay and dine with us, won't you? We are always tired on Saturday evenings, and it will be delightful to hear you sing. The carriage shall take you home."

"You're awfully good," Felicia answered. "But don't trouble to send out the carriage. Ask Mr. Mackenzie too. He will be enchanted to stay, and then we can go down together on foot, and nobody need be bothered."

"You don't mind?"

"At *my* age!" answered Felicia, smiling. Felicia's smile always had a slightly hungry look.

"*We* shouldn't think of it. But then we're Americans," responded Mrs. Tracy. "Over here no woman seems to be safely old."

"Is that why so many of you come over?" demanded Felicia, who at heart detested all American women, especially those who, like the tenants of Villa Dorio, had plenty of money at their disposal. Then curbing her tongue, she added, "What you say is true of wives and widows. But I assure you that old maids are shelved over here as soon and as completely as they are with you in Oregon."

"In Oregon!" repeated Mrs. Tracy. "You English are too extraordinary." And she went away, laughing.

During this conversation Dorothy was leaning back in the gold-colored easy-chair; Charrington and Stephen Lefevre were standing beside her, and presently Julian Grimston joined the group, rubbing his dry little hands together gleefully, and murmuring to himself something that sounded like "Aha! aha!"

"Is it the pure joy of living, Mr. Grimston?" Dorothy inquired. For this was said to have been Julian's answer when an acquaintance, upon passing him in the street one day and overhearing him ahaing, had asked what it meant.

At this moment Waddy came from the anteroom. "And mamma's tea?" Dorothy asked.

"Raffaello was just going down; I gave it to him."

"Oh, thanks. I'm thinking how little mamma will like that." And Dorothy played thoughtfully a soundless tune with her right hand upon the arm of the easy-chair.

Waddy pursed up his lips in an inaudible whistle. Then with swift step he left the room.

Five minutes later he was back again. "It's all right. I caught up with him," he said, briefly.

"Now mark that," began Charrington. "This impostor gave those things to Mrs. North, I'll warrant, with rolling eyes that seemed to say that even to have touched them had been a huge joy." Waddy did not defend himself. "I wouldn't be a cherub, as you are, even if I could," went on Charrington. "You belong to Christmas-cards—your chin on your clasped hands. What is a cherub out of business—a cherub going about clothed, and with an umbrella? It's ghastly."

Mrs. Tracy to Miss Jane Wood: "How do you do, Miss Wood?"

To Miss Maria: "*How* do you do?"

Behind the Misses Wood came Rose Hatherbury and three of the Misses Sebright, who were tired of sitting on the wall. Felicia, very busy, sent tea to them all, Mackenzie carrying the cups. Raffaello presented himself at the table to assist. Felicia did not know much Italian, but she did know her own mind, and she wished for no second

assistant; she therefore said to Raffaello, in an undertone, but with decision, "Andate via!" Raffaello, astounded by this unexpected "Clear out!" gazed at her for a moment with wild eyes, and then escaped from the room.

The tea was not good—so the Misses Wood thought as they tried to sip it; Nora Sebright, who was now walking with quick steps through the Via Romana on her way home, would have been distressed to see how bad it was.

"I wonder if there is any one in the garden now?" said Dorothy.

"There are fifty-seven persons," answered Rose, who had seated herself on a sofa near. "I know, because I counted them."

"Then I must go down," said Dorothy, rising.

She nodded to Rose and to the others and left the room, Waddy following as usual. Two minutes later, Charrington, Julian Grimston, and Stephen Lefevre had also disappeared.

Miss Jane Wood (having given up the tea) now began, graciously, "Did you get your ride this morning, Mr. Charrington?"

"Aunt Jane, Mr. Charrington is not here now," said Rose, in her distinct tones.

"Oh," said Miss Jane, bewildered, and fumbling quickly for her eye-glasses, which she had removed when she took her teacup. "He was here a moment ago; I saw him."

"What wonderful elocutionary powers Miss Hatherbury has!" said Felicia, in an aside, to Mackenzie. "I really think she could be heard in the largest hall."

"Upon my word, now that you mention it, I believe she could," answered Mackenzie, admiringly.

Rose divined that she was the subject of Felicia's aside. She said to her aunt, in an interested tone, "How well one sees the Belmonte tower from here!"

Miss Jane came to look, and then (in order that she should see to advantage) her niece pulled the cord and rolled the window-shade up to the top, letting in a broad shaft of sunset light, which fell directly across the tea-table and the persons in attendance there. Rose took this moment to carry her aunt's cup back to the table; and, having put it down, she remained standing by Felicia's side while she began, composedly, a conversation with Alan Mackenzie. Mackenzie responded: his head immediately assumed the little bend which with him signified devoted listening; he stood, meanwhile, exactly where Rose had intended that he should stand—namely, in front of the two ladies, facing them. Felicia, even in her youth, had had no beauty; now all the faults of her sharp features were pitilessly magnified by the same clear light which brought out the fine-grained purity of Rose's complexion and turned her golden hair into glittering glory. Felicia was too intelligent to cherish illusions about her appearance; she quivered under the radiance in which the golden motes danced; she too had color now, but it was an ugly vermilion in spots and streaks. She glanced at Mackenzie; he was listening to Rose; now he was offering one of his civil little questions—those attentive, never-failing small interrogatories for which he was celebrated.

"I should like to strangle him!" thought the older woman, bitterly. "I believe he would keep up those everlasting little questions on his death-bed. In reality, he doesn't care the turn of his finger for that screaming popinjay. Yet he stands there and listens to her, and will do it unflinchingly as long as she talks, if it's all night."

The popinjay at this moment turned, and fired back at Felicia her own gun. "You are tired, Miss Philipps. Doesn't she look tired, Mr. Mackenzie?"

Mackenzie turned obediently; he inspected Felicia's flushed face. "Yes—ah, really, I am afraid you are tired," he said, kindly.

Felicia, unable to bear his gaze, seized her gloves and fled.

But the popinjay could not sing, and had no invitation to stay. Alan Mackenzie loved music. As he never spoke of the love, but few persons had discovered it; Felicia was one of the few.

It was nearly eleven o'clock before the song began. They had gone out, after dinner, to the small stone terrace that opened from the drawing-room, in order to look at the valley by the light of the moon. "For we really like our view when we don't have to talk about it," Mrs. Tracy explained. After a while, "Come, Felicia," she said.

Felicia went within and opened the piano; Mrs. Tracy, following, sank into the easiest chair; Mrs. North placed herself in the doorway, with her face towards the moonlight. Dorothy remained outside, using the hammock as a swing, pushing herself to and fro slowly by a touch on the parapet now and then. On the other side of the terrace, in a garden-chair, sat the second guest.

Felicia's voice was a contralto which had not a range of many notes, but each one of the notes was perfect. Her singing was for a room only; it was intimate, personal; perhaps too personal sometimes. The words were, for her, a part of it as much as the melody.

"Through the long days and years
What will my loved one be,
Parted from me.
Through the long days and years?"

The music upon which these words were borne was indescribably sweet. Dorothy had stopped swinging. But it was the melody that held her vaguely given attention; she paid no heed to the spoken syllables.

"Never on earth again
Shall I before her stand,
Touch lip or hand,
Never on earth again,"

sang the voice, the strains floating out to the moonlight in a passion of sorrow. Dorothy was now looking at the tower of Belmonte, near by. "I wish our villa had a tower," was the thought in her mind. As her gaze turned, she saw that Mackenzie's eyes were resting upon her, and she smiled back at him, making a mute little gesture of applause.

"But while my darling lives,
Peaceful I journey on,
Not quite alone,
Not while my darling lives."

And now the music rose to that last courage, that acceptance of grief as the daily portion of one's life, which is the highest pathos. Then there was a silence.

Dorothy made her little motion of applause again, save that this time the applause was audible; the words on her lips, ready to utter, were, "How pretty that is!" Perhaps Mackenzie divined what these words would be, for, with a quick movement, he rose and went to the end of the terrace, where he stood with his back towards her, looking down the valley. But Dorothy had accomplished her duty; she was perfectly willing to be silent; she sank lazily back in the hammock again, and resumed her swinging.

"Mr. Mackenzie, wasn't that exquisite?" said Mrs. Tracy's voice within.

Mackenzie, thus summoned, crossed the terrace and re-entered the drawing-room. Felicia kept her seat at the piano; as Mrs. Tracy was standing behind her, and as Mrs. North's head was turned away, she was freed for the moment from feminine observation, and she therefore gave herself the luxury of letting all the pathos and passion with which she had sung remain unsubdued in her eyes, which, met his as he came up.

"Lovely, wasn't it? But so sad," continued Mrs. Tracy.

"Yes," Mackenzie answered; "it *is* rather sad." Then, "What song is it, Miss Philipps?" he inquired. "I do not remember having heard it before."

"Through the long days," answered Felicia, who was now looking at the piano keys.

"Ah! And the composer?"

"Francis Boott."

"Ah! Francis Boott, yes. And the words?" His head had now its attentive little bend.

"They are by John Hay." To herself she added: "You *shall* stop your little questions; you *shall* say something different!" And again she looked up at him, her eyes strangely lustrous.

And then at last he did say, "May I take the music home with me? You shall have it again to-morrow. It is a very beautiful song."

Felicia rolled up the sheet and gave it to him, her hand slightly rigid as she did so from repressed emotion.

At midnight the two guests took leave, Mrs. Tracy accompanying them down to the entrance portal. The irregular open space, or piazza, before the house had a weird appearance; the roadway looked like beaten silver; the short grass had the hue and gleam of new tin; the atmosphere all about was as visibly white as it is visibly black on a dark night.



"AND AGAIN SHE LOOKED UP AT HIM"

"It's the moment exactly for our ghost to come out and clank his chains," said the lady of the house. "This intensely white moonlight is positively creepy; it is made for hobgoblins and sheeted spectres; the Belmonte monk must certainly be dancing on the top of his tower."

"Oh no," said Felicia; "it's St. Mark's eve, so we're all under good protection. Hear the nightingales."

She was in high spirits; her words came out between little laughs like giggles. Mrs. Tracy watched the two

figures cross the grass and turn down the narrow passage whence the road descends in zigzags to Florence.

"Poor Felicia," she said, when she had returned up the stairs to the drawing-room; "she is talking about St. Mark's eve, in order, I suppose, to bring up the idea of St. Agnes's. It's late, isn't it? They must want to walk!"

"They?" said Mrs. North. "*She*."

"Well, then, I wish she could," responded Mrs. Tracy. Going to the terrace door, she looked out. "Where is Dorothy?"

"I sent her to bed; she was almost asleep in the hammock. If there is one thing she likes better than another, it is to curl herself up in some impossible place and fall asleep. Would you mind closing the glass doors? The nightingales hoot so."

Mrs. Tracy closed and fastened the terrace entrance for the night.

"What do you mean by saying that you wish she could?" Mrs. North went on. "You wouldn't have Alan Mackenzie marry that plain-looking, ill-tempered old maid, would you?"

"Perhaps she is ill-tempered just because she is an old maid, Laura. And as to looks—if she were happy—"

"Mercy! Are the Mackenzie millions to be devoted to the public charity of making a Felicia Philipps happy?"

"Why, isn't it as good an object as a picture-gallery? Or even an orphan asylum? Felicia would be a great deal happier than all the happiness combined of the whole three hundred orphans out at St. Martin's at a Christmas dinner," suggested Charlotte Tracy, laughing.

"Absurd! Rose Hatherbury is the one—if it's any one in Florence."

"Oh, Rose is too young for him."

"In years, yes. But Rose's heart can be any age she pleases. Alan isn't really old in the least; but he was born middle-aged; he is the essence of middle-age and mediocrity; one always knows beforehand what he will say, for it will simply be, on every occasion, the most polite and the most commonplace thing that could possibly be devised under the circumstances. How came you to ask him to stay to dinner?"

"Felicia made me. Funny, wasn't it, to see Waddy hang on, hoping for an invitation too."

"You might have given him one. It would have entertained Dorothy."

"Well, to tell the truth, Laura, I am a little afraid of Waddy; he *is* so handsome!"

"She doesn't care for him."

"She likes him."

"Yes, as she likes a dozen more. If she has a fancy for one over another, it is, I think, for Owen Charrington," continued the mother. "She would have to live in England. But I dare say his people would take to her; they are very nice, you know—his people."

"How can you talk so! Dorothy is thoroughly American; she would be wretched in England. When she marries—which I hope won't be for five or six years more—she must marry one of our own countrymen, of course. The idea!"

"Very well; I've no objection. But in that case we must take her home again before long," said Laura North, rising. As she spoke she indulged in a stretch, with her long arms extended first horizontally, and then slowly raised until they were perpendicular above her head, the very finger-tips taking part in the satisfactory elongation.

"How I wish *I* could do that!" said Charlotte Tracy, enviously. "But you don't say 'Ye-ough' at the end, as you ought to."

They put out the wax-candles and left the room together, Mrs. Tracy lighting the way with a Tuscan lamp, its long chains dangling. "By this time Felicia, 'delicately treading the clear pellucid air,' is going through the Porta Romana," she suggested.

"Never in the world! She has taken him round by the Viale dei Colli; she won't let him off for two good hours yet," responded Mrs. North.

II

"ON Thursday, January 8th, at the English church, Florence, by the Reverend J. Chaloner-Bouverie, Alan Mackenzie, to Dorothy, daughter of the late Captain Richard North, United States Navy."—*Galignani's Messenger* of January 10, 1882.

III

IT was St. Mark's eve again, April 24th, and again there were many visitors at Bellosguardo. Upon this occasion they were assembled at Belmonte, the villa with the old battlemented tower, where Mr. and Mrs. Alan Mackenzie were receiving their Florentine friends for the first time since their marriage; they had been travelling in Sicily and southern Italy through the winter months.

"We shall be going home in 1883, I suppose," Mackenzie had said to the ladies of Villa Dorio; "I shall be obliged to go then; or at least it would be better to go. In the meanwhile, as Dorothy appears to be rather fond of Bellosguardo—don't you think so?—I have had the idea of taking Belmonte for a time. That is, if you yourselves intend to continue here?"

"Oh, we shall continue, we shall continue," Mrs. Tracy had answered, laughing. "For detached American ladies, who haven't yet come to calling themselves old—for the cultivated superfluous and the intelligent remainders—there is nothing like Europe!"

The flat highways down in the Arno Valley, west of Bellosguardo, are deep in dust even as early as April; the villages, consisting for the most part of a shallow line of houses on each side of the road, almost join hands, so that it is not the dust alone that afflicts the pedestrian, but children, dogs, the rinds of fruit and vegetables—all the far-reaching untidiness of a Southern race that lives in the street. The black-eyed women sit in chairs at the edge of the

dry gutter, plaiting straw; up to middle-age they are all handsome, with thick hair and soft, dark eyes. On this April afternoon they laughed (waiting with Italian politeness until she had passed) as an Englishwoman trudged by them on her way back to Florence. Her plain dress was short, revealing long shoes white with dust; her unbeautiful face was mottled by the heat; she looked tired enough to lie down and die. But to the straw-plaiting matrons she was simply ridiculous, or else mad; for how otherwise should a foreigner be toiling along their plebeian highway on foot, when she could so easily have a carriage? Felicia was finishing her daily walk of miles—a walk without an object save to tire herself. As she passed the olive-crowned heights of Bellosguardo rising on the right, she lifted her eyes.

"He is there, seeing everybody. All the same people who were there a year ago to-day. And what are they thinking—perhaps saying? 'See this dull, middle-aged man, with that flighty little creature for a wife! She cares nothing for him; she turns him round her finger, and always will.' O fool! fool too noble to see or to doubt; simple, generous nature, never asserting itself, always repressed, that *I* understood, while all these other people, that girl at the head of them, only laughed at it!"

She hastened on, passed through the city gate, and made her way down the dirty, evil-smelling Borgo San Frediano to San Spirito beyond, where, high up in an old palace, she had a small apartment crowded with artistic trumpery. After climbing the long stairs, and letting herself in with a latch-key, she entered her minute drawing-room, and sank into a chair, her feet, in their dusty shoes, like two blocks of wood on the matting before her. And the plates and the plaques and the pots, the bits of silk and tapestry and embroidery, the old sketches and old busts and old shrines that adorned the walls, looked down upon her with their usual heterogeneous glimmer. This time the glimmer seemed personally sarcastic, seemed inhuman.

While she sat there, the people at Belmonte were beginning to take leave. Rose was to remain (with Miss Jane Wood). As Waddy Brunetti was to remain also, the Misses Sebright looked at Rose with envy. Six of the sisters were now united in a single admiration. For Owen Charrington had gone to Australia before Christmas—it was about the time that Dorothy's engagement had been announced—and he had not returned; admiration could not stretch to the antipodes. Waddy, too, had been absent through January, February, and March; but he was now at home again, so there was some use in going once more to teas and receptions.

"How lovely Mrs. Mackenzie is looking!" said Miss Maria Wood on the way down to Florence.

She had accepted a seat in Mrs. Grimston's carriage, and it was that lady who answered her.

"Yes—fairly; it's her youth more than anything else. Strictly speaking, there are but two kinds of beauty—dimpled youth like that, and the noble outline and bearing that come from distinguished birth."

This was a double shot. For Rose certainly had no dimples, and the birth of distinction pointed of course to the widowed countess. But Julian, who sat facing his mother, had no longer any courage to resist; his poor little eyes, like those of a sick monkey, had shed their two slow tears on Christmas eve, when, at last allowed to retreat to his own (cold) room, he had accepted drearily the tidings of Dorothy's engagement, and had given up his struggle against fate.

Mr. Illingsworth walked down the hill with Mrs. Sebright, her girls following at a little distance, two and two. "Don't I miss one of your charming daughters?" he said, gallantly, as, happening to look back at the turn of a zigzag, he caught sight of the procession coming round the higher bend.

"Dear me! I wish he might miss three or four!" thought the mother. But this was nothing worse on her part than a natural desire to translate three or four of them to richer atmospheres—a Yorkshire country-house, for instance, or a good vicarage; even army life in India would do. Meanwhile she was replying, "Yes—Nora; Nora has been at St. Martin's Orphan House, out in the country, since Christmas. She is greatly interested in the work there; so much so that I have consented to let her remain."

Nora's secret only one person had discovered, and this one was the benevolent stranger, Charlotte Tracy, who had happened to see the expression in the girl's eyes for one instant, when the news of Alan Mackenzie's engagement had come upon her suddenly, and taken her (as it took all Florence) by surprise. The American lady, instantly comprehending, had (while her own face showed nothing) screened Nora skilfully from observation for several minutes. And ever since she had kept her knowledge hidden away very closely in a shaded corner of her heart.

"A true Sister of Charity," Mr. Illingsworth had responded to the mother's reply about the orphan house. But as he said this he was thinking, "And if *I* had married, as I came so near doing, I, too, might have had at my heels this moment—great heavens!—just such another red-cheeked, affectionate train!"

That evening the ladies who had dined at Belmonte were taking their coffee in the garden; there was no moon, but the splendid stars gave a light of their own as they spangled the dark-blue sky. From the open door of the boudoir at this end of the house, the light, streaming forth, fell upon Dorothy as she sat talking to Rose. After a while the gentlemen joined the ladies; and then Waddy talked to Rose. But while he talked, his eyes followed the hostess, who was now strolling up and down the honeysuckle path with one of her guests. Some one asked Waddy to sing. Nothing loath, he went within, brought out Dorothy's guitar, and sang one of Tosti's serenades. The song and his voice, a melodious tenor, accorded so perfectly with the old Italian garden that there was much applause. And then Waddy, having moved his chair into the shadow of the trees, sent forth after a while from the darkness, unasked, a second song, and this time the words were English:

"Through the long days, the long days and the years,
What will my loved one be,
Parted from me, parted from me,
Through the long days and years?"

The lady who had been strolling with Dorothy had stopped to speak to some one, and for the moment the young wife, who had reached the end of the honeysuckle path, was alone. Mackenzie came up quietly and stood beside her as the song went on. When it had ended, she looked up at him.

"Do you like it so much?" she asked, in surprise, as she saw, in the starlight, the expression of his face.

"It's because I have so much more than I ever dreamed of having, Dorothy," he answered, in a low tone, just touching her hair in the shadow. "A year ago—do you remember? That same song, on the terrace? It expressed what

I felt; for then I had no hope. But now—"

Here a voice from the group of ladies said, "Mr. Mackenzie will know; ask him." And Mackenzie, returning to the light, was the attentive host again. Waddy, meanwhile, crossed the grass quickly to the honeysuckle path.

He was the last to take leave; when Mackenzie returned, after escorting Mrs. North and Mrs. Tracy to the Villa Dorio, he was still in the garden with Dorothy.

Fifteen minutes later, through the open windows of Mrs. North's chamber there came the sound of steps.

"Waddy," said Charlotte Tracy, peeping through the closed blinds, and recognizing his figure. "He has outstayed everybody."

"You are no longer afraid of him, I trust?" inquired Mrs. North.

"Certainly not," said the older lady with decision. After a moment she added, "She must always amuse herself, I suppose."

"She has the very best of safeguards."

"Now there you go, with your cold-blooded judgments, Laura! Dorothy has as deep feelings as anybody. I don't know where you get your knowledge of her; you are her step-mother, it is true; but I have been with her as constantly as you have for years."

"Quite so. May I ask how well you knew her father?"

"I don't care!" was Charlotte's reply. She left the room with majesty. The majesty lasted through the hall, and into her own chamber, as she reflected, "*I* have feelings. And Dorothy has feelings. But Laura is a stone!" At this moment she caught a glimpse of herself in the full-length mirror, and majesty collapsed. "Do I look like that? Do I? Stout, short-nosed?" And she sank down on a sofa overwhelmed. But presently a laugh broke through her discomfiture. "The very next crumpled little old man I see, I'll be nice to him! I'll ask who is his favorite poet, and I'll get him to quote—yes, even if it's Byron!" Mrs. Tracy's favorite author was Ibsen.

"You will do it if I wish, won't you, Alan?" said Dorothy the next day.

"Why, if you really wish it—if you think it best—" began Mackenzie.

"She doesn't in the least," interposed Mrs. North. "Don't indulge her so; you will spoil her."

Mackenzie's eyes turned towards his wife.

"Don't look at me to see whether mamma is right," said Dorothy, laughing; "invent an opinion of your own about me—do! But let us have something striking; consider me capable of murder, for instance, not of mere commonplace selfishness. Every woman is capable of murder once; I am perfectly sure of it."

"My dear," said Mackenzie, expostulatingly.

"I don't know whether I could quite do it with my own hands," Dorothy went on, stretching out her palms and looking at them. "But Felicia Philipps could; yes, with her long fingers. Brrrr!" And she rushed to her husband and hid her face on his arm.

She had her way, which was not a murder, but a ball. Soon afterwards there was a summer-night party at Belmonte, with music and dancing; the tower and the garden, illuminated, were visible for miles roundabout, like a fairy-land on the dark hill. Then followed excursions, long drives, and, more frequently, long rides; for Dorothy had taken to riding. Mackenzie accompanied the riding-parties cheerfully. But Dorothy was often far in advance with one of the younger cavaliers.

"I believe I should come back from the dead, Alan, to see you pounding along, always at the very end of the procession, with Miss Jane Wood," said the young wife one day. "I know you don't care much about riding. But why do you always escort Miss Jane? She must weigh one hundred and eighty."

"She is a little timid, I think," answered Mackenzie; "at least, I have fancied so. She only goes to see to Miss Hatherbury."

"As you see to me?"

Mackenzie liked long walks.

"But walking is so dull. And the people who take long walks have such an insufferable air of superiority," commented Dorothy. "Not that you have come to that, Alan; with you it's just simple vanity."

And making the motion of turning up trousers at the bottom, she crossed the garden, holding her riding-whip like a cane, with her shoulders put back, her head run out a little, and a long step with a dip in the middle of it—the whole an amusing caricature of her husband's gait when starting on a long excursion. Mackenzie had taught himself that gait; he had even been a little proud of it. But now he joined irrepressibly in his wife's merriment, as she loped down the broad walk, and then came running back to him with her own light swiftness.

Occasionally, however, she went with him for a stroll. One day late in the afternoon they passed Villa Dorio together. The sun, low in the west, was shining on all the square Tuscan towers that dot the hill-tops in every direction. May was now more than half spent, and the air was like that of July in Northern countries. The ladies of Villa Dorio saw them go by; Dorothy's straw hat was hanging by its ribbons from her arm.

"He hates to have her out without her hat," remarked Mrs. Tracy, leaning forward to watch them for a moment.

"Well, in that dress, she doesn't look more than fourteen," answered Mrs. North.

Mr. and Mrs. Mackenzie went on down the hill. When they came to the first zigzag, they left the main road, and, turning, crossed a grassy little piazza; beyond, clinging to the side of the hill, with a cluster of cypresses before it like tall green candles, is the small church of San Vito, commanding a magnificent sweep of the valley below. As they passed, San Vito's chimes rang the Angelus, swinging far out from the open belfry against the sky with all the abandon of Italian bells, which seem forever joyous—almost intoxicated—even for the dead. San Vito's has a path of its own which follows a narrow shelf overhanging the valley; the two pedestrians turned down this path. As the bells ceased, Dorothy began to sing:

"Ring out across the sunset sky, Angelus—"

"Go on; go on," said Mackenzie, delightedly. "Oh, *I* can't sing."

"Dear, I think you could; your voice is so sweet. If you would take lessons—"

"Well, by-and-by. We have lots of time for everything, Alan." When they came to the turn where there is a rustic

shrine she paused. "I won't go any farther, I think. But don't stop because I do; you like your walk. Go on, and come back through the olive groves just beyond Belmonte; I will be waiting for you at our wall."

"I don't like to leave you here alone."

"Not under the shrine? What's more, here is the priest."

The priest of San Vito's was coming down the path. He was an old man, with a large, sensible face, and a somewhat portly person dressed in well-brushed black. He aided his steps with a cane. His bearing was serene and dignified. As he passed, Mackenzie saluted him, raising his hat.

"For a Unitarian," said Dorothy, after the worthy man had gone by, "aren't you showing a good deal of courtesy? But you would be courteous to any religion; you would respect the fetish of a South Sea Islander. Do you know, Alan, that you have too many respects? Please go now, so that you can be back the sooner." Mackenzie, who had been leaning against the parapet, turned and began to go down the descent. His wife followed him for a step or two, in order to brush some mortar from his sleeve. "You see it is I that must keep you respectable—in spite of your respects."

How pretty she was! They were alone under the high wall. "My darling," he murmured. And Dorothy, laughing, raised herself on tiptoe to kiss him.

Half an hour later, when he reached the wall near Belmonte, there was no Dorothy. He went within. The signora had gone to Villa Dorio, the servant said. He came out and followed her thither. Yes, Dorothy had been there; but Waddy Brunetti had happened in, and they had strolled down as far as San Vito's.

Mackenzie did not say, "But she has just been to San Vito's." He sat talking with the ladies for twenty minutes or more; then he remarked, offering it as a suggestion for their approval, "I think I will walk on to San Vito's and meet them."

"Yes, do," said Mrs. North. "And make that foolish Dorothy put on her hat."

"It is as warm as midsummer. And the air is perfectly dry, I think; no dew," Mackenzie answered.

"He defends her even when she vexes him," commented Charlotte Tracy, after he had gone.

"He might as well be amiable, seeing that he cannot be interesting," Mrs. North responded.

Dorothy was not at San Vito's. And she had not gone down the zigzags of the carriage-road; he went down to see. He returned to Belmonte. It was now late twilight. But there was still a band of orange light in the west, and, outlined against it, on the top of the tower, were two figures. He recognized them instantly—Dorothy and young Brunetti.

Dorothy waved her hand to him through one of the embrasures. "Send up some one with candles," she called.

"With what?"

"Candles; it's too dark now to come down without lights. But don't send immediately; wait fifteen minutes more, so that we can see the moon rise. And, Alan!"

"Yes?"

"Please tell them that Mr. Brunetti will stay and dine with us."

IV

ON the 29th of December of this same year, 1882, Reginald Illingsworth was paying a visit to Mrs. Sebright.

"What a career that little girl will have!" he said, with deep gustatory appreciation.

Before this, for half an hour, he had been making remarks of a nature best described by the following examples: "That excellent fellow, Mackenzie! You can't think how I miss him!" "There is something so tragic in such a death—a man who had everything to live for!" "How could they go to Rome! That pernicious Roman fever is the curse of Italy." "Those poor ladies! Directly I heard they had returned to Belmonte, I went up at once to inquire and to leave cards; it is a stricken house!" Having said everything that decorum required, he now finally allowed himself to bring out the thought which was in reality filling his mind: "What a career that little girl will have! Only nineteen, and so very pretty, so charming. He has left her everything without a condition (save in the event—most improbable at her age—of her dying without children, in which case it goes back to his own relatives), and I am told that he had nearly eight millions of dollars; that is, one million six hundred thousand pounds! They are shrewd in their American way—those ladies; Mrs. North is very shrewd. And mark my words, madam, that little girl will make one of the great matches yet; not pinchbeck; something really good!" (His "good" had a deeply solid sound.)

This same afternoon the following words were exchanged in another quarter of Florence:

"Rose, dear," said Miss Jane Wood, "you will go up again to-morrow, won't you, to see poor Dorothy?"

"I have been twice—all that is necessary for appearances, Aunt Jane. Why should I bother Dorothy now?"

"Sympathy—" began Miss Jane.

"Sympathy! She is in a position to extend it to me. I think she is the very luckiest girl I have ever heard of in my life. All another girl can do in the face of such luck as that is to keep away from it, and not think about it—if she can."

Miss Jane Wood: "I am *astonished!*"

Miss Maria: "!!!!"

That evening, at Belmonte, Dorothy walked and walked about the drawing-room; now she stopped at a table, took up something and put it down again; now she moved a statuette to another position; now she gazed at the etchings on the wall as though she had never seen them before; now she added pine-cones to the already blazing fire, kneeling on the rug with the hot flame scorching her face; finally she went to the window, and, parting the curtains, stood looking out. It was a dark night without stars; in addition to the freezing temperature, the wind was fierce; it drove furiously against the windows of the villa, it came round the corner of the tower with a shriek like that of a banshee.

"It's dreadfully cold," said the girl at last, as if speaking to herself.

"Surely not here?" replied Mrs. Tracy. Dorothy came wandering back to the fire, and then the aunt drew her

down by her side. "Dear child, don't keep thinking of Rome," she whispered. "He is not there; there is nothing there but the lifeless clay." And she kissed her.

"Try not to be so restless, Dorothy," said Mrs. North, from her warm corner. "You have walked about this room all day."

"It's because I'm so tired; I am so tired that I cannot keep still," Dorothy answered.

"I think a change would be a good thing for all of us," Mrs. North went on. "We could go to Cannes for two months; we could be as quiet at Cannes as here."

Dorothy looked at her with vague eyes, as if waiting to hear more.

"It is warmer there. And then there is the sea—to look at, you know," pursued Mrs. North, seeing that she was called upon to exhibit attractions.

"Egypt would be my idea," said Mrs. Tracy. "A dahabeeyah on the Nile, Dorothy. Camels; temples."

Dorothy listened, as if rather struck by this idea also.

"But Egypt would be a fearful trouble, Charlotte," objected Mrs. North. "Who is going to get a good dahabeeyah for us at this time of year?"

"Don't spoil it. I'll get twenty," responded the other lady.

And then there was a silence.

"Well, Dorothy, are you going to leave it to us to decide?"

"Yes, mamma," Dorothy answered. Her eyes had grown dull again; she sat listening to the wind as if she had forgotten what they were talking about.

"It's decided, then. We will go to Cannes," remarked Mrs. North, serenely.

Her Aunt Charlotte's discomfited face drew a sudden laugh from the niece. And this laughter, once begun, did not cease; peal succeeded peal, and Dorothy threw herself back on the cushions of the sofa, overcome with merriment. Mrs. North glanced towards the doors to see if they were well closed. But Charlotte Tracy was so glad to hear the sound again that she did not care about comments from the servants; Dorothy's face, dull and tired, above the dead black of the widow's attire, had been like a nightmare to her.

They went to Cannes. And Mrs. North's suggested "two months" had now lengthened, in her plans, to three. But before two weeks, had passed they were again at Belmonte.

"Now that we have made one fiasco, Charlotte, and taken that horrible journey, all tunnels, twice within twenty days, we must not make another; we must decide to remain where we are for the present. If Dorothy grows restless again, be firm. Be firm, as I shall be."

"Surely we ought to be indulgent to her now, Laura?"

"Not too much so. Otherwise we shall be laying up endless bother for ourselves. For we have a year of hourly employment before us, day by day. In the way of seeing to her, I mean."

"She will not make us the least trouble," said Mrs. Tracy, indignantly.

"I am not finding fault with her. But she cannot help her age, can she? She is exceedingly young to be a widow, and she has a large fortune; but for a year, at any rate, if I know myself, gossip shall not touch my daughter."

"A year? I'll guarantee ten," said Mrs. Tracy, still indignant.

"I don't care about ten; three will do. Yes, I see you looking at me with outraged eyes. But there's no need. I liked Alan as much as you did; I appreciated every one of his good points. With all that, you cannot pretend to say that you believe Dorothy really loved him. She was too young to love anybody. The love was on his side, and you were as much surprised as I was when she took a fancy to accept it."

Mrs. Tracy could not deny this. But she belonged to that large class of women who, from benevolent motives, never acknowledge unwelcome facts. "I think you are perfectly horrid!" she said.

Dorothy, back at Belmonte, was troublesome only in the sense of being always in motion. Having exhausted the garden, she began to explore the country. She went to Galileo's tower; to the lonely little church of Santa Margherita; the valley of the Ema knew her slender black figure. Once she crossed the Greve, and, following the old Etruscan road, climbed to the top of the height beyond, where stands the long, blank Shameless Villa outlined against the sky.

"Do you know, I am afraid I am lame," said Mrs. Tracy, the morning after this long tramp to the Shameless.

"Well, why do you go? One of us is enough," answered Mrs. North.

To the walks Dorothy now added lessons in German and Italian. Mrs. North drove down to Florence and engaged Fräulein Bernstein and Mademoiselle Scarletti. Next, Dorothy said that she wished to take lessons in music.

"A good idea. You ought to play much better than you do," said her mother.

"Piano; but singing too, please," Dorothy answered.

Again Mrs. North descended to Florence; Fräulein Lundborg was engaged for instrumental music, and Madame Farinelli for vocal. Dorothy wished to have a lesson each day from each of her teachers. "It's a perfect procession up and down this hill!" thought Mrs. Tracy. There was a piano in the billiard-room, and another in the drawing-room; but now Dorothy wished to have a third piano in her own sitting-room up-stairs.

"But, my dear, what an odd fancy! Are you going to sing there by yourself?" her mother inquired.

"Yes!" said Dorothy.

"Do you think she is well?" asked Mrs. Tracy, confidentially, with some anxiety.

"Perfectly well. It is the repressed life she is leading," Mrs. North answered. "But we must make the best of it. This is as good a place as any for the next three months."

But again this skilful directress was forced to abandon the "good place." Early in March, when the almond-trees were in bloom, Dorothy, coming in from the garden, announced, "I *hate* Belmonte! Let us go away, mamma—anywhere. Let us start to-morrow."

"We took you to Cannes, and you did not wish to stay. We shall be leaving Belmonte in any case in June; that isn't long to wait."

"You like Paris; will you go to Paris?" the girl went on.

"What can you do in Paris more than you do here?"

"I love the streets, they are so bright—so many people. Oh, mamma, if you could only know how dull I am!" And sinking down on the rug, Dorothy laid her face on the sofa-cushion at her mother's side.

Mrs. Tracy coming in and finding her thus, bent and felt her pulse.

"Yes, one hundred and fifty!" said Dorothy, laughing. "Take me to Paris, and to the opera or theatre every night, and it will go down."

"Oh, you don't mean that," said the aunt, assuringly.

"Yes, but I do," Dorothy answered. And then, with her cheek still resting on the cushion, she looked up at her mother. "You will take me, mamma, won't you? If I tell you that I *must*?"

"Yes," replies Mrs. North, coldly.

They went to Paris. And then, for four weeks, almost every night at the back of a box at the opera or at one of the theatres were three ladies in mourning attire, the youngest of the three in widow's weeds. Mrs. Tracy was so perturbed during these weeks that her face was constantly red.

"Why are you so worried?" Mrs. North inquired. "I manage it perfectly; people don't in the least know."

"Do I care for 'people'? It's—it's—" But she would not say "It's Dorothy." "It's ourselves," she finally ended.

"Always sentimental," said Laura.

Midway in the first week of April, Dorothy suddenly changed again. "I can't stay here a moment longer!" she said.

"Perhaps you would like to take a trip round the world?" suggested Mrs. North, with a touch of sarcasm.

"No. I don't know what you will say, mamma, but I should like to go back to Belmonte."

"I have a good deal of patience, my dear, but I must say that you wear it out."

"I know I do; but if you will take me back, I promise to stay there this time as long as you like."

"I like—" began Mrs. North; but Dorothy, with a frown, had rushed out of the room.

"What shall we do now?" said the aunt.

"Go back, I suppose; I have always thought Belmonte the best place up to really hot weather. One good thing: if we do go back we can take the opportunity to rid ourselves definitely of both of those villas. My idea is the Black Forest country for August and September. Then we could come here again for a few weeks. For the winter, what do you say to a long cruise towards the South somewhere, in a yacht of our own? We could select the right people to go with us."

They returned to Italy, reaching Bellosguardo again on the 11th of April.

On the 6th of May Charlotte Tracy said, "Laura, to me this is dreadful! Waddy is here morning, noon, and night."

"So many people have left Florence that it hardly matters; nobody knows what is going on up here. He amuses her, and that is something gained."

"I wish he wouldn't be forever singing!" said the aunt, irritably.

"He sings very well. And Dorothy has shown a new interest in singing lately. Don't you remember that she took lessons herself before we went to Paris?"

"You don't mean to intimate that Waddy had anything to do with that?"

"Why not? A girl of that age has all sorts of changing interests and tastes; there will be something new every month or two, probably, for a long time yet."

In June, Mrs. Tracy demanded, "Is Owen Charrington one of your something-news?"

"I dare say he is," Mrs. North answered, smiling.

For Owen Charrington had come back from Australia. He found the zigzags which led to Belmonte very hot and very solitary; there was no Waddy going up or coming down, either on foot or in a carriage, although his ascents and descents had been as regular as those of the postman during the six preceding weeks. Shortly before Charrington's return, Dorothy, entering the boudoir one evening at ten o'clock, said:

"Mamma—Aunt Charlotte—will you tell the servants, please, that whenever Mr. Brunetti calls, after this, they are to say that we are engaged, or not at home? I don't suppose *you* care to see him?"

"What can have happened?" said Mrs. Tracy, when the girl had gone out again without explanation.

"There hasn't been time for much to happen. I have been out there with them all the evening; I only came in for my tea," answered Mrs. North, sipping that beverage.

"Since then he has been singing. At least, I thought I heard his voice—not very loud."

"Perhaps she is tired of his voice—not very loud."

Mrs. Tracy threw a lace scarf over her head and went out to the garden. The long aisles under the trees were flooded with moonlight, the air was perfumed with the fragrance of the many flowers; but there was no Dorothy. She entered the house by another door, and, going softly up the great stairway, turned towards Dorothy's rooms at the south end of the long villa. Here a light was visible, coming under the door of the sitting-room; the aunt did not lift the latch, she stood outside listening. Yes, Dorothy was there, and she was singing to herself in a low tone, playing the accompaniment with the soft pedal down:

"Through the long days, the long days and the years,
What will my loved one be,
Parted from me, parted from me,
Through the long days and years?"

"She is up there singing; singing all alone," reported the aunt, when she came back to the boudoir down-stairs.

"I suppose you like that better than not alone?" suggested Mrs. North.

Waddy came to Belmonte five times without success. Then he left Florence.

Dorothy did not stroll in the garden with Owen Charrington. If her mother and aunt were outside when he came, she remained with them there; but if they were in the drawing-room or the boudoir, she immediately led her guest within; then she sat looking at him while he talked. Charrington talked well; all he said was amusing. Dorothy listened and laughed. If he paused, she urged him on again. This urgency of hers became so apparent that at last it embarrassed him. To carry it off he attacked her:

"You force me to chatter, Mrs. Mackenzie—to chatter like a parrot!"

"Yes," answered Dorothy, "you must talk; you must talk all the time."

"'All the time'—awfully funny Americanism!"

"And the French 'tout le temps'?"

"Oh, French; I don't know about French."

"Of course you don't. We are willing to be funny with the French. Are you 'very pleased' to be here to-day?
Answer."

"Of course I am very pleased."

"And you would say, wouldn't you, 'Directly I returned to Florence, I bought a horse'?"

"But I didn't," said Charrington, laughing; "I only hired one. And that reminds me, Mrs. Mackenzie; you can't think how divine it is now at four o'clock in the morning. Won't you go for a ride at that hour some day soon? Mrs. North and Mrs. Tracy could follow in the carriage" (with a look towards those ladies).

"Ride?" repeated Dorothy. A flush rose in her cheeks. "No," she answered, in an altered voice—"no!"

She said nothing more, and she did not speak again; she sat looking at the floor. Mrs. North filled the pause with her placid sentences. But Dorothy's manner was so changed and constrained that the young Englishman soon went away. The girl had taken something into her head. But it would not last long; nothing ever did last long with Dorothy.

This belief of his was soon jostled by the fact that Dorothy would not see him. Mrs. North covered the refusal as well as she could by saying that her daughter was not well; that she was not seeing any visitors at present. But Florence was empty; there were no visitors to come; it simply meant, therefore, that she was not seeing Owen Charrington. He lingered on through the month, coming every day to Belmonte. Mrs. North received him graciously. But he was obliged to content himself with a close investigation of their plans for the summer. At last, on the 2d of July, unable any longer to endure the burning, glaring Lung' Arno and the furnace-like atmosphere of the Hôtel d'Italie, he took his departure. He went to Baden-Baden, writing home to his family that he should probably spend the summer in the Black Forest country with friends.

The morning after Charrington's departure, illness (real illness this time) seized Dorothy. For a week she remained motionless on a couch, her face white, her eyes closed.

"We must take her to Switzerland; we must go straight up to the snow," said Charlotte Tracy. "When she sees the glacier water she will revive at once. The gray glacier water, you know; one begins to meet it at Chiomonte; it comes rushing over the rocks, gray and cool, with sometimes a little foam; but gray, always gray—a sort of leady gray."

She said gray so many times that Mrs. North cried out at last, "Oh, do call it green!"

Speedy preparations were made for departure; the trunks were packed and sent down to the railway station. Dorothy remained passive, making no objection to their plans, but showing no interest in them. Caroline, her maid, dressed her for the journey. But when the little black bonnet with its long black veil had been put on, and the black gloves, and the young mistress of the house rose to walk to the carriage, after a few steps her figure swayed, and she sank to the floor; she had fainted. She remained unconscious for so long a time that it was evident there could be no travelling that day; they must wait until she was stronger. They waited, therefore, from one day to the next, each morning expecting to start, and each morning postponing departure. The 15th of July found them still at Belmonte. The thick stone walls of the majestic old house kept out the burning sunshine, and Dorothy appeared to like the warm air that came in through the shaded windows; she lay breathing it quietly, with her eyes closed. The American physician of Florence had gone to New York for six months. An English doctor came up daily. But there was nothing to combat. There was no fever, no malady save this sudden physical weakness. Everything possible was done for this, but with small results. At last Dr. Hotham advised them to attempt the journey in any case. A nurse was engaged; Dorothy was to be carried on a couch to the station, where a railway carriage, provided with an invalid's bed, was waiting. But before they had traversed a quarter of the length of the Via dei Serragli, the clatter of the carriage wheels and the other noises of the street threw the girl into a delirium, and they returned hastily to Bellosguardo. The delirium passed away and they made another attempt. This time they were to cross Florence in the middle of the night, and a special train was to take them northward. But the paroxysm came on again, and with greater violence. Before they reached the bottom of the Bellosguardo hill Dorothy threw up her arms like a wild creature; the nurse could scarcely hold her. This time high fever followed; the girl, now in bed, lay with scarlet cheeks and glassy eyes, knowing nobody. Dr. Hotham conquered the fever. Then she was as she had been before, save that the weakness was increased.

With the exception of Dr. Hotham, there was now no one in Florence whom they knew. Nora Sebright remained at St. Martin's Orphan House out in the country; but she knew nothing of events in town. One day Dr. Hotham, having been called to the orphan house to see a child, spoke to Nora of the puzzling illness of Mrs. Mackenzie; he knew that the Sebrights were among the acquaintances of these American ladies. Nora hurried to town, and, although it was evening, drove up to Belmonte without delay. There were now two nurses at the villa. But Nora was the best nurse; and, after seeing Dorothy for a moment, she begged the mother and aunt to allow her to remain and assist.

"You are extremely kind, Miss Sebright. But I do not think you ought to give yourself so much trouble," said Mrs. North. "Dorothy will soon be stronger; the fever, as you see, has entirely disappeared, and in a few days we shall go to Switzerland."

But Nora followed Mrs. Tracy into the next room. "Dear Mrs. Tracy, do let me stay. I am such a good nurse—you can't think. And I am so fond of Dorothy. And I really think she ought to be amused, if possible. Not that I am very amusing; but at least it makes one more."

There was no lamp in this room, but, all the same, Charlotte Tracy seemed to read an expression in the face she could not see. "What has Dr. Hotham said to you?" she asked.

"Indeed, nothing; he never talks. It is only that Dorothy has always been so well; she was well all winter, you know. Even now (for the fever was only the effort of the journey) there seems to be nothing one can take hold of. And so the question came up, as it always does in such a case, could she have anything weighing upon her mind—weighing too much, I mean? But I am sure," continued Nora, her voice calm as usual (but her face, in the darkness, quivering for an instant), "that we need apprehend no danger of that sort; Dorothy's mind is perfectly healthy. And she has been from the very first so brave, you know—so wonderfully brave."

Charlotte Tracy, a prey to conflicting feelings, bent and kissed Nora without a word. Grief for Alan Mackenzie had indeed been more deeply felt at the dreary orphan house down in the dusty valley than in his own home on this beautiful hill. Nora stayed.

August burned itself out. At Belmonte the heavy outer portals were kept closed; within, all the doors stood open in order to create, if possible, a current of air through the darkened rooms. Once in two hours, night and day, Nora came to Dorothy's bedside and offered some delicate nourishment; Dorothy took it unobjectingly. She seldom spoke, but she appeared to like Nora's presence and her gentle ministrations.

Mrs. Tracy had forced herself to speak to Laura about the doctor's question. Some force was necessary, for she was always exasperated by Laura's replies. "I am beginning to be a little frightened about Dorothy, Laura; she doesn't gain. It is no time to mince matters; such things have happened before, and will happen again as long as the world lasts, and it seems that even Dr. Hotham has asked whether there could be anything weighing upon her mind. Now what I want to know is, do you think she is brooding about something?"

"Brooding?"

"Yes. I mean, do you think she is interested in somebody?—Owen Charrington, if I must name him. You used to think that she liked him? And that she cannot bear the separation? Yet thinks it too soon? And that that was the reason she refused to see him again? And now it is weighing upon her?"

"Mercy, what theories! You have always saddled Dorothy with deeper feelings than she has ever possessed. Do leave the poor child alone; don't make her out so unusual and unpleasant; she is like any other girl of nineteen. She is interested in Owen—yes; but not in that exaggerated way; she isn't pining herself ill about him. And let me tell you, too, that if he were to her at this moment all you are imagining him to be, she wouldn't in the least be deterred by considerations of its being 'too soon,' as you call it; she would not even remember that it *was* soon."

Mrs. Tracy's eyes filled.

"Well, what now? Do you wish her to be breaking her heart for Alan? I thought you came in to suggest sending post-haste for Owen Charrington! Do you know really what you want yourself? Dorothy will grow stronger in time. A hot summer in Italy has pulled her down, but with the first cool weather she will revive, and then we can carry out our plans."

Towards the middle of September the rains came, the great heat ended. With the return of the fresh breeze Dorothy left her bed, and lay on the broad divan among its large, cool cushions; she even walked about the room a little, once or twice a day. The first time she walked they saw how thin she was; the black dressing-gown hung about her like a pall.

"Take it off," said Mrs. Tracy, when she had beckoned Caroline into the next room. "Never let her wear it again."

"But I have fear that madame is not enough strong yet to wear a costume," suggested the maid, respectfully.

Mrs. Tracy unlocked a wardrobe and took out a pile of folded draperies. They were white morning dresses, long and loose, covered with beautiful laces and knots of ribbon; they had formed part of Dorothy's trousseau. "Let her wear these," she said, briefly.

Dorothy made no objection to the change. Occasionally she looked at her new attire, and smoothed out the ribbons and lace. Throughout her illness she had scarcely spoken. They had supposed that this silence came from her weakness—the weakness which had made it an effort sometimes for her to lift her hand. But now that she was up again, and walking about the room, the muteness continued. She answered their questions, but it seemed necessary for her to recall her thoughts from some distant place in order to answer. She lived in a reverie, and her eyes had a far-off expression. But these were slight things. When ten days had slowly passed without any relapse, Charlotte Tracy, who had counted the hours, exclaimed, with joy, "Now we can go!" Dr. Hotham was to accompany them as far as Vevey. Nothing was to be said to Dorothy, in order that she should not have even a feather's weight of excitement; but the preparations were swiftly made. On the afternoon before the day appointed for the start, Dorothy suddenly left her easy-chair, crossed the room, opened a door, and looked down a corridor. At the end of the corridor she saw Caroline kneeling before open trunks.

"What are you doing, Caroline? Those are my trunks, aren't they? You may stop; I shall not leave Belmonte."

Nora, who had followed, led her back. "Your mother and aunt are so very anxious to go north, dear," she explained. "Come and lie down; you must not tire yourself before the journey."

But Dorothy resisted. "Please call them, Nora; call them both; I must tell them. I know mamma; she will have me carried. But that is because she does not understand. When I tell her, it will be different. Please call them both."

When they came in—Mrs. Tracy alarmed, Mrs. North smiling as if prepared to be, outwardly, very indulgent—Dorothy was still standing in the centre of the room, the laces of her white dress fluttering in the soft breeze.

"Mamma," she said, "I must tell you. Aunt Charlotte, you have always been kind to me. I cannot go away; do not ask me."

"Sit down, Dorothy. Nora, make her sit down. You will not be asked to take a step, my daughter; everything is arranged; don't trouble yourself even to think."

"You do not understand, mamma. But I myself have not understood until lately. I cannot leave Belmonte."

"But Dr. Hotham thinks you can," interposed Mrs. Tracy, soothingly; "he knows how much strength you have. We are all going with you, and the journey will be very easy. You used to like Vevey."

"Let me stay here; I wish to stay here."

"But we have never intended to spend our lives at Bellosguardo," answered Mrs. North, drawing her towards the divan and making her sit down.

"Let me stay a little while longer, mamma."

"You mean that you will be willing to go later? But, we think that now is the time. You have nothing to do save to rest here quietly, and then go to sleep; you will open your eyes in Vevey."

Dorothy, seated, her hands extended on her knees, looked up at her mother. "Mamma, you don't know. There's an ache that will not leave me. I haven't told you about it. But I'm *so* unhappy!"

Mrs. Tracy, hurrying forward, put her arm round the girl protectingly. Mrs. North, her face slightly flushed, whispered to Nora:

"She is wandering. Please go and send some one immediately for the doctor. Write a note for the man to take with him."

In this way she got rid of Nora.

Dorothy, alone with her mother and aunt, went on talking: "I didn't know what it meant myself for ever so long. But now I do, and it's all simple. I shall just stay quietly here. This is the best place. And you mustn't mind, for it makes *me* very happy."

"My darling, have you written? What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Tracy.

"What do I mean?" Dorothy repeated. She smiled; into her white face came a flush of color. "I mean that I shall see him very soon now. It won't be long to wait."

"She has sent for him," thought the aunt. "I was right; it is Owen."

"That is why I wish to stay here," Dorothy went on. "Everything here is associated with Alan; he liked Belmonte so much."

"Alan?" breathed the aunt, amazed, but instantly concealing her amazement. Mrs. North quickly measured some drops from a phial containing a sedative.

Dorothy let her head sink back against the cushions. "In the beginning I didn't in the least know that I was going to feel it so. But that ache came, and it wouldn't stop. I tried all sorts of things—don't you remember? I tried studying. I tried music lessons. He used to urge me to sing. He liked long walks, and I never would go; so then I took long walks. You haven't forgotten them, have you? But the ache went on, and I could not stand it. So I asked you to go to Paris. Paris has always been so funny and amusing. But it wasn't funny any more. When we came back here I thought that perhaps some one coming up every day and staying a long time would make me forget. But having Waddy was worse than being alone, and at last I hated him. Owen Charrington, too! Owen used to make me laugh; I thought he would make me laugh again. But he didn't at all. And when he asked me that last day to ride it was like a knife; for Alan always went with me, and would never say anything to spoil my pleasure. Yet he did not care about it really, though I insisted upon going day after day. That is the way it was about everything. But I'm paying for it now; I miss him so—I miss him so! Alan! Alan!—" And putting her thin hands over her face, Dorothy burst into miserable heart-broken sobs.

Nora came running in; Mrs. North handed her the medicine glass.

"Hysterics," she said. "Give her those drops as soon as you can."

"I look to you, doctor, to get us out of this new difficulty," said this lady the next day to Dr. Hotham. "She has taken this fixed idea that she does not wish to leave Belmonte. But the fixed idea of a girl of nineteen ought not to be a trouble to you. Can't you suggest something? Has science no resources for such a case?"



"I MEAN THAT I SHALL SEE HIM VERY SOON NOW"

Dr. Hotham's resource was to send to Rome for a colleague. The most distinguished English physician in Italy

was called to Florence, and there was a consultation at Bellosguardo. When it was over Mrs. North came in to see the great man.

His sentences were agreeable; they were also encouraging. After a time he spoke of the varying forms of nervous prostration; then he asked whether this very interesting young lady could have, by any possibility, something weighing upon her mind?

"No, nothing," replied the mother.

"Ah! In that case time, I trust, is all that is necessary for a complete recovery."

"My own idea would be to take her north in spite of her disinclination to go," Mrs. North went on. "A disinclination ought not to be important. The journey would soon be over. She could be kept under the influence of sedatives. But Dr. Hotham will not give his consent."

"I agree with him, madam. Do not force her; the effect upon the nervous system might be bad. Let her do whatever she fancies. Amuse her. What a pity there is no Corney Grain in Italy!"

"Everything in the way of amusement has been tried. That is why I wish to take her away."

"Ah! I understood you to say, I think, that there is no hidden cause, no wish, no mental—ah—err—strain?"

"Nothing of any consequence. She is hysterical sometimes; but that is owing to her physical weakness," Mrs. North answered. And she said what she believed.

A month later Dorothy, lying on a couch in her room, put out her hand to Nora. "I must give you some of my money, Nora, for your poor people—your orphans and the school and the hospital. I will give it to you to-morrow."

"You can help Nora to distribute it," said Mrs. Tracy.

"Dear Aunt Charlotte, how you hate to hear me speak of it! But I talk to Nora, you know, just as I please in the night."

"No; talk to me, too. Say whatever you like," answered Mrs. Tracy, quickly.

"It is so warm this evening that I can have all the windows open," Dorothy went on. "Take the lamp out, Nora, please, and let in the moonlight; I like to see it shining across the floor." She lay in silence for some minutes looking at the radiance. They had cut off her hair, thinking that its length and thickness might be taking something from her small store of strength. Her face, with the boyish locks, looked very childlike. "Do you remember that song, Aunt Charlotte, 'Through the long days'? The moonlight makes me think of it. First, Felicia Philipps sang it one moonlight evening over at Villa Dorio. Then, after we were married, some one sang it here in the garden, and Alan said, when it was over— Oh, if I could only tell him once, just once, that I *did* love him! He never believed it—he never knew—"

"Don't cry, dear. *Don't*."

"No; I don't cry very often now," Dorothy answered, her breast rising in one or two long sobs. "Last spring Waddy dared to sing that song again—Alan's song! I could not see him after that."

"Through the long days, the long days and the years—"

"It will tire you to sing, dear."

"No; I like it." And then, in a faint little thread of a voice, barely audible, but very sweet, she sang, lying there in the moonlight, the beautiful song:

"Through the long days, the long days and the years,
What will my loved one be,
Parted from me, parted from me,
Through the long days and years?
"Never, ah, never on earth again—"

It was her last song. Three days later she died. She passed away so quietly that they did not know it was death; they thought she was

asleep.

When at last they learned what it was, Mrs. North, standing beside the couch, white and stern, said, with rigid lips, "The doctors did not tell us."

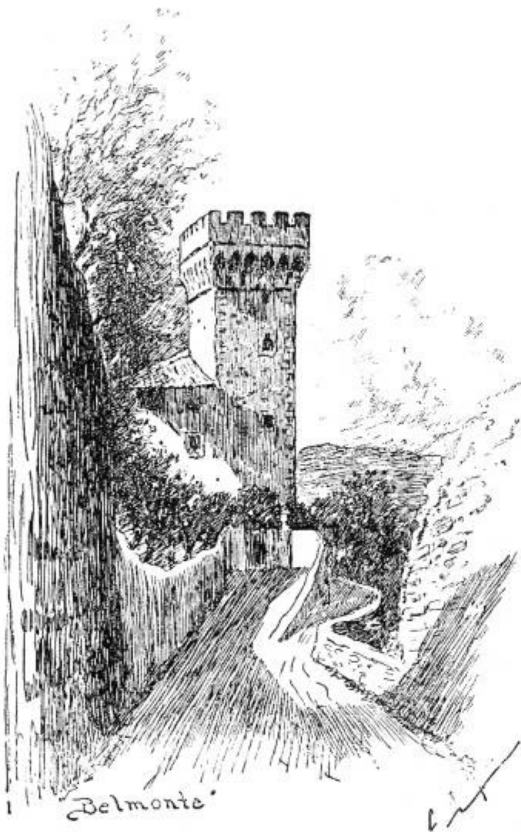
But the doctors did not know.

A TRANSPLANTED BOY

I

LORENZO came into the hall, bell in hand.

Putting down his white gloves at the feet of the goddess Flora, he began his promenade: ding-dong past Jupiter and Juno; ding-dong past Mars and Venus, Neptune and Diana, Minerva and Apollo, until the last pedestal on the east was reached; here there was no goddess, only a leaping flame. There was a corresponding tongue of fire on the last pedestal of the west side opposite, and both of these architectural ornaments were made of wood, painted



BELMONTE

scarlet. On the north side there towered six windows as high as those of a church. These windows faced a flight of stone steps that went down in a dignified sweep, eighteen feet wide, to a landing adorned with a Muse; here, dividing into two wings, the staircase turned to the right and the left in noble curves, and descended to the square hall below. The massive iron-clamped portals of this lower hall were open; they were swung back early in the morning, in order that the horses might pass through on their way to the street; for there were horses in the stables of the court-yard within. They did pass through, making with the carts to which they were harnessed a thundering clatter which would have deafened the inmates of an American dwelling. But the old Pisan palace had been built in another fashion. This lower hall with its heavy pavement and great doors, the gallery above with the rows of life-sized statues, the broad sweep of the stone stairways—all these, a space that could have swallowed many modern houses entire, were but its entrance; and so massive were the floors that no one in the long ranges of rooms above had any intimation of the moment when their hallway was turned into a street. The outer portals remained swung back all day; but the light inner doors were opened and closed on demand by old Bianca, the portress, who lived in a dusky den under the staircase. This evening the sunset was so brilliant that even these inner doors stood open, and Bianca herself had come to the threshold, blinking a little as the radiance fell upon her patient, cloistered face.

She was looking at a boy who was leaning over the parapet opposite. This boy, with one arm round a small dog whom he had lifted to the top of the wall by his side, was gazing at the tawny water of the Arno as it glided past the house; for the old palace was in the Lung' Arno of Pisa, the sunny street that follows the river like a quay, its water-side lying open to the stream, protected by a low wall. Bianca was evidently thinking of this boy and the summons of the clanging bell above; whether he cared for the bell or not, he seemed to feel at last the power of her mild gaze directed upon his back, for, swinging himself down from the parapet, he crossed the street, and with his dog at his heels, entered the palace. He went up the right-hand stairway, glancing as he passed at the two stone caryatides which upheld the balustrade at the landing; these were girls who had probably been intended for mermaids; but their fish endings were vague compared with the vividly human expression of their anxious young countenances—an anxiety oddly insisted upon by the unknown house-sculptor who had chiselled them according to his fantasy hundreds of years before. Freshly arrived Americans, not yet broken in to the light foreign breakfast, and frozen from January to March, were accustomed to declare that the faces of these caryatides reflected in advance all the miseries of the *pension*, that is, all the hardship of winter life in Italy which assails the surprised and undefended pilgrim from the United States. But the boy who was coming up the stairs, though American, was not freshly arrived; in his mind the caryatides illustrated, more or less, a charming story which his mother had told him—the story of the Little Mermaid; he was fond of their anxious stone cheeks on that account.

The Casa Corti was not an ordinary pension. In the first place, it had the distinction of occupying the whole of the Rondinelli palace, with the great shield of the Rondinellis (showing their six heraldic swallows sitting on their tails) over its door; in the second, it had been in the hands of one family for four generations, and was to go down in the same line. The establishment could accommodate seventy persons. Three-fourths of the seventy were always English, drawn hither by the fact that Madame Corti was of English descent. A few Americans were allowed to enter, and an occasional foreigner was received as a favor. In the *pension* phraseology the English were "we," their transatlantic cousins "the Americans," and all the rest "foreigners." As Lorenzo's bell ceased many doors opened, and from the various quarters into which the old Ghibelline residence had for its present purposes been divided—from high rooms overlooking the river and adorned with frescos to low-browed cells in the attic under the eaves; from apartments that looked upon small inner courts like yellow wells, wells that resounded with the jingle of dish-washing from morning till night; from short staircases descending at unexpected points, and from others equally unlocked for which mounted from secret chambers in the half-story (chambers whose exact situation always remained a mystery to the rest of the house)—from all of these, and from two far-off little dwellings perched like tents on the roof, came the guests of the *pension* on their way to the dining-room and dinner. For they were all guests: the word patron or boarder was unknown. In the same way the head of the establishment was not by any means the boarding-house-keeper or the landlady: she was the proprietress. She had inherited her *pension* as other people inherit an estate, and she managed it in much the same autocratic fashion.

When all her guests were seated, this proprietress herself rustled in, a little late. Her attire was elaborate: a velvet gown made with a train, an amber star in the hair, and a chain of large amber beads wound three times round the throat, and falling in a long loop to the belt. She entered with a gliding step, pressing her dimpled hands together as she advanced, and giving a series of little bends from the waist upward, which were intended as general salutation to the company; her smile meanwhile gradually extended itself, until, as her chair was drawn out with a flourish by Lorenzo, it became broad enough to display her teeth as she sank gracefully into her place at the head of her table, and, with a final bow to the right and the left, unfolded her napkin. Her duty as regarded civility being now done, she broke off a morsel of bread, and took a rapid survey of her seventy, with the mixture of sharp personal dislike and the business views which forced her to accept them visible as usual in her eyes behind her smile.

Her seventy appeared, as they always did, eminently respectable. There were three English curates; there were English husbands and wives of the travelling and the invalid varieties; there were four or five blooming English girls with pink cheeks and very straight backs; and there were dozens of English old maids, and of that species of relict that returns naturally to spinsterhood after the funeral, without having acquired, from passing through it, any of the richer tints and more ample outlines that belong to the married state. In addition there were several Americans, and a few "foreigners."

Lorenzo and his assistants were carrying away the soup-plates when two more guests entered late. This was high crime. Madame's eyes, looking smaller than ever, gleamed like two sparks as they passed. For if one were so unfortunate as to be late for dinner at Casa Corti the custom was to make an apologetic little bow to madame as one entered—entered with hasty, repentant step (having passed, outside the door, the whole miscellaneous force of the establishment gathered together with cans of hot water to wash the forks). But these two had made no bow, and madame had known that they would not; so she talked to her right-hand neighbor, Captain Sholto Fraser, R.N., and carefully pretended not to see them. The delinquents were Americans (madame would have said "Of course!"), a pretty little woman who looked much younger than her age (which was thirty-three), and the boy who had adorned the parapet with his sprawling person—a mother and son. They found their empty chairs waiting for them at the far end of the room. The boy's place was at his mother's left hand; on her right she had one of the curates.

"Late again!" began this gentleman. "We shall have to impose a fine upon you, Mrs. Roscoe; we shall indeed." And he made, playfully, a menacing gesture with his large, very well kept hand.

"Ought I to come for the soup?" inquired the lady, surveying the plateful before her with a slight curl of her lip.

"Nay; when it is cold!" remonstrated her neighbor. "Be more reasonable, pray." He regarded her smilingly.

"Oh, reasonable women are horrid!" responded Mrs. Roscoe. "I should never think of coming down until later," she went on, "only Maso—he likes the soup." The boy was eating rapidly. She watched him for a moment. "I don't see how he can!" she added.

"Perhaps Tommaso is hungry," suggested an English lady who sat opposite.

"Maso, please," corrected Mrs. Roscoe; "Tommaso is as ugly as Thomas."

"I dare say he has not nourishment enough," continued the first speaker; "at his age that is so important. Why not order for him an extra chop at luncheon?"

"Thank Mrs. Goldsworthy for her interest in you, Maso," said his mother.

Maso grew red, and hastily crammed so much bread into his mouth that both of his cheeks were widely distended at the same time.

"I have read in the journal, Madame Roscoe, of a gerate fire in your countree—a town entire! I hope you lose not by it?" This inquirer was a grave little woman from Lausanne, the widow of a Swiss pastor.

Mrs. Roscoe gave a shrug. "My interests are not of that kind. Where was the fire, may I ask?"

"But in your countree, Amereekar. Voyons: the citee of Tam-Tampico."

Mrs. Roscoe laughed as she helped herself to fish—a fish tied with yellow ribbons, and carrying a yellow lily in his mouth. "When we were at Mentone an old lady informed me one day of the arrival of some of my 'countrypeople.' 'Now,' she said, 'you will not be the only Americans in the house.' At dinner they appeared. They were Chilians. I said to my friend, 'They are not my countrypeople; they are South Americans.' She answered, severely: 'I suppose you say that because they are Southerners! But now that so many years have passed since that dreadful war of yours was brought to a close, I should think it would be far wiser to drop such animosities.'" No one laughed over this story save an American who was within hearing.

This American, a Vermont man, had arrived at the *pension* several days before, and already he had formed a close and even desperate friendship with Mrs. Roscoe, pursuing her, accompanied by his depressed wife, to her bedroom (she had no sitting-room), where, while trying to find a level place on her slippery yellow sofa, he had delivered himself as follows: "Wife—she kept saying, 'You ought to go abroad; you aren't well, and it'll do you good; they say it's very sociable over there if you stay at the *pensions*.'" (He gave this word a political pronunciation.) "All I can say is—if *this* is their *pension*!" And he slapped his thigh with a resounding whack, and laughed sarcastically.

The beef now came round, a long slab of mahogany color, invisibly divided into thin slices, the whole decked with a thick dark sauce which contained currants, citron, and raisins.

"We miss Mr. Willoughby sadly," observed Mrs. Goldsworthy, with a sigh, as she detached a slice. "Only last night he was here."

"I cannot say *I* miss him," remarked Mrs. Roscoe.

"You do not? Pray tell us why?" suggested the curate, eagerly.

"Well, he's so black-letter; so early-English; so 'Merrily sungen the monks of Ely.' In Baedeker, you know."

"He is very deep, if you mean that," said Mrs. Goldsworthy, reprovingly.

"Deep? I should call him wide; he is all over the place. If you speak of a cat, he replies with a cataract; of a plate, with Plato; of the cream, with cremation. I don't see how he manages to live in England at all; there isn't standing-room there for his feet. But perhaps he soars; he is a sort of a Cupid, you know. What will become of him if they make him a bishop? For how can a bishop flirt? The utmost he can do is to say, 'I will see you after service in the vestry.'"

The curate was laughing in gentlemanlike gulps. He was extremely happy. The Rev. Algernon Willoughby, of Ely, had been admired, not to say adored, in that *pension* for seven long weeks.

The dinner went on through its courses, and by degrees the red wine flew from the glasses to the faces. For as wine of the country in abundance, without extra charge, was one of the attractions of Casa Corti, people took rather more of it than they cared for, on the thoroughly human principle of getting something for nothing. At length came a pudding, violently pink in hue, and reposing on a bed of rose-leaves.

"Why, the pudding's redder than we are!" remarked Mrs. Roscoe, with innocent surprise.

Her own cheeks, however, looked very cool in the universal flush; her smooth complexion had no rose tints. This lack of pink was, in truth, one of the faults of a face which had many beauties. She was small and fair; her delicately cut features were extremely pretty—"pretty enough to be copied as models for drawing-classes," some one had once said. Her golden hair, which fell over her forehead in a soft, rippled wave, was drawn up behind after the latest fashion of Paris; her eyes were blue, and often they had a merry expression; her little mouth was almost like that of a child, with its pretty lips and infantile, pearly teeth. In addition, her figure was slender and graceful; her hands and feet and ears were noticeably small. To men Violet Roscoe's attire always appeared simple; the curate, for instance, if obliged to bear witness, would have said that the costume of each and every other lady in the room appeared to him more ornamented than that of his immediate neighbor. A woman, however, could have told this misled male that the apparently simple dress had cost more, probably, than the combined attire of all the other ladies, save perhaps the rich velvet of Madame Corti.

After nuts and figs, and a final draining of glasses, Madame Corti gave the signal (no one would have dared to leave the table before that sign), and her seventy rose. Smiling, talking, and fanning themselves, they passed across the hall to the salon, where presently tea was served in large gold-banded coffee-cups, most of which were chipped at the edges. The ladies took tea, and chatted with each other; they stood by the piano, and walked up and down, before beginning the regular occupations of the evening—namely, whist, chess, the reading of the best authorities on art, or doing something in the way of embroidery and wool-work, or a complicated construction with bobbins that looked like a horse-net. There were jokes; occasionally there was a ripple of mild laughter. Madame Corti, intrenched behind her own particular table, read the London *Times* with the aid of a long-handled eye-glass. How she did despise all these old maids, with their silver ornaments, and their small economies, with their unmounted photographs pinned on the walls of their bedrooms, and their talk of Benozzo, and Nicolo the Pisan! She hated the very way they held their teacups after dinner, poised delicately, almost gayly, with the little finger extended, as if to

give an air of festal lightness to the scene. Promptly at nine o'clock she disappeared; an hour later her brougham was taking her to an Italian gathering, where there would also be conversation, but conversation of a very different nature. Teresa Corti, when she had escaped from her *pension*, was one of the wittiest women in Pisa; her wit was audacious, ample, and thoroughly Italian. There was, indeed, nothing English about her save her knowledge of the language, and the trace of descent from an English great-grandfather in her green eyes and crinkled yellow hair.

Mrs. Roscoe did not remain in the drawing-room five minutes; she never took tea, she did not play whist or chess, and she detested fancy-work. She was followed to the stairway by her curate, who was urging her to remain and play backgammon. "It's not such a bad game; really it's not," he pleaded, in his agreeable voice.

"Nothing is a bad game if one is amused," answered Mrs. Roscoe, severely. She was seldom severe. But this evening she was tired.

"Oh, how early you've come up! I'm awful glad," said Maso, as she entered her bedroom on the third floor. It was a large room, shabbily furnished in yellow, the frescoed walls representing the Bay of Naples. Maso was lying on the rug, with his dog by his side.

"Why are you in the dark?" said his mother. There was a smouldering fire on the hearth; for though the day had been fine (it was the 15th of March), the old palace had a way of developing unexpected shivers in the evening. In spite of these shivers, however, this was the only room where there was a fire. Mrs. Roscoe lighted the lamp and put on the pink shade; then she drew the small Italian sticks together on the hearth, threw on a dozen pine cones, and with the bellows blew the whole into a brilliant blaze. Next she put a key into the Bay of Naples, unlocked a wave, and drew out a small Vienna coffee-pot.

"Are we going to have coffee? Jolly!" said the boy.



"OH, HOW EARLY YOU'VE COME UP!" SAID MASO

His mother made the coffee; then she took from the same concealed cupboard, which had been drilled in the solid stone of the wall, a little glass jug shaped like a lachrymal from the catacombs, which contained cream; sugar in a bowl; cakes, and a box of marrons glacés. Maso gave a Hi! of delight as each dainty appeared, and made his dog sit on his hind legs. "I say, mother, what were they all laughing about at dinner? Something you said?"

"They always laugh; they appear never to have heard a joke before. That about the bishops, now, that is as old as the hills." Leaning back in her easy-chair before the fire, with Maso established at her feet, enjoying his cake and coffee, she gave a long yawn. "Oh, what a stupid life!"

Maso was well accustomed to this exclamation. But when he had his mother to himself, and when the room was so bright and so full of fragrant aromas, he saw no reason to echo it. "Well, *I* think it's just gay!" he answered. "Mr. Tiber, beg!" Mr. Tiber begged, and received a morsel of cake.

Mrs. Roscoe, after drinking her coffee, had taken up a new novel. "Perhaps you had better study a little," she suggested.

Maso made a grimace. But as the coffee was gone and the cakes were eaten, he complied—that is, he complied after he had made Mr. Tiber go through his tricks. This took time; for Mr. Tiber, having swallowed a good deal of cake himself, was lazy. At last, after he had been persuaded to show to the world the excellent education he had received, his master decided to go on with his own, and went to get his books, which were on the shelf at the other end of the long room. It pleased him to make this little journey on his heels, with his toes sharply upturned in the air—a feat which required much balancing.

"That is the way you run down the heels of your shoes so," his mother remarked, glancing at his contortions.

"It doesn't hurt them much on the *carpet*," replied the boy.

"Mercy! You don't go staggering through the streets in that way, do you?"

"Only back streets."



"MR. TIBER, BEG!"

He was now returning in the same obstructed manner, carrying his books. He placed them upon the table where the lamp was standing; then he lifted Mr. Tiber to the top of the same table and made him lie down; next, seating himself, he opened a battered school-book, a United States History, and, after looking at the pictures for a while, he began at last to repeat two dates to himself in a singsong whisper. Maso was passing through the period when a boy can be very plain, even hideous, in appearance, without any perception of the fact in the minds of his relatives, who see in him the little toddler still, or else the future man; other persons, however, are apt to see a creature all hands and feet, with a big uncertain mouth and an omnipresent awkwardness. Maso, in addition to this, was short and ill developed, with inexpressive eyes and many large freckles. His features were not well cut; his complexion was pale; his straight hair was of a reddish hue. None of the mother's beauties were repeated in the child. Such as he was, however, she loved him, and he repaid her love by a deep adoration; to him, besides being "mother," she was the most beautiful being in the whole world, and also the cleverest. He was intensely proud of the admiration she excited, and was always on the watch for it; at the table, awkward, constrained, with downcast eyes, he yet saw every glance that was directed towards her, and enjoyed each laugh which her words created. Mrs. Roscoe's purse was a light one; worse than that, an uncertain one; but Maso, personally, had known nothing but indulgence and ease all his life.

While he was vaguely murmuring his dates, and rocking himself backward and forward in time with the murmur, there came a tap at the door. It was Miss Spring. "I have looked in to bid you good-bye," she said, entering. "I am going to Munich to-morrow."

"Isn't that sudden?" said Mrs. Roscoe. "The torn chair is the most comfortable. Have a marron?"

"Thank you; I seldom eat sweets. No, it is not sudden."

"Shall I make you a cup of coffee?"

"Thank you; I don't take coffee."

Mrs. Roscoe pushed a footstool across the rug.

"Thank you; I never need footstools."

"Superior to all the delights of womankind!"

Miss Spring came out of her abstraction and laughed. "Not superior; only bilious and long-legged." Then her face grew grave again. "Do you consider Pisa an attractive place for a permanent residence?" she inquired, fixing her eyes upon her hostess, who, having offered all the hospitable attentions in her power, was now leaning back again, her feet on a hassock.

"Attractive? Heavens! no."

"Yet you stay here? I think I have seen you here, at intervals, for something like seven years?"

"Don't count them; I hate the sound," said Mrs. Roscoe. "My wish is—my hope is—to live in Paris. I get there once in a while, and then I always have to give it up and come away. Italy is cheap, and Pisa is the cheapest place in Italy."

"So that is your reason for remaining," said Miss Spring, reflectively.

"What other reason on earth *could* there be?"

"The equable climate."

"I hate equable climates. No, we're not here for climates. Nor for Benozzo; nor for Nicolo the Pisan, and that everlasting old sarcophagus that they are always talking about; nor for the Leaning Tower, either. I perfectly hate the Leaning Tower!"

Miss Spring now undertook a joke herself. "It is for the moderns, then. You are evidently a Shelley worshipper."

"Do I look like one?" demanded Violet Roscoe, extending her arms a little, with the palms of the hands displayed, as if to call attention to her entire person.

"I cannot say that you do," replied Miss Spring, after surveying her. "I should think New York would please you as a place of residence," she went on, after a moment. "If you do not like Italy, why do you not go home?"

"Why don't you?" retorted Violet, taking a marron and crunching it.

"Well answered. But Newburyport is not to me what I should think New York might be to you; Newburyport has

much to learn. However, we all have our reasons, I suppose."

"Mine are not mysterious," said Violet, continuing to crunch. "I have a better time abroad than I do at home; that's all."

Miss Spring gazed at the fire. "I may as well acknowledge that it was those very things that brought me here in the beginning, the things you don't care for; Nicolo and the revival of sculpture; the early masters. But I have not found them satisfying. I have tried to care for that sarcophagus; but the truth is that I remain perfectly cold before it. And the Campo Santo frescos seem to me out of drawing. As to the Shelley memories, do you know what I thought of the other day? Suppose that Shelley and Byron were residing here at this moment— Shelley with that queerness about his first wife hanging over him, and Byron living as we know he lived in the Toscanelli palace—do you think that these ladies in the pension who now sketch the Toscanelli and sketch Shelley's windows, who go to Lerici and rave over Casa Magni, who make pilgrimages to the very spot on the beach where Byron and Trelawny built the funeral pyre—do you think that a single one of them would call, if it were to-day, upon Mary Shelley? Or like to have Shelley and Byron dropping in here for afternoon tea, with the chance of meeting the curates?"

"If they met them, they couldn't out-talk them," answered Violet, laughing. "Curates always want to explain something they said the day before. As to the calling and the tea, what would *you* do?"

"I should be consistent," responded Miss Spring, with dignity. "I should call. And I should be happy to see them here in return."

"Well, you'd be safe," said Violet. "Shelley, Byron, Trelawny, all together, would never dare to flirt with Roberta Spring!" She could say this without malice, for her visitor was undeniably a handsome woman.

Miss Spring, meanwhile, had risen; going to the table, she put on her glasses and bent over Maso's book. "History?"

"Yes, 'm. I haven't got very far yet," Maso answered.

"Reader. Copy-book. Geography. Spelling-book. Arithmetic," said Miss Spring, turning the books over one by one. "The Arithmetic appears to be the cleanest."

"Disuse," said Mrs. Roscoe, from her easy-chair. "As I am Maso's teacher, and as I hate arithmetic, we have never gone very far. I don't know what we shall do when we get to fractions!"

"And what is your dog doing on the table, may I ask?" inquired the visitor, surveying Mr. Tiber coldly.

"Oh, he helps lots. I couldn't study at all without him," explained Maso, with eagerness.

"Indeed?" said Miss Spring, turning the gaze of her glasses from the dog to his master. "How's that?"

Maso was always rather afraid of the tall Roberta; he curled the pages of his History with stubby fingers and made no reply.

"If you won't tell, Maso, I shall," said his mother; "I shall do it to make you ashamed of your baby ways. He divides each lesson, Miss Spring, into four parts, if you please; then, as each part is learned (or supposed to be learned), Mr. Tiber has to sit on his hind legs and wave a paw. Then, when all four parts are done, Mr. Tiber has to lie on the book. Book after book is added to the pile, and finally Mr. Tiber is on top of a monument. But he is so used to it that he does not mind it much. After the last lesson is learned, then Mr. Tiber, as a celebration, has to go through all the tricks. And there are twenty-two."

"Well!" said Miss Spring. She never could comprehend what she called "all this dog business" of the Roscoes. And their dog language (they had one) routed her completely. "Twenty-two!"

"An' *gherry* kinnin, idn't they?" Maso was whispering to his pet.

"Why did you name him Mr. Tiber?" pursued the visitor, in her grave voice.

"We didn't; he was already named," explained Mrs. Roscoe. "We bought him of an old lady in Rome, who had three; she had named them after Italian rivers: Mr. Arno, Mr. Tiber, and Miss Dora Riparia."

"Miss Dora Riparia—well!" said Miss Spring. Then she turned to subjects more within her comprehension. "It is a pity I am going away, Maso, for I could have taught you arithmetic; I like to teach arithmetic."

Maso made no answer save an imbecile grin. His mother gesticulated at him behind Miss Spring's back. Then he muttered, "Thank you, 'm," hoping fervently that the Munich plan was secure.

"I shall get a tutor for Maso before long," remarked Mrs. Roscoe, as Miss Spring came back to the fire. "Later, my idea is to have him go to Oxford."

Miss Spring looked as though she were uttering, mentally, another "well!" The lack of agreement in the various statements of her pretty little countrywoman always puzzled her; she could understand crime better than inconsistency.

"Shall you stay long in Munich?" Violet inquired.

"That depends." Miss Spring had not seated herself. "Would you mind coming to my room for a few minutes?" she added.

"There's no fire; I shall freeze to death!" thought Violet. "If you like," she answered aloud. And together they ascended to the upper story, where, at the top of two unexpected steps, was Miss Spring's door. This door was adorned with a large solidly fastened brass door-plate, bearing, in old-fashioned script, the name "Archibald Starr." No one in the house, not even Madame Corti herself, had any idea who Archibald Starr had been in the flesh. At present he was nothing but a door-plate. His apartment within had been divided by partitions, so that his sitting-room was now a rain-water tank. Roberta Spring occupied his vestibule. The vestibule was small and bare; in the daytime it was lighted by two little windows, so high in the wall that they were opened and closed by means of long cords. A trunk, locked and strapped, stood in the centre of the floor; an open travelling-bag, placed on a chair, gaped for the toilet articles, which were ranged on the table together, so that nothing should be forgotten at the early morning start—a cheap hair-brush and stout comb, an unadorned wooden box containing hair-pins and a scissors, a particularly hideous travelling pin-cushion. Violet Roscoe gazed at these articles, fascinated by their ugliness; she herself possessed a long row of vials and brushes, boxes and mirrors, of silver, crystal, and ivory, and believed that she could not live without them.

"I thought I would not go into the subject before Maso," began Miss Spring, as she closed her door. "Such explanations sometimes unsettle a boy; his may not be a mind to which inquiry is necessary. My visit to Munich has

an object. I am going to study music."

"Music?" repeated Mrs. Roscoe, surprised. "I didn't know you cared for it."

"But it remains to be seen whether I care, doesn't it? One cannot tell until one has tried. This is the case: I am now thirty-seven years of age. I have given a good deal of attention to astronomy and to mathematics; I am an evolutionist, a realist, a member of the Society for Psychical Research; Herbert Spencer's works always travel with me. These studies have been extremely interesting. And yet I find that I am not fully satisfied, Mrs. Roscoe. And it has been a disappointment. I am determined, therefore, to try some of those intellectual influences which do not appeal solely to reason. They appear to give pleasure to large numbers of mankind, so there must be something in them. What that is I resolved to find out. I began with sculpture. Then painting. But they have given me no pleasure whatever. Music is third on the list. So now I am going to try that."

Mrs. Roscoe gave a spring, and seated herself on the bed with her feet under her, Turkish fashion; the floor was really too cold. "No use trying music unless you like it," she said.

"I have never *dis*liked it. My attitude will be that of an impartial investigator," explained Miss Spring. "I have, of course, no expectation of becoming a performer; but I shall study the theory of harmony, the science of musical composition, its structure—"

"Structure! Stuff! You've got to *feel* it," said Violet.

"Very well. I am perfectly willing to feel; that is, in fact, what I wish—let them *make* me feel. If it is an affair of the emotions, let them rouse *my* emotions," answered Roberta.

"If you would swallow a marron occasionally, and drink a cup of good coffee with cream; if you would have some ivory brushes and crystal scent-bottles, instead of those hideous objects," said Violet, glancing towards the table; "if you would get some pretty dresses once in a while—I think satisfaction would be nearer."

Miss Spring looked up quickly. "You think I have been too ascetic? Is that what you mean?"

"Oh, I never mean anything," answered Violet, hugging herself to keep down a shiver.

"In spite of your disclaimer, I catch your idea," replied her hostess. "But if I should carry it out, Mrs. Roscoe, carry it out to its full extent, it would take me, you know, very far—into complex dissipations."

Her voice took on no animation as she said this; it remained calm, as it always was. She was a tall woman with regular features, a clear white complexion, and striking gray eyes with long dark lashes; her abundant dark hair was drawn straight back from her face, and she carried her head remarkably well. She was what is called "fine-looking," but from head to foot, though probably she did not know it, her appearance was austere.

Violet had given way to irresistible laughter over the "complex dissipations." Miss Spring came out of what appeared to be a mental census of the various debaucheries that would be required, and laughed a little herself. She was not without a sense of humor. "To you it seems funny, no doubt," she said, "for I have never been at all gay. Yet I think I could manage it."

Violet, still laughing, climbed down from the bed; she was too cold to stay longer.

"I knew I should get a new idea out of you, Mrs. Roscoe. I always do," said Roberta, frankly. "And this time it is an important one; it is a side-light which I had not thought of myself at all. I shall go to Munich to-morrow. But I will add this: if music is not a success, perhaps I may some time try your plan."

"Plan? Horrible! I haven't any," said Violet, escaping towards the door.

"It is an unconscious one; it is, possibly, instinctive truth," said Miss Spring, as she shook hands with her departing guest. "And instinctive truth is the most valuable."

Violet ran back to her own warm quarters. "You don't mean to say, Maso, that you've stopped studying already?" she said, as she entered and seated herself before her fire again, with a sigh of content. "Nice lessons you'll have for me to-morrow."

"They're all O.K.," responded the boy. He had his paint-box before him, and was painting the Indians in his History.

"Well, go to bed, then."

"Yes, 'm."

At half-past ten, happening to turn her head while she cut open the pages of her novel, she saw that he was still there. "Maso, do you hear me? Go to bed."

"Yes, 'm." He painted faster, making hideous grimaces with his protruded lips, which unconsciously followed the strokes of his brush up and down. The picture finished at last, he rose. "Mr. Tiber, pim."

Mr. Tiber left the sofa, where he had been sleeping since the termination of the lessons, and hopped to the floor. Here he indulged in a stretch; first, hind legs; then fore legs; then a hunch of his back and a deep yawn. He was a very small black-and-tan terrier, with a pretty little head and face. Maso's voice now gave a second summons from his bedroom, which was next to his mother's, with a door between. "Are you coming, Mr. Tiber? *Very well!*" Mr. Tiber, hearing this, ran as fast as he could scamper into his master's chamber. Here he had his own bed, composed of a flat basket containing what Maso called "a really mattress," and a pillow with a pillow-case, a blanket, and red coverlid, each article bearing an embroidered T in the corner, surmounted by a coronet; for Mr. Tiber was supposed to be a nobleman. The nobleman went to bed, and was tucked in with his head on the pillow. This was Maso's rule; but very soon the head assumed its normal position, curled round on the little black tail.

At eleven, Mrs. Roscoe finished her novel and threw it down. "Women who write don't know much about love-affairs," was her reflection. "And those of us who have love-affairs don't write!" She rose. "Maso, you here still? I thought you went to bed an hour ago!"

"Well, I did begin. I put my shoes outside." He extended his shoeless feet in proof. "Then I just came back for a minute."

His mother looked over his shoulder. "That same old fairy-book! Who would suppose you were twelve years old?"

"Thirteen," said Maso, coloring.

"So you are. But only two weeks ago. Never mind; you'll be a tall man yet—a great big thing striding about, whom I shall not care half so much for as I do for my little boy." She kissed him. "All your father's family are tall, and

you look just like them."

Maso nestled closer as she stood beside him. "How did father look? I don't remember him much."

"Much? You don't remember him at all; he died when you were six months old—a little teenty baby."

"I say, mother, how long have we been over here?"

"I came abroad when you were not quite two."

"Aren't we ever going back?"

"If you could once see Coesville!" was Mrs. Roscoe's emphatic reply.

II

"HIST, Maso! Take this in to your lady mother," said Giulio. "I made it myself, so it's good." Giulio, one of the dining-room waiters at Casa Corti, was devoted to the Roscoes. Though he was master of a mysterious French polyglot, he used at present his own tongue, for Maso spoke Italian as readily as he did, and in much the same fashion.

Maso took the cup, and Giulio disappeared. As the boy was carrying the broth carefully towards his mother's door, Madame Corti passed him. She paused.

"Ah, Master Roscoe, I am relieved to learn that your mother is better. Will you tell her, with my compliments, that I advise her to go at once to the Bagni to make her recovery. She ought to go to-morrow. That is the air required for convalescence."

Maso repeated this to his mother. "'That is the air required for convalescence,' she said."

"And 'this is the room required for spring tourists,' she meant. Did she name a day—the angel?"

"Well, she did say to-morrow," Maso admitted.

"Old cat! She is dying to turn me out; she is so dreadfully afraid that the word fever will hurt her house. All the servants are sworn to call it rheumatism."

"See here, mother, Giulio sent you this."

"I don't want any of their messes."

"But he made it himself, so it's good." He knelt down beside her sofa, holding up the cup coaxingly.

"Beef-tea," said Mrs. Roscoe, drawing down her upper lip. But she took a little to please him.

"Just a little more."

She took more.

"A little *teenty* more."

"You scamp! You think it's great fun to give directions, don't you?"

Maso, who had put the emptied cup back on the table, gave a leap of glee because she had taken so much.

"Don't walk on your hands," said his mother, in alarm, "It makes me too nervous."

It was the 12th of April, and she had been ill two weeks. An attack of bronchitis had prostrated her suddenly, and the bronchitis had been followed by an intermittent fever, which left her weak.

"I say, mother, let's go," said Maso. "It's so nice at the Bagni—all trees and everything. Miss Anderson'll come and pack."

Miss Anderson was one of Dr. Prior's nurses. She had taken charge of Mrs. Roscoe during the worst days of her illness.

"If we do go to the Bagni we cannot stay at the hotel," said Mrs. Roscoe, gloomily. "This year we shall have to find some cheaper place. I have been counting upon money from home that hasn't come."

"But it *will* come," said Maso, with confidence.

"Have you much acquaintance with Reuben John?"

The tone of voice, bitterly sarcastic, in which his mother had from his earliest remembrance pronounced this name, had made the syllables eminently disagreeable to Maso. He had no very clear idea as to the identity of Reuben John, save that he was some sort of a dreadful relative in America.

"Well, the Bagni's nice," he answered, "no matter where we stay. And I know Miss Anderson'll come and pack."

"You mustn't say a word to her about it. I have got to write a note, as it is, and ask her to wait for her money until winter. Dr. Prior, too."

"Well, they'll do it; they'll do it in a minute, and be glad to," said Maso, still confident.

"I am sure I don't know why," commented his mother, turning her head upon the pillow fretfully.

"Why, mother, they'll do it because it's you. They think everything of you; everybody does," said the boy, adoringly.

Violet Roscoe laughed. It took but little to cheer her. "If you don't brush your hair more carefully they won't think much of *you*," she answered, setting his collar straight.

There was a knock at the door. "Letters," said Maso, returning. He brought her a large envelope, adorned with Italian superlatives of honor and closed with a red seal. "Always so civil," murmured Mrs. Roscoe, examining the decorated address with a pleased smile. Her letters came to a Pisan bank; the bankers re-enclosed them in this elaborate way, and sent them to her by their own gilt-buttoned messenger. There was only one letter to-day. She opened it, read the first page, turned the leaf, and then in her weakness she began to sob. Maso in great distress knelt beside her; he put his arm round her neck, and laid his cheek to hers; he did everything he could think of to comfort her. Mr. Tiber, who had been lying at her feet, walked up her back and gave an affectionate lick to her hair. "Mercy! the dog, too," she said, drying her eyes. "*Of course* it was Reuben John," she explained, shaking up her pillow.

Maso picked up the fallen letter.

"Don't read it; burn it—horrid thing!" his mother commanded.

He obeyed, striking a match and lighting the edge of the page.

"Not only no money, but in its place a long, hateful, busyboding sermon," continued Mrs. Roscoe, indignantly.

Maso came back from the hearth, and took up the envelope. "Mrs. Thomas R. Coe," he read aloud. "Is our name really Coe, mother?"

"You know it is perfectly well."

"Everybody says Roscoe."

"I didn't get it up; all I did was to call myself Mrs. Ross Coe, which is my name, isn't it? I hate Thomas. Then these English got hold of it and made it Ross-Coe and Roscoe. I grew tired of correcting them long ago."

"Then in America I should be Thom-as Ross Coe—Thom-as R. Coe," pursued the boy, still scanning the envelope, and pronouncing the syllables slowly. He was more familiar with Italian names than with American.

"No such luck. Tommy Coe you'd be now. And as you grew older, Tom Coe—like your father before you."

They went to the Bagni—that is, to the baths of Lucca. The journey, short as it was, tired Mrs. Roscoe greatly. They took up their abode in two small rooms in an Italian house which had an unswept stairway and a constantly open door. These quarters did not depress Violet; she had no strongly marked domestic tastes; she was indifferent as to her lodging, provided her clothes were delicately fresh and pretty. But her inability to go out to dinner took away her courage. She had intended to dine at the hotel where they had stayed in former years; for two or three hours each day she could then be herself. But after one or two attempts she was obliged to give up the plan; she had not the strength to take the daily walk. It ended in food being sent in from a neighboring cook-shop, or *trattoria*, and served upon her bedroom table. Maso, disturbed by her illness, but by nothing else—for they had often followed a nomadic life for a while when funds were low—scoured the town. He bought cakes and fruit to tempt her appetite; he made coffee. He had no conception that these things were not proper food for a convalescent; his mother had always lived upon coffee and sweets.

On the first day of May, when they had been following this course for two weeks, they had a visitor. Dr. Prior, who had been called to the Bagni for a day, came to have a look at his former patient. He stayed fifteen minutes. When he took leave he asked Maso to show him the way to a certain house. This, however, was but a pretext, for when they reached the street he stopped.

"I dare say ye have friends here?"

"Well," answered Maso, "mother generally knows a good many of the people in the hotel when we are staying there. But this year we ain't."

"Hum! And where are your relatives?"

"I don't know as we've got any. Yes, there's one," pursued Maso, remembering Reuben John. "But he's in America."

The Scotch physician, who was by no means an amiable man, was bluntly honest. "How old are you?" he inquired.

"I'm going on fourteen."

"Never should have supposed ye to be more than eleven. As there appears to be no one else, I must speak to you. Your mother must not stay in this house a day longer; she must have a better place—better air and better food."

Maso's heart gave a great throb. "Is she—is she very ill?"

"Not yet. But she is in a bad way; she coughs. She ought to leave Italy, for a while; stay out of it for at least four months. If she doesn't care to go far, Aix-les-Bains would do. Speak to her about it. I fancy ye can arrange it—hey? American boys have their own way, I hear." This was meant as a joke; but as the grim face did not smile, the jocular intention failed to make itself apparent. The speaker nodded, and went down the street. The idea that Mrs. Roscoe might not have money enough to indulge herself with a journey to Aix-les-Bains, or to anywhere else, would never have occurred to him. He had seen her in Pisa off and on for years, one of the prettiest women there, and perhaps the most perfectly equipped as regarded what he called "furbelows"; that, with all her costly finery, she chose to stay in a high-up room at Casa Corti instead of having an apartment of her own, with the proper servants, was only another of those American eccentricities to which, after a long professional life in Italy, he was now well accustomed.

Maso went back to his mother's room with his heart in his mouth. When he came in she was asleep; her face looked wan. The boy, cold all over with the new fear, sat down quietly by the window with Mr. Tiber on his lap, and fell into anxious thought. After a while his mother woke. The greasy dinner, packed in greasy tins, came and went. When the room was quiet again he began, tremulously, "How much money have we got, mother?"

"Precious little."

"Mayn't I see how much it is?"

"No; don't bother."

She had eaten nothing.

"Mother, won't you please take that money, even if it's little, and go straight off north somewhere? To Aix-les-Bains."

"What are you talking about? Aix-les-Bains? What do you know of Aix-les-Bains?"

"Well, I've heard about it. Say, mother, do go. And Mr. Tiber and me'll stay here. We'll have lots of fun," added the boy, bravely.

"Is that all you care about me?" demanded his mother. Then seeing his face change, "Come here, you silly child," she said. She made him sit down on the rug beside her sofa. "We must sink or swim together, Maso (dear me! we're not much in the swim now); we can't go anywhere, either of us; we can only just manage to live as we're living now. And there won't be any more money until November." She stroked his hair caressingly. His new fear made him notice how thin her wrist had grown.

"You will mail these three letters immediately," said Mr. Waterhouse, in Italian, to the hotel porter.

"Si, signore," answered the man, with the national sunny smile, although Waterhouse's final gratuity had been but a franc.

"Now, Tommaso, I must be off; long drive. Sorry it has happened so. Crazy idea her coming at all, as she has enjoyed bad health for years, poor old thing! She may be dead at this moment, and probably, in fact, she is dead; but I shall have to go, all the same, in spite of the great expense; she ought to have thought of that. I have explained everything to your mother in that letter; the money is at her own bank in Pisa, and I have sent her the receipt. You have fifty francs with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Fifty francs—that is ten dollars. More than enough, much more; be careful of it, Tommaso. You will hear from your mother in two days, or sooner, if she telegraphs; in the meanwhile you will stay quietly where you are."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Waterhouse shook hands with his pupil, and, stepping into the waiting carriage, was driven away.



"WE MUST SINK OR SWIM TOGETHER, MASO"

Benjamin F. Waterhouse, as he signed himself (of course the full name was Benjamin Franklin), was an American who had lived in Europe for nearly half a century, always expecting to go home "next summer." He was very tall, with a face that resembled a damaged portrait of Emerson, and he had been engaged for many years in writing a great work, a Life of Christopher Columbus, which was to supersede all other Lives. As his purse was a light one, he occasionally took pupils, and it was in this way that he had taken Maso, or, as he called him (giving him all the syllables of the Italian Thomas), Tommaso. Only three weeks, however, of his tutorship had passed when he had received a letter announcing that his sister, his only remaining relative, despairing of his return, was coming abroad to see him, in spite of her age and infirmities; she was the "poor old thing" of her dry brother's description, and the voyage apparently had been too great an exertion, for she was lying dangerously ill at Liverpool, and the physician in attendance had telegraphed to Waterhouse to come immediately.

The history of the tutorship was as follows: Money had come from America, after all. Mrs. Roscoe (as everybody called her) had been trying for some time, so she told Maso, "to circumvent Reuben John," and sell a piece of land which she owned in Indiana. Now, unexpectedly, a purchaser had turned up. While she was relating this it seemed to her that her little boy changed into a young man before her eyes. "You've just got to take that money, mother, and go straight up to Aix-les-Bains," said Maso, planting himself before her. "I sha'n't go a single step; I ain't sick, and you are; it's cheaper for me to stay here. There isn't money enough to take us both, for I want you to stay up there ever so long—four whole months."

This was the first of many discussions, or rather of astonished exclamations from the mother, met by a stubborn and at last a silent obstinacy on the part of the boy. For of late he had scarcely slept, he had been so anxious; he had discovered that the people in the house, with the usual Italian dread of a cough, believed that "the beautiful little American," as they called his mother, was doomed. Mother and son had never been separated; the mother shed tears over the idea of a separation now; and then a few more because Maso did not "care." "It doesn't seem to be anything to you," she declared, reproachfully.

But Maso, grim-faced and wretched, held firm.

In this dead-lock, Mrs. Roscoe at last had the inspiration of asking Benjamin Waterhouse, who was spending the summer at the Bagni, and whom she knew to be a frugal man, to take charge of Maso during her absence. Maso, who under other circumstances would have fought the idea of a tutor with all his strength, now yielded without a word. And then the mother, unwillingly and in a flood of tears, departed. She went by slow stages to Aix-les-Bains; even her first letter, however, much more the later ones, exhaled from each line her pleasure in the cooler air and in her returning health. She sent to Maso, after a while, a colored photograph of herself, taken on the shore of Lake Bourget, and the picture was to the lonely boy the most precious thing he had ever possessed; for it showed that the alarming languor had gone; she was no longer thin and wan. He carried the photograph with him, and when he was alone he took it out. For he was suffering from the deepest pangs of homesickness. He was homesick for his mother, for his mother's room (the only home he had ever known), with all its attractions and indulgences; he could always play his games there; she was never tired of them nor of the noise and disorder which they might occasion; she was never tired of Mr. Tiber; she was never tired of Indians and war-whoops, nor of tents made of her shawls. She always petted him and made much of him; she was so little serious herself that she had unconsciously kept him childlike; in

many things they had been like two children together. In the life they led he had but small opportunity to make friendships with other lads. He had played with the American boys of his age whom he had met here and there, but they were always travellers; they never stayed long. His only comrade had been a lad in Pisa named Luigi. But even Luigi could not play games half as well as his mother could, nor live in the tent half as satisfactorily. He said nothing of his homesickness to his tutor; Waterhouse thought him a dull, hangdog sort of boy, and also a boy incredibly, monstrously ignorant. "What can that feather-brained little woman have been about not to have sent him to school long ago!" was his thought.

But now Maso was left alone, not only schoolless but tutorless. When the carriage bearing the biographer of Columbus had disappeared down the road leading to Lucca, the boy went back to the porter, who, wearing his stiff official cap adorned with the name of the hotel, stood airing his corpulent person in the doorway. "Say, Gregorio, I'll take those letters to the post-office if you like; I'm going right by there."

Gregorio liked Maso; all Italian servants liked the boy and his clever dog. In addition, the sunshine was hot, and Gregorio was not fond of pedestrian exercise; so he gave the letters to Maso willingly enough. Maso went briskly to the post-office. Here he put two of the letters into the box, but the third, which bore his mother's address, remained hidden under his jacket. Returning to the hotel, he went up to his room, placed this letter in his trunk, and locked the trunk carefully; then, accompanied by Mr. Tiber, he went off for a walk. The change had been so sudden that he had hardly had time to think; the telegram to Mr. Waterhouse had come only the day before, and until its arrival he had supposed that his life was definitely arranged for several months. Now, suddenly, everything was upheaved. After walking a mile, he sat down in a shady place and took off his hat. His thoughts ran something as follows: "T any rate, mother sha'n't know; *that's* settled; I ain't going to let her come back here and get sick again; no, sir! She's getting all well up there, and she's *got* to stay four whole months. There's no way she can hear that old Longlegs" (this was his name for the historical Benjamin) "has gone, now that I've hooked his letter. The people she knows here at the Bagni never write; besides, they don't know where she's staying, and I won't let 'em know. If they see me here alone they'll suppose Longlegs has arranged it. I've got to tell lies some; I've got to pretend, when I write to her, that Longlegs has sprained his wrist or his leg or something, and that's why he can't write himself. I've got to be awful careful about what I put in my letters, so that they'll sound all right; but I guess I can do it bully. And I'll spend mighty little (only I'm going to have ices); I'll quit the hotel, and go back to that house where we stayed before the money came. I've got fifty francs—that's lots; when that's gone, I'll go down to Pisa and get some more; they know me at the bank; I've been there with mother; they'll give me some. But I won't take much. Then, as old Longlegs hasn't got to be paid, there'll be stacks left when mother comes back, and she'll be so surprised! That'll be jolly fun—just elegant fun! Mr. Tiber, pim here."

Mr. Tiber was pursuing investigations by the side of a small watercourse; nothing was visible of him but the tip of a tail.

"Very well!"

Mr. Tiber came with a rush. Maso took him up, and confided to him, in the dog language, all his profound plan. Mr. Tiber approved of it highly.

The fifty francs carried the two through a good many days. Mr. Tiber, indeed, knew no change, for he had his coroneted bed, and the same fare was provided for him daily—a small piece of meat, plenty of hot macaroni, followed by a bit of cake and several lumps of sugar. When there were but eight francs left Maso went to Pisa. Mr. Waterhouse, who was very careful about money affairs, had paid all his pupil's bills up to the date of his own departure, and had then sent the remainder of the money which Mrs. Roscoe had left with him for the summer to her bankers at Pisa. Maso, as a precaution, carried with him the unmailed letter which contained the receipt for this sum. But he hoped that he should not be obliged to open the letter; he thought that they would give him a little money without that, as they knew him well. When he reached Pisa he found that the bank had closed its doors. It had failed.

Apparently it was a bad failure. Nobody (he inquired here and there) gave him a hopeful word. At the English bookseller's an assistant whom he knew said: "Even if something is recovered after a while, I am sure that nothing will be paid out for a long time yet. They have always been shaky; in my opinion, they are rascals." The bank, in truth, had never been a solid establishment; during its brief existence its standing had been dubious. But Violet Roscoe had her own ideas about banks, and one of the first was that she should be treated "with civility"; she was immensely indignant if her personality was not immediately recognized. Generally it was; she was such a charmingly pretty woman that bankers' clerks all over Europe remembered that personality without trouble, and handed out her letters eagerly through the windows of their caged retreats, stretching their heads through as far as possible to anticipate her slightest wish. But once, at one of the old banks in Pisa, she had presented a check on Paris, and had been asked to bring some one to identify her.

"Such a thing has never happened to me before!" she said, throwing back her head proudly.

This was true. But, again, it was her appearance, her beauty, and personal elegance which had helped her; risks had been assumed now and then simply from these. "She goes it on her face, doesn't she?" had been the private comment of one clerk to another in a bank at Rome. Upon this occasion at Pisa Violet had swept out of the place before the older official had time to find out what the new man was doing at the outer counter. Soon after this Mrs. Roscoe had selected this smaller establishment as "much nicer." "The office is so handsome, and they have such nice chairs, and all the illustrated papers. And then they are polite; they know their business, which is to be civil; there they see what I am!" They did see, indeed.



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN WATERHOUSE

Maso went back to the Bagni. In the bewilderment of his thoughts there was but one clear idea: "T any rate, mother *sha'n't* know; she's got to stay away four whole months; the doctor said so."

IV

AFTER a day of thought, Maso decided that he would leave the Bagni and go down to Pisa, and stay at Casa Corti. Madame Corti would not be there (she spent her summers at Sorrento), and officially the *pension* was closed; but Giulio would let him remain, knowing that his mother would pay for it when she returned; he had even a vision of the very room at the top of the house where Giulio would probably put him—a brick-floored cell next to the linen-room, adorned with an ancient shrine, and pervaded by the odor of freshly ironed towels. It would be no end of a lark to spend the summer in Pisa. Luigi would be there; and the puppet-shows. And perhaps Giulio would take him up on Sundays to the house on the hill-side where his wife and children lived; he had taken him once, and Maso had always longed to go again. But when he reached Pisa with his dog and his trunk he found the Palazzo Rondinelli wearing the aspect of a deserted fortress; the immense outer doors were swung to and locked; there was no sign of life anywhere. It had not been closed for twenty years. It was the unexpected which had happened. Maso went round to the stone lane behind the palace to see Luigi. It was then that he learned that his friend had gone to live in Leghorn; he learned, also, that the Casa Corti servants, having an opportunity to earn full wages at Abetone for two months, had been permitted by Madame Corti to accept this rare good-fortune; the house, therefore, had been closed. Maso, thus adrift, was still confident that the summer was going to be "huge," a free, banditlike existence, with many enjoyments; pictures of going swimming, and staying in as long as he liked, were in his mind; also the privilege of having his hair shaved close to his head, of eating melons at his pleasure, and of drinking lemonade in oceans from the gayly adorned, jingling carts. Of course he should have to get something to do, as his money was almost gone. Still, it would not take much to support him, and there was going to be an exciting joy in independence, in living in "bachelor quarters." He found his bachelor quarters in the Street of the Lily, a narrow passage that went burrowing along between two continuous rows of high old houses. The Lily's pavement was slimy with immemorial filth, and, in spite of the heat, the damp atmosphere was like that of an ill-kept refrigerator. At the top of one of the houses he established himself, with Mr. Tiber, in a bare room which contained not much more than a chair and a bed. Nevertheless, the first time he came out, locked his door, and descended the stairs with the key in his pocket he felt like a man; and he carried himself like one, with a swagger. The room had one advantage, it contained a trap-door to the roof, and there was a ladder tied up to the high ceiling, its rope secured by a padlock; the boy soon contrived means (this must have been his Yankee blood) to get the ladder down when he chose; then at night he went up and cooled himself off on the roof, under the stars. There were two broken statues there, for the old house had had its day of grandeur; he made a seat, or rather a bed, at their feet. Mr. Tiber was so unhappy down below that he invented a way to get him up also. He spread his jacket on the floor, made Mr. Tiber lie down upon it, and then, fastening the sleeves together with a cord, he swung the jacket round his neck and ascended with his burden. Mr. Tiber enjoyed the roof very much.

Having established himself, selected his trattoria, and imbibed a good deal of lemonade as a beginning, the occupant of the bachelor quarters visited the business streets of Pisa in search of employment. But it was the dullest season in a place always dull, and no one wished for a new boy. At the Anglo-American Agency the clerk, languid from the heat, motioned him away without a word; at the Forwarding and Commission Office no one looked at him or spoke to him; so it was everywhere. His friend, the bookseller's assistant, had gone for the summer to the branch

establishment at Como.

Mrs. Roscoe, who detested Pisa, had established no relations there save at the confectioner's, and at the agreeable bank where they saw what she was. But the bank continued closed, and the confectioner objected to boys of thirteen as helpers. In this emergency Maso wrote to Luigi, asking if there was any hope of a place in Leghorn.

"There is sure to be a demand at the large establishments for a talented North American," Luigi had answered, with confidence.

But Maso went up and down the streets of Leghorn in vain; the large establishments demanded nothing.

The boys now came down in their expectations. Upon Maso's second visit to the seaport of Tuscany it was agreed that he should take any employment that was offered; "for of course it is but a temporary thing," said Luigi, grandly. He remembered Maso's mother, and to him Casa Corti, at whose heels, as it were, he had lived, was a highly aristocratic place of abode. Luigi was assistant in a shop where glass-ware was sold; for an hour this morning he was free to accompany his friend in his quest, and together they edged their way along in the narrow line of shade on one side of the hot, white streets. But it made no difference whether Luigi went in first and offered his North American candidate, Maso following a few minutes afterwards, or whether Maso made his demand in person, Luigi entering later, with his best smile, to serve as backer; no one showed any eagerness to secure the services of the small, narrow-chested boy. "Say, Maso, couldn't you *look* a little different?" suggested Luigi, anxiously, as they came out of an office, where, as he was last, he had overheard the epithet "sullen-faced" applied to his American friend.

The two boys spoke Italian; Luigi knew no English.

"Why, I look as I'm made. Everybody looks as they're made, don't they?" said Maso, surprised.

"Ah, but expression is a beautiful thing—a sympathetic countenance," said Luigi, waving his hand. "Now you—you might smile more. Promise me to try a smile at the next place where we go in to ask."

"Like this?" said Maso. And stopping, he slapped his leg violently, and gave a deep, long, sardonic laugh. "I saw a man once who did it like that," he explained.

"Well! If you should go in and ask for a place and do that—well, I don't know *what* they would do to you!" said Luigi, standing still, amazed.

"I didn't want to do it; you made me," answered Maso, nettled.

"I told you to smile with an amiability—a sweetness; I didn't tell you to slap your leg and yell out like that," Luigi remonstrated, taking off his hat and wiping his hot forehead. "Come; here's a window with nice looking-glasses; practice a little, and I'll stand behind and tell you when it's right."

And Maso, standing close to the window, smiled with an amiability—a sweetness. The reflection of his freckled face in the tilted mirror, giving back these grins, was something unearthly. But both of the boys were far too much in earnest to notice that.

"This one will do, I think," said Luigi, doubtfully—"at least, it's the best. I've got to go now, but look in at the shop before you take the train back. Are you hungry? I know a place where things are good and not dear; I'll take you there myself."

This was Luigi's Italian hospitality; he would show Maso his own particular *trattoria*. But Maso was not hungry.

At three o'clock he appeared at Luigi's shop. Luigi was dusting goblets. "Well?" he said, inquiringly.

Maso shook his head.

"Didn't you smile?"

"Yes, I did it as I took off my hat. And every time they seemed so surprised."

"I've a new idea, Maso; behold it: the consul of your country!"

"Is there one in Leghorn?" asked Maso, vaguely.

"Of course there is; I have seen the sign many a time." And Luigi mentioned the street and the number.

The proprietor of the shop, who was packing a case of the slender Epiphany trumpets, now broke one by accident, and immediately scolded Luigi in a loud voice; Maso was obliged to make a hasty departure.

The office of the representative of the United States government was indicated by a painted shield bearing the insignia of the republic, and a brass plate below, with the following notification: "Consolato degli Stati-Uniti d'America." The first word of this inscription rouses sometimes a vague thrill in the minds of homesick Americans in Italy coming to pay a visit to their flag and the eagle. The thrill, however, is immediately followed by a conviction that whatever the syllables may mean (in an unintelligible land), they do not foreshadow, probably, anything so solacing as they appear at first to indicate. Consolato—a consoling-place; if it were indeed that, the bare room would soon be as celebrated as is in Jerusalem the Wailing-place of the Jews. To Maso, however, there was no double meaning. He glanced at the flag; then he went up the stairs and knocked at the door.

As it happened, the consul himself was there alone. Maso, upon entering, took off his hat and tried his smile, then he began: "If you please, I am trying to get a place—something to do. I thought perhaps, sir, that you might—"

He stopped, and in his embarrassment put the toe of his shoe into a hole in the matting, and moved it about industriously.

"Don't spoil my matting," said the consul. "You're a very young boy to be looking for a place."

"I'm going on fourteen."

"And of what nation are you?" demanded the consul, after another survey.

"Why, I'm American," said Maso, surprised.

"I shouldn't have taken you for one. What is your name?"

"Maso—I mean Thom-as Ross Coe," replied the boy, bringing out the syllables with something of an Italian pronunciation.

"Tummarse Errosco? Do you call that an American name?"

"I'll write it," said Maso, blushing. He wrote it in large letters on the edge of a newspaper that was near him.

"Thomas R. Coe," read the consul. "Coe is your name, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"You want something to do, eh? What do you want, and why do you come here for it?"

Maso told his story, or rather a tale which he had prepared on his way to the consulate. It was a confused narrative, because he did not wish to betray anything that could give a clue to his mother's address.

The consul asked questions. "A failure, eh? What failure?"

"It—it wasn't in Leghorn."

"And your mother will be back in September? Where is she at present?"

"She—she is north; she isn't very well, and—" But he could not think of anything that he could safely add, so he stopped.

"We haven't any places for boys. Did you expect me to take you in here?"

"No, sir. I thought perhaps you'd recommend me."

"On general principles, I suppose, as an American, seeing that I don't know anything else about you. And you selected the Fourth as a nice, good, patriotic day for it?"

"The Fourth?"

"I suppose you know what day it is?"

"Yes, sir—Tuesday."

The consul looked at him, and saw that he spoke in good faith. "*You* an American boy? I guess not! You may go." And dipping his pen in the ink, he resumed his writing.

Maso, though disturbed and bewildered, held his ground. He certainly was an American boy. What could the man mean?

The consul, whose name was Maclean, was a lawyer from Michigan; a short, stout man of sixty, with a yellow skin, bright black eyes, and an old-fashioned black wig with a curled edge all round. "No use waiting, my friend," he said, without looking up; "frauds don't go down here."

"I'm American. True as you live, I am," said Maso, earnestly.

Something in his face made the consul relent a little. "Perhaps you've got some American blood hidden in you somewhere. But it must be pretty well thinned out not to know the Fourth of July! I suppose you've never heard of the Declaration of Independence either?"

A gleam of light now illumined the darkness of Maso's mind. "Oh yes; I know now; in the History." He rallied. "The Indians took a *very* bloody part in it," he added, with confidence.

"Oh, they did, did they? Where were you brought up?"

"In Italy, most; a little in other places. I came abroad before I was two."

"I see—one of the expatriated class," said Maclean, contemptuously. He had a great contempt for Americans who leave their own country and reside abroad. The dialogue ended, after a little more talk, in his saying: "Well, you get me a note from your mother (I suppose you write to her?) telling me something more about you. Then I'll see what I can do." For the boy's story had been a very vague one.

As Maso, heavy-hearted, turned towards the door, Maclean suddenly felt sorry for him. He was such a little fellow, and somehow his back looked so tired. "See here, my son," he said, "here's something for the present. No use telling you to buy fire-crackers with it, for they haven't got 'em here. But you might buy rockets; can't look out of the window summer nights in this place without seeing a lonely rocket shooting up somewhere." He held out two francs.

Maso's face grew scarlet. "I'd rather not, unless I can work for it," he muttered. It was a new feeling to be taken for a beggar.

"You can work enough for that if you want to. There is a printed list on that desk, and a pile of circulars; you can direct them. Show me the first dozen, so that I can see if they'll pass."

Maso sat down at the desk. He put his hat in six different places before he could collect his wits and get to work. When he brought the dozen envelopes for inspection, Maclean said:

"You seem to know Eytalian well, with all these Eytalian names. *I* can't make head or tail of 'em. But as to handwriting, it's about the worst I ever saw."

"Yes, I know," said Maso, ashamed. "I've never had regular lessons, 'cepting this summer, when—" He stopped; Mr. Waterhouse's name would be, perhaps, a clue. He finished the circulars; it took an hour and a half.

The consul shook hands with him, the mechanical hand-shake of the public functionary. "You get me that note, and I'll see."

Maso went back to Pisa. When he arrived at his door in the Street of the Lily, the wife of the cobbler who lived on the ground-floor handed him a letter which the postman had left. The sight of it made the boy's heart light; he forgot his weariness, and, climbing the stairs quickly, he unlocked his door and entered his room, Mr. Tiber barking a joyous welcome. Mr. Tiber had been locked in all day; but he had had a walk in the early morning, and his solitude had been tempered by plenty of food on a plate, a bowl of fresh water, and a rubber ball to play with. Maso sat down, and, with the dog on his knees, tore open his letter. It was directed to him at Pisa, in a rough handwriting, but within there was a second envelope, a letter from his mother, which bore the address of the hotel at the Bagni di Lucca, where she supposed that her son was staying with his tutor. She wrote regularly, and she sent polite messages to Waterhouse, regretting so much that his severe sprain prevented him from writing to her in reply. Maso, in his answers, represented himself as the most hopelessly stupid pupil old Longlegs had ever been cursed with; in the network of deception in which he was now involved he felt this somehow to be a relief. He had once heard an American boy call out to another who was slow in understanding something, "You're an old gumpy;" so he wrote, "Longlegs yells out every day your an old gumpy," which greatly astonished Mrs. Roscoe. The boy exerted every power he had to make his letters appear natural. But the task was so difficult that each missive read a good deal like a ball discharged from a cannon; there was always a singularly abrupt statement regarding the weather, and another about the food at the hotel; then followed two or three sentences about Longlegs; and he was her "affecshionate son Maso. P.S.—Mr. Tiber is very well." He sent these replies to the Bagni; here his friend, the porter, taking off the outer envelope, which was directed to himself, put the letter within with the others to go to the post-office; in this way Maso's epistles bore the postmark "Bagni di Lucca." For these services Maso had given his second-best suit of clothes, with shoes and hat, to the porter's young son, who had aspirations.

The present letter from Mrs. Roscoe was full of joyousness and jokes. But the great news was that she intended to make a tour in Switzerland in August, and as she missed her little boy too much to enjoy it without him, she had written urgently to America about money, and she hoped that before long (she had told them to cable) she could send for him to join her. Maso was wildly happy; to be with his mother again, and yet not to have her return to Italy before the important four months were over, that was perfect; he got up, opened his trunk, and refolded his best jacket and trousers with greater care, even before he finished the letter. For he wore now continuously his third-best suit, as the second-best had been left at the Bagni. At last, when he knew the letter by heart, he washed his face and hands, and, accompanied by Mr. Tiber, tail-wagging and expectant, he went down to get supper at the *trattoria* near by.

The next day he tried Pisa again, searching for employment through street after street. His mother had written that she hoped to send for him early in August. It was now the 5th of July, so that there were only four or five weeks to provide for; and then there would be his fare back to the Bagni. But his second quest was hardly more fortunate than the first. The only person who did not wave a forefinger in perspiring negative even before he had opened his lips was a desiccated youth, who, sitting in his shirt-sleeves, with his feet up and a tumbler beside him, gave something of an American air (although Maso did not know that) to a frescoed apartment in which Singer sewing-machines were offered for sale. This exile told him to add up a column of figures, to show what he could do. But when he saw that the boy was doing his counting with his fingers, he nodded him towards the door. "Better learn to play the flute," he suggested, sarcastically.

Maso was aware that accountants are not in the habit of running a scale with the fingers of their left hand on the edge of their desks, or of saying aloud, "six and three are nine," "seven and five are eleven," and "nought's nought." He had caught these methods from his mother, who always counted in that way. He clinched his fingers into his palm as he went down the stairs; he would never count with them again. But no one asked him to count, or to do anything else. In the afternoon he sought the poorer streets; here he tried shop after shop. The atmosphere was like that of a vapor bath; he felt tired and dull. At last, late in the day, a cheese-seller gave him a hope of employment at the end of the week. The wages were very small; still, it was something; and refreshed by the thought, he went home (as he called it), released Mr. Tiber, and, as the sun was low, took him off for a walk. By hazard he turned towards the part of the town which is best known to travellers, that outlying quarter where the small cathedral, the circular baptistery, and the Leaning Tower keep each other company, folded in a protecting corner of the crenellated city wall. The Arno was flowing slowly, as if tired and hot, under its bridges; Pisa looked deserted; the pavements were scorching under the feet.

As the boy came up the broad paved walk that leads to the cathedral, he saw two ladies leaving the doorway at the base of the Leaning Tower; evidently they had been making the ascent. They went across to the baptistery to see the pulpit of Nicolo the Pisan. "Now they're going to make the old shed howl," he said to himself. This was the disrespectful way in which he thought of the famous echo.

At Pisa the atmosphere clothes the cathedral with a softness which no Northern marbles can ever hope to attain. The façade, perfect in proportion and beauty, rises with its columns and galleries from the greensward, facing the sculptured baptistery; on the other side the celebrated and fantastic tower for the bells stands, like a tree which has been made to slant by the furious wind, looking across the plain towards the sea.

Maso stretched himself on the grass under the façade of the cathedral. After a while the ladies came from the baptistery, and crossed to the Campo Santo. In the relaxation of the dull season the portal had been left open behind them, and the boy went over and wandered about within, carrying Mr. Tiber under his jacket, half concealed, as dogs are not allowed in the sacred enclosure. He looked at the frescos of Benozzo, at the "Last Judgment" and the "Triumph of Death." He passed the celebrated sarcophagus without knowing what it was, his attention being more attracted by the modern monuments, the large marble figures, seated and standing, that stared down upon him with their unmoving white eyes. At last he sat down at the base of one of these figures to rest, for the air here was cool compared with the atmosphere outside. The two strangers, in their slow progress, looking at everything, guide-book in hand, had passed him once; now on their second round they stopped near him at the doorway, preparing for departure. "Well, there is nothing more to see in Pisa," said one. "Thank Heaven! Pisa's done. Now we can go on to Lerici."

"We haven't found those plates yet," objected the other.

"What plates?"

"Why, don't you remember? They say there are old majolica plates set in one of the campaniles here—trophies taken from the Moors ages ago. I've stared up at every campanile, and haven't seen a sign. I wonder if that boy would know? What a forlorn-looking creature!"

Maso, in truth, in his third-best suit, and obliged to be economical regarding the bills of the cobbler's wife, who acted as his laundress, did not present an attractive appearance.

The lady, turning towards him, had begun, "Sapete uno posata in campanile—" But resenting her comment, Maso had risen and walked away.

"Evidently he isn't Italian, for he doesn't understand," said the questioner, who was accustomed to declare that it was very easy for her to travel abroad, as she spoke "five languages equally well." "Perhaps he is German—with that light hair." She ran after him. "Tisch," she called, "in thurm. Haben-sie gesehen ein?"

"I speak English," said Maso, stopping.

"You're never English, surely!"

"I'm American."

"American? We are Americans; but I should never have taken *you* for one!" Then she asked her question about the plates. Maso had never heard of them; he told her so, and made his escape, going back to the grass under the façade. "Ugly old things," he thought, "both of them! I just wish they could see *mother*." And forgetting his own mortification, his heart swelled with pride as he recalled her pretty face and pretty step, and the general perfection of her appearance. Only four weeks or so and he should be with her! "Mr. Tiber, pim here. We're going to Switzerland. Do you hear that? I shall take you in a basket and pretend you's lunch. The nobil empress" (this character, in the dog language, was Mrs. Roscoe) "says you mut promet not to bark. But you can bark now. Hi! Mr. Tiber. Hi!"

And Mr. Tiber hied. And then, at the word of command, performed every trick he knew.

V

THE cheese-shop was blazing with the light of four flaring gas-burners; the floor had been watered a short time before, and this made the atmosphere reek more strongly than ever with the odors of the smoked fish and sausages, caviare and oil, which, with the cheese, formed the principal part of the merchandise offered for sale. There was no current of air passing through from the open door, for the atmosphere outside was perfectly still. Tranquilly hovering mosquitoes were everywhere, but Maso did not mind these much; he objected more to the large black beetles that came noiselessly out at night; he hated the way they stood on the shelves as if staring at him, motionless save for the waving to and fro of their long antennæ. A boy came in to buy cheese. It was soft cheese; Maso weighed it, and put it upon a grape leaf. "It just gets hotter and hotter!" he remarked, indignantly. The Italian lad did not seem to mind the heat much; he was buttery with perspiration from morning until night, but as he had known no other atmosphere than that of Pisa, he supposed that this was the normal summer condition of the entire world. It was the 27th of August.

On the last day of July, when Maso's every breath was accompanied by an anticipation of Switzerland, there had arrived a long disappointed letter from his mother; the hoped-for money had not come, and would not come: "Reuben John again!" The Swiss trip must be given up, and now the question was, could Mr. Waterhouse keep him awhile longer? "Because if he cannot, I shall return to the Bagni next week." Maso, though choked with the disappointment, composed a letter in which he said that old Longlegs was delighted to keep him, and was sorry he could not write himself, but his arm continued stiff; "probly heel never be able to write agane," he added, darkly, so as to make an end, once for all, of that complicated subject. There was no need of her return, not the least; he and Mr. Tiber were well, "and having loads of fun"; and, besides, there was not a single empty room in the hotel or anywhere else, and would not be until the 6th of September; there had never been such a crowd at the Bagni before. He read over what he had written, and perceiving that he had given an impression of great gayety at the Italian watering-place, he added, "P.S. peple all cooks turists." (For Mrs. Roscoe was accustomed to declare that she hated these inoffensive travellers.) Then he signed his name in the usual way: "your affecshionate son, Maso." He never could help blotting when he wrote his name—probably because he was trying to write particularly well. Mrs. Roscoe once said that it was always either blot "so," or "Ma" blot; this time it was "Ma" blot.

This letter despatched, the boy's steadiness broke down. He did not go back to the cheese-seller's shop; he lived upon the money he had earned, and when that was gone he sold his clothes, keeping only those he wore and his best suit, with a change of under-clothing. Next he sold his trunk; then his school-books, though they brought but a few centimes. The old fairy-book he kept; he read it during the hot noon-times, lying on the floor, with Mr. Tiber by his side. The rest of the day he devoted to those pleasures of which he had dreamed. He went swimming, and stayed in for hours; and he made Mr. Tiber swim. He indulged himself as regarded melons; he went to the puppet-show accompanied by Mr. Tiber; he had had his hair cut so closely that it was hardly more than yellow down; and he swaggered about the town in the evening smoking cigarettes. After three weeks of this vagabond existence he went back to the cheese-seller, offering to work for half-wages. His idea was to earn money enough for his fare to the Bagni, and also to pay for the washing of his few clothes, so that he might be in respectable condition to meet his mother on the 6th of September; for on the 6th the four months would be up, and she could safely return. This was his constant thought. Of late he had spoken of the 6th in his letters, and she had agreed to it, so there was no doubt of her coming. To-day, August 27th, he had been at work for a week at the cheese-seller's, and the beetles were blacker and more crafty than ever.

It was Saturday night, and the shop was kept open late; but at last he was released, and went home. The cobbler's wife handed him his letter, and he stopped to read it by the light of the strongly smelling petroleum lamp. For he had only a short end of a candle up-stairs; and, besides, he could not wait, he was so sure that he should find, within, the magic words, "I shall come by the train that reaches Lucca at—" and then a fixed date and hour written down in actual figures on the page.

The letter announced that his mother had put off her return for three weeks: she was going to Paris. "As you are having such a wonderfully good time at the Bagni this summer, you won't mind this short delay. If by any chance Mr. Waterhouse cannot keep you so long, let him telegraph me. No telegram will mean that he can." She spoke of the things she should bring to him from Paris, and the letter closed with the sentence, "I am so glad I have thought of this delightful idea before settling down again in that deadly Casa Corti for the winter." (But the idea had a human shape. Violet Roscoe's ideas were often personified; they took the form of agreeable men.)

"Evil news? Tell me not so!" said the cobbler's wife, who had noticed the boy's face as he read.

"Pooh! no," answered Maso, stoutly. He put the letter into his pocket and went up to his room. As he unlocked his door, there was not the usual joyful rush of Mr. Tiber against his legs; the silence was undisturbed. He struck a match on the wall and lighted his candle-end. There, in the corner, on his little red coverlid, lay Mr. Tiber asleep. Then, as the candle burned more brightly, it could be seen that it was not sleep. There was food on the tin plate and water in the bowl; he had not needed anything. There was no sign of suffering in the attitude, or on the little black face with its closed eyes (to Maso that face had always been as clearly intelligible as a human countenance); the appearance was as if the dog had sought his own corner and his coverlid, and had laid himself down to die very peacefully without a pain or a struggle.

The candle-end had long burned itself out, and the boy still lay on the floor with his arm round his pet. It seemed to him that his heart would break. "Mr. Tiber, dear little Tiber, my own little doggie—dying here all alone!—kinnin little chellow!" Thus he sobbed and sobbed until he was worn out. Towards dawn came the thought of what must follow. But no; Mr. Tiber should not be taken away and thrown into some horrible place! If he wished to prevent it, however, he must be very quick. He had one of the large colored handkerchiefs which Italians use instead of baskets; as the dawn grew brighter he spread it out, laid his pet carefully in the centre, and knotted the corners together tightly; then, after bathing his face to conceal as much as possible the traces of his tears, he stole down the stairs, and, passing through the town, carrying his burden in the native fashion, he took a road which led towards the hills.

It was a long walk. The little body which had been so light in life weighed now like lead; but it might have been twice as heavy, he would not have been conscious of it. He reached the place at last, the house where Giulio's wife lived, with her five children, near one of the hill-side villages which, as seen from Pisa, shine like white spots on the verdure. Paola came out from her dark dwelling, and listened to his brief explanation with wonder. To take so much trouble for a dog! But she was a mild creature, her ample form cowlike, her eyes cowlike also, and therefore beautiful; she accompanied him, and she kept the curious crowding children in some kind of order while the boy, with her spade, dug a grave in the corner of a field which she pointed out. Maso dug and dug in the heat. He was so afraid of the peasant cupidity that he did not dare to leave the dog wrapped in the cotton handkerchief, lest the poor little tomb should be rifled to obtain it; he gave it, therefore, to one of the children, and, gathering fresh leaves, he made a bed of them at the bottom of the hole; then leaning down, he laid his pet tenderly on the green, and covered him thickly with more foliage, the softest he could find. When the last trace of the little black head had disappeared he took up the spade, and with eyes freshly wet again in spite of his efforts to prevent it, he filled up the grave as quickly as he could, levelling the ground smoothly above it. He had made his excavation very deep, in order that no one should meddle with the place later: it would be too much trouble.

It was now nearly noon. He gave Paola three francs, which was half of all he possessed. Then, with one quick glance towards the corner of the field, he started on his long walk back to Pisa.

VI

"Do you know where you'll end, Roberta! You'll end with us," said Mrs. Harrowby.

"With you?"

"Yes; in the Church. You've tried everything, beginning with geology and ending with music (I can't help laughing at the last; you never had any ear), and you have found no satisfaction. You are the very kind to come to us; they always do."

The speaker, an American who lived in Naples, had entered the Roman Catholic Church ten years before; in Boston she had been a Unitarian. It was the 10th of September, and she was staying for a day in Pisa on her way southward; she had encountered Miss Spring by chance in the piazza of Santa Caterina at sunset, and the two had had a long talk with the familiarity which an acquaintance in childhood carries with it, though years of total separation may have intervened.

"There is one other alternative," answered Miss Spring; "it was suggested by a pretty little woman who used to be here. She advised me to try crystal scent-bottles and dissipation." This being a joke, Miss Spring had intended to smile; but at this instant her attention was attracted by something on the other side of the street, and her face remained serious.

"Crystal scent-bottles? Dissipation? Mercy!" exclaimed Mrs. Harrowby. "What *do* you mean?"

But her companion had gone; she was hurrying across the street. "It isn't possible, Maso, that this is *you!*" She spoke to a ragged, sick-looking boy.

Two hours after her question Maso was in bed in the Palazzo Rondinelli. Madame Corti never came back till October, and the *pension* was not open, but servants were there. The house-keeper went through the form of making protest: "The signora has always such great alarm about fever."

"You will refer Madame Corti to me; I will pay for her alarm," answered Roberta, marching past her to direct the driver of the carriage, who was assisting Maso up the stairs. "It's not infectious fever. Only malarial." Roberta was something of a doctor herself. She superintended in person the opening of a large, cool room on the second floor, the making of the bed, and then the installation of Maso between linen sheets. The servants were all fond of the boy; in addition, Madame Corti was in Sorrento, and Miss Spring's francs were here. Her francs were few, but she spent them for Maso as generously as though they had been many.

The boy, as soon as he was in bed, whispered to Giulio, "Pencil—paper." Then when Miss Spring had left the room, he scrawled on the page, Giulio holding a book under it, "My dog is ded," and signed his name. He told Giulio to give this to her when she came in; then, as he heard her step, he quickly closed his eyes.

Miss Spring read, and understood. "He was afraid I would ask. And he could not speak of it. He remembers, poor little fellow, that I did not care for the dog."

Maso had refused to tell her where his mother was. "She's coming, on the 22d, to the Bagni di Lucca"; this was all he would say. The next morning at daylight she left him with the nurse (for she had sent immediately for Dr. Prior and for one of the best nurses in Pisa), and, driving to the Street of the Lily, she ascended the unclean stairs, with her skirts held high and her glasses on, to the room at the top of the house. Maso had himself gathered his few possessions together after his meeting with her in the piazza of Santa Caterina, but he had not had the strength to carry them down to the lower door. Miss Spring took the two parcels, which were tied up in newspapers, and after looking about to see that there was nothing left, she descended in the same gingerly way, and re-entered the carriage which was waiting at the door, its wheels grazing the opposite house. "Yes, he is ill; malarial fever. But we hope he will recover," she said to the cobbler's wife, who inquired with grief and affection, and a very dirty face.

To find Mrs. Roscoe's address, so that she could telegraph to her, Miss Spring was obliged to look through Maso's parcels. She could not ask his permission, for he recognized no one now; his mind wandered. One of the bundles contained the best suit, still carefully saved for his mother's arrival. The other held his few treasures: his mother's letters, with paper and envelopes for his own replies; the old fairy-book; and Mr. Tiber's blanket, coverlid, and little collar, wrapped in a clean handkerchief. The latest letter gave the Paris address.

"My dear little boy! If I could only have known!" moaned Violet Roscoe, sitting on the edge of the bed with her child in her arms. She had just arrived; her gloves were still on. "Oh, Maso, why didn't you tell me?"

Maso's face, gaunt and brown, lay on her shoulder; his eyes were strange, but he knew her. "You mustn't get

sick again, mother," he murmured, anxiously, the fixed idea of the summer asserting itself. Then a wider recollection dawned. "Oh, mother," he whispered with his dry lips, "Mr. Tiber's dead. Little Tiber!"

His fever-hot eyes could not shed tears, but his mother cried for him, overwhelmed by the thought of his lonely sorrow. Then she tried to comfort him: "Tiber was an old dog, Maso; he was not young when we bought him, and we have had him many years. Dogs do not live very long, even the oldest; he had to die some time. And he had a very happy little life with you, always; you loved him, and gave him everything, and he loved you. No dog could have had more."

Roberta overheard this attempt; she came to the bedside to add her item also to the consolation. "Perhaps you will see your pet again, Maso. For he had his vital spark as well as we have, though in a less degree. If ours is to reappear in a future existence, I am inclined to think that his will also. Why not?"

Maso did not understand her; his mother's voice alone reached his dulled intelligence. But at least Roberta had done her best.

A month later Mr. Reuben J. Coe, of Coesville, New Hampshire, said to his brother David: "That foolish wife of Tom's is coming home at last. In spite of every effort on my part, she has made ducks and drakes of almost all her money."

"Is that why she is coming back?"

"No; thinks it will be better for the boy. But I'm afraid it's too late for that."

A FLORENTINE EXPERIMENT

ONE afternoon, three years ago, two ladies were talking together on the heights of Fiesole overlooking Florence. They occupied the stone bench which bears the inscription of its donor, an appreciative Englishman, who in a philanthropical spirit has had it placed there for the benefit of the pilgrims from all nations who come to these heights to see the enchanting view. The two ladies were not speaking of the view, however, but of something more personal. It seemed to be interesting.

"He is certainly much in love with you," said one, who was taller and darker than her companion. As she spoke, she gave back a letter which she had been reading.

"Yes, I think he is," said the other, reflectively, replacing it in its envelope.

"I suppose you are so accustomed to it, Beatrice, that it does not make much impression upon you," continued the first speaker, her glance as she spoke resting not upon her companion, but upon the lovely levels beneath, with the violet-hued mountains rising softly up round about them, so softly that one forgot they were mountains until the eye caught the gleam of snow on the summits towards the east. There was a pause after this question, and it lasted so long that the questioner at length removed her eyes from the landscape and turned them upon her friend; to her surprise she saw that the friend was blushing.

"Why, Beatrice!" she exclaimed, "is it possible—"

"No," said Beatrice, "it is not possible. I know that I am blushing; but you must not think too much of that. I am not as strong as I was, and blush at everything; I am taking iron for it. In the present case, it only means that—" She paused.

"That you like him," suggested the other, smiling.

"I like a number of persons," said Mrs. Lovell, tranquilly, gazing in her turn down the broad, slightly winding valley, dotted with its little white villages, and ending in a soft blue haze, through which the tawny Arno, its course marked by a line of tall, slender, lightly foliated, seemingly branchless trees, like tall rods in leaf, went onward towards the west.

"I know you do," said the first speaker. "And I really wish," she added, with a slight touch of vehemence, "that your time would come—that I should see you at last liking some one person really and deeply and jealously, and to the exclusion of all the rest."

"I don't know why you should wish me unhappiness, Margaret. You have beautiful theories, I know; but in my *experience*" (Mrs. Lovell slightly underlined this word as if in opposition to the "theories" of her friend) "the people who have those deeper sort of feelings you describe are almost always very unhappy."

Margaret turned her head, and looked towards the waving line of the Carrara mountains; in her eyes there was the reflection of a sudden inward pain. But she knew that she could indulge in this momentary expression of feeling; the mountains would not betray her, and the friend by her side did not realize that anything especial could have happened to "Margaret." In excuse for Mrs. Lovell it may be said that so much that was very especial had always happened, and still continued to happen, to her, that she had not much time for the more faintly colored episodes of other people.

Beatrice Lovell was an unusually lovely woman. The adjective is here used to signify that she inspired love. Not by an effort, word, action, or hardly interest of her own; but simply because she was what she was. Her beauty was not what is called striking; it touched the eye gently at first, but always grew. People who liked to analyze said that the secret lay in the fact that she had the sweetness, the tints, the surface texture as it were, and even sometimes the expression, of childhood still; and then, when you came to look deeper, you found underneath all the richer bloom of the woman. Her golden hair, not thick or long, but growing in little soft wavelets upon her small head; her delicate rose-leaf skin, showing the blue veins; her little teeth and the shape of her sweet mouth—all these were like childhood. In addition, she was dimpled and round, with delicately cut features, and long-lashed violet eyes, in whose soft depths lay always an expression of gentle trust. This beautiful creature was robbed to-day in widow's mourning-garb made in the severest fashion, without one attempt to decorate or lighten it. But the straight-skirted, untrimmed garments, the little close bonnet, and the heavy veil pinned over it with straight crape-pins, only brought out more vividly the tints of her beauty.

"No," she continued, as her companion did not speak, "I by no means wish for the feelings you invoke for me. I am better off as I am; I keep my self-possession. For instance, I told this Sicily person that it was in very bad taste to speak to me in that way at such a time—so soon after Mr. Lovell's death; and that I was much annoyed by it."

"It has not prevented his writing," said Margaret, coming back slowly from the Carrara mountains, and letting her eyes rest upon the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio below, springing above the city roofs like the stem of a flower.

"They always write, I think," said Mrs. Lovell, simply.

"I know they do—to *you*," said Margaret. She turned as she spoke, and looked at her friend with the same old affection and admiration which she had felt for her from childhood, but now with a sort of speculative curiosity added. How must it feel to live such a life—to be constantly surrounded and accompanied by an atmosphere of devotion and enthrallment such as that letter had expressed? Beatrice seemed to divine something of her friend's thought, and answered it after her fashion.

"It is such a comfort to be with you, Margaret," she said, affectionately; "it has always been a comfort, ever since we were children. I can talk freely to you, and as I can talk to no one else. You understand; you do not misunderstand. But all the other women I meet invariably do; or, at least, pretend to enough to excuse their being horribly disagreeable."

Margaret took her hand. They had taken off their gloves, as the afternoon was warm, and they had the heights to themselves; it was early in March, and the crowd of tourists who come in the spring to Italy, and those more loitering travellers who had spent the winter in Naples or Rome, had not yet reached Florence, although it may be said that they were at the door. Mrs. Lovell's hands, now destitute of ornament save the plain band of the wedding-ring, were small, dimpled, very white; her friend Miss Stowe had hands equally small, but darker and more slender.

"You have been happy all your life, have you not, Beatrice?" said Margaret, not questioningly so much as assertively.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Lovell, "I think I have. Of course I was much shocked by Mr. Lovell's death; he was very kind to me."

"Mr. Lovell," as his wife always called him, had died four months previously. He was fifty-six years of age, and Beatrice had been his wife for a little more than a year. He had been very happy with her, and had left her his fortune and his blessing; with these, and his memory, she had come abroad, and had been for six weeks in Sicily, with some elderly friends. She had stopped in Florence to see Miss Stowe, who was spending the winter there with an aunt; but she was not to remain. In her present state of seclusion she was to visit Venice and the Lakes in advance of the season, and spend the summer in "the most quiet village" which could be discovered for her especial benefit on the Brittany coast. The friends had not met for two years, and there had been much to tell—that is, for Beatrice to tell. Her always personal narratives were saved from tediousness, however, because they were not the usual decorated feminine fancies, but plain masculine facts (oh, very plain!); and because, also, the narrator was herself quite without the vanity which might naturally have accompanied them. This last merit seemed to her admirers a very remarkable one; in reality it was only that, having no imagination, she took a simple, practical view of everything, themselves included. This last, however, they never discovered, because her unflinching tact and gentleness lay broadly and softly over all.

"And what shall you do about your Sicily person?" said Margaret, not in the least, however, associating the remark, and knowing also that Beatrice would not associate it, with "Mr. Lovell" and his "memory" (it was quite well understood between them about "Mr. Lovell").

"Of course I shall not answer."

"And if he follows you?"

"He will hardly do that—now. Besides, he is going to America; he sails to-morrow. Our having been together in Sicily was quite by chance, of course; he knows that, and he knows also that I intend to pay, in every way, the strictest respect to Mr. Lovell's memory. That will be fully two years."

"And then?"

"Oh, I never plan. If things do not assert themselves, they are not worth a plan."

"You certainly are the most delightful little piece of common-sense I ever met," said Margaret, laughing, and kissing her. "I wish you would give me a share of it! But come—it is late; we must go."

As they went down the slope together towards the village where their carriage was waiting, they looked not unlike the two seventeen-year-old school-girls of eight years before; Beatrice was smiling, and Margaret's darker face was lighted by the old animation which had always charmed her lovely but unanimated friend. It may here be remarked that the greatest intellectual excitements which Beatrice Lee had known had been when Margaret Stowe had let loose her imagination, and carried her friend up with her, as on strong wings, to those regions of fancy which she never attained alone; Beatrice had enjoyed it, wondered over it, and then had remained passive until the next time.

"Ah well—poor Sicily person!" said Margaret, as they took their places in the carriage. "I know just what you will do with him. You will write down his name in a memorandum-book, so as not to forget it; you will safely burn his poor letter, as you have safely burned so many others; and you will go gently on to Brittany without even taking the ashes!"

"Keep it for me!" said Mrs. Lovell, suddenly, drawing the letter from her pocket and placing it in Margaret's hand. "Yes," she repeated, enjoying her idea and dwelling upon it, delighted to find that she possessed a little fancy of her own, after all, "keep it for me, and read it over once in a while. It is quite well written, and will do you good, because it is not one of your theories, but a fact. There is nothing disloyal in my giving it to you, because I always tell you everything, and this Sicily person has no claim for exemption in that regard. He has gone back to America, and you will not meet him. No—positively, I will not take it. You must keep it for me."

"Very well," said Margaret, amused by this little unexpected flight. "But as I may go back to America also, I want to be quite sure where I stand. Did you happen to mention to this Sicily person my name, or anything about me?"

"No," replied Mrs. Lovell, promptly. "We did not talk on such subjects, you know."

"And he had no idea that you were to stop in Florence?"

"No; he supposed I was to take the steamer at Naples for Marseilles. You need not be so scrupulous; everything is quite safe."

"And when shall I return the epistle?"

"When I ask for it," said Mrs. Lovell, laughing.

The next morning she went northward to Venice.

Two weeks later Miss Stowe formed one of the company at a reception, or, rather, a musical party. She looked quite unlike the "Margaret" of Fiesole as she sat on a small, faded purple satin sofa, listening, rather frowningly, to the rippling movement that follows the march in Beethoven's sonata, opus twenty-six; she had never liked that rippling movement, she did not pretend to like it now. Her frown, however, was slight—merely a little line between her dark eyebrows; it gave her the appearance of attention rather than of disapprobation. The "Margaret" of Fiesole had looked like an animated, almost merry, young girl; the "Miss Stowe" of the reception appeared older than she really was, and her face wore an expression of proud reserve, which, although veiled by all the conventional graciousness required by society, was not on that account any the less apparent. She was richly dressed; but the general effect of her attire was that of simplicity. She fanned herself slowly with a large fan, whose sticks were of carved amber, and the upper part of soft gray ostrich plumes, curled; closed or open, as she used it or as it lay beside her, this fan was an object of beauty. As the music ceased a lady came fluttering across the room, and, with a whispered "Permit me," introduced a gentleman, whose name, in the hum of released conversation, Miss Stowe did not hear.

"He understands *everything* about old pictures, and you know how ignorant *I* am!" said this lady, half closing her eyes, and shaking her ringleted head with an air of abnegation. "*I* have but *one* inspiration; there is room in me but for *one*. I bring him, therefore, to *you*, who have so many! *We all* know your love for the early masters—may I not say, the *earliest*?"

Madame Ferri was an American who had married a Florentine; she was now a little widow of fifty, with gray ringlets and emotions regarding music almost too ineffable to be expressed. I say "almost," because she did, after all, express them, as her friends knew. She was a useful person in Florence because she indefatigably knew everybody—the English and Americans as well as the Florentines; and she spent her time industriously at work mingling these elements, whether they would or no. No one thanked her for this especially, or remembered it after it was done; if republics are ungrateful, even more so is a society whose component parts are transient, coming and departing day by day. But Madame Ferri herself appreciated the importance of her social combinations if no one else did; and, like many another chemist, lived on content in the consciousness of it.

"I know very little about old pictures," said the stranger, with a slight smile, finding himself left alone beside Miss Stowe.

"And I—do not like them," she replied.

"If, more than that, you dislike them, we shall have something to talk about. Dislike can generally express itself very well."

"On the contrary, I think it is one of those feelings we do not express—but conceal."

"You are thinking of persons, perhaps. I was speaking of things. Pictures are things."

Miss Stowe felt herself slightly displeased; and the feeling was not lessened when, with a "Will you allow me?" the stranger took a seat at the end of her sofa, in the space left free by the gray silken sweep of her dress. There was in reality an abundance of room for him; other men were seated, and there was no chair near. Still, the sofa was a small one; the three Italians and two Frenchmen who had succeeded each other in the honor of standing beside her for eight or ten minutes' conversation had not thought of asking for the place so calmly taken by this new-comer. She looked at him as he began talking; he was quite unlike the three Italians and two Frenchmen. He was not ruddy enough for an Englishman of that complexion; he had a lethargic manner which was un-American. She decided, however, that he was, like herself, an American; but an American who had lived much abroad.

He was talking easily upon the various unimportant subjects in vogue at a "small party," she replied in the same strain.

Margaret Stowe was not beautiful; "pretty" was the last word that could have been applied to her. Her features were irregular; she had a well-shaped, well-poised head, and a quantity of dark hair which she wore closely braided in a low knot behind. She was tall, slender, and rather graceful; she had dark eyes. As has been said before, she was not beautiful; but within the past two years she had acquired, her friends thought, an air of what is called distinction. In reality this was but a deep indifference, combined with the wish at the same time to maintain her place unchanged in the society in which she moved. Indifference and good manners taken together, in a tall and graceful person, will generally give that air. Beatrice Lovell had not perceived this change in her friend, but on that day at Fiesole Miss Stowe had been simply the "Margaret" of old.

In accordance with what we have called her good manners, Miss Stowe now gave to the stranger beside her easy replies, several smiles, and a fair amount of intelligent attention. It was all he could have expected; but, being a man of observation, he perceived her indifference lying broadly underneath, like the white sand under a shallow river.

During the same week she met him at a dinner-party, and they had some conversation. Later he was one of the guests at a reception which she attended, and again they talked together awhile. She now mentioned him to her aunt, Miss Harrison, to whom she generally gave, every few days, a brief account of the little events in the circle to which they belonged. She had learned his name by this time; it was Morgan.

"I wonder if he is a grandson of old Adam Morgan," said Miss Harrison, who was genealogical and reminiscent. "If he is, I should like to see him. Has he a Roman nose?"

"I think not," said her niece, smiling.

"Well, describe him, then."

"He is of medium height, neither slender nor stout; he is light, with rather peculiar eyes because they are so blue—a deep, dull blue, like old china; but they are not large, and he does not fully open them. He has a long, light mustache, no beard, and very closely cut hair."

"He must be good-looking."

"No; he is not, especially. He may be anywhere between thirty and forty; his hair in a cross-light shows a slight tinge of gray. He looks fatigued; he looks cynical. I should not be surprised if he were selfish. I do not like him."

"But if he should be the grandson of old Adam, I should have to invite him to dinner," said Miss Harrison,

reflectively. "I could not do less, I think."

"I won't poison the soup. But Morgan is a common name, Aunt Ruth; this is the fourth Morgan I have met here this spring. There isn't one chance in a thousand that he belongs to the family you know." She was smiling as she spoke, but did not explain her smile; she was thinking that "Morgan" was also the name signed to that letter locked in her writing-desk—a letter whose expressions she now knew quite well, having obeyed Mrs. Lovell's injunction to "read it over" more than once. They were ardent expressions; it might be said, indeed, that they were very ardent.

But now and then that one chance in a thousand, so often summarily dismissed, asserts its existence and appears upon the scene. It turned out in the present case that the stranger was the grandson of the old Adam Morgan whom Miss Harrison remembered. Miss Stowe, in the meantime, had continued to meet him; but now she was to meet him in a new way—when he would be more upon her hands, as it were; for Miss Harrison invited him to dinner.

Miss Ruth Harrison was an invalid of nearly sixty years of age; she had been for ten years in Europe, but had only had her orphaned niece with her during the past eighteen months. She had a large fortune, and she gave Margaret every luxury; especially she liked to see her richly dressed. But it was quite well understood between them that the bulk of her wealth was to go to another relative in America who bore her family name. It was understood between them, but it was not understood outside. On the contrary, it was generally believed in Florence that Miss Stowe would inherit the whole. It is just possible that this belief may have had a remote influence in shaping the opinion which prevailed there—namely, that this young lady was "handsome" and "gracious," when, in truth, she was neither. But Mr. Morgan, the new-comer, exhibited so far, at least, no disposition to fall in with this fiction. In his estimation Miss Stowe was a conventionally agreeable, inwardly indifferent young lady of twenty-six, who carried herself well, but was too ironical as well as too dark. He came to dinner. And did not change his opinion.

A few days after the dinner Miss Harrison invited her new acquaintance to drive; she was able to go out for an hour or two in the afternoon, and she had a luxurious carriage and fine horses. Miss Stowe did not accompany them; she went off by herself to walk in the Boboli Garden.

Miss Harrison returned in good-humor. "I like him," she announced, as the maid removed her bonnet. "Yes, I think I may hope that the grandson of old Adam is not going to be a disappointment."

"The grandson of Adam—I suppose his name is Adam also—is a fortunate person, Aunt Ruth, to have gained your liking so soon; you do not often take likings to strangers."

"His name is not Adam," pursued Miss Harrison, "and that is a pity; there is character as well as association in Adam. He has a family name—Trafford. His mother was a Miss Trafford, of Virginia, it seems."

Miss Stowe was selecting flowers from a fragrant heap before her to fill the wide-mouthed vases which stood on the floor by her side; but now she stopped. "Trafford Morgan" was the name signed at the end of that letter! It must be he; it was not probable that there were two names of that special combination; it seemed a really remarkable chance. And evidently he had not gone to America, in spite of Mrs. Lovell's belief. She began to smile and almost to laugh, bending her head over a great soft purple heap of Florence lilies in order that her aunt might not observe it. But the large room was dusky, and Miss Harrison near-sighted; she observed nothing. The two ladies occupied an apartment in a house which, if it had not been so new, would have been called a "palace." Although modern, the measurements had been after the old Florentine pattern, and the result was that the occupants moved about in rooms which could have contained entire, each one, a small American house. But they liked the vastness. After a moment Miss Stowe went on arranging her blossoms, but inwardly she was enjoying much entertainment; she was going over in her own mind the expressions of that letter, which now took on quite a new character, coming no longer from some formless stranger, but from a gentleman with whom she had spoken, a person she had met and would meet again. "I never should have dreamed that he was capable of it," she said to herself. "He has seemed indifferent, *blasé*. But it places me in a nice position! Especially now that Aunt Ruth has taken a fancy to him. I must write to Beatrice immediately, and ask her to take back the stupid letter." She wrote during the same evening.

The next day she was attacked by a severe illness—severe, although short. No one could tell what was the matter with her; even the physician was at fault. She did not eat or sleep, she seemed hardly to know what they said when they spoke to her. Her aunt was alarmed. But at the end of the week, as suddenly as she had fallen ill, she came back to life again, rose, ordered the maid to braid her hair, and appeared at Miss Harrison's lonely little dinner-table quite herself, save that she was tremulous and pale. But by the next day even these signs were no longer very apparent. It was decided that she had had an attack of "nervous prostration;" "although why in the world you should have been seized by it just now, and here, I am at a loss, Margaret, to imagine," said her aunt.

On the day of her reappearance at the dinner-table there came a letter from Beatrice which bore the postmark of a village on one of the Channel islands. Mrs. Lovell had changed her plans, and gone yachting for a month or two with a party of friends, a yacht probably being considered to possess attributes of seclusion more total than even the most soundless village on the Brittany shore. Of course she had not received Margaret's letter, nor could she receive one—their route being uncertain, but nevertheless to the southward—until her return. Communication between them for the present was therefore at an end.

On the afternoon after Margaret's reappearance Madame Ferri was making a visit of congratulation upon the recovery of "our dear girl." It was a cool day, a heavy rain had fallen, and fresh snow gleamed on the summits of the Apennines; our dear girl, very unresponsive and silent, was dressed in black velvet, whose rich, plain folds brought out her slenderness, and made more apparent than usual the graceful shape of her head and hair. But the unrelieved black made her look extremely pale, and it was her recent illness, probably, which made her look also tired and languid. Madame Ferri, who kept constantly in practice her talent for being charming (she was always spoken of as "charming"), looked at her for a time while conversing; then she rose, took all the crimson roses from a vase, and, going to her, placed one in her hair, meditatively; another in a button-hole of the closely fitting high corsage; and, after a moment's reflection, all the others in a bunch in a velvet loop which was on the side of the skirt not quite half-way down, rapidly denuding herself of pins for the purpose as she proceeded. "There!" she said, stepping back a few paces to survey her handiwork, with her head critically on one side, "*now* you are a picture. Look, dear Miss Harrison, pray look."

Miss Harrison put up her glass and approved. And then, while this climax still lasted, Madame Ferri took her departure; she liked to depart in a climax.

She had hardly gone when another card was brought in: "Mr. Trafford Morgan." He, too, had come to pay his respects to Miss Harrison upon the change for the better in her niece; he had not expected to see the latter person, he had merely heard that there was "an improvement." After he had been there twenty minutes he said to himself that there was, and in more ways than one. She not only looked much better than usual (this may have been owing to the roses), but there was a new gentleness about her; and she listened with a perceptible increase of attention to what he said. Not that he cared much for this; he had not admired Miss Stowe; but any man (this he remarked to himself) likes to be listened to when he is talking better than the contrary; and as the minutes passed he became conscious that Miss Stowe was not only listening, but bestowing upon him also what seemed an almost serious attention. She did not say much—Miss Harrison said more; but she listened to and looked at him. She had not looked at him previously; people can turn their eyes upon one without really looking, and Miss Stowe had excelled in this accomplishment.

During the next week he met her at a dinner-party; she went to these entertainments with a friend of her aunt's, a lady who was delighted to act as chaperon for the heiress. The spring season was now at its height in Florence, and the members of the same circle perforce constantly met each other; on each separate occasion during the two weeks that followed Trafford Morgan was conscious that Miss Stowe was honoring him, although in a studiously guarded and quiet way, with much of a very observant attention. This, in the end, excited in him some curiosity. He had as good an opinion of himself as most men have; but he did not think it probable that the heiress had suddenly fallen in love with him without rhyme or reason, as it were, the "rhyme" being that he was neither an Apollo, an Endymion, nor a military man; the "reason," that he had never in the least attempted to make himself agreeable to her. Of course, if he had attempted—But he had not. She was not in need of entertainment; she had enough of that, of all sorts, including apparently the sort given by suitors. She showed no sign of having troublesomely impulsive feelings; on the contrary, she seemed cold. "She is playing some game," he thought; "she has some end in view. But if she wishes to make use of me she must show her hand more. I may assist her, and I may not; but, at any rate, I must understand what it is—I will not be led." He made up his mind that her aim was to excite remark in their circle; there was probably some one in that circle who was to be stimulated by a little wholesome jealousy. It was an ancient and commonplace method, and he had not thought her commonplace. But human nature at heart is but a commonplace affair, after all, and the methods and motives of the world have not altered much, in spite of the gray lapse of ages.

Morgan was an idle man; at present he was remaining in Italy for a purpose, and had nothing to do there. The next time he met Miss Stowe he followed out his theory and took the lead; he began to pay her attention which might, if pursued, have aroused observation. To his surprise she drew back, and so completely that he was left stranded. He tried this three times on three different occasions, and each time met the same rebuff. It became evident, therefore, that Miss Stowe did not wish for the kind of attention which he had supposed was her point; but as, whenever she could do it unobserved, she continued to turn upon him the same quiet scrutiny, he began to ask himself whether she wished for any other. An opportunity occurred which made him think that she did.

It was in the Boboli Garden, where he had gone to walk off a fit of weariness; here he came upon Miss Stowe. There seemed to be no one in the garden save themselves—at least, no one whom they knew; only a few stray tourists wandering about, with Baedeker, Horner, and Hare. The world of fashion was at the Cascine that day, where races were going on. Morgan did not feel like talking; he exchanged the usual phrases with Miss Stowe, and then prepared to pass on. But she said, gently, "Are you going now? If not, why not stroll awhile with me?"

After this, as he mentally observed, of course he was forced to stroll awhile. But, on the whole, he found himself entertained, because his companion gave him an attention which was almost devout. Its seriousness, indeed, compelled him to be serious likewise, and made him feel as though he were in an atmosphere combining the characteristics of a church and a school; he was partly priest, partly pedagogue, and the sensation was amusing. She asked him what he liked best in Florence; and she called it, gravely, "enchancing Florence."

"Giotto and Botticelli," he answered.

"I wish you would be in earnest; I am in earnest."

"With all the earnestness in the world, Miss Stowe, I could only repeat the same reply."

"What is it you find to like in them? Will you tell me?"

"It would take an age—a full half-hour; you would be quite tired out. Women are so much quicker in their mental processes than we are that you would apprehend what I was going to say before I could get it out; you would ascend all the heights, scour all the plains, and arrive at the goal before I came even in sight, where you would sit waiting, patiently or impatiently, as I, slowly and with mortified perception, approached."

"Yes, we are quick; but we are superficial. I wish you would tell me."

He glanced at her; she was looking at him with an expression in her eyes which was extremely earnest. "I cannot deliver a discourse while walking," he said. "I require a seat."

"Let us go to the amphitheatre; I often sit there for a while on the stone benches under the old statues. I like to see them standing around the circle; they are so serenely indifferent to the modern pencil-scribbles on their robes, so calmly certain that their time will come again."

"What you say is entirely charming. Still, I hardly think I can talk to the statues. I must have something more—more secluded." He was aware that he was verging upon a slight impertinence; but he wished to see whether she would accede—what she would do. He made no effort to find the seclusion of which he spoke; he left that to her.

She hesitated a moment; then, "We might go to a seat there is under a tree at the top of the slope," she said. "It is a pleasant place."

He assented; and they went up the path by the side of the tall, stately hedges, and past the fountain and the great statue of *Abbondanza*. The stone bench was not one of those sought for; it was not in front, but on the western side. It commanded a view of the city below, with the *Duomo* and Giotto's lovely bell-tower; of the fruit-trees, all in flower on the outskirts; of the treetops of the *Cascine*, now like a cloud of golden smoke with their tender brown leaflets, tasselled blossoms, and winged seeds; of the young grain, springing greenly down the valley; and the soft, velvety mountains rising all around. "How beautiful it is!" she said, leaning back, closing her parasol and folding her hands.

"Beautiful—yes; but barren of human interest save to those who are going to sell the fruit, or who depend upon the growth of the grain. The beauty of art is deeper; it is all human."

"I must be quite ignorant about art," she answered, "because it does not impress me in that way; I wish it did. I wish you would instruct me a little, Mr. Morgan."

"Good!" he thought. "What next?" But although he thought, he of course was obliged to talk also, and so he began about the two art masters he had mentioned. He delivered quite an epic upon Giotto's two little frescos in the second cloister of Santa Maria Novella, and he openly preferred the third there—the little Virgin going up the impossible steps—to Titian's splendid picture of the same subject, in Venice. He grew didactic and mystic over the round Botticelli of the Uffizi and the one in the Prometheus room at the Pitti; he invented as he went along, and amused himself not a little with his own unusual flow of language. His companion listened, and now and then asked a question. But her questions were directed more towards what he thought of the pictures (after a while he noticed this), and what impressions they made upon him, than to the pictures themselves or their claims to celebrity. As he went on he made some slight attempts to diverge a little from the subject in hand, and skirt, if ever so slightly, the borders of flirtation; he was curious to see if she would follow him there. But she remained unresponsive; and, while giving no sign of even perceiving his digressions, she brought him back to his art atmosphere, each time he left it, with a question or remark very well adapted for the purpose; so well, indeed, that it could not have been by chance.

She declined his escort homeward, pretexting a visit she wished to pay; but she said, of her own accord, that she would sing for him the next time he came. He knew this was a favor she did not often grant; Madame Ferri had so informed him.

He went, without much delay; and she sang several songs in the dusky corner where her piano stood while he sat near. The light from the wax candles at the other end of the large room, where Miss Harrison was knitting, did not penetrate here; but she said she liked to sing in a semi-darkness, as she had only a twilight voice. It was in truth not at all powerful; but it was sweet and low, and she sang with much expression. Trafford Morgan liked music; it was not necessary to make up a conviction or theory about that; he simply had a natural love for it, and he came more than once to hear Miss Stowe sing.

In the meantime Miss Harrison continued to like "the grandson of old Adam," and again invited him to drive. A month went by, and, by the end of it, he had seen in one way and another a good deal of these two ladies. The "later manner" (as he mentally called it) of Miss Stowe continued; when they were in company, she was as she had been originally, but when they were unobserved, or by themselves, she gave him the peculiar sober attention which he did not quite comprehend. He had several theories about it, and varied between them. He was a man who did not talk of persons, who never told much. If questioned, while answering readily and apparently without reserve, it was noticed afterwards that he had told nothing. He had never spoken of Sicily, for instance, but had talked a good deal of Sweden. This reticence, so exasperating to many women, seemed agreeable to Miss Stowe, who herself did not tell much, or talk of persons—that is, generally. One person she talked about, and with persistence. Morgan was hardly ever with her that she did not, sooner or later, begin to talk to him about himself. Sometimes he was responsive, sometimes not; but responsive or unresponsive, in society or out of it, he had talked, all told, a goodly number of hours with Miss Stowe when May attained its zenith and the season waned.

The tourists had gone to Venice; the red gleam of guide-books along the streets and the conscientiousness of woollen travelling-dresses in the galleries were no longer visible. Miss Stowe now stepped over the boundary-line of her caution a little; many of the people she knew had gone; she went with Trafford to the Academy and the Pitti; she took him into cool, dim churches, and questioned him concerning his creed; she strolled with him through the monastery of San Marco, and asked what his idea was of the next world. She said she liked cloisters; she would like to walk in one for an hour or two every day.

He replied that there were a number of cloisters in Florence; they might visit them in succession and pace around quietly. The effect would be heightened if she would read aloud, as they paced, short sentences from some ancient, stiff-covered little book like *De Contemptu Mundi*.

"Ah," she said, "you are not in earnest. But I am!"

And she seemed to be; he said to himself that he had hardly had a look or word from her which was not only earnest, but almost portentously so. She now began to do whatever he asked her to do, whether it was to sing Italian music or to read Dante's *Vita Nuova*, both of which she had said she did not like. It is probable that he asked her to do a number of things about this time which he did not especially care for, simply to see if she would comply; she always did.

"If she goes on in this sort of way," he thought, "never showing the least opposition, or personal moods different from mine, I really don't know where we shall end!"

But at last she did show both. It was in the evening, and she was at the piano; after one or two ballads he asked her to sing a little English song he had found among her music, not printed, but in manuscript.

"Oh, that is nothing," she said, putting out her hand to take it from him. "I will sing this of Schumann's instead; it is much prettier."

But he maintained his point. "I like this better," he said. "I like the name—of course it is impossible, but it is pleasant—'Semper Fidelis.'"

She took it, looked at it in silence for a moment, and then, without further reply, began to sing. There was nothing remarkable in the words or the music; she did not sing as well as usual, either; she hurried the time.

"SEMPER FIDELIS

"Dumb and unchanged my thoughts still round thee hover,
Nor will be moved;
E'en though I strive, my heart remains thy lover,
Though unbeloved;
Yet there is sad content in loyalty,
And, though the silent gift is naught to thee,
It changes never—
Faithful forever."

This was the verse; but at the fifth line she faltered, stopped, and then, rising abruptly, left the room.

"Margaret is very uneven at times," said Miss Harrison, apologetically, from her easy-chair.

"All interesting persons are uneven," he replied. He went over and took a seat beside his hostess, remaining half an hour longer; but as he went back to his hotel he said to himself that Miss Stowe had been for many weeks the most even woman he had ever known, showing neither variation nor shadow of turning. She had been as even as a straight line.

On this account her sudden emotion made an impression upon him. The next day he mentioned that he was going to Trieste.

"Not Venice?" said Miss Harrison. "I thought everybody went to Venice."

"Venice," he replied, "is pre-eminently the place where one needs either an actual, tangible companionship of the dearest sort, or a memory like it. I, who have neither, keep well away from Venice!"

"I rather think, Mr. Morgan, that you have had pretty much what you wanted, in Venice or elsewhere," said Miss Harrison, with a dry humor she sometimes showed. Here she was called from the room to see a poor woman whom she befriended; Miss Stowe and Morgan were left alone.

He was looking at her; he was noting what effect, if any, the tidings of his departure (he had named to-morrow) would have upon her. She had not been conventional; would she resort to conventionality now?

Her gaze was bent upon the floor; after a while she looked up. "Where shall you be this summer?" she said, slowly. "Perhaps we shall be there too." Her eyes were fixed upon his face, her tone was hardly above a whisper.

Perhaps it was curiosity that made him do what he did; whether it was or not, mingled with it there was certainly a good deal of audacity. He rose, went to her, and took her hand. "Forgive me," he said; "I am in love with some one else."

It implied much. But had not her manner implied the same, or more?

She rose; they were both standing now.

"What do you mean!" she demanded, a light coming into her eyes—eyes usually abstracted, almost dull.

"Only what I have said."

"Why should you say it to me?"

"I thought you might be—interested."

"You are mistaken. I am not in the least interested. Why should I be?"

"Are you not a little unkind?"

"Not more unkind than you are insolent."

She was very angry. He began to be a little angry himself.

"I ask your pardon with the deepest humility, Miss Stowe. The insolence of which you accuse me was as far as possible from my mind. If I thought you might be somewhat interested in what I have told you, it was because you have honored me with some small share of your attention during the past week or two; probably it has spoiled me."

"I have; and for a month or two, not a week or two. But there was a motive—It was an experiment."

"You have used me for experimental purposes, then?"

"Yes."

"I am immensely grateful to have been considered worthy of a part in an experiment of yours, even although a passive one. May I ask if the experiment is ended?"

"It is."

"Since when? Since I made that confession about some one else?"

Miss Stowe's face was pale, her dark eyes were brilliant. "I knew all the while that you were in love—hopelessly in love—with Mrs. Lovell," she said, with a proud smile. "That was the reason that, for my experiment, I selected *you*."

A flush rose over his face as she spoke. "You thought you would have the greater triumph?" he asked.

"I thought nothing of the kind. I thought that I should be safe, because you would not respond."

"And you did not wish me to respond?"

"I did not."

"Excuse me—we are speaking frankly, are we not?—but do you not contradict yourself somewhat? You say you did not wish me to respond; yet, have you not tried to make me?"

"That was not my object. It was but a necessary accompaniment of the experiment."

"And if I *had* responded?" he said, looking at her.

"I knew you could not. I knew quite well—I mean I could imagine quite well—how much you loved Beatrice. But it has all been a piece of folly upon my part—I see it now." She turned away, and went across to the piano. "I wish you would go now," she said, in a low voice, vaguely turning over the music. "I cannot, because my aunt will think it strange to find me gone."

Instead of obeying her, he crossed the room and stood beside her; and then he saw in the twilight that her eyes were full of tears and her lips quivering, in spite of her effort to prevent it.

"Margaret," he said, suddenly, and with a good deal of feeling in his voice, "I am not worth it! Indeed I am not!" And again he touched her hand.

But she drew it from him. "Are you by any chance imagining that my tears are for *you*?" she said, in a low tone, but facing him like a creature at bay. "Have you interpreted me in that way? I have a right to know; speak!"

"I am at a loss to interpret you," he said, after a moment's silence.

"I will tell you the whole, then—I must tell you; your mistake forces it from me." She paused, drew a quick breath, and then went on, rapidly: "I love some one else. I have been very unhappy. Just after you came I received a letter which told me that he was soon to be married; he *is* married now. I had an illness in consequence. You may remember my illness? I made up my mind then that I would root out the feeling if possible, no matter at what cost of pain and effort and long patience. You came in my way. I knew you were deeply attached elsewhere—"

"How did you know it?" he said. He was leaning against the piano watching her; she stood with her hands folded, and pressed so tightly together that he could see the force of the pressure.

"Never mind how; but quite simply and naturally. I said to myself that I would try to become interested in you, even if only to a small degree; I would do everything in my power to forward it. It would be an acquired interest; still, acquired interests can be deep. People can become interested in music, in pictures, in sports, in that way; why not, then, in persons also, since they are more human?"

"That is the very reason—because they are too human," he answered.

But she did not heed. "I have studied you; I have tried to find the good in you; I have tried to believe in you, to idealize you. I have given every thought that I could control to you, and to you alone, for two long months," she said, passionately, unlocking her hands, reddened with their pressure against each other, and turning away.

"It has been a failure?"

"Complete."

"And if you had succeeded?" he asked, folding his arms as he leaned against the piano.

"I should have been glad and happy. I should never have seen *you* again, of course; but at least the miserable old feeling would have been laid at rest."

"And its place filled by another as miserable!"

"Oh no; it could never have been *that*," she said, with an emphasis of scorn.

"You tried a dangerous remedy, Margaret."

"Not so dangerous as the disease."

"A remedy may be worse than a disease. In spite of your scornful tone, permit me to tell you that if you had succeeded at all, it would have been in the end by loving me as you loved—I mean love—this other man. While I, in the meantime, am in love (as you are kind enough to inform me—hopelessly) with another woman! Is Beatrice a friend of yours?"

"My dearest friend."

"Has it never occurred to you that you were playing towards her rather a traitorous part?"

"Never."

"Supposing, during this experiment of yours, that I had fallen in love with you?"

"It would have been nothing to Beatrice if you had," responded Mrs. Lovell's friend instantly and loyally, although remembering, at the same moment, that Fiesole blush. Then, in a changed voice, and with a proud humility which was touching, she added, "It would have been quite impossible. Beatrice is the loveliest woman in the world; any one who had loved *her* would never think of me."

At this moment Miss Harrison's voice was heard in the hall; she was returning.

"Good-bye," said Morgan. "I shall go to-morrow. You would rather have me go." He took her hand, held it an instant, and then raised it to his lips. "Good-bye," he said, again. "Forgive me, Margaret. And do not entirely—forget me."

When Miss Harrison returned they were looking at the music on the piano. A few moments later he took leave.

"I am sorry he has gone," said Miss Harrison. "What in the world is he going to do at Trieste? Well, so goes life! nothing but partings! One thing is a consolation, however—at least, to me; the grandson of old Adam did not turn out a disappointment, after all."

"I do not think I am a judge," replied Miss Stowe.

In June Miss Harrison went northward to Paris, her niece accompanying her. They spent the summer in Switzerland; in the autumn returned to Paris; and in December went southward to Naples and Rome.

Mrs. Lovell had answered Margaret's letter in June. The six weeks of yachting had been charming; the yacht belonged to an English gentleman, who had a country-seat in Devonshire. She herself, by-the-way, might be in Devonshire during the summer; it was so quiet there. Could not Miss Harrison be induced to come to Devonshire? That would be *so* delightful. It had been extremely difficult to wear deep mourning at sea; but of course she had persisted in it. Much of it had been completely ruined; she had been obliged to buy more. Yes—it *was* amusing—her meeting Trafford Morgan. And so unexpected, of course. Did she like him? No, the letter need not be returned. If it troubled her to have it, she might destroy it; perhaps it was as well it should be destroyed. There were some such pleasant qualities in English life; there was not so much opportunity, perhaps, as in America—"That blush meant nothing, then, after all," thought the reader, lifting her eyes from the page, and looking musingly at a picture on the wall. "She said it meant only a lack of iron; and, as Beatrice always tells the truth, she did mean that, probably, and not irony, as I supposed." She sat thinking for a few moments, and then went back to the letter: There was not so much opportunity, perhaps, as in America; but there was more stability, more certainty that things would continue to go on. There were various occurrences which she would like to tell; but she never wrote that sort of thing, as Margaret knew. If she would only come to Devonshire for the summer—and so forth, and so forth.

But Beatrice did sometimes write "that sort of thing," after all. During the next February, in Rome, after a long silence, Margaret received a letter from her which brought the tidings of her engagement. He was an Englishman. He had a country-seat in Devonshire. He owned a yacht. Beatrice seemed very happy. "We shall not be married until next winter," she wrote. "I would not consent, of course, to anything earlier. I have consistently endeavored to do what was right from the beginning, and shall not waver now. But by next January there can be no criticism, and I suppose that will be the time. How I wish you were here to advise me about a hundred things! Besides, I want you to know him; you will be sure to like him. He is"—and so forth, and so forth.

"She is following out her destiny," thought the reader in Rome.

In March Miss Harrison found the Eternal City too warm, and moved northward as far as Florence. Madame Ferri was delighted to see them again; she came five times during the first three days to say so.

"You will find *so* many whom you knew last year here again as well as yourselves," she said, enthusiastically. "We shall have some of our *charming* old reunions. Let me see—I think I can tell you." And she ran over a list of names, among them that of "Mr. Morgan."

"What, not the grandson of Adam?" said Miss Harrison.

"He is not *quite* so old as that, is he?" said Madame Ferri, laughing. "It is the one who dined with you several times last year, I believe—Mr. Trafford Morgan. I shall have great pleasure in telling him this very day that you are here."

"Do you know whether he is to remain long?" said Miss Stowe, who had not before spoken.

"I am sorry to say he is not; Mr. Morgan is always an addition, I think—don't you? But he told me only yesterday that he was going this week to—to Tarascon, I think he said."

"Trieste and Tarascon—he selects the most extraordinary places!" said Miss Harrison. "The next time it will be Tartarus."

Madame Ferri was overcome with mirth. "*Dear* Miss Harrison, you are *too* droll! *Isn't* she, dear Miss Stowe?"

"He probably chooses his names at random," said Miss Stowe, with indifference.

The next day, at the Pitti, she met him. She was alone, and returned his salutation coldly. He was with some ladies who were standing near, looking at the "Madonna of the Chair." He merely asked how Miss Harrison was, and said he should give himself the pleasure of coming to see her very soon; then he bowed and returned to his friends. Not long afterwards she saw them all leave the gallery together.

Half an hour later she was standing in front of one of Titian's portraits, when a voice close beside her said, "Ah! the young man in black. You are not admiring it?"

There had been almost a crowd in the gorgeous rooms that morning. She had stood elbow to elbow with so many persons that she no longer noticed them; Trafford Morgan had been able, therefore, to approach and stand beside her for several minutes without attracting her recognition. As he spoke she turned, and, in answer to his smile, gave an even slighter bow than before; it was hardly more than a movement of the eyelids. Two English girls, with large hats, sweet, shy eyes, and pink cheeks, who were standing close beside them, turned away towards the left for a minute to look at another picture.

"Do not treat me badly," he said. "I need kindness. I am not very happy."

"I can understand that," she answered. Here the English girls came back again.

"I think you are wrong in admiring it," he said, looking at the portrait; "it is a quite impossible picture. A youth with that small, delicate head and face could never have had those shoulders; they are the shoulders of quite another type of man. This is some boy whom Titian wished to flatter; but he was artist enough to try and hide the flattery by that overcoat. The face has no calm; you would not have admired it in life."

"On the contrary, I should have admired it greatly," replied Miss Stowe. "I should have adored it. I should have adored the eyes."

"Surely there is nothing in them but a sort of pugnacity."

"Whatever it is, it is delightful."

The English girls now turned away towards the right.

"You are quite changed," he said, looking at her.

"Yes, I think I am. I am much more agreeable. Every one will tell you so; even Madame Ferri, who is obliged to reconcile it with my having been always more agreeable than any one in the world, you know. I have become lighter. I am no longer heavy."

"You mean you are no longer serious."

"That is it. I used to be absurdly serious. But it is an age since we last met. You were going to Trieste, were you not? I hope you found it agreeable?"

"It is not an age; it is a year."

"Oh, a great deal can happen in a year," said Miss Stowe, turning away.

She was as richly dressed as ever, and not quite so plainly. Her hair was arranged in little rippling waves low down upon her forehead, which made her look, if not what might be called more worldly, at least more fashionable, since previously she had worn it arranged with a simplicity which was neither. Owing to this new arrangement of her hair, her eyes looked larger and darker.

He continued to walk beside her for some moments, and then, as she came upon a party of friends, he took leave.

In the evening he called upon Miss Harrison, and remained an hour. Miss Stowe was not at home. The next day he sent to Miss Harrison a beautiful basket of flowers.

"He knows we always keep the rooms full of them," remarked Miss Stowe, rather disdainfully.

"All the same, I like the attention," said Miss Harrison. And she sent him an invitation to dinner. She liked to have one guest.

He came. During the evening he asked Miss Stowe to sing. "I have lost my voice," she answered.

"Yes," said Miss Harrison, "it is really remarkable; Margaret, although she seems so well, has not been able to sing for months—indeed, for a full year. It is quite sad."

"I am not sad about it, Aunt Ruth; I am relieved. I never sang well—I had not voice enough. There was really nothing in it but expression; and that was all pretence."

"You are trying to make us think you very artificial," said Morgan.

"I can make you think what I please, probably. I can follow several lines of conduct, one after the other, and make you believe them all." She spoke lightly; her general tone was much lighter than formerly, as she herself had said.

"Do you ever walk in the Boboli Garden now?" he asked, later.

"Occasionally; but it is a dull place. And I do not walk as much as I did; I drive with my aunt."

"Yes, Margaret has grown indolent," said Miss Harrison; "and it seems to agree with her. She has more color than formerly; she looks well."

"Wonderfully," said Morgan. "But you are thinner than you were," he added, turning towards her.

"And darker!" she answered, laughing. "Mr. Morgan does not admire arrangements in black and white, Aunt Ruth; do not embarrass him." She wore that evening a white dress, unrelieved by any color.

"I see you are bent upon being unkind," he said. It was supposed to be a society remark.

"Not the least in the world," she answered, in the same tone.

He met her several times in company, and had short conversations with her. Then, one afternoon, he came upon her unexpectedly in the Cascine; she was strolling down the broad path alone.

"So you do walk sometimes, after all," he said.

"Never. I am only strolling. I drove here with Aunt Ruth, but, as she came upon a party of American friends who are going to-morrow, I gave up my place, and they are driving around together for a while, and no doubt settling the entire affairs of Westchester County."

"I am glad she met them; I am glad to find you alone. I have something I wish much to say to you."

"Such a beginning always frightens me. Pray postpone it."

"On the contrary, I shall hasten it. I must make the most of this rare opportunity. Do you remember when you did me the honor, Miss Stowe, to make me the subject of an experiment?"

"You insist upon recalling that piece of folly?" she said, opening her parasol. Her tone was composed and indifferent.

"I recall it because I wish to base something upon it. I wish to ask you—to allow yourself to be passively the subject of an experiment on *my* part, an experiment of the same nature."

She glanced at him; he half smiled. "Did you imagine, then, that mine was in earnest?" she said, with a fine, light scorn, light as air.

"I never imagine anything. Imaginations are useless."

"Not so useless as experiments. Let yours go, and tell me rather what you found to like in—Trieste."

"I suppose you know that I went to England?"

"I know nothing. But yes—I do know that you are going to—Tarascon."

"I shall not go if you will permit what I have asked."

"Isn't it rather suddenly planned?" she said, ironically. "You did not know we were coming."

"Very suddenly. I have thought of it only since yesterday."

They had strolled into a narrow path which led by one of those patches of underwood of which there are several in the Cascine—little bosky places carefully preserved in a tangled wildness which is so pretty and amusing to American eyes, accustomed to the stretch of real forests.

"You don't know how I love these little patches," said Miss Stowe. "There is such a good faith about them; they are charming."

"You were always fond of nature, I remember. I used to tell you that art was better."

"Ah! did you?" she said, her eyes following the flight of a bird.

"You have forgotten very completely in one year."

"Yes, I think I have. I always forget, you know, what it is not agreeable to remember. But I must go back; Aunt Ruth will be waiting." They turned.

"I will speak more plainly," said Morgan. "I went to England during July last—that is, I followed Mrs. Lovell. She was in Devonshire. Quite recently I have learned that she has become engaged in—Devonshire, and is soon to be married there. I am naturally rather down about it. I am seeking some other interest. I should like to try your plan for a while, and build up an interest in—you."

Miss Stowe's lip curled. "The plans are not alike," she said. "Yours is badly contrived. *I* did not tell *you* beforehand what I was endeavoring to do!"

"I am obliged to tell you. You would have discovered it."

"Discovered what a pretence it was? That is true. A woman can act a part better than a man. *You* did not discover! And what am I to do in this little comedy of yours?"

"Nothing. It is, in truth, nothing to you; you have told me that, even when you made a great effort towards that especial object, it was impossible to get up the slightest interest in me. Do not take a violent dislike to me; that is all."

"And if it is already taken?"

"I shall have to conquer that. What I meant was—do not take a fresh one."

"There is nothing like precedent, and therefore I repeat your question: what if you should succeed—I mean as regards yourself?" she said, looking at him with a satirical expression.

"It is my earnest wish to succeed."

"You do not add, as I did, that in case you do succeed you will of course never see me again, but that at least the miserable old feeling will be at rest?"

"I do not add it."

"And at the conclusion, when it has failed, shall you tell me that the cause of failure was—the inevitable comparisons?"

"Beatrice is extremely lovely," he replied, turning his head and gazing at the Arno, shining through an opening in the hedge. "I do not attempt to pretend, even to myself, that she is not the loveliest woman I ever knew."

"Since you do not pretend it to yourself you will not pretend it to me."

She spoke without interrogation; but he treated the words as a question. "Why should I?" he said. And then he was silent.

"There is Aunt Ruth," said Miss Stowe; "I see the horses. She is probably wondering what has become of me."

"You have not altogether denied me," he said, just before they reached the carriage. "I assure you I will not be in the least importunate. Take a day or two to consider. After all, if there is no one upon whom it can really infringe (of course I know you have admirers; I have even heard their names), why should you not find it even a little amusing?"

Miss Stowe turned towards him, and a peculiar expression came into her eyes as they met his. "I am not sure but that I shall find it so," she answered. And then they joined Miss Harrison.

The day or two had passed. There had been no formal question asked, and no formal reply given; but as Miss Stowe had not absolutely forbidden it, the experiment may be said to have been begun. It was soon reported in Florence that Trafford Morgan was one of the suitors for the hand of the heiress; and, being a candidate, he was of course subjected to the searching light of Public Inquiry. Public Inquiry discovered that he was thirty-eight years of age; that he had but a small income; that he was indolent, indifferent, and cynical. Not being able to find any open vices, Public Inquiry considered that he was too *blasé* to have them; he had probably exhausted them all long before. All this Madame Ferri repeated to Miss Harrison, not because she was in the least opposed to Mr. Morgan, but simply as part of her general task as gatherer and disseminator.

"Trafford Morgan is not a saint, but he is well enough in his way," replied Miss Harrison. "I am not at all sure that a saint would be agreeable in the family."

Madame Ferri was much amused by this; but she carried away the impression also that Miss Harrison favored the suitor.

In the meantime nothing could be more quiet than the manner of the supposed suitor when he was with Miss Stowe. He now asked questions of her; when they went to the churches, he asked her impressions of the architecture; when they visited the galleries, he asked her opinions of the pictures. He inquired what books she liked, and why she liked them; and sometimes he slowly repeated her replies.

This last habit annoyed her. "I wish you would not do that," she said, with some irritation. "It is like being forced to look at one's self in a mirror."

"I do it to analyze them," he answered. "I am so dense, you know, it takes me a long time to understand. When you say, for instance, that Romola is not a natural character because her love for Tito ceases, I, who think that the unnatural part is that she should ever have loved him, naturally dwell upon the remark."

"She would have continued to love him in life. Beauty is all powerful."

"I did not know that women cared much for it," he answered. Then, after a moment, "Do not be too severe upon me," he added; "I am doing my best."

She made no reply.

"I thought certainly you would have answered, 'By contrast?'" he said, smiling. "But you are not so satirical as you were. I cannot make you angry with me."

"Have you tried?"

"Of course I have tried. It would be a step gained to move you—even in that way."

"I thought your experiment was to be all on one side?" she said. They were sitting in a shady corner of the cloisters of San Marco; she was leaning back in her chair, following with the point of her parasol the lines of the Latin inscription on the slab at her feet over an old monk's last resting-place.

"I am not so consistent as I should be," he answered, rising and sauntering off, with his hands in the pockets of his short morning-coat, to look at St. Peter the Martyr.

At another time they were in the Michael Angelo chapel of San Lorenzo. It was past the hour for closing, but Morgan had bribed the custode to allow them to remain, and the old man had closed the door and gone away, leaving them alone with the wondrous marbles.

"What do they mean?" he said. "Tell me."

"They mean fate, our sad human fate: the beautiful Dawn in all the pain of waking; the stern determination of the Day; the recognition of failure in Evening; and the lassitude of dreary, hopeless sleep in Night. It is one way of looking at life."

"But not your way?"

"Oh, I have no way; I am too limited. But genius takes a broader view, and genius, I suppose, must always be sad. People with that endowment, I have noticed, are almost always very unhappy."

He was sitting beside her, and, as she spoke, he saw a little flush rise in her cheeks; she was remembering when Mrs. Lovell had used the same words, although in another connection.

"We have never spoken directly, or at any length, of Beatrice," she said, suddenly. "I wish you would tell me about her."

"Here?"

"Yes, here and now; Lorenzo shall be your judge."

"I am not afraid of Lorenzo. He is not a god; on the contrary, he has all our deepest humanity on his musing face; it is for this reason that he impresses us so powerfully. As it is the first time you have expressed any wish, Miss Stowe, I suppose I must obey it."

"Will it be difficult?"

"It is always difficult, is it not, for a man to speak of an unhappy love?" he said, leaning his elbow on the back of the seat, and shading his eyes with his hand as he looked at her.

"I will excuse you."

"I have not asked to be excused. I first met Mrs. Lovell in Sicily. I was with her almost constantly during five weeks. She is as lovable as a rose—as a peach—as a child." He paused.

"Your comparisons are rather remarkable," said Miss Stowe, her eyes resting upon the grand massiveness of Day.

"They are truthful. I fell in love with her; and I told her so because there was that fatal thing, an opportunity—that is, a garden-seat, starlight, and the perfume of flowers. Of course these were irresistible."

"Indeed?"

"Do not be contemptuous. It is possible that you may not have been exposed to the force of the combination as yet. She rebuked me with that lovely, gentle softness of hers, and then she went away; the Sicilian days were over. I wrote to her—"

He was sitting in the same position, with his hand shading his eyes, looking at her; as he spoke the last phrase he perceived that she colored, and colored deeply.

"You knew the story generally," he said, dropping his arm and leaning forward. "But it is not possible you saw that letter!"

She rose and walked across, as if to get a nearer view of Day. "I admire it so much!" she said, after a moment. "If it should stretch out that great right arm, it could crush us to atoms." And she turned towards him again.

As she did she saw that he had colored also; a deep, dark flush had risen in his face, and covered even his forehead.

"I am safe—very safe!" he said. "After reading such a letter as that, written to another woman, you are not likely to bestow much regard upon the writer, try as he may!"

Miss Stowe looked at him. "You are overacting," she said, coldly. "It is not in your part to pretend to care so soon. It was to be built up gradually."

"Lorenzo understands me," he said, recovering himself. "Shall I go on?"

"I think I must go now," she answered, declining a seat; "it is late."

"In a moment. Let me finish, now that I have begun. I had thought of returning to America; indeed, Beatrice had advised it; she thought I was becoming expatriated. But I gave it up and remained in Italy because I did not wish to appear too much her slave (women do not like men who obey them too well, you know). After this effort I was consistent enough to follow her to England. I found her in—Devonshire, lovelier than ever; and I was again fascinated; I was even ready to accept beforehand all the rules and embargo of the strictest respect to the memory of Mr. Lovell."

Miss Stowe's eyes were upon Day; but here, involuntarily, she glanced towards her companion. His face remained unchanged.

"I was much in love with her. She allowed me no encouragement. But I did not give up a sort of vague hope I had until this recent change. Then, of course, I knew that it was all over for me."

"I am sorry for you," replied Miss Stowe after a pause, still looking at Day.

"Of course I have counted upon that—upon your sympathy. I knew that you would understand."

"Spare me the quotation, 'A fellow-feeling,' and so forth," she said, moving towards the door. "I am going; I feel as though we had already desecrated too long this sacred place."

"It is no desecration. The highest heights of art, as well as of life, belong to love," he said, as they went out into the cool, low hall, paved with the gravestones of the Medici.

"Don't you always think of them lying down below?" she said. "Giovanni in his armor, and Leonore of Toledo in her golden hair?"

"Since when have you become so historical? They were a wicked race."

"And since when have you become so virtuous?" she answered. "They were at least successful."

Time passed. It has a way of passing rapidly in Florence; although each day is long and slow and full and delightful, a month flies. Again the season was waning. It was now believed that Mr. Morgan had been successful, although nothing definite was known. It was remarked how unusually well Miss Stowe looked: her eyes were so bright and she had so much color that she really looked brilliant. Madame Ferri repeated this to Miss Harrison.

"Margaret was always brilliant," said her aunt.

"Oh, extremely!" said Madame Ferri.

"Only people never found it out," added Miss Harrison.

She herself maintained a calm and uninquiring demeanor. Sometimes she was with her niece and her niece's supposed suitor, and sometimes not. She continued to receive him with the same affability which she had bestowed upon him from the first, and occasionally she invited him to dinner and to drive. She made no comment upon the frequency of his visits, or the length of his conversations upon the little balcony in the evening, where the plash of the fountain came faintly up from below. In truth she had no cause for solicitude; nothing could be more tranquil than the tone of the two talkers. Nothing more was said about Mrs. Lovell; conversation had sunk back into the old impersonal channel.

"You are very even," Morgan said one evening. "You do not seem to have any moods. I noticed it last year."

"One is even," she replied, "when one is—"

"Indifferent," he suggested.

She did not contradict him.

Two things she refused to do: she would not sing, and she would not go to the Boboli Garden.

"As I am especially fond of those tall, ceremonious old hedges and serene statues, you cut me off from a real pleasure," said Morgan.

It was on the evening of the 16th of May; they were sitting by the open window; Miss Harrison was not present.

"You can go there after we have gone," she said, smiling. "We leave to-morrow."

"You leave to-morrow!" he repeated. Then, after an instant, "It is immensely kind to tell me beforehand," he said, ironically. "I should have thought you would have left it until after your departure!"

She made no reply, but fanned herself slowly with the beautiful gray fan.

"I suppose you consider that the month is more than ended, and that you are free?"

"You have had all you asked for, Mr. Morgan."

"And therefore I have now only to thank you for your generosity, and let you go."

"I think so."

"You do not care to know the result of my experiment—whether it has been a failure or a success?" he said. "You told me the result of yours."

"I did not mean to tell you. It was forced from me by your misunderstanding."

"Misunderstandings, because so slight that one cannot attack them, are horrible things. Let there be none

between us now."

"There is none."

"I do not know." He leaned back in his chair and looked up at the soft darkness of the Italian night. "I have one more favor to ask," he said, presently. "You have granted me many; grant me this. At what hour do you go to-morrow?"

"In the afternoon."

"Give me a little time with you in the Boboli Garden in the morning."

"You are an accomplished workman, Mr. Morgan; you want to finish with a polish; you do not like to leave rough ends. Be content; I will accept the intention as carried out, and suppose that all the last words have been beautifully and shingly spoken. That will do quite as well."

"Put any construction upon it you please," he answered. "But consent."

But it was with great difficulty that he obtained that consent.

"There is really nothing you can say that I care to hear," she declared, at last.

"The king is dead! My time is ended, evidently! But, as there *is* something you can say which *I* care to hear, I again urge you to consent."

Miss Stowe rose, and passed through the long window into the lighted empty room, decked as usual with many flowers; here she stood, looking at him, as he entered also.

"I have tried my best to prevent it," she said.

"You have."

"And you still insist?"

"I do."

"Very well; I consent. But you will not forget that I tried," she said. "Good-night."

The next morning at ten, as he entered the old amphitheatre, he saw her; she was sitting on one of the upper stone seats, under a statue of Diana.

"I would rather go to our old place," he said, as he came up; "the seat under the tree, you know."

"I like this better."

"As you prefer, of course. It will be more royal, more in state; but, to be in accordance with it, you should have been clothed in something majestic, instead of that soft, yielding hue."

"That is hardly necessary," she answered.

"By which you mean, I suppose, that your face is not yielding. And indeed it is not."

She was dressed in cream color from head to foot; she held open, poised on one shoulder, a large, heavily fringed, cream-colored parasol. Above this soft drapery and under this soft shade the darkness of her hair and eyes was doubly apparent.

He took a seat beside her, removed his hat, and let the breeze play over his head and face; it was a warm summer morning, and they were in the shadow.

"I believe I was to tell you the result of my experiment," he said, after a while, breaking the silence which she did not break.

"You wished it; I did not ask it."

If she was cool, he was calm; he was not at all as he had been the night before; then he had seemed hurried and irritated, now he was quiet. "The experiment has succeeded," he said, deliberately. "I find myself often thinking of you; I like to be with you; I feel when with you a sort of satisfied content. What I want to ask is—I may as well say it at once—Will not this do as the basis of a better understanding between us?"

She was gazing at the purple slopes of Monte Morello opposite. "It might," she answered.

He turned; her profile was towards him, he could not see her eyes.

"I shall be quite frank," he continued; "under the circumstances it is my only way. You have loved some one else. I have loved some one else. We have both been unhappy. We should therefore, I think, have a peculiar sympathy for and comprehension of each other. It has seemed to me that these, combined with my real liking for you, might be a sufficient foundation for—let us call it another experiment. I ask you to make this experiment, Margaret; I ask you to marry me. If it fails—if you are not happy—I promise not to hold you in the slightest degree. You shall have your liberty untrammelled, and, at the same time, all shall be arranged so as to escape comment. I will be with you enough to save appearances; that is all. In reality you shall be entirely free. I think you can trust my word."

"I shall have but little from my aunt," was her answer, her eyes still fixed upon the mountain. "I am not her heiress, as you suppose."

"You mean that to be severe; but it falls harmless. It is true that I did suppose you were her heiress; but the fact that you are not makes no difference in my request. We shall not be rich, but we can live; it shall be my pleasure to make you comfortable."

"I do not quite see why you ask this," she said, with the same slow utterance and her eyes turned away. "You do not love me; I am not beautiful; I have no fortune. What, then, do you gain?"

"I gain," he said—"I gain—" Then he paused. "You would not like me to tell you," he added; and his voice was changed.

"I beg you to tell me." Her lips were slightly compressed, a tremor had seized her; she seemed to be exerting all her powers of self-control.

He watched her a moment, and then, leaning towards her while a new and beautiful expression of tenderness stole into his eyes, "I gain, Margaret," he said, "the greatest gift that can be given to a man on this earth, a gift I long for—a wife who really and deeply loves me."

The hot color flooded her face and throat; she rose, turning upon him her blazing eyes. "I was but waiting for this," she said, her words rushing forth, one upon the other, with the unheeding rapidity of passion. "I felt sure that it would come. With the deeply-rooted egotism of a man you believe that I love you; you have believed it from the beginning. It was because I knew this that I allowed this experiment of yours to go on. I resisted the temptation at

first, but it was too strong for me; you yourself made it so. It was a chance to make you conscious of your supreme error; a chance to have my revenge. And I yielded. You said, not long ago, that I was even. I answered that one was even when one was— You said 'indifferent,' and I did not contradict you. But the real sentence was that one was even when one was pursuing a purpose. I have pursued a purpose. This was mine: to make you put into words your egregious vanity, to make you stand convicted of your dense and vast mistake. But towards the end a better impulse rose, and the game did not seem worth the candle. I said to myself that I would go away without giving you, after all, the chance to stultify yourself, the chance to exhibit clearly your insufferable and amazing conceit. But you insisted, and the impulse vanished; I allowed you to go on to the end. I love you! *You!*"

He had risen also; they stood side by side under the statue of Diana; some people had come into the amphitheatre below. He had turned slightly pale as she uttered these bitter words, but he remained quite silent. He still held his hat in his hand; his eyes were turned away.

"Have you nothing to say?" she asked, after some moments had passed.

"I think there is nothing," he answered, without turning.

Then again there was a silence.

"You probably wish to go," he said, breaking it; "do not let me detain you." And he began to go down the steps, pausing, however, as the descent was somewhat awkward, to give her his hand.

To the little Italian party below, looking at the Egyptian obelisk, he seemed the picture of chivalry, as, with bared head, he assisted her down; and as they passed the obelisk, these children of the country looked upon them as two of the rich Americans, the lady dressed like a picture, the gentleman distinguished, but both without a gesture or an interest, and coldly silent and pale.

He did not accompany her home. "Shall I go with you?" he said, breaking the silence as they reached the exit.

"No, thanks. Please call a carriage."

He signalled to a driver who was near, and assisted her into one of the little rattling Florence phaetons.

"Good-bye," she said, when she was seated.

He lifted his hat. "Lung' Arno Nuovo," he said to the driver.

And the carriage rolled away.

Countries attract us in different ways. We are comfortable in England, musical in Germany, amused in Paris (Paris is a country), and idyllic in Switzerland; but when it comes to the affection, Italy holds the heart—we keep going back to her. Miss Harrison, sitting in her carriage on the heights of Bellosguardo, was thinking this as she gazed down upon Florence and the valley below. It was early in the next autumn—the last of September; and she was alone.

A phaeton passed her and turned down the hill; but she had recognized its occupant as he passed, and called his name—"Mr. Morgan!"

He turned, saw her, bowed, and, after a moment's hesitation, ordered his driver to stop, sprang out, and came back to speak to her.

"How in the world do you happen to be in Florence at this time of year?" she said, cordially, giving him her hand. "There isn't a soul in the place."

"That is the reason I came."

"And the reason we did, too," she said, laughing. "I am delighted to have met you; one soul is very acceptable. You must come and see me immediately. I hope you are going to stay."

"Thanks; you are very kind. But I leave to-morrow morning."

"Then you must come to-night; come to dinner at seven. It is impossible you should have another engagement when there is no one to be engaged to—unless it be the pictures; I believe they do not go away for the summer."

"I really have an engagement, Miss Harrison; you are very kind, but I am forced to decline."

"Dismiss your carriage, then, and drive back with me; I will set you down at your hotel. It will be a visit of some sort."

He obeyed. Miss Harrison's fine horses started, and moved with slow stateliness down the winding road, where the beggars had not yet begun to congregate; it was not "the season" for beggars; they were still at the sea-shore.

Miss Harrison talked on various subjects. They had been in Switzerland, and it had rained continuously; they had seen nothing but fog. They had come over the St. Gothard, and their carriage had broken down. They had been in Venice, and had found malaria there. They had been in Padua, Verona, and Bologna, and all three had become frightfully modern and iconoclastic. Nothing was in the least satisfactory, and Margaret had not been well; she was quite anxious about her.

Mr. Morgan "hoped" that it was nothing serious.

"I don't know whether it is or not," replied Miss Harrison. "Margaret is rather a serious sort of a person, I think."

She looked at him as if for confirmation, but he did not pursue the subject. Instead, he asked after her own health.

"Oh, I am as usual. It is only your real invalids who are always well; they enjoy their poor health, you know. And what have you been doing since I last saw you? I hope nothing out of the way. Let me see—Trieste and Tarascon; you have probably been in—Transylvania?"

"That would be somewhat out of the way, wouldn't it? But I have not been there; I have been in various nearer places, engaged rather systematically in amusing myself."

"Did you succeed? If you did you are a man of genius. One must have a rare genius, I think, to amuse one's self in that way at forty. Of course I mean thirty-five, you know; but forty is a better conversational word—it classifies. And you were amused?"

"Immensely."

"So much so that you have to come to Florence in September to rest after it!"

"Yes."

Miss Harrison talked on. He listened, and made the necessary replies. The carriage entered the city, crossed the Carraja bridge, and turned towards his hotel.

"Can you not come for half an hour this evening, after your engagement is over?" she said. "I shall be all alone, for Margaret cannot be there before midnight; she went into the country this morning with Madame Ferri—some sort of a fête at a villa, a native Florentine affair. You have not asked much about her, I think, considering how constantly you were with her last spring," she added, looking at him calmly.

"I have been remiss; pardon it."

"It is only forgetfulness, of course. That is not a fault nowadays; it is a virtue, and, what is more, highly fashionable. But there is one little piece of news I must tell you about my niece: she is going to be married."

"That is not little; it is great. Please present to her my sincere good wishes and congratulations."

"I am sorry you cannot present them yourself. But at least you can come and see *me* for a little while this evening—say about ten. The grandson of your grandfather should be very civil to old Ruth Harrison for old times' sake." Here the carriage stopped at his door. "Remember, I shall expect you," she said, as he took leave.

At about the hour she had named he went to see her; he found her alone, knitting. It was one of her idiosyncrasies to knit stockings "for the poor." No doubt there were "poor" enough to wear them; but as she made a great many, and as they were always of children's size and black, her friends sometimes thought, with a kind of amused dismay, of the regiment of little funereal legs running about for which she was responsible.

He had nothing especial to say; his intention was to remain the shortest time possible; he could see the hands of the clock, and he noted their progress every now and then through the twenty minutes he had set for himself.

Miss Harrison talked on various subjects, but said nothing more concerning her niece; nor did he, on his side, ask a question. After a while she came to fashions in art. "It is the most curious thing," she said, "how people obediently follow each other along a particular road, like a flock of sheep, no matter what roads, equally good and possibly better, open to the right and the left. Now there are the wonderfully spirited frescos of Masaccio at the Carmine, frescos which were studied and copied by Raphael himself and Michael Angelo. Yet that church has no vogue; it is not fashionable to go there; Ruskin has not written a maroon-colored pamphlet about it, and Baedeker gives it but a scant quarter-page, while the other churches have three and four. Now it seems to me that—"

But what it seemed Morgan never knew, because here she paused as the door opened. "Ah, there is Margaret, after all," she said. "I did not expect her for three hours."

Miss Stowe came across the large room, throwing back her white shawl and taking off her little plumed hat as she came. She did not perceive that any one was present save her aunt; the light was not bright, and the visitor sat in the shadow.

"It was very stupid," she said. "Do not urge me to go again." And then she saw him.

He rose, and bowed. After an instant's delay she spoke his name, and put out her hand, which he took as formally as she gave it. Miss Harrison was voluble. She was "so pleased" that Margaret had returned earlier than was expected; she was "so pleased" that the visitor happened to be still there. She seemed indeed to be pleased with everything, and talked for them both; in truth, save for replies to her questions, they were quite silent. The visitor remained but a short quarter of an hour, and then took leave, saying good-bye at the same time, since he was to go early in the morning.

"To Trent?" said Miss Harrison.

"To Tadmor, I think, this time," he answered, smiling.

The next morning opened with a dull gray rain. Morgan was late in rising, missed his train, and was obliged to wait until the afternoon. About eleven he went out, under an umbrella, and, after a while, tired of the constant signals and clattering followings of the hackmen, who could not comprehend why a rich foreigner should walk, he went into the Duomo. The vast church, never light even on a bright day, was now sombre, almost dark, the few little twinkling tapers, like stars, on an altar at the upper end, only serving to make the darkness more visible. He walked down to the closed western entrance, across whose wall outside rises slowly, day by day, the new façade under its straw-work screen. Here he stood still, looking up the dim expanse, with the dusky shadows, like great winged, formless ghosts, hovering over him.

One of the south doors, the one near the choir, was open, and through it a slender ray of gray daylight came in, and tried to cross the floor. But its courage soon failed in that breadth and gloom, and it died away before it had gone ten feet. A blind beggar sat in a chair at this entrance, his patient face faintly outlined against the ray; there seemed to be no one else in the church save the sacristan, whose form could be dimly seen moving about, renewing the lights burning before the far-off chapels.

The solitary visitor strolled back and forth in the shadow. After a while he noted a figure entering through the ray. It was that of a woman; it had not the outlines of the usual church beggar; it did not stoop or cringe; it was erect and slender, and stepped lightly; it was coming down towards the western end, where he was pacing to and fro. He stopped and stood still, watching it. It continued to approach—and at last brushed against him. Coming in from the daylight, it could see nothing in the heavy shadow.

"Excuse me, Miss Stowe," he said; "I should have spoken. My eyes are accustomed to this light, and I recognized you; but of course you could not see me."

She had started back as she touched him; now she moved away still farther.

"It is grandly solitary here on a rainy day, isn't it?" he continued. "I used often to come here during a storm. It makes one feel as if already disembodied—as if he were a shade, wandering on the gray, unknown outskirts of another world."

She had now recovered herself, and, turning, began to walk back towards the ray at the upper door. He accompanied her. But the Duomo is vast, and cannot be crossed in a minute. He went on talking about the shadows; then stopped.

"I am glad of this opportunity to give you my good wishes, Miss Stowe," he said, as they went onward. "I hope you will be quite happy."

"I hope the same, certainly," she answered. "Yet I fail to see any especially new reason for good wishes from you

just at present."

"Ah, you do not know that I know. But Miss Harrison told me yesterday—told me that you were soon to be married. If you have never forgiven me, in the light of your present happiness I think you should do so now."

She had stopped. "My aunt told you?" she said, while he was still speaking. But now, as he paused, she walked on. He could not see her face; although approaching the ray, they were still in the shadow, and her head was turned from him.

"As to forgiveness, it is I who should ask forgiveness from you," she said, after some delay, during which there was no sound but their footsteps on the mosaic pavement.

"Yes, you were very harsh. But I forgave you long ago. I was a dolt, and deserved your sharp words. But I want very much to hear *you* say that you forgive *me*."

"There is nothing to forgive."

"That is gently spoken. It is your marriage present to me, and I feel the better for it."

A minute later they had reached the ray and the door. He could see her face now. "How ill you look!" he said, involuntarily. "I noticed it last evening. It is not conventional to say so, but it is at least a real regret. He should take better care of you."

The blind beggar, hearing their footsteps, had put out his hand. "Do not go yet," said Morgan, giving him a franc. "See how it is raining outside. Walk with me once around the whole interior for the sake of the pleasant part of our Florentine days—for there *was* a pleasant part; it will be our last walk together."

She assented silently, and they turned into the shadow again.

"I am going to make a confession," he said, as they passed the choir; "it can make no difference now, and I prefer that you should know it. I did not realize it myself at the time, but I see now—that is, I have discovered since yesterday—that I was in love with you, more or less, from the beginning."

She made no answer, and they passed under Michael Angelo's grand, unfinished statue, and came around on the other side.

"Of course I was fascinated with Beatrice; in one way I was her slave. Still, when I said to you, 'Forgive me; I am in love with some one else,' I really think it was more to see what you would say or do than any feeling of loyalty to her."

Again she said nothing. They went down the north aisle.

"I wish you would tell me," he said, leaving the subject of himself and turning to her, "that you are fully and really happy in this marriage of yours. I hope you are, with all my heart; but I should like to hear it from your own lips."

She made a gesture as if of refusal; but he went on. "Of course I know I have no right; I ask it as a favor."

They were now in deep obscurity, almost darkness; but something seemed to tell him that she was suffering.

"You are not going to do that wretched thing—marry without love?" he said, stopping abruptly. "Do not, Margaret, do not! I know you better than you know yourself, and you will not be able to bear it. Some women can; but you could not. You have too deep feelings—too—"

He did not finish the sentence, for she had turned from him suddenly, and was walking across the dusky space in the centre of the great temple whose foundations were so grandly laid six centuries ago.

But he followed her and stopped her, almost by force, taking both her hands in his. "You must not do this," he said; "you must not marry in that way. It is dangerous; it is horrible; for you, it is a crime." Then, as he stood close to her and saw two tears well over and drop from her averted eyes, "Margaret! Margaret!" he said, "rather than that, it would have been better to have married even me."

She drew her hands from his, and covered her face; she was weeping.

"Is it too late?" he whispered. "Is there a possibility—I love you very deeply," he added. And, cold and indifferent as Florence considered him, his voice was broken.

When they came round to the ray again, he gave the blind beggar all the small change he had about him; the old man thought it was a paper golconda.

"You owe me another circuit," he said; "you did not speak through fully half of the last one."

So they went around a second time.

"Tell me when you first began to think about me," he said, as they passed the choir. "Was it when you read that letter?"

"It was an absurd letter."

"On the contrary, it was a very good one, and you know it. You have kept it?"

"No; I burned it long ago."

"Not so very long! However, never fear; I will write you plenty more, and even better ones. I will go away on purpose."

They crossed the east end, under the great dome, and came around on the other side.

"You said some bitter things to me in that old amphitheatre, Margaret; I shall always hate the place. But after all—for a person who was quite indifferent—were you not just a little *too* angry?"

"It is easy to say that now," she answered.

They went down the north aisle.

"Why did you stop and leave the room so abruptly when you were singing that song I asked for—you know, the 'Semper Fidelis?'"

"My voice failed."

"No; it was your courage. You knew then that you were no longer 'fidelis' to that former love of yours, and you were frightened by the discovery."

They reached the dark south end.

"And now, as to that former love," he said, pausing. "I will never ask you again; but here and now, Margaret, tell me what it was."

"It was not 'a fascination'—like yours," she answered.

"Do not be impertinent, especially in a church. Mrs. Lovell was not my only fascination, I beg to assure you; remember, I am thirty-six years old. But now—what was it?"

"A mistake."

"Good; but I want more."

"It was a will-o'-the-wisp that I thought was real."

"Better; but not enough."

"You ask too much, I think."

"I shall always ask it; I am horribly selfish; I warn you beforehand that I expect everything, in the most relentless way."

"Well, then, it was a fancy, Trafford, that I mistook for—" And the Duomo alone knows how the sentence was ended.

As they passed, for the third time, on their way towards the door, the mural tablet to Giotto, Morgan paused. "I have a sort of feeling that I owe it to the old fellow," he said. "I have always been his faithful disciple, and now he has rewarded me with a benediction. On the next high-festival his tablet shall be wreathed with the reddest of roses and a thick bank of heliotrope, as an acknowledgment of my gratitude."

It was; and no one ever knew why. If it had been in "the season," the inquiring tourists would have been rendered distracted by the impossibility of finding out; but to the native Florentines attending mass at the cathedral, to whom the Latin inscription, "I am he through whom the lost Art of Painting was revived," remains a blank, it was only a tribute to some "departed friend."

"And he is as much my friend as though he had not departed something over five centuries ago," said Trafford; "of that I feel convinced."

"I wonder if he knows any better, now, how to paint an angel leaning from the sky," replied Margaret.

"Have you any idea why Miss Harrison invented that enormous fiction about you?" he said, as they drove homeward.

"Not the least. We must ask her."

They found her in her easy-chair, beginning a new stocking. "I thought you were in Tadmor," she said, as Trafford came in.

"I started; but came back to ask a question. Why did you tell me that this young lady was going to be married?"

"Well, isn't she?" said Miss Harrison, laughing. "Sit down, you two, and confess your folly. Margaret has been ill all summer with absolute pining—yes, you have, child, and it is a woman's place to be humble. And you, Trafford, did not look especially jubilant, either, for a man who has been immensely amused during the same space of time. I did what I could for you by inventing a sort of neutral ground upon which you could meet and speak. It is very neutral for the other man, you know, when the girl is going to be married; he can speak to her then as well as not! I was afraid last night that you were not going to take advantage of my invention; but I see that it has succeeded (in some mysterious way out in all this rain) better than I knew. It was, I think," she concluded, as she commenced on a new needle, "a sort of experiment of mine—a Florentine experiment."

Trafford burst into a tremendous laugh, in which, after a moment, Margaret joined.

"I don't know what you two are laughing at," said Miss Harrison, surveying them. "I should think you ought to be more sentimental, you know."

"To confess all the truth, Aunt Ruth," said Trafford, going across and sitting down beside her, "Margaret and I have tried one or two of those experiments already!"

A WAITRESS

As the evening was delightful, their coffee was served in the garden. Modesta brought out a low table and a tray; then, returning to the kitchen, she came forth again with the coffee-pot, fresh from the fire, and filled the two cups, one for Dennison, the other for his guest, Edward Gray. The coffee was fragrant, very hot, very black. John Dennison never took at night more than this one small cupful; but it was necessary that the quality of the drops within should be of the purest, and Peppino, the cook, knew that he must not fail. The dinner which had preceded the coffee had been excellent.

"Well, Jack, you *live* well!" Gray had remarked, after he had spent two days with his former school-fellow.

"Yes, good cooking has become a *sine qua non* with me," Dennison answered. "I don't take much, but it must be just so; I can't put up with even a trifling deficiency. I give Peppino very high wages for this economical land; but, on my side, I require of him unfailingly his very best skill. I am afraid," he added, with a quizzical smile, "that I couldn't get through my day and cultivate lofty thoughts if I did not feel certain that at the end of it there would be a capital little dinner waiting on the table. Physical comfort has become enormously important to me. Result: I'm corpulent!"

"Oh no," said Gray.

"Well on the way to it, then. Do you remember how lean I used to be?"

"You look in much better trim than you did when—"

"When I was young. You needn't hesitate about saying it; we're in the same box in that respect. How old do we call ourselves now?"

"We're fifty-two," answered Gray. "But I to-day look fifty-eight or nine, and you about forty. To me, Jack, it's marvellous—your youth."

"Yes, I'm plump. I no longer worry; I take life easily. But it's such an immense change in every way that I've

stopped watching it myself. Why, I remember when I liked pictures that tell a story, good heavens! and books with a moral, and iron-fronted blocks, and plenty of gaslight."

"Well, it's awfully tempting," said Gray, slowly, as he looked about him.

"Plenty of gaslight?"

"No; this place—the whole thing."



TEA IN THE GARDEN

They were sitting at one end of a flower-bordered walk which leads to a terrace with a parapet; from here opens out a panorama of the velvety hills of Tuscany, with a crowd of serried mountain-peaks rising behind them; below, in the narrow valley of a winding stream, is the small mediæval town of Tre Ponti, or Three Bridges. The garden retains a distinctly monastic air, though its last monk took leave of it several hundred years ago; here are no statues of goddesses and muses, so common in Italy; instead there are two worn stone crosses, with illegible Latin inscriptions at their bases. An arcade along one side is paved with flag-stones, and has the air of a cloister; at its end is a fresco representing a monk with his finger on his lips, as if inculcating silence; the face is dim, all save the eyes, but these have a strange vitality, and appear to follow the gazer with intelligence as he turns away. There are two ancient sundials, and there is a relic which excites curiosity—a flight of stone steps attached to a high boundary wall; the steps go up for a distance of eight or nine feet, and then stop, leading to nothing. On the north and west, where it stretches to the verge of the hill, the garden is open, defended only by its parapet. Across its south edge it is shut in by the irregular stone house called Casa Colombina. On the east there is the boundary wall already mentioned, and above this wall there rises outside, not fifteen yards away, a massive square battlemented tower, one hundred and thirty feet high, named Torre Colombina, or Tower of the Dove. This tower is now occupied only by owls, and travellers suppose vaguely that it belongs in some way to the little church of Santa Lucia, which nestles at its feet; they even fancy that it is the campanile for Santa Lucia's bells. But the great stone Tower of the Dove dates from the thirteenth century, and although Santa Lucia cannot be called young, her two hundred and fifty years are nothing to the greater antiquity of her ponderous, overshadowing neighbor. Santa Lucia's bells, indeed, would be lost in the Tower of the Dove. The saint has but three, each twelve inches in length, and the miniature peal is suspended in a belfry about as large as a pigeon-house which perches on the roof of her own small temple—a yellow sanctuary adorned with a flat pointed façade which looks (it is a characteristic of many church façades in Italy) as if it would come up and off if pulled strongly at the top, like the front of a box or the slide of a lantern.

Edward Gray's compliment had drawn from Dennison a disparaging "Oh, it's all dilapidated, forlorn—"

"Spare your adjectives," responded the other man. "They're pure hypocrisy. You needn't pretend you don't like it!"

"Of course I don't pretend. Haven't I lived here for nearly twenty years because I do like it? That tells the story."

"Though my occupation at home is the making of boiler-plate," Gray continued, pursuing the current of his own thoughts, "and though I couldn't and wouldn't live here as you do, giving up your own country (the greatest country in the world), yet don't imagine, Jack, that I can't take it in!"

He had risen while speaking. Now he went down to the parapet and stood looking at the view. Each mountain-peak was bathed in the light of sunset; all was softly fair—the ineffable loveliness of Italy. He came back. "It's probable that I take it in more than you do," he went on.

"Oh yes, of course; new-comers always think so. They think that we don't comprehend either the country or the people because we take them calmly. They believe that they themselves show far more discrimination in only coming now and then. For in that way they preserve their power of appreciating; they don't grow dull-eyed and stupid as we do."

"Exactly. That's just what I think," answered Gray. "What do you suppose those stairs were for?" he added, as he sat down again beside the table and lighted a cigarette.

"Probably they led to a small out-door pulpit which has fallen down. The whole top of this hill was covered by a monastery—a fortified place, I believe, with four towers. Only one of the towers remains, and nothing above ground of all the other buildings but that piece of high wall; I dare say there are plenty of substructures and vaults below. But though the monastery has gone, this old garden of the monks remains very much as it was, I fancy."

Modesta now came to take the tray. She was accompanied by a cat and a dog. The dog was a small dachshund, black, with long silky ears and very crooked paws. The cat, a sinuous yellow matron, appeared to believe that she

was the favorite, for she rubbed herself against her mistress's ankles caressingly. As Modesta, with murmured "excuses," lifted the tray, four kittens rushed from the house, gambolling and tumbling over each other; they all made their way to her feet, round which they curled themselves so that she walked in a tangle of cats. She returned towards the house with her tray, laughing, and careful not to step on them. The dog waited a moment with dignity. "Here, Hannibal! Here!" said Dennison. But the dachshund paid no attention to him; he trotted back to the house as fast as his short legs could carry him.

"He is supposed to be my property. But he spends his life in the kitchen," commented Dennison.

"That girl of yours has a passion for animals; one might rather call it compassion, perhaps, for I have even seen her petting that preternaturally ill-tempered and hideous donkey who turns your water-wheel," remarked Gray. "It seems to extend in all directions, for she runs out to help the old milkman up the hill with his cans, and she gives tidbits to that idiot boy who haunts the main road."

"That isn't half. She feeds regularly two children who live a little below here, on the way down to the valley. Partly she robs me to do it, after the easy Italian fashion; but she also robs herself—I have had proof of that. She almost always has some forlorn object, varying anywhere from a lame chicken to a blind man, stowed away in a corner of the court or the kitchen, where she can see to and comfort it. And every Friday, when the regular beggars of Tre Ponti—the authorized humbugs—make the round of the villas and poderes on this side of the valley, invariably she has saved something for each one of them."

"She is extraordinarily handsome. With her full throat, her large, soft eyes, and that classic head and hair, she looks like a Madonna of one of the old painters. I have never seen a more kindly and beautiful smile."

"It's well enough. But the great thing is that she is perfect as a servant. What she has to do is done without a fault."

"And she is so placid and sweet-tempered, too, as well as skilful," Gray went on. "She's a regular marvel!"

"She's a regular Tuscan!"

"Didn't I tell you that you don't half appreciate the beautiful natures of these people? As to this particular girl—come back to America, and see what we have to put up with! A waitress like that, over there, would be worth her weight in silver—if not gold."

"A what?" asked Dennison.

"A waitress; that's what we call 'em now; we've given up 'help.' Is she married to your cook?"

"Oh no; Peppino is nearly sixty. She is only twenty-five, though she looks thirty. She is a widow, and she is thinking of taking another husband before long. Have you noticed a young fellow working in the vineyard just under your windows?"

"I have noticed some one loafing there."

"That's the man."

"Poor good-natured woman—he has imposed upon her; she will have to earn his living as well as her own. As it happens, I have watched him, and a lazier creature I never saw; he looks at the vines occasionally, and he calls down jokes to the other men below; that is the extent of his exertions. Come out for a walk."

"I don't walk after dinner."

"Come at least as far as the tower."

Thus adjured, Dennison rose. In spite of his own assertion, he was not corpulent; he was a tall man whose outlines had grown large; but he was muscular still. Gray also was tall. If Edward Gray had a hobby, it was to show to the world that an American business-man can be as athletic as an English fox-hunter or an ancient Greek; his face, which was thin and deeply lined, did not come up to his ambition; but his erect figure, wiry and elastic, was well-developed and strong.

As they passed through the house, now growing dim in the twilight, they caught a glimpse of the waitress in the distance, seated in the kitchen, knitting. On the table by her side two of the tall, slender Tuscan lamps were burning, each with its three little wicks and its three brass chains; in her lap two kittens were curled asleep. The light illumined also a gaudy print on the wall, apparently a Madonna. Beneath the print was a jug filled with flowers.

"Is that little piece of piety your cook's?" Gray asked, as they passed out.

"No. The cook is a free-thinker. It's Modesta; she is overwhelmingly devout. She has the whole house blessed at regular intervals—priest and holy-water."

The outer door of Casa Colombina opens directly upon the small square or piazza of Santa Lucia, a grassy space dotted with minute pink daisies. One side of this square is bordered by a low wall. In the daytime this wall's broad, flat top was adorned not infrequently by the recumbent figure of one of Modesta's protégés, who, after enjoying her bounty, was taking a siesta here, in the sunshine or the shade, according to the season; sometimes it was Hannibal, with his nose on his paws; sometimes it was the cat; very often it was a beggar or the idiot boy. To-night the slab was empty, and, after a stroll of half an hour up the road and back, Dennison and his visitor sat down here for a moment; it made an excellent seat. It was now dark; the lights of Tre Ponti were twinkling in the valley, the evening-star shone above the Tower of the Dove; the soft air of the Italian May was filled with the fragrance of blossoms. Suddenly on one of the mountains in the northern sky there appeared, flashing out, a gleam. Then a blaze.

"Woods on fire up there," said Gray, who was accustomed to forest fires at home.

But while he was speaking a similar glare appeared on a mountain in the south. And then a third in the east. Many summits and flanks of the Apennines were in sight, and before long there were fifty of the blazing signals visible, some near, some distant, but all at high points.

"It's the vigil of the Ascension, the night when the mountain peasants light bonfires on their peaks as a species of religious rite," explained Dennison. "In reality it is a relic of pagan times. Their belief is that the ceremony will bring tranquillity to their families during the year."

A figure which had come from the house now passed them. "Lordships will pardon," said Modesta's voice; "they know that I would not wish to disturb. But from the kitchen it is not possible to count the mountain fires. And to count them all is important, since tranquillity is most surely a blessed thing. Excuses." She passed on to a distant angle of the wall, where she stood for five or ten minutes.

"What did she say?" asked Gray, who was sure that he could learn to speak Italian in a week or two. Simplest thing in the world—so much like Latin.

Dennison translated the phrases—the lordships, the excuses, and the proffered opinion as to tranquillity.

"It's awfully pretty," said Gray, admiringly.

Modesta, after finishing her counting, crossed the piazza to the little church. In the starlit darkness they could see her kneel down there in the porch.

"She is clinching it—the tranquillity—by a few private orisons," said Dennison.

Presently, her devotions concluded, the waitress returned to the house. The two men remained where they were. They had all sorts of subjects to thresh out together. They took them up, or rather Gray did, by fits and starts.

"Well, Jack, it's settled, then, that you're never coming home?" he remarked, as he accepted another cigarette.

"Not at all," Dennison answered. "I shall come back by-and-by, when I feel like it. In the meanwhile I pay my taxes regularly over there, and I subscribe to all the charities I believe in—three or four. If there were to be another war (but there won't be) I should return at once."

"Well, I don't call it a useful life."

"Is it more useful to make money—at somebody else's expense?"

"It's more useful to be a good citizen; to bring up one's family well; to—"

"Let's stop there," Dennison interposed. "People with families never approve of the people who haven't those blessings. It doesn't occur to them that nobody forced them to marry; they selected the lot, and therefore they accepted responsibilities. But a man who has not undertaken family life ought not to be saddled with its cares. You chose your boys and girls; I chose Italy. Each to his taste. You may ask, 'Isn't the world to be peopled, then?' No trouble about that; it always will be. Personally my own answer to the same question might be, however, the old one, 'Je n'en vois pas la nécessité.'"

"That's where you all end; dreary nihilism!"

A figure was now passing the piazza, following the road which ascends from the valley. "Let us see if Hannibal gives tongue from the house," said Dennison. "It's a man they call the Professor; he lives behind the church, and he and the dog detest each other. Generally, Hannibal knows his step even from the depths of the olive-grove! You don't want to watch those fires all night, do you?"

They returned to the house. The outer door of Casa Colombina bore no relation to the drawing-room, dining-room, or library. It led to the court, to the cellar, to the gardens, to the podere, to the kitchen, to whatever you please; but it was only by a circuitous route through corridors and purposeless anterooms that Dennison could reach his own apartments. As he and his guest were following this route they caught another glimpse across the court of Modesta in her kitchen. The door was more widely open this time, and they could see the whole interior of the large, vaulted, hall-like room, with the rows of copper pans on the wall. The kittens were now in their basket on the floor, and Modesta's lap was occupied by the dachshund, who had curled himself into a ball. The waitress was still knitting, her head bent forward over her work. With her smoothly braided hair and her white apron, in her neat, quiet room, with her cats and her dog and her flower-decked shrine, she was the image of peace.

"Tranquillity is most surely a blessed thing," quoted Gray. "If it were not for the moving needles, I should say she was asleep."

"She probably is asleep; she is knitting unconsciously. She appears to require about fifteen hours of slumber out of the twenty-four," said Dennison, as he lighted wax matches, one after the other, to show the way. When he reached the sitting-room he rang for lights, and presently Modesta appeared, carrying the lamp, her eyes drowsy.

"As soon as Peppino comes in you may close the house," said Dennison. "We shall require nothing more to-night."

The waitress put down the lamp, adjusting its wick so that it burned brightly. Then she lighted the shaded candles which stood on a side table. Hannibal had followed her; when she had finished her task she stooped and picked him up. "If the master allows, he must be washed to-morrow," she said. "Or, rather, not to-morrow, for it is a festa, but the day after. As it is now warm weather, Peppino shall take him to the pond, instead of bathing him in the green crockery basin. Annibale himself will not wish to go—silly cherub!" (Here she stroked the dog's head.) "But—what do they wish? It is necessary. Good-night to the lordships." And she disappeared, carrying the dog, and murmuring endearments to him as she went.

The next morning Gray, always an early riser, found himself awake at the abnormal hour of dawn; for in May and in Italy one can see the beginnings of light in the east soon after midnight. Long before four o'clock he was dressed and out. He had a fancy to see the dew on the blossoms, to watch the sun rise above the Apennines and touch, one by one, the gray towers with which in that part of Tuscany all the hills are crowned. Peppino was up, for the kitchen door was open. Hannibal, hearing steps, looked into the court, and seeing that some one was going for a walk, he decided to go too, announcing his intention by a bark of one syllable—"wow!" This drew forth a "Be quiet!" in Tuscan from Peppino within. For no unnecessary sound must disturb the master of the house, who never appeared before eight o'clock; in winter an hour later. Gray went quietly through the corridors to the irrelevant outer door, opened it, and let himself out, followed by the dog. He walked up the road for a short distance; then he turned into a winding lane. Here he saw the thick dew on the hedges and fields, but only one bird; with great care Dennison had kept three birds'-nests in the garden of Casa Colombina, but they were probably the only nests for miles. Presently the sun rose above the eastern mountains, its first rays illumining distant high-up villages which are invisible later in the day. Then came the gleam of the towers. Some of these stand alone, like the Tower of the Dove; two belong to ruined castles; but the majority are now attached to villas which were built later, or rather the villas have attached themselves to the towers. These villas, now old in their turn, are for the most part large, solid, blank-looking structures, yellow in hue, with a dignified group of cypresses near by. When the tints of the sunrise were all gone, merged in the broad, clear light of the Tuscan summer day, Gray turned back. He was following the main road. As the cluster of houses which stand next to Santa Lucia, behind the piazza, came into view, he saw a large white dog appear suddenly on the broad top of a wall which bounds one of the gardens. This dog began to bark in a deep tone at Hannibal, who was below; for Hannibal had hurried on far in advance of his companion, with the air of expecting something. This was what he had expected; and he now answered the challenge by leaping up as high as he could

towards his mocking aggressor, and barking in his turn with all his strength. As the top of the wall was ten feet above the roadway, the big dog could loftily send down his derisive scorn at intervals without lowering the dignity of his pose; and his derision was plainly increased when two other dogs appeared on the wall by his side and added their voices to the tumult. Hannibal meanwhile nearly turned himself inside out in his efforts to reply with appropriate contempt; he defied them all three at the top of his voice. Suddenly from a house opposite appeared a singular figure—a tall, thin man in his night-shirt, scantily covered by a short dressing-gown—who rushed into the mêlée, brandishing a cane and trying to strike the vociferous dachshund. Hannibal, relinquishing for the moment his warfare with the canine foes, turned his attention towards this new enemy, but not quickly enough to escape a blow which changed his proud bark into a yelp of dismay.

"Don't strike the dog!" called Gray, futilely, in English, as he hurried towards the scene of action. But before he could reach the spot a flying figure had intervened, coming from the opposite direction. Modesta rushed to the dodging Hannibal and picked him up, while she sent a flood of Tuscan sarcasms after his now retreating antagonist. "Two-legged brutes are much worse than four-legged ones," she announced, loudly; "and as to the quality of the *legs*, there can be no comparison." The thin human limbs were, indeed, only too plainly visible below the insufficient garments, and she wittily enumerated their weak points for the benefit of the gazing heads which had now appeared at all the windows of the neighborhood, as the distracted man, losing first one of his slippers and then the other, finally seized them in his hand, and, getting his door open at last, disappeared within. "Figure it to yourself—a Professor! Legs like that for the *literary* profession!" was the waitress's final thrust.

After breakfast, as Dennison and Gray were sitting in the garden, she appeared. "Lordships will excuse, but it seemed best that they should know. The paw of Annibale is wounded; likewise his shoulder and one ear. I have put on a lotion and bandaged him, and he has shown the patience of an angel. But that he suffers is visible, and I therefore ask the master, could I leave him here while I go to mass, so that he may not be lonely, Peppino having gone to town?"

"Oh, bring him, if you like," said Dennison. "Little scamp!" he added in English.

Modesta went off, returning after a minute or two, carrying Hannibal in his basket. The dog reposed on his cushions with the air of a wounded hero; he was arrayed in a complicated bandage of coarse white linen, which swathed one paw and encircled his shoulder and head. "To think of any one's being such a brute as to injure a creature so small!" said Modesta, after she had put the basket gently down in the shade. "But, without doubt, there are in this world absolute demons!"

"You hypocrite!" said Dennison to Hannibal, after the waitress had departed. "You go every morning of your life at dawn to wake up that poor man by a row with the Ciardelli dogs—you know you do! He is a teacher of languages from Florence, who is here for six months of rest," he added to Gray. "He has not had much rest so far! He has already thrown all his boots and shoes at Hannibal through the window more than once. This morning I suppose he was desperate."

"Is your paw *very* bad, Hannibal?" inquired Gray.

The bandage had slipped down, so that Hannibal had only one eye visible. With this eye he appeared to wink.

After lunch the two men went out for a stroll. The roads were gay with the country-folk, celebrating the festa in the Italian fashion by the simple amusement of being together in the open air. The wrinkled faces of the old women were framed in their new red-and-yellow kerchiefs, which were folded over their heads and tied under their chins. Each girl wore a flower in her hair, and this hair was always thick, rising up round the face in a dense mass, no matter how closely the long ends were braided and coiled behind. The men were dressed in their best, but they all carried their jackets folded and tossed over one shoulder.

The younger men were entertaining themselves.

"They will end by slicing us in two at the ankles," said Gray, indignantly, after he had jumped aside three or four times to escape a sharp disk which met them suddenly as they turned a corner, whizzing past them as it flew down the road, almost invisible from its speed.

"It's a game," said Dennison.

"Oh, is it? I thought it was assassination."

Presently they came to a little stone building adorned with a rusty tin cross. On the side towards the road it has a small, iron-barred window, whose glass within is so thickly covered with dust that it looks as if it had been painted yellow. There is a Latin inscription cut in stone over its long-closed door: "Pul—pulsate, et—Knock and it shall be opened to you," translated Gray, making out the words with difficulty.

"Nobody would dare to knock. And the last thing they wish is to have it opened," remarked Dennison. "It is the private chapel of that old villa across the fields, but for the last two hundred years there has been a tomb inside, whose occupant is supposed to rise and come to the window now and then to glare at the passers-by. She was a Countess Alberoni, who had a tragical end, if the legend is true. Her own children are said to have locked her up in that villa with one attendant and the plainest food, until at last, from sheer melancholy, she died. On the other hand, it is added that the world was well rid of her, for a more wicked old woman never lived. Her crimes, however, whatever they were, have not prevented Modesta, I see, from decorating her with the others," he continued. For as they walked on they perceived that a faded shrine, set in the outer wall of the chapel at its eastern end, had been adorned with a long garland made of fresh green leaves and blossoms.

"The others? What others?"

"Your Madonna beauty decorates every way-side shrine within a mile of Casa Colombina on all the principal festas," said Dennison. "She starts out after lunch, carrying a pile of garlands in her arms, and another poised on her head, so that she is like a walking hay-stack."

They now took a narrow track which leads to the valley. This path winds round a small low house, brilliantly pink on the outside, with a dark and gloomy interior.

"There she is now," said Gray, who, looking at everything with the keen attention of a stranger, had discovered the figure of the Casa Colombina servant within. Her back was towards them; she was talking to some one who was not visible from the road. Hearing their footsteps, she turned. And then, as the light from the doorway fell upon her, they saw that she had Hannibal in her arms.

"Put down that ridiculous animal!" called Dennison.

The waitress came out, and, joining in their laughter, placed the dog on the ground. "With his bandages, yes, he does look comical," she said, assentingly. "But it seemed best to give him a breath of fresh air."

"Have you lugged him all the way from the house?" asked Dennison, who had paused to roll two cigarettes. "The dog and the flowers too?"

"It is nothing; lordship knows his gentleness. He lay among them like a lamb."

"But why did you give a wreath to the wicked countess, Modesta?" Dennison went on. "The Signor Gray is astonished at such an action."

"Povera! to be so treated by her own children," answered the Italian; "that seems to me abominable. She was their mother, even if a bad one. And then one feels for her; only on a festa does any one pass that chapel, and so she has very little to see even when she does look out. The master may not know? This is the home of Pietro."

"The idiot boy?"

"The afflicted of God," said Modesta, gently.

The boy, hearing his name, had come shuffling out. He was a repulsive-looking child, but Modesta smoothed his hair. "To me he appears constantly more intelligent," she said, hopefully.

Dennison and his visitor, having lighted their cigarettes, now passed on. The moment their figures had disappeared round a curve the waitress stooped and took up the waiting Hannibal. "To call thee comical, with thy little paw in pain!" she murmured in his ear. "But thou knowest that I did not mean it. 'Twas but politeness for the masters."

The masters went down to Tre Ponti, where they took horses and a rattling phaeton, and went off on one of those quests with whose mild excitements Dennison enlivened his quiet Italian days. This time it was a search for some tapestry, which had been discovered, so it was said, in a villa six miles distant. The villa was one of those which had degenerated, having been used for the last hundred years as a farm-house. During the preceding week an addition had been pulled down, and the demolition had uncovered a window which corresponded to nothing within; further search had revealed a walled-up chamber, and it was this chamber which contained the tapestry. The chamber was there—a small room with a high ceiling. It contained no tapestry; nothing, in fact, but one singular object: a lady's toilet-table with a lace cover, an old mirror, two candlesticks, and various saucers, vials, and boxes. The lace, which was falling to pieces from age, was ordinary in quality; the mirror-frame and the candlesticks were made of metal that imitates bronze; and the saucers, vials, and boxes were of glass that imitates crystal; nothing, therefore, had intrinsic value. Dennison made a small offer for the whole just as it stood, in case the government should not lay claim to the objects.

"It's only for the riddle," he said to his companion, as they drove back to Tre Ponti. "There is a history, of course, and nobody can ever know it; that is the charm; one can fancy anything one pleases. If I get the table, I'll put it in one of the unused bedrooms. And then when there comes a wild windy night, such as we sometimes have in Tuscany, I'll go there after midnight, and see if she don't glide slowly in and look at herself in her old glass."

It was late in the afternoon when they drove through the eastern gate of Three Bridges. Leaving the phaeton at the stable, they strolled about the village for a while before returning to Casa Colombina.

But village is hardly the word. Although Tre Ponti has never contained more than two thousand inhabitants (at present there are but fifteen hundred), it is surrounded by an important stone wall with bastions, and two of the old gateways, massive arched portals, are still in use. The narrow winding streets are paved with broad flag-stones, which reach to the house walls on each side, so that one seems to be following hallways open at the top rather than roads. Nowhere is there an inch of garden; the high blocks stand side by side in solid rows. The only breathing-place is the central square; one side of this piazza is embellished by a palazzo-pubblico, or town-hall, decorated with griffins and armorial bearings. Along another side there is an arcade ornamented with a row of heads by Andrea della Robbia, old women, monks, knights, children, and others, each looking out with life-like expression from a heavy frame of clustered porcelain fruit.

"Those frames of fruit would do for a State fair," said Gray, irreverently. "Queer, solid, stony little place! Somehow it looks fierce, too."

"Naturally. They did almost nothing here but fight for hundreds of years; they fought with every town in Tuscany. And almost every town in Tuscany responded by fighting with them."

When Gray had seen everything, they passed through the western gate, taking the road which leads down the hill and across one of the three bridges; on the other side of this bridge begins the path which is a short-cut to Casa Colombina.

In the open space outside of this gate there stands a small café of the most modern type. Its exterior is adorned in fresco on one side of the door with a portrait of Garibaldi as large as life. On the other side there is a second work of art, a painted open window from whose lattice leans a damsel, dressed in the remarkable apparel which is produced by a translation of the latest Paris fashions into Italian. This damsel hospitably offers to the passers-by a glass of wine. "Let's breathe," said Dennison, seating himself on one of the benches which, with a green table, was placed before the door.

"You want to attach yourself to every bench you see, Jack."

"On the contrary, I much prefer my own, at home. It's only for your sake that I go tramping about the country in this way, on my feet."

"What do they have in such a place as this?" asked Gray, fanning himself with his hat. "We can't sit here without ordering something."

"Yes, we can. Don't be throwing your money about."

"Only a quarter. What can I get for that?"

"Red vinegar."

At this moment the proprietor of the café came forth, carrying a three-legged stool and a brazier filled with hot coals. He saluted the gentlemen with a beaming smile, but made no effort to solicit their patronage; placing the stool and the brazier at a little distance, he returned to the house, and came forth again with a large shallow pan, whose bottom was covered with a layer half an inch deep of coffee in the berry. Seating himself on the stool, he began to

roast the coffee, holding the pan over the coals by its long handle, and swaying it slightly from side to side with a rhythmical motion. He was a picturesque young man, with a brilliant pink silk handkerchief round his neck. Whenever his roving glance happened to meet that of either of the Americans he smiled genially, as though he wished to assure them that, whatever their mood might be, he should be sure to sympathize with it if admitted to their confidence.

"Ask him for the wine," said Gray.

"You can't possibly drink it," expostulated Dennison.

"I'll take it to Modesta—for her Friday beggars. You won't? Very well, then, I'll do it myself. Here, vyno! Vyno, do you hear? Vyno bono. Oon liry. *Oon!*" And he held up one finger.

The young landlord, with cordial smiles, put down his pan, hurried into the house, and returned with two little tumblers, and one of the graceful Tuscan flasks swathed in its covering of plaited straw. Taking out the stopper, he removed with exaggerated care the protecting layer of oil by means of a long wisp, and then placed the flask on the table with a flourish. "Ecco!"

"They always understand me," said Gray, complacently, when the coffee roasting had begun again.

"They would understand a Patagonian; one who was a lunatic, and dumb!"

"That is what I mean; they are so extraordinarily intelligent," replied Gray, declining to be snubbed.

Tre Ponti was keeping the festa with much gayety; the streets were full of strolling figures; the benches in front of all the cafés were full. This little way-side hostelry beyond the gate now began to receive its share; four men coming to town from a distant podere stopped here to refresh themselves with wine and chunks of the dark Italian bread. Then came a procession of youths returning from an expedition up the valley. They wore branches of blossoms in their hats, and kept step as they marched. More wine was brought out, and they all drank.

"I have not seen a drunken man in Italy," said Gray; "it's perfectly wonderful. Think of the whiskey and whiskey-brawls at home! Think of the gin and horrible wife-beating in England!"

"I don't know why I should think of them. They're not pleasant subjects."

A party of women now appeared, coming through the gateway from the town; one of them had a baby in her arms, and another was carrying a heavy boy of three, whose head, adorned with a red cap, lay sleepily on her shoulder. Set in the wall outside of this gateway there is a large shrine shielded by a grating. It bears an inscription in Italian—"Erected in token of mercies felt on this spot." There is a low marble step outside of the grating, and the woman who had the older child knelt down here for a moment, and made the child kneel by her side; taking some flowers from the knot at her belt, she showed him how to throw them through the grating as far as he could, as an offering to the Madonna within. The boy obeyed her; and then she gently bent his head forward with her hand as salutation. The other women knelt also, after this one had risen; but they did it perfunctorily; they bobbed down and bobbed up again, crossing themselves, the whole process taking about two seconds.

"The one carrying the red-capped boy is your waitress again," said Gray, as the women, their devotions over, drew nearer on their way to the bridge. "What is she doing down here?"

"It's her home; she is a Tre Ponti girl—was born here; and her family live here still. She herself much prefers the town to the country; she shares to the full the ideas which Browning expressed in 'Up in a Villa, Down in the City.'"

Modesta had now discovered them, and paused, while the women who were with her gave such a general greeting to "lordships" that it seemed to Gray that he beheld several yards of white teeth, surmounted by rows of dark eyes whose depths held a sweetness which no Northern orbs could ever contain.

"I accompany for a short distance my friend Paola," explained the waitress, "Paola being tired, and having already the baby to carry. This, the one I have, is her Angelo—as the master can perceive for himself, an angel indeed—though his little ankles are not strong. But—what would they have? That requires patience; it will improve. The masters would like without doubt to see also the baby? A miracle of beauty!" And giving the older child to one of her companions, she took the swaddled infant from its mother, and brought it to Dennison and his friend, a smile of pure enthusiasm irradiating her face. "His cheeks—do the masters behold them? And his eyes like stars? Lordships can note the quality of his arms."

Gray lightly pinched the dimpled roll of fat extended towards him. "Oui, oui. Grandeena!" he said, emphatically.

Modesta appeared to be charmed with this attention; she thanked him warmly. Then she carried the baby back to its mother, kissing it before she gave it up, and, taking the other child, led the way down the hill, the whole party making fresh obeisances before they turned away.

"What frank, pleasant faces they all have!" said Gray.

"Very frank. They never changed a muscle when, as a token of your admiration of the baby, you told them that it was hailing."

"Hailing? What are you talking about? I said the baby's arm was big."

"Grandina happens to mean 'it is hailing'; that's all."

"It couldn't; it wouldn't be such a fool! Are we going to stay here all night? It's awfully dusty."

For the open space outside of the gate was now filled with loungers, and the café of Garibaldi was crowded both inside and out; the two Americans left their bench and strolled down the hill. When they reached the bridge they stopped to watch the water. As they did so they heard music; down the gorge beside the stream came a party of girls, two and two, with linked arms; they were singing all together something slow and sweet, and as they passed under the bridge each gave a glance upward towards the two gentlemen who were leaning over the parapet to look at them.

"What are they singing?" asked Gray.

"A hymn to the Virgin, with an endless number of verses; stay here a month, and you'll hear it so often that you'll sing it in your sleep."

"That girl who was last did not look like an Italian," Gray went on, as the musical band disappeared round a bend.

"She isn't; she is a Swede. She was brought here last summer by a queer old English woman, who has lived for ten years, off and on, in that villa just above the second bridge; she had a fancy for servants who could not speak a

word of English, and she picked up this girl in Stockholm during one of her journeys—for when she wasn't in Tuscany, she was trotting all over the globe. She died, at the last, suddenly; it was two months ago, and, so far, her heirs in England, distant cousins, I believe, have refused to do anything for this stranded maid. The Swedish consul, however, has taken it up, and I hear that there is prospect of a remittance some time or other—enough to pay her expenses back to Stockholm. Fortunately for herself, she had learned to speak Italian. And she had made friends in Tre Ponti; she is staying with these friends now, and turning her hand meanwhile to anything that offers in order to support herself until the money comes. Let's go home and have some tea. Dinner will be very late this evening on account of the festa; no hope of its being on the table before nine o'clock."

"Just a minute more," said Gray.

It was no wonder that the man who was unfamiliar with the scene should wish to linger. The sun was sinking out of sight, sending up broad shafts of gold as he disappeared; above the gold a deep rose tint filled the sky. The water of the stream was gilded, and gilded were the bristling turrets of a fourteenth-century monastery, which here crowns a crag where the gorge makes a bend towards the south. Opposite, beyond Casa Colombina, the soaring Tower of the Dove was flushed with pink. And on the eastern side, over their heads, the little stone town with its bastioned walls was colored in bars of salmon and pearl. The close circle of hills, the wider amphitheatre of mountains behind, all of them clothed in the violet mantle which mountains wear in Italy, were tipped with orange. And somehow all these lovely hues seemed to deepen as the chimes of Tre Ponti began to ring the Angelus. The peal of the monastery on the crag soon joined in the anthem, these latter bells flinging themselves far out from their open belfry against the sky, to and fro, to and fro, with an abandon which was in itself a picture. And when the chime stopped, music of another kind took its place, for coming up the road appeared the same band of girls singing their slow hymn; they had left the gorge, and were returning by way of the bridge to Tre Ponti.

They were no longer a small company; a dozen women had joined them, and six or eight youths followed behind. Modesta accompanied the girls, having finished her duties as escort to Paola and her children.

"Here is your waitress coming back," said Gray. "How handsome she looks!"

The arch of the bridge is high, and the ascent which leads to it steep; the two gentlemen were standing in a small projecting half-bastion, which once served, no doubt, as a sentry-box; their figures were therefore inconspicuous from below, and no one saw them. Modesta walked beside one of the girls. Her arms were folded, her hands resting upon them tranquilly; she was clad in a dress of dark blue tint, with a kerchief of cream-colored silk folded over her breast, and in her hair there was a crimson rose; she was singing as she walked, joining in the hymn to the Virgin, and her eyes were slightly raised, fixed dreamily upon the tinted sky. As the group approached the ascent leading to the bridge, a girl at the end of the procession began playfully to push against one of her companions, and the pushing ended in a hoidenish race, the two turning and rushing back down the road, the one who had been attacked in pursuit of the aggressor. The others paused, and stood watching the chase, but without stopping their hymn, which went steadily on, though, as the pursued girl doubled unexpectedly and baffled her pursuer, the mouths of the singers became so widely stretched in their glee that it was impossible for them to pronounce their syllables, and they carried the melody on mechanically, without words and almost in a shriek.

"Modesta is the only one who appears to remember that it is a hymn," remarked Gray.

"Hymn? It's a him of another kind. She probably doesn't know that she is singing at all; much less what. And she doesn't even see those racing tomboys. She only knows one thing, sees one thing, and that is her Goro."

"Goro?"

"Yes; the young fellow she is going to marry. He is just behind her—there at her elbow. You've seen him in our vineyard half a dozen times."

"He appeared dull enough there! To-day he looks very smart. However, he is much too young for her—hardly more than a boy."

The pursued girl had now escaped, and was returning. The pursuer followed, and as they both reached the waiting group she made a last desperate effort, and succeeded in grasping the other again, and so firmly that they both fell to the ground. The hymn now ceased abruptly, drowned in the general laughter as the two girls struggled in the dust. After a moment they rose, shaking their skirts, and joining in the merriment, until suddenly there came from one of them a high yell. Drawing herself away from the others, she stood with her body stiffened as though it had been turned into wood, and her eyes closed, while she poured forth in a shrill voice a flood of rapid Italian. Her companions meanwhile were so overcome with their laughter as they listened that they rocked to and fro, and clapped their hands on their sides.

"What was she saying?" asked Gray, when at last the piercing voice stopped.

"You wish a sample? She said, 'Brute, thou! Beast, thou! Thou it is who hast done it, pig of a Vanna! For thou putttest me in a fury so that I said evil words. And now what is the use of my Lent? Didn't I drop with fasting? Wasn't I faint? Didn't I do every one of my devotions? And now all lost through *thee*. Serpent! and frog!'"

Modesta had paid no more attention to this raving outburst than she had paid to the race which had preceded it; she had stopped singing when the others stopped, but her eyes still gazed dreamily at the sky. After a moment or two she turned so that her glance could take in Goro, and then she stood tranquilly waiting, her face serene, content.

Presently the little company, its laugh out, began to move on again, coming up the ascent in a straggling band, the girl who had yelled forth her accusations with her body stiffened so strangely accompanying them, her fit of excitement ended. She even tried to frolic in a shamefaced sort of way; she took the flower from her hair, threw it up and caught it, as though it were a ball, humming a tune to herself carelessly. As they reached the bridge the band perceived the two gentlemen in the semi-bastion; all, that is, save Modesta. In her absorption the waitress saw nothing, until the girl who was beside her pulled her sleeve.

"The master, thine," she whispered. "Thy two lordships."

The waitress now came back to actual life. She waited a moment, until the others had passed on. "It is Goro," she said, presenting him. "The masters already know him well."

"Not in his festival clothes," answered Dennison. "He is nothing," he added, banteringly; "not half good enough! I wouldn't have him, Modesta, if I were you."

When Dennison said "He is nothing," Goro answered, "È vero" (It is true), and laughed lightly. He was a tall,

strong youth, with curling hair and a joyous smile.

"Eh—he wishes me so much good!" replied Modesta, fondly.

The next morning Gray took another sunrise walk; he had but five days more to spend in Tuscany, and he wished to make every hour tell. When he came back the waitress was in the court, occupied in tying a long cord to Hannibal's collar; beside her were two towels and a cake of soap.

"It is Annibale, who goes now for his bath," she explained; "Peppino takes him. A bath is excellent for Annibale."

The dog's spirits were deeply depressed; his elongated little body seemed almost to sweep the ground, owing to the dejected state of his short legs. "It is nothing, thou silly one!" said Modesta, affectionately. "Thou must be washed—that thou knowest. And as the morning is so warm, thou art to go to the pond."

Peppino now came from the kitchen, ready for the expedition. With a salute to their visitor, he took the end of the cord in his hand, and turned down the path which leads to the fields below.

"I'll go too," said Gray. "Ego," he added, tapping his breast violently, to show that he meant himself.

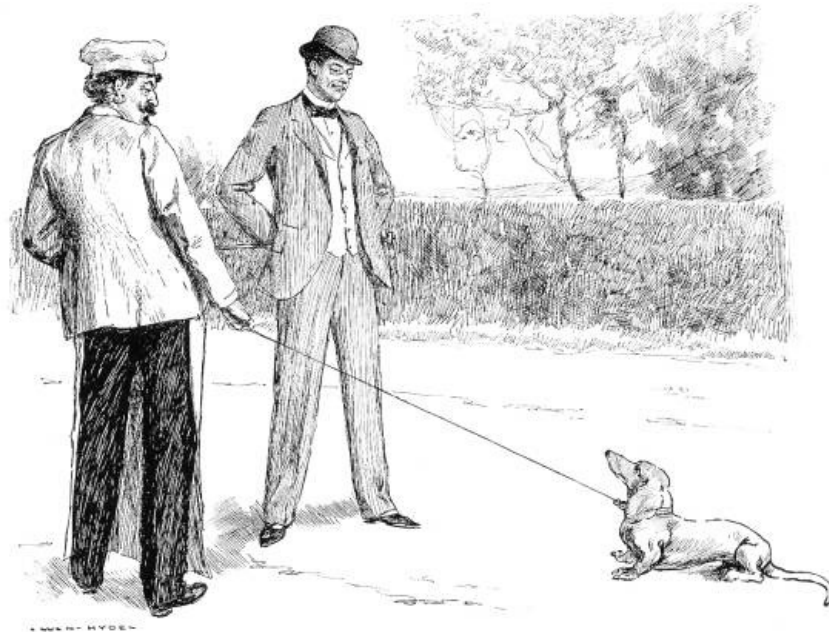
The two servants were charmed with this idea; Modesta said that it would give Hannibal courage to be accompanied by the gentleman, and Peppino added that it was "too much honor." The cook was very tall, with the countenance of a seer; in his spotless white linen jacket, his long white apron, and white linen cap, his appearance, with his dark eyes and thick gray hair, was striking. He was suspected of belonging to a secret society of nihilistic principles; but his nihilism must have applied only to mankind, for he went down the hill as slowly as he could, in order that Hannibal's neck should not be hurt by undue pressure from his collar. For the dog was following at the extreme length of his cord, dragging back obstinately with all his might, and digging his crooked little paws as deeply into the sand as he possibly could with each reluctant step; as Peppino was six feet in height, and Hannibal ten inches, the spectacle was amusing. At the foot of the hill the glitter of the pond became visible, and Hannibal's resistance grew so desperate that Peppino went back and picked him up, carrying him onward in his arms as though he had been a baby. "Most surely he must not be permitted to strangle himself," he explained to Gray in his serious voice.

The valley fields belonging to Casa Colombina are six in number; five are for grain and one for vegetables, and all are bordered by rows of fruit-trees, with grape-vines trained to swing from trunk to trunk. These fields are watered by artificial rivulets, which are fed from the pond. And the pond is in reality a reservoir for the water of a spring above. They passed the spring first. It is covered by a roof which extends some distance beyond it, supported by pillars of brick; the ground beneath is paved with flag-stones, and here were assembled a collection of the large tubs, of red earthen-ware, in shape and hue like mammoth flower-pots, which the Tuscan peasants use for washing clothes. Above the spring, fastened to one of the pillars, was a china image of St. Agnes, and beneath the image there was a hanging lamp with one wick, its tiny flame like a pale yellow point in the brilliant morning light.

"Modesta?" said Gray, indicating the lamp as they passed.

The cook nodded affirmatively.

"She is foolishly superstitious," he said. "But women—" A shrug completed the sentence.



"THE DOG WAS FOLLOWING AT THE EXTREME LENGTH OF HIS CORD"

The pool was square, paved within, and bordered by a low stone parapet; the water was not quite a foot deep. Peppino soaped Hannibal carefully until he was a mass of white lather; then he placed him gently in the pool, and kept him from returning to the shore by the aid of a long branch. "Walk about, then; walk! Agitate thyself," he said, pressing him softly with the twigs. Hannibal walked as little as he possibly could; his indignation was plainly visible even in the tip of his nose, which was the only part of him above the water. When he was judged to be sufficiently laved the branch was withdrawn, and as he leaped out the cook caught him and dried him with a towel. Another towel was then folded closely round him and fastened with long tapes, leaving only his head and paws and tail free. "Now must thou run back, so as not to take cold," said Peppino, putting on the collar and readjusting the cord. And then the procession returned, the swathed Hannibal this time as far in advance as the cord would permit, and pulling up the hill like a miniature steam-engine. "He is anxious to get back to Modesta," said Gray.

The cook comprehended. "It is true. She spoils him with her indulgence; it is a melancholy weakness in her

character," he replied, as with his disengaged hand he took his red handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his face, which was heavily bedewed with drops of perspiration, owing to his exertions at the pond.

As they reached the level ground behind the house the cat could be seen audaciously reposing in Hannibal's basket, which had been set outside to air. The dachshund barked angrily; the cook did not set him free, but hurried forward himself to eject the intruder; and as he did so, in some way his foot slipped, and he came down full length on the grass with a thud. And then Modesta, who had appeared at the kitchen door, began to call out in excitement: "He laughs—behold him! Annibale *laughs!*" And, in truth, the dog had that look as, with his mouth set in a broad grin, his tongue hanging out a little, his tail wagging, and his eyes brilliant with glee, he surveyed his prostrate companion. Modesta ran and took him up. "Didst thou laugh, little one? Like a human creature? And, indeed, thou art one; 'tis a man thou art!" Peppino, as soon as he was on his feet again, was almost as much interested as she was; between them they took off the towel, and dried him anew with a fresh one, watching him tenderly meanwhile with bated breath, as though they were expecting every instant to hear him speak.

In spite of her mirth, Gray had noticed that the eyes of the waitress were reddened, as though she had been shedding tears.

At breakfast Dennison also noticed this. "Anything the matter?" he said.

"Ah, nothing, nothing," replied Modesta, waving her hand contemptuously. "It is only that I am of so great a carelessness—I have shame about it. Will they figure it to themselves that I actually took off the cover of the large pepper-jar and emptied the contents into a bowl, my face held over it meanwhile and a breeze blowing through the pantry! That was acting like a fool; the pepper naturally flew into my eyes. But enough; it will pass."

After breakfast Dennison went down to Tre Ponti on business connected with his olive-grove. But he returned very soon, and, entering the library, rang the bell sharply.

"What's up?" said Gray, who was writing letters by the window.

"A poor old man was terribly injured while passing the house this morning; his donkey slipped on a rolling stone and fell, and the man was thrown from his two-wheeled cart with great violence. Peppino was out apparently—I can't imagine where, at that hour, as it's not his day for going to town."

"He was down at the pond washing the dog; I was with him."

"That explains it. Modesta, therefore, having the field to herself, absolutely refused to allow them to bring the poor creature in here; she let him go in a jolting wagon down to Tre Ponti, telling me nothing whatever about it. What makes it worse is that the man is a contadino who used to work for me; he worked for me, in fact, until he grew too old to work anywhere."

"Probably she has some reason for disliking him."

"On the contrary, she likes him; I happen to know it. And she has a very soft heart for old people, for all kinds of infirmity and suffering. She will fly down to see him upon the very first opportunity; she will rob herself to take him the best food and wine, and everything else she can think of; she will take the very pillows from her bed! She had cried her eyes out over him, that was evident. With her yarn about the pepper!"

"But why in the world, then—"

"Simply because her idea is never to speak of unpleasant subjects to her superiors if she can possibly avoid it; if forced to tell something of the truth, she envelops it in roundabout, optimistic phrases that would deceive even Solomon! But you'll hear for yourself. I'll translate what she says afterwards."

Modesta now appeared in answer to the ring.

"Two men are coming to-day to work in the olive-grove," said Dennison; "tell Peppino to have the tools ready; they will come every afternoon for a week. Your eyes are better, I trust?"

"Almost well, as lordship can behold. It was too much carelessness—mine—with that pepper!"

"Pepper, indeed; I feel peppery myself," replied Dennison. "Why didn't you tell me about the man who was injured here this morning?"

"Eh—lordship has heard? It was a slight accident."

"His leg and his arm were broken, and you know it. Also his head was cut."

"Most surely that is an error. It was a sprain, a wrench; nothing more."

"But I have seen him myself. And it was old Niccolo."

"Lordship has seen him? It is possible that it was Niccolo; I did not observe closely."

"You should have come to my door and wakened me, instead of taking it upon yourself to give orders," said Dennison.

"Oh!" exclaimed the waitress, with a vivid expression of repugnance in her eyes. "Waken lordship to tell him of a trouble—a misfortune like that? What, then, would become of his repose—his tranquillity?"

"You need not concern yourself about my tranquillity," answered Dennison. But he gave it up. "You may go," he said. "Stay a minute," he added; "I have provided a nurse for Niccolo, and a doctor, and he is to be paid so much a day for the best food and wine; he will therefore require nothing from you."

"Save my compassion," answered the waitress, the tears now rolling freely down her cheeks, and reddening her eyes anew. "And that I give with all my heart!" She lifted a corner of her apron to wipe away the drops. "It was sad to see—the masters can imagine! So old a man, and feeble. His white hair in the dust. But he knew me when I ran out. I wept much."

"How about the pepper?" inquired Dennison, as she left the room.

But the waitress was not disturbed by the detection of her falsehood.

"The whole thing seems to her only the most ordinary duty to me," said Dennison, after she had gone. "And if I had not happened to see Niccolo with my own eyes, she would have stuck to her lie to the judgment-day. Personally it was dreadful to her to send him away; she would have liked nothing better than to have him here, in one of those cool rooms off the court, where she could coddle him to her heart's content."

"Do you know, then, I think what she did was in one way charming," said Gray. "All these Italian peasants seem to me to have the most wonderful civility; their manners are always agreeable; they are almost polished. Think of the manners of—"

"I refuse to think of anything; the discoveries made by you new-comers are only exceeded by your conceit. For a thorough knowledge of the Italian character give me the man who has spent, in all, six weeks in Italy?"

The last day of Gray's visit came. As they sat at the breakfast-table, his host said: "There's a powwow to-night, to celebrate something or other, at one of the poderes about a mile from here. Modesta is going if I give her permission. If I do, she won't be back until after midnight, and the table service at dinner will therefore be at sixes and sevens. As the day is so fine, we might take it for a drive to that tower on the mountain—the one which is adorned, according to you, with a winding outside stairway!"

"There certainly is a stairway," persisted Gray.

"And then we could get something in the way of a dinner at a little summer hotel, which is already open for the season. There is a moon for the drive back, and we could stop and have a look at the powwow before coming home—as you're so athirst for everything Tuscan."

"Excellent. Jar!" said Gray.

"Jar? What jar?"

"Jar. Jarr, then, since you say I always cut my r's. *You* ought to know Italian when you hear it. Jar is what they all say to me when they mean yes."

"You ridiculous object, 'già' is the word."

"That's exactly what I said: jar."

It was three o'clock when they started, and a beautiful May afternoon. A pair of horses and the rattling phaeton had been sent to Casa Colombina from Tre Ponti. Modesta had already departed.

"The celebration begins early," said Gray, as he saw her start.

"She isn't going there now," answered Dennison. "She will go first to the house of Goro's mother, about half a mile from here; there she will sit braiding straw and gossiping with the old woman in a dark, cellar-like room, until the beloved object comes home and is ready to accompany her. I dare say she is taking him something with which to make himself smart for the occasion—a new necktie or a silk handkerchief."

As they passed out on their way to the carriage they caught a glimpse of the distant white figure of the cook seated with his back towards them outside of his kitchen door in the shade, occupying his leisure in playing the flute; his notes, which just reached them, were soft and long-drawn as sighs.

"What is it?" said Gray, listening. "I'm sure I know it."

"'Com' è gentil'; that is, 'O summer night.' Peppino is very sentimental in his musical tastes."

"He doesn't go to the party, then?"

"He despises parties. *He* goes in for bombs."

It was between eight and nine o'clock in the evening when, on their return from the drive, Dennison checked his horses in a hedge-bordered lane, and stopped. (It may be mentioned that they did not reach the tower; no one—that is, no stranger—has ever reached it. Italians are indifferent to its mystery.) "This is the place," he said. "The house is a quarter of a mile from here, and I could have taken you nearer by keeping to the main road; but in that case they might have heard the sound of our wheels. I haven't let any one know we were coming, so that you can have a glimpse of the scene as it really is, and not tamed by the presence of strangers." He tied the horses to the hedge, and, climbing over a stone wall, led the way across a broad field, freshly ploughed. On the other side of this field the ground ascended, and the slope was covered by an olive-grove. The sparse gray foliage of the pruned trees cast hardly more than a lace-work of shade upon the moonlit ground, and the two men made their way upward easily; in ten minutes they had reached the top. Here, on a broad plateau, stood the farm-house with its out-buildings. Beyond the plateau the ground ascended again, decked by another grove. The door and windows of the house were open, and sounds of laughter came forth. The two Americans drew near cautiously, walking as quietly as they could in the shadow of the trees. But their care was unnecessary; all were assembled within, and no one was looking either from the door or the windows; the noise, too, was so great that no sound outside could have been heard even by a listening ear. Dennison, making a détour, led the way round to one of the back casements. This window, a small one, was breast-high; its little lattices of lead-bordered panes had been thrown back; they opened into the room, as the exterior of the window was guarded by iron rods set close together. The two spectators outside, by looking between these rods, obtained a view of the scene within. The room was large, low, and smoke-browed; it was lighted by all the lamps the house could muster—lamps of the old Tuscan pattern for olive-oil; there were also earthen-ware saucers filled with the same oil, and carrying a floating wick. Two candles illumined a supper-table which was placed across one end of the apartment. This table bore upon its white linen cloth the dishes of the feast—dishes and little else, as everything had been eaten save bread, of which there was still a supply (in case any one should feel a return of hunger). There were also fresh flasks of wine for future thirst, and over a handful of coals on the hearth there was a long-handled coffee-pot. A game was now going on, or, rather, a pantomime; two men in masks were jumping about like harlequins, and every now and then they seized a person from the ranks of spectators, and whirled him or her round and round dizzily; there was guessing connected with it in some way, as everybody called out names loudly; the uproar was incessant, with occasional applause and a great deal of laughter. The feet of the harlequins had raised much dust, and at last the room became dim. "More light, more light, Filippo. We can't see," called several voices.

Filippo, a sinewy little man who had been acting as harlequin himself (for the men took turns), consulted with his wife. They had no more candles, and no more saucers and wicks; but they could make a blaze of brushwood on the hearth, if the company would not mind the additional heat? The wife, a laughing ample matron who still showed a handsome face above her rotund person, opened a door into an out-building, and, after some rummaging, produced three fagots of small, dry twigs; one of these she placed over the coals, and in a minute or two a blaze leaped up the wide chimney, lighting the room brilliantly. The game now went on with redoubled vigor and glee, and the gazers without could see all the faces of the circle distinctly.

"There is Modesta by the table," whispered Gray. "How she does laugh! It doesn't seem natural."

"Oh yes, it is. That is the way they laugh sometimes; they can go on for hours like children."

"Isn't that the Swedish girl with one of the harlequins? How light-colored she looks in that tanned, black-haired crowd! She is rather pretty; instead of letting her go back to Stockholm, one of these Italian youths had better marry

her."

"She probably holds herself above them," answered Dennison, in the same low tone. "But, in any case, Tuscan peasants are extremely slow to marry a person who is not a Tuscan. They call even Romans foreigners; generally, too, they call them brutes! Well, we've been here twenty minutes: had enough?"

They turned, and, making a second circuit of the house, they crossed the plateau noiselessly, and re-entered the grove. They had gone but a few paces down the slope when the distant voices and laughter suddenly grew louder; looking back, they saw that the whole company had come outside, following the harlequins, each one of whom held a girl by the elbows, and was whirling her over the grass in the brilliant moonlight. Presently four more couples began to whirl in the same manner, and all the others, inspired by the sight, joined hands, and made a long chain which moved to and fro with rhythmical steps, forming now a star, now a square, now a figure 8. The game was at an end; everybody was dancing. One of the harlequins changed his partner every few minutes, but the other did not loosen his grasp of the girl whom he had brought with him from the house. After a while this second harlequin moved away from the other dancers, and came waltzing across the plateau towards the grove where Dennison and Gray were standing, each hidden in the shadow of a tree trunk; at the top of the slope the man did not stop, but began to descend, still dancing, or pretending to dance, and pulling his unwilling partner with him.

At this instant a woman detached herself from the distant groups of revellers and rushed towards the grove. And as she came on her figure was such a vision of swiftness of motion and of intensity of purpose that Gray unconsciously held his breath as he watched her. The plateau was broad; she was a full minute in crossing it. As she drew near the grove she lifted her head a little, and the moonlight, which had been behind her, fell across her forehead; then he saw that it was Modesta.

The harlequin also had recognized her, for, suddenly ceasing his gyrations, he released his companion, and ran off in the opposite direction, bounding as he went, in accordance with his assumed character, and joining the chain of dancers near the house with a high leap which gained for him their loud applause. Meanwhile his partner, freed at last, stood still for an instant with her eyes closed, dizzy from the whirling.

It was during this instant that Modesta reached her; coming down the slope with all the gathered impetus of her tremendous speed, she swooped upon the girl, bore her to the ground, struck her across the cheek, and then, holding her down with one hand, she fumbled in her own pocket with the other.

Dennison meanwhile, as soon as he had recognized his waitress at the top of the descent (he had not distinguished who it was before, his eyesight not being so keen as Gray's), had left his tree, and, darting across the intervening space, he now caught her arm tightly at the elbow, while her hand was still in her pocket. Gray hurried to his aid, and seized her other wrist, dragging her fingers away from the girl on the ground; thus holding her between them, they pulled her to her feet. As they did so her right hand came out of her pocket. It held a murderous-looking knife.

"You devil," said Dennison, in Italian, "drop that knife!"

They held her so closely that she could not move, but her face glared at them in the moonlight. It was like nothing human; her head was thrust out, the eyes were narrowed and glittering, the nostrils flattened, and the lips drawn up and back from the set, fierce teeth. Their four figures—three standing, one on the ground—were below the slope, and no one saw them. There had been no sound from the prostrate girl, who had lost consciousness from fright, paralyzed by the terrible countenance of the woman who had attacked her; and the waitress herself had made no sound as she came. She made no sound now, save that she panted as she breathed; she was like a wild beast who had made one spring and is about to make another.

"Drop the knife, or you shall go to prison," said Dennison, sternly, his hands on her shoulder like a vise.

Her fingers did not move.

"Listen. If you don't drop it, I swear to you I'll send Goro to America by the next Leghorn steamer, with five hundred lire in his pocket."

The knife dropped.

"Pick it up," said Dennison to Gray, in English. "Now see if you can lift that girl and carry her down the hill. Get her across the field somehow to that stone wall where we climbed over; wait there for me—unless she should come to on the way, in which case perhaps she will be able to climb over the wall herself. If she does, wait there with her by the phaeton. I sha'n't be long. But I must take this she-wolf back to the house first."

Gray had bent down; he lifted the inert body at their feet, raising it a little, and as he did so the head fell back, and the moonlight, shining on the hair and temples, showed that it was the Swede. Modesta, as she too saw the face, made a spring at it. But Dennison jerked her back. Then, with a snarling sound in her throat, she twisted her head round, and bit savagely at his hand where it held her shoulder.

"Do hurry. She is perfectly insane," he said to Gray.

Gray, having got the Swede off the ground, put his left arm under her back at the shoulders, and his right under her knees, and, lifting her in this position, he carried her down the hill with as much speed as was possible. This was not great, because the ground was uneven, and as he could not see where to place his steps, he was obliged to feel his way with his feet as he advanced—to shuffle along cautiously. In time, however, he reached the bottom of the hill. Then slowly he began to cross the field. This, too, was difficult, owing to the soft, crumbling earth of the freshly ploughed furrows. But here at last the girl opened her eyes.

"Can you stand?" asked Gray, breathlessly. Then he thought, with irritation, "None of them can speak *anything!*"

But the Swede now made of her own accord the motion of trying to get to her feet, and gladly enough he let her slip down and stand on the ground, as his arms were aching. He still supported her, however, lest she should fall.

But the girl seemed to be more terrified than weak; the instant her feet touched the earth she began to run towards the stone boundary wall, looking back every half-minute to see that no one was following. He went with her, trying to help her over the furrows; and as they hurried onward side by side, her face was such a picture of deathly fear that the feeling took possession of him also; he found himself regretting that their figures were so plainly visible on the moonlit expanse, and he too looked nervously over his shoulder, as though he expected to see the Italian woman coming after them madly, with her glittering eyes and the shining knife.

They reached the wall, and climbed over into the road outside, the Swede needing no help, but quicker in her

movements than he was. In the road he tried to stop her, but she pulled herself from him. Still holding her, he showed her the horses tied in the shadow of the hedge. This she comprehended. She waited, therefore; but she kept herself several yards away from him, so that he should not stop her in case she should again wish to flee. She was a slender young creature, and she stood there much as a bird poises itself on a twig; not resting, not bearing its full weight, but perched provisionally, as it were—ready to fly away again in an instant.

Gray, who had now recovered his composure, tried to soothe her. With his most encouraging inflections he repeated: "All safe now. *All-ll* safe! Stay right here with me."

She paid not the least attention to him. Her eyes continued their strained watch of the lower trees of the grove. At length a man's figure emerged from these trees, and the girl gave a muffled scream. But Gray had caught hold of her arm; pointing to the horses and then to Dennison, he said, gesticulating energetically: "Horses are *his*. Dennison's. *My* friend. *Your* friend. (Oh, what *is* 'friend?') Amicus! Don't you see he's alone? Nobody with him? Solo? Sola?"

And the girl could indeed see for herself that the person approaching was alone. She had understood the fact that the horses belonged to this person, and her hope was in the horses; they could take her away—away from here!

As soon as Dennison was near enough he began speaking in Italian, and he continued to talk to her as he climbed over the wall, calming her, explaining and arranging. Then he turned the phaeton, and they all took their places within, the Swede sitting between the two men on the broad seat. Dennison drove down the lane, still talking encouragingly. When they reached the main road he took a direction which led them away from Casa Colombina and Tre Ponti. "We're in for it!" he said in English to Gray. "I shall take her to the nearest railway station—not the one you know, but another—and pack her off to Florence; there her consul can see to her. I have explained it to her clearly. She is glad enough to go."

"What was it all about, anyhow?"

"Didn't you comprehend? That harlequin (I'll mention no names, and then she won't be startled) was no less a person than the lover of your Madonna beauty—the youth she expects to marry. During the game he was flirting, or trying to flirt after his fashion, with our present companion. This was too much for the older woman. Hence the knife."

"Which I have in my pocket, by-the-bye."

"Don't take it out now; you can throw it away after we have disposed of our Scandinavian. I suppose she has never before seen such a thing as a brandished weapon of that sort. It's a knife used by the peasants about here to cut hides with; your Madonna probably took it from among Filippo's tools somehow while the festivities were going on. She must have been jealous even then."

"I told you that her laugh wasn't natural. 'Twas an awful sight, though! She would certainly have murdered the girl if we hadn't happened to be standing just where we were."

"Very likely," answered Dennison. "Tchk, tchk," he added to the horses.

"I hope she is safely locked up by this time."

"Locked up! She is probably dancing with her harlequin."

"You don't mean to say that you let her go?"

"Quite so. She is all right now; she has come back to her senses. I had six words with the youth, however; he'll treat her better—for the present, at least; I have frightened him."

"What did you mean when you said you'd send him away?"

"That was what brought her round. He has had a hankering for a long time to emigrate to—to the land of the free; he would go in a minute if his passage were paid and he had a hundred dollars in his pocket—go and never think of her again; she knows this. But the land of the free doesn't want him—he is incorrigibly lazy; and his departure would end her as far as I am concerned—make her perfectly useless."

"Good heavens! you're not going to take that murderess back?"

"I can't take her back without sending her away first. And that I haven't done," answered Dennison.

"But won't she be arrested, in any case? Every one will know that she attacked this girl, and that the girl has fled."

"No one knows that she attacked her. And even if it is guessed, Tuscan peasants are not so easily alarmed as you suppose; they understand each other. As to the disappearance of this one, I shall explain it by saying that I decided to advance the money to send her as far as Florence, instead of making her wait for the remittance which is expected from the consul; it is known that she was to go before long, in any case. It will cost me something, but I like peace and quietness. The other woman is perfect as a servant, and the cause of her jealousy removed she will continue perfect."

"Brrrr!" said Gray, uttering the sound that accompanies a shudder.

The Swede recognized the meaning of this; she looked at him quickly with parted lips and her hand extended. She was ready to spring from the phaeton.

"Do be quiet!" said Dennison. Then he spoke to the girl in Italian, quieting her dread.

They reached the station in safety, and soon after sunrise the Northerner, her breath still hurried, her hands cold, was placed in the care of the official who had charge of the Florence train. Dennison gave her his white silk handkerchief to tie over her uncovered head. The daylight had revealed the discolored lines of the bruise on her cheek produced by Modesta's blow. "Poor thing!" said Gray, as the train started on its way, and they had a last glimpse of her frightened eyes at the window.

"Yes. But she will get over it in time—she is strong and healthy. I have telegraphed to the consul at Florence to meet her, and take every care of her; he is to give her money from me, and then he is to send her to Stockholm, comfortably, in the charge of a suitable person. When she arrives there she will find a tidy little sum to her credit at a banker's."

"You're paying well for her scare."

"I'm paying well for my comfort."

They took fresh horses and returned to Casa Colombina.

As the Tower of the Dove came into sight on its hill, Gray said: "She won't be there, will she—I mean at the house?"

"Oh yes."

"What will she do when she sees us?"

"She will bring in the breakfast just as she brings it every morning, and Hannibal and the cats will follow behind. Perhaps she will talk rather more than usual; if she does, it will be on the most agreeable topics, and her smile (which you admire so much) will be sweeter than ever; her hair will be braided to perfection, and, what is more important, her work will be done to perfection. We shall pretend, both of us, she and I, that we don't see the mark of the bite on my hand. Shall I go on? In a week or two, probably, she will marry her Goro, and then he will be so constantly under my feet that I shall end by installing him as my gardener for life. He will do no work of importance; but, owing to his presence, I shall continue to enjoy the services of a waitress whom you yourself have described as a regular marvel."

It may be added that this prophecy has been exactly fulfilled.

AT THE CHÂTEAU OF CORINNE

ON the shores of Lake Lemman there are many villas. For several centuries the vine-clad banks have been a favorite resting-place for visitors from many nations. English, French, Germans, Austrians, Poles, and Russians are found in the circle of strangers whose gardens fringe the lake northward from Geneva, eastward from Lausanne, and southward from Vevey, Clarens, and Montreux. Not long ago an American joined this circle. The American was a lady named Winthrop.

Mrs. Winthrop's villa was not one of the larger residences. It was an old-fashioned square mansion, half Swiss, half French, ending in a high-peaked roof, which came slanting sharply down over several narrowed half-stories, indicated by little windows like dove-perches—four in the broadest part, two above, then one winking all alone under the peak. On the left side a round tower, inappropriate but picturesque, joined itself to the square outline of the main building; the round tower had also a peaked roof, which was surmounted by a contorted ornament of iron somewhat resembling a letter S. Altogether the villa was the sort of a house which Americans are accustomed to call "quaint." Its name was quaint also—Miolans la Tour, or, more briefly, Miolans. Cousin Walpole pronounced this "Miawllins."

Mrs. Winthrop had taken possession of the villa in May, and it was now late in August; Lake Lemman therefore had enjoyed her society for three long months. Through all this time, in the old lake's estimation, and notwithstanding the English, French, Germans, Austrians, Poles, and Russians, many of them titled, who were also upon its banks, the American lady remained an interesting presence. And not in the opinion of the old lake only, but in that also of other observers, less fluid and impersonal. Mrs. Winthrop was much admired. Miolans had entertained numerous guests during the summer; to-day, however, it held only the *bona fide* members of the family—namely, Mrs. Winthrop, her cousin Sylvia, and Mr. H. Walpole, Miss Sylvia's cousin. Mr. H. Walpole was always called "Cousin Walpole" by Sylvia, who took comfort in the name, her own (a grief to her) being neither more nor less than Pitcher. "Sylvia Pitcher" was not impressive, but "H. Walpole" could shine for two. If people supposed that H. stood for Horace, why, that was their own affair.

Mrs. Winthrop, followed by her great white dog, had strolled down towards the lake. After a while she came within sight of the gate; some one was entering. The porter's lodge was unoccupied save by two old busts that looked out from niches above the windows, much surprised that no one knew them. The new-comer surveyed the lodge and the busts; then opened the gate and came in. He was a stranger; a gentleman; an American. These three items Mrs. Winthrop's eyes told her, one by one, as she drew nearer. He now caught sight of her—a lady coming down the water-path, followed by a shaggy dog. He went forward to meet her, raising his hat. "I think this is Mrs. Winthrop. May I introduce myself? I am John Ford."

"Sylvia will be delighted," said Mrs. Winthrop, giving her hand in courteous welcome. "We have been hoping that we should see you, Mr. Ford, before the summer was over."

They stood a few moments, and then went up the plane-tree avenue towards the house. Mrs. Winthrop spoke the usual phrases of the opening of an acquaintance with grace and ease; her companion made the usual replies. He was quite as much at his ease as she was, but he did not especially cultivate grace. Sylvia, enjoying her conversation with Cousin Walpole, sat just within the hall door; she was taken quite by surprise. "Oh, John, how you startled me! I thought you were in Norway. But how very glad I am to see you, my dear, dear boy!" She stood on tiptoe to kiss him, with a moisture in her soft, faded, but still pretty eyes.

Mrs. Winthrop remained outside; there were garden chairs in the small porch, and she seated herself in one of them. She smiled a little when she heard Sylvia greet this mature specimen of manhood as a "dear, dear boy."

Cousin Walpole now came forward. "You are welcome, sir," he said, in his slender little voice. Then bethinking him of his French, he added, with dignity, "Welcome to Miaw-lins—Miaw-lins-lay-Tower."

Ford took a seat in the hall beside his aunt. She talked volubly: the surprise had excited her. But every now and then she looked at him with a far-off remembrance in her eyes: she was thinking of his mother, her sister, long dead. "How much you look like her!" she said at last. "The same profile—exact. And how beautiful Mary's profile was! Every one admired it."

Ford, who had been gazing at the rug, looked up; he caught Mrs. Winthrop's glance, and the gleam of merriment in it. "Yes, my profile is like my mother's, and therefore good," he answered, gravely. "It is a pity that my full face contradicts it. However, I live in profile as much as possible; I present myself edgewise."

"What *do* you mean, dear?" said Sylvia.

"I am like the new moon," he answered; "I show but a rim. All the rest I keep dark."

Mrs. Winthrop laughed; and again Ford caught her glance. What he had said of himself was true. He had a regular, clearly cut, delicately finished profile, but his full face contradicted it somewhat, showing more strength than beauty. His eyes were gray, without much expression, unless calmness can be called an expression; his hair and beard, both closely cut, were dark brown. As to his height, no one would have called him tall, yet neither would any

one have described him as short. And the same phrasing might have been applied to his general appearance: no one would have called him handsome, yet neither would any one have classed him as ordinary. As to what is more important than looks, namely, manner, although his was quiet, and quite without pretension, a close observer could have discovered in it, and without much effort, that the opinions of John Ford (although never obtruded upon others) were in general sufficiently satisfactory to John Ford; and, furthermore, that the opinions of other people, whether accordant or discordant with his own, troubled him little.

After a while all went down to the outlook to see the after-glow on Mont Blanc. Mrs. Winthrop led the way with Cousin Walpole, whose high, bell-crowned straw hat had a dignity which no modern head-covering could hope to rival.

Sylvia followed, with her nephew. "You must come and stay with us, John," she said. "Katharine has so much company that you will find it entertaining, and even at times instructive. I am sure I have found it so; and I am, you know, your senior. We are alone to-day; but it is for the first time. Generally the house is full."

"But I do not like a full house," said Ford, smiling down upon the upturned face of the little "senior" by his side.

"You will like this one. It is not a commonplace society—by no means commonplace. The hours, too, are easy; breakfast, for instance, from nine to eleven—as you please. As to the quality of the—of the bodily support, it is sufficient to say that Marches is house-keeper. You remember Marches?"

"Perfectly. Her tarts no one could forget."

"Katharine is indebted to me for Marches," continued Sylvia. "I relinquished her to Katharine upon the occasion of her marriage, ten years ago; for she was totally inexperienced, you know—only seventeen."

"Then she is now twenty-seven."

"I should not have mentioned that," said Miss Pitcher, instinctively. "It was an inadvertence. Could you oblige me by forgetting it?"

"With the greatest ease. She is, then, sensitive about her age?"

"Not in the least. Why should she be? Certainly no one would ever dream of calling twenty-seven *old*!" (Miss Pitcher paused with dignity.) "You think her beautiful, of course?" she added.

"She is a fine-looking woman."

"Oh, John, that is what they always say of women who weigh two hundred! And Katharine is very slender."

Ford laughed. "I supposed the fact that Mrs. Winthrop was handsome went without the saying."

"It goes," said Sylvia, impressively, "but not without the saying; I assure you, by no means without the saying. It has been said this summer many times."

"And she does not find it fatiguing?"

The little aunt looked at her nephew. "You do not like her," she said, with a fine air of penetration, touching his coat-sleeve lightly with one finger. "I see that you do not like her."

"My dear aunt! I do not know her in the least."

"Well, how does she impress you, then, *not* knowing her?" said Miss Pitcher, folding her arms under her little pink shawl with an impartial air.

He glanced at the figure in front. "How she impresses me?" he said. "She impresses me as a very attractive, but very complete, woman of the world."

A flood of remonstrance rose to Sylvia's lips; but she was obliged to repress it, because Mrs. Winthrop had paused, and was waiting for them.

"Here is one of our fairest little vistas, Mr. Ford," she said as they came up, showing him an oval opening in the shrubbery, through which a gleam of blue lake, a village on the opposite shore, and the arrowy, snow-clad Silver Needle, rising behind high in the upper blue, were visible, like a picture in a leaf frame. The opening was so narrow that only two persons could look through it. Sylvia and Cousin Walpole walked on.

"But you have seen it all before," said Mrs. Winthrop. "To you it is not something from fairy-land, hardly to be believed, as it is to me. Do you know, sometimes, when waking in the early dawn, before the prosaic little details of the day have risen in my mind, I ask myself, with a sort of doubt in the reality of it all, if this is Katharine Winthrop living on the shores of Lake Lemman—herself really, and not her imagination only, her longing dream." It is very well uttered, with a touch of enthusiasm which carried it along, and which was in itself a confidence.

"Yes—ah—quite so. Yet you hardly look like a person who would think that sort of thing under those circumstances," said Ford, watching a bark, with the picturesque lateen-sails of Lake Lemman, cross his green-framed picture from east to west.

Mrs. Winthrop let the hand with which she had made her little gesture drop. She stood looking at him. But he did not add anything to his remark, or turn his glance from the lateen-sails.

"What sort of a person, then, do I look like?" she said.

He turned. She was smiling; he smiled also. "I was alluding merely to the time you named. As it happened, my aunt had mentioned to me by chance your breakfast hours."

"That was not all, I think."

"You are very good to be interested."

"I am not good; only curious. Pray tell me."

"I have so little imagination, Mrs. Winthrop, that I cannot invent the proper charming interpretation as I ought. As to bald truth, of course you cannot expect me to present you with that during a first visit of ceremony."

"The first visit will, I hope, be a long one; you must come and stay with us. As to ceremony, if this is your idea of it—"

"—What must I be when unceremonious! I suppose you are thinking," said Ford, laughing. "On the whole, I had better make no attempts. The owl, in his own character, is esteemed an honest bird; but let him not try to be a nightingale."

"Come as owl, nightingale, or what you please, so long as you come. When you do, I shall ask you again what you meant."

"If you are going to hold it over me, perhaps I had better tell you now."

"Much better."

"I only meant, then, that Mrs. Winthrop did not strike me as at all the sort of person who would allow anything prosaic to interfere with her poetical, heartfelt enthusiasms."

She laughed gayly. "You are delightful. You have such a heavy apparatus for fibbing that it becomes fairly stately. You do not believe I have any enthusiasms at all," she added. Her eyes were dark blue, with long lashes; they were very fine eyes.

"I will believe whatever you please," said John Ford.

"Very well. Believe what I tell you."

"You include only what you tell in words?"

"Plainly, you are not troubled by timidity," said the lady, laughing a second time.

"On the contrary, it is excess of timidity. It makes me desperate and crude."

They had walked on, and now came up with the others. "Does he amuse you?" said Sylvia, in a low tone, as Cousin Walpole in his turn walked onward with the new-comer. "I heard you laughing."

"Yes; but he is not at all what you said. He is so shy and ill at ease that it is almost painful."

"Dear me!" said the aunt, with concern. "The best thing, then, will be for him to come and stay with us. You have so much company that it will be good for him; his shyness will wear off."

"I have invited him, but I doubt his coming," said the lady of the manor.

The outlook was a little terrace built out over the water. Mrs. Winthrop seated herself and took off her garden-hat (Mrs. Winthrop had a very graceful head, and thick, soft, brown hair). "Not so close, Gibbon," she said, as the shaggy dog laid himself down beside her.

"You call your dog Gibbon?" said Ford.

"Yes; he came from Lausanne, where Gibbon lived; and I think he looks just like him. But pray put on your hat, Mr. Ford. A man in the open air, deprived of his hat, is always a wretched object, and always takes cold."

"I may be wretched, but I do not take cold," replied Ford, letting his hat lie.

"John *does* look very strong," said Sylvia, with pride.

"O fortunate youth—if he but knew his good-fortune!" said Cousin Walpole. "From the Latin, sir; I do not quote the original tongue in the presence of ladies, which would seem pedantic. You do look strong indeed, and I congratulate you. I myself have never been an athlete; but I admire, and with impartiality, the muscles of the gladiator."

"Surely, Cousin Walpole, there is nothing in common between John and a gladiator!"

"Your pardon, Cousin Sylvia. I was speaking generally. My conversation, sir," said the bachelor, turning to Ford, "is apt to be general."

"No one likes personalities, I suppose," replied Ford, watching the last hues of the sunset.

"On the contrary, I am devoted to them," said Mrs. Winthrop.

"Oh no, Katharine; you malign yourself," said Sylvia. "You must not believe all she says, John."

"Mr. Ford has just promised to do that very thing," remarked Mrs. Winthrop.

"Dear me!" said Sylvia. Her tone of dismay was so sincere that they all laughed. "You know, dear, you have so much imagination," she said, apologetically, to her cousin.

"Mr. Ford has not," replied the younger lady; "so the exercise will do him no harm."

The sky behind the splendid white mass of Mont Blanc was of a deep warm gold; the line of snowy peaks attending the monarch rose irregularly against this radiance from east to west, framed by the dark nearer masses of the Salève and Voirons. The sun had disappeared, cresting with glory as he sank the soft purple summits of the Jura, and sending up a blaze of color in the narrow valley of the Rhone. Then, as all this waned slowly into grayness, softly, shyly, the lovely after-glow floated up the side of the monarch, tingeing all his fields of pure white ice and snow with rosy light as it moved onward, and resting on the far peak in the sky long after the lake and its shores had faded into night.

"This lake, sir," said Cousin Walpole, "is remarkable for the number of persons distinguished in literature who have at various times resided upon its banks. I may mention, cursorily, Voltaire, Sismondi, Gibbon, Rousseau, Sir Humphry Davy, D'Aubigné, Calvin, Grimm, Benjamin Constant, Schlegel, Châteaubriand, Byron, Shelley, the elder Dumas, and in addition that most eloquent authoress and noble woman Madame de Staël."

"The banks must certainly be acquainted with a large amount of fine language," said Ford.

"And oh, how we have enjoyed Coppet, John! You remember Coppet?" said Miss Pitcher. "We have had, I assure you, days and conversations there which I, for one, can never forget. Do you remember, Katharine, that moment by the fish-pond, when, carried away by the influences of the spot, Mr. Percival exclaimed, and with such deep feeling, '*Etonnante femme!*'"

"Meaning Mrs. Winthrop?" said Ford.

"No, John, no; meaning Madame de Staël," replied the little aunt.

Mr. Ford did not take up his abode at Miolans, in spite of his aunt's wish and Mrs. Winthrop's invitation. He preferred a little inn among the vineyards, half a mile distant. But he came often to the villa, generally rowing himself down the lake in a skiff. The skiff, indeed, spent most of its time moored at the water-steps of Miolans, for its owner accompanied the ladies in various excursions to Vevey, Clarens, Chillon, and southward to Geneva.

"I thought you had so much company," he said one afternoon to Sylvia, when they happened to be alone. "I have been coming and going now for ten days, and have seen no one."

"These ten days were reserved for the Storms," replied Miss Pitcher. "But old Mrs. Storm fell ill at Baden-Baden, and what could they do?"

"Take care of her, I should say."

"Gilbert Storm was poignantly disappointed. He is, I think, on the whole, the best among Katharine's *outside*

admirers."

"Then there are inside ones?"

"Several. You know Mr. Winthrop was thirty-five years older than Katharine. It was hardly to be expected, therefore, that she should love him—I mean in the *true* way."

"Whatever she might have done in the false."

"You are too cynical, my dear boy. There was nothing false about it; Katharine was simply a child. He was very fond of her, I assure you. And died most happily."

"For all concerned."

Sylvia shook her head. But Mrs. Winthrop's step was now heard in the hall; she came in with several letters in her hand. "Any news?" said Miss Pitcher.

"No," replied the younger lady. "Nothing ever happens any more."

"As Ronsard sang,

"Le temps s'en va, le temps s'en va, ma dame!
Las! le temps non; mais nous nous en allons,"

said Ford, bringing forward her especial chair.

"That is true," she answered, soberly, almost sombrely.

That evening the moonlight on the lake was surpassingly lovely; there was not a ripple to break the sheen of the water, and the clear outline of Mont Blanc rose like silver against the dark black-blue of the sky. They all strolled down to the shore; Mrs. Winthrop went out with Ford in his skiff, "for ten minutes." Sylvia watched the little boat float up and down for twenty; then she returned to the house and read for forty more. When Sylvia was down-stairs she read the third canto of "Childe Harold"; in her own room she kept a private supply of the works of Miss Yonge. At ten Katharine entered. "Has John gone?" said the aunt, putting in her mark and closing the Byronic volume.

"Yes; he came to the door, but would not come in."

"I wish he would come and stay. He might as well; he is here every day."

"That is the very point; he also goes every day," replied Katharine.

She was leaning back in her chair, her eyes fixed upon the carpet. Sylvia was going to say something more, when suddenly a new idea came to her. It was a stirring idea; she did not often have such inspirations; she remained silent, investigating it. After a while, "When do you expect the Carrols?" she said.

"Not until October."

Miss Pitcher knew this perfectly, but she thought the question might lead to further information. It did. "Miss Jay has written," pursued Mrs. Winthrop, her eyes still fixed absently on the carpet. "But I answered, asking her to wait until October, when the Carrols would be here. It will be much pleasanter for them both."

"She has put them off!" thought the little aunt. "She does not want any one here just at present." And she was so fluttered by the new possibilities rising round her like a cloud that she said good-night, and went up-stairs to think them over; she did not even read Miss Yonge.

The next day Ford did not come to Miolans until just before the dinner hour. Sylvia was disappointed by this tardiness, but cheered when Katharine came in; for Mrs. Winthrop wore one of her most becoming dresses. "She wishes to look her best," thought the aunt. But at this moment, in the twilight, a carriage came rapidly up the driveway and stopped at the door. "Why, it is Mr. Percival!" said Sylvia, catching a glimpse of the occupant.

"Yes; he has come to spend a few days," said Mrs. Winthrop, going into the hall to greet her new guest.

Down fell the aunt's cloud-castle; but at the same moment a more personal feeling took its place in the modest little middle-aged breast; Miss Pitcher deeply admired Mr. Percival.

"You know who it is, of course?" she whispered to her nephew when she had recovered her composure.

"You said Percival, didn't you?"

"Yes; but this is Lorimer Percival—Lorimer Percival, the poet."

Katharine now came back. Sylvia sat waiting, and turning her bracelets round on her wrists. Sylvia's bracelets turned easily; when she took a book from the top shelf of the bookcase they went to her shoulders.

Before long Mr. Percival entered. Dinner was announced. The conversation at the table was animated. From it Ford gathered that the new guest had spent several weeks at Miolans early in the season, and that he had also made since then one or two shorter visits. His manner was that of an intimate friend. The intimate friend talked well. Cousin Walpole's little candle illuminated the outlying corners. Sylvia supplied an atmosphere of general admiration. Mrs. Winthrop supplied one of beauty. She looked remarkably well—brilliant; her guest—the one who was not a poet—noticed this. He had time to notice it, as well as several other things, for he said but little himself; the conversation was led by Mr. Percival.

It was decided that they would all go to Coppet the next day—"dear Coppet," as Sylvia called it. The expedition seemed to be partly sacred and partly sylvan; a pilgrimage-picnic. When Ford took leave, Mrs. Winthrop and Mr. Percival accompanied him as far as the water-steps. As his skiff glided out on the calm lake, he heard the gentleman's voice suggesting that they should stroll up and down awhile in the moonlight, and the lady's answer, "Yes; for ten minutes." He remembered that Mrs. Winthrop's ten minutes was sometimes an hour.

The next day they went to Coppet; Mrs. Winthrop and Mr. Percival in the carriage, Sylvia and Cousin Walpole in the phaeton, and Ford on horseback.

"Oh! isn't this almost too delightful!" said Miss Pitcher, when they reached the gates of the old Necker château. Cousin Walpole was engaged in tying his horse, and Mr. Percival had politely stepped forward to assist her from the phaeton. It is but fair, however, to suppose that her exclamation referred as much to the intellectual influences of the home of Madame de Staël as to the attentions of the poet. "I could live here, and I could die here," she continued, with ardor. But as Mr. Percival had now gone back to Mrs. Winthrop, she was obliged to finish her sentence to her nephew, which was not quite the same thing. "Couldn't *you*, John?" she said.

"It would be easy enough to die, I should say," replied Ford, dismounting.

"We must all die," remarked Cousin Walpole from the post where he was at work upon the horse. He tied that peaceful animal in such intricate and unexpected convolutions that it took Mrs. Winthrop's coachman, later, fully twenty minutes to comprehend and unravel them.

The Necker homestead is a plain, old-fashioned château, built round three sides of a square, a court-yard within. From the end of the south side a long, irregular wing of lower outbuildings stretches towards the road, ending in a thickened, huddled knot along its margin, as though the country highway had refused to allow aristocratic encroachments, and had pushed them all back with determined hands. Across the three high, pale-yellow façades of the main building the faded shutters were tightly closed. There was not a sign of life, save in a little square house at the end of the knot, where, as far as possible from the historic mansion he guarded, lived the old custodian, who strongly resembled the portraits of Benjamin Franklin.

Benjamin Franklin knew Mrs. Winthrop (and Mrs. Winthrop's purse). He hastened through the knot in his shuffling woollen shoes, and unlocked the court-yard entrance.

"We must *go* all through the dear old house again, for John's sake," said Sylvia.

"Do not sacrifice yourselves; I have seen it," said her nephew.

"But not lately, dear John."

"I am quite willing to serve as a pretext," he answered, leading the way in.

They passed through the dark old hall below, where the white statue of Necker gleams in solitude, and went up the broad stairway, the old custodian preceding them, and throwing open the barred shutters of room after room. The warm sunshine flowed in and streamed across the floors, the dim tapestries, the spindle-legged, gilded furniture, and the Cupid-decked clocks. The old paintings on the walls seemed to waken slowly and survey them as they passed. Lorimer Percival seated himself in a yellow arm-chair, and looked about with the air of a man who was breathing a delicate aroma.

"This is the room where the 'incomparable Juliette' danced her celebrated gavotte," he remarked, "probably to the music of that old harpsichord—or is it a spinet?—in the corner."

"Pray tell us about it," entreated Sylvia, who had seated herself gingerly on the edge of a small ottoman embroidered with pink shepherdesses on a blue meadow, and rose-colored lambs. Mrs. Winthrop meanwhile had appropriated a spindle-legged sofa, and was leaning back against a tapestried Endymion.

Percival smiled, but did not refuse Sylvia's request. He had not the objection which some men have to a monologue. It must be added, however, that for that sort of thing he selected his audience. Upon this occasion the outside element of John Ford, strolling about near the windows, was discordant, but not enough so to affect the admiring appreciation of the little group nearer his chair.

"Madame de Staël," he began, with his eyes on the cornice, "was a woman of many and generous enthusiasms. She had long wished to behold the grace of her lovely friend Madame Récamier, in her celebrated gavotte, well known in the salons of Paris, but as yet unseen by the exile of Coppet. By great good-fortune there happened to be in the village, upon the occasion of a visit from Madame Récamier, a French dancing-master. Madame de Staël sent for him, and the enchanted little man had the signal honor of going through the dance with the beautiful Juliette, in this room, in the presence of all the distinguished society of Coppet: no doubt it was the glory of his life. When the dance was ended, Corinne, carried away by admiration, embraced with transport—"

"The dancing-master?" said Cousin Walpole, much interested.

"No; her *ravissante amie*."

Cousin Walpole, conscious that he had made a mistake, betook himself to the portrait near by. "Superb woman!" he murmured, contemplating it. "Superb!"

The portrait represented the authoress of *Corinne* standing, her talented head crowned by a majestic aureole of yellow satin turban, whose voluminous folds accounted probably for the scanty amount of material left for the shoulders and arms.

"If I could have had the choice," said Miss Pitcher, pensively gazing at this portrait, "I would rather have been that noble creature than any one else on history's page."

Later they went down to the old garden. It stretched back behind the house for some distance, shut in by a high stone wall. A long, straight alley, shaded by even rows of trees, went down one side like a mathematical line; on the other there was some of the stiff landscape-gardening of the last century. In the open space in the centre was a moss-grown fish-pond, and near the house a dignified little company of clipped trees. They strolled down the straight walk: this time Ford was with Mrs. Winthrop, while Sylvia, Mr. Percival, and Cousin Walpole were in front.

"I suppose she used to walk here," observed Mrs. Winthrop.

"In her turban," suggested Ford.

"Perhaps she has sat upon that very bench—who knows?—and mused," said Sylvia, imaginatively.

"Aloud, of course," commented her nephew. But these irreverent remarks were in undertone; only Mrs. Winthrop could hear them.

"No doubt they all walked here," observed the poet; "it was one of the customs of the time to take slow exercise daily in one of these dignified alleys. The whole society of Coppet was no doubt often here, Madame de Staël and her various guests, Schlegel, Constant, the Montmorency, Sismondi, Madame Récamier, and many others."

"Would that I too could have been of that company!" said Cousin Walpole, with warmth.

"Which one of the two ladies would you have accompanied down this walk, if choice had been forced upon you?" said Mrs. Winthrop.

"Which one?—Madame de Staël, of course," replied the little bachelor, chivalrously.

"And you, Mr. Percival?"

"With the one who had the intellect," replied the poet.

"We must be even more lacking in beauty than we suppose, Sylvia, since they all chose the plain one," said Katharine, laughing. "But you have not spoken yet, Mr. Ford: what would your choice have been?"

"Between the two, there would hardly have been one."

"Isn't that a little enigmatical?"

"John means that he admires them equally," explained the aunt.

"That is it," said her nephew.

Lunch was spread upon the grass. Mrs. Winthrop's coachman had made an impromptu carpet of carriage rugs and shawls. Percival threw himself down beside the ladies; Cousin Walpole, after trying various attitudes, took the one denominated "cross-legged." Ford surveyed their group for a moment, then went off and came back with a garden bench; upon this he seated himself comfortably, with his back against a tree.

"You are not sufficiently humble, Mr. Ford," said Katharine.

"It is not a question of humility, but of grace. I have not the gifts of Mr. Percival."

Percival said nothing. He was graceful; why disclaim it?

"But you are very strong, John," said Sylvia, with an intention of consolation. "And if not exactly graceful, I am sure you are very well shaped."

Her hearers, including Ford himself, tried not to laugh, but failed. There was a burst of merriment.

"You think John does not need my encouragement?" said the little lady, looking at the laughers. "You think I forget how old he is? It is quite true, no doubt. But I remember him so well, you know, in his little white frock, with his dear little dimpled shoulders! He always would have bread and sugar, whether it was good for him or not, and he was so pretty and plump!"

These reminiscences provoked another peal.

"You may laugh," said Miss Pitcher, nodding her head sagely, "but he did eat a great deal of sugar. Nothing else would content him but that bowl on the high shelf."

"Do you still retain the same tastes, Mr. Ford?" said Katharine. "Do you still prefer what is out of reach—*on a high shelf?*"

"When one is grown," said Ford, "there is very little that is absolutely out of reach. It is, generally speaking, a question merely of determination, and—a long arm."

The sun sank; his rays came slanting under their tree, gilding the grass in bars. The conversation had taken a turn towards the society of the eighteenth century. Percival said the most. But a poet may well talk in a memorial garden, hushed and sunny, on a cushioned carpet under the trees, with a long-stemmed wineglass near his hand, and fair ladies listening in rapt attention. Ford, leaning back against his tree, was smoking a cigarette; it is to be supposed that he was listening also.

"Here is something I read the other day, at least as nearly as I can recall it," said the speaker. He was gazing at the tops of the trees on the other side of the pond. He had a habit of fixing his eyes upon something high above his hearers' heads when speaking. Men considered this an impertinence; but women had been known to allude to it as "dreamy."

"Fair vanished ladies of the past," quoted the poet in his delightful voice, "so charming even in your errors, do you merit the judgment which the more rigid customs of our modern age would pronounce upon you? Was that enthusiasm for virtue and for lofty sentiments with which your delicious old letters and memoirs, written in faded ink and flowing language, with so much wit and so much bad spelling, are adorned—was it all declamation merely, because, weighed in our severer balances, your lives were not always in accordance with it? Are there not other balances? And were you not, even in your errors, seeking at least an ideal that was fair? Striving to replace by a sensibility most devoted and tender a morality which, in the artificial society that surrounded you, had become well-nigh impossible? Let us not forget how many of you, when the dread hour came, faced with unfaltering courage the horrors of the Revolution, sustained by your example the hearts of strong men which had failed them, and atoned on the red guillotine for the errors and follies of your whole generation with your delicate lives."

He paused. Then, in a lighter tone, added: "Charming vanished dames, in your powder and brocade, I salute you! I, for one, enroll myself among your faithful and tender admirers."

Mr. Percival remained two weeks at Miolans. He was much with Mrs. Winthrop. They seemed to have subjects of their own for conversation, for on several occasions when Ford came over in the morning they were said to be "in the library," and Miss Pitcher was obliged to confess that she did not feel at liberty to disturb them. She remarked, with a sigh, that it must be "very intellectual," and once she asked her nephew if he had not noticed the poet's "brow."

"Oh yes; he is one of those tall, slim, long-faced, talking fellows whom you women are very apt to admire," said Ford.

Miss Pitcher felt as much wrath as her gentle nature allowed. But again her sentiments were divided, and she sacrificed her personal feelings. That evening she confided to Katharine, under a pledge of deepest secrecy, her belief that "John" was "jealous."

Mrs. Winthrop greeted this confidence with laughter. Not discouraged, the aunt the next day confided to her nephew her conviction that, as regarded the poet, Katharine had not yet "at all made up her mind."

"That is rather cruel to Percival, isn't it?" said Ford.

"Oh, he too has many, many *friends*," said Sylvia, veering again.

"Fortunate fellow!"

At last Percival went. Ford was again the only visitor. And if he did not have long mornings in the library, he had portions not a few of afternoons in the garden. For if he came up the water-steps and found the mistress of the house sitting under the trees, with no other companion than a book, it was but natural that he should join her, and possibly make some effort to rival the printed page.

"You do not like driving?" she said, one day. They were in the parlor, and the carriage was coming round; she had invited him to accompany them, and he had declined.

"Not with a coachman, I confess."

"There is always the phaeton," she said, carelessly.

He glanced at her, but she was examining the border of her lace scarf. "On the whole, I prefer riding," he answered, as though it were a question of general preferences.

"And Katharine rides *so* well!" said Sylvia, looking up from her wax flowers. Sylvia made charming wax flowers, generally water-lilies, because they were "so regular."

"There are no good horses about here," observed Ford. "I have tried them all. I presume at home in America you keep a fine one?"

"Oh, in America! That is too far off. I do not remember what I did in America," answered Mrs. Winthrop.

A day or two later. "You were mistaken about there being no good saddle-horses here," she remarked. "My coachman has found two; they are in the stable now."

"If you are going to be kind enough to offer one of them to me," he said, rather formally, after a moment's silence, "I shall then have the pleasure of some rides with you, after all."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Winthrop. "As you say—after all!" She was smiling. He smiled too, but shook his head. Sylvia did not see this little by-play. Whatever it meant, however, it did not prevent Ford's riding with Mrs. Winthrop several times, her groom following. Miss Pitcher watched these little excursions with much interest.

Meanwhile letters from Lorimer Percival came to Miolans almost daily. "That is the Percival crest," said Sylvia to her nephew, one of these epistles, which had just arrived, being on the hall table, seal upward, as they passed. "So appropriate for a poet, I think—a flame."

"Ah! I took it for steam," said Ford.

Now the elder Percival had been a successful builder of locomotives. "John," said Miss Pitcher, solemnly, "do you mean that for derision?"

"Derision, my dear aunt! There is nothing in the world so powerful as steam. If I only had more, I too might be a poet. Or if my father had had more, I too might have enjoyed a fortune."

"Mr. Percival enjoys no fortune," said Sylvia, still solemnly.

"What has he done with it, then? Enjoyed it all out?"

"He tells me that it dissolved, like a mist, in his grasp."

"Yes; they call it by various names," said Ford.

Mrs. Winthrop, dressed in her habit, now came down the stairway; she took the letter and put it in her pocket. That day the groom could not accompany them: the horse he rode was lame. "We are sufficiently brave to do without him for one afternoon, are we not?" said the lady.

"I confess I am timid; but I will do my best," answered Ford, assisting her to mount. Sylvia, standing in the doorway, thought this a most unfortunate reply.

They rode southward. "Shall we stop for a few moments?" said Katharine, as they came towards Coppet.

"Yes; for ten," he answered.

The old custodian let them in, and threw open the windows as before. The visitors went out on the little shelf-like balcony which opened from the drawing-room.

"You notice there is no view, or next to none," said Ford, "although we are on the shore of Lake Lemane, and under the shadow of Mont Blanc. They did not care for views in the eighteenth century—that is, views of the earth; they were all for views of the 'soul.' Madame de Staël detested the country; to the last, Coppet remained to her a dreary exile. She was the woman who frankly said that she would not cross the room to look at the Bay of Naples, but would walk twenty miles to talk with an agreeable man."

"They were as rare then, it seems, as they are now," said Mrs. Winthrop. "But to-day we go more than twenty miles; we go to Europe."

"She did the same—that is, what was the same in her day; she went to Germany. There she found two rather agreeable men—Goethe and Schiller. Having found them, she proceeded to talk to them. They confessed to each other, long afterwards, the deep relief they felt when that gifted woman departed."

"Ah, well, all she wanted, all she was seeking, was sympathy."

"She should have waited until it came to her."

"But if it never came?"

"It would—if she had not been so eager and voracious. The truth is, Corinne was an inordinate egotist. She expected all minds to defer to her superiority, while at the very moment she was engaged in extracting from them any poor little knowledge or ideas they might possess which could serve her own purposes. All her books were talked into existence; she talked them before she wrote them. It was her custom, at the dinner-table here at Coppet, to introduce the subject upon which she was engaged, and all her guests were expected, indeed forced, to discuss it with her in all its bearings, to listen to all she herself had to say, and never to depart from the given line by the slightest digression until she gave the signal. The next morning, closeted in her own room, she wrote out the results of all this, and it became a chapter."

"She was a woman of genius, all the same," said Mrs. Winthrop, in a disagreeing tone.

"A woman of genius! And what is the very term but a stigma? No woman is so proclaimed by the great brazen tongue of the Public unless she has thrown away her birthright of womanly seclusion for the miserable mess of pottage called 'fame.'"

"The seclusion of a convent? or a prison?"

"Neither. Of a home."

"You perhaps commend obedience, also?"

"In one way—yes."

"I'm glad to know there are other ways."

"I shall be very obedient to the woman I love in several of those other ways," replied Ford, gathering some of the ripening grapes near the balcony rail.

Mrs. Winthrop went back into the faded drawing-room. "It is a pity there is no portrait here of Madame Récamier," she remarked. "That you might have admired."

"The 'incomparable Juliette' was at least not literary. But in another way she was as much before the public as though she had been what you call a woman of genius. It may be said, indeed, that she had genius—a genius for

attracting admiration."

"You are hard to please."

"Not at all; I ask only the simple and retiring womanly graces. But anything retiring was hard to find in the eighteenth century."

"You dislike literary women very much," said Mrs. Winthrop. She had crossed the room to examine an old mirror made of squares of glass, welded together by little leaden frames, which had once been gilded.

"Hardly. I pity them."

"You did not know, then, that I was one?"

He had crossed the room also, and was now standing behind her; as she asked the question she looked at his image in the glass.

"I did not know it," he answered, looking at hers.

"I am, anonymously."

"Better anonymously than avowedly."

"Will you read something I have written?"

"Thanks. I am not in the least a critic."

"I know that; you are too prejudiced, too narrow, to be one. All the same, will you read?"

"If you insist."

"I do insist. What is more, I have it with me. I have had it for several days, waiting for a good opportunity." She drew from her pocket a small flat package, and gave it to him.

"Must it be now?"

"Here and now. Where could we find a more appropriate atmosphere?"

He seated himself and opened the parcel; within was a small square book in flexible covers, in decoration paper and type, a daintily rich little volume.

"Ah! I know this," he said. "I read it when it first came out."

"So much the better. You can give me your opinion without the trouble of reading."

"It received a good deal of praise, I remember," he said, turning over the leaves.

She was silent.

"There was a charming little description somewhere—about going out on the Campagna to gather the wild narcissus," he went on, after a pause.

And then there was another silence.

"But—" said Mrs. Winthrop.

"But, as you kindly suggest, I am no judge of poetry. I can say nothing of value."

"Say it, valuable or not. Do you know, Mr. Ford, that you have scarcely spoken one really truthful word to me since we first met. Yet I feel sure that it does not come natural to you, and that it has cost you some trouble to—to—"

"To decorate, as I have, my plain speech. But if that is true, is it not a compliment?"

"And do I care for your compliments? I have compliments in abundance, and much finer ones than yours. What I want from you is the truth, your real opinion of that little volume in your hand. You are the only man I have met in years who seems to feel no desire to flatter me, to make me think well of myself. I see no reason why I should not think well of myself; but, all the same, I am curious. I can see that you judge me impartially, even severely."

She paused. He did not look up or disclaim; he went on turning the pages of the little volume.

She had not seated herself; she was standing beside a table opposite him. "I can see that you do not in the least like me," she added, in a lower tone.

"My dear lady, you have so many to like you!" said Ford.

And then he did look up; their eyes met.

A flush came to her cheeks. He shut the little book and rose.

"Really, I am too insignificant a victim," he said, bowing as he returned it.

"You mean that I—that I have tried—"

"Oh no; you do it naturally."

For the moment her self-possession had failed her. But now she had it in hand again. "If I *have* tried, naturally or artificially, I have made a failure—have I not?"

"It must be a novel experience for Mrs. Winthrop."

She turned away and looked at a portrait of Voltaire. After some moments, "Let us come back to the real point between us," she said, as he did not speak—"that is, your opinion of my little book."

"Is that the real point between us?"

"Of course it is. We will walk up and down Corinne's old rooms, and you shall tell me as we walk."

"Why do you force me to say unpleasant things?"

"They are unpleasant, then? I knew it! Unpleasant for me."

"For us both."

"For you, I doubt it. For me, they cannot be more unpleasant than the things you have already said. Yet you see I forgive them."

"Yes; but I have not forgiven you, Mrs. Winthrop."

"For what, pray?"

"For proposing to make me a victim."

"Apparently you had small difficulty in escaping."

"As you say—apparently. But perhaps I conceal my wounds."

"You are trying to turn the subject, so that I will not insist about the little book."

"I wish, indeed, that you would not insist."

"But if I am the sort of woman you have indicated, I should think you would enjoy punishing me a little."

"A little, perhaps. But the punishment would be too severe."

They were walking slowly through the rooms; she turned her head and looked at him. "I have listened to you, Mr. Ford; I have let you say pretty much what you pleased to me, because it was amusing. But you cannot seriously believe that I really care for what you say, severe or otherwise?"

"Only as any right-minded woman must care."

"Say on. Now I insist."

"Good-bye to Miolans, then. You will never admit me within its gates again; that is, unless you have the unusual justice—unusual in a woman—to see that what I say is but the severity of a true friend."

"A friend is not severe."

"Yes, he is; in such a case as this, must be."

"Go on. I will decide afterwards."

They entered the third room. Ford reflected a moment; then began. "The poem, which you now tell me is yours, had, as its distinguishing feature, a certain daring. Regarding its other points: its rhythm was crude and unmelodious; its coloring was exaggerated—reading it, one was cloyed with color; its logic—for there was an attempt at logic—was utterly weak." He paused. Mrs. Winthrop was looking straight before her at the wall across the end of the last room in the vista. Her critic did not lift his eyes, but transferred his gaze from one section of the dark old floor to the next as they walked onward.

"All this, however," he resumed, "could be forgiven. We do not expect great poems from women any more than we expect great pictures; we do not expect strong logic any more than we expect brawny muscle. A woman's poetry is subjective. But what cannot be forgiven—at least in my opinion—is that which I have called the distinguishing feature of the volume, a certain sort of daring. This is its essential, unpardonable sin. Not because it is in itself dangerous; it has not force enough for that; but because it comes, and can be recognized at once as coming, from the lips of a woman. For a woman should not dare in that way. Thinking to soar, she invariably descends. Her mental realm is not the same as that of man; lower, on the same level, or far above, it is at least different. And to see her leave it, and come in all her white purity, which must inevitably be soiled, to the garish arena where men are contending, where the dust is rising, and the air is tainted and heavy—this is indeed a painful sight. Every honest man feels like going to her, poor mistaken sibyl that she is, closing her lips with gentle hand, and leading her away to some far spot among the quiet fields, where she can learn her error, and begin her life anew. To the pity of it is added the certain truth that if the words she sang could be carried out to their logical end, if they were to be clothed in the hard realities of life and set up before her, they would strike first the poor creature who was chanting them, and crush her to the dust. Fortunately there is no danger of this; it is among the impossibilities. And sometimes the poor sibyls learn, and through the teachings of their own hearts, their great mistake." As he ended, for the first time he lifted his eyes from the floor and looked at her.

Katharine Winthrop's face was flushed; the dark color extended over her forehead and dyed even her throat, and there was an expression as though only by a strong effort was a tremor of the lips controlled. This gave to her mouth a fixed look. She was so unlike herself, veiled in that deep, steady, painful blush, that, involuntarily and earnestly, Ford said, "I beg you not to mind it so much."

"I mind only that you should dare to say such things to me," she answered, slowly, as though utterance was an effort.

"Remember that you forced me to speak."

"I did not expect—this."

"How could I know what you expected? But in one way I am glad you made me go on; it is well that you should have for once a man's true opinion."

"All men do not think as you think."

"Yes, they do; the honest ones."

"Mr. Percival does not."

"Oh, Percival! He's effeminate."

"So you judge him," said Mrs. Winthrop, to whose utterance anger had now restored the distinctness.

"We will not quarrel about Lorimer Percival," said Ford; "he is not worth it—at least, he is not worth it to me." Then, as they entered the last room, "Take it as I meant it, Katharine," he said, the tone of his voice changing—"take it as a true woman should. Show me the sweet side of your nature, the gentle, womanly side, and I will then be your suitor indeed, and a far more real and earnest one than though I had become the victim you intended me to be. You may not care for me; you may never care. But only let me see you accept for your own sake what I have said, in the right spirit, and I will at least ask you to care, as humbly and devotedly as man ever asked woman. For when she is her true self she is so far above us that we can only be humble."

The flush still covered her forehead; her eyes looked at him, strangely and darkly blue in all this red.

"Curious, isn't it, how things come about?" she said. "You have made me a declaration, after all."

"A conditional one."

"No, not conditional in reality, although you might have pleased yourself with the fancy. For I need not have been in earnest. I had only to pretend a little, to pretend to be the acquiescent creature you admire, and I could have turned you round my little finger. It is rather a pity I did not do it. It might have been entertaining."

He had watched her as she spoke. "I do not in the least believe you," he said, gravely.

"It is not of much consequence whether you believe me or not. I think, on the whole, however, that I may as well take this occasion to tell you what you seem not to have suspected: I am engaged to Mr. Percival."

"Of course, then, you were angry when I spoke of him as I did. But I beg you will do me the justice to believe that I never for a moment dreamed that he was anything to Mrs. Winthrop."

"Your dreams must be unobservant."

"I knew that he was with you, of course, and that you received his letters—there is one in your pocket now. But it made no impression upon me—that is, as far as you were concerned."

"And why not? Even in the guise of an apology, Mr. Ford, you succeed in insinuating your rudeness. What you have said, when translated, simply means that you never dreamed that Mrs. Winthrop could be interested in Mr. Percival. And why should she not be interested? But the truth is, there is such an infinite space between you that you cannot in the least comprehend him." She turned towards the door which led to the stairway.

"That is very possible," said Ford. "But I have not now the honor to be a rival of Mr. Percival's, even as an unfavored suitor; you did not comply with my condition."

They went down the stairs, past the shining statue of Necker, and out into the sunshine. Benjamin Franklin brought forward the horses, and Ford assisted her to mount. "You prefer that I should not go with you," he said; "but of course I must. We cannot always have things just as we wish them in this vexatious world, you know."

The flush on her face was still deep; but she had recovered herself sufficiently to smile. "We will select subjects that will act as safe conductors down to commonplace," she said. They did. Only at the gate of Miolans was any allusion made to the preceding conversation.

He had said good-bye; the two riding-gloves had formally touched each other. "It may be for a long time," he remarked. "I start towards Italy this evening; I shall go to Chambéry and Turin."

She passed him; her horse turned into the plane-tree avenue. "Do not suppose that I could not have been, that I could not be—if I chose—all you described," she said, looking back.

"I know you could. It was the possibilities in you which attracted me, and made me say what I did."

"*That* for your possibilities!" she answered, making the gesture of throwing something lightly away.

He lifted his hat; she smiled, bowed slightly, and rode onward out of sight. He took his horse to the stables, went down to the water-steps, and unmoored his skiff. The next day Sylvia received a note from him; it contained his good-bye, but he himself was already on the way to Italy.

The following summer found Miss Pitcher again at Miolans. But although her little figure was still seen going down to the outlook at sunset, although she still made wax flowers and read (with a mark) "Childe Harold," it was evident that she was not as she had been. She was languid, mournful, and by August these adjectives were no longer sufficient to describe her condition, for she was now seriously ill. Her nephew, who was spending the summer in Scotland, was notified by a letter from Cousin Walpole. In answer he travelled southward to Lake Lemman without an hour's delay; for Sylvia and himself were the only ones of their blood on the old side of the Atlantic, and if the gentle little aunt was to pass from earth in a strange land, he wished to be beside her.

But Sylvia did not pass. Her nephew read her case so skilfully, and with the others tended her so carefully, that in three weeks' time she was lying on a couch by the window, with "Childe Harold" again by her side. But if she was now well enough for a little literature, she was also well enough for a little conversation.

"I suppose you were much surprised, John, to find Katharine still Mrs. Winthrop?"

"No, not much."

"But she told me that she had mentioned to you her engagement."

"Yes, she mentioned it."

"You speak as though she was one of the women who make and break engagements lightly. But she is not, I assure you: far from it."

"She broke this one, it seems."

"One breaking does not make a—breaker," said Sylvia, thinking vaguely of "swallows," and nearly saying "summer." She paused, then shook her head sadly. "I have never understood it," she said, with a deep sigh. "It lasted, I know, until the very end of June. I think I may say, without exaggeration, that I spent the entire month of July, day and night, picturing to myself his sufferings."

"You took more time than he did. He was married before July was ended."

"Simply despair."

"Despair took on a cheerful guise. Some of the rest of us might not object to it in such a shape."

But Miss Pitcher continued her dirge. "So terrible for such a man! A mere child—only seventeen!"

"And he is—"

"Thirty-seven years, eight months, and nine days," answered the lady, in the tone of an obituary. "Twenty years younger than he is! Of course, she cannot in the least appreciate the true depth of his poetry."

"He may not care for that, you know, if she appreciates him," said Ford—Miss Pitcher thought, heartlessly.

During these three weeks of attendance upon his aunt he had, of course, seen Mrs. Winthrop daily. Generally he met her in the sick-room, where she gave to the patient a tender and devoted care. If she was in the drawing-room when he came down, Cousin Walpole was there also; he had not once seen her alone. He was not staying at Miolans, although he spent most of his time there; his abode nominally was a farm-house near by. Sylvia improved daily, and early in September her nephew prepared for departure. He was going to Heidelberg. One beautiful morning he felt in the mood for a long farewell ride. He sent word to Sylvia that he should not be at Miolans before evening, mounted, and rode off at a brisk pace. He was out all day under the blue sky, and enjoyed it. He had some wonderful new views of Mont Blanc, some exhilarating speed over tempting stretches of road, a lunch at a rustic inn among the vineyards, and the uninterrupted companionship of his own thoughts. Towards five o'clock, on his way home, he came by Coppet. Here the idle ease of the long day was broken by the small accident of his horse losing a shoe. He took him to the little blacksmith's shop in the village; then, while the work was in slow Swiss progress, he strolled back up the ascent towards the old château.

A shaggy white dog came to meet him; it was his friend Gibbon, and a moment later he recognized Mrs. Winthrop's groom, holding his own and his mistress's horse. Mrs. Winthrop was in the garden, so Benjamin Franklin said. He opened the high gate set in the stone wall and went down the long walk.

She was at the far end; her back was towards him, and she did not hear his step; she started when he spoke her name. But she recovered herself immediately, smiled, and began talking with much the same easy, graceful manner

she had shown upon his first arrival at Miolans, when they met at the gate the year before. This meant that she had put him back as an acquaintance where he was then.

He did not seem unwilling to go. They strolled onward for ten minutes; then Mrs. Winthrop said that she must start homeward; they turned towards the gate. They had been speaking of Sylvia's illness and recovery. "I often think, when I look at my little aunt," said Ford, "how pretty she must have been in her youth. And, by-the-way, just before leaving Scotland I met a lady who reminded me of her, or rather of my idea of what she must have been. It was Mrs. Lorimer Percival."

"She is charming, I am told," said the lady beside him.

"I don't know about the charming; I dislike the word. But she is very lovely and very lovable."

"Did you see much of her?"

"I saw her several times; but only saw her. We did not speak."

"You judge, then, by appearance merely."

"In this case—yes. Her nature is written on her face."

"All are at liberty to study it, then. Pray describe her."

He was silent. Then, "If I comply," he said, "will you bear in mind that I am quite well aware that that which makes this little lady's happiness is something that Mrs. Winthrop, of her own accord, has cast aside as nothing worth?" As he rounded off this phrase he turned and looked at her.

But she did not meet his eyes. "I will remember," she answered.

He waited. But she said nothing more.

"Mrs. Percival," he resumed, "is a beautiful young girl, with a face like a wild flower in the woods. She has an expression which is to me enchanting—an expression of sweet and simple goodness, and gentle, confiding trust. One is thankful to have even seen such a face."

"You speak warmly. I am afraid you are jealous of poor Mr. Percival."

"He did not strike me as poor. If I was jealous, it was not the first time. He was always fortunate."

"Perhaps there are other wild flowers in the woods; you must search more diligently." She opened the gate, passed through, and signalled to her groom.

"That is what I am trying to do; but I do not succeed. It is terribly lonely work sometimes."

"What a confession of weakness!"

He placed her in the saddle. "It may be. At any rate, it is the truth. But women do not believe in truth for its own sake; it strikes them as crude."

"You mean cruel," said Katharine Winthrop. She rode off, the groom and Gibbon following. He went back to the blacksmith's shop. The next day he went to Heidelberg.

But he had not seen the last of Corinne's old château. On the 25th of October he was again riding up the plane-tree avenue of Miolans, this time under bare boughs.

"Oh, John! dear John!" said Miss Pitcher, hurrying into the drawing-room when she was told he was there. "How glad I am to see you! But how did you know—I mean, how did you get here at this time of year?"

"By railway and on horseback," he answered. "I like autumn in the country. And I am very glad to see you looking so well, Aunt Sylvia."

But if Sylvia was well in body, she was ill at ease in mind. She began sentences and did not finish them; she often held her little handkerchief to her lips as if repressing herself. Cousin Walpole had gone to Geneva, "on business for Katharine." No, Katharine was not with him; she was out riding somewhere. She was not well, and needed the exercise. Katharine, too, was fond of autumn in the country. But Sylvia found it rainy. After a while Ford took leave, promising to return in the evening. When he reached the country road he paused, looking up and down it for a moment; then he turned his horse southward. It was a dreary day for a ride; a long autumn rain had soaked the ground, clouds covered the sky, and a raw wind was blowing. He rode at a rapid pace, and when he came towards Coppet he again examined the wet track, then turned towards the château. He was not mistaken; Mrs. Winthrop's horse was there. There was no groom this time; the horse was tied in the court-yard. Benjamin Franklin said that the lady was in the garden, and he said it muffled in a worsted cap and a long wadded coat that came to his heels. No doubt he permitted himself some wonder over the lady's taste.

The lady was at the end of the long walk as before. But to-day the long walk was a picture of desolation; all the bright leaves, faded and brown, were lying on the ground in heaps so sodden that the wind could not lift them, strongly as it blew. Across one end of this vista stretched the blank stone wall, its grayness streaked with wet spots; across the other rose the old château among the bare trees, cold, naked, and yellow, seeming to have already begun its long winter shiver. But men do not mind such things as women mind them. A dull sky and stretch of blank stone wall do not seem to them the end of the world—as they seemed at that moment to Katharine Winthrop. This time she heard his step; perhaps he intended that she should hear it. She turned.

Her face was pale; her eyes, with the dark shadows under them, looked larger than usual. She returned his greeting quietly; her trouble, whatever it was, did not apparently connect itself with him.

"You should not be walking here, Mrs. Winthrop," he said as he came up; "it is too wet."

"It is wet; but I am going now. You have been at Miolans?"

"Yes. I saw my aunt. She told me you were out riding somewhere. I thought perhaps you might be here."

"Is that all she told you?"

"I think so. No; she did say that you were fond of autumn in the country. So am I. Wouldn't it be wise to stop at the old man's cottage, before remounting, and dry your shoes a little?"

"I never take cold."

"Perhaps we could find a pair in the village that you could wear."

"It is not necessary. I will ride rapidly; the exercise will be the best safeguard."

"Do you know why I have come back?" he said, abandoning the subject of the shoes.

"I do not," answered the lady. She looked very sad and weary.

"I have come back, Katharine, to tell you plainly and humbly that I love you. This time I make no conditions; I have none to make. Do with me as you please; I must bear it. But believe that I love you with all my heart. It has been against my will; I have not been willing to admit it to myself; but of late the certainty has forced itself upon me so overwhelmingly that I had no resource left save to come to you. I am full of faults; but—I love you. I have said many things that displeased you deeply; but—I love you. Do not deliberate. Send me away—if go I must—now. Keep me—if you will keep me—now. You can punish me afterwards."

They had been walking onward, but now he stopped. She stopped also; but she said nothing; her eyes were downcast.

"It is a real love I offer you," he said, in a low tone. Then, as still she did not speak, "I will make you very happy, Katharine," he added.

Her face had remained pale, but at this assertion of his a slight color rose, and a smile showed itself faintly. "You are always so sure!" she murmured. And then she laughed, a little low, sweet, sudden laugh.

"Let him laugh who wins," said Ford, triumphantly. The old streaked stone wall, if dreary, was at least high; no one saw him but one very wet and bedraggled little bird, who was in the tree above. This bird was so much cheered (it must have been that) that he immediately chirruped one note quite briskly, and coming out on a drier twig, began to arrange his soaked feathers.

"Now," said Ford, "we will have those shoes dried, whether you like it or not. No more imprudence allowed. How angry you were when I said we might find a pair in the village that you could wear! Of course I meant children's size." He had drawn her hand through his arm, and was going towards the gate.

But she freed herself and stopped. "It is all a mistake," she said, hurriedly. "It means nothing. I am not myself today. Do not think of it."

"Certainly I shall not trouble myself to think of it much when—what is so much better—I have it."

"No; it is nothing. Forget it. I shall not see you again. I am going back to America immediately—next week."

He looked at her as she uttered these short sentences. Then he took her hands in his. "I know about the loss of your fortune, Katharine; you need not tell me. No, Sylvia did not betray you. I heard it quite by chance from another source while I was still in Heidelberg. That is the reason I came."

"The reason you came!" she repeated, moving from him, with the old proud light coming back into her eyes. "You thought I would be overwhelmed—you thought that I would be so broken that I would be glad—you pitied me—you came to help me? And you were *sure*—" She stopped; her voice was shaking.

"Yes, Katharine, I did pity you. Yes, I came to help you if you would let me. But I was not sure. I was sure of nothing but my own obstinate love, which burst out uncontrollably when I thought of you in trouble. I have never thought of you in that way before; you have always had everything. The thought has brought me straight to your side."

But she was not softened. "I withdraw all I have said," she answered. "You have taken advantage."

"As it happens, you have said nothing. As to taking advantage, of course I took advantage: I was glad enough to see your pale face and sad eyes. But that is because you have always carried things with such a high hand. First and last, I have had a great deal of bad treatment."

"That is not true."

"Very well; then it is not. It shall be as you please. Do you want me to go down on my knees to you on this wet gravel?"

But she still turned from him.

"Katharine," he said, in a graver tone, "I am sorry on your account that your fortune is gone, or nearly gone; but on my own, how can I help being glad? It was a barrier between us, which, as I am, and as you are—but principally as you are—would have been, I fear, a hopeless one. I doubt if I should ever have surmounted it. Your loss brings you nearer to me—the woman I deeply love, love in spite of myself. Now if you are my wife—and a tenderly loved wife you will be—you will in a measure be dependent upon your husband, and that is very sweet to a self-willed man like myself. Perhaps in time I can even make it sweet to you."

A red spot burned in each of her cheeks. "It is very hard," she said, almost in a whisper.

"Well, on the whole, life *is* hard," answered John Ford. But the expression in his eyes was more tender than his words. At any rate, it seemed to satisfy her.

"Do you know what I am going to do?" he said, some minutes later. "I am going to make Benjamin Franklin light a fire on one of those old literary hearths at the chateau. Your shoes shall be dried in the presence of Corinne herself (who must, however, have worn a much larger pair). And while they are drying I will offer a formal apology for any past want of respect, not only to Corinne, but to all the other portraits, especially to that blue-eyed Madame Necker in her very tight white satin gown. We will drink their healths in some of the native wine. If you insist, I will even make an effort to admire the yellow turban."

He carried out his plan. Benjamin Franklin, tempted by the fee offered, and relying no doubt upon the gloomy weather as a barrier against discovery, made a bright fire upon one of the astonished hearths, and brought over a flask of native wine, a little loaf, and some fine grapes. Ford arranged these on a spindle-legged table, and brought forward an old tapestried arm-chair for Katharine. Then while she sat sipping her wine and drying her shoes before the crackling flame, he went gravely round the room, glass in hand, pausing before each portrait to bow ceremoniously and drink to its health and long life—probably in a pictorial sense. When he had finished the circuit, "Here's to you all, charming vanished ladies of the past," he said; "may you each have every honor in the picturesque, powdered, unorthographic age to which you belong, and never by any possibility step over into ours!"

"That last touch has spoiled the whole," said the lady in the tapestried chair.

But Ford declared that an expression in Madame Necker's blue eye approved his words.

He now came back to the hearth. "This will never do," he said. "The shoes are not drying; you must take them off." And with that he knelt down and began to unbutton them. But Katharine, agreeing to obey orders, finished the task herself. The old custodian, who had been standing in the doorway laughing at Ford's portrait pantomime, now saw an opportunity to make himself useful; he came forward, took one of the shoes, put it upon his hand, and, kneeling down, held it close to the flame. The shoes were little boots of dark cloth like the habit, slender, dainty, and

made with thin soles; they were for riding, not walking. Ford brought forward a second arm-chair and sat down. "The old room looks really cheerful," he said. "The portraits are beginning to thaw, presently we shall see them smile."

Katharine too was smiling. She was also blushing a little. The blush and slight embarrassment made her look like a school-girl.

"Where shall we go for the winter?" said Ford. "I can give you one more winter over here, and then I must go home and get to work again. And as we have so little foreign time left, I suggest that we lose none of it, and begin our married life at once. Don't be alarmed; he does not understand a word of English. Shall we say, then, next week?"

"No."

"Are you waiting to know me better? Take me, and make me better."

"What are your principal faults—I mean besides those I already know?" she said, shielding her face from the heat of the fire with her riding gauntlets.

"I have very few. I like my own way; but it is always a good way. My opinions are rather decided ones; but would you like an undecided man? I do not enjoy general society, but I am extremely fond of the particular. I think that is all."

"And your obstinacy?"

"Only firmness."

"You are narrow, prejudiced; you do not believe in progress of any kind. You would keep women down with an iron hand."

"A velvet one."

The custodian now took the other shoe.

"He will certainly stretch them with that broad palm of his," said Ford. "But perhaps it is as well; you have a habit of wearing shoes that are too small. What ridiculous little affairs those are! Will twelve pairs a year content you?"

A flush rose in her cheeks; she made no reply.

"It will be very hard for you to give up your independence, your control of things," he said.

But she turned towards him with a very sweet expression in her eyes. "You will do it all for me," she answered.

He rose, walked about the room, coming back to lean over the gilded top of her chair and say, with emphasis, "What in the world does that old wretch mean by staying here so persistently all this time?"

She laughed. Benjamin Franklin, looking up from his task, laughed too—probably on general principles of sociability and appreciation of his fee.

"To go back to your faults," she said; "please come and sit down, and acknowledge them. You have a very jealous nature."

"You are mistaken. However, if you like jealousy, I can easily take it up."

"It will not be necessary. It is already there."

"You are thinking of some particular instance; of whom did you suppose I was jealous?"

But she would not say.

After a while he came back to it. "You thought I was jealous of Lorimer Percival," he said.

The custodian now announced that both shoes were dry; she put them on, buttoning them with an improvised button-hook made of a hair-pin. The old man stood straightening himself after his bent posture; he still smiled—probably on the same general principles. The afternoon was drawing towards its close; Ford asked him to bring round the horses. He went out; they could hear his slow, careful tread on each of the slippery stairs. Katharine had risen; she went to the mirror to adjust her riding-hat. Ford came up and stood behind her. "Do you remember when I looked at you in the glass, in this same way, a year ago?" he said.

"How you talked to me that day about my poor little book! You made me feel terribly."

"I am sorry. Forgive it."

"But you do not forgive the book?"

"I will forget it, instead. You will write no more."

"Always so sure! However, I will promise, if you acknowledge that you have a jealous disposition."

She spoke gayly. He watched her in the glass a moment, then drew her away. "Whether I have a jealous disposition or not I do not know," he answered. "But I was never jealous of Lorimer Percival; I held him in too light estimation. And I did not believe—no, not at any time—that you loved him; he was not a man whom you would love. Why you allowed yourself to become engaged to him I do not know; but I suspect it was because he flattered what you thought your literary talent. I do not believe you would ever have married him; you would have drawn back at the last moment. To be engaged to him was one thing, to marry him another. You kept your engagement along for months, when there was no reason at all for the delay. If you had married him I should have thought the less of you, but I should not have been jealous." He paused. "I might never have let you know it, Katharine," he went on; "but I prefer that there should be nothing but the truth between us. I know that it was Percival who broke the engagement at the last, and not you. I knew it when I was here in the summer. He himself told me when I met him in Scotland just after his marriage."

She broke from him. "How base are all men!" she said, in a voice unlike her own.

"In him it was simply egotism. He knew that I had known of his engagement to you, and he wished me to appreciate that in order to marry that sweet young girl, who was quite without fortune, he had been obliged to make, and had made, a great sacrifice."

"Great indeed!" she commented, bitterly. "You do well to commend him."

"I do not commend him. I simply say that he was following out his nature. Being a poet, he is what is called sympathetic, you know; and he wanted my appreciation and sympathy—I will not say applause."

She was standing with her back towards him. She now walked towards the door. But her courage failed, she sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands. "It is too much," she said. "You wait until I have lost my

fortune and am overwhelmed; you wait until I am rejected, cast aside; and then you come and win from me an avowal of my love, telling me afterwards—"afterwards"—Her voice broke, she burst into tears.

"Telling you afterwards nothing but that I love you. Telling you afterwards that I have not had one really happy moment since our conversation in this old house a year ago. Telling you afterwards that my life has resolved itself into but one unceasing, tormenting wish—the wish, Katharine, that you would love me, I suppose I ought to say a little, but I mean a great deal. Look at me; is this humble enough for you?"

He drew her hands away; she saw that he was kneeling at her feet; and, not only that, but she saw also something very like a mist in the gray eyes she had always thought too cold.

In the library of Mr. John Ford, near New York, there hangs in the place of honor a water-color sketch of an old yellow château. Beneath it, ranged by themselves, are all the works of that eloquent authoress and noble woman, Madame de Staël.

"You admire her?" said a visitor recently, in some surprise. "To me she always seemed a—a little antique, you know."

"She is antiquity itself! But she once lent me her house, and I am grateful. By-the-way, Katharine, I never told you, although I found it out afterwards: Benjamin Franklin understood English, after all."

THE END

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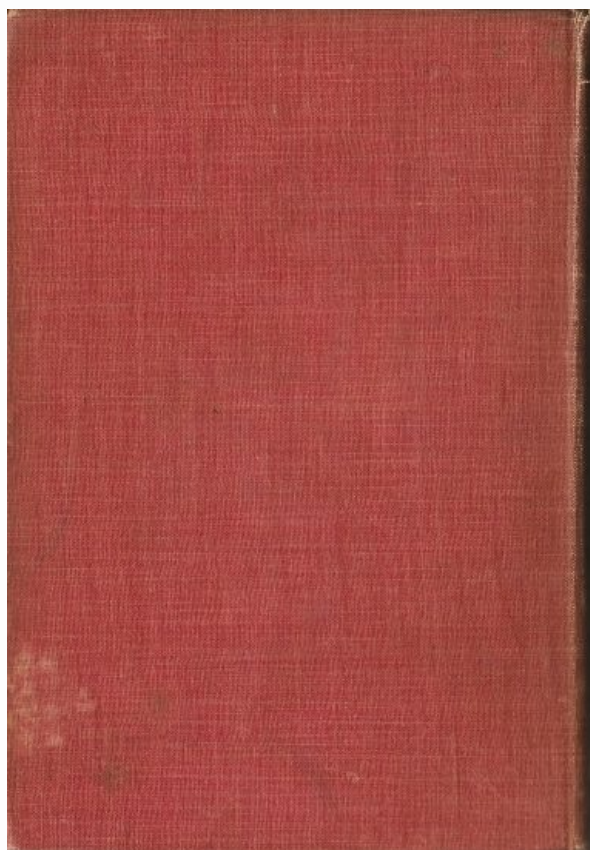
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