

general use of machinery, is by no means so much higher in America as the mere rate of wages suggests.

It is almost impossible to bring American silk production exactly to that double test in which progress is shown by a decrease in the cost of the goods made and an increase in the wages of those who make them. Fashion changes styles and processes change qualities so rapidly that comparison of prices is very difficult. A silk authority points out, however, that

"one operative will spin more silk and do it much better than two thousand could a half-century ago; the room occupied would be only one-four-hundredth part as much, and the cost of the machinery about one-twentieth." This is progress; and the American woman who likes to feel content with her shopping is safe in believing that the American goods of to-day are as good as or better, and cost her much less, than the imported fabrics our grandmothers boasted.

NOTE.—Among the best and latest authorities on silk growing and manufacturing, to which this article is indebted, are—W. C. Wyckoff's special report on silk manufacturing, in the Tenth Census, reprinted under the title of *Silk Manufacture in the United States*, in which his historical study of the industry in America is accompanied by full references to original authorities; the same writer's manual of *The Silk Goods of America*; the reports of the judges of Group IX.; and the special report of John L. Hayes on "Silk and Silk Fabrics," in Vol. V. of the United States Centennial Reports; Dr. L. P. Brockett's Centennial history of *The Silk Industry in America*; Franklin Allen's *American Silk Industry Chronologically Arranged*, 1876; and the annual reports of the Silk Association of America. An *Instruction-Book in the Art of Silk-Culture* is published by the Women's Silk-culture Association, Philadelphia. The report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1878, contains a valuable treatise on the silk-worm and the silk industry by the entomologist of the department, Professor C. V. Riley, which has since been issued as a separate pamphlet.

## INDIAN SUMMER.

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### I.

MIDWAY of the Ponte Vecchio at Florence, where three arches break the line of the little jewellers' booths glittering on either hand, and open an approach to the parapet, Colville lounged against the corner of a shop and stared out upon the river. It was the late afternoon of a day in January, which had begun bright and warm, but had suffered a change of mood as its hours passed, and now from a sky dimmed with flying gray clouds was threatening rain. There must already have been rain in the mountains, for the yellow torrent that seethed and swirled around the piers of the bridge was swelling momentarily on the wall of the Lung' Arno, and rolling a threatening flood toward the Cascine, where it lost itself under the ranks of the poplars that seemed to file across its course, and let their delicate tops melt into the pallor of the low horizon.

The city, with the sweep of the Lung' Arno on either hand, and its domes and towers hung in the dull air, and the country with its white villas and black cypresses breaking the gray stretches of the olive orchards on its hill-sides, had alike been growing more and more insufferable; and Colville was finding a sort of vindictive

satisfaction in the power to ignore the surrounding frippery of landscape and architecture. He isolated himself so perfectly from it, as he brooded upon the river, that, for any sensible difference, he might have been standing on the Main Street Bridge at Des Vaches, Indiana, looking down at the tawny sweep of the Wabash. He had no love for that stream, nor for the ambitious town on its banks, but ever since he woke that morning he had felt a growing conviction that he had been a great ass to leave them. He had, in fact, taken the prodigious risk of breaking his life sharp off from the course in which it had been set for many years, and of attempting to renew it in a direction from which it had long been diverted. Such an act could be precipitated only by a strong impulse of conscience, or a profound disgust, and with Colville it sprang from disgust. He had experienced a bitter disappointment in the city to whose prosperity he had given the energies of his best years, and in whose favor he imagined that he had triumphantly established himself.

He had certainly made the Des Vaches *Democrat-Republican* a very good paper; its ability was recognized throughout the State, and in Des Vaches people of all par-

ties were proud of it. They liked every morning to see what Colville said; they believed that in his way he was the smartest man in the State, and they were fond of claiming that there was no such writer on any of the Indianapolis papers. They forgave some political heresies to the talent they admired; they permitted him the whim of free trade, they laughed tolerantly when he came out in favor of civil service reform, and no one had much fault to find when the *Democrat-Republican* bolted the nomination of a certain politician of its party for Congress. But when Colville permitted his own name to be used by the opposing party, the people arose in their might and defeated him by a tremendous majority. That was what the regular nominee said. It was a withering rebuke to treason, in the opinion of this gentleman; it was a good joke, anyway, with the Democratic managers who had taken Colville up, being all in the Republican family; whichever it was, it was a mortification for Colville which his pride could not brook. He stood disgraced before the community not only as a theorist and unpractical doctrinaire, but as a dangerous man; and what was worse, he could not wholly acquit himself of a measure of bad faith; his conscience troubled him even more than his pride. Money was found, and a printer bought up with it to start a paper in opposition to the *Democrat-Republican*. Then Colville contemptuously offered to sell out to the Republican committee in charge of the new enterprise, and they accepted his terms.

In private life he found much of the old kindness returning to him; and his successful opponent took the first opportunity of heaping coals of fire on his head in the public street, when he appeared to the outer eye to be shaking hands with Colville. During the months that he remained to close up his affairs after the sale of his paper, the *Post-Democrat-Republican* (the newspaper had agglutinated the titles of two of its predecessors, after the fashion of American journals) was fulsome in its complimentary allusions to him. It politely invented the fiction that he was going to Europe for his health, impaired by his journalistic labors, and adventurously promised its readers that they might hope to hear from him from time to time in its columns. In some of its allusions to him Colville detected the point of a fine irony,

of which he had himself introduced the practice in the *Democrat-Republican*; and he experienced, with a sense of personal impoverishment, the curious fact that a journalist of strong characteristics leaves the tradition of himself in such degree with the journal he has created that he seems to bring very little away. He was obliged to confess in his own heart that the paper was as good as ever. The assistants, who had trained themselves to write like him, seemed to be writing quite as well, and his honesty would not permit him to receive the consolation offered him by the friends who told him that there was a great falling off in the *Post-Democrat-Republican*. Except that it was rather more Stalwart in its Republicanism, and had turned quite round on the question of the tariff, it was very much what it had always been. It kept the old decency of tone which he had given it, and it maintained the literary character which he was proud of. The new management must have divined that its popularity, with the women at least, was largely due to its careful selections of verse and fiction, its literary news, and its full and piquant criticisms, with their long extracts from new books. It was some time since he had personally looked after this department, and the young fellow in charge of it under him had remained with the paper. Its continued excellence, which he could not have denied if he had wished, seemed to leave him drained and feeble, and it was partly from the sense of this that he declined the overtures, well backed up with money, to establish an independent paper in Des Vaches. He felt that there was not fight enough in him for the work, even if he had not taken that strong disgust for public life which included the place and its people. He wanted to get away, to get far away, and with the abrupt and total change in his humor he reverted to a period in his life when journalism and politics and the ambition of Congress were things undreamed of.

At that period he was a very young architect, with an inclination toward the literary side of his profession, which made it seem profitable to linger, with his Ruskin in his hand, among the masterpieces of Italian Gothic, when perhaps he might have been better employed in designing red-roofed, many-verandaed, consciously-mullioned sea-side cottages on the New

England coast. He wrote a magazine paper on the zoology of the Lombardic pillars in Verona, very Ruskinian, very scornful of modern motive. He visited every part of the peninsula, but he gave the greater part of his time to North Italy, and in Venice he met the young girl whom he followed to Florence. His love did not prosper; when she went away she left him in possession of that treasure to a man of his temperament, a broken heart. From that time his vague dreams began to lift, and to let him live in the clear light of common day; but he was still lingering at Florence, ignorant of the good which had befallen him, and cowering within himself under the sting of wounded vanity, when he received a letter from his elder brother suggesting that he should come and see how he liked the architecture of Des Vaches. His brother had been seven years at Des Vaches, where he had lands, and a lead mine, and a scheme for a railroad, and had lately added a daily newspaper to his other enterprises. He had, in fact, added two newspapers; for having unexpectedly and almost involuntarily become the owner of the *Des Vaches Republican*, the fancy of building up a great local journal seized him, and he bought the *Wabash Valley Democrat*, uniting them under the name of the *Democrat-Republican*. But he had trouble almost from the first with his editors, and he naturally thought of the brother with a turn for writing who had been running to waste for the last year or two in Europe. His real purpose was to work Colville into the management of his paper when he invited him to come out and look at the architecture of Des Vaches.

Colville went, because he was at that moment in the humor to go anywhere, and because his money was running low, and he must begin work somehow. He was still romantic enough to like the notion of the place a little because it bore the name given to it by the old French *voyageurs* from a herd of buffalo cows which they had seen grazing on the site of their camp there; but when he came to the place itself he did not like it. He hated it; but he staid, and as an architect was the last thing any one wanted in Des Vaches, since the jail and court-house had been built, he became, half without his willing it, a newspaper man. He learned in time to relish the humorous in-

timacy of the life about him, and when it was decided that he was no fool—there were doubts, growing out of his Eastern accent and the work of his New York tailor, at first—he found himself the object of a pleasing popularity. In due time he bought his brother out; he became very fond of newspaper life, its constant excitements and its endless variety; and six weeks before he sold his paper he would have scoffed at a prophecy of his return to Europe for the resumption of any artistic purpose whatever. But here he was, lounging on the Ponte Vecchio at Florence, whither he had come with the intention of rubbing up his former studies, and of perhaps getting back to put them in practice at New York ultimately. He had said to himself before coming abroad that he was in no hurry; that he should take it very easily—he had money enough for that; yet he would keep architecture before him as an object, for he had lived long in a community where every one was intensely occupied, and he unconsciously paid to Des Vaches the tribute of feeling that an objectless life was disgraceful to a man.

In the mean time he suffered keenly and at every moment the loss of the occupation of which he had bereaved himself: in thinking of quite other things, in talk of totally different matters, from the dreams of night, he woke with a start to the realization of the fact that he had no longer a newspaper. He perceived now, as never before, that for fifteen years almost every breath of his life had been drawn with reference to his paper, and that without it he was in some sort lost and as it were extinct. A tide of ridiculous homesickness, which was an expression of this passionate regret for the life he had put behind him, rather than any longing for Des Vaches, swept over him, and the first passages of a letter to the *Post-Democrat-Republican* began to shape themselves in his mind. He had always, when he left home for New York or Washington, or for his few weeks of summer vacation on the Canadian rivers or the New England coast, written back to his readers, in whom he knew he could count upon quick sympathy in all he saw and felt, and he now found himself addressing them with that frank familiarity which comes to the journalist, in minor communities, from the habit of print. He began by confessing to them the defeat of certain expectations

with which he had returned to Florence, and told them that they must not look for anything like the ordinary letters of travel from him. But he was not so singular in his attitude toward the place as he supposed; for any tourist who comes to Florence with the old-fashioned expectation of impressions will probably suffer a disappointment, unless he arrives very young and for the first time. It is a city superficially so well known that it affects one somewhat like a collection of views of itself: they are from the most striking points, of course, but one has examined them before, and is disposed to be critical of them. Certain emotions, certain sensations, failed to repeat themselves to Colville at sight of the familiar monuments, which seemed to wear a hardy and indifferent air, as if being stared at so many years by so many thousands of travellers had extinguished in them that sensibility which one likes to fancy in objects of interest everywhere.

The life which was as vivid all about him as if caught by the latest instantaneous process made the same comparatively ineffective appeal. The operatic spectacle was still there. The people, with their cloaks statuesquely draped over their left shoulders, moved down the street, or posed in vehement dialogue on the sidewalks; the drama of bargaining, with the customer's scorn, the shop-man's pathos, came through the open shop door; the handsome, heavy-eyed ladies, the bare-headed girls, thronged the ways; the caffès were full of the well-remembered figures over their newspapers and little cups; the officers were as splendid as of old, with their long cigars in their mouths, their swords kicking against their beautiful legs, and their spurs jingling; the dandies, with their little dogs and their flower-like smiles, were still in front of the confectioners' for the inspection of the ladies who passed; the old beggar still crouched over her *scaldino* at the church door, and the young man with one leg, whom he thought to escape by walking fast, had timed him to a second from the other side of the street. There was the wonted warmth in the sunny squares, and the old familiar damp and stench in the deep, narrow streets. But some charm had gone out of these things. The artisans coming to the doors of their shallow booths for the light on some bit of carpentering, or cobbling, or tinkering; the crowds swarm-

ing through the middle of the streets on perfect terms with the wine carts and cab horses; the ineffective grandiosity of the palaces huddled upon the crooked thoroughfares; the slight but insinuating cold of the southern winter, gathering in the shade and dispersing in the sun, and denied everywhere by the profusion of fruit and flowers, and by the greenery of gardens showing through the grated portals and over the tops of high walls; the groups of idle poor permanently or temporarily propped against the bases of edifices with a southern exposure; the priests and monks and nuns in their gliding passage; the impassioned snapping of the cabmen's whips; the clangor of bells that at some hours inundated the city, and then suddenly subsided and left it to the banging of coppersmiths; the open-air frying of cakes, with its primitive smell of burning fat; the tramp of soldiery, and the fanfare of bugles blown to gay measures—these and a hundred other characteristic traits and facts still found a response in the consciousness where they were once a rapture of novelty; but the response was faint and thin; he could not warm over the old mood in which he once treasured them all away as of equal preciousness.

Of course there was a pleasure in recognizing some details of former experience in Florence as they recurred. Colville had been met at once by a *fiesta*, when nothing could be done, and he was more than consoled by the caressing sympathy with which he was assured that his broken trunk could not be mended till the day after to-morrow; he had quite forgotten about the *fiestas* and the sympathy. That night the piazza on which he lodged seemed full of snow to the casual glance he gave it; then he saw that it was the white Italian moonlight, which he had also forgotten....

## II.

Colville had reached this point in that sarcastic study of his own condition of mind for the advantage of his late readers in the *Post-Democrat-Republican*, when he was aware of a polite rustling of draperies, with an ensuing well-bred murmur, which at once ignored him, deprecated intrusion upon him, and asserted a common right to the prospect on which he had been dwelling alone. He looked round with an instinctive expectation of style and poise, in which he was not disappointed. The lady, with a graceful lift



of the head and a very erect carriage, almost Bernhardtesque in the backward fling of her shoulders and the strict compression of her elbows to her side, was pointing out the different bridges to the little girl who was with her.

"That first one is the Santa Trinità, and the next is the Carraja, and that one quite down by the Cascine is the iron bridge. The Cascine, you remember—the park where we were driving—that clump of woods there—"

A vagueness expressive of divided interest had crept into the lady's tone rather than her words. Colville could feel that she was waiting for the right moment to turn her delicate head, sculpturesquely defined by its toque, and steal an imperceptible glance at him; and he involuntarily afforded her the coveted excuse by the slight noise he made in changing his position in order to be able to go away as soon as he had seen whether she was pretty or not. At forty-one the question is still important to every man with regard to every woman.

"Mr. Colville!"

The gentle surprise conveyed in the exclamation, without time for recognition, convinced Colville, upon a cool review of the facts, that the lady had known him before their eyes met.

"Why, Mrs. Bowen?" he said.

She put out her round, slender arm, and gave him a frank clasp of her gloved hand. The glove wrinkled richly up the sleeve of her dress half-way to her elbow. She bent on his face a demand for just what quality and degree of change he found in hers, and apparently she satisfied herself that his inspection was not to her disadvantage, for she smiled brightly, and devoted the rest of her glance to an electric summary of the facts of Colville's physiognomy: the sufficiently good outline of his visage, with its full, rather close-cut drabbish-brown beard and mustache, both shaped a little by the ironical self-conscious smile that lurked under them; the non-committal, rather weary-looking eyes; the brown hair, slightly frosted, that showed while he stood with his hat still off. He was a little above the middle height, and if it must be confessed, neither his face nor his figure had quite preserved their youthful lines. They were both much heavier than when Mrs. Bowen saw them last, and the latter here and there swayed beyond the strict bounds of symmetry. She was

herself in that moment of life when, to the middle-aged observer, at least, a woman's looks have a charm which is wanting to her earlier bloom. By that time her character has wrought itself more clearly out in her face, and her heart and mind confront you more directly there. It is the youth of her spirit which has come to the surface.

"I should have known you anywhere," she exclaimed, with friendly pleasure in seeing him.

"You are very kind," said Colville. "I didn't know that I had preserved my youthful beauty to that degree. But I can imagine it—if you say so, Mrs. Bowen."

"Oh, I assure you that you have!" she protested; and now she began gently to pursue him with one fine question after another about himself, till she had mastered the main facts of his history since they had last met. He would not have known so well how to possess himself of hers, even if he had felt the same necessity; but in fact it had happened that he had heard of her from time to time at not very long intervals. She had married a leading lawyer of her Western city, who in due time had gone to Congress, and after his term was out, had "taken up his residence" in Washington, as the newspapers said, "in his elegant mansion at the corner of & Street and Idaho Avenue." After that he remembered reading that Mrs. Bowen was going abroad for the education of her daughter, from which he made his own inferences concerning her marriage. And "You knew Mr. Bowen was no longer living?" she said, with fit obsequy of tone.

"Yes, I knew," he answered, with decent sympathy.

"This is my little Effie," said Mrs. Bowen, after a moment; and now the child, hitherto keeping herself discreetly in the background, came forward and promptly gave her hand to Colville, who perceived that she was not so small as he had thought her at first; an effect of infancy had possibly been studied in the brevity of her skirts and the immaturity of her corsage, but both were in good taste, and really to the advantage of her young figure. There was reason and justice in her being dressed as she was, for she was really not so old as she looked by two or three years; and there was reason in Mrs. Bowen's carrying in the hollow of her left arm the India shawl sacque she had taken off and hung there; the deep cherry silk lining gave life

to the sombre tints prevailing in her dress, which its removal left free to express all the grace of her extremely lady-like person. Lady-like was the word for Mrs. Bowen throughout—for the turn of her head, the management of her arm from the elbow, the curve of her hand from wrist to finger-tips, the smile, subdued, but sufficiently sweet, playing about her little mouth, which was yet not too little, and the refined and indefinite perfume which exhaled from the ensemble of her silks, her laces, and her gloves, like an odorous version of that otherwise impalpable quality which women call style. She had, with all her flexibility, a certain charming stiffness, like the stiffness of a very tall feather.

"And have you been here a great while?" she asked, turning her head slowly toward Colville, and looking at him with a little difficulty she had in raising her eyelids: when she was younger the glance that shyly stole from under the covert of their lashes was like a gleam of sunshine, and it was still like a gleam of paler sunshine.

Colville, whose mood was very susceptible to the weather, brightened in the ray. "I only arrived last night," he said, with a smile.

"How glad you must be to get back! Did you ever see Florence more beautiful than it was this morning?"

"Not for years," said Colville, with another smile for her pretty enthusiasm. "Not for seventeen years at the least calculation."

"Is it so many?" cried Mrs. Bowen, with lovely dismay. "Yes, it is," she sighed, and she did not speak for an appreciable interval.

He knew that she was thinking of that old love affair of his, to which she was privy in some degree, though he never could tell how much; and when she spoke he perceived that she purposely avoided speaking of a certain person, whom a woman of more tact or of less would have insisted upon naming at once. "I never can believe in the lapse of time when I get back to Italy; it always makes me feel as young as when I left it last."

"I could imagine you'd never left it," said Colville.

Mrs. Bowen reflected a moment. "Is that a compliment?"

"I had an obscure intention of saying something fine; but I don't think I've quite made it out," he owned.

Mrs. Bowen gave her small, sweet smile. "It was very nice of you to try. But I haven't really been away for some time; I've taken a house in Florence, and I've been here two years. Palazzo Pinti, Lung' Arno della Zecca. You must come and see me. Thursdays from four till six."

"Thank you," said Colville.

"I'm afraid," said Mrs. Bowen, remotely preparing to offer her hand in adieu, "that Effie and I broke in upon some very important cogitations of yours." She shifted the silken burden of her arm a little, and the child stirred from the correct pose she had been keeping, and smiled politely.

"I don't think they deserve a real dictionary word like that," said Colville. "I was simply mooning. If there was anything definite in my mind, I was wishing that I was looking down on the Wabash in Des Vaches, instead of the Arno in Florence."

"Oh! And I supposed you must be indulging all sorts of historical associations with the place. Effie and I have been walking through the Via de' Bardi, where Romola lived, and I was bringing her back over the Ponte Vecchio, so as to impress the origin of Florence on her mind."

"Is that what makes Miss Effie hate it?" asked Colville, looking at the child, whose youthful resemblance to her mother was in all things so perfect that a fantastic question whether she could ever have had any other parent swept through him. Certainly, if Mrs. Bowen were to marry again, there was nothing in this child's looks to suggest the idea of a predecessor to the second husband.

"Effie doesn't hate any sort of useful knowledge," said her mother, half jestingly. "She's just come to me from school at Vevay."

"Oh, then, I think she might," persisted Colville. "Don't you hate the origin of Florence a little?" he asked of the child.

"I don't know enough about it," she answered, with a quick look of question at her mother, and checking herself in a possibly indiscreet smile.

"Ah, that accounts for it," said Colville, and he laughed. It amused him to see the child referring even this point of propriety to her mother, and his thoughts idled off to what Mrs. Bowen's own untrammelled girlhood must have been in her Western city. For her daughter there were to be no buggy rides or concerts or dances at the invitation of young men;

no picnics, free and unchaperoned as the casing air; no sitting on the steps at dusk with callers who never dreamed of asking for her mother; no lingering at the gate with her youthful escort home from the ball—nothing of that wild, sweet liberty which once made American girlhood a long rapture. But would she be any the better for her privations, for referring not only every point of conduct, but every thought and feeling, to her mother? He suppressed a sigh for the inevitable change, but rejoiced that his own youth had fallen in the earlier time, and said, "You will hate it as soon as you've read a little of it."

"The difficulty *is* to read a little of Florentine history. I can't find anything in less than ten or twelve volumes," said Mrs. Bowen. "Effie and I were going to Viesseux's Library again, in desperation, to see if there wasn't something shorter in French."

She now offered Colville her hand, and he found himself very reluctant to let it go. Something in her looks did not forbid him, and when she took her hand away, he said, "Let me go to Viesseux's with you, Mrs. Bowen, and give you the advantage of my unprejudiced ignorance in the choice of a book on Florence."

"Oh, I was longing to ask you!" said Mrs. Bowen, frankly. "It is really such a serious matter, especially when the book is for a young person. Unless it's very dry, it's so apt to be—objectionable."

"Yes," said Colville, with a smile at her perplexity. He moved off down the slope of the bridge with her, between the jewellers' shops, and felt a singular satisfaction in her company. Women of fashion always interested him; he liked them; it diverted him that they should take themselves seriously. Their resolution, their suffering for their ideal, such as it was, their energy in dressing and adorning themselves, the pains they were at to achieve the trivialities they passed their lives in, were perpetually delightful to him. He often found them people of great simplicity, and sometimes of singularly good sense; their frequent vein of piety was delicious.

Ten minutes earlier, he would have said that nothing could have been less welcome to him than this encounter, but now he felt unwilling to leave Mrs. Bowen.

"Go before, Effie," she said; and she added, to Colville, "How very Florentine all this is! If you dropped from the clouds

on this spot without previous warning, you would know that you were on the Ponte Vecchio, and nowhere else."

"Yes, it's very Florentine," Colville assented. "The bridge is very well as a bridge, but as a street I prefer the Main Street Bridge at Des Vaches. I was looking at the jewelry before you came up, and I don't think it's pretty, even the old pieces of peasant jewelry. Why do people come here to look at it? If you were going to buy something for a friend, would you dream of coming here for it?"

"Oh *no*!" replied Mrs. Bowen, with the deepest feeling.

They quitted the bridge, and turning to the left, moved down the street, which with difficulty finds space between the parapet of the river and the shops of the mosaicists and dealers in statuary cramping it on the other hand.

"Here's something distinctively Florentine too," said Colville. "These table-tops, and paper-weights, and caskets, and photograph frames, and lockets, and breast-pins; and here, this ghostly glare of under-sized Psyches and Hebes and Graces in alabaster."

"Oh, you mustn't think of any of them!" Mrs. Bowen broke in, with horror. "If your friend wishes you to get her something characteristically Florentine, and at the same time very tasteful, you must go—"

Colville gave a melancholy laugh. "My friend is an abstraction, Mrs. Bowen, without sex or any sort of entity."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Bowen. Some fine drops had begun to sprinkle the pavement. "What a ridiculous blunder! It's raining! Effie, I'm afraid we must give up your book for to-day. We're not dressed for damp weather, and we'd better hurry home as soon as possible." She got promptly into the shelter of a doorway, and gathered her daughter to her, while she flung her sacque over her shoulder, and caught her draperies from the ground for the next movement. "Mr. Colville, will you please stop the first closed carriage that comes in sight?"

A figure of *primo tenore* had witnessed the manœuvre from the box of his cab; he held up his whip, and at a nod from Colville he drove abreast of the doorway his broken-kneed, tremulous little horse, gay in brass-mounted harness, and with a tall turkey feather stuck upright at one ear in his headstall.

Mrs. Bowen had no more scruple than another woman in stopping travel and traffic in a public street for her convenience. She now entered into a brisk parting conversation with Colville, such as ladies love, blocking the narrow sidewalk with herself, her daughter, and her open carriage door, and making people walk round her cab, in the road, which they did meekly enough, with the Florentine submissiveness to the pretensions of any sort of vehicle. She said a dozen important things that seemed to have just come into her head, and, "Why, how stupid I am!" she called out, making Colville check the driver in his first start, after she had got into the cab. "We are to have a few people to-night. If you have no engagement, I should be so glad to have you come. Can't you?"

"Yes, I can," said Colville, admiring the whole transaction and the parties to it with a passive smile.

After finding her pocket, she found that her card-case was not in it, but in the purse she had given Effie to carry; but she got her address at last, and gave it to Colville, though he said he should remember it without. "Any time between nine and eleven," she said. "It's so nice of you to promise!"

She questioned him from under her half-lifted eyelids, and he added, with a laugh, "I'll come!" and was rewarded with two pretty smiles, just alike, from mother and daughter, as they drove away.

### III.

Twenty years earlier, when Mrs. Bowen was Miss Lina Ridgely, she used to be the friend and confidante of the girl who jilted Colville. They were then both so young that they could scarcely have been a year out of school before they left home for the year they were spending in Europe; but to the young man's inexperience they seemed the wisest and maturest of society women. His heart quaked in his breast when he saw them talking and laughing together, for fear they should be talking and laughing about him; he was even a little more afraid of Miss Ridgely than of her friend, who was dashing and effective, where Miss Ridgely was serene and elegant, according to his feeling at that time. He never saw her after his rejection, and it was not till he read of her marriage with the Hon. Mr. Bowen that certain

vague impressions began to define themselves. He then remembered that Lina Ridgely in many fine little ways had shown a kindness, almost a compassion, for him, as for one whose unconsciousness a hopeless doom impended over. He perceived that she had always seemed to like him—a thing that had not occurred to him in the stupid absorption of his passion for the other—and fragments of proof that she had probably defended and advocated him occurred to him, and inspired a vain and retrospective gratitude; he abandoned himself to regrets, which were proper enough in regard to Miss Ridgely, but were certainly a little unlawful concerning Mrs. Bowen.

As he walked away toward his hotel he amused himself with the conjecture whether he, with his forty-one years and his hundred and eighty-five pounds, were not still a pathetic and even a romantic figure to this pretty and kindly woman, who probably imagined him as heart-broken as ever. He was very willing to see more of her, if she wished; but with the rain beginning to fall more thick and chill in the darkening street, he could have postponed their next meeting till a pleasanter evening without great self-denial. He felt a little twinge of rheumatism in his shoulder when he got into his room, for your room in a Florentine hotel is always some degrees colder than out-doors, unless you have fire in it; and with the sun shining on his windows when he went out after lunch, it had seemed to Colville ridiculous to have his morning fire kept up. The sun was what he had taken the room for. It was in it, the landlord assured him, from ten in the morning till four in the afternoon; and so, in fact, it was, when it shone; but even then it was not fully in it, but had a trick of looking in at the sides of the window, and painting the chamber wall with a delusive glow. Colville raked away the ashes of his fire-place, and throwing on two or three fagots of broom and pine sprays, he had a blaze that would be very pretty to dress by after dinner, but that gave out no warmth for the present. He left it, and went down to the Reading-Room, as it was labelled over the door, in homage to a predominance of English-speaking people among the guests; but there was no fire there; that was kindled only by request, and he shivered at the bare aspect of the apartment, with its cold piano, its locked book-cases, and its



table, where the London *Times*, the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna, and the *Italie* of Rome exposed their titles, one just beyond the margin of the other. He turned from the door and went into the dining-room, where the stove was ostentatiously roaring over its small logs and its lozenges of peat. But even here the fire had been so recently lighted that the warmth was potential rather than actual. By stooping down before the stove, and pressing his shoulder against its brass doors, Colville managed to lull his enemy, while he studied the figures of the woman-headed, woman-breasted hounds developing into vines and foliage that covered the frescoed trellising of the quadrangularly vaulted ceiling. The waiters, in their veteran dress-coats, were putting the final touches to the table, and the sound of voices outside the door obliged Colville to get up. The effort involved made him still more reluctant about going out to Mrs. Bowen's.

The door opened, and some English ladies entered, faintly acknowledging, provisionally ignoring, his presence, and talking of what they had been doing since lunch. They agreed that it was really too cold in the churches for any pleasure in the pictures, and that the Pitti Gallery, where they had those braziers, was the only place you could go with comfort. A French lady and her husband came in; a Russian lady followed; an Italian gentleman, an American family, and three or four detached men of the English-speaking race, whose language at once became the law of the table.

As the dinner progressed from soup to fish, and from the *entrée* to the roast and salad, the combined effect of the pleasant cheer and the increasing earnestness of the stove made the room warmer and warmer. They drank Chianti wine from the wicker-covered flasks, tied with tufts of red and green silk, in which they serve table wine at Florence, and said how pretty the bottles were, but how the wine did not seem very good.

"It certainly isn't so good as it used to be," said Colville.

"Ah, then you have been in Florence before," said the French lady, whose English proved to be much better than the French that he began to talk to her in.

"Yes, a great while ago; in a state of pre-existence, in fact," he said.

The lady looked a little puzzled, but in-

terested. "In a state of pre-existence?" she repeated.

"Yes; when I was young," he added, catching the gleam in her eye. "When I was twenty-four. A great while ago."

"You must be an American," said the lady, with a laugh.

"Why do you think so? From my accent?"

"From your metaphysics too. The Americans like to talk in that way."

"I didn't know it," said Colville.

"They like to strike the key of personality; they can't endure not being interested. They must relate everything to themselves or to those with whom they are talking."

"And the French, no?" asked Colville.

The lady laughed again. "There is a large American colony in Paris. Perhaps we have learned to be like you."

The lady's husband did not speak English, and it was probably what they had been saying that she interpreted to him, for he smiled, looking forward to catch Colville's eye in a friendly way, and as if he would not have him take his wife's talk too seriously.

The Italian gentleman on Colville's right was politely offering him the salad, which had been left for the guests to pass to one another. Colville thanked him in Italian, and they began to talk of Italian affairs. One thing led to another, and he found that his new friend, who was not yet his acquaintance, was a member of Parliament, and a republican.

"That interests me as an American," said Colville. "But why do you want a republic in Italy?"

"When we have a constitutional king, why should we have a king?" asked the Italian.

An Englishman across the table relieved Colville from the difficulty of answering this question by asking him another that formed talk about it between them. He made his tacit observation that the English, since he met them last, seemed to have grown in the grace of facile speech with strangers; it was the American family which kept its talk within itself, and hushed to a tone so low that no one else could hear it. Colville did not like their mumbling; for the honor of the country, which we all have at heart, however little we think it, he would have preferred that they should speak up, and not seem afraid or ashamed; he thought the English man-

ner was better. In fact, he found himself in an unexpectedly social mood; he joined in helping to break the ice; he laughed and hazarded comment with those who were new-comers like himself, and was very respectful of the opinions of people who had been longer in the hotel, when they spoke of the cook's habit of under-doing the vegetables. The dinner at the Hôtel d'Atene made an imposing show on the *carte du jour*; it looked like ten or twelve courses, but in fact it was five, and even when eked out with roast chestnuts and butter into six, it seemed somehow to stop very abruptly, though one seemed to have had enough. You could have coffee afterward if you ordered it. Colville ordered it, and was sorry when the last of his commensals, slightly bowing him good-night, left him alone to it.

He had decided that he need not fear the damp in a cab rapidly driven to Mrs. Bowen's. When he went to his room he had his doubts about his dress-coat; but he put it on, and he took the crush hat with which he had provided himself in coming through London. That was a part of the social panoply unknown in Des Vaches; he had hardly been a dozen times in evening dress there in fifteen years, and his suit was as new as his hat. As he turned to the glass he thought himself personable enough, and in fact he was one of those men who look better in evening dress than in any other: the broad expanse of shirt bosom, with its three small studs of gold dropping, points of light, one below the other, softened his strong, almost harsh face, and balanced his rather large head. In his morning coat, people had to look twice at him to make sure that he did not look common; but now he was not wrong in thinking that he had an air of distinction, as he took his hat under his arm and stood before the pier-glass in his room. He was almost tempted to shave, and wear his mustache alone, as he used to do: he had let his beard grow because he found that under the lax social regimen at Des Vaches he neglected shaving, and went about days at a time with his face in an offensive stubble. Taking his chin between his fingers, and peering closer into the mirror, he wondered how Mrs. Bowen should have known him; she must have remembered him very vividly. He would like to take off his beard and put on the youthfulness that comes of shaving, and

see what she would say. Perhaps, he thought, with a last glance at his toilet, he was overdoing it, if she were only to have a few people, as she promised. He put a thick neckerchief over his chest so as not to provoke that abominable rheumatism by any sort of exposure, and he put on his ulster instead of the light spring overcoat that he had gone about with all day.

He found that Palazzo Pinti, when you came to it, was rather a grand affair, with a gold-banded porter eating salad in the lodge at the great doorway, and a handsome gate of iron cutting you off from the regions above till you had rung the bell of Mrs. Bowen's apartment, when it swung open of itself, and you mounted. At her door a man in modified livery received Colville, and helped him off with his overcoat so skillfully that he did not hurt his rheumatic shoulder at all; there were half a dozen other hats and coats on the carved chests that stood at intervals along the wall, and some gayer wraps that exhaled a faint, fascinating fragrance on the chilly air. Colville experienced the slight exhilaration, the mingled reluctance and eagerness, of a man who formally re-enters an assemblage of society after long absence from it, and rubbing his hands a little nervously together, he put aside the yellow Abruzzi blanket portière and let himself into the brilliant interior.

Mrs. Bowen stood in front of the fire in a brown silk of subdued splendor, and with her hands and fan and handkerchief tastefully composed before her. At sight of Colville she gave a slight start, which would have betrayed to him, if he had been another woman, that she had not really believed he would come, and came forward with a rustle and murmur of pleasure to meet him: he had politely made a rush upon her, so as to spare her this exertion, and he was tempted to a long-forgotten foppishness of attitude as he stood talking with her during the brief interval before she introduced him to any of the company. She had been honest with him; there were not more than twenty-five or thirty people there; but if he had overdone it in dressing for so small an affair, he was not alone, and he was not sorry. He was sensible of a better personal effect than the men in frock-coats and cut-aways were making, and he perceived with self-satisfaction that his evening dress was of better style than that

of the others who wore it; at least no one else carried a crush hat.

At forty-one a man is still very much of a boy, and Colville was obscurely willing that Mrs. Bowen, whose life since they last met at an evening party had been passed chiefly at New York and Washington, should see that he was a man of the world in spite of Des Vaches. Before she had decided which of the company she should first present him to, her daughter came up to his elbow with a cup of tea and some bread and butter on a tray, and gave him good-evening with charming correctness of manner. "Really," he said, turning about to take the cup, "I thought it was you, Mrs. Bowen, who had got round to my side with a sash on. How do you and Miss Effie justify yourselves in looking so bewitchingly alike?"

"You notice it, then?" Mrs. Bowen seemed delighted.

"I did every moment you were together to-day. You don't mind my having been so personal in my observations?"

"Oh, not at all," said Mrs. Bowen, and Colville laughed.

"It must be true," he said, "what a French lady said to me at the *table d'hôte* dinner to-night: 'the Americans always strike the note of personality.'" He neatly imitated the French lady's guttural accent.

"I suppose we do," mused Mrs. Bowen, "and that we don't mind it in each other. I wish *you* would say which I shall introduce you to," she said, letting her glance stray invisibly over her company, where all the people seemed comfortably talking.

"Oh, there's no hurry; put it off till to-morrow," said Colville.

"Oh no; that won't do," said Mrs. Bowen, like a woman who has public duties to perform, and is resolute to sacrifice her private pleasure to them. But she postponed them a moment longer. "I hope you got home before the rain," she said.

"Yes," returned Colville. "That is, I don't mind a little sprinkling. Who is the Junonian young person at the end of the room?"

"Ah," said Mrs. Bowen, "you can't be introduced to *her* first. But *isn't* she lovely?"

"Yes. It's a wonderful effect of white and gold."

"You mustn't say that to her. She was doubtful about her dress because she

says that the ivory white with her hair makes her look just like white and gold furniture."

"Present me at once, then, before I forget not to say it to her."

"No; I must keep you for some other person: anybody can talk to a pretty girl."

Colville said he did not know whether to smile or shed tears at this imbittered compliment, and pretended an eagerness for the acquaintance denied him.

Mrs. Bowen seemed disposed to intensify his misery. "Did you ever see a more statuesque creature—with those superb broad shoulders and that little head, and that thick braid brought round over the top? Doesn't her face, with that calm look in those starry eyes, and that peculiar fall of the corners of the mouth, remind you of some of those exquisite great Du Maurier women? That style of face is very fashionable now: you might think he had made it so."

"Is there a fashion in faces?" asked Colville.

"Why, certainly. You must know that."

"Then why aren't all the ladies in the fashion?"

"It isn't one that can be put on. Besides, every one hasn't got Imogene Graham's figure to carry it off."

"That's her name, then—Imogene Graham. It's a very pretty name."

"Yes. She's staying with me for the winter. Now that's all I can allow you to know for the present. Come! You must!"

"But this is worse than nothing." He made a feint of protesting as she led him away, and named him to the lady she wished him to know. But he was not really sorry; he had his modest misgivings whether he were equal to quite so much young lady as Miss Graham seemed. When he no longer looked at her he had a whimsical impression of her being a heroic statue of herself.

The lady whom Mrs. Bowen left him with had not much to say, and she made haste to introduce her husband, who had a great deal to say. He was an Italian, but master of that very efficient English which the Italians get together with unimaginable sufferings from our orthography, and Colville repeated the republican deputy's saying about a constitutional king, which he had begun to think was neat.

"I might prefer a republic myself," said the Italian, "but I think that gentleman is wrong to be a republican where he is, and for the present. The monarchy is the condition of our unity; nothing else could hold us together, and we must remain united if we are to exist as a nation, It's a necessity, like our army of half a million men. We may not like it in itself, but we know that is our salvation." He began to speak of the economic state of Italy, of the immense cost of freedom and independence to a people whose political genius enables them to bear quietly burdens of taxation that no other government would venture to impose. He spoke with that fond, that appealing patriotism which expresses so much to the sympathetic foreigner in Italy: the sense of great and painful uncertainty of Italy's future through the complications of diplomacy, the memory of her sufferings in the past, the spirit of quiet and inexhaustible patience for trials to come. This resolution, which is almost resignation, poetizes the attitude of the whole people; it made Colville feel as if we had done nothing and borne nothing yet.

"I am ashamed," he said, not without a remote resentment of the unworthiness of the Republican voters of Des Vaches, "when I hear of such things, to think of what we are at home, with all our resources and opportunities."

The Italian would have politely excused us to him, but Colville would have no palliation of our political and moral nakedness; and he framed a continuation of the letter he began on the Ponte Vecchio to the *Post-Democrat-Republican*, in which he made a bitterly ironical comparison of the achievements of Italy and America in the last ten years.

He forgot about Miss Graham, and had only a vague sense of her splendor as he caught sight of her in the long mirror which she stood before. She was talking to a very handsome young clergyman, and smiling upon him. The company seemed to be mostly Americans, but there were a good many evident English also, and Colville was dimly aware of a question in his mind whether this clergyman was English or American. There were three or four Italians and there were some Germans, who spoke English.

Colville moved about from group to group as his enlarging acquaintance led. and found himself more interested in so-

ciety than he could ever have dreamed of being again. It was certainly a defect of the life at Des Vaches that people, after the dancing and love-making period, went out rarely or never. He began to see that the time he had spent so busily in that enterprising city had certainly been in some sense wasted.

At a certain moment in the evening, which perhaps marked its advancement, the tea-urn was replaced by a jug of the rum punch, mild or strong according to the custom of the house, which is served at most Florentine receptions. Some of the people went immediately after, but the young clergyman remained talking with Miss Graham.

Colville, with his smoking glass in his hand, found himself at the side of a friendly old gentleman who had refused the punch. They joined in talk by a common impulse, and the old gentleman said, directly, "You are an American, I presume?"

His accent had already established the fact of his own nationality, but he seemed to think it the part of candor to say, when Colville had acknowledged his origin, "I'm an American myself."

"I've met several of our countrymen since I arrived," suggested Colville.

The old gentleman seemed to like this way of putting it. "Well, yes, we're not unfairly represented here in numbers, I must confess. But I'm bound to say that I don't find our countrymen so aggressive, so loud, as our international novelists would make out. I haven't met any of their peculiar heroines as yet, sir."

Colville could not help laughing. "I wish I had. But perhaps they avoid people of our years and discretion, or else take such a filial attitude toward us that we can't recognize them."

"Perhaps, perhaps," cried the old gentleman, with cheerful assent.

"I was talking with one of our German friends here just now, and he complained that the American girls—especially the rich ones—seem very calculating and worldly and conventional. I told him I didn't know how to account for that. I tried to give him some notion of the ennobling influences of society in Newport, as I've had glimpses of it."

The old gentleman caressed his elbows, which he was holding in the palms of his hands, in high enjoyment of Colville's sarcasm. "Ah! very good! very good!" he said. "I quite agree with you; and I



think the other sort are altogether preferable."

"I think," continued Colville, dropping his ironical tone, "that we've much less to regret in their unsuspecting, unsophisticated freedom than in the type of hard materialism which we produce in young girls, perfectly wide awake, disenchanted, unromantic, who prefer the worldly vanities and advantages deliberately and on principle, recognizing something better merely to despise it. I've sometimes seen them—"

Mrs. Bowen came up in her gentle, inquiring way. "I'm glad that you and Mr. Colville have made acquaintance," she said to the old gentleman.

"Oh, but we haven't," said Colville. "We're entire strangers."

"Then I'll introduce you to Rev. Mr. Waters. And take you away," she added, putting her hand through Colville's arm with a delicate touch that flattered his whole being, "for your time's come at last, and I'm going to present you to Miss Graham."

"I don't know," he said. "Of course, as there *is* a Miss Graham, I can't help being presented to her, but I had almost worked myself up to the point of wishing there were none. I believe I'm afraid."

"Oh, I don't believe that at all. A simple school-girl like that!" Mrs. Bowen's sense of humor had not the national acuteness. She liked joking in men, but she did not know how to say funny things back. "You'll see, as you come up to her."

#### IV.

Miss Graham did, indeed, somehow diminish in the nearer perspective. She ceased to be overwhelming. When Colville lifted his eyes from bowing before her he perceived that she was neither so very tall nor so very large, but possessed merely a generous amplitude of womanhood. But she was even more beautiful, with a sweet and youthful radiance of look that was very winning. If she had ceased to be the goddess she looked across the length of the salon, she had gained much by becoming an extremely lovely young girl; and her teeth, when she spoke, showed a fascinating little irregularity that gave her the last charm.

Mrs. Bowen glided away with the young clergyman, but Effie remained at Miss Graham's side, and seemed to have hold of the left hand, which the girl let hang carelessly behind her in the volume of her

robe. The child's face expressed an adoration of Miss Graham far beyond her allegiance to her mother.

"I began to doubt whether Mrs. Bowen was going to bring you at all," she said, frankly, with an innocent, nervous laugh, which made favor for her with Colville. "She promised it early in the evening."

"She has used me much worse, Miss Graham," said Colville. "She has kept me waiting from the beginning of time. So that I have grown gray on my way up to you," he added, by an inspiration. "I was a comparatively young man when Mrs. Bowen first told me she was going to introduce me."

"Oh, how *good!*" said Miss Graham, joyously. And her companion, after a moment's hesitation, permitted herself a polite little titter. She had made a discovery: she had discovered that Mr. Colville was droll.

"I'm very glad you like it," he said, with a gravity that did not deceive them.

"Oh yes," sighed Miss Graham, with generous ardor. "Who but an American could say just such things? There's the loveliest old lady here in Florence, who's lived here thirty years, and she's always going back and never getting back, and she's so homesick she doesn't know what to do, and she always says that Americans may not be *better* than other people, but they are *different*."

"That's very pretty. They're different in everything but thinking themselves better. Their native modesty prevents that."

"I don't exactly know what you mean," said Miss Graham, after a little hesitation.

"Well," returned Colville, "I haven't thought it out very clearly myself yet. I may mean that the Americans differ from other people in not thinking well of themselves, or they may differ from them in not thinking well enough. But what I said had a very epigrammatic sound, and I prefer not to investigate it too closely."

This made Miss Graham and Miss Effie both cry out "Oh!" in delighted doubt of his intention. They both insensibly drifted a little nearer to him.

"There was a French lady said to me at the *table d'hôte* this evening that she knew I was an American because the Americans always strike the key of personality." He practiced these economies of material in conversation quite reck-

lessly, and often made the same incident or suggestion do duty round a whole company.

"Ah, I don't believe that," said Miss Graham.

"Believe what?"

"That the Americans always talk about themselves."

"I'm not sure she meant that. You never can tell what a person means by what he says—or *she*."

"How shocking!"

"Perhaps the French lady meant that we always talk about other people. That's in the key of personality too."

"But I don't believe we do," said Miss Graham. "At any rate, *she* was talking about *us*, then."

"Oh, she accounted for that by saying there was a large American colony in Paris, who had corrupted the French, and taught them our pernicious habit of introspection."

"Do you think we're very introspective?"

"Do you?"

"I know I'm not. I hardly ever think about myself at all. At any rate, not till it's too late. That's the great trouble. I wish I could. But I'm always studying other people. They're so much more interesting."

"Perhaps if you knew yourself better you wouldn't think so," suggested Colville.

"Yes, I know they are. I don't think any young person can be interesting."

"Then what becomes of all the novels? They're full of young persons."

"They're ridiculous. If I were going to write a novel, I should take an old person for a hero—thirty-five or forty." She looked at Colville, and blushing a little, hastened to add: "I don't believe that they begin to be interesting much before that time. Such flat things as young men are always saying! Don't you remember that passage somewhere in Heine's Pictures of Travel, where he sees the hand of a lady coming out from under her mantle, when she's confessing in a church, and he knows that it's the hand of a young person who has enjoyed nothing and suffered nothing, it's so smooth and flower-like? After I read that I hated the look of my hands—I was only sixteen, and it seemed as if I had had no more experience than a child. Oh, I like people to be *through* something. Don't you?"

"Well, yes, I suppose I do. Other people."

"No; but don't you like it for yourself?"

"I can't tell; I haven't been through anything worth speaking of yet."

Miss Graham looked at him dubiously, but pursued with ardor: "Why, just getting back to Florence, after not having been here for so long—I should think it would be so romantic. Oh dear! I wish I were here for the second time."

"I'm afraid you wouldn't like it so well," said Colville. "I wish I were here for the first time. There's nothing like the first time in everything."

"Do you really think so?"

"Well, there's nothing like the first time in Florence."

"Oh, I can't imagine it. I should think that recalling the old emotions would be perfectly fascinating."

"Yes, if they'd come when you do call them. But they're as contrary-minded as spirits from the vasty deep. I've been shouting around here for my old emotions all day, and I haven't had a responsive squeak."

"Oh!" cried Miss Graham, staring full-eyed at him. "How delightful!" Effie Bowen turned away her pretty little head and laughed, as if it might not be quite kind to laugh at a person's joke to his face.

Stimulated by their appreciation, Colville went on with more nonsense. "No; the only way to get at your old emotions in regard to Florence is to borrow them from somebody who's having them fresh. What do *you* think about Florence, Miss Graham?"

"I? I've been here two months."

"Then it's too late?"

"No, I don't know that it is. I keep feeling the strangeness all the time. But I can't tell you. It's very different from Buffalo, I can assure you."

"Buffalo? I can imagine the difference. And it's not altogether to the disadvantage of Buffalo."

"Oh, have you been there?" asked Miss Graham, with a touching little eagerness.

"Do you know anybody in Buffalo?"

"Some of the newspaper men; and I pass through there once a year on my way to New York—or used to. It's a lively place."

"Yes, it is," sighed Miss Graham, fondly.

"Do the girls of Buffalo still come out at night and dance by the light of the moon?"

"What?"

"Ah, I see," said Colville, peering at her under his thoughtfully knitted brows, "you do belong to another era. You don't remember the old negro minstrel song."

"No," said Miss Graham. "I can only remember the end of the war."

"How divinely young!" said Colville. "Well," he added, "I wish that French lady could have overheard us, Miss Graham. I think she would have changed her mind about Americans striking the note of personality in their talk."

"Oh!" exclaimed the girl, reproachfully, after a moment of swift reflection and recognition, "I don't see how you could let me do it! You don't suppose that I should have talked so with every one? It was because you were another American, and such an old friend of Mrs. Bowen's."

"That is what I shall certainly tell the French lady if she attacks me about it," said Colville. He glanced carelessly toward the end of the room, and saw the young clergyman taking leave of Mrs. Bowen; all the rest of the company were gone. "Bless me!" he said, "I must be going."

Mrs. Bowen had so swiftly advanced upon him that she caught the last words. "Why?" she asked.

"Because it's to-morrow, I suspect, and the invitation was for one day only."

"It was a season ticket," said Mrs. Bowen, with gay hospitality, "and it isn't to-morrow for half an hour yet. I can't think of letting you go. Come up to the fire, all, and let's sit down by it. It's at its very best."

Effie looked a pretty surprise and a pleasure in this girlish burst from her mother, whose habitual serenity made it more striking in contrast, and she forsook Miss Graham's hand and ran forward and disposed the easy-chairs comfortably about the hearth.

Colville and Mrs. Bowen suddenly found themselves upon those terms which often succeed a long separation with people who have felt kindly toward each other at a former meeting and have parted friends: they were much more intimate than they had supposed themselves to be, or had really any reason for being.

"Which one of your guests do you wish

me to offer up, Mrs. Bowen?" he asked, from the hollow of the arm-chair, not too low, which he had sunk into. With Mrs. Bowen in a higher chair at his right hand, and Miss Graham intent upon him from the sofa on his left, a sense of delicious satisfaction filled him from head to foot. "There isn't one I would spare if you said the word."

"And there isn't one I want destroyed, I'm sorry to say," answered Mrs. Bowen. "Don't you think they were all very agreeable?"

"Yes, yes; agreeable enough—agreeable enough, I suppose. But they staid too long. When I think we might have been sitting here for the last half-hour, if they'd only gone sooner, I find it pretty hard to forgive them."

Mrs. Bowen and Miss Graham exchanged glances above his head—a glance which demanded, "Didn't I tell you?" for a glance that answered, "Oh, he *is*!" Effie Bowen's eyes widened; she kept them fastened upon Colville in silent worship.

He asked who were certain of the company that he had noticed, and Mrs. Bowen let him make a little fun of them: the fun was very good-natured. He repeated what the German had said about the worldly ambition of American girls; but she would not allow him so great latitude in this. She said they were no worldlier than other girls. Of course they were fond of society, and some of them got a little spoiled. But they were in no danger of becoming too conventional.

Colville did not insist. "I missed the military to-night, Mrs. Bowen," he said. "I thought one couldn't get through an evening in Florence without officers?"

"We have them when there is dancing," returned Mrs. Bowen.

"Yes, but they don't know anything but dancing," Miss Graham broke in. "I like some one who can talk something besides compliments."

"You are very peculiar, you know, Imogene," urged Mrs. Bowen, gently. "I don't think our young men at home do much better in conversation, if you come to that, though."

"Oh, *young* men, yes! They're the same everywhere. But here, even when they're away along in the thirties, they think that girls can only enjoy flattery. I should like a gentleman to talk to me without a single word or look to show that he thought I was good-looking."

"Ah, how could he?" Colville insinuated, and the young girl colored.

"I mean if I were pretty. This everlasting adulation is insulting."

"Mr. Morton doesn't flatter," said Mrs. Bowen, thoughtfully, turning the feather screen she held at her face, now edgewise, now flatwise, toward Colville.

"Oh no," owned Miss Graham. "He's a clergyman."

Mrs. Bowen addressed herself to Colville. "You must go to hear him some day. He's very interesting, if you don't mind his being rather Low-Church."

Colville was going to pretend to an advanced degree of ritualism, but it occurred to him that it might be a serious matter to Mrs. Bowen, and he asked instead who was the Rev. Mr. Waters.

"Oh, isn't he lovely?" cried Miss Graham. "There, Mrs. Bowen! Mr. Waters's manner is what I call *truly* complimentary. He always talks to you as if he expected you to be interested in serious matters, and as if you were his intellectual equal. And he's so *happy* here in Florence! He gives you the impression of feeling every breath he breathes here a privilege. You ought to hear him talk about Savonarola, Mr. Colville."

"Well," said Colville, "I've heard a great many people talk about Savonarola, and I'm rather glad he talked to me about American girls."

"American girls!" uttered Miss Graham, in a little scream. "Did Mr. Waters talk to you about *girls*?"

"Yes. Why not? He was probably in love with one once."

"Mr. Waters?" cried the girl. "What nonsense!"

"Well, then, with some old lady. Would you like that better?"

Miss Graham looked at Mrs. Bowen for permission, as it seemed, and then laughed, but did not attempt any reply to Colville.

"You find even that incredible of such pyramidal antiquity," he resumed. "Well, it *is* hard to believe. I told him what that German said, and we agreed beautifully about another type of American girl which we said we preferred."

"Oh! What could it be?" demanded Miss Graham.

"Ah, it wouldn't be so easy to say right off-hand," answered Colville, indolently.

Mrs. Bowen put her hand under the elbow of the arm holding her screen. "I don't believe I should agree with you so

well," she said, apparently with a sort of didactic intention.

They entered into a discussion which is always fruitful with Americans—the discussion of American girlhood, and Colville contended for the old national ideal of girlish liberty as wide as the continent, as fast as the Mississippi. Mrs. Bowen withstood him with delicate firmness. "Oh," he said, "you're Europeanized."

"I certainly prefer the European plan of bringing up girls," she replied, steadfastly. "I shouldn't think of letting a daughter of mine have the freedom I had."

"Well, perhaps it will come right in the next generation, then; she will let her daughter have the freedom she hadn't."

"Not if I'm alive to prevent it," cried Mrs. Bowen.

Colville laughed. "Which plan do you prefer, Miss Graham?"

"I don't think it's quite the same now as it used to be," answered the girl, evasively.

"Well, then, all I can say is that if I had died before this change, I had lived a blessed time. I perceive more and more that I'm obsolete. I'm in my dotage; I prattle of the good old times, and the new spirit of the age flouts me. Miss Effie, do you prefer the Amer—"

"No, thank you," said her mother, quickly. "Effie is out of the question. It's time you were in bed, Effie."

The child came with instant submissiveness and kissed her mother good-night; she kissed Miss Graham, and gave her hand to Colville. He held it a moment, letting her pull shyly away from him, while he lolled back in his chair, and laughed at her with his sad eyes. "It's past the time I should be in bed, my dear, and I'm sitting up merely because there's nobody to send me. It's not that I'm really such a very bad boy. Good-night. Don't put me into a disagreeable dream; put me into a nice one." The child bridled at the mild pleasantry, and when Colville released her hand she suddenly stooped forward and kissed him.

"You're so *funny*!" she cried, and ran and escaped beyond the *portière*.

Mrs. Bowen stared in the same direction, but not with severity. "Really, Effie has been carried a little beyond herself."

"Well," said Colville, "that's *one* conquest since I came to Florence. And merely by being funny! When I was in Florence before, Mrs. Bowen," he contin-



ued, after a moment, "there were two ladies here, and I used to go about quite freely with either of them. They were both very pretty, and we were all very young. Don't you think it was charming?" Mrs. Bowen colored a lovely red, and smiled, but made no other response. "Florence has changed very much for the worse since that time. There used to be a pretty flower girl, with a wide flapping straw hat, who flung a heavy bough full of roses into my lap when she met me driving across the Carraja bridge. I spent an hour looking for that girl to-day, and couldn't find her. The only flower girl I could find was a fat one of fifty, who kept me fifteen minutes in Via Tornabuoni while she was fumbling away at my button-hole, trying to poke three second-hand violets and a sickly daisy into it. Ah, youth! youth! I suppose a young fellow could have found that other flower girl at a glance; but *my* old eyes! No, we belong, each of us, to our own generation. Mrs. Bowen," he said, with a touch of tragedy—whether real or affected he did not well know himself—in his hardness, "what has become of Mrs. Pilsbury?"

"Mrs. Milbury, you mean?" gasped Mrs. Bowen, in affright at his boldness.

"Milbury, Bilbury, Pilsbury—it's all one, so long as it isn't—"

"They're living in Chicago!" she hastened to reply, as if she were afraid he was going to say, "so long as it isn't Colville," and she could not have borne that.

Colville clasped his hands at the back of his head and looked at Mrs. Bowen with eyes that let her know that he was perfectly aware she had been telling Miss Graham of his youthful romance, and that he had now touched it purposely. "And you wouldn't," he said, as if that were quite relevant to what they had been talking about—"you wouldn't let Miss Graham go out walking alone with a dotard like me?"

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Bowen.

Colville got to his feet by a surprising activity. "Good-by, Miss Graham." He

offered his hand to her with burlesque despair, and then turned to Mrs. Bowen. "Thank you for *such* a pleasant evening! What was your day, did you say?"

"Oh, any day!" said Mrs. Bowen, cordially, giving her hand.

"Do you know whom you look like?" he asked, holding it.

"No."

"Lina Ridgely."

The ladies stirred softly in their draperies after he was gone. They turned and faced the hearth, where a log burned in a bed of hot ashes, softly purring and ticking to itself, and whilst they stood pressing their hands against the warm fronts of their dresses, as the fashion of women is before a fire, the clock on the mantel began to strike twelve.

"Was that her name?" asked Miss Graham, when the clock had had its say.

"Lina Ridgely?"

"No; that was *my* name," answered Mrs. Bowen.

"Oh yes!" murmured the young girl, apologetically.

"She led him on; she certainly encouraged him. It was shocking. He was quite wild about it."

"She must have been a cruel girl. How *could* he speak of it so lightly?"

"It was best to speak of it, and have done with it," said Mrs. Bowen. "He knew that I must have been telling you something about it."

"Yes. How bold it was! A *young* man couldn't have done it! Yes, he's fascinating. But how old and sad he looked as he lay back there in the chair!"

"Old? I didn't think he looked old. He looked sad. Yes, it's left its mark on him."

The log burned quite through to its core, and fell asunder, a bristling mass of embers. They had been looking at it with downcast heads. Now they lifted their faces, and saw the pity in each other's eyes, and the beautiful girl impulsively kissed the pretty woman good-night.

## HIGH DAYS AND HOLIDAYS.

O LONG and lagging hours of time,  
How heavily the hope you mock,  
How slow you creep across the clock,  
When the child waits for you to chime  
The year returning in its prime—  
Yet all so glad! yet all so glad!

O hurrying hours, when age is nigh,  
So breathlessly you sweep along,  
So fast your flashing circles throng  
By failing sense and dazzled eye,  
We scarcely see them as they fly—  
And all so sad! and all so sad!