

# The Simple Life of Genevieve Maud

BY ELIZABETH JORDAN

GENEVIEVE MAUD reclined in a geranium-bed in an attitude of unstudied ease. On her fat body was a white dress, round her waist was a wide blue sash, perched on one side of her head was a flaunting blue bow, and in her heart was bitterness. It was dimly comforting to lie down in all this finery, but it did not really help much. She brooded darkly upon her wrongs. They were numerous, and her cherubic little face took on additional gloom as she summed them up. First, she had been requested to be good—a suggestion always unwelcome to the haughty soul of Genevieve Maud, and doubly so this morning when she saw no alternative but to obey it. Secondly, there was no one to play with—a situation depressing to any companionable being, and grindingly so to one who considered all men her peers, all women her unquestioning slaves, and all animals grateful ministers to her needs in lowlier fields of delight.

These delusions, it must be admitted, had been fostered during the four short but eventful years of Genevieve Maud's life. Her method of approach had been singularly compelling; old and young paused not to argue, but freely stripped themselves of adornments she fancied, and animals, from the kitten she carried round by one ear to the great St. Bernard she half strangled in recurring moments of endearment, bore with her adoringly, and humbly followed the trail of cake she left behind her when she tired of them and trotted off in search of fresh attractions. These were usually numerous; and had they been rarer, the ingenuity of Genevieve Maud would have been equal to the test. There were no social distinctions in her individual world. But one short year ago she had followed a hand-organ man and a monkey to a point safely distant from too-observant relatives and servants; there, beside the chattering monkey, she had sung and

danced and scrambled for pennies and shaken a tambourine, and generally conducted herself like a *débutante* mænad.

It had been a great success from the point of view of Genevieve Maud and the organ-man and the monkey, but when the rapture of her abandon was at its height a passing neighbor, attracted by the throng, had rescued the child and borne her home.

That had been a glorious day. She recalled it now smoulderingly, resentfully. Different, indeed, was the tragic present. No one to play with—that was bad enough. But there were still worse conditions. She was not even allowed to play by herself! Rover had been banished to a neighbor's, the kitten had been lent generously to the Joyce children, her human playmates had been warned off the premises, and Genevieve Maud had been urged to be a dear little girl and keep very, very quiet because mamma was sick. As if this was not enough, fate drove its relentless knife and gave it a final twist. Far back in a corner of the garden where she lay, almost hidden by the drooping branches of an old willow, sat her two sisters, Helen Adeline and Grace Margaret, highly superior beings of a stately dignity even beyond their ripe ages of eleven and nine years. They were too old to play with little girls, as they had frequently mentioned to Genevieve Maud, but they were not wholly beyond the power of her spell, and there had been occasions when they had so far forgotten themselves as to descend to her level and enjoy doll tea-parties and similar infantile pleasures. To-day, however, they were of a remoteness. Their plump backs were turned to her, their heads were close together, and on the soft afternoon breeze that floated over the garden were borne sibilant whispers. They were telling each other secrets—secrets from which Genevieve Maud, by reason of her tender years, was irrevocably shut out.

Genevieve Maud sat up suddenly in the flower-bed as the full horror of this truth burst upon her, and then briskly entered into action designed to transform the peace and quiet of the scene. Her small fat face turned purple, her big brown eyes shut tight, her round mouth opened, and from the small aperture came a succession of shrieks which would have lulled a siren into abashed silence. The effect of this demonstration, rarely long delayed, was instantaneous now. A white-capped nurse came to an up-stairs window and shook her head warningly; the two small sisters rose and scurried across the lawn; a neighbor came to the hedge and clapped her hands softly, clucking mystic monosyllables supposed to be of a soothing nature; neighboring children within hearing assumed half-holiday expressions and started with a rush to the side of the blatant afflicted one. Surveying all this through half-shut eyes and hearing the steady tramp of the oncoming relief corps, an expression of triumphant content rested for an instant on Genevieve Maud's face. Then she tied it up again into knots of even more disfiguring pattern, took another long breath, and apparently made an earnest effort to attract the attention of citizens of the next township. "I'm tired!" was the message Genevieve Maud sent to a sympathetic world on the wings of this megaphonic roar.

The trained nurse, who had rushed down-stairs and into the garden, now reached her side and drastically checked Genevieve Maud's histrionism by spreading a spacious palm over the wide little mouth. With her other hand she hoisted Genevieve Maud from the flower-bed and escorted her to neutral ground on the lawn.

"Tired!" repeated the irate nurse as the uproar subsided to gurgles. "Heavens! I should think you would be, after that!" Helen Adeline and Grace Margaret arrived simultaneously, and the older child took the situation and the infant in hand with her best imitation of her mother's manner.

"I am so sorry you were disturbed, Miss Wynne," she said, "and poor mamma, too. We will take care of Genevieve Maud, and she won't cry any more. We were just making some plans for her future," she ended, loftily.

The mouth of Genevieve Maud, stretched for another yell, was arrested in its distension. Her small ears opened wide. Was she, after all, in the secret? It would seem so, for the nurse, seemingly satisfied and with a scarcely concealed smile, left the three children alone and went back to her patient, while Helen Adeline at once led her small sister to the choice retreat under the willow.

"We are going to talk to you, Genevieve Maud," she began, "ve-ry seriously, and we want you to pay 'tention and try to understand." This much was easy. Mamma usually opened her impressive addresses in such fashion.

"Pay 'tention and try to understand," echoed Genevieve Maud, and grinned in joyful interest.

"Yes, really try," repeated Helen Adeline, firmly. Then, rather impatiently and as one bearing with the painful limitations of the young, she went on:

"You're so little, Maudie, you see, you don't know; and you won't know even if we tell you. But you are a spoiled child; every one says so, and mamma said the other day that something should be done. She's sick, so she can't do it, but we can. We've got to take care of you, anyhow, so this is a good time. Now what it really is, is a kind of game. Gracie and I will play it, and you are going to—to—well, you are going to be the game."

Genevieve Maud nodded solemnly, well satisfied. She was in it, anyhow. What mattered the petty details? "'Going to be the game,'" she echoed, as was her invariable custom, with the air of uttering an original thought.

Helen Adeline went on impressively.

"It's called the simple life," she said, "and grown-up folks are playing it now. I heard the minister an' mamma talking about it las' week for hours an' hours an' hours. They give up pomps an' vaneries, the minister says, an' they mustn't have luxuries, an' they must live like nature an' save their souls. They can't save their souls when they have pomps an' vaneries. We thought we'd try it with you first, an' then if we like it—er—if it's nice, I mean, p'r'aps Gracie an' I will, too. But mamma is sick, an' you've had too many things an' too much 'tention, so it's a good time for you to lead the simple life an' do without things."

Genevieve Maud, gazing into her sister's face with big, interested eyes, was vaguely, subconsciously aware that the new game might halt this side of perfect content; but she was of an experimental turn and refrained from expressing any scepticism until she knew what was coming. In the mean time the eyes of her sister Grace Margaret had roamed disapprovingly over Genevieve Maud's white dress, the blue sash that begirded her middle, the rampant bow on her hair. Katie had put on all these things conscientiously, and had then joyfully freed her mind from the burden of thought of the child for the rest of the afternoon.

"Don't you think," Grace Margaret asked Helen Adeline, tentatively, "sashes an' bows is poms?"

Helen Adeline gave the speaker a stolid, unexpressive glance. She acquiesced.

"Let's take 'em off," went on the younger and more practical spirit. "Then we won't never have to tie 'em for her, either, when they get loose."

They stripped Genevieve Maud, first of the sash and bows, then of the white gown, next of her soft undergarments, finally, as zeal waxed, even of her shoes and stockings. She stood before them clad in innocence and full of joyful expectation.

"All these fine clothes is poms an' vaneries," remarked Helen Adeline, firmly. "The minister said so when he was talking with mamma 'bout the simple life, an' Gracie and I listened. It was very interestin'."

She surveyed the innocent nudity of her little sister, "naked but not ashamed," with a speculative glance.

"Katie will be glad, won't she?" she reflected aloud. "She says there's too much washing. Now she won't have to do any more for you. Don't you feel better an' happier without those poms?" she asked Genevieve Maud.

That young person was already rolling on the grass, thrusting her little toes into the cool earth, exulting in her new-found sartorial emancipation. If this was the "new game," the new game was a winner. Grace Margaret, gazing doubtfully at her, was dimly conscious of an effect of incompleteness.

"I think she ought to have a hat," she

murmured at last. Helen Adeline was good-naturedly acquiescent.

"All right," she answered, cheerfully, "but not a pompy one. Papa's big straw will do." They found it and put it on the infant, whose eyes and face were thereby fortunately shaded from the hot glare of the August sun. Almost before it was on her head she had slipped away and was running in and out of the shrubbery, her white body flashing among the leaves.

"We'll have our luncheon here," announced Helen Adeline, firmly, "an' I'll bring it out to save Katie trouble. Maudie can't have rich food, of course, 'cos she's livin' the simple life. We'll give her bread off a tin plate."

Grace Margaret looked startled.

"We haven't got any tin plate," she objected.

"Rover has."

Grace Margaret's eyes dropped suddenly, then rose and met her sister's. An unwilling admiration crept into them.

"How will Maudie learn nice table manners?" she protested, feebly. "Mamma says she must, you know."

"Folks don't have nice table manners when they're livin' simple lives," announced Helen Adeline, loftily. "They just eat. I guess we won't give her knives an' forks an' spoons, either."

Grace Margaret battled with temptation and weakly succumbed.

"Let's give her some of the rice pudding, though," she suggested. "It will be such fun to see her eat it, 'specially if it's very creamy!"

Of further details of that luncheon all three children thereafter declined to speak. To Genevieve Maud the only point worthy of mention was that she had what the others had. This compromise effected, the manner of eating it was to her a detail of indescribable unimportance. What were knives, forks, spoons, or their lack, to Genevieve Maud? The tin plate was merely a gratifying novelty, and that she had been in close communion with rice pudding was eloquently testified by the samples of that delicacy which clung affectionately to her features and her fat person during the afternoon.

While they ate, Helen Adeline's active mind had been busy. She generously gave her sisters the benefit of its working without delay.

"She mus'n't have any money," she observed, thoughtfully, following with unseeing eyes the final careful polish the small tongue of Genevieve Maud was giving Rover's borrowed plate. "No one has money in the simple life, so we must take her bank an' get all the money out an'—"

"Spend it!" suggested Grace Margaret, rapturously, with her first inspiration. Helen Adeline reflected. The temptation was great, but at the back of her wise little head lay a dim foreboding as to the possible consequences.

"No," she finally decided, consistently. "I guess it mus' be given to the poor. We'll break the bank an' take it out, an' Maudie can give it to the poor all by herself. Then if any one scolds, *she* did it! You'll enjoy that kind an' noble act, won't you, Maudie?" she added, in her stateliest grown-up manner.

Maudie decided that she would, and promptly corroborated Helen Adeline's impression. The soft August breeze fanned her body, the grass was cool and fresh under her feet, and her little stomach looked as if modelled from a football by her ample luncheon. She was to be the central figure in the distribution of her wealth, and wisdom beyond her own would burden itself with the insignificant details. Genevieve Maud, getting together the material for large and slushy mud pies, sang blithely to herself, and found the simple life its own reward.

"We'll leave her with her dolls," continued Helen Adeline, "an' we'll hunt up deservin' poor. Then we'll bring 'em here an' Maudie can give 'em all she has. But first"—her little sharp eyes rested discontentedly upon Genevieve Maud's family—six little dolls reposing in a blissful row in a pansy-bed—"first we mus' remove *those* pomps an' vaneries."

Grace gasped.

"Take away the dolls?" she ejaculated, dizzily.

"No, not edzactly. Jus' take off all their clothes. Don't you think it looks silly for them to have clothes on when Maudie hasn't any?"

Grace Margaret agreed that it did, and at once the mistake was rectified, the clothing was added to the heap of Genevieve Maud's clothing, and a pleasing

effect of harmony reigned. The little girls regarded it with innocent satisfaction.

"I s'pose we couldn't really take her dolls," reflected Helen Adeline, aloud. "She'd make an awful fuss, an' she's so good an' quiet now it's a pity to start her off. But her toys *mus'* go. They're very expensive an' they're pomps an' vaneries, I know. So we'll take 'em with us an' give 'em to poor children."

"You think of lots of things, don't you?" gurgled Grace Margaret, with warm admiration. Her sister accepted the tribute modestly, as no more than her due. Leaving Genevieve Maud happy with her mud pies and her stripped dolls, the two sought the nursery and there made a discriminating collection of her choicest treasures. Her Noah's Ark, her picture-books, her colored balls and blocks, her woolly lambs that moved on wheels, her miniature croquet set, all fell into their ruthless young hands and, as a crowning crime, were dumped into the little go-cart that was the very apple of Genevieve Maud's round eyes. It squeaked under its burden as the children drew it carefully along the hall. They carried it down-stairs with exaggerated caution, but Genevieve Maud saw it from afar, and, deeply moved by their thoughtfulness, approached with gurgles of selfish appreciation. The conspirators exchanged glances of despair. It was the intrepid spirit of Helen Adeline that coped with the distressing situation. Sitting down before her victim, she took Maudie's reluctant hands in hers and gazed deep into her eyes as mamma was wont to gaze into hers on the various occasions when serious talks became necessary.

"Now, Genevieve Maud," she began, "you mus' listen an' you mus' mind, or you can't play. Ain't you havin' a good time? If you don't want to do what we say, we'll put your clothes right straight on again an' leave you in the midst of your pomps an' vaneries: an' then—what 'll become of your soul?" She paused impressively to allow this vital question to make its full appeal. Genevieve Maud writhed and squirmed.

"But," continued Helen Adeline, solemnly, "if you do jus' as we say, we'll let you play some more." The larger issue was temporarily lost sight of this

time, but the one presented seemed to appeal vividly to Genevieve Maud.

"Let Genevieve Maud play some more," she wheedled.

"And will you do everything we say?"

"Do everything you say," promised Genevieve Maud, recklessly.

"Very well,"—this with a fidelity in its imitation to her mother's manner which would have convulsed that admirable and long-suffering woman could she have heard it. "An' first of all we mus' give away your toys to poor children."

The mouth of Genevieve Maud opened. Helen Adeline held up a warning hand, and it shut.

"They're *pomps*," repeated the older sister, positively, "an' we'll bring you simple toys if poor children will exchange with us."

This was at least extenuating. Genevieve Maud hesitated and sniffed. In the matter of being stripped, toys were more important than clothes.

"If you don't, you know, you can't play," Grace Margaret reminded her.

"Awright," remarked Genevieve Maud, briefly. "Give toys to poor chil'ren."

They hurriedly left her before her noble purpose could do so, and Genevieve Maud, left to her own resources, made unctuous mud pies and fed them to her family, with considerable satisfaction to herself, but with marring effects on the dolls who received this diet in their complexions. Grace Margaret and Helen Adeline returned in triumph within the hour and laid at the feet of their small victim modest offerings consisting of one armless rubber doll, one dirty and badly torn picture-book, and one top, broken.

"These is simple," declared Helen Adeline, with truth, "an' the poor Murphy children has your pomps, Maudie. Are you glad?"

Genevieve Maud, surveying doubtfully the nondescript collection before her, murmured without visible enthusiasm something which was interpreted as meaning that she was glad. As a matter of fact, the charm of the simple life was not borne in upon her compellingly. The top she accepted until she discovered that it would not go. The rubber doll she declined to touch until Grace Margaret suggested that it had been in a hospital and had had its arms amputated

like Mrs. Clark's son Charlie. Deeply moved by the pathos of this tragic fate, Genevieve Maud added the rubber doll to her aristocratic family, whose members seemed to shrink aside as it fell among them. The picture-book Genevieve Maud declined to touch at all.

"It's dirty," she remarked, with an air of finality which effectually closed the discussion. By this time she was not herself an especially effective monument of cleanliness. The rice pudding and the mud pies had combined to produce a somewhat bizarre effect, and the dirt she had casually gathered from the paths, the flower-beds, and the hedges enlivened but did not improve the ensemble.

"She ought to be washed pretty soon," suggested Grace, surveying her critically; but to this tacit criticism Helen Adeline promptly took exception.

"They don't have to, so much," she objected, "when it's the simple life. That's one of the nice things."

With this decision Genevieve Maud was well content. Her tender years forbade hair-splitting and subtle distinctions; the term "accumulated dirt" or "old dirt" had no significance for her. She could not have told why she rejected the Murphy child's thoroughly grimed picture-book, yet herself rolled happily about in a thin coating of mud and dust, but she did both instinctively.

Her attention was pleasantly distracted by subdued cries from the street beyond the garden hedge. Three Italian women, all old, stood there gesticulating freely and signalling to the children, and a small ragged boy on crutches hovered nervously near them. Helen Adeline jumped to her feet with a sudden exclamation.

"It's the poor!" she said, excitedly. "For your money, Genevieve Maud. I told them to come. Get the bank, Gracie, an' she mus' give it all away!"

Grace departed promptly on her errand, but there was some delay in opening the bank when she returned—an interval filled pleasantly by the visitors with interested scrutiny of the shameless Genevieve Maud, whose airy unconsciousness of her unconventional appearance uniquely attested her youth. When the money finally came, rolling out in pennies, five-cent pieces, and rare dimes, the look of good-natured wonder in the old black



eyes peering wolfishly over the hedge changed quickly to one of keen cupidity, but the children saw nothing of this. Helen Adeline divided the money as evenly as she could into four little heaps.

"It's all she has," she explained, grandly, "so she's got to give it all to you, 'cos riches is poms an' ruins souls. Give it, Genevieve Maud," she continued, magnanimously surrendering the centre of the stage to the novice in the simple life.

Genevieve Maud handed it over with a fat and dirty little paw, and the women and the lame boy took it uncritically, with words of thanks and even with friendly smiles. Strangely enough, there was no quarrelling among themselves over the distribution of the spoils. For one golden moment they were touched and softened by the gift of the baby hand that gave its all so generously. Then the wisdom of a speedy disappearance struck them and they faded away, leaving the quiet street again deserted. Helen Adeline drew a long breath as the bright gleam of their kerchiefs disappeared around a corner.

"That's good," she exclaimed, contentedly. "Now what else can we make her do?"

The two pair of eyes rested meditatively on the unconscious little sister, again lost to her surroundings in the construction of her twenty-third mud pie. Not even the surrender of her fortune beguiled her from this unleavened joy of the simple life. "We've made her do 'most everything, I guess," admitted Grace Margaret, with evident reluctance. It appeared so, indeed. Stripped of her clothing, her money, and her toys, it would seem that little in the way of earthly possessions was left to Genevieve Maud; but even as they looked again, Grace Margaret had an inspiration.

"Don't they work when they have simple lives?" she asked, abruptly.

"Course they work."

"Then let's have Genevieve Maud do our work!"

There was silence for a moment—silence filled with the soul-satisfying enjoyment of a noble conception.

"Grace Margaret Davenport," said Helen, solemnly, "you're a smart girl!" She exhaled a happy sigh, and added: "Course we'll let her! She must work.

She can water the geraniums for you an' the pansies for me, an' gather up the croquet things for me an' take them in, an' fill Rover's water-basin, an' get seed for the birds, an' pick up all the paper an' leaves on the lawn."

It is to be deplored that the active and even strenuous life thus outlined did not for the moment appeal to Genevieve Maud when they brought its attractions to her attention. The afternoon was fading, and Genevieve Maud was beginning to fade too; her active little feet were tired and her fat legs seemed to curve more in her weariness of well-doing; but the awful threat of being left out of the game still held, and she struggled bravely with her task, while the two arch-conspirators reposed languidly and surveyed her efforts from beneath the willow-tree.

"It 'll be her bedtime pretty soon," suggested Helen Adeline, the suspicion of a guilty conscience lurking in the remark. "She can have her bread and milk like she always does—that's simple 'nuff. But do you think she ought to sleep in that handsome brass crib?"

Grace Margaret did not think so, but she was sadly puzzled to find a substitute.

"Mamma won't let her sleep anywhere else, either," she pointed out.

"Mamma won't know."

"Annie or Katie will know—p'r'aps."

The "p'r'aps" was tentative. Annie and Katie had taken full advantage of the liberty attending the illness of their mistress, and their policy with the children was one of masterly inactivity. So long as the children were quiet they were presumably good and hence, to a surety, undisturbed. Still, it is hardly possible that even their carelessness would fail to take account of Genevieve Maud's unoccupied bed, if unoccupied it proved to be.

"An' certinly papa will know."

Helen Adeline's last hope died with this sudden reminder. She sighed. Of course papa would come to kiss his chicks good night, but that was hours hence. Much could be done in those hours. Her problem was suddenly simplified, for even as she bent her brows and pondered, Grace Margaret called her attention to an alluring picture behind her. Under the shelter of a blossoming white hydrangea lay Genevieve Maud fast asleep. It was

a dirty and an exhausted Genevieve Maud, worn with the heat and toil of the day, scratched by bush and brier, but wonderfully appealing in her helplessness—so appealing, that Helen Adeline's heart yearned over her. She conquered the momentary weakness.

"I think," she suggested, casually, "she ought to sleep in the barn."

Grace Margaret gasped.

"It ain't a simple life sleepin' in lovely gardens," continued the authority, with simple but thrilling conviction. "An'—wasn't the Infant Jesus born in barns?"

Grace Margaret essayed a faint protest.

"Papa won't like it," she began, feebly.

"He won't know. Course we won't let her *stay* there! But just a little while, to make it finish right—the way it ought to be."

The holding up of such lofty ideals of consistency conquered Grace Margaret—so thoroughly, in fact, that she helped to carry the sleeping Genevieve Maud not only to the barn, but even, in a glorious inspiration, to Rover's kennel—a roomy habitation and beautifully clean. The pair deposited the still sleeping innocent there and stepped back to survey the effect. Helen Adeline drew a long breath of satisfaction. "Well," she said, with the content of an artist surveying the perfect work, "if that ain't simple lives, I don't know what it is!"

They stole out of the place and into the house. The shadows lengthened on the floor of the big barn, and the voices of children in the street beyond grew fainter and finally died away. Lights began to twinkle in neighboring windows. Rover, returning from his friendly visit, sought his home, approached its entrance confidently, and retreated with a low growl. The baby slept on, and the dog, finally recognizing his playmate, stretched himself before the entrance of his kennel and loyally mounted guard, with a puzzled look in his faithful brown eyes. The older children, lost in agreeable conversation and the attractions of baked apples and milk toast, forgot Genevieve Maud and the flying hours.

It was almost dark when their father came home, and after a visit to the bedside of his wife, looked to the welfare of his children. The expression on the faces of the two older ones as they sud-

denly grasped the fact of his presence explained in part the absence of the third. Mr. Davenport had enjoyed the advantages of eleven years of daily association with his daughter Helen Adeline.

"Where is she?" he asked, briefly, with a slight prickling of the scalp.

In solemn procession, in their nighties, they led him to her side; and the peace of the perfumed night as they passed through the garden was broken with explanations and mutual recriminations and expressions of unavailing regret. Rover rose as they approached and looked up into his master's eyes, wagging his tail in eager welcome.

"Here she is," he seemed to say. "It's all right. I looked after her."

The father's eyes grew dim as he patted the dog's fine head and lifted the naked baby in his arms. Her little body was cold, and she shivered as she awoke and looked at him. Then she gazed down into the conscience-stricken faces of her sisters and memory returned. It drew from her one of her rare spontaneous remarks.

"Don't yike simple lives," announced Genevieve Maud, with considerable firmness. "Don't yant to play any more."

"You shall not, my babykins," promised her father, huskily. "No more simple life for Genevieve Maud, you may be sure."

Later, after the hot bath and the supper which both her father and the trained nurse had supervised, Genevieve Maud was tucked cozily away in the little brass crib which had earlier drawn out the stern disapproval of her sisters. Her round face shone with cold cream. A silver mug, full of milk, stood beside her bed, on her suggestion that she might become "firsty" during the night. Finding the occasion one of unlimited indulgence and concession, she had demanded and secured the privilege of wearing her best nightgown—one resplendent with a large pink bow. In her hand she clasped a fat cookie.

Helen Adeline and Grace Margaret surveyed this sybaritic scene from the outer darkness of the hall.

"Look at her poor perishin' body full of comforts," sighed Helen Adeline, dismally. Then, with concentrated bitterness, "I s'pose we'll never dare to even *think* 'bout her soul again!"

# William Dean Howells

BY MARK TWAIN

IS it true that the sun of a man's mentality touches noon at forty and then begins to wane toward setting? Dr. Osler is charged with saying so. Maybe he said it, maybe he didn't; I don't know which it is. But if he said it, and if it is true, I can point him to a case which proves his rule. Proves it by being an exception to it. To this place I nominate Mr. Howells.

I read his *Venetian Days* about forty years ago. I compare it with his paper on Machiavelli in a late number of *Harper*, and I cannot find that his English has suffered any impairment. For forty years his English has been to me a continual delight and astonishment. In the sustained exhibition of certain great qualities—clearness, compression, verbal exactness, and unforced and seemingly unconscious felicity of phrasing—he is, in my belief, without his peer in the English-writing world. *Sustained*. I intrench myself behind that protecting word. There are others who exhibit those great qualities as greatly as does he, but only by intervalled distributions of rich moonlight, with stretches of veiled and dimmer landscape between; whereas Howells's moon sails cloudless skies all night and all the nights.

In the matter of verbal exactness Mr. Howells has no superior, I suppose. He seems to be almost always able to find that elusive and shifty grain of gold, the *right word*. Others have to put up with approximations, more or less frequently; he has better luck. To me, the others are miners working with the goldpan—of necessity some of the gold washes over and escapes; whereas, in my fancy, he is quicksilver raiding down a riffle—no grain of the metal stands much chance of eluding him. A powerful agent is the right word: it lights the reader's way and makes it plain; a close approximation to it will answer, and much travelling is done in a well-enough

fashion by its help, but we do not welcome it and applaud it and rejoice in it as we do when *the* right one blazes out on us. Whenever we come upon one of those intensely right words in a book or a newspaper the resulting effect is physical as well as spiritual, and electrically prompt: it tingles exquisitely around through the walls of the mouth and tastes as tart and crisp and good as the autumn-butter that creams the sumac-berry. One has no time to examine the word and vote upon its rank and standing, the automatic recognition of its supremacy is so immediate. There is a plenty of acceptable literature which deals largely in approximations, but it may be likened to a fine landscape seen through the rain; the right word would dismiss the rain, then you would see it better. It doesn't rain when Howells is at work.

And where does he get the easy and effortless flow of his speech? and its cadenced and undulating rhythm? and its architectural felicities of construction, its graces of expression, its pemmican quality of compression, and all that? Born to him, no doubt. All in shining good order in the beginning, all extraordinary; and all just as shining, just as extraordinary to-day, after forty years of diligent wear and tear and use. He passed his fortieth year long and long ago; but I think his English of to-day—his perfect English, I wish to say—can throw down the glove before his English of that antique time and not be afraid.

I will go back to the paper on Machiavelli now, and ask the reader to examine this passage from it which I append. I do not mean, examine it in a bird's-eye way; I mean search it, study it. And, of course, read it aloud. I may be wrong, still it is my conviction that one cannot get out of finely wrought literature all that is in it by reading it mutely: