Woolson Constance Fenimore

East Angels: A Novel

Constance Woolson

East Angels: A Novel

Woolson C.

East Angels: A Novel / C. Woolson — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

Constance Fenimore Woolson
East Angels: A Novel

CHAPTER I

"I think, more than anything else, I came to be under blue sky."

"Are you fond of sky?" said the young girl who was sitting near the speaker, her eyes on the shimmering water of the lagoon which stretched north and south before the house.

"I can't lay claim to tastes especially celestial, I fear," answered the visitor, "but I confess to a liking for an existence which is not, for six months of the year, a combat. I am mortally tired of our long northern winters, with their eternal processions of snow, ice, and thaw – thaw, ice, and snow; I am tired of our springs – hypocritical sunshine pierced through and through by east winds; and I have at last, I think, succeeded in breaking loose from the belief that there is something virtuous and heroic in encountering these things – encountering them, I mean, merely from habit, and when not called to it by any necessity. But this emancipation has taken time – plenty of it. It is directly at variance with all the principles of the country and creed in which I was brought up."

"You have good health, Mr. Winthrop?" asked Mrs. Thorne, in a tone which was prepared to turn with equal appreciation towards sympathy if he were, and congratulation if he were not, the possessor of the lungs which classify a person, and give him an occupation for life.

"Do I look delicate?"

"On the contrary, you look remarkably well," answered his hostess, sure of her ground here, since even an invalid likes to be congratulated upon an appearance of health: not only is it more agreeable in itself, but it gives him the opportunity to explain (and at some length) that all is illusory merely, a semblance; an adjustment of the balances between resignation and heroism which everybody should admire. "Yes," Mrs. Thorne went on, with a critical air which seemed to say, as she looked at him, that her opinions were founded upon unprejudiced scrutiny, "wonderfully well, indeed – does he not, Garda?"

"Mr. Winthrop looks well; I don't know that it is a wonder," replied Edgarda Thorne, in her soft voice. "He has been everywhere, and seen everything," she added, turning her eyes towards him for a moment – eyes in which he read envy, but envy impersonal, concerning itself more with his travels, his knowledge of many places, his probable adventures, than with himself.

"Mr. Winthrop is accustomed to a largeness of opportunity," remarked Mrs. Thorne; "but it is his natural atmosphere." She paused, coughed slightly, and then added, "He does not come into the ports he enters with banners flying, with rockets and cannon, and a brass band at bow and stern."

"You describe an excursion steamer on the Fourth of July," said Winthrop.

"Precisely. One or two of the persons who have visited Gracias-á-Dios lately have seemed to us not unlike that," answered the lady.

Mrs. Thorne had a delicate little voice, pitched on rather a high key, but so slender in volume that, like the pure small note of a little bird, it did not offend. Her pronunciation was very distinct and accurate – that is, accurate according to the spelling; they knew no other methods in the conscientious country school where she had received her education. Mrs. Thorne pronounced her *t* in "often," her *l* in "almond," her "again" rhymed with "plain."

"Did you mean that you, too, would like to go everywhere and see everything, Miss Thorne?" said Evert Winthrop, addressing the daughter. "I assure you it's dull work."

"Naturally – after one has had it all." She spoke without again turning her eyes towards him.

"We are kept here by circumstances," observed Mrs. Thorne, smoothing the folds of her black gown with her little withered hand. "I do not know whether circumstances will ever release us – I do

not know. But we are not unhappy meanwhile. We have the old house, with its many associations; we have our duties and occupations; and if not frequent amusement, we have our home life, our few dear friends, and our affection for each other."

"All of them crowned by this same blue sky which Mr. Winthrop admires so much," added Garda.

"I see that you will always hold me up to ridicule on account of that speech," said Winthrop. "You are simply tired of blue. As a contrast you would welcome, I dare say, the dreariest gray clouds of the New England coast, and our east wind driving in from the sea."

"I should welcome snow," answered Garda, slowly; "all the country covered with snow, lying white and dead – that is what I wish to see. I want to walk on a frozen lake with ice, real ice over deep water, under my feet. I want to breathe freezing air, and know how it feels. I want to see trees without any leaves on them; and a snow-storm when the flakes are very big and soft like feathers; and long icicles hanging from roofs; and then, to hear the wind whistle round the house, and be glad to draw the curtains and bring my chair close to a great roaring fire. Think of that – to be *glad* to come close to a great roaring fire!"

"I have described these things to my daughter," said Mrs. Thorne, explaining these wintry aspirations to their guest in her careful little way. "My home before my marriage was in the northern part of New England, and these pictures from my youth have been Garda's fairy tales."

"Then you are not English?" said Winthrop. He knew perfectly that she was not, but he wished to hear the definite little abstract of family history which, in answer to his question, he thought she would feel herself called upon to bestow. He was not mistaken.

"My husband was English – that is, of English descent," she explained – "and I do not wonder that you should have thought me English also, for I have imbibed the family air so long that I have ended by really becoming one of them. We Thornes are very English; but we are the English of one hundred and fifty years ago. *We* have not moved on, as no doubt the English of to-day have been obliged to move; *we* have remained stationary. Even in dear old England itself, we should to-day, no doubt, Garda and I, be called old-fashioned."

Winthrop found himself so highly entertained by this speech, by her "We Thornes," and her "dear old England," that he looked down lest she should see the change of expression which accompanies a smile, even though the smile be hidden. This little woman had never been in England in her life; unmistakable New Hampshire looked from her eyes, sounded in every tone of her voice, made itself visible in all her movements and attitudes. She was unceasingly anxious; she had never indulged herself in anything, or taken anything lightly since she was born; she had as little body as was possible, and in that body she had to the full the strict American conscience. All this was vividly un-English.

"Yes, I always regret so much the modern ways into which dear England has fallen," she went on. "It would have been beautiful if they could but have retained the old customs, the old ideas, as we have retained them here. But in some things they have done so," she added, with the air of wishing to be fully just. "In the late unhappy contest, you know, they were with us – all their best people – as to our patriarchal system for our servants. They understood us – us of the South – completely."

Winthrop's amusement had now reached its highest point. "Heroic, converted little Yankee school-marm," was his thought. "What a colossal effort her life down here must have been for her, poor thing!"

"Your husband was the first of the American Thornes, then?" he said, with the intention of drawing out more narrative.

"Oh no. The first Edgar Thorne came out from England with Governor Tonyn (the friend of Lord Marchmont, you know), during the British occupation of this province in the last century; he remained here after the retrocession to Spain, because he had married a daughter of one of the old Spanish families of this coast, Beatriz de Duero. As Beatriz was an only child, they lived here with her

parents, and the second Edgar Thorne, their son, was born here. He also married a Duero, a cousin named Ines; my husband, the third Edgar, was their child. My husband came north one summer; he came to New England. There he met me. We were married not long afterwards, and I returned with him to his southern home. Edgarda was but two years old when her dear father was taken from us."

"Miss Thorne resembles her Spanish more than her English ancestors, I fancy?" said Winthrop, looking at the handle of his riding-whip for a moment, perhaps to divest the question of too closely personal a character, the young lady herself being beside him. But this little by-play was not needed. Mrs. Thorne had lived a solitary life so long that her daughter, her daughter's ancestors, her daughter's resemblances (the last, indeed, might be called historical), seemed to her quite natural subjects for conversation; if Winthrop had gazed at Garda herself, instead of at the handle of his riding-whip, that would have seemed to her quite natural also.

"Edgarda is the portrait of her Spanish grandmother painted in English colors," she answered, in one of her neatly arranged little phrases.

"An anomaly, therefore," commented Garda, who seemed rather tired of the turn the conversation had taken. "But it can do no harm, Medusa-fashion, because fastened forever upon a Florida wall."

"A Florida wall is not such a bad thing," answered Winthrop. "I am thinking a little of buying one for myself."

"Ah, a residence in Gracias-á-Dios?" said Mrs. Thorne, her small, bright blue eyes meeting his with a sort of screen suddenly drawn down over them – a screen which he interpreted as a quick endeavor on her part to conceal in their depths any consciousness that a certain desirable old Spanish mansion was possibly to be obtained, and for a price which, to a well-filled purse of the north, might seem almost comically small.

"No; I do not care for a house in the town," he answered. "I should prefer something outside – more of a place, if I should buy at all."

"I cannot imagine why any one should wish to buy a place down here now," said Garda. "A house in Gracias-á-Dios, with a rose garden and a few orange-trees, is all very well; you could stay there for two months or so in the winter, and then close it and go north again. But what could you do with a large place? Cotton and sugar are no longer worth raising, now that we have no slaves. And as to one of the large orange groves that people are beginning to talk about, there is no one here who could manage it for you. You would have to see to it yourself, and that you could never do. To begin with, the climate would kill you; and then there are the snakes."

"Being already dead, the snakes would hardly trouble me, I suppose, unless you refer to future torments," said Winthrop, laughing. "Allow me to congratulate you upon your picture of the agricultural resources of the country. They have never before been so clearly presented to me; it is most interesting."

Garda shook her head, repressing a smile. But still she did not look at him.

"In purchasing a place here Mr. Winthrop may not be thinking of agriculture; he may be thinking only of climate," remarked Mrs. Thorne, mildly, to her daughter.

"Climate – that is blue sky, I suppose," said Garda; "I acknowledge that there is an abundance of that here. But I advise Mr. Winthrop to buy but a small piece of ground as his standing-point, and to take his sky out perpendicularly; he can go up to any height, you know, as high as the moon, if he likes. That would be ever so much wiser than to have the same amount spread out horizontally over a quantity of swamp-land which no person in his senses could wish to own."

"But the land about here strikes me as remarkably dry," observed their visitor, amused by the girl's opposition to an idea which he had as yet so faintly outlined. He suspected, however, that she was not combating him so much as she was combating the possibility of a hope in the breast of her little mother. But poor Mrs. Thorne had been very discreet; she had not allowed herself to even look interested.

"It is as dry as the Desert of Sahara," Garda answered, with decision, "and it is as wet as a wet sponge. There is this dry white sand which you see on the pine-barrens – miles upon miles of it. Then, stretching across it here and there come the great belts of bottomless swamp. *That* is Florida."

"Your description is a striking one," said Winthrop, gravely. "You make me feel all the more desirous to own a little of such a remarkable combination of wet and dry."

Garda glanced at him, and this time her smile conquered her. Winthrop was conscious of a pleasure in having made her look at him and smile. For it was not a matter of course that she would do either. His feeling about her had been from the first that she was the most natural young girl he had ever met – that is, in the ranks of the educated. There was a naturalness, of course, in the Indian girls, whom he had seen in the far West, which probably exceeded Garda's; but that sort of naturalness he did not care for. Garda was natural in her own graceful way, singularly natural; her glance and her smile, while not so ready, nor so promptly hospitable as those of most girls of her age, seemed to him to possess a quality which he had come to consider almost extinct – the quality of frank, undisturbed sincerity.

"I sometimes regret that I described to my daughter so often the aspects of my northern home," said Mrs. Thorne. "It was a pleasure to me at the time (it had been a great change for me, you know), and I did not realize that they were becoming exaggerated to her, these descriptions – more beautiful than the reality. For she has dwelt too much upon them; by contrast she over-estimates them. The South, too, has its beautiful aspects: that we must allow."

Winthrop fancied that he detected a repressed plaintiveness in her tone. "She thinks her daughter cruel to keep on beating down so ruthlessly her poor little hope," was his thought. Then he answered the spoken sentence: "As she has never seen these things for herself, your descriptions must have been vivid."

"No; it is her imagination that is that."

"True – I have myself had an example of her imagination in her remarks upon agriculture."

Garda laughed. "I shall say no more about agriculture, blue sky, or anything else," she declared.

"You leave me, then, to take care of myself?"

"You do not need my assistance, I never waste it."

"I should have pretended to be quite helpless! That's the second mistake I have made this afternoon. If I had only let it be supposed that my health was delicate, Mrs. Thorne would have been much more interested in me."

"Oh no, Mr. Winthrop," said his hostess, earnestly; "you are quite mistaken. Good health is in itself full of the deepest interest, I am sure, and especially at the present day, when it is so singularly rare. I am most glad you possess it – most glad indeed."

"I possess enough of it, at any rate, to go over the place, if you will be so kind," said Winthrop. "You know you promised me that pleasure some day, and why not this afternoon? There is a delightful breeze."

Mrs. Thorne dropped her eyes to the tips of her black cloth slippers, visible beneath the skirt of her gown. These little shoes one could scarcely fail to see, since the skirt, which was neatness itself in its decent black folds, was rather scanty and short. Their age and well-worn thinness, the skilful mending of their worst places, the new home-made bindings, the fresh ribbon bows bravely tied, told a story to the observers of delicate things.

But while Mrs. Thorne surveyed her slippers, her daughter was replying: "It would hardly amuse you to go over the place, Mr. Winthrop; there is really nothing to see but the crane."

"Let us go, then, and see the crane."

"Mamma would be so delighted, you know. But she never walks."

"Not far," corrected Mrs. Thorne. "I am not strong, not able to walk far."

"And I should be delighted, too," continued Garda, "only I am so sleepy. I have fallen into the habit of spending my afternoons in the hammock; that makes me immensely drowsy just at this hour."

"I feel like an interloper," said Winthrop; "say a large mosquito."

"You needn't. It's not well to sleep so much," replied Miss Thorne, calmly.

"Certainly you know how to console. Is that the hammock in which you pass your happy existence?"

"Not existence; only afternoons. You really wish to go?" she added, seeing that he had taken his hat from the chair beside him. "We will send Raquel with you, then, as guide."

"Raquel?"

"Haven't you noticed her? She lets you in when you come. She is an important personage with us, I assure you; her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother lived on the place here before her."

Winthrop recalled the portly jet-black negress who, in answer to his knock, had opened the lower door.

"Three generations make aristocracy in America," he replied; "I am afraid of so distinguished a guide. If doomed to go without Mrs. Thorne or yourself, why may I not go alone?"

"You would never find the magnolias, you would come into the live-oak avenue at the wrong end, you would look at the ruin from its commonplace side, you would see only the back of the Cherokee roses, the crane would not dance for you, the wild cattle would run at you, and you would inevitably get into the swamp," answered the girl, checking off the items one by one on her pretty fingers.

"I have confessed my fear of Raquel, and now you display before me this terrible list of dangers. Don't you think it would be but common charity to come with me yourself? My conversation is not exciting; you could easily sleep a little, between-times, as we walk."

"I believe you have had your own way all your life," remarked Garda, "or you would never persist as you do. Your humility is nothing but a manner; in reality you expect everything to be done for you by everybody."

"Not by everybody," Winthrop responded.

Mrs. Thorne had coughed as Garda ended her speech. Mrs. Thorne often coughed, and her coughs had a character of their own; they did not appear to be pulmonary. They were delicate little sounds which came forth apologetically, shielded by her hand, never quite completed; they were not coughs so much as suggestions of coughs, and with these suggestions she was in the habit of filling little pauses in the conversation, covering up the awkwardnesses or mistakes of others (there were never any of her own to cover), or acting as hyphen for disjointed remarks when people had forgotten what they were going to say. It was, indeed, a most accomplished cough, all Gracias had been indebted to it. Lately, too, she had begun to use it to veil her own little periods of consultation with herself regarding her daughter; for she seemed by no means certain of the direction which this daughter's thoughts or words might take, and the uncertainty troubled her careful maternal mind. Garda, however, though often out of sight round some unexpected corner, was never far distant; the hurrying elderly comprehension always caught up with her before long; but these periods of uncertainty, combined with cares more material, had ended by impressing upon Mrs. Thorne's face the look of anxiety which was now its most constant expression – an anxiety covered, however, as much as possible, by the mask of minutely careful politeness which fitted closely over it, doing its best to conceal, or, failing in that, to at least mark as private, the personal troubles which lay underneath.

"Mamma's cough means that I am not sufficiently polite," said Garda; "I always know what mamma's cough means." She rose, passed behind her mother's chair, and bending forward over her small head, lightly kissed her forehead. "I will go, mamma," she said, caressingly. "I will be beautifully good, because to-morrow is your birthday; it ought to be a dear little day, about six hours long, to fit you."

"I am fortunate to have asked my favor upon the eve of an anniversary," said Winthrop.

"You are," answered Garda, taking her broad-brimmed hat from the nail behind her. "It's only upon such great occasions that I am really and angelically good – as mamma would like me to be all the time."

"I will send Raquel after you, my daughter, with the umbrellas," said Mrs. Thorne, with a little movement of her lips and throat, as though she had just swallowed something of a pleasant taste, which was, with her, the expression of content.

"Surely it is not going to rain?" said Winthrop, examining the sky.

"They are sun-umbrellas; you may need them," answered his hostess, with a certain increased primness of accentuation, which immediately brought to his mind the idea that the carrier of these articles would represent the duenna whom she considered necessary.

"A Spanish graft, that, on the original New England tree," was his mental comment. "I wonder how many more there are?"

But the descendant of the Spaniards was speaking for herself. "We do not want Raquel, mamma; we can carry the umbrellas ourselves." And she passed into the darkened drawing-room, from which opened the little balcony where they had been sitting.

Winthrop, after taking leave of Mrs. Thorne, followed Garda. But he had the conviction that a duenna of some sort, though it might not be Raquel, would be improvised from that balcony before long, and sent after them.

He had already paid several visits to these ladies, and knew his way through the interior dimness, but the old house still attracted him, and he did not hurry his steps; he looked again at the rooms, which, with their few articles of furniture, had to northern eyes an appearance of cool shaded emptiness, the broad open spaces having been purposely left to give place for the free passage of air. The vaulted ceilings deep in shadow, the archways in place of the northern doors, one room panelled to the top in dark polished wood which glimmered dimly as he passed through – all these he liked to note. Beyond, the stone stairway made a leisurely, broad-stepped descent. The high wainscot on the wall at its side showed pomegranates stiffly carved in low relief, and the balustrade of the same dark wood ended in a clumsy column, with a heavy wreath of the fruit wound round it, the conventional outlines worn into vagueness by the touch of time.

The old house was built of stone, the porous shell-conglomerate of that coast. The thick blocks had been covered with an outer coat of plaster, and painted a shadeless gray-white. The structure extended itself over a large space of ground. Blank, unadorned, covered by a flat roof, without so much as the projection of a cornice to break their monotony, the walls stretched evenly round a parallelogram, and having but two stories of height, looked low in comparison with their length. But the old house in reality was not so large as it appeared to be, these same walls with their lining of rooms enclosing an interior court which was open to the sky; the windows of the inner sides looked down upon a low-curbed well, a clump of bananas, a rose-bush, and an ancient stone seat with a hook above it, where had hung in his cage, until he died of old age, Mrs. Thorne's northern canary, who had accompanied his mistress southward on her wedding journey to Florida.

Viewed from without, the gray-white abode had a peculiarly dumb aspect. On the north side there were no windows; on the south, east, and west the windows of the lower story, few at best, were covered by solid wooden shutters, which, being all kept closed, and having the same hue as the walls, could scarcely be distinguished from them. The windows of the upper story were more numerous, but almost as jealously guarded; for though their shutters were here and there partially open, one could see that in a trice they could all be drawn to and barred within, and that then the old mansion would present an unbroken white wall to all points of the compass. But once allowed to pass the door, solidly set in the stone, without top or side lights, the visitor perceived that these rooms with exterior windows darkened, opened widely upon the sunny court within. Some of them, indeed, did more. The inner walls of the ground-floor had been cut away in four places, leaving rounded open arches with pillars supporting the second story, and, under these arcades, there were chairs and tables and

even a sofa visible, articles which presented to Evert Winthrop's eyes, each time he came, a picture of tropical and doorless confidence in the temperature which struck him as delightful. These arcades were not so unprotected as they appeared to be. Still, as the months went by, it could be said with truth that they remained, for five-sixths of the year, thus widely open. Evert Winthrop had spent his childhood and youth in New England, he had visited all parts of the great West, in later years he had travelled extensively in the Old World; but this was his first visit to that lovely southern shore of his own country which has a winter climate more enchanting than any that Europe can offer; to match it, one must seek the Madeira Islands or Algiers. In addition to this climate, Winthrop was beginning to discover that there were other things as well – old Spanish houses like the one through which he was now passing, a flavor of tradition and legend, tradition and legend, too, which had nothing to do with Miles Standish and his companions, or even with that less important personage, Hendrik Hudson. There was – he could not deny it – a certain comparative antiquity about this southern peninsula which had in it more richness of color and a deeper perspective than that possessed by any of the rather blank, near, little backgrounds of American history farther north. This was a surprise to him. Like most New-Englanders, he had unconsciously cherished the belief that all there was of historical importance, of historical picturesqueness even, in the beginnings of the republic, was associated with the Puritans from whom he was on his father's side descended, was appended to their stately hats and ruffs, their wonderful perseverance, their dignified orthography, the solemnities of their speech and demeanor. And if, with liberality, he should stretch the lines a little to include the old Dutch land-holders of Manhattan Island, and the river up which the *Half-moon* had sailed, that had seemed to him all that could possibly be necessary; there was, indeed, nothing else to include. But here was a life, an atmosphere, to whose contemporary and even preceding existence on their own continent neither Puritan nor Patroon had paid heed; and it was becoming evident that he, their descendant, with all the aids of easy communication, and that modern way of looking at the globe which has annihilated distance and made a voyage round it but a small matter – even he, with all this help, had not, respecting this beautiful peninsula of his own country, developed perceptions more keen than those of these self-absorbed ancestors – an appreciation more delicate than their obtuse one. Winthrop's appreciation was good. But it had been turned, as regarded historical and picturesque associations, principally towards the Old World. He now went through a good deal of meditation upon this subject; he was pleased, yet, on the whole, rather ashamed of himself. When Raphael was putting into the backgrounds of his pictures those prim, slenderly foliaged trees which he had seen from Perugino's windows in his youth, the Spaniards were exploring this very Florida shore; yet when he, Evert Winthrop, had discovered the same tall, thin trees (which up to that time he had thought rather an affectation) from the overhanging balcony of the little inn at Assisi – it had seemed to overhang all Umbria – did he not think of Raphael's day as far back in the past, and as completely remote from the possibility of any contemporary history in America as America is remote from the future great cities of the Sahara plains? And when, in Venice, he dwelt with delight upon the hues of Titian and Veronese, was he not sure (though without thinking of it) that in their day the great forests of his own New World untrodden by the white man's foot, had stretched unbroken to the sea? Because no Puritan with grave visage had as yet set sail for Massachusetts Bay, he had not realized that here on this southern shore had been towns and people, governors, soldiers, persecutions, and priests.

"I presume you intend to show me everything in its worst possible aspect," he said, as he joined Garda in the sunny court below. She was waiting for him beside the bananas, which were here not full grown – tall shrubs that looked, with their long-winged leaves standing out stiffly from their stalks, like green quill-pens that a giant might use for his sonnet-writing.

"No; I have withdrawn my guardianship – don't you remember? You must now guard yourself."

"From the great temptations opening before me."

"They may be such to you; they are not to me. I think I have never met any great temptations; I wonder when they will begin?"

They had crossed the court, and passed through a cool, dark, stone-floored hall on the other side; here they went out through a low door, which Raquel opened for them. Winthrop declined the white umbrella which this stately handmaid offered him, and as Garda would not let him carry the one she had taken, he walked on beside her with his hands in the pockets of his short morning-coat, looking about him with enjoyment, as he usually did at East Angels. The façade of the house which looked towards the lagoon was broken by the small balcony, roofed and closely shaded by green blinds, where they had been sitting, and where the hammock was swung. This little green cage, hung up on the side of the house, had no support from below; there was neither pillar nor trellis; not even a vine wandered up to its high balustrade. The most agile Romeo could not have climbed to it. But a Romeo, in any case, could not have approached near enough to attempt such a feat, since a wide space of open ground, without tree or shrub upon it, extended from the house-walls outward to a certain distance on all sides. Winthrop had already noticed these features – the heavy barred shutters of the lower floor, the high-hung little balcony, the jealous open space – he had pronounced them all very Spanish. He now looked about him again – at the dumb old house, the silvery sheen of the lagoon, the feathery tops of the palmettoes on Patricio opposite, the blue sky, and the sunny sea stretching eastward to Africa. "I ask nothing more," he said at last. "*This* is content."

His companion glanced at him. "You do look wonderfully contented," she commented.

"It amuses you? Perhaps it vexes you?"

"Neither. I was only wondering what there could be here to make you so contented."

This little speech pleased the man beside her highly. He said to himself that in the mind of a girl accustomed to the ways of the world, it would have belonged to the list of speeches too obvious in application to be made; while a little country coquette would have said it purposely. But Garda Thorne had spoken both naturally and indifferently, without thinking or caring as to what he might say in reply.

"I was remembering," he answered, "that at home all the rivers are frozen over, not to speak of the water-pipes, and that ice-blocks are grinding against each other in the harbor; is it any wonder, then, that in this charming air I should be content? But there are various degrees even in contentment, and I should reach a higher one still if you would only let me carry that umbrella." For she had opened it, and was holding it as women will, not high enough to admit him under its shade, but at just the angle that kept him effectually at a distance on account of the points which were dangerously on a level, now with his hat, now with his collar, now with some undefended portion of his face. He had always admired the serenity with which women will pass through a crowded street, raking all the passers-by as they go with an umbrella held at just that height, the height that suits themselves; smilingly and with agreeable countenances they advance, without the least conception, apparently, of the wild dodging they force upon all persons taller than themselves, of the wrath and havoc they are leaving behind them.

"No man knows how to hold a sun-umbrella," answered Garda. "To begin with, he never has the least idea where the sun is."

"I have learned that when you say 'To begin with,' there is small hope for us. Might I offer the suggestion, humbly, that there may be other methods of holding umbrellas in existence, besides those prevalent in Gracias."

Garda laughed. Her laugh was charming, Winthrop had already noticed that; it was not a laugh that could be counted upon, it did not come often, or upon call. But when it did ripple forth it was a distinct laugh, merry and sweet, and not the mere magnified smile, or the two or three shrill little shouts in a descending scale, which do duty as laughs from the majority of feminine lips. Its influence extended also to her eyes, which then shot forth two bright beams to accompany it. "I see that it will not do to talk to you as I talk to – to the persons about here," she said.

"Are there many of them – these persons about here?"

"Four," replied Garda, promptly. "There is Reginald Kirby, surgeon. Then there is the Reverend Mr. Moore, rector of St. Philip and St. James. Then we have Adolfo Torres, from the Giron plantation, south of here, and Manuel Ruiz, from Patricio, opposite."

"A tropical list," said Winthrop; "discouragingly tropical."

"But I'm tropical myself," Garda responded.

She was taking him through a narrow path, between what had once been hedges, but were now high tangled walls, overrun with the pointed leaves of the wild smilax. The girl had a light step, but if light, it was not quick; it could have been best described, perhaps, by the term unhurrying, a suggestion of leisure lay in each motion, from the poise of the small head to the way the pretty feet moved over the path or floor. Winthrop disliked a hurried step, he disliked also a tardy one; the step that is light but at the same time leisurely – this seemed to him to mark the temperament that gets the most out of life as a whole, certainly the most of pleasure, often too the most of attainment. Garda Thorne had this step. In her case, probably, there had been more of pleasure than of attainment. She did not indeed strike one as a person who had given much thought to attainment, whether of scholarship or housewifely skill, of needle-work or graceful accomplishments, or even of that balance of conscience, that trained obedience of the mind, which are so much to many of her sisters farther north. But these same sisters farther north would have commented, probably, commented from the long, rocky coast of New England, and from the many intelligent communities of the Middle States, that no woman need trouble herself about attainment, or anything else, if she were as beautiful as Edgarda Thorne.

For in their hearts women always know that of all the gifts bestowed upon their sex that of beauty has so immeasurably the greatest power that nothing else can for one moment be compared with it, that all other gifts, of whatsoever nature and extent, sink into insignificance and powerlessness beside it. It is, of course, to the interest of domestic men, the good husbands and fathers who are satisfied with home comforts and home productions, and desire nothing so much as peace at the hearth-stone, to deny this fact, to qualify it as much as possible, and reduce its universality. But the denials of these few, contented, low-flying gentlemen are lost in the great tide of world-wide agreement, and no one is deceived by them, save, in occasional instances, their own wives, who in that case have been endowed by nature with much faith (or is it self-complacence?), and powers of observation not much beyond those of the oyster. But on that long New England coast already spoken of, and in those pleasant, pretty towns of the Middle States, observation has been keenly cultivated, and self-complacence held in abeyance by much analysis. All the northern sisters who lived there would probably have answered again, and with one voice, that with simply the most ordinary good qualities in addition, a girl as beautiful as Edgarda Thorne would carry all before her in any case.

Garda was of medium height, but her litheness made her seem tall. This litheness had in it none of the meagre outlines of the little mother, its curves were all moulded with that soft roundness which betrays a southern origin. But the observer was not left to this evidence alone, there was further and indisputable proof in her large, dark, beautiful, wholly Spanish eyes. She had, in truth, been well described by Mrs. Thorne's phrase – "the portrait of her Spanish grandmother, painted in English colors." The tints of her complexion were very different from the soft, unchanging, creamy line which had been one of the beauties of the beautiful Ines de Duero; Garda's complexion had the English lightness and brightness. But it was not merely pink and white; there were browns under its warm fairness – browns which gave the idea that it was acquainted with the open air, the sun, the sea, and enjoyed them all. It never had that blue look of cold which mars at times the beauty of all women who are delicately fair; it never had the fatal shade of yellow that menaces the brunette. It was a complexion made for all times and all lights; pure and clear, it had also a soft warmth of color which was indescribably rich. The lustrous black braids of Ines de Duero had been changed in her granddaughter to braids equally thick, but in color a bright brown; not the brown that is but golden hair grown darker, nor that other well-known shade, neither light nor dark, which covers the heads of so many Americans that it might almost be called the national color; this brown had always been bright,

had never changed; the head of the little Garda of two years old had showed a flossy mass of the same hue. This hair curled slightly through all its length, which gave the braids a rippled appearance. It had, besides, the beauty of growing low and thickly at the temples and over the forehead. The small head it covered was poised upon a throat which was not a mere point of union, an unimportant or lean angle to be covered by a necklace or collar; this throat was round, distinct in outline, its fairness beautiful not only in front, but also behind, under and at the edges of the hair where the comb had lifted the thick, soft mass and swept it up to take its place in the braids above. Garda's features were fine, but they were not of the Greek type, save that the beautiful forehead was low; the mouth was not small, the lips full, delicately curved. When she smiled, these lips had a marked sweetness of expression. They parted over brilliantly white teeth, which, with the colors in her hair and complexion, were the direct gifts of English ancestors, as her dark eyes with their long, curling, dark lashes, the thickness of her brown braids, her rounded figure with its graceful unhurrying gait and high-arched little feet, were inheritances from the Dueros.

But written words are not the artist's colors; they can never paint the portrait which all the world can see. A woman may be described, and by a truthful pen, as possessing large eyes, regular features, and so on through the list, and yet that woman may move through life quite without charm, while another who is chronicled, and with equal truthfulness, as having a profile which is far from showing accordance with artists' rules, may receive through all her days the homage paid to loveliness alone. The bare catalogue of features, tints, and height does not include the subtle spell whose fulness crowns the one, while its lack mars the other, and a narrator, therefore, while allowing himself as detailed a delineation as it pleases him to give, should set down plainly at the end the result, the often mysterious and unexpected whole, which the elements he has described have, in some occult manner, combined to produce. "There was an enchantment in her expression," "There was an irresistible sweetness about her;" these phrases tell more than the most minute record of hue and outline; they place the reader where he would be were the living, breathing presence before him, instead of the mere printed page.

But in the case of Garda Thorne it could have been said that she had not only brilliant beauty, but the loveliness which does not always accompany it. There was sufficient regularity in her face to keep from it the term irregular; but it had also all the changing expressions, all the spirit, all the sweetness, which faces whose features are not by rule often possess. She had undoubtedly a great charm, a charm which no one had as yet analyzed; she was not a girl who turned one's thoughts towards analysis, one was too much occupied in simply admiring her. She was as open as the day, her frankness was wonderful; it would have been said of her by every one that she had an extraordinary simplicity, were it not that the richness of her beauty threw over her a sort of sumptuousness which did not accord with the usual image of pure, rather meagre limpidity called up by the use of that word.

Evert Winthrop, beholding her for the first time in the little Episcopal church of Gracias, had said to himself that she was the most beautiful girl (viewing the matter impersonally) whom he had ever seen. Impersonally, because he would have set down his personal preference as decidedly for something less striking, for eyes of blue rather than black, eyes which should be not so much lustrous as gentle, for smooth hair of pale gold, a forehead and eyebrows like those of a Raphael Madonna. He was sure, also, that he much preferred slenderness; even a certain virginal thinness and awkwardness he could accept, it might be part of the charm. A friend of his, a lady older than himself, upon hearing him express these sentiments not long before, had remarked that they shed a good deal of light backward over his past. When he asked her what she meant, she added that a liking for little wild flowers in a man of the world of his age, and an indifference to tea-roses, did not so much indicate a natural simplicity of taste as something quite apart from that – too long an acquaintance, perhaps, with the heavily perfumed atmosphere of conservatories.

"I don't know what you are trying to make me out," Winthrop had answered, laughing.

"I make you out a very good fellow," replied the lady. "But you are like my husband (who is also a very good fellow); he wonders how I can go to the theatre, plays are so artificial. I suppose

they are artificial; but I notice that it required his closest – I may almost say his nightly – attention for something like fifteen years to find it out."

Winthrop happened to think of this little conversation – he knew not why – as he followed his guide through her green-walled path, which had now become so narrow that he could no longer walk by her side. As it came up in his mind he said to himself that here was a tea-rose, growing if not quite in the seclusion of untrodden forests where the wild flowers have their home, then at least in natural freedom, in the pure air and sunshine, under the open sky. There was – there could be – nothing of the conservatory, nothing artificial, in the only life Edgarda Thorne had known, the life of this remote southern village where she had been born and brought up. Her knowledge of the world outside was – must be – confined to the Spanish-tinted legends of the slumberous little community, to the limited traditions of her mother's small experience, and to the perceptions and fancies of her own imagination; these last, however numerous they might be in themselves, however vivid, must leave her much in the condition of a would-be writer of dramas who has never read a play nor seen one acted, but has merely evolved something vaguely resembling one from the dreaming depths of his own consciousness; Garda's idea of the world beyond the barrens must be equally vague and unreal. And then, as he looked at her, sweet-natured and indifferent, walking onward with her indolent step over her own land, under the low blue sky, it came over him suddenly that probably she had not troubled herself to evolve anything, to think much of any world, good or bad, outside of her own personality. And he said to himself that wherever she was would be world enough for most men. In which class, however, he again did not include Evert Winthrop.

The path made a sudden turn, and stopped. It had brought them to the borders of a waste.

"This was one of the sugar fields," said Garda, with her little air of uninterested proprietorship.

Two old roads, raised on embankments, crossed the level, one from north to south, the other from east to west. The verge upon which they stood had once been a road also, though now narrowed and in some places blocked by the bushes which had grown across it. "A little farther on, beyond that point, you will find our ruin," said Garda. "There will not be time to sketch it, I will wait for you here."

"You are deserting me very soon."

"I am not deserting you at all, I intend to take you remorselessly over the entire place. But there are thorns in those bushes, and thorns are dangerous."

"I know it, I am already wounded."

"I mean that the briers might tear my dress," explained Miss Thorne, with dignity.

This stately rejection of so small and, as it were, self-made a pun entertained her companion highly; it showed how unfamiliar she was with the usual commonplaces. Talking with her would be not unlike talking with a princess in a fairy tale – one of those who have always lived mysteriously imprisoned in a tower; such a damsel, regarding her own rank, would be apt to have a standard which might strike the first comer as fantastically high. His entertainment, however, was not visible as, with a demeanor modelled upon the requirements of her dignity, he bent back the thorny bushes of the green cape, and made a passageway for her round its point. When his little roadway was finished, she came over it with her leisurely step, as though (he said to himself) it and the whole world, including his own poor individuality, belonged to her by inherited right, whenever she should choose to claim them. He was well aware that he was saying to himself a good many things about this girl; but was it not natural – coming unexpectedly upon so much beauty, set in so unfamiliar a frame? It was a new portrait, and he was fond of portraits; in picture-galleries he always looked more at the portraits than at anything else.

On the opposite side of the thorny cape the ruin came into view, standing back in a little arena of its own. Two of its high stone walls remained upright, irregularly broken at the top, and over them clambered a vine with slender leaves and long curling sprays that thrust themselves boldly out into the air, covered with bell-shaped, golden blossoms. This was the yellow jessamine, the lovely wild jessamine of Florida.

"You will look at it, please, from the other side," announced Garda; "it looks best from there. There will not be time to sketch it."

"Why do you keep taking it for granted that I sketch? Do I look like an artist?"

"Oh no; I've never seen an artist, but I'm sure you don't look like one. I suppose you sketch simply because I suppose northerners can do everything; I shall be fearfully disappointed if they cannot – when I see them."

"Do you wish to see them?"

"I wish to see hundreds," answered Miss Thorne, with great deliberation, "I wish to see thousands. I wish to see them at balls; I have never seen a ball. I wish to see them driving in parks; I have never seen a park. I wish to see them climbing mountains; I have never seen a mountain – "

"They don't do it in droves, you know," interpolated her companion.

" – I wish to see them in the halls of Congress; I have never seen Congress. I wish to see them at the Springs; I have never seen Springs. I wish to see them wearing diamonds; I have never seen diamonds – "

"The last is a wish easily gratified. In America, as one may say, the diamond's the only wear," remarked Winthrop, taking out a little linen-covered book.

Garda did not question this assertion, which reduced her own neighborhood to so insignificant an exception to a general rule that it need not even be mentioned. To her Florida was Florida. America? That was quite another country.

"You are going to sketch, after all," said the girl. She looked about her for a conveniently shaped fragment among the fallen blocks, and, finding one, seated herself, leaning against a second sun-warmed fragment which she took as her chair's back. "I thought I mentioned that there would not be time," she added, indolently, in her sweet voice.

"It will take but a moment," answered Winthrop. "I am no artist, as you have already mentioned; but, plainly, as a northerner, I must do something, or fall hopelessly below your expectations. There is no mountain here for me to climb, there is no ball at which I can dance. I'm not a Congressman and can't tell you about the 'halls,' and I haven't a diamond to my name, not one. Clearly, therefore, I must sketch; there is nothing else left." And with slow, accurate touch he began to pencil an outline of the flower-starred walls upon his little page. Garda, the handle of her white umbrella poised on one shoulder, watched him from under its shade. He did not look up nor break the silence, and after a while she closed her eyes and sat there motionless in the flower-perfumed air. Thus they remained for fully fifteen minutes, and Winthrop, going on with his work, admired her passiveness, he had never before seen the ability to maintain undisturbed an easy silence in a girl so young. True, the silence had in it something of that same element of indifference which he had noted in her before; but one could pardon her that for her tranquillity, which was so charming and so rare.

"Ah – sketching?" said a voice, breaking the stillness. "Yes – yes – the old mill has, I suppose, become an object of antiquity; we must think of it now as venerable, moss-grown."

Garda opened her eyes. "Jessamine-grown," she said, extending her hand.

The new-comer, whose footsteps had made no sound on the sand as he came round the cape of thorns, now crossed the arena, and made a formal obeisance over the little glove; then he threw back his shoulders, put his hands behind him, and remained standing beside her with a protecting, hospitable air, which seemed to include not only herself and the stranger artist, but the ruin, the sky, the sunshine, and even to bestow a general benediction upon the whole long, warm peninsula itself, stretching like a finger pointing southward from the continent's broad palm into the tropic sea.

But now Miss Thorne laid her white umbrella upon the heap of fallen blocks beside her, and rose; she did this as though it were something of a trouble, but a trouble that was necessary. She walked forward several steps, and turned first towards the new-comer, then towards the younger gentleman. "Let me present to you, Doctor, Mr. Evert Winthrop, of New York," she said, formally.

"Mr. Winthrop, this is our valued friend, Mr. Reginald Kirby, surgeon, of Gracias-á-Dios." She then returned to her seat with the air of one who had performed an important task.

Dr. Kirby now advanced and offered his hand to Winthrop. He was a little man, but a little man with plenty of presence; he bore – if one had an eye for such things – a general resemblance to a canary-bird. He had a firm, plump little person, upon which his round, partly bald head (visible as he stood with hat doffed) was set, with scarcely any intervention of neck; and this plump person was attired in nankeen-colored clothes. His face showed a small but prominent aquiline nose, a healthily yellow complexion, and round, bright black eyes. When he talked he moved his head briskly to and fro upon his shoulders, and he had a habit of looking at the person he was addressing with one eye only, his face almost in profile, which was most bird-like of all. In addition, his legs were short in proportion to his body, and he stood on his small, well-shaped feet much as a canary balances himself on his little claws.

"I am delighted to meet you, sir," he said to Winthrop. "I esteem it a fortunate occurrence, most fortunate, which brought me to East Angels this evening to pay my respects to Mistress Thorne, thus obtaining for myself, in addition, the pleasure of your acquaintance. Mistress Thorne having mentioned to me that you were making a little tour of the place with Miss Garda, I offered to bear you company during a portion, at least, of your progress, for Miss Garda, though possessing an intelligence delicately keen, may not (being feminine) remember to present you with the statistics, the – as I may say – historical items, which would naturally be interesting to a northerner of discrimination." The Doctor had a fine voice; his words were borne along on it like stately ships on the current of a broad river.

"Do not praise me too highly," said the possessor of the delicate intelligence, from her block. "I could never live up to it, you know."

"Miss Thorne has said many interesting things," answered Winthrop, "but she has not as yet, I think, favored me with anything historical; her attention has perhaps been turned rather more to the agricultural side."

"Agricultural?" said Kirby, bringing to bear upon Winthrop a bright left eye.

"He is making sport of me," explained Garda, laughing.

"Pooh! pooh!" said the Doctor, raising himself a little, first on his toes, then on his heels, thus giving to his plump person a slightly balancing motion to and fro. "A little more seriousness, Garda, my child; a little more seriousness." Then, with his hands behind him, he turned to Winthrop to present, in his full tones, one of the historical items of which he had spoken. "These walls, Mr. Winthrop, whose shattered ruins now rise before you, once formed part of a large sugar-mill, which was destroyed by the Indians during the Seminole war. This province, sir, has had a vast deal of trouble with her Indians – a vast deal. The nature of the country has afforded them every protection, and clogged pursuit with monstrous difficulties, which, I may add, have never been in the least appreciated by those unfamiliar with the ground. The records of our army – I speak, sir, of the old army," said the Doctor, after a moment's pause, making his little explanation with a courteous wave of the hand, which dismissed, as between himself and the guest of Mistress Thorne, all question as to the army which was newer – "these records, sir, are full of stories of the most harassing campaigns, made up and down this peninsula by our soldiers, in pursuit – vain pursuit – of a slippery, creeping, red-skinned, damnable foe. Canebrake, swamp, hammock; hammock, swamp, canebrake; ague, sunstroke, everglade; fever, scalping, ambuscade; and massacre – massacre – massacre! – such, sir, are the terms that succeed each other endlessly on those old pages; words that represent, I venture to say, more bravery, more heroic and unrequited endurance, than formed part of many a campaign that shines out to-day brilliantly on history's lying scroll. Yet who knows anything of them? I ask you, who?" The Doctor's fine voice was finer still in indignation.

"As it happens, by a chance, I do," answered Winthrop. "A cousin of my father's was in some of those campaigns. I well remember the profound impression which the Indian names in his letters

used to make upon me when a boy – the Withlacoochee, the Caloosahatchee, the Suwannee, the Ocklawaha; they seemed to me to represent all that was tropical and wild and far, far away."

"They represented days of wading up to one's waist in stiff marsh-grass and water, sir. They represented rattlesnakes, moccasins, and adders, sir. They represented every plague of creation, from the mosquito down to the alligator, that great pig of the Florida waters. They represented long, fruitless tramps over the burning barrens, with the strong probability of being shot down at the last by a cowardly foe, skulking behind a tree," declaimed the Doctor, still indignant. "But this cousin of yours – would you do me the favor of his name?"

"Carey – Richard Carey."

"Ah! Major Carey, without doubt," said the little gentleman, softening at once into interest. "Allow me – was he sometimes called Dizzy Dick?"

"I am sorry to say that I have heard that name applied to him," answered Winthrop, smiling.

"Sir, you need not be," responded the other man, with warmth; "Dizzy Dick was one of the finest and bravest gentlemen of the old army. My elder brother Singleton – Captain Singleton Kirby – was of his regiment, and knew and loved him well. I am proud to take a relative of his by the hand – proud!" So saying, the Doctor offered his own again, and the two men went gravely through the ceremony of friendship a second time, under the walls of the old mill.

"Returning to our former subject," began the Doctor again – "for I hope to have many further opportunities for conversation with you concerning your distinguished relative – I should add, while we are still beside this memento, that the early Spanish settlers of this coast – "

"As a last wish," interrupted Garda, in a drowsy voice, "wait for the resurrection."

"As a last wish?" said the Doctor, turning his profile towards her with his head on one side, in his canary-bird way.

"Yes. I see that you have begun upon the history of the Spaniards in Florida, and as I shall certainly fall asleep, I think I ought to protect, as far as possible beforehand, my own especial ancestors," she answered, still somnolent; "they always have that effect upon me – the Spaniards in Florida." And as she slowly pronounced these last words the long lashes drooped over her eyes, she let her head fall back against the block behind her, and was apparently lost in dreams.

In this seeming slumber she made a lovely picture. But its chief charm to Evert Winthrop lay in the fact that it had in it so much more of the sportiveness of the child than of the consciousness of the woman. "I am interested in the old Spaniards, I confess," he said, "but not to the extent of allowing them to put you to sleep in this fashion. We will leave them where they are for the present (of course Elysium), and ask you to take us to the crane; his powers of entertainment are evidently greater than our own." And he offered his hand as if to assist her to rise.

"I am not quite gone yet," replied Garda, laughing, as she rose without accepting it. "But we must take things in their regular order, the magnolias come next; the crane, as our greatest attraction, is kept for the last." And she led the way along a path which brought them to a grove of sweet-gum-trees; the delicately cut leaves did not make a thick foliage, but adorned the boughs with lightness, each one visible on its slender stalk; the branches were tenanted by a multitude of little birds, whose continuous carols kept the air filled with a shower of fine small notes.

"How they sing!" said Winthrop. "I am amazed at myself for never having been in Florida before. The Suwannee River can't be far from here.

> ""'Way down upon de Suwannee River,
> Far, far away – '

I must confess that Nilsson's singing it is the most I know about it."

"Nilsson!" said Garda, envyingly.

"You, sir, are too young, unfortunately too young, to remember the incomparable Malibran," said Dr. Kirby. "Ah! there was a voice!" And with recollections too rich for utterance, he shook his head several times, and silently waved his hand.

"Oh, when shall *I* hear something or somebody?" said Garda.

"We shall accomplish it, we shall accomplish it yet, my dear child," said the Doctor, coming briskly back to the present in her behalf. "Malibran is gone. Her place can never be filled. But I hope that you too may cross the seas some day, and find, if not the atmosphere of the grand style, which was hers and perished with her, at least an atmosphere more enlarging than this. And there will be other associations open to you in those countries besides the musical – associations in the highest degree interesting; you can pay a visit, for instance, to the scenes described in the engaging pages of Fanny Burney, incomparably the greatest, and I fear, from the long dearth which has followed her, the last of female novelists. For who is there since her day worthy to hold a descriptive pen, and what has been written that is worth our reading? With the exception of some few things by two or three ladies of South Carolina, which I have had the privilege of seeing, and which exist, I regret to say, only in manuscript as yet, I know of nothing – no one."

Winthrop glanced at Garda to see if her face would show merriment over the proposed literary pilgrimage. But no, the young girl accepted Miss Burney calmly; she had heard the Doctor declaim on the subject all her life, and was accustomed to think of the lady as a celebrated historical character, as school-boys think of Helen of Troy.

Beyond the grove, they came to the Levels. Great trees rose here, extending their straight boughs outward as far as they could reach, touching nothing but the golden air. For each stood alone, no neighbor near; each was a king. Black on the ground beneath lay the round mass of shadow they cast. Above, among the dense, dark foliage, shone out occasional spots of a lighter green; and this was the mistletoe. Besides these monarchs there were sinuous lines of verdure, eight and ten feet in height, wandering with grace over the plain. Most of the space, however, was free – wide, sunny glades open to the sky. The arrangement of the whole, of the great single trees, the lines of lower verdure, and the sunny glades, was as beautiful as though Art had planned and Time had perfected the work. Time's touch was there, but Art had had nothing to do with it. Each tree had risen from the ground where it and Nature pleased; birds, perhaps, with dropped seeds, had been the first planters of the lower growths. Yet it was not primeval; Winthrop, well used to primeval things, and liking them (to gratify the liking he had made more than one journey to the remoter parts of the great West), detected this at once. Open and free as the Levels were, he could yet see, as he walked onward, the signs of a former cultivation antecedent to all this soft, wild leisure. His eye could trace, by their line of fresher green, the course of the old drains crossing regularly from east to west; the large trees were sometimes growing from furrows which had been made by the plough before their first tiny twin leaves had sprouted from the acorn which had fallen there. "How stationary things are here!" he said, half admiringly. He was thinking of the ceaseless round of change and improvement which went on, year after year, on the northern farms he knew, of the thrift which turned every inch of the land to account, and made it do each season its full share. The thrift, the constant change and improvement, were best, of course; Winthrop was a warm believer in the splendid industries of the great republic to which he belonged; personally, too, there was nothing of the idler in his temperament. Still, looked at in another way, the American creed for the moment dormant, there was something delightfully restful in the indolence of these old fields, lying asleep in the sunshine with the low furrows of a hundred years before stretching undisturbed across them. Here was no dread, no eager speed before the winter. It was, in truth, the absence of that icy task-master which gave to all the lovely land its appearance of dreaming leisure. Growing could begin at any time; why, then, make haste?

"All this ground was once under cultivation," said the Doctor. "The first Edgar Thorne (your great-grandfather, Garda) I conjecture to have been a man of energy, who improved the methods of the Dueros; these Levels probably had a very different aspect a hundred years ago."

"A hundred years ago – yes, that was the time to have lived," said Garda. "I wish I could have lived a hundred years ago!"

"I don't know what we can do," said Winthrop. "Perhaps Dr. Kirby would undertake for a while the stately manners of your Spanish ancestors; I could attempt, humbly, those of the British colonist; I haven't the high-collared coat of the period, but I would do my best with the high-collared language which has been preserved in literature. Pray take my arm, and let me try."

Garda, looking merrily at the Doctor, accepted it.

"Arms were not taken in those days," said the Doctor, stiffly. "Ladies were led, delicately led, by the tips of their fingers." He was not pleased with Garda's ready acceptance; but they had kept her a child, and she did not know. He flattered himself that it would be an easy matter to bring about a withdrawal of that too freely accorded hand from the northerner's arm; he, Reginald Kirby, man of the world and noted for his tact, would be able to accomplish it. In the mean while, the hand remained where it was.

Beyond the Levels they came to the edge of a bank. Below, the ground descended sharply, and at some distance forward on the lower plateau rose the great magnolias, lifting their magnificent glossy foliage high in the air. "The Magnolia Grandiflora," said the Doctor, as if introducing them. "You no doubt feel an interest in these characteristically southern trees, Mr. Winthrop, and if you will walk down there and stand under them for a moment – the ground is too wet for your little shoes, Garda – you will obtain a very good idea of their manner of growth."

Miss Thorne made no objection to this suggestion. But neither did she withdraw her hand from Winthrop's arm.

"I can see them perfectly from here," answered that gentleman. "They are like tremendous camellias."

"When they are in bloom, and all the sweet-bays too, it is superb," said Garda; "then is the time to come here, the perfume is enchanting."

"Too dense," said the Doctor, shaking his head disapprovingly; "it's fairly intoxicating."

"That is what I mean," Garda responded. "It's as near as I can come to it, you know; I have always thought I should love to be intoxicated."

"What is your idea of it?" said Winthrop, speaking immediately, in order to prevent the Doctor from speaking; for he saw that this gentleman was gazing at Garda with amazement, and divined the solemnity his words would assume after he should have got his breath back.

"I hardly know how to describe my idea," Garda was answering. "It's a delicious forgetting of everything that is tiresome, an enthusiasm that makes you feel as if you could do anything – that takes you way above stupid people. Stupid people are worse than thieves."

"You describe the intoxication, or rather, to give it a better name, the inspiration of genius," said Winthrop; "all artists feel this inspiration at times – musicians, poets, painters, sculptors, all who have in them a spark, great or small, of the creative fire; even I, when with such persons – as by good fortune I have been once or twice – have been able to comprehend a little of it, have caught, by reflection at least, a tinge of its glow."

"Oh, if *you* have felt it, it is not at all what I mean," answered Garda, with one of her sudden laughs. She drew her hand from his arm, and walked down the slope across the lower level towards the magnolias.

As soon as her back was turned, Dr. Kirby tapped Winthrop on the back impressively, and raising himself on tiptoe, spoke in his ear. "She has never, sir, been near – I may say, indeed, that she has never *seen*– an intoxicated person in her life." He then came down to earth again, and folding his arms, surveyed the northerner challengingly.

"Of course I understood that," Winthrop answered.

When Garda reached the dark shade under the great trees she paused and turned. Winthrop had followed her. She gave him a bright smile as he joined her. "I wanted to see if you would come," she said, with her usual frankness.

"Of course I came; what did you suppose I would do?"

"I did not know, that was what I wanted to find out. You are so different, I should never know."

"Different from whom? From your four persons about here? I assure you that I am not different, I have no such pretension; your four are different, perhaps, but I am like five thousand, fifty thousand, others – as you will see for yourself when you come north."

"I don't believe it," said Garda, beginning to retrace her steps. She looked at him reflectively, then added, "I don't believe they are like you."

"What is it in me that you dislike so much?"

"Oh, I haven't thought whether I dislike it or not," responded Garda, with what he called in his own mind her sweet indifference. "What I meant was simply that I do not believe there are fifty thousand, or five thousand, or even five hundred other men, who are as cold as you are."

"Do I strike you in that way?"

"Yes; but of course you cannot help it, it is probably a part of your nature – this coldness," said the girl, excusingly. "It was that which made me say that you could never have felt the feeling I was trying to describe, you know – intoxication; it needs a certain sort of temperament; I have it, but you haven't."

"I see you are an observer," said her companion, inwardly smiling, but preserving a grave face.

"Yes," responded Garda, serenely, "I observe a great deal; it helps to pass the time."

"You have opportunities for exercising the talent?"

"Plenty."

"The four persons about here?"

Garda's laugh rippled forth again. "My poor four – how you make sport of them! But I should have said five, because there is the crane, and he is the wisest of all; he is wiser than any one I know, and more systematic, he is more systematic even than you are, which is saying a great deal. His name is Carlos Mateo, and you must be careful not to laugh at him when he dances, for a laugh hurts his feelings dreadfully. His feelings are very deep; you might not think so from a first glance, but that will be because you have not looked deep into his eyes – taken him round the neck and peered in. He has a great deal of expression; you have none at all – what has become of it? Did you never have any, or have you worn it all out? Perhaps you keep it for great occasions. But there will be no great occasions here."

"No, great occasions are at the North, where they are engaged in climbing mountains, walking on frozen lakes, wearing diamonds, and attending the halls of Congress," Winthrop answered.

Dr. Kirby was waiting for them on the bank, he had not stained his brightly polished little boots with the damp earth of the lower level. He had surveyed with inward disfavor the thick-soled walking shoes of the northerner, and the rough material of his gray clothes. The northerner's gloves were carelessly rolled together in his pocket, but the Doctor's old pair were on.

Garda led the way westward along the bank. After they had proceeded some distance, in single file owing to the narrowness of the path, she suddenly left her place, and, passing the Doctor, took Winthrop's hand in hers. "Close your eyes," she commanded; "I am going to lead you to a heavenly wall."

Winthrop obeyed; but retarded his steps.

"How slow you are!" she said, giving his hand a little pull.

"It's a wild country for a blind man," Winthrop answered, continuing to advance with caution. "Please take both hands."

"Let me lead him, Garda," said the Doctor, preferring to join in this child's play rather than have her continue it alone.

But the child's play was over, the bend in the path had been but a short one, and they were now before her "heavenly wall." Winthrop, upon being told to open his eyes – he had perhaps kept them closed longer than was absolutely necessary – found himself standing before a wall of verdure, fifteen feet high, composed of a mass of shining little leaves set closely together in an almost even expanse; this lustrous green was spangled with white flowers widely open, the five petals laid flatly back like a star.

"The Cherokee rose," said Dr. Kirby. He had been greatly vexed by Garda's freak of taking Winthrop's hands and pulling him along, and as he added, explanatorily, "the wild white rose of the South," he glanced at him to see how he, as a northerner and stranger, regarded it.

But the stranger and northerner was gazing at the southern flowers with an interest which did not appear to depend at all upon the southern girl who had brought him thither.

Garda remained but a moment; while they were looking at the roses she walked slowly on, following her heavenly wall.

"She is but a child," said the Doctor, looking after her. "We have perhaps kept her one too long."

"On the contrary, that is her charm," replied Winthrop. "How old is she?"

"Barely sixteen. If her father had lived, it would perhaps have been better for her; she would have had in that case, probably, more seriousness – a little more. Mistress Thorne's ideas concerning the training of children are admirable, most admirable; but they presuppose a certain kind of child, and Garda wasn't that kind at all; I may say, indeed, the contrary. Mistress Thorne has therefore found herself at fault now and then, her precedents have failed her; she has been met by perplexities, sometimes I have even thought her submerged in them and floundering – if I may use such an expression of the attitude of a cultured lady. The truth is, her perceptions have been to blame."

"Yet I have thought her perceptions unusually keen," said Winthrop.

"So they are, so they are; but they all advance between certain lines, they are narrow. Understand me, however – I would not have them wider; I was not wishing that, I was only wishing that poor Edgar, the father, could have lived ten years longer. Too wide a perception, sir, in a woman, a perception of things in general – general views in short – I regard as an open door to immorality; women so endowed are sure to go wrong – as witness Aspasia. It was a beautiful provision of nature that made the feminine perceptions, as a general rule, so limited, so confined to details, to the opinions and beliefs of their own families and neighborhoods; in this restricted view lies all their safety."

"And ours?" suggested Winthrop.

"Ah, you belong to the new school of thought, I perceive," observed the Doctor, stroking his smoothly shaven chin with his plump gloved hand.

The two men had begun to walk onward again, following their guide who was now at the end of the rose wall. Here she disappeared; when they reached the spot they found that she had taken a path which turned northward along a little ridge – a path bordered on each side by stiff Spanish-bayonets.

"Garda's education, however, has been, on the whole, good," said the Doctor, as they too turned into this aisle. "Mistress Thorne, who was herself an instructress of youth before her marriage, has been her teacher in English branches; Spanish, of course, she learned from the Old Madam; my sister Pamela (whom I had the great misfortune to lose a little over a year ago) gave her lessons in embroidery, general deportment, and the rudiments of French. As regards any knowledge of the world, however, the child has lived in complete ignorance; we have thought it better so, while things remain as they are. My own advice has decidedly been that until she could enter the right society, the society of the city of Charleston, for instance – it was better that she should see none at all; she has therefore lived, and still continues to live, the life, as I may well call it, of a novice or nun."

"The young gentleman who has just joined her is then, possibly, a monk?" observed Winthrop.

The Doctor was near-sighted, and not at all fond of his spectacles; with his bright eyes and quickly turning glance, it humiliated him to be obliged to take out and put on these cumbrous aids to vision. On this occasion, however, he did it with more alacrity than was usual with him. "Ah," he

said, when he had made out the two figures in front, "it is only young Torres, a boy from the next plantation."

"A well-grown boy," commented the northerner.

"A mere stripling – a mere stripling of nineteen. He has but lately come out from Spain (a Cuban by birth, but was sent over there to be educated), and he cannot speak one word of English, sir – not one word."

"I believe Miss Thorne speaks Spanish, doesn't she?" remarked Winthrop.

CHAPTER II

The Doctor admitted that Garda could converse in Spanish. He suggested that they should walk on and join her; joining her, of course, meant joining Torres. The Cuban proved to be a dark-skinned youth, with dull black eyes, a thin face, and black hair, closely cut, that stood up in straight thickness all over his head, defying parting. He was tall, gaunt, with a great want of breadth in the long expanse of his person; he was deliberate in all his motions; ungainly. Yet he could not have been described as insignificant exactly; a certain deep reticent consciousness of his own importance, which was visible in every one of his slow, stiff movements, in every glance of his dull, reserved eyes, saved him from that. He bowed profoundly when introduced to the northerner, but said nothing. He did not speak after the others came up. When Garda addressed him, he contented himself with another bow.

They all walked on together, and after some minutes the little ridge, winding with its sentinel bayonets across old fields, brought them to the main avenue of the place. This old road, broad as it was, was completely overarched by the great live-oaks which bordered it on each side; the boughs rose high in the air, met, interlaced, and passed on, each stretching completely over the centre of the roadway and curving downward on the opposite side; looking east and looking west was like looking through a Gothic aisle, vaulted in gray-green. The little party entered this avenue; Garda, after a few moments, again separated herself from Winthrop and Dr. Kirby, and walked on in advance with Torres. The Doctor looked after them, discomfited.

"We should have spoken Spanish," said Winthrop, smiling.

"I do not know a word of the language!" declared the Doctor, with something of the exasperation of fatigue in his voice.

For the Doctor was not in the habit of walking, and he did not like to walk; the plump convexes of his comfortable person formed, indeed, rather too heavy a weight for his small feet in their little boots. But he was far too devoted a family friend to be turned back from obvious duty by the mere trifle of physical fatigue; he therefore waved his hand towards the live-oaks, and (keeping one eye well upon Garda and her companion in front) resumed with grace his descriptive discourse. "These majestic old trees, Mr. Winthrop, were set out to adorn the main avenue of the place, leading from the river landing up to the mansion-house. You will find a few of these old avenues in this neighborhood; but far finer ones – the finest in the world – at the old places on the Ashley and Cooper rivers, near the city of Charleston."

"But there are no trees near the house," said Winthrop; "I noticed that particularly."

"The road goes to the door, the trees stop at the edge of the open space; that space was left, as you have probably divined, as a protection against surprises by Indians."

The younger man laughed. "I confess I was thinking more of the traditional Spanish jealousy than of Indians. You are right, of course; I must not allow my fancies, which are, after all, rather operatic in their origin, to lead me astray down here."

"You will find, I think, very little that is operatic among us," said Kirby, a trace of sombreness making itself felt for the first time through the courteous optimism of his tone. Truly there had been little that was operatic in their life at the South for some years past.

"I don't know," said Winthrop. "Isn't that rather an operatic personage who has just stopped Miss Thorne? The Tenor himself, I should say."

The spectacles were safely in their case, and back in the Doctor's pocket. But he now made haste to take them out a second time, he knew of no Tenors in Gracias. When he had adjusted them, "It's only Manuel Ruiz," he said, with both relief and vexation in his tone. He was relieved that it was only Manuel, but vexed that he should have been led, even for a moment, to suppose that it might be some one else, some one who was objectionable (as though objectionable persons could penetrate into their society!); and he asked himself inwardly what the deuce this northerner meant by calling

their arrangement of their land "operatic," and their young gentlemen "Tenors." "Manuel Ruiz is the son of an old friend of ours; their place is on Patricio, opposite," he said, frigidly. "The Ruiz family were almost as well known here in the old Spanish days as the Dueros."

He had no time for more, for, as Garda had stopped, they now came up with the little party in front.

Manuel Ruiz was older than Torres. Manuel was twenty-one. He was a tall, graceful youth, with a mobile face, eloquent dark eyes, and a manner adorned with much gesture and animation. He undoubtedly cherished an excellent opinion of Manuel Ruiz; but undoubtedly also there was good ground for that opinion, Manuel Ruiz being a remarkably handsome young man. That Winthrop should have called him operatic was perhaps inevitable. He wore a short black cloak, an end of which was tossed over one shoulder after the approved manner of the operatic young gentleman when about to begin, under the balcony of his lady-love, a serenade; on his head was a picturesque sombrero, and he carried, or rather flourished, a slender cane, which might have been a rapier; these properties, together with his meridional eyes, his gestures, and the slight tendency to attitude visible in his graceful movements, made him much like the ideal young Tenor of the Italian stage, as he comes down to the foot-lights to sing in deepest confidence, to the sympathetic audience, of his loves and his woes.

That the ideal young Tenor has often encountered wide-spreading admiration, no one would venture to deny. Still, there have been, now and then, those among his audiences who have not altogether shared this feeling. They have generally been men; not infrequently they have been men of a somewhat lighter complexion, with visual orbs paler, perhaps, and not so expressive; a grace in attitude less evident. Evert Winthrop cared nothing for Tenors, real or imitative. But he was a man made with more pretensions to strength than to sinuousness; he had no gestures; his complexion, where not bronzed by exposure, was fair; his eyes were light. They were gray eyes, with, for the most part, a calm expression. But they easily became keen, and they could, upon occasion, become stern. He opposed a short, thick, brown beard to Manuel's pointed mustache, and thick, straight hair, closely cut, of the true American brown, to the little luxuriant rings, blue-black in color, short also, but curling in spite of shortness, which the breeze stirred slightly on the head of the handsome young Floridian as he stood, sombrero in hand, beside Garda Thorne.

Manuel was not another Torres; he was an American, and spoke English perfectly. Upon this occasion, after his introduction, he offered to the northerner with courtesy several well-turned sentences as the beginning of an acquaintance, and then they all walked on together up the old road.

"I believe we have now finished our little tour, Miss Garda, have we not?" said the Doctor, in a cheerful voice. Though very tired, he was walking onward with his usual trim step, his toes well turned out, his shoulders thrown back, his head erect, but having no perception of the fact (plump men never have) that, as seen from behind, his round person appeared to be projected forward into space as he walked with something of an overweight in front, and his little legs and feet to have been set on rather too far back to balance this weight properly, so that there seemed to be always some slight danger of an overthrow.

"Oh no," answered Garda; "I have promised to take Mr. Winthrop over the entire place, and we have still the orange walk, the rose garden, the edge of the swamp, the wild cattle, and the crane."

"I doubt whether Mr. Wintup will find much to amuse him in the wild cattle," remarked Manuel, laughing.

It was certainly a slight offence: Manuel had never been north, and did not know the name; in addition, owing to the mixture of races, much liberty of pronunciation was allowed in Gracias, Manuel himself seldom hearing his own name in proper form, the Spanish names of Florida, like the Huguenot names of South Carolina, having undergone more than one metamorphosis on New World shores. Winthrop walked on without replying, he seemed not to have heard the remark.

"You do want to see the wild cattle, don't you, Mr. Winthrop?" said Garda. "They're beautiful – in glimpses."

"If – ah – somebody should ride one of them – in glimpses – it might be entertaining," answered Winthrop. "Perhaps one of these young gentlemen would favor us?"

Garda's laugh pealed forth; Manuel looked angry, Torres watched the scene, but prudently gave no smile to what he did not understand. Even the Doctor joined in Garda's laugh.

"What in the world are you thinking of?" he said to Winthrop. "Bull-fighting? I am afraid we shall not be able to gratify you in that way just now."

At this moment, round a bend in the road, appeared the small figure of Mrs. Thorne; she was advancing towards them, accompanied by a gentleman in clerical attire.

"Here is mamma, with Mr. Moore," said Garda. She left the others, and went across to Winthrop. "The whole four," she murmured; "my four persons about here."

"So I supposed," Winthrop answered, in the same tone.

The two parties now met, and it was decided that the wild cattle and the swamp should be postponed for the present, and that they would all go together to the rose-garden, where, at this hour, Carlos Mateo was generally to be found disporting himself. Garda explained that he was disporting himself with the roses – he was very fond of roses, he was often observed gazing with fixed interest at unclosing buds. When they were fully opened, he ate them; this, however, was not gluttony, but appreciation; it was his only way of showing his admiration, and a very expressive one, Garda thought.

"Remarkably," observed the Doctor. "Captain Cook was of the same opinion."

The live-oak avenue brought them to the open space which surrounded the house; crossing this space, they took a path that came up to its border from the opposite direction. This second avenue was a green arched walk, whose roof of leaves seemed, as one looked down it, sure to touch the head; but it never did, it was an illusion produced by the stretching vista of the long aisle. The same illusion made the opposite entrance at the far end – a half-circle of yellow light shining in from outside – seem so low, so near the ground, that one would inevitably be forced to creep through it on one's hands and knees when one had reached it, there would be no other way. This, again, was an illusion, the aisle was eight feet in height throughout its length. This long arbor had been formed by bitter-sweet orange-trees. Not a ray of the sunshine without could penetrate the thick foliage; but the clear light color of the shining leaves themselves, with the sunshine touching them everywhere outside, made a cheerful radiance within, and the aisle was further illuminated by the large, warm-looking globes of the fruit, thickly hanging like golden lamps from the roof of branches. There was an indescribably fresh youthfulness in this golden-green light, it was as different from the rich dark shade cast by the magnolias as from the gray stillness under the old live-oaks.

Through this orange aisle it pleased Miss Thorne to walk with Evert Winthrop. Mrs. Thorne came next, with the Rev. Dr. Moore; Dr. Kirby followed at a little distance, walking alone, and resting, if not his feet, at least his conversational powers. The two younger men were last, and some yards behind the others, Torres advancing with his usual woodenness of joint, not indulging in much conversation, but giving a guarded Spanish monosyllable now and then to his New World compatriot, who, still angry, let his slender cane strike the trunks of the orange-trees as they passed along, these strokes being carefully watched by Torres, who turned his thin neck stiffly each time, like an automaton, to see if the bark had received injury.

"We make quite a little procession," said Winthrop, looking back. "We have four divisions."

"What do you think of them?" inquired Garda.

"The divisions?"

"No; my four persons about here."

"Dr. Kirby is delightful, I don't know when I have met any one so much so."

"Delightful," said Garda, meditatively. "I am very fond of Dr. Reginald, he is almost the best friend I have in the world; but delightful? – does delightful mean – mean – " She paused, leaving her sentence unfinished.

"Does delightful mean Dr. Kirby?" said Winthrop, finishing it for her. "Dr. Kirby is certainly delightful, but he doesn't exhaust the capacity of the adjective; it has branches in other directions."

"And the others?"

"The other directions?"

"No; the other persons about here."

"I have seen Mr. Moore so few times that I have had scarcely opportunity to form an opinion."

"You formed one of Dr. Reginald the first time you saw him. But I was not speaking of Mr. Moore, I meant the others still."

"Those young natives? Really, I have not observed them."

"Now, there, I do not believe you," said Garda; "you have observed them, you observe everything. You say that to put them down – why should you put them down? You are very imperious, why should you be imperious?" And she looked at him, not vexed but frankly curious.

"Imperious," said Winthrop; "what extraordinary words you use? I am not imperious, as you call it, with you."

"No; but you would be if it were allowable," said the girl, nodding her head shrewdly. "Fortunately it isn't."

"Make the experiment – allow it; I might do better than you think."

"There is room for improvement, certainly," she answered, laughing. They had reached the end of the orange aisle, she passed under the green archway (which proved to be quite high enough), and went out into the sunshine beyond, calling "Carlos Mateo? Carlos, dear?" Then, in Spanish, "Angel of my heart, come to me."

The old garden had long been left untended. It was large, but seemed larger even than it was, because it had wandered out into the forest, and wild growths from there had come back with it; these had jumped boldly across the once well-guarded boundaries and overrun the cultivated verdure with their lawless green; oleanders were lost in thickets, fig-trees, pomegranates, and guavas were bound together in a tangle of vines; flower beds had become miniature jungles in which the descendants of the high-born blossoms that had once held sway there had forgotten their manners in the crowd of lusty plebeian plants that jostled against them. Even the saw-palmetto had pushed his way in from the barrens, and now clogged the paths with his rough red legs, holding up his stiff fans in the very faces of the lilies, who, being southern lilies, longed for the sun. A few paths had been kept open, however, round the great rose-tree, the pride of the place, a patriarch fifteen feet high, its branches covered with beautiful tea-roses, whose petals of soft creamy hue were touched at the edges with an exquisite pink. A little space of garden beds in comparative order encircled this tree; here, too, on the right, opened out the sweet-orange grove.

This grove was by no means in good condition, many of its trees were ancient, some were dead; still, work had been done there, and the attempt, such as it was, had been persisted in, though never effectually. The persistence had been due to the will of Mrs. Thorne, the ineffectualness to the will of old Pablo. His mistress, by a system of serene determination, had been able to triumph, to a certain extent, over the ancient and well-organized contrariness of this old man – a dumb opposition whose existence she never in the least recognized, though its force she well knew. Each season the obstinate old servant began by disapproving regularly of everything she ordered; next, he carried out her orders slowly, and with as many delays as possible – this not so much from any reasonable objection to her ideas as from his general principles of resistance, founded upon family pride. For Pablo, who was Raquel's husband – a bent little negro of advanced age – could never forget that "Marse Edgar's wife" was but an interloper after all, an importation from New England, and not "ob de fambly c'nection," not even of southern birth. The memory of majestic "Old Madam," Edgar Thorne's Spanish aunt, kept her "Young Miss" still in the estimation of the two old slaves, though "Ole Miss" had now been for a number of years safely in her coquina tomb – "let us hope enjoying rest and peace – as that poor little Mistress Thorne will now enjoy them too, *at last*," as an old friend of the family, Mrs.

Betty Carew, had remarked with much feeling, though some ambiguity of phrase (the latter quite unintentional), the day after the funeral.

"Young Miss 'lows dese yere's *yappul*-trees," Pablo said to Raquel, with a fine scorn, as he dug objectingly round their roots. "An' 'lowing it, '*lowing* it, Raquel, she orders accordin'!"

But the southern trees had lived, and had even, some of them, thrived a little under the unwonted northern methods applied to them; Mrs. Thorne, therefore, was able to rise above old Pablo's disapprovals – a feat, indeed, which she had been obliged to perform almost daily, and with regard to many other things than oranges, ever since her first arrival at East Angels, seventeen years before.

This lady now seated herself on a bench under the rose-tree. She had tied on, over her neat little widow's cap, the broad-brimmed palmetto hat which she usually wore in the garden; this hat had fallen slightly back, and now its broad yellow brim, standing out in a circle round her small face, looked not unlike the dull nimbus with which the heads of the stiff, sweet little angels in the early Italian paintings are weighted down. The clergyman, Mr. Moore, stood beside her.

The Rev. Middleton Moore, rector of St. Philip and St. James's, Gracias-á-Dios, was a tall gentleman, with narrow, slightly stooping shoulders, long thin hands, a long smooth face, and thin dry brown hair which always looked long (though it was not), because it grew from the top of his head down to his ears in straight flat smoothness, the ends being there cut across horizontally. His features were delicately moulded. His long feet were slender and well-shaped. There was a charming expression of purity and goodness in his small, mild blue eyes. He was attired in clerical black, all save his hat, which was brown – a low-crowned, brown straw hat adorned with a brown ribbon. Mrs. Penelope Moore, his wife, profound as was her appreciation of the dignity of his position as rector of the parish, could yet never quite resist the temptation of getting for him, now and then, a straw hat, and a straw hat, too, which was not black; to her sense a straw hat was youth, and to her sense the rector was young. It was in a straw hat that she had first beheld and admired him as the handsomest, as well as the most perfect, of men; and so in a straw hat she still occasionally sent him forth, gazing at the back view of it and him, from the rickety windows of her Gothic rectory, with much satisfaction, as he went down the path towards the gate on his way to some of the gentle Gracias entertainments. For of course he wore it only on such light, unofficial occasions.

Dr. Kirby, meanwhile, was making the circuit of the orange grove. He stopped and peered up sidewise into each tree, his head now on one shoulder, now on the other; then he came back, his hands and pockets filled with oranges, which he offered to all; seating himself on the low curb of an old well, he began to peel one with the little silver knife which he kept for the purpose, doing it so deftly that not a drop of the juice escaped, and looking on calmly meanwhile as the other bird, Carlos Mateo, went through his dance for the entertainment of the assembled company. Carlos Mateo was a tall gray crane of aged and severe aspect; at Garda's call he had come forward with long, dignified steps and stalked twice round the little open space before the rose-tree, following her with grave exactitude as she walked before him. She then called him to a path bordered with low bushes, and here, after a moment, the company beheld him jumping slowly up and down, aiding himself with his wings, sometimes rising several feet above the ground, and sometimes only hopping on his long thin legs; he advanced in this manner down the path to its end, and then back again, Garda walking in front, and raising her hand as he rose and fell, as though beating time. Nothing could have been more comical than the solemnity of the old fellow as he went through these antics; it was as if a gray-bearded patriarch should suddenly attempt a hornpipe.

His performance ended, he followed his mistress back to the company, to receive their congratulations.

"What can we give him?" said Winthrop. "What does he like?"

"He will not take anything except from me," answered Garda; she gathered a rose, and stood holding it by the stem while Carlos Mateo pecked gravely at the petals. The sun was sinking, his

horizontal rays shone across her bright hair; she had taken off her hat, which was hanging by its ribbon from her arm; Winthrop looked at her, at the rose-laden branches above her head, at the odd figure of the crane by her side, at the background of the wild old garden behind her. He was thinking that he would give a good deal for a picture of the scene.

But while he was thinking it, Manuel had spoken it. "Miss Garda, I would give a year out of my life for a picture of you as you are at this moment!" he said, ardently. Winthrop turned away.

He went to look at some camellias, whose glossy leaves formed a thicket at a little distance; on the other side of this thicket he discovered a crape-myrtle avenue, the delicate trees so choked and hustled by the ruder foliage which had grown up about them that they stood like captives in the midst of a rabble, broken-hearted and dumb; with some pushing he made his way within, and followed the lost path. It brought him to a mound of tangled shrubbery which rose like a small hill at this end of the garden, decked here and there, in what seemed inaccessible places, with brilliant flowers. But the places had not been inaccessible to Torres. Winthrop met him returning from the thorny conflict with a magnificent stalk of blossoms which he had captured there, and was now bringing back in triumph; it was a long wand of gorgeous spurred bells, each two inches in length, crimson without, cream-color within, the lip of the flaring lower petal lined with purple, and spotted with gold. Torres carried his prize to Garda, and offered it in silence. She thanked him prettily in Spanish, and he stood beside her, his dark face in a dull glow from pleasure.

"Perhaps it is poisonous," murmured Manuel, taking good care, however, to murmur in English.

"Oh, my dearest child! pray put it down," said Mrs. Thorne, anxiously.

"It is quite harmless," said the clergyman, "I know the family to which it belongs. It is not indigenous here; probably the original shrub was planted in the garden many years ago, and has run wild."

Garda took the stalk in her right hand, extended her left rigidly, and, stiffening her light figure in a wooden attitude, looked meekly upward.

"Bravo! bravo!" said the Doctor from his well-curb, laughing, and beginning on a second orange.

She stood thus for a few instants only. But it was very well done – an exact copy of a dark, grim old picture in the little Spanish cathedral of Gracias, a St. Catherine with a stalk of lilies in her hand.

Winthrop, who had returned, was standing on the other side of the open space. Apparently he had not noticed this little pantomime. Garda looked at him for a moment. Then she left her place, went across, and gravely decorated him with her stalk of blossoms, the large stem going through three of the button-holes of his coat before it could hold itself firmly; the brilliant flowers extended diagonally across his breast, past his chin, and above one ear.

"Your hat will break the top buds," said Garda, surveying her handiwork. "Please take it off."

He obeyed. "For what sacrifice am I thus adorned?" he asked.

"It's no sacrifice," answered Garda, "it's a rebellion – a rebellion against your constant objections to everything in the world!"

"But I haven't opened my lips."

"That is the very thing; you object silently – which is much worse. I'm not accustomed to people who object silently. Everybody here talks; why don't you talk?"

This little dialogue went on apart, the others could not hear it.

"I do – when you give me an opportunity," Winthrop answered.

"I'll give you one now," responded Garda; "we'll go back to the house, we'll go through the orange-walk as we came, and the others can follow as *they* came." Without waiting for reply, she went towards the garden gate. Winthrop followed her; and then Carlos Mateo, stalking across the open space, followed Winthrop. He followed him so closely that Winthrop declared he could feel his beak on his back. When they reached the house they paused; Carlos then took up his station a little apart, and stood on one leg to rest himself, watching Winthrop meanwhile with a suspicious eye.

Mrs. Thorne was crossing the level with the Rev. Mr. Moore. Following them, at a little distance, came Dr. Kirby, with his hands behind him. Manuel and Torres, forced to be companions a second time, formed the rear-guard of the returning procession. But as it approached the house, Manuel, raising his hat to Mrs. Thorne, turned away; he went down the live-oak avenue to the river landing, where his skiff was waiting. Manuel had his ideas, he did not care to be one of five. Torres, who also had his ideas, and many more of them than Manuel had, was not troubled by considerations of this sort; in his mind a Torres was never one of five, or one of anything, but always a Torres, and alone. Left to himself, he now took longer steps, passed the others, and came first to the doorway where Garda was standing.

"Why do you always look so serious, Mr. Torres?" she said, in Spanish, as he came up.

"It is of small consequence how I look, while the señorita herself remains so beautiful," answered the young man, bowing ceremoniously.

"Isn't that pretty?" said Garda to Winthrop.

"Immensely so," replied that decorated personage.

"But he does not look half so serious as you look comical – with all those brilliant flowers by the side of your immovable face," she went on, breaking into a laugh.

"It is of small consequence how I look, seeing that the señorita herself placed them where they are," answered Winthrop, in tolerable if rather labored Spanish, turning with a half-smile to Torres as he borrowed his phrase.

"You did not like it? You thought it childish?" said Garda. She drew the stalk quickly from its place. She was now speaking English, and Torres watched to see the fate of his gift; she had taken the flowers with the intention of throwing them away, but noticing that the Cuban's eyes were fixed upon them, she slipped the end of the stem under her belt, letting the long brilliant spray hang down over her dark skirt.

"I am now more honored than ever," said Winthrop.

"But it is Mr. Torres whom I am honoring this time," answered the girl.

Torres, hearing his name in her English sentence, drew the heels of his polished boots together with a little click, and made another low bow.

The rest of the party now came up, and soon after, the visitors took leave; Winthrop rode back across the pine-barrens to Gracias. Dr. Kirby bore him company on his stout black horse Osceola, glad indeed to be there and off his own feet; on the way he related a large portion of that history of the Spaniards in Florida which Garda, their descendant, had interrupted at the mill.

As they left East Angels, and rode out on the barren, this descendant was being addressed impressively by her mother. "That, Garda, is my idea of a cultivated gentleman: to have had such wide opportunities, and to have improved them; to be so agreeable, and yet so kind; so quiet, and yet so evidently a man of distinction, of mark – it's a rare combination."

"Very," replied Garda, giving the crane her gloves to carry in his beak.

They were still standing in the lower doorway; Mrs. Thorne surveyed her daughter for a moment, one of her states of uncertainty seemed to have seized her. "I hope you appreciate that Mr. Winthrop is not another Manuel or Torres," she said at last, in her most amiable tone.

"Perfectly, mamma; I could never make such a mistake as that. Mr. Winthrop inspires respect."

"He does – he does," said Mrs. Thorne, with conviction.

"I respect him already as a father," continued Garda. "Manuel and Ernesto also respect him as a father. Come, Carlos, my angel, let us go down to the landing, and see if we can call Manuel back."

CHAPTER III

Gracias-á-Dios was a little town lying half asleep on the southern coast of the United States, under a sky of almost changeless blue.

Of almost changeless blue. Americans have long been, in a literary way, the vicarious victims, to a certain extent, of the climate of the British Isles. The low tones of the atmosphere of those islands, the shifting veils of fog and rain rising and falling over them, the soft gray light filtered through mist and cloud – all these have caused the blue skies and endless sunshine of Italy to seem divinely fair to visitors from English shores; and as among these visitors have come the poets and the romance writers, this fairness, embalmed in prose and verse, has taken its place in literature, has become classic. The imaginative New World student, eager to learn, passionately desirous to appreciate, has read these pages reverently; he knows them by heart. And when at last the longed-for day comes when he too can make his pilgrimage to these scenes of legend and story, so dominated is he, for the most part, by the spell of tradition that he does not even perceive that these long-chanted heavens are no bluer than his own; or if by chance his eye, accurate in spite of himself, notes such a possibility, he puts it from him purposely, preferring the blueness which is historic. The heavens lying over Venice and her palaces are, must be, softer than those which expand distantly over miles of prairie and forest; the hue of the sky which bends over Rome is, must be, of a deeper, richer tint than any which a New World has attained. But generally this preference of the imaginative American is not a choice so much as an unconscious faith which he has cherished from childhood, and from which he would hardly know how to dissent; he is gazing at these foreign skies through a long, enchanting vista of history, poetry, and song; he simply does not remember his own sky at all.

Only recently has he begun to remember it, only recently has he begun to discover that, in the matter of blue at least, he has been gazing through glasses adjusted to the scale of English atmosphere and English comparisons, and that, divested of these aids to vision, he can find above his own head and in his own country an azure as deep as any that the Old World can show.

When this has been discovered it remains but blue sky. The other treasure of those old lands beyond the sea – their ruins, their art, their ancient story – these he has not and can never have, and these he loves with that deep American worship which must seem to those old gods like the arrival of Magi from afar, men of distant birth, sometimes of manners strange, but bringing costly gifts and bowing the knee with reverence where the dwellers in the temple itself have grown cold.

Compared with those of the British Isles, all the skies of the United States are blue. In the North, this blue is clear, strong, bright; in the South, a softness mingles with the brilliancy, and tempers it to a beauty which is not surpassed. The sky over the cotton lands of South Carolina is as soft as that of Tuscany; the blue above the silver beaches of Florida melts as languorously as that above Capri's enchanted shore. Gracias-á-Dios had this blue sky. Slumberous little coast hamlet as it was, it had also its characteristics.

"Gracias á Dios!" Spanish sailors had said, three hundred years before, when, after a great storm, despairing and exhausted, they discovered this little harbor on the low, dangerous coast, and were able to enter it – "Gracias á Dios!" "Thanks to God!" In the present day the name had become a sort of shibboleth. To say Gracias á Dios in full, with the correct Spanish pronunciation, showed that one was of the old Spanish blood, a descendant of those families who dated from the glorious times when his Most Catholic and Imperial Majesty, King of Spain, Defender of the Church, always Victorious, always Invincible, had held sway on this far shore. To say Gracias without the "á Dios," but still with more or less imitation of the Spanish accent, proved that one belonged among the older residents of the next degree of importance, that is, that one's grandfather or great-grandfather had been among those English colonists who had come out to Florida during the British occupation; or else that he had been one of the planters from Georgia and the Carolinas who had moved to the

province during the same period. This last pronunciation was also adopted by those among the later-coming residents who had an interest in history, or who loved for their own sakes the melody of the devout old names given by the first explorers – names now so rapidly disappearing from bay and harbor, reef and key. But these three classes were no longer all, there was another and more recent one, small and unimportant as yet, but destined to grow. This new class counted within its ranks at present the captains and crews of the northern schooners that were beginning to come into that port for lumber; the agents of land-companies looking after titles and the old Spanish grants; speculators with plans in their pockets for railways, with plans in their pockets for canals, with plans in their pockets (and sometimes very little else) for draining the swamps and dredging the Everglades, many of the schemes dependent upon aid from Congress, and mysteriously connected with the new negro vote. In addition there were the first projectors of health resorts, the first northern buyers of orange groves: in short, the pioneers of that busy, practical American majority which has no time for derivations, and does not care for history, and which turns its imagination (for it has imagination) towards objects more veracious than the pious old titles bestowed by an age and race that murdered, and tortured, and reddened these fair waters with blood, for sweet religion's sake. This new class called the place Grashus – which was a horror to all the other inhabitants.

The descendants of the Spaniards, of the English colonists, of the Georgia and Carolina planters – families much thinned out now in numbers and estate, wearing for the most part old clothes, but old prides as well – lived on in their old houses in Gracias and its neighborhood, giving rather more importance perhaps to the past than to the present, but excellent people, kind neighbors, generous and devoted friends. They were also good Christians; on Sundays they all attended service in one or the other of the two churches of Gracias, the Roman Catholic cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, and the Episcopal church of St Philip and St. James'. These two houses of worship stood side by side on the plaza, only an old garden between them. St. Philip and St. James' had a bell; but its Spanish neighbor had four, and not only that, but a habit of ringing all four together, in a sort of quickstep, at noon on Sundays, so that the Episcopal rector, in that land of open windows, was obliged either to raise his voice to an unseemly pitch, or else to preach for some minutes in dumb-show, which latter course he generally adopted as the more decorous, mildly going back and giving the lost sentences a second time, as though they had not been spoken, when the clamor had ceased. This, however, was the only warfare between the two churches. And it might have been intended, too, merely as a friendly hint from the Angels to the Saints that the latter's sermons were too long. The Episcopal rector, the Rev. Middleton Moore, had in truth ideas somewhat behind his times: he had not yet learned that fifteen or at most twenty minutes should include the utmost length of his weekly persuasions to virtue. It had never occurred to the mind of this old-fashioned gentleman that congregations are now so highly improved, so cultivated and intellectual, that they require but a few moments of dispassionate reminder from the pulpit once a week, that on the whole it is better to be moral, and, likewise, that any assumption of the functions of a teacher on the part of a clergyman is now quite obsolete and even laughable – these modern axioms Middleton Moore had not yet learned; the mistaken man went on hopefully exhorting for a full three-quarters of an hour. And as his congregation were as old-fashioned as himself, no objection had as yet been made to this course, the simple people listening with respect to all he had to say, not only for what it was in itself, but for what he was in himself – a man without spot, one who, in an earlier age, would have gone through martyrdom with the same pure, gentle firmness with which he now addressed them from a pulpit of peace. It was in this little church of St. Philip and St. James' that Evert Winthrop had first beheld Garda Thorne.

The next day he presented a letter of introduction which his aunt, Mrs. Rutherford, had given him before he left New York; the letter bore the address, "Mrs. Carew." Winthrop had not welcomed this document, he disliked the demand for attention which epistles usually convey. How much influence the beautiful face seen in church had upon its presentation when he finally made it, how long, without that accident, the ceremony might have been delayed, it would be difficult, perhaps,

to accurately state. He himself would have said that the beautiful face had hastened it somewhat; but that in time he should have obeyed his aunt's wish in any case, as he always did. For Winthrop was a good nephew, his aunt had given him the only mother's love his childhood had known.

Mrs. Carew, who as Betty Gwinnet had been Mrs. Rutherford's room-mate at a New York school forty-four years before, lived in one of the large, old, rather dilapidated houses of Gracias; she was a widow, portly, good-natured, reminiscent, and delighted to see the nephew of her "dearest Katrina Beekman." It was not until his second visit that this nephew broached the subject of the face seen in church, and even then he presented it so slightly, with its narrow edge towards her, as it were, that the good lady never had a suspicion that it was more than a chance allusion on his part, and indeed always thereafter took to herself the credit of having been the first to direct a cultivated northern attention to this beautiful young creature, who was being left, "like the poet's flower, you know, to blush unseen and waste her sweetness on the desert air, though of coarse you understand that I am not literal of course, for fortunately there are no deserts in Florida, unless, indeed, you include the Everglades, and I don't see how you can, for certainly the essence of a desert is, and always has been, dryness of course, dryness to a *degree*, and the Everglades are all under water, so that there isn't a dry spot anywhere for even so much as the sole of your foot, any more than there was for Noah's weary dove, you know, and it's water, water, everywhere, and not a drop to drink, that is, if you should *wish* to drink it, which I am sure I hope you wouldn't, for it's said to be *most* unhealthy, and even the Ancient Mariner himself couldn't have stood it long."

Mrs. Carew was fertile in quotations, rich in simile; and if both were rather wanting in novelty, there was at least an element of unexpectedness in her manner of connecting them which amused her present visitor and kept him listening. Not that Winthrop was ever inattentive. On the contrary, he had listening powers of admirable range and calm. He was capable of participating in any amount of conversation upon the weather, he could accept with passiveness those advisers who are always telling their friends what they "ought" to do, he could listen imperturbably to little details from the people who always will tell little details, he could bear without impatience even the narration of dreams; he was able to continue an acquaintance unmoved with those excellent persons who, when they have said a good thing, immediately go back and tell it over again; in short, he betrayed no irritation in the presence of great Commonplace. The commonplace people, therefore, all liked him, he had not an enemy among them. And this was the more amusing, as, in reality, he detested them.

His friends, those who knew him best, told him that he went about most of the time in a mask. "All the world's a stage," he answered; "the only point is that the mask should be an agreeable one. Why should I be obliged to show my true complexion to Tom, Dick, and Harry, when Tom, Dick, and Harry so much prefer the one I have assumed? It's good practice for me – the mask-wearing – practice in self-control; and besides, Tom, Dick, and Harry are right, the borrowed complexion *is* the better one; perhaps I may be able, in time, to really acquire one like it."

To find himself listening, therefore, without his mask, listening for the simple entertainment of it, was always an agreeable variety to this gentleman, who kept at least his outward attention in such strict control; and the first time he heard Mrs. Betty Carew hold forth, he had a taste of it.

"Yes, that was Mistress Thorne and Garda, I reckon; on second thoughts, I am sure of it; for they always come up from East Angels on Sunday mornings to service, with old Pablo to row, as Mistress Thorne *has* succeeded in getting as far as the Episcopal church, though Our Lady of the Angels *was* too much for her, which was quite as well, however, because, of course, all the Thornes, being English, were Church people of course in the old country, though poor Eddie, having been twice diluted, as one may say, owing to his mother and grandmother having been Spanish and Roman Catholic, was not *quite* so strong in the real Episcopal doctrines as he might have been, which was a pity, of course, but could hardly, under the circumstances, have been prevented so far as I can see, for one swallow doesn't make a summer, I reckon, any more than one parent makes a Protestant, especially when the other's a Duero – with the Old Madam *roaring* on the borders, ready to raise Ned

on the slightest provocation, to come down like wolf on the fold, you know – or was it the Assyrian? Now at East Angels – perhaps you are wondering at the name? Well, the cathedral, to begin with, is Our Lady of the Angels, and, in the old days, there were two mission-stations for the Indians south of here, one on the east coast, one more to the west, and bearing the same name. These chapels are gone; but as the Duero house stood near one of them, it took the name, or part of it, and has been called East Angels ever since. There was no house near the other chapel – West Angels – and some say the very site is lost, though others again have declared that the old bell is still there, lying at the foot of a great cypress – that hunters have seen it. But I haven't much faith in hunters, have you? – nor in fishermen either, for that matter. Little Mistress Thorne must know a great deal about fish, I suppose she lived on cod before she came down here; she belongs to Puritan stock, they say, and there *were* good people among them of course, though, for my part, I have always had a horror of the way they treated the witches; not that I approve of witchcraft, which is of course as wicked as possible, and even the witch of Endor, I suppose, could hardly be defended upon moral grounds, whatever you may do upon historical – which are so much the fashion nowadays, though I, for one, can't abide them – making out as they do that everything is a falsehood, and that even Pocahontas was not a respectable person; I don't know what they will attack next, I'm sure; Pocahontas was our *only* interesting Indian. Not that I care for Indians, don't fancy that; the Seminoles particularly; I'm always so glad that they've gone down to live in the Everglades, half under water; if anything could take down their savageness, I should think it would be that. I know them very well, of course – the Thornes, not the Seminoles – though perhaps I was never *quite* so intimate with them as Pamela Kirby was (she's dead now, poor soul! *so* sad for her!), for Pamela used to give Garda lessons; she moulded her, as she called it, taught her to shoot – of course I mean the young idea, and not guns. In fact, they have all had a hand in it – the moulding of Garda; too many, I think, for *I* believe in *one* overruling eye, and if you get round that, there's the good old proverb that remains pretty true, after all, I reckon, the one about too many cooks, though in this case the broth has been saved by the little mother, who is a very Napoleon in petticoats, and never forgets a thing; she actually remembers a thing *before* it has happened; Methuselah himself couldn't do more, though, come to think of it, I suppose very little had happened in the world before *his* day – excepting trilobites, that we used to read about in school. And Mistress Thorne knows all about *them*, you may be sure, just as well as Methuselah did; for she was a teacher, to begin with, a prim little New England school marm whom poor Eddie Thorne met by accident one summer when he went north, and fell in love with, as I have always supposed, from sheer force of contrast, like Beauty and the Beast, you know – not that she was a beast, of course, though poor Eddie *was* very handsome, but still I remember that everybody wondered, because it had been thought that he would marry the sister of Madame Giron, who had hair that came down to her feet. However, I ought to say that poor little Mistress Thorne has certainly done her very best to acquire our southern ways; she has actually tried to make herself over, root, stem, and branch, from her original New England sharpness to our own softer temperament, though I always feel sure, at the same moment, that, in the core of the rock, the old sap burns still – like the soul under the ribs of death, you know; not that I mean that exactly (though she *is* thin), but simply that the leopard cannot change his spots, nor the zebra his stripes, nor," added the good lady – altering her tone to solemnity as she perceived that her language was becoming Biblical – "the wild *cony* her *young*. Just to give you an idea of what I mean, Mr. Winthrop: for a long time after she first came to Gracias that little creature used regularly to parse twenty-four pages of 'Paradise Lost' every day, as a sort of mental tonic, I reckon, against what she thought the enervating tendencies of our southern life here – like quinine, you know; and as she parsed so much, she was naturally obliged to quote, as a sort of safety-valve, which was very pleasant of course and very intellectual, though I never care much for quotations myself, they are so diffuse, and besides, with all your efforts, you cannot make 'Paradise Lost' appropriate to all the little daily cares of life and house-keeping, which no true woman, I think, should be above; for though Eve *did* set a table for the angel, that was merely poetical and not like

real life in the least, for she only had fruits, and no dishes probably but leaves, that you could throw away afterwards, which was *very* different from nice china, I can assure you, for you may not know, not being a house-keeper, that as regards china *nowadays*– our old blue sets – our servants are not in the *least* careful not to nick; I don't enter here into the great question of emancipation for the slaves, *but*– nick they *will*! Mistress Thorne speaks like 'Paradise Lost' to this day, and, what is more, she has taught Garda to speak in the same way – just like a book; only Garda's book is her own, you never know what she is going to say next, she turns about in all sorts of shapes, like those kaleidoscopes they used to give us children when I was little, only *she* never rattles (they did, dreadfully) – for I am sure a softer voice *I* never heard, unless it was that of the Old Madam, who used to say in velvet tones the most ferocious things you ever heard. Ah, you should have seen her! – straight as an arrow, and they said she was ninety for over thirty years, which of course was impossible, even if she had wished it, which I doubt, for there is the well-known Bible age of threescore years and ten, and to have exceeded it to *that* extent would have been irreverent. She was poor Eddie Thorne's aunt, the sister of his mother, a Duero and a tremendous one, dyed in ancestors to the core; every one was afraid of her but Garda, and Garda she took complete charge of as long as she lived, though Mistress Thorne did what she could on the outskirts —*not* much, I fancy, for the Old Madam declared that the child was a true Duero and should be brought up as one, which seemed to mean principally that she should swing in the hammock, and not learn verbs. I *think* Mistress Thorne began to teach Garda verbs the day after the funeral; at least when I went down there to pay a visit of condolence I found her with a grammar in her hand, and a good deal of cheerfulness under the circumstances – a good deal! The first Edgar Thorne, the one who came out from England, is said to have been a man of a good deal of force of character, for he kept a coach and four, and at that early day, on these pine-barrens, it almost seemed as if he must have created them by magic, which makes one think of Cinderella and her rats, doesn't it? And indeed, in this case, the horses did turn into rats, as one may say, before their very eyes; the poor Thornes have no horses *now*" said the kind-hearted lady, pausing to shake her head sympathetically, and then speeding on again. "They say that rats desert a sinking ship – though I have always wondered how, since ships are not apt to sink at the piers, are they? – and I never heard that rats could make rafts, though squirrels can, they say – a bit of plank with their tails put up as a sail, though of course rats' tails would never do for that, they are so thin; but if rats *do* desert their ship, Mistress Thorne will *never* desert hers, she will keep the Thorne colors flying to the last, and go down, if down she must, with the silent courage of the Spartan boy – although it was a fox he had gnawing him, wasn't it? and not a rat; but it makes no difference, it's the principle that's important, not the illustration. Garda's name is really Edgarda, Edgarda after all the Thornes, who, it seems, have been Edgars and Edgardas for centuries, which I should think must have been very inconvenient, for, just to mention one thing, they could never have signed their names in initials, because that would have meant fathers and sons and brothers and sisters indiscriminately, in fact all of them except the wives, who, having come in from outside families, would be able, fortunately, to be plain Mary and Jane. I am very fond of Garda, as indeed we all are; and I think she has wonderful beauty, don't you? – though *rather* Spanish perhaps. When she was about twelve years old I was afraid that the tinge of her mother in her was going to make her thin; but Nature fortunately prevented that in time, for you know that once an elbow gets fixed in the habit of being sharp, sharp it remains to the end of the chapter, though you may have pounds and pounds both above and below it, which seems strange, doesn't it? though of course it must serve some good purpose, as we ought all to believe. And that reminds me to say that I hope dear Katrina has gained flesh since she left school, for she used to be rather too slender (though *very* handsome otherwise), so that, in profile view, you couldn't help thinking of a paper-cutter, and you doubted whether she could even cast a shadow – like the man without a shadow, you remember, who used to double his up and put it in his pocket – only of course dear Katrina was never anything horrible like that, and, after all, why we should *wish* to cast shadows I am sure I don't know; certainly there are enough of them, as it is, in this vale of tears. If you like, I will take you

down some day to call upon the Thornes; they will be delighted to see us and we shall be like angels' visits, few and far between, or fair as a star when only *one*; I *hope* you like poetry – you modern young gentlemen have such a way of being above it! But Mr. Carew was always very fond of Mrs. Hemans."

The monologues of Mr. Carew's relict could with the utmost ease be regulated, their flowing currents turned aside into another channel (from which they never came back to the first one), or stopped entirely, by any one who wished to accomplish it, the lady's boundless good-nature preventing her from even perceiving that she had been interrupted. But Evert Winthrop had no wish to interrupt, he was enjoying the current's vagaries; upon this occasion, therefore, it pursued its way unchecked to the end – a thing which rarely happened, all Gracias having the habit of damming it temporarily, turning it aside, or stopping it abruptly, in a brisk manner which showed long usage.

To-day, when at last this easy-tempered lady paused of her own accord, Winthrop accepted her invitation promptly; he spoke of coming for her with a carriage the next afternoon; he should enjoy seeing something of the interior, those singular roads across the barrens which were so old and untouched and yet in such perfect condition – so he had been told.

When he had brought his little speech to a close, his hostess gave way to laughter (her laugh was hearty, her whole amplitude took part in it). "But this isn't interior," she said, "this is coast; East Angels is down the river, south of here; when I said I would take you, I meant in a boat."

She had in her mind Uncle Cato, and the broad, safe, old row-boat, painted black and indefinite as to bow and stern, which that venerable negro propelled up and down the Espiritu as custom required. But instead of voyaging in this ancient bark, Winthrop persuaded her to intrust herself to the rakish-looking little craft, sloop-rigged, which he had engaged for his own use among the lagoons during his stay in Gracias, a direct descendant, no doubt, of the swift piratical barks of the wreckers and smugglers who, until a very recent date, had infested the Florida keys. Once on board, Mrs. Carew adjured the man at the helm to "keep the floor straight at any price," and then seating herself, and seizing hold of the first solid object she could find, she tightly closed her eyes and did not again open them, being of the opinion apparently that the full force of a direct glance would infallibly upset the boat. She had postponed their visit for a day, in order that she might have time to send Uncle Cato down to East Angels, with a note saying that they were coming. Stately Raquel, in a freshly starched turban, was therefore in waiting to open the lower door; Mrs. Thorne's best topics were arranged in order in her mind, as well as orange wine and wafers upon her sideboard, and Garda also, neither asleep in the hammock nor wandering afield with the crane, was in readiness, sitting expectant in an old mahogany arm-chair, attired in her best gown. Poor Garda had but two gowns to choose from, both faded, both old; but the one called best had been lately freshened and mended by the skilful hands of the tireless mother.

"When that little woman dies, some of her mendings ought to be enclosed in a glass case and set up over her grave as a monument, I do declare!" said Mrs. Carew, as, again voluntarily blinded, she sailed back to Gracias with Winthrop over the sunset-tinted water. "Did you notice that place on Garda's left sleeve? But of course you didn't. Well, it was a perfect miracle of patience, which Job himself couldn't have equalled (and certainly the Thornes are as poor as Job, and Carlos might well be the turkey); as black silk, or even black thread, would have shone – they *will* shine, you know, in spite of all you can do, even if you ink them – she had actually used ravellings, and *alpaca* ravellings – you know what *they* are! Don't you think it would be nicer to have that sail out sideways, as it was when we came down, and go straight, instead of slanting in this way back and forth across the river?"

Evert Winthrop, thus introduced, had received from the mistress of East Angels an invitation to repeat his visit. He had repeated it several times. It was easy to do this, as, in addition to the piratical little craft already mentioned, he had engaged a saddle-horse, and was now amusing himself exploring the old roads that led southward.

Upon returning from one of these rides he found awaiting him a letter from the North. It was from his aunt, Mrs. Rutherford, and contained the intelligence that she was coming southward

immediately, having been ordered to a warmer climate on account of the "threatenings of neuralgia, that tiresome neuralgia, my dear boy, that makes my life such a burden. I am so tired of Pau and Nice that, instead of crossing that cold ocean again, I have suddenly made up my mind to come down and join you under the blue sky you have discovered down there – Egypt, you say, Egypt without the ruins; but as I am a good deal of a ruin myself just now, I shall not mind that lack; in fact, can supply it in my own person. My love to Betty Carew; I shall be delighted to see her again after all these years. Margaret comes with me, of course, and we shall probably follow this letter without much delay."

Winthrop was surprised. He knew that his aunt was fond of what she patriotically called her "own country;" but he should have said that she would not probably consider that there was any of it worth her personal consideration south of Philadelphia, or, at the utmost, south of Baltimore and Washington. This amiably blind lady was, however, a great traveller, in her leisurely way she had taken long journeys across Europe and the East; if she did not know the Mississippi, she knew the Nile; if Shasta was a stranger to her eyes, the Finsteraarhorn and Vesuvius were old friends. Shasta, indeed! – where was Shasta? She had once been to Niagara Falls.

Her nephew smiled to himself as he thought that probably, in her own mind, her present undertaking wore much of the air of an exploring expedition, the kind of tour through remote regions that people made sometimes, and then wrote books about – books with a great many illustrations.

But Mrs. Rutherford would write no books. This lady noticed but slightly the characteristics of the countries through which she passed, she never troubled her mind with impressions, or burdened it with comparisons. She seldom visited "objects of interest," but was always "rather tired" when the appointed hour came, and thought she would lie down for a while; they could tell her about it afterwards. Yet in her easy, irresponsible fashion she enjoyed travelling; she liked new scenes and new people, especially new people. In the evening, after a quiet (but excellent) little dinner, and twenty minutes or so of lady-like tranquillity after it, Mrs. Rutherford was always pleased to see the new people aforesaid; and it could with truth be added that the new people were, as a general thing, equally pleased to see her. She was a handsome, stately woman, with agreeable manners, and so well-dressed that that alone was a pleasure – a pleasure to the eyes; it was an attire rich and quiet, which combined with extraordinary skill the two often sadly dissevered qualities of personal becomingness and adaptation to the fashion of the hour.

Evert Winthrop was much attached to his aunt. Associated with her were the happiest memories of his childhood. He knew that her strongest love had not been given to him, it had been given to her other nephew, his cousin Lansing Harold. But of Lansing she had had entire charge from his birth, he had been to her like her own child, while Andrew Winthrop had kept closely in his own care his motherless little son Evert, allowing him to spend only his vacations with his aunt Katrina – who was spoiling one boy (so thought the New-Englander) as fast as possible, but who should not be permitted to spoil another. These vacations, so grudgingly granted, had been very happy times for the little Evert, and their memory remained with him still. As he grew older he had gradually become conscious of some of the traits and tendencies of his aunt's mind, apart from his boyish idea of her, as we generally do become conscious, by degrees, of the traits (as they are estimated by others) of even those who are nearest and dearest, save in the case of our parents, who remain always, beautifully always, "father" and "mother" to the end, precious beyond all analysis, all comparison. Separating itself, therefore, from the delightful indulgence with which she had sweetened his boyhood days, separating itself from his own unquestioning childish belief in her, there had gradually come to Evert Winthrop (though without any diminution of his affection for her) the consciousness that his aunt's nature was a narrow one. Her narrowness could have been summed up roughly in the statement that her views upon every subject were purely personal ones. It was difficult to realize how personal they were, Winthrop himself, well as he knew her, had only within the past five or six years become fully conscious of the absolute predominance of the principle. No one besides himself had had the opportunity to make the same discovery, save possibly – so he had sometimes thought with a smile

– the departed Peter Rutherford, the lady's husband. But Peter Rutherford, among many excellent qualities, had not been endowed with a delicate observation, and indeed having been of a robust and simple nature, he had had small respect for the talent, at least in a man, associating it vaguely with a knowledge of millinery, with a taste for spelling-games and puzzles, for cake and religious novels – things he considered unworthy of the masculine mind. His wife's nephew, however, though not a judge of millinery, and not interested in the mild entertainments and literature referred to, possessed observation in abundance, and with regard to his aunt he had not been able to keep it from exercising itself, at least to a certain degree. He had discovered – he had been unable to help discovering – the secret springs that moved much of her speech; and these springs were so simple that, in a complicated age, they seemed extraordinary. Her opinions of persons (he knew it now) were based entirely upon the narrow but well-defined foundation of their behavior to herself.

Concerning people with whom she had no personal acquaintance, she was utterly without opinions; no matter how eminent they might be, they were no more to her than so much sand of the shore. You might talk to her about them by the hour, and she would listen approvingly, or at least quite without contradiction. People spoke of her, therefore, as very appreciative, and, for a woman, broad-minded. What, in truth, can be more broad-minded in one of the sex most given to partisanship than to be able to listen with unprejudiced attention to the admirers of the Rev. Mr. A., the distinguished High-Church clergyman, and then the very next day to the friends of the Rev. Mr. B., equally eminent, but Low; to the devotees of the C. family, who trace their descent directly from old English barons – passing over, of course, that unimportant ancestor who happened to have been the one to cross to the New World, and who, immediately after his arrival, engaged in blacksmithing, and became in time the best blacksmith the struggling little colony possessed – to listen, I say, to the partisans of this ancient race, and then to hearken the next afternoon with equal equanimity to warm praise of the D.'s, who, having made their great fortune so vigorously in the present generation, are engaged in spending it with a vigor equally commendable – what, indeed, could be broader than this? It never occurred to these talkers that A. and B., the C.'s and the D.'s, alike, were all non-existent bodies, nebulæ, to Mrs. Peter Rutherford so long as she was not personally acquainted with them, so long as their names were not upon her visiting list.

But when once this had been discovered, as Evert Winthrop had discovered it, it made everything clear; it was perfectly easy to understand her, easy to see how simple the opinions appeared to the lady herself, since they had to do merely with a series of facts. If Mr. X. had been polite to her, if he had been attentive, deferential, he was without doubt (if at all presentable) a most delightful and praiseworthy person in every way. If Mr. X. had been civil to a certain extent, yet on the whole rather indifferent, he was a little dull, she thought; a good sort of a man perhaps, but not interesting; tiresome. If Mr. X. had simply left her alone, without either civility or incivility, she was apt to have mysterious intuitions about him, intuitions which she mentioned, confidentially of course, to her friends; little things which she had noticed – indications. Of bad temper? Or was it bad habits? It was something bad, at any rate; she was very ingenious in reading the signs. But if Mr. X. had been guilty of actual rudeness (a quality which she judged strictly by the standard of her own hidden but rigorous requirements), Mr. X. was immediately thrust beyond the pale, there was no good in him; in the way of odious traits there was nothing which she did not attribute to him at one time or another, she could even hint at darker guilt. She wondered that people should continue to receive him, and to her dying day she never forgot to give, upon opportunity, her well-aimed thrust – a thrust all the more effective because masked by her reputation for amiability and frank, liberal qualities.

As, however, people generally were sufficiently attentive, this lady's judgments seldom reached the last-mentioned stage, a condition of things which she herself was the first to approve, because (this was the most curious shade of her disposition) she believed fully in her own opinions, and would have disliked greatly to "have anything to do with unprincipled persons." But the world at large had no suspicion of these intricacies; to the world at large Mrs. Rutherford was a handsome, amiable

woman, who, possessing a good fortune, a good house in New York, a good old country-place on the Sound, and much hospitality, was considered to be above petty criticisms – criticisms which would do for people less pleasing, less well-endowed.

But though he read his aunt's nature, Winthrop was none the less attached to her; it might be said, perhaps, with more accuracy, that he was fond of her. He had been a very lonely little boy, his father while loving him deeply had been strict with him, and had permitted him few amusements, few companions; to go, therefore, and spend a month with his aunt Katrina, to taste her indulgent kindness and enjoy the liberty she allowed, to have her come and kiss him good-night, and talk to him about his beautiful mother, to have her take him up on her lap and pet him when he was a tired-out, drooping little fellow after immense exertions with his big cousin Lanse, to hear her stories about his uncle Evert (after whom he had been named) – that wonderful Uncle Evert who had gone down to Central America to see the Aztecs – these things had been deeply delightful at the time to the child, whose nature was reserved and concentrated. And if the details were no longer distinct, now that he was a man, the general remembrance at least was always there, the remembrance of happy hours and motherly caresses. He therefore welcomed the idea of his aunt's coming to Gracias. Though what Mrs. Peter Rutherford would be able to find in that sleepy little hamlet in the way of entertainment, he did not pretend to have discovered.

Five days later the party arrived, his aunt, her niece Mrs. Harold, her maid Celestine.

As he greeted Mrs. Rutherford, Winthrop remarked to himself, as he had remarked many times before, that his aunt was a fine-looking woman. Mrs. Rutherford was sixty years of age, tall, erect, with a well-cut profile, and beautiful gray hair, which lay in soft waves, like a silvery cloud, above her fine dark eyes. The state of her health had evidently not interfered with the arrangement of this aureola, neither had it relaxed in any degree the grave perfection of her attire; her bonnet was a model of elegance and simplicity, her boot, as she stepped from the carriage, was seen to be another model of elegance and good sense. Mrs. Rutherford loved elegance. But Mrs. Rutherford loved indolence as well, and indolence never constructed or kept in order an appearance such as hers; the person (of very different aspect) who followed her, laden with baskets, cushions, and shawls, was the real architect of this fine structure, from the soft waves of hair to the well-shaped boot; this person was Celestine, the maid.

Celestine's real name was Minerva Poindexter. Her mistress, not liking the classic appellation, had changed it to Celestine, the Poindexter being dropped entirely. Mrs. Rutherford was accustomed to say that this was her one deliberate affectation – she affected to believe that Celestine was French; the maid, a tall, lean, yellow-skinned woman, reticent and unsmiling, might have been French or Scotch, Portuguese or Brazilian, as far as appearance went, tall, lean women of unmarried aspect being a product scattered in regular, if limited, quantities over the face of the entire civilized globe. As she seldom opened her lips, her nationality could not be determined by an inquiring public from her speech. There were those, however, who maintained that Celestine knew all languages, that there was a dark omniscience about her. In reality she was a Vermont woman, who had begun life as a country dress-maker – a country dress-maker with great natural talent but no opportunities. The opportunities had come later, they came when she was discovered by Mrs. Peter Rutherford. This tall Vermont genius had now filled for many years a position which was very congenial to her, though it would have been considered by most persons a position full of difficulties. For Mrs. Rutherford required in her personal attendant talents which are generally supposed to be conflicting: esteeming her health very delicate, she wished to be minutely watched and guarded by an experienced nurse, a nurse who should take to heart conscientiously the responsibilities of her charge; yet at the same time she cherished that deep interest in the constantly changing arcana of feminine attire for which it is supposed that only a skilful but probably immoral Parisian can suffice.

But the keen New England eyes of Minerva Poindexter had an instant appreciation of such characteristics of arriving fashions as could be gracefully adopted by her handsome mistress, whose

best points she thoroughly understood, and even in a certain way admired, though as regarded herself, and indeed all the rest of womankind, she approved rigidly of that strict neutrality of surface, that ignoring of all merely corporeal points, which is so striking a characteristic of the monastic heavenly paintings of Fra Angelico. At the same moment, however, that her New England eyes were exercising their natural talent, her New England conscience, equally keen, made her a nurse of unmatched qualities, albeit she was perhaps something of a martinet. But with regard to her health Mrs. Rutherford rather liked to be domineered over. She liked to be followed about by shawls (her shawls were always beautiful, never having that niggardly, poverty-stricken aspect which such feminine draperies, when reserved for use in the house, are apt to assume); she liked to be vigilantly watched with regard to draughts; she liked to have her pulse felt, to have cushions, handsomely covered in rich colors, placed behind her well-dressed back. Especially did she like to be presented, at fixed hours, with little tea-spoonfuls of homœopathic medicine, which did not taste badly, but which, nevertheless, it always required some urging to induce her to take; the urging – in fact, the whole system, regularly persevered in – could give variety to the dullest day.

After greeting his aunt, Winthrop turned to speak to Celestine. By way of reply Celestine gave a short nod, and looked in another direction. In reality she was delighted with his notice, but this was her way of showing it. The two boys, Evert Winthrop and Lansing Harold, Mrs. Rutherford's nephews, had been her pets from childhood; but even in the old days her manner towards them had always been so curt and taciturn that they used to consider it a great triumph when they had succeeded in drawing out Minerva's laugh – for they always called her Minerva behind Mrs. Rutherford's back. It may be that this had had something to do with her liking for them; for, in her heart, Miss Poindexter considered her baptismal name both a euphonious and dignified one, and much to be preferred to the French frivolity of the title to which she was obliged to answer.

"But where is Margaret?" said Mrs. Rutherford, turning.

A third person, who had been looking at the new scene about her – the orange-trees, the palmettoes, the blue water of the Espiritu beyond the low sea-wall, and the fringe of tropical forest on Patricio opposite – now stepped from the carriage.

"I was beginning to think that there had been some change of plan, Mrs. Harold, and that you had not come," said Winthrop, going back to the carriage to assist her.

Margaret Harold smiled. Her smile was a very pleasant one; she and Winthrop greeted each other with what seemed like a long-established, though quiet and well-governed, coldness.

CHAPTER IV

Later in the evening Mrs. Rutherford was sitting with her nephew on the piazza of her new residence, the little house he had engaged for her use during her stay in Gracias; they were looking at the moonlight on the lagoon.

The little residence had but one story, and that story was a second one. It had been built above an old passageway of stone, which had led from the Franciscan monastery down to the monks' landing-place on the shore; the passageway made a turn at a right angle not far from the water, and this angle had been taken possession of by the later architect, who had rested his square superstructure solidly on the old walls at the south and west, and had then built a light open arch below to support the two remaining sides, thus securing an elevated position, and a beautiful view of the sea beyond Patricio, at comparatively small expense for his high foundation. An outside stairway of stone, which made a picturesque turn on the way, led up to the door of this abode, and, taken altogether, it was an odd and pleasant little eyrie on a pleasant shore.

Evert Winthrop, however, when he secured it for his aunt, had not been thinking so much of its pleasantness as its freedom from damp, Mrs. Rutherford having long been of the opinion that most of the evils of life, mental, moral, and physical, and even in a great measure the disasters of nations, could be directly traced to the condition of cellars.

"You will observe, Aunt Katrina, that there *is* no cellar," he remarked as she took possession.

The eyrie had but one fault, and that was a fault only if people were disposed to be sentimental: the old walls beneath, built by the monks long before, had the air of performing their present duty with extreme unwillingness. Coming up from the water, they passed under the modern house reluctantly, supporting it under protest, as it were; their cold disapprovals seemed to come through the floors.

Mrs. Rutherford declared that it made her feel "sacrilegious." But the sentiments of Minerva Poindexter were of an entirely different nature. "I *admire* to have 'em there," said this rigid Protestant; "I admire to know they're under my feet, so that I can tromple 'em down!" For though she had been over the entire civilized world, though she could adapt Paris fashions, and was called Celestine, Miss Poindexter had never in her heart abated one inch of her original Puritan principles, and as she now came and went over the old monks' passage, her very soles rejoiced in the opportunity to express their utter detestation of the monastic system, she ground them deeply into the mattings on purpose.

The little plaza of Gracias-á-Dios was near the eyrie. On one side of it stood the rambling old inn, the Seminole House, encircled by a line of stout ancient posts for the use of its patrons, who for the most part had come mounted; for in that country there had been very little driving, all rode. There had been horses of many grades, mules, and the little ponies not much larger than sheep that browsed in the marshes. To walk was beneath the dignity of any one; the poorest negro had his sorry animal of some sort to save him from that. As to walking for pleasure, that crazed idea had not yet reached Gracias.

The Seminole had agreed to send lunches and dinners of its best cooking to the eyrie, and its best cooking, though confined to the local ingredients, was something not to be despised; it owed its being to the culinary intuitions of Aunt Dinah-Jim, a native artist, who evolved in some mysterious way, from her disorderly kitchen, the dishes for which she was celebrated at uncertain hours. But if the hours were uncertain, the dishes were not.

The old black woman sent the results of her labors to the house on the wall, in the charge of Telano Johnson, a tall, slender colored boy of eighteen summers, whose spotless white linen jacket and intense gravity of demeanor gained him the favor of even Celestine. "He has manners like the Governor of Vermont and all his staff, I do declare!" was the secret thought of this good woman. Telano, who had never seen a white servant before, treated Celestine with profound respect; his inward belief was that she was a witch, which would account for her inexplicable leanness, and the conciseness

of her remarks, the latter most singular of all to Telano, who had the usual flowery fluency of his race. He carried a Voudoo charm against her, and brandished it when she was not looking; in addition, he often arranged, swiftly and furtively, in a corner of the dining-room when he came to lay the cloth, a little pile of three minute twigs crossed in a particular fashion, and sprinkled with unknown substances which he also took from his pocket, the whole a protection from her supposed incantations against him. Minerva meanwhile had no suspicion of these pagan rites, she continued to be pleased with Telano, and had a plan for teaching him to read. The boy sang with the charming sweetness so common among the Africans, and once, after listening, duster in hand, in spite of herself, for a quarter of an hour, as he carolled over the dishes he was washing in his pantry, she went so far as to appear at his pantry door to ask, briefly, if he knew a favorite song of her youth, "The Draggle-tail Gypsies, Oh!" Telano did not know it. And she said she would sing it to him some day. Whereupon Telano, as soon as possible afterwards, took flight in his long white apron back to the Seminole House for a fresh charm against her; he was convinced that the singing of this strange bony woman would finish him, would be the worst spell of all.

"That's a very good black boy we've got to wait at table and do the chores," Celestine remarked approvingly to her mistress, as she brought a shawl of different thickness, suitable to the dew in the air, to put round her. "He's a deal sight more serious-minded than the rantum-scootum boys one has to put up with in a wanderin' life like this. He's spry, yet he's steady too; and he sings like a bobolink, though his songs are most *dreadful* as to words. There's one, 'O Lord, these *bones* of mine! O Lord, these BONES of mine! O Lord, these BONES of mine!'" – Celestine sang this quotation in a high chanting voice, with her eyes closed and her face screwed up tightly, which was her usual expression when musical. "And I suppose it refers to rheumatism," she added, descending to her ordinary tones; "but it's very irreverent. He doesn't know 'The Draggle-tail Gypsies,' nor yet 'Barbara Allen,' nor yet 'I'll Make You a Present of a Coach and Six;' but I'm going to sing 'em to him some day. I feel that I must do my duty by him, poor neglected African. Have you any objections to my teaching him to read?"

"No, provided he doesn't read my books," Mrs. Rutherford answered.

"He will read in McGuffey's Third Reader," responded Celestine.

Winthrop had retained his bachelor quarters at the Seminole; the house over the old monks' passage was not large, and Mrs. Rutherford was fond of space. She liked open doors in all directions, she liked to have several sitting-rooms; she liked to leave her book in one, her fan in another, her scent-bottle or handkerchief in a third, and have nobody disturb them.

"I don't detect in you, Aunt Katrina, any signs of the ruin you mentioned," her nephew said, as they sat together, that first evening, on the piazza.

The light from the room within shone across Mrs. Rutherford's face and the soft waves of her silvery hair as, with a pink shawl thrown round her, she sat leaning back in an easy-chair. "Celestine repairs the breaches so cleverly that no doubt I continue to present a fair appearance to the world," she answered, drawing the shawl more closely round her shoulders, and then letting her hands drop on its pink fringes.

Mrs. Rutherford's hands always took statuesque positions; but probably that was because they were statuesque hands. They were perfect in shape according to sculptors' rules, full and white, one ringless, its beautiful outlines unmarred, the other heavily weighted with gems, which flashed as she moved.

"But pray don't imagine, my dear boy," she continued, "that I enjoy my ill health, as so many women do. On the contrary, I dislike it – dislike it so much that I have even arranged with Margaret that she is never to ask me (save when we are alone) any of those invalid questions – whether I have slept well, how my cough is, if there isn't a draught, and that sort of thing. I used to think that talking with a mother when her children were in the room, was the most trying thing, conversationally; she listens to you with one ear, but the other is listening to Johnnie; right in the midst of something very pathetic you are telling her, she will give a sudden, perfectly irrelevant smile, over her baby's last

crow, and your best story is hopelessly spoiled because she loses the point (though she pretends she hasn't) while she rearranges the sashes of Ethel and Tottie (they are always rearranging them), who are going out to walk with their nurse. Still, bad as this is, I have come to the conclusion, lately, that invalid-questions are worse, because they are not confined to the hours when children are about; and so I have given Margaret my directions."

"Which are to be mine too, I suppose," said Winthrop, smiling. "Mrs. Harold looks well."

"Yes, Margaret always looks the same, I think. She has not that highly colored, robust appearance that some women have, but her health is absolutely perfect; it's really quite wonderful," said the aunt. She paused; then sighed. "I almost think that it has been like an armor to her," she went on. "I don't believe she feels little things as some of us do, some of us who are perhaps more sensitive; she is never nervous, never disturbed, her temper is so even that it is almost exasperating. She thinks as well of everything, for instance, in an east wind as in any other."

"A great gift in some climates; but here it will have less play. Gracias air isn't easterly, it bends towards one – yields, melts."

"I wish Margaret could yield – melt," said Mrs. Rutherford, with another sigh. "You see my mind still broods upon it, Evert; seeing you, my other boy, brings it all back."

"I don't know, but I suppose you do, whether Lanse has made any overtures lately?" said Winthrop, after a moment of silence.

"I know nothing, she is the most reticent woman living. But it would not be like him; with his pride – you know his pride – he would never speak first, never urge."

"A man might speak first to his wife, I should suppose," replied Winthrop, a stern expression showing itself for a moment in his gray eyes. "It need not be urging, it might be a command."

"Lanse would never do that. It would show that he cared, and – well, you know his disposition."

"I used to think that I knew it; but of late years I have doubted my knowledge."

"Don't doubt it, Evert," said Mrs. Rutherford, earnestly, laying her hand on his arm, "he is just what you think, just what he always was. We understand him, you and I – we comprehend him; unfortunately, Margaret cannot."

"I have never pretended to judge Mrs. Harold," answered Evert Winthrop (but he looked as if he might have, if not a judgment, at least an opinion); "I know her too slightly."

"Yet you have seen a good deal of her since you came back from Europe," remarked his aunt.

"I have seen enough to know that she is, at least, a very good niece to you," he answered.

His feeling against Margaret Harold was strong, it was founded upon some of the deepest beliefs of his nature. But these beliefs were his own, in their very essence they were personal, private, he could not have discussed them with any one; especially would he never have discussed them with his aunt, because he thought that she did not, even as it was, do full justice to Margaret Harold, and he had no wish to increase the feeling. On the contrary, he thought that full justice should always be scrupulously awarded to that lady, and the more scrupulously if one did not happen to like her; he himself, for instance, did not like her; on that very account he was careful always, so he would have said, to keep in clear view a just estimate of the many good qualities which she undoubtedly possessed.

In response to his suggestion that Margaret had proved herself a good niece, Mrs. Rutherford answered, in a voice somewhat softened, "Yes, she is very devoted to me." Her conscience seemed to stir a little, for she went on: "Regarding my health, my personal comfort, she is certainly most thoughtful."

Here a door within opened, and she stopped. They heard a light step cross the floor; then a figure appeared in the long window that opened upon the piazza.

"Ah, Margaret, is that you? You have finished the letter?" said Mrs. Rutherford. "She has been writing to my cousins, to tell them of my safe arrival; I did not feel equal to writing myself," she added, to Winthrop.

He had risen to bring forward a chair. But Margaret passed him, and went to the piazza railing, which came solidly up as high as one's elbows, with a broad parapet to lean upon; here she stood looking at the water.

"I believe now all I have heard of this Florida moonlight," she said, her eyes on the broad silvery expanse of the ocean, visible beyond the low line of Patricio. She had turned her head a little as she spoke, and perceiving that a ray from the room within was shining across Mrs. Rutherford's face, she stepped back through the window, changed the position of the lamp, and returned.

"Thank you, my dear; I did not know how much it was teasing me until you moved it," said Mrs. Rutherford. Perhaps she still felt some twinges of conscience, for she added, "Why not go out with Evert and take a look at the little old town by moonlight? It's not yet nine."

"I shall be most happy if Mrs. Harold is not too tired," said Winthrop. He did not rise; but probably he was waiting for her consent.

"Margaret is never tired," said Mrs. Rutherford, making the statement with a wave of her hand – a wave which drew a flash from all her gems.

"Yes, that is one of the things quite understood and settled – that I am never tired," observed Mrs. Harold; she still stood by the parapet, there was no indication in her tone whether she agreed with the understanding or not.

"Do go," urged Mrs. Rutherford. "You have been shut up with me for six days on those slow-moving southern trains, and you know how you enjoy a walk."

"Not to-night, Aunt Katrina."

"You say that because you think I shall not like to be left alone in this strange house on the first evening. But I shall not mind it in the least; Celestine is here, and that black boy."

At this moment the door of the room within was opened by Celestine, and there followed a quick, and what seemed to be, from the sound, a voluminous entrance, and a hurried step across the floor. "My dearest darling Katrina!" said Mrs. Carew, pausing at the long window (which she filled), her arms extended in anticipative welcome, but her eyes not yet certain which of the three figures on the piazza should properly fill them.

Mrs. Rutherford rose, with cordial if less excited welcome. "Is that you, Betty?" she said. And then she was folded in Betty's capacious embrace.

Hand in hand the two ladies went within, to look at each other, they said. Mrs. Harold and Winthrop followed.

"Now, Margaret," said Mrs. Rutherford, after the first greetings were over, "you surely need feel no further scruples about leaving me; Betty and I have enough to say to each other for a half-hour, I am sure."

"For a half-hour, Katrina? For days! weeks! months!" cried Betty, with enthusiasm. And she began upon what was evidently to be a long series of retrospective questions and replies.

"Why not go for a while, if, as you say, you are not tired?" said Winthrop, in pursuance of his system of showing always a careful civility to Margaret Harold.

"It was not I that said it," replied Margaret, smiling a little. "I will go for a quarter of an hour," she added, as though compliance were, on the whole, less trouble than a second refusal. She took a white shawl which was lying on a chair, made a veil for her head of one corner, while the rest of its fleecy length fell over her dark dress. They left the room and went down the outside stairway to the street below.

It was called a street, and had even a name – Pacheco; but in reality it was the open shore.

"It has such an odd effect to me, all this low-lying country on a level with the water," said Margaret; "the whole land is like a sea-beach, a sea-beach with trees growing on it."

"Do you like it? or do you think it ugly?"

"I think it very beautiful – in its own way."

"I will take you to the Benito," said Winthrop.

At the end of Pacheco lane they passed under an old stone archway into the plaza. This little pleasure-ground was shaded by orange-trees, which formed a thick grove; paths ran irregularly through the grove, and there were stone benches here and there. On the north side the gray-white façade of Our Lady of the Angels rose above the trees, conferring architectural dignity upon the town. The main building was low and rather dilapidated, but the front was felt to be impressive, it elevated itself with candid majesty three stories above the roof, quite undisturbed by a thinness of aspect in profile; the first story bore upon its face an old clock and sun-dial, the second, which was narrower, was punctured by three arches, each containing a bell, and the third under the apex had also an aperture, through which the small bell hanging there should have swung itself picturesquely to and fro, far out against the blue; as a matter of fact, however, none of the bells were rung, they were struck ignominiously from behind by a man with a hammer. The point of the apex was surmounted by a broken globe and a cross.

The uncertain Gothic of St. Philip and St. James' came next, much lower as to height, much younger as to age. But the glory of St. Philip and St. James' lay not in its height, it lay in the flying buttresses of which it had no less than eight, four on each side. These flying buttresses were of course a great feature, they showed how much imagination the architect had had; for they did not support the roof, nor anything else, they appeared indeed to have some difficulty in supporting themselves, so that it was always more or less of a question as to whether, in a northerly gale, they might not take to flying themselves – in fragments and a wrong direction. So far, however, this had not happened; and Mrs. Penelope Moore, the rector's wife, had trained vines over them so thickly that they looked like arbors; Mrs. Penelope, however, had a better name for them than that; she called them "the cloisters."

The west side of the plaza was occupied by the long front of the old Government House, the residence of crown officials during Spanish days. Over its low height, palmetto-trees lifted their ostrich-plumed foliage high in the air from the large garden behind. At one end there rose above the roof a lookout tower, which commanded a view of the harbor; here had floated for two hundred years the flag of Spain, here also had hung the bell upon which the watchman had struck the signal when the beacon on Patricio opposite had flamed forth from its iron cage the tidings that a ship was in sight, a ship from Spain. But the bell had long been gone, and nothing floated from the old staff now save twice a year, when on the Fourth of July and Washington's Birthday the postmaster, who used the old Government House for his post-office, unfurled there, with official patriotism, the Stars and Stripes of the United States.

As Winthrop and his companion on their way across the plaza came out from the shade of the orange-trees, some one spoke Winthrop's name. It was Dr. Kirby, who was entering the grove by another path which intersected theirs. Garda Thorne was with him, and a little behind them appeared the dark countenance of Torres. The Doctor stopped and extended his hand, it was not the Doctor's custom to pass his friends without speech. Winthrop therefore stopped too; and then, as the Doctor seemed to expect it, he presented him to Mrs. Harold. The Doctor paid his respects in his best manner, and introduced his "young friend, Miss Thorne, of Gracias-á-Dios." After that, "Mr. Adolfo Torres, of Cuba." He had been with Miss Thorne (who was spending a day or two with his mother, Mistress Kirby) to pay an evening visit to Mistress Carew. But they had not found Mistress Carew at home.

"She is with my aunt," said Winthrop; "the two ladies having a past of forty years to talk over, Mrs. Harold and I came out for a stroll."

"Ah – a first impression, I conjecture," said the Doctor, standing, hat in hand, before the northern lady. "You find our little town, I fear, rather old-fashioned."

"I like old-fashioned things," replied Margaret. "I have been looking at something more old-fashioned still – the sea."

"If you like to look at the sea, you are going to the Benito, I am sure of it," said Garda in her soft tones, tones that contrasted with those of Mrs. Harold, which were equally low, but much more reserved, and also more clear. She came forward and stood beside the northern lady, scanning her

face in the moonlight with her beautiful eyes. "Please let me go with you," she said, urgently; "I want to go so much. It is so long since I have been on the Benito by moonlight!"

Mrs. Harold smiled at her earnestness; and Garda, speaking to the Doctor now, though without turning her head, said, "You will come, won't you, Doctor? Do; oh, please do."

The Doctor hesitated, then sacrificed himself; in the cause of the Thorne family pedestrianism seemed to be required of him. But Benito was long; he made up his mind that he would not go one inch beyond a certain old boat which he remembered, drawn up on the sand at not more than a quarter of the distance to the end of the point.

"We will go ever so far," said Garda, taking Mrs. Harold's arm; "we will go way out to the end!"

"Certainly," replied the Doctor.

They all walked on together through the St. Luz quarter, Torres following. Torres had no idea where they were going, nor why the direction of their walk had been changed. But this was a frequent condition of things with him in Gracias, and, besides, it did not trouble him; a Torres was not curious, he wished to go, therefore he went.

The little streets here were not more than eight feet wide. Garda kept her place beside Mrs. Harold, and Dr. Kirby followed with Winthrop; Torres, joining no one, walked by himself, five or six yards behind the others.

"That young man seems fond of acting as rear-guard," said Winthrop, glancing back as they turned a corner, and noting the solitary figure advancing stiffly in the moonlight.

"Garda is the only one of our present party whose conversation he can really enjoy," answered the Doctor. "When he cannot converse with her, he prefers, I think, to be by himself. At least I have gathered that impression from his manner."

"His manner is his strong point," said Winthrop. "It's very picturesque."

"It strikes you as picturesque?" said the Doctor, looking up at him with his quick bird-glance.

"It's a little feudal, isn't it?" replied Winthrop. "But I am afraid you will think my comparisons fantastic; I have treated you to a good many of them."

"Sir," responded the Doctor, courteously waiving the question of accuracy, "what I notice is your command of language. It would never have occurred to me to say feudal, I admire your affluence."

"And I am ashamed of it," said Winthrop, "I am ashamed of myself for staring about and applying adjectives in this way to the people and scenery here, as though it were a foreign country; it ought to be as much a part of me, and I of it, as though it were Massachusetts Bay."

But this view of the subject was beyond the Doctor's comprehension; to him the difference between New England and the South was as wide, whether considered geographically, psychologically, or historically, as that between the South and Japan. Nothing could have made him, Reginald Kirby, feel a sympathetic ownership in Massachusetts Bay, and he saw no reason why this Mr. Evert Winthrop should be claiming proprietorship in a distinctively Spanish and Carolinian shore. The singular views of these northerners were apparently endless! But in this case, at least, the views could do no harm, Florida would remain Florida, in spite of northern hallucinations.

Beyond the low stone houses of St. Luz, they crossed a common, and gained the open shore. The coast here bent sharply to the east, and went out to sea in a long point, the beach which fringed this point was called the Benito; the party of strollers walked down the Benito's firm white floor, with the sea breaking in little lapping wavelets at its edge, and the moonlight flooding land and water with its wonderful radiance. The beach was forty feet broad; Winthrop and the Doctor joined the ladies. But Garda kept her place beside Mrs. Harold, and talked only to her, she seemed to be fascinated by all the northern lady said. Winthrop could not fail to see that her interest in this new companion was of the same sort as that which she had originally shown regarding himself – curiosity, apparently; and that Margaret Harold excited the feeling in a stronger degree than he had done. Meanwhile it amused

him to see how completely this Florida girl did as she pleased. It pleased her now to forget him entirely; but he was not the only one, she forgot the Doctor also, and the patient lonely Torres behind.

It may as well be mentioned here that the Doctor went as far as the old boat he remembered. And that then he went farther; he went to the end of the point, a mile away.

"Surely you have not been gone half an hour?" said Mrs. Carew, as Margaret and Winthrop re-entered the eyrie's little drawing-room.

"Two hours, nearly," answered Winthrop, looking at his watch.

"Betty is *so* demonstrative," said Mrs. Rutherford to her niece, in a plaintive tone, when they were left alone. "I verily believe she has kissed me during this one call at least twenty times. She always had the best heart in the world – poor Betty!"

"She is very stout, isn't she?" she resumed, after a pause. "Her figure is all gone, she's like a meal-sack with a string tied round it."

Her eyes wandered to the mirror, which gave back the reflection of her own shapely person in its rich, perfectly fitting attire. "And how she was dressed! – did you notice! That old-fashioned glacé silk that shines, made with gathers, and a hem – I don't know *when* I've seen a hem before."

She spoke with much seriousness, her eyes were slowly measuring the gulf that separated this friend of her youth from herself. After a while these eyes moved up to the reflection in the mirror of her own silver-gray locks, arranged in their graceful waves above her white forehead.

"She has the old-time ideas, poor Betty!" she murmured. Then, gravely and impartially, as one who chronicles a past historical epoch: "She still colors her hair!"

CHAPTER V

Mrs. Carew's candles, in the old candelabra hung with glass prisms, were all lighted; in addition, her astral lamp was shining on a table in the back drawing-room, and near this lamp she was standing.

The two rooms were large, square, separated by folding-doors which were held open by giant sea-shells, placed upon the carpet as weights. Wide doors led also from each room into the broad hall, which was lighted by a hanging lamp in a pictured porcelain shade. From the back drawing-room a second door led into the dining-room behind, which was also entered by a broader door at the end of the hall.

"Now, Pompey," said the mistress of the house, "are you quite sure you understand? Tell me what it is you are to do."

Pompey, a small, yellow-skinned negro, whose large, orb-like, heavily wrinkled eyelids (underneath which but a narrow line of eye appeared) were the most prominent features of his flat face, replied, solemnly: "W'en eberyting's ready, I fuss slips inter de hall, steppen softly, an' shets *dish* yer do', de back parlo' do' inter de hall. I nex' announces suppah at de *fron*' parlo' do'. Den, wiles de compahny's parsing inter de hall, I hurries roun' tru *dish* yer do' – de do' from de *dinin*'-room – gits out dat ar lamp mighty quick, an' has it onter de middle ob de suppah table befo' de *fuss* head ob de compahny appeahs at de hall do'. An' I follers de same course *ob*wersed w'en de compahny retiahs."

"Very well," said Mrs. Carew. "Now mind you do it."

Hearing the gate-latch fall, she hurried into the front room to be ready to receive her dearest Katrina. But it was only Mrs. Thorne, who, with Garda, entered without knocking; the evening was warm and the hall door stood open, the light from within shining across the broad piazza, and down the rose-bordered path to the gate. Mrs. Carew herself accompanied her friends up-stairs, and stood talking while they laid aside their light wraps; these guests were to spend the night, having come up from East Angels in their boat, old Pablo rowing.

"We shall be ten," said their hostess; "a good number, don't you think so? I shall have whist, of course, later – whist and conversation." Here Mrs. Thorne, having taken from her basket a small package, brought forth from their careful wrappings two pairs of kid gloves, one white, the other lavender; they did not appear to be new.

"You are not going to wear *gloves*?" said Mrs. Carew, interrupting herself in her surprise. "It's only a small tea-party."

"No entertainment given by you, dear friend, can be called small; it is not a question of numbers, but of scope, and your scope is always of the largest," replied the mistress of East Angels, beginning to cover her small fingers with the insignia of ceremony. "Our only thought was to do you honor, we are very glad to have this little opportunity."

Garda put her gloves in her pocket. She had the white ones.

"My daughter," said Mrs. Thorne, admonishingly.

"But, mamma, I don't want to wear them; I don't like them."

"We are obliged, in *this* world at least, my child, to wear many things, gloves included, which we do not especially like," said Mrs. Thorne, with the air of expecting to wear only the choicest garb (gloves included) in the next. "Do not interfere with my plan for doing honor to our dear friend."

Garda, with a grimace, took out the gloves and put them on, while the dear friend looked on with much interest. There was not a trace of jealousy in her glance, a Gwinnet, in truth, could not have cause for jealousy; she was really admiring the little New England woman's inspiration. "Gloves have never been worn here at small tea-parties," she said to Evert Winthrop afterwards. "But she thought that your aunt and Mrs. Harold, coming as they do from New York, would have them, and so she unearthed those two old pairs. There is really *no* limit to that woman's energy; I verily believe that if an East Indian prince should be wrecked off Gracias, she would find an elephant to receive

him with! Her courage is inexhaustible, and if she had any money *at all*, she'd move the world – like Archimedes, wasn't it, who only wanted a point for his lever? To be sure, that is the great thing – the point, and Mr. Carew used always to say that I forgot mine. I told him that he could pick them up and put them in himself if he missed them so much, but he said that anybody could put them in, but that it took a real genius to leave them out, as I did." Here the good lady laughed heartily. "It was only his joking way, of course," she added; "you see, Mr. Carew was a lawyer."

The gloves having been duly put on, the three ladies descended to the front drawing-room, where Mrs. Thorne seated herself in an attitude which might have been described as suggesting a cultured expectation. Her little figure remained erect, not touching the back of her chair; her hands, endued with the gloves, were folded lightly; her countenance expressed the highest intelligence, chastened by the memory of the many trials through which she had passed; this, at least, was what she intended it to express.

The fall of the gate-latch was now heard again.

"Had we not better be standing?" suggested their hostess, in a hurried whisper. It was so many years since she had opened her old house for what she called "evening company" that she felt fluttered and uncertain – embarrassed, as imaginative people always are, by the number of things that occurred to her, things she might do.

"I think not, dear friend," answered Mrs. Thorne, with decision. "We are too few, it would have, I fear, the air of a tableau."

Mrs. Thorne was above flutter, a whisper she scorned. As the approaching footsteps drew nearer, the listening silence in the drawing-room, whose long windows stood open, became in her opinion far too apparent; she coughed, turned to her daughter, and, in her clear little voice, remarked, "I have always esteemed the pearl the most beautiful of precious stones. The diamond has more brilliancy, the ruby a richer glow, but the pearl – " Here the steps, entering the hall without ceremony, showed that the new-comers were not the expected northern guests, since they, of course, would have gone through the form of raising the knocker upon the open door. It was Dr. Kirby who entered, followed by the Rev. Mr. Moore.

The Doctor offered his salutations in his usual ceremonious fashion. He made a compact little bow, and a formal compliment, over the hand of each of the ladies in turn; he was dressed in black, but still looked like a canary-bird – a canary-bird in mourning.

After some minutes, again came the sound of the gate-latch. Mrs. Carew, who was talking, stopped short, even Dr. Kirby's attention flew to the gravel-path; there was danger of another pause. But bravely Mrs. Thorne came to the rescue a second time. "The emerald," she observed, to the unlistening Kirby, "is clear, and even one may say translucent. And how profound it is! – how deep the mysterious green which – " The new-comers had crossed the piazza, lifted the knocker, and had then, without waiting for Pompey's appearance, entered the hall; this showed acquaintance, though not the familiar intimacy of the first guests; it proved to be Manuel Ruiz, and with him Adolfo Torres.

But now came the sound of wheels, Mrs. Carew listened eagerly. "A carriage!" she murmured, turning to the Doctor, as the sound stopped before her house. He nodded and twirled his thumbs. This time there could be no doubt, the strangers were coming up the path.

But silence had again attacked the little group, and Mrs. Thorne, feeling that graceful conversation was now more than ever imperative, if the strangers were to be impressed with the ease and distinction of Gracias society, was again about to speak, when Garda, with a merry gleam in her eyes, exclaimed, with sudden enthusiasm, to Manuel, "Sapphires, oh, beautiful sapphires, how I wish I had a tiara of them!" Manuel, though somewhat surprised by the unexpectedness of the topic, gallantly answered that she was worthy to have her floors paved with them if she should wish it; nay, that he himself would become a sapphire for such a purpose. And then by the formal knock and the delay, all felt that the strangers were at last within their gates. A few minutes later they entered the

drawing-room, Mrs. Rutherford, Margaret Harold, and Evert Winthrop. Mrs. Thorne's eyes turned towards her daughter with one quick single beam of triumph: the ladies wore gloves.

Mrs. Carew seated herself beside her dearest Katrina, and Dr. Kirby bore them company; the Rev. Mr. Moore and Mrs. Thorne gave their attention to Mrs. Harold. Evert Winthrop took a seat which had the air of being near enough to the first group for conversational purposes, but which was in reality a little apart. Garda and Manuel were on the opposite side of the room, with Torres standing near them; Manuel was talking, but Garda gave him a divided attention, she was looking at Evert Winthrop. At length she rose and went across to his chair.

"Did you have a pleasant ride to-day?" she asked, standing with the simplicity of a child before him, her hands clasped and hanging.

"Yes; I went down the King's Road," he answered, rising. "I like a 'King's Road;' we have no King's Roads at the North."

"Why not?" said Garda.

"We abolished kings more completely than you did perhaps; in 1776."

"What happened then? Something at the North?"

"Oh, a small matter, quite unimportant; it didn't include Gracias-á-Dios."

"It might have, I don't pretend to know the history of Gracias-á-Dios," replied Garda, rather loftily; "all I know is the history of my own family. In 1776 my grandmother Beatriz was five years old, and even then, they say, water could run under her insteps."

"Why did they keep the poor child in such wet places? It must have been very unhealthy. Won't you have this chair?"

"I'm so tired of chairs."

"Have you been asleep in the hammock all the afternoon?"

"Yes," she confessed. "But I hope I don't show it so plainly? It isn't polite to look sleepy at a party."

"Let us walk up and down for a while: that will waken you," he said, offering his arm.

"Do people walk up and down when the party is such a small one? Is that a northern custom?"

"I am a northerner certainly; and it's my custom," he answered. As they entered the back drawing-room, "I did not mean that you looked sleepy," he added, "but the contrary; the walking will be of use as a sedative."

"You need not be afraid, I shall not do anything out of the way; don't you see that I have on white gloves?" And she extended her hands for his inspection. "They are not mine, as you may well imagine, I never had a pair of white gloves in my life; they are mamma's, and ever so many years old, she wore them when she was married."

"I wish I could have seen her; she must have looked like a little blossom of the May."

"Yes," answered Garda, "I am sure that mamma must have been very pretty indeed when she was young." She spoke with seriousness, Winthrop imagined that she had given the subject much consideration. They reached the end of the second room, and turned to come back.

"I should never have asked the señorita to do that," said Torres in Spanish to Manuel.

"Very likely not; but do at least sit down, people don't stand up against the wall all the time at tea-parties, like wooden soldiers."

"It is my method," replied Torres; "I have always my own method about everything."

"Change it, then; at least for this evening," suggested his New World companion.

"If they do not, as you say, stand, it appears that they walk. And continue to walk," remarked the Cuban, after a moment, his eyes still upon Garda and Winthrop.

"Of course they do, if they wish to," replied Manuel, who was at heart as much surprised by Winthrop's proceeding as Torres had been; but, if surprised, quick also to seize and appropriate to his own use any advantages which new codes of manners might offer. "But you cannot walk all alone

– don't try that. Take something and look at it, if you won't sit down; a book; daguerreotypes. There's a Chinese puzzle; take that."

Thus adjured, Torres stepped forward, took the puzzle from a table, and returned with it to his place. Here he stood still again, holding his prize solemnly.

"Play with it," said Manuel; "I never saw such a fellow! Move the rings up and down."

"I took it because you wished me to do so," replied the Cuban, with dignity. "But to play with it is impossible; why should I play with an ivory toy? – I am not a child."

Here the gray head of Pompey appeared at the front drawing-room door. The old servant waited respectfully until he had caught his mistress's eye; he then made a low bow, with his hands folded before him – "Miss C'roo am serbed."

Dr. Kirby offered his arm to Mrs. Rutherford, Mr. Moore offered his to Mrs. Harold; Mrs. Carew waved Winthrop towards Mrs. Thorne, while she herself took the arm of Manuel Ruiz. Garda was left to Torres, who, thus unexpectedly made happy, accompanied her into the hall, still bearing his puzzle.

"What in the world are you carrying?" she asked, laughing.

"It is a toy of ivory which Manuel insisted that I should take. With your permission I will now lay it aside." And he deposited it carefully upon a chair.

The little procession now came to a pause, Mrs. Carew having asked her dearest Katrina to look at a portrait upon the wall. "It was taken the year after my marriage," she explained, watching for the increased glow through the dining-room door which should proclaim to her anxious eyes the arrival of the astral lamp in its destined place.

"I do not need a portrait, Betty; I have one in my memory," replied Mrs. Rutherford, graciously. She could not see the picture without her glasses, but she gazed at the gilt frame with an interested air, looking at it with her head now a little on one side, now on the other, as if to get the right light.

"I have never considered this portrait a faithful representation of our friend," observed Dr. Kirby. He could not see even the frame, but he surveyed the wall with disapprobation. "It quite fails to give her vivacity, which is so characteristic a feature. But what painter's brush, what limner's art, can fix upon canvas that delicate, that, I may say, intangible charm which belongs to the fairer portion of our humanity? It is, and must always be, a hopeless task."

Mrs. Rutherford admired the Doctor's way of expressing himself. It was the fine old style. She herself had kept pace with the new, as she kept pace with everything; but the old style was more stately, and she had always preferred it; for one thing, she understood it better. Mrs. Rutherford liked conversations to have a beginning, a middle, and an end; the Doctor's conversations, and even his sentences, had all three.

The increased glow now showed itself through the distant door, and Mrs. Carew moved on; the little company passed down the hall and into the dining-room, where stood a bountifully decked table with the astral lamp radiant in the centre, and Pompey, so dignified under his responsibilities that he actually looked tall, in attendance. It was an old-fashioned repast; they were all seated round the table as though it had been a dinner. But the hostess did not place them in the order in which they had proceeded through the hall; having paid what she considered due acknowledgment to etiquette, she now arranged them for the long repast in the way which she thought would please them best, which is quite another matter. Winthrop found himself between Garda and Mrs. Harold; Mrs. Harold had upon her left hand Manuel Ruiz, and Garda upon her right the happy Torres, who, however, in spite of happiness, looked more rigid and solemn than ever as the soft horizontal light of the lamp, shining above the central plum-cake, illumined his dark face.

"You remember, of course, that he does not speak English," Garda said to Winthrop. She was alluding to her right-hand neighbor.

"Does that mean that you intend to speak Spanish to him?" said Winthrop. "He has quite enough as it is in being next you; you should not give too much."

"I like generosity."

"That wouldn't be generosity, but squandering; you shouldn't give at random."

"Poor Adolfo isn't at random! But I believe you are trying to instruct me?" she said, surveying him frankly.

"Would it displease you if I were?"

Garda paused, as if considering the point. "You might try it," she answered. "It would at least be new, and I generally like new things. That is the reason, you know, that I liked you; you were new."

Manuel, meanwhile, was bringing forward his finest powers for the entertainment of Mrs. Harold, by whose side he had been placed; and if he talked in a somewhat more decorated strain than was prevalent in the colder circles from which she had come, it was carried off easily by his youth, his handsome face, his animated manner. Winthrop overheard occasionally his fervid little speeches, he did not admire them. But it was only occasionally, for he himself was fully occupied, Garda talked to him, or listened to him, during the entire time they remained at the table. And this was over two hours; there were many delicious things to be eaten, or at least tasted, for Mrs. Carew's Cynthy, having been one of the good cooks of the old days before the war, was still in possession of a remnant of her former skill. As these "old days" lay but six years back, it would seem that Cynthy must have worked hard to forget all but a remnant, in so short a time. She had, however, succeeded perfectly, and only upon great occasions, like the present, would she condescend to revert to her ancient knowledge, as a favor to "Miss Betty," whose fortunes were so sadly fallen. Cynthy and Pompey had accompanied their young mistress from her Georgia home to the new one in Florida many years before; they now remained with her for the excellent reason that, owing to age and infirmities, it would have been impossible for them to have found a home or employment elsewhere. This, however, they never acknowledged, they spoke of their fidelity as a weakness of which they were rather ashamed; but "dat poor Miss Betty, she nebber get 'long widout us nohow, Pomp, dat's a fac'." In reality, they adored Miss Betty, and would have pined and died in a month if taken from her kindly, indulgent rule, and from the old Carew kitchen, with its disorder and comfort, where they had reigned so many years.

The superior table manners of Mrs. Thorne were never more apparent than upon this occasion. In this lady's opinion, when one was required to turn from intellectual occupations to the grosser employment of supplying nourishment to the body, one could at least endeavor to etherealize it as much as possible by confining one's self to that refined implement, the fork. In accordance with this theory, she scarcely touched her knife; once, under protest as it were, she delicately divided with its aid the wing of a wild-duck, but that was all. She encountered difficulties; slices of cold tongue betrayed a remarkable tenacity of fibre, portions of broiled chicken manifested a very embarrassing slipperiness under the silver tines, as she tried to divide them or roll them up. But she persevered in her efforts to the end, and succeeded, though her small fingers became deeply dented by the force she was obliged to exert.

When the meal was at length over, Mrs. Carew, with a bow to Mrs. Rutherford as her most distinguished guest, rose. Garda called Winthrop's attention, as they also rose, to the fact that she had scarcely spoken six sentences of Spanish during its entire continuance. "See how well I have obeyed you," she said.

"Surely I did not venture a command?"

"I think you did. At least you came as near it as you dared, and you are very daring."

"I? Never in the world! You are quite mistaken, Miss Thorne, I am the exact opposite of that," he answered, laughing.

"But I should think you would like me to at least believe you so," responded Garda, looking at him with wonder.

"Believe me to be daring? We probably use the word in a different sense; it isn't a word I am fond of, I confess; but I don't think you would find me lacking in any emergency."

"Oh, emergencies! – they never come to Gracias. Now please don't say, like the dear old Doctor, 'May they never come to *you*, my dearest child!'"

"I will say, then – may I be present when they do."

"But you won't be," responded Garda, her tone suddenly changing; "you will go away, Mrs. Harold will go away, everybody will go away, and we shall be left alone again, mamma and I, on this old shore!"

"But you have seemed to me very happy here on this old shore," said Winthrop, in a tone which was indulgent as well as comforting – she had looked so young, so like a child, as she made her complaint.

"So I have been – until now. But now that I have seen you, now that I have seen Mrs. Harold, I – I don't know." She looked at him wistfully.

This little conversation had gone on while they were all returning through the hall to the front drawing-room. Manuel, however, who was with Mrs. Harold, had a plan of his own, he turned boldly aside towards the closed door of the back drawing-room, his intention being to establish himself with the charming northern lady upon a certain sofa which he remembered at the extreme end of that broad apartment; if isolation were a northern fashion, he would be isolated too. But Mrs. Carew (with the returning lamp on her mind) saw his hand upon the knob, and summoned him in haste: "Mr. Ruiz! Mr. Ruiz!"

When he obeyed her call, she begged him fervently to promise to sing for them immediately that "sweet little air" which it seemed was "such a favorite" of hers, though when he asked her to define it more clearly, she was unable to recall its name, the words, or any characteristic by which he could identify it; however, by this effort of the imagination the door of the back drawing-room was kept closed, and all her guests were piloted safely to the front room by the way they had come. The lamp was in position, only the retreating legs of Pompey were visible through the dining-room door; the mistress of the house, unused to strategy, sank into a chair, and furtively passed her handkerchief across her brow.

Manuel was already tuning the guitar.

"Does he like to sing so soon after – after tea?" said Mrs. Rutherford.

But the handsome youth could sing as well at one time as another. He looked about him, found a low ottoman and drew it towards the sofa where Mrs. Harold was sitting, thus placing himself as nearly as possible at her feet; then he struck a chord or two, and began. He had a tenor voice (as Winthrop would have said, "of course"); and the voice had much sweetness. He sang his little love song admirably.

Garda was standing near one of the windows with Winthrop. When the song was ended, "How old is Mrs. Harold?" she asked, abruptly; that is, abruptly as regarded subject, her voice itself had no abrupt tones.

"I don't know," Winthrop answered.

"Isn't she your cousin?"

"She is my aunt's niece by marriage; Mr. Rutherford was her uncle."

"But if you have always known her, you must know how old she is."

"I have not always known her, and I don't know; I suppose her to be about twenty-seven or twenty-eight."

"She is over thirty," said Garda, with decision. "Do you think her handsome?"

"She is considered handsome."

"But do you think her so?"

"That is rather a close question, isn't it?"

"It doesn't seem so to me; people are handsome or not handsome, it's fact – not opinion. And what I wanted to see was whether you had any eye for beauty, that was all. Mrs. Rutherford, for instance, is handsome, Mrs. Carew is not. Manuel is handsome, Adolfo Torres is not."

"And Miss Thorne?"

"She hopes she is, but she isn't sure," replied the girl, laughing; "it isn't 'sure' to be thought so by the four persons about here. And she can't find out from the only stranger she knows, because he hasn't a particle of expression in his face; it's most unfortunate."

"For him – yes. It's because he's so old, you know."

"How old are you?"

"I am thirty-five."

"You look younger than that," said Garda, after scanning him for a moment.

"It's my northern temperament, that keeps me young and handsome."

"Oh, you're not handsome; but in a man it's of little consequence," she added.

"Very little. Or in a woman either. Don't we all know that beauty fades as the leaf?"

"The leaf fades when it has had all there was of its life, it doesn't fade before. That is what I mean to do, have all there is of *my* life, I have told mamma so. I said to mamma more than a year ago, 'Mamma, what are our pleasures? Let us see if we can't get some more;' and mamma answered, 'Edgarda, pleasures are generally wrong.' But I don't agree with mamma, I don't think them wrong; and I intend to take mine wherever I can find them, in fact, I do so now."

"And do you find many?"

"Oh yes," replied Garda, confidently. "There are our oranges, which are excellent; and Carlos Mateo, who is so amusing; and the lovely breeze we have sometimes; and the hammock where I lie and plan out all the things I should like to have – the softest silks, laces, nothing coarse or common to touch me; plenty of roses in all the rooms and the garden full of sweet-bay, so that all the air should be perfumed."

"And not books? Conversation?"

"I don't care much about books, they all appear to have been written by old people; I suppose when I am old myself, I shall like them better. As to conversation – yes, I like a little of it; but I like actions more – great deeds, you know. Don't you like great deeds?"

"When I see them; unfortunately, there are very few of them left nowadays, walking about, waiting to be done."

"I don't know; let me tell you one. The other day a young girl here – not of our society, of course – was out sailing with a party of friends in a fishing-boat. This girl had a branch of wild-orange blossoms in her hand; suddenly she threw it overboard, and challenged a young man who was with her to get it again. He instantly jumped into the water; there was a good deal of sea, they were at the mouth of the harbor and the tide was going out; they were running before a fresh breeze, and, having no oars with them, they could not get back to him except by several long tacks. He could not swim very well, and the tide was strong, they thought he certainly would be carried out; but he kept up, and at last they saw him land, ever so far down Patricio – he was only a black dot. He walked back, came across to Gracias in a negro's dug-out, and just as he was, without waiting to change his clothes, he brought her the wet flowers."

"It is the old story of the Glove. Did he throw them in her face?"

"Throw them in her face! – is that what you would have done?" said Garda, astonished.

"Oh, I should never have jumped overboard," answered Winthrop, laughing.

During this interval, Torres, wishing to show himself a man of conversation, after his own method, had propounded no less than three questions to the Rev. Mr. Moore, who understood something of Spanish. He had first requested information as to the various methods of punishment, other than the whip, which had been in use on the plantations in the Gracias-á-Dios neighborhood before the emancipation, and which of them had been considered the most effective. His next inquiry, made after a meditative silence of some minutes, was whether, in the reverend gentleman's opinion, the guillotine was not on the whole a more dignified instrument for the execution of justice than the noose – one more calculated to improve the minds of the lower classes? Finally, he wished to

know whether the clergyman supposed that a person suffered more when an arm was amputated than he did when a leg was taken off, the arm being nearer the vital organs; and whether either of these operations could be compared, as regarded the torture inflicted, with that caused by a sabre wound (such as one might receive in a duel with swords) which had cut into the breast?

"That is a very blood-thirsty young man; his style of conversation is really extraordinary," said the clergyman to Dr. Kirby, when Torres, having exhausted all his topics, and not having understood one word of the rector's Spanish in reply, returned gravely to his place on the other side of the room.

"He is blood-thirsty because he is forced to be so dumb," answered the Doctor, with one of his sudden little grins – grins which came and went so quickly that, were it not for a distinct remembrance of about sixteen very white little teeth which he had seen, the gazer would scarcely have realized that it had been there at all. "No one here (besides yourself and Manuel) can talk Spanish with him but Garda, and Mr. Winthrop has kept Garda talking English every moment since he came; I don't wonder the youth is blood-thirsty, I'm afraid that at his age I should have called the northerner out."

But now Winthrop and Garda joined the others. Winthrop was addressed by Mrs. Thorne.

"I have been begging Mrs. Rutherford and Mrs. Harold to pay us a visit at East Angels some day this week; I hope, Mr. Winthrop, that you will accompany them."

Winthrop expressed his thanks; he put forward the hope in return that she would join them for an afternoon sail, before long, down the Espiritu. Mrs. Thorne was sure that that would be extremely delightful, she was sure that his yacht (she brought out the word with much clearness; no one had ventured to call it a yacht until now) was also delightful; and its name —*Emperadora*– was so charming!

She was perched, by some fatality, on a high-seated chair, so high that (Winthrop suspected) her little feet did not touch the floor. She did not look like a person who could enjoy sailing, one who would be able to undulate easily, yield to the motion of the boat, or find readily accessible in her storehouse of feelings that mood of serene indifference to arriving anywhere at any particular time, which is a necessary accompaniment of the aquatic amusement when pursued in the lovely Florida waters. But "I enjoy sailing of all things," this brave little matron was declaring.

"I am afraid there will be little novelty in it for you. You must know all these waters well," observed Winthrop.

"Even if I do know them well, it will be a pleasure to visit them again in such intelligent society," replied Mrs. Thorne. "We have lived somewhat isolated, my daughter and I; it will be a widening for us in every way to be with you – with Mrs. Rutherford, Mrs. Harold, and yourself. I have sometimes feared," she went on, looking at him with her bright little eyes, "that we should become, perhaps have already become, too motionless in our intellectual life down here, my daughter and myself."

"Motionless things are better than moving ones, aren't they?" answered Winthrop. "The people who try to keep up with everything are apt to be a panting, breathless set. Besides, they lose all sense of comparison in their haste, and don't distinguish; important things and unimportant they talk about with equal eagerness, the only point with them is that they should be new."

"You console me – you console me greatly," responded Mrs. Thorne. "Still, I feel sure that knowledge, and important knowledge, is advancing with giant strides outside, and that we, my daughter and I, are left behind. I have seen but few of the later publications – could you not kindly give me just an outline? In geology, for instance, always so absorbing, what are the latest discoveries with regard to the Swiss lakes? And I should be so grateful, too, for any choice thoughts you may be able to recall at the moment from the more recent essays of Mr. Emerson; I can say with truth that strengthening sentences from Mr. Emerson's writings were my best mental pabulum during all the early years of my residence at the South."

"I – I fancy that Mrs. Harold knows more of Emerson than I do," replied Winthrop, reflecting upon the picture of the New England school-teacher transplanted to East Angels, and supporting life there as best she could, on a diet of Mr. Emerson and "Paradise Lost."

"An extremely intelligent and cultivated person," responded Mrs. Thorne, with enthusiasm. "Do you know, Mr. Winthrop, that Mrs. Harold quite fills my idea of a combination of our own Margaret Fuller and Madame de Staël."

"Yet she can hardly be called talkative, can she?" said Winthrop, smiling.

"It is her face, the language of her eye, that give me my impression. Her silence seems to me but a fulness of intellect, a fulness at times almost throbbing; she is a Corinne mute, a Margaret dumb."

"Were they ever mute, those two?" asked Winthrop.

Mrs. Thorne glanced at him. "I see you do not admire lady conversationalists," she murmured, relaxing into her guarded little smile.

Dr. Kirby, conversing with Mrs. Rutherford, had brought forward General Lafayette. On the rare occasions of late years when the Doctor had found himself called upon to conduct a conversation with people from the North, he was apt to resort to Lafayette.

The Rev. Mr. Moore, stimulated by Mrs. Carew's excellent coffee, advanced the opinion that Lafayette was, after all, "very French."

"Ah! but Frenchmen can be *so* agreeable," said Mrs. Carew. "There was Talleyrand, you know; when he was over here he wrote a sonnet to my aunt, beginning 'Aimable Anne.' And then there was little Dumont, Katrina; you remember him? – how well he danced! As for Lafayette, when he made his triumphal tour through the country afterwards, he grew so tired, they say, of the satin sheets which Gratitude had provided for him at every town that he was heard to exclaim, 'Satan de satin!' Not that I believe it, because there are those beautiful memoirs and biographies of all his lady-relatives who were guillotined, you know, poor things! – though, come to think of it, one of them must have been saved of course to write the memoirs, since naturally they couldn't have written them beforehand themselves with all those touching descriptions of their own dying moments and last thoughts thrown in; well – what I was going to say was that I don't believe he ever swore in the least, because they were all so extremely pious; he couldn't – in that atmosphere. What a singular thing it is that when the French *do* take to piety they out-Herod Herod himself! – and I reckon the reason is that it's such a novelty to them that they're like the bull in the china shop, or rather like the new boy at the grocer's, who is not accustomed to raisins, and eats so many the first day that he is made seriously ill in consequence, for clear raisins *are* very trying."

"The French," remarked Dr. Kirby, "have often, in spite of their worldliness, warm enthusiasms in other directions which take them far, very far indeed. It was an enthusiasm, and a noble one, that brought Lafayette to our shores."

"*Such* a number of children as were named after him, too," said Mrs. Carew, starting off again. "I remember one of them; he had been baptized Marquis de Lafayette (Marquis de Lafayette Green was his full name), and I didn't for a long time comprehend what it was, for his mother always called him 'Marquisdee,' and I thought perhaps it was an Indian name, like Manatee, you know; for some people do like Indian names *so* much, though I can't say I care for them, but it's a matter of taste, of course, like everything else, and I once knew a dear sweet girl who had been named Ogeechee, after our Southern river, you remember; Ogeechee – do you like that, Katrina?"

"Heavens! no," said Mrs. Rutherford, lifting her beautiful hands in protest against such barbarism.

"Yet why, after all, is it not as melodious as Beatrice?" remarked Mr. Moore, meditatively, his eyes on the ceiling.

Gracias society was proud of Mr. Moore; his linguistic accomplishments it regarded with admiration. Mrs. Carew, divining the Italian pronunciation of Beatrice, glanced at Katrina to see if she were properly impressed.

Garda, upon leaving Evert Winthrop, had joined Mrs. Harold, at whose feet Manuel still remained, guitar in hand. "Do you sing, Mrs. Harold?" the young girl said, seating herself beside the northern lady, and looking at her with her usual interest – an interest which appeared to consist,

in part, of a sort of expectancy that she would do or say something before long which would be a surprise. Nothing could be more quiet, more unsurprising, so most persons would have said, than Margaret Harold's words and manner. But Garda had her own stand-point; to her, Mrs. Harold was a perpetual novelty. She admired her extremely, but even more than she admired, she wondered.

"No," Mrs. Harold had answered, "I do not sing; I know something of instrumental music."

"I am afraid we have no good pianos here," pursued Garda; "that is, none that you would call good. – I wish you would go and talk to Mr. Torres," she continued, turning to Manuel.

The young Cuban occupied a solitary chair on the other side of the room, his method apparently having allowed him to seat himself for a while; he had not even his ivory puzzle, but sat with his hands folded, his eyes downcast.

"You ask impossibilities," said Manuel. "What! leave this heavenly place at Mrs. Harold's feet – and yours – for the purpose of going to talk to that tiresome Adolfo? Never!"

"But I wish to talk to Mrs. Harold myself; you have already had that pleasure quite too long. Besides, if you are very good, I will tell you what you can do; cards will be brought out presently, and then it will be seen that there are ten persons present, and as but eight are required for the two tables, I shall be the one left out to talk to Adolfo, as he can neither play nor speak English; in this state of things you can, if you are watchful, arrange matters so as to be at the same table with Mrs. Harold; perhaps even her partner."

"I will be more than watchful," Manuel declared; "I will be determined!"

"I play a wretched game," said the northern lady, warningly.

"And if you should play the best in the world, I should never know it, absorbed as I should be in your personal presence," replied the youth, with ardor.

Mrs. Harold laughed. Winthrop (listening to Mrs. Thorne's remarks upon Emerson) glanced towards their little group.

"People do not talk in that way at the North. That is why she laughs," said Garda, explanatorily.

"And do I care how they talk in their frozen North!" cried Manuel. "I talk as my heart dictates."

"Do so," said Garda, "but later. At present, go and cheer up poor Mr. Torres; he is fairly shivering with loneliness over there in his corner."

Manuel, who, in spite of his studied attitude at the feet of Mrs. Harold, was evidently the slave of whatever whim Garda chose to express, rose to obey. "But do not in the least imagine that Adolfo needs cheering," he explained, still posing a little as he stood before them with his guitar. "He entertains himself perfectly, always; he is never lonely, he has only to think of his ancestors. Adolfo is, in fact, a very good ancestor already. As to his shivering – that shows how little you know him; he is a veritable volcano, that silent one! Still, I obey your bidding, I go."

"What do *you* think of him?" said Garda, as he crossed the room towards the solitary Cuban.

"Mr. Torres?"

"No; Mr. Ruiz."

"I know him so slightly, I cannot say I have formed an opinion."

Garda looked at the two young men for a moment; then, "They are both boys," she said, dismissing them with a little wave of her hand.

"But Mr. Winthrop is not a boy," she went on, her eyes returning to the northern lady's face. "How old is Mr. Winthrop?"

"I don't know."

"Isn't he your cousin?"

"Mr. Winthrop is the nephew of Mrs. Rutherford, who is only my aunt by marriage."

"But if you have always known him, you must know how old he is."

"I have not always known him. I suppose he is thirty-four or five."

"That is just what he said," remarked Garda, reflectively.

"That I was thirty-four or five?"

"No; but he began in the same way. He said that he did not know; that you were not his cousin; that you were the niece of Mr. Rutherford; and that he supposed you to be about twenty-seven or eight."

"I am twenty-six," said Margaret.

"And he is thirty-five," added Garda.

"I suppose they both seem great ages to you," observed Margaret, smiling.

"It's of very little consequence in a man – his age," replied the young girl. "I confess that I thought you older than twenty-six; but it's not because you look old, it's because you look as if you did not care whether people thought you old or not, and generally it's only women who are really old, you know, over thirty, like mamma and Mrs. Carew, who have that expression – don't you think so? And I fancy you don't care much about dress, either," she went on. "Everything you wear is very beautiful; still, I don't believe you care about it. Yet you would carry it off well, any amount of it, you are so tall."

"I think you are as tall as I am," said Margaret, amused by these unconventional utterances.

"Come and see," replied Garda, suddenly. She took Margaret's hand and rose.

"What is it we are to do?" inquired Margaret, obeying the motion without comprehending its object.

"Come," repeated Garda.

They passed into the back drawing-room, and Garda led the way towards a large mirror.

"But we do not wish to survey ourselves in the presence of all this company," said Margaret, pausing.

"Yes, we do. They will not notice us, they are talking; it's about our height, you know," answered the girl. She held Margaret's hand tightly, and drew her onward until they both stood together before the long glass.

Two images gazed back at them. One was that of a young girl with bright brown hair curling low down over wonderful dark eyes. A white rose was placed, in the Spanish fashion, on one side above the little ear. This image in the mirror had a soft warm color in its cheeks, and a deeper one still on its slightly parted lips; these lips were very lovely in outline, with short, full, upward-arching curves and a little downward droop at the corners. The rich beauty of the face, and indeed of the whole figure, was held somewhat aloof from indiscriminate appropriation, by the indifference which accompanied it. It was not the indifference of experience, there was no weariness in it, no knowledge of life; it was the fresh indifference rather of inexperience, like the indifference of a child. It seemed, too, as if it would always be there, as if that face would never grow eager, no matter how much expansion of knowledge the years might bring to it; very possibly, almost certainly, this beautiful girl would demand more of life in every way, year by year, as it passed; but this would not make her strive for it, she would always remain as serenely careless, as unconcerned, as now.

The mirror gave back, also, the second image. It was that of a woman older – older by the difference that lies between sixteen years and twenty-six. This second image was tall and slender. It had hair of the darkest brown which is not black – hair straight and fine, its soft abundance making little display; this hair was arranged with great simplicity, too great, perhaps, for, brushed smoothly back and closely coiled behind, it had an air of almost severe plainness – a plainness, however, which the perfect oval of the face, and the beautiful forehead, full and low, marked by the slender line of the dark eyebrows, with the additional contrast of the long dark eyelashes beneath, could bear. The features were regular, delicate; the complexion a clear white, of the finest, purest grain imaginable, the sort of texture which gives the idea that the bright color will come and go through its fairness. This expectation was not fulfilled; the same controlled calm seemed to hold sway there which one perceived in the blue eyes and round the mouth.

As Winthrop had said, Margaret Harold was considered handsome. By that was meant that she was in possession of a general acknowledgment that the shape and poise of her head were fine, that her features were well-cut, that her tall, slender form was charmingly proportioned, her movements

graceful. Winthrop would have stated, as his own opinion, that she was too cold and formal to be beautiful – too restricted; it was true that in one thing she was not restricted (this was also his own opinion), namely, in the high esteem she had for herself.

She had undoubtedly a quiet reserved sort of beauty. But other women were not made jealous by any especial interest in her, by discussions concerning her, by frequent introduction of her name. She was thought unsympathetic; but as she never said the clever, cutting things which unsympathetic women sometimes know how to say so admirably, she was not thought entertaining as well – as they often are. Opinion varied, therefore, as to whether she could say these things, but would not, or whether it was the contrary, that she would have said them if she had been able, but simply could not, having no endowment of that kind of wit; one thing alone was certain, namely, that she continued not to say them.

Her dress, as seen in the mirror, had much simplicity of aspect; but this was owing to the way she wore it, and the way in which it was made, rather than to the materials, which were ample and rich. The soft silk, Quakerish in hue, lay in folds over the carpet which Garda's scanty skirt barely touched; it followed the lines of the slender figure closely, while Garda's muslin, which had been many times washed, was clumsy and ill-fitting. The gray robe came up smoothly round the throat, where it was finished by a little ruff of precious old lace, while the poor Florida gown, its fashion a reminiscence of Mrs. Thorne's youth, ended at that awkward angle which is neither high nor low.

But all this made no difference as regarded the beauty of Garda. Of most young girls it can be said that richness of attire spoils them, takes from their youthfulness its chief charm; but of Garda Thorne it could easily be believed that no matter in what she might be clad, poor garb as at present, or the most sumptuous, she herself would so far outshine whichever it happened to be, that it would scarcely be noticed.

"You are the taller," said Garda. "I knew it!" The outline of the head with the smooth dark hair was clearly above that crowned by the curling locks.

"You are deceptive," said Margaret, "you look tall, yet I see now that you are not. Are there many more such surprises about you?"

"I hope so," answered Garda, "I love surprises. That is, short ones; I don't like surprises when one has to be astonished ever so long, and keep on saying 'oh!' and 'dear me!' long after it's all over. But everything long is tiresome, I have found *that* out."

Winthrop had watched them pass into the second room. He now left his place, and joined them.

"We came to see which was the taller," said Garda, as his face appeared in the mirror behind them. Margaret moved aside; but as Garda still held her hand, she could not move far. Winthrop, however, was not looking at her, his eyes were upon the reflection of the younger face; perceiving this, her own came back to it also.

"You two are always so solemn," said Garda, breaking into one of her sweet laughs; "standing between you, as I do, I look like Folly itself. There was an old song of Miss Pamela's:

"'Reason and Folly and Beauty, they say,
Went on a party of pleasure one day – '

Here they are in the glass, all three of them. Mrs. Harold is Beauty."

"I suppose that means that I am that unfortunate wretch, Reason," said Winthrop. "Didn't he get a good many cuffs in the song? He generally does in real life, I know – poor fellow!"

Garda had now released Mrs. Harold's hand, and that lady turned away. She found herself near an interesting collection of Florida paroquets, enclosed in a glass case, and she devoted her attention to ornithology for a while; the birds returned her gaze with the extremely candid eyes contributed by the taxidermist. Presently Dr. Kirby came to conduct her to the whist-table. Pompey had arranged these tables with careful precision upon the exact figures of the old carpet which his mistress had pointed

out beforehand; but though Pompey had thus arranged the tables, the players were not arranged as Garda had predicted. Mrs. Rutherford, Dr. Kirby, Mrs. Thorne, and the Rev. Mr. Moore formed one group. At the other table were Mrs. Harold, Manuel Ruiz, and Mrs. Carew, with a dummy. Evert Winthrop did not play.

This left him with Garda. But Torres was also left; the three walked up and down in the broad hall for a while, and then went out on the piazza. Here there was a hammock, towards which Garda declared herself irresistibly attracted; she arranged it as a swing, and seated herself. Winthrop found a camp-chair, and placed himself near her as she slowly swayed in her hanging seat to and fro. But Torres remained standing, according to his method; he stood with folded arms in the shadow, close to the side of the house, but without touching it. As he stood there for an hour and a half, it is possible that he found the occupation tedious – unless indeed the picture of Garda in the moonlight was a sufficient entertainment; certainly there was very little else to entertain him; Garda and Winthrop, talking English without intermission, seemed to have forgotten his existence entirely.

"Adolfo," said Manuel, on their way home, giving a rapier-like thrust in the air with his slender cane, "that northerner, that Wintup, is unendurable!"

"He is a matter of indifference to me," replied Torres.

"What – when he keeps you out there on the piazza for two hours in perfect silence? I listened, you never spoke one word; he talked all the time to Garda himself."

"*That*– I suffered," said Torres, with dignity.

"Suffered? I should think so! Are you going to 'suffer' him to buy East Angels, too?"

"He may buy what he pleases. He cannot make himself a Spaniard."

"How do you know Garda cares so much for Spaniards?" said Manuel, gloomily. "I suppose you remember that the mother, after all, is a northerner?"

"I remember perfectly," replied the Cuban. "The señorita will always do – "

"What her mother wishes?" (Manuel was afraid of Mrs. Thorne.)

" – What she pleases," answered Torres, serenely.

CHAPTER VI

"I think you very wonderful," said Garda. "And I think you very beautiful too, though no one seems to talk about it. That in itself is a wonder. But everything about you is wonderful." She was sitting on the floor, her hands crossed on Margaret Harold's knee, her chin resting on her hands; her eyes were fixed on that lady's face.

"You are easily pleased," said Margaret.

"No," replied Garda, with the leisurely utterance which took from her contradictions all appearance of opposition; "I am not easily pleased at all, it's the contrary. I see the goodness of all my friends, I hope; I love them very much. But they do not please me, as you please me, for instance, just because they are good, or because I love them; to be pleased as I am now, to admire as I admire you, is a very different thing."

Margaret said nothing, and Garda, as if wishing to convince her, went on; "I love my dear Dr. Reginald, I love him dearly; but don't you suppose I see that he is too stout and too precise? I love my dear Mr. Moore, I think him perfectly adorable; but don't you suppose I see that he is too lank and narrow-shouldered, and that his dear good little eyes are too small for his long face – like the eyes of a clean, thin, white pig? Mrs. Carew is my kindest friend; that doesn't prevent me from seeing that she is too red. Mr. Torres is too dark, Mr. Winthrop too cold; and so it goes. But you – you are perfect."

"You have left out Mr. Ruiz," suggested Margaret, smiling.

"Manuel is beautiful; yes, in his face, Manuel is very beautiful," said Garda, consideringly. "But you have a beautiful nature, and Manuel has only an ordinary one. It's your having a beautiful face and beautiful nature too which makes you such a wonder to me, because people with beautiful natures are so apt to have ugly faces, or at least thin, wrinkled, and forlorn ones, or else they are invalids; and if they escape that, they are almost sure to have such dreadful clothes. But *you* have a beautiful nature, and a beautiful face, and beautiful clothes – all three. I could never be like you, I don't want to be; but I admire you more than any one I have ever known, and I hope you will let me be with you as often as I can while you stay here; I don't know what I shall do when you go away!"

Margaret smiled a second time; the young girl seemed to her very young indeed as she uttered these candid beliefs.

"Mamma too admires you so much," continued Garda; "I have never known mamma to admire any one (outside of our own family) so completely as she admires you; for generally mamma has her reservations, you know. But it is your intellect which mamma admires, and *I* do not care so much for intellect; of course it's all very well for a foundation, but one doesn't want to be all foundation."

"Mrs. Rutherford would like to see you for a moment, Miss Margaret, if you please," said a voice which seemed startlingly near them, though no one was in sight.

It was Celestine; she had opened the door noiselessly the sixteenth part of an inch, delivered her message with her lips close to the crack, and then closed it again with the soundless abruptness which characterized all her actions.

"That is the fourth time Mrs. Rutherford has sent a message since I came, an hour ago," remarked Garda. "She depends upon you for everything."

"Oh no; upon Celestine," said Margaret, as she left the room.

When she came back, fifteen minutes later, "You are mistaken," Garda answered, as though there had been no interruption; "she depends upon Celestine for her clothes, her hair, her medicine, and her shawls; but she depends upon you for everything else."

"Have you been thinking about it all this time?" Margaret asked.

"How good you are! Why didn't you say, '*Is* there anything else?' But I have noticed that you never say those things. Have I been thinking about it all this time? No, it doesn't require thinking about, any one can see it; what I have been thinking about is you." She had taken her former place, her

arms crossed on Margaret's knee. "You have such beautiful hands," she said, lifting one and spreading it out to look at it.

"My dear Miss Thorne, your own are much more beautiful."

"Oh, I do very well, I know what I am; but I am not you. I don't believe there is any one like you; it would be too much."

"Too much perfection?" said Margaret, laughing.

"Yes," answered Garda, her seriousness unbroken. "For you take quantities of trouble for other people – I can see that. And the persons who do so are hardly ever happy – thoroughly happy; it seems such a pity, but it's true. Now I am always happy; but then I never take any trouble for any one, not a bit."

"I haven't observed that," said Margaret.

"No one observes it," responded Garda, composedly; "but it is quite true. And I never intend to take any trouble, whether they observe it or not. But with you it is different, you take a great deal; partly you have taught yourself to do it, and partly you were made so."

"Since when have you devoted your attention to these deep subjects, Miss Thorne?" said Margaret, smiling down upon the upturned face of the girl before her.

Garda rose to her knees. "Oh, don't call me Miss Thorne," she said, pleadingly, putting her arms round her companion. "I love you so much – please never say it again."

"Very well. I will call you Garda."

"I like it when you are cold like that – oh, I like it!" said Garda, with enthusiasm. "All you say when I tell you I adore you is, 'Very well; I will call you Garda;' you do not even say 'my dear.' That is beautiful, because you really mean it; you mean nothing more, and you say nothing more."

"Do you praise me simply because I speak the truth?" said Margaret.

"Yes; for nothing is more rare. I speak the truth myself, but my truth is whatever happens to come into my head; your truth is quiet and real, as you yourself are. I could never be like you, I don't want to be; but I admire you – I admire you."

"I don't know that I am much complimented, if you keep on insisting, in spite of it all, that you don't want to be like me," said Margaret, laughing again.

"Well," replied Garda, "I don't; what's the use of pretending? For I wish to be happy, and I mean to be happy. You are a sort of an angel; but I have never heard that angels had very much of a good time themselves, or that anybody did anything especial for *their* pleasure; they are supposed to be above it. But I am not above it, and never shall be." And leaning forward, she kissed Margaret's cheek. "It's because you're so wonderful," she said.

"I am not wonderful at all," answered Margaret, rather coldly, withdrawing a little from the girl's embrace.

"And if you didn't answer in just that way, you wouldn't be, of course," said Garda, delightedly; "that is exactly what I mean – you are so cold and so true. You think I exaggerate, you do not like to have me talk in this way about you, and so you draw back; but only a little, because you are too good to hurt me, or any one. But I don't want to be 'any one' to you, Mrs. Harold. Do let me be some one."

Now came again the ventriloquistic voice at the door, "phaeton's ready, Miss Margaret."

"Why doesn't Mr. Winthrop drive out with Mrs. Rutherford?" said Garda, watching Margaret put on her bonnet.

"He is probably occupied."

"He is never occupied. Do you call it occupied to be galloping over the pine barrens in every direction, and stopping at East Angels? to be exploring the King's Road, and stopping at East Angels? to be sailing up and down the Espiritu, and stopping at East Angels? to be paddling up all the creeks, and stopping at East Angels?"

"I should call that being very much occupied indeed," said Margaret, smiling.

"I don't then," replied Garda; "that is, not in your sense of the word. It's being occupied with his own pleasure – that's all. But the truth is Mrs. Rutherford takes you, always you, because no one else begins to make her so comfortable; you not only see that she has everything as she likes it, but that she has nothing as she doesn't like it, which is even more delightful. Yet apparently she doesn't realize this in the least; I think that so very curious."

"Do you fancy that you understand Mrs. Rutherford on so short an acquaintance?" asked Margaret, rather reprovingly.

"Yes," responded Garda, in her calm fashion, her attention, however, not fixing itself long upon the subject, which she seemed to consider unimportant. "I wish you would get a palmetto hat like mine," she went on with much more interest; "your bonnet is lovely, but it makes you seem old."

"But I *am* old," said Margaret, as she left the room.

She did not apologize for leaving her guest; the young girl was in the habit of bestowing her presence upon her so often now, that ceremony between them had come to an end some time before. She took her place in the phaeton, which was waiting at the foot of the outside stairway, Mrs. Rutherford, enveloped in a rich shawl, having already been installed by Celestine. Telano, in his Sunday jacket of black alpaca, held the bridle of the mild old horse with great firmness. He had put on for the occasion his broad-brimmed man-of-war hat, which was decorated with a blue ribbon bearing in large gilt letters the inscription *Téméraire*. Telano had no idea what *Téméraire* meant (he called it Turmrer); he had bought the hat of a travelling vender, convinced that it would add to the dignity of his appearance – as it certainly did. For there was nothing commonplace or horizontal in the position of that hat; the vender had illustrated how it was to be worn, but Telano, fired by the new ambitions of emancipation, had practised in secret before his glass until he had succeeded in getting the Turmrer so far back on his curly head that it was not on the top at all, but applied flatly and perpendicularly behind, so that the gazer's mind lost itself in possibilities as to the methods of adhesion which he must have employed to keep it in place. His mistresses seated, Telano sprang to the little seat behind them, where, with folded arms, he sat stiffly erect, conscious of the Turmrer, showing the whites of his eyes, happy. Margaret lifted the reins, and smiling a good-bye to Garda, who was standing on the outside stairway, drove down Pacheco Lane into the plaza, and out of sight.

Garda still leaned on the balustrade; though left alone, she did not take her departure. After a while she sat down on a step, and leaned her head back against the railing; her eyes were fixed indolently upon the sea.

"Looking across to Spain?" said Evert Winthrop's voice, ten minutes later. He had come down the lane, his step making no sound on the mat of low, thick green.

"No," Garda answered, without turning her eyes from the water. "If I want Spain, I have only to send for Mr. Torres; he's Spain in person."

"Are you here alone? Where are the others?"

"Gone out to drive; I wish you had never sent for that phaeton!"

Several weeks had passed since the arrival of the northern ladies; but it seemed more like several months, if gauged by the friendship which had been bestowed upon them. The little circle of Gracias society had opened its doors to them with characteristic hospitality – the old-time hospitality of the days of better fortune; its spirit unchanged, though the form in which it must now manifest itself was altered in all save its charming courtesy. Mrs. Rutherford was a friend of Mrs. Carew's, that was enough; they were all friends of Mrs. Rutherford in consequence. Mrs. Kirby, the active little mother of Dr. Reginald, invited them to dine with her. Mrs. Penelope Moore, the rector's wife, though seldom able to leave her sofa, did not on that account consider herself exempt from the present privilege of entertaining them. Madame Ruiz, the mother of Manuel, insisted upon several visits at her residence on Patricio Point. Madame Giron, the aunt of Adolfo Torres, came up the Espiritu in her broad old boat, rowed by four negro boys, to beg them to pass a day with her at her plantation, which was south of East Angels. Mrs. Thorne did what she could in the way of afternoon visits at her

old Spanish mansion, with oranges, conversation, and Carlos Mateo. And good Betty Carew moved in and out among these gentle festivities with assiduous watchfulness, ready to fill any gaps that might present themselves with selections from her own best resources; the number of times she invited her dearest Katrina to lunch with her, to spend the day with her, to pass the evening with her, to visit the orange groves with her, to play whist, to go and see the rose gardens, and to "bring over her work" in the morning and "sit on the piazza and talk," could not be counted. Mrs. Rutherford, who never had any work beyond the holding of a fan sometimes to screen her face from the fire or sun, was amiably willing to sit on the piazza (Betty's) and talk – talk with the peculiar degree of intimacy which embroidery (or knitting) and piazzas, taken together, seem to produce. Especially was she willing as, without fail, about eleven o'clock, Pompey appeared with a little tray, covered with a snowy damask napkin, upon which reposed a small loaf of delicious cake, freshly baked, two saucers (of that old blue china whose recent nicks owed their origin to emancipation), a glass dish heaped with translucent old-fashioned preserves, and a little glass pitcher of rich cream. Mrs. Rutherford thought this "so amusing – at eleven o'clock in the morning!" But it was noticed that she never refused it.

If Katrina had no work, Betty had it in abundance. It was not embroidery – unless mending could be called by that name. But Betty did not accomplish as much as she might have done, owing to the fact that about once in ten minutes she became aware of the loss of her scissors, or her spool of thread, and was forced to get up, shake her skirts, or dive to the bottom of her pocket in search of them. For her pocket had a wide mouth, which was not concealed by a superfluous overskirt; it was a deep comfortable pocket going well down below the knee, its rotund outline, visible beneath the skirt of the gown, suggesting to the experienced eye a handkerchief, a battered porte-monnaie, a large bunch of keys, two or three crumpled letters, a pencil with the stubby point which a woman's pencil always possesses, a half-finished stocking and ball of yarn, a spectacle-case, a paper of peppermint drops, and a forgotten pair or two of gloves.

These little entertainments hospitably given for the northern ladies succeeded each other rapidly – so rapidly that Margaret began to fear lest, mild as they were in themselves, they should yet make inroads on Mrs. Rutherford's strength.

"You needn't be scairt, Miss Margaret," was Celestine's reply to this suggestion, a remote gleam of a smile lighting up for a moment her grim face; "a little gentlemen-talk is *very* strengthenin' to yer aunt at times; nothin' more so."

During these weeks Garda Thorne had manifested a constantly increasing devotion to Margaret Harold; that, at least, was what they called it in the little circle of Gracias society, where it was considered an interesting development of character. These good friends said to each other that their little girl was coming on, that they should soon be obliged to think of her as something more than a lovely child.

Mrs. Rutherford had another name for it; she called it curiosity. "That little Thorne girl (who is quite pretty)," she remarked to Winthrop, "seems to be never tired of looking at Margaret, and listening to what she says. Yet Margaret certainly says little enough!" Mrs. Rutherford never went beyond "quite pretty" where Garda was concerned. It was her superlative for young girls, she really did not think they could be more.

"You wish that I had never sent for that phaeton? Would you, then, deprive my poor aunt of her drives?" Winthrop had said, in answer to Garda's remark.

"Do you care much for your poor aunt?" she inquired.

"I care a great deal."

"Then why do you never drive out with her yourself?"

"I do; often."

"I have been here every afternoon for a week, and every afternoon Margaret has had to leave me, because Mrs. Rutherford sends word that the phaeton is ready."

"Well, perhaps for the past week – "

"I don't believe you have been for two; I don't believe you have been for three," pursued the girl. "You are willing to go, probably you suppose you do go; but in reality it is Margaret, always Margaret. Do you know what I think? – you do not half appreciate Margaret."

"I am glad at least that you do," Winthrop answered. "Do you prefer that step to a chair?"

"Yes; for I ought to be going back to the Kirbys, and sitting here is more like it. Not that I mean to hurry, you know."

"It's pleasant, staying with the Kirbys, isn't it?" said Winthrop. He was standing on a step below hers, leaning against the side of the house in the shade.

"No," answered Garda, "it isn't; that is, it isn't so pleasant as staying at home. I like my own hammock best, and Carlos Mateo is funnier than any one I know. But by staying in town I can see more of Margaret, and that is what I care for most; I don't know how I can endure it when she goes away!"

"You had better persuade her not to go."

"But she must go, unless Mrs. Rutherford should take a fancy to stay, which is not at all probable; Mrs. Rutherford couldn't get on without Margaret one day."

"I think you exaggerate somewhat my aunt's dependence upon Mrs. Harold," observed Winthrop, after a pause.

"I was waiting to hear you say that. You are all curiously blind. Mrs. Rutherford is so handsome that I like to be in the same room with her; but that doesn't keep me from seeing how much has to be done for her constantly, and in her own particular way, too, from important things down to the smallest; and that the person who attends to it all, keeps it all going, is – "

"Minerva Poindexter," suggested Winthrop.

"Is Margaret Harold; I cannot imagine how it is that you do not see it! But you do not any of you comprehend her – comprehend how unselfish she is, how self-sacrificing."

Winthrop's attention had wandered away from Garda's words. He did not care for her opinion of Margaret Harold; it was not and could not be important – the opinion of a peculiarly inexperienced young girl about a woman ten years older than herself, a woman, too, whose most marked characteristic, so he had always thought, was the reticence which kept guard over all her words and actions. No, for Garda's opinions he did not care; what attracted him, besides her beauty, was her wonderful truthfulness, her grace and ease. "How indolent she is!" was his present thought, while she talked on about Margaret, her eyes still watching the sea. "On these old steps she has taken the one position that is comfortable; yet she has managed to make it graceful as well; she finds a perfect enjoyment in simply sitting here for a while in this soft air, looking at the water, and so here she sits, without a thought of doing anything else. At home, it would be the hammock and the crane; so little suffices for her. But she enjoys her little more fully, she appreciates her enjoyment as it passes more completely, than any girl of her age, or, indeed, of much more than her age, whom I have ever known. Our northern girls are too complex for that, they have too many interests, too many things to think of, and they require too many, also, to enjoy in this simple old way; perhaps *they* would say that they were too conscientious. But here is a girl who is hampered, or enlarged – whichever you choose to call it – by no such conditions, who tastes her pleasures fully, whatever they may happen to be, as they pass. But though her pleasures are simple, her enjoyment of them is rich, it's the enjoyment of a rich temperament; many women would not know how to enjoy in that way. She's simple from her very richness; but she doesn't in the least know it, she has never analyzed herself, nor anything else, and never will; she leaves analysis to – to thin people." Thus he brought up, with an inward laugh over his outcome. His thoughts, however, had not been formulated in words, as they have necessarily been formulated for expression upon the printed page; these various ideas – though they were scarcely distinct enough to merit that name – passed through his consciousness slowly, each melting into the next, without effort on his own part; the effort would have been to express them.

When Garda, after another quarter of an hour's serene contemplation of the sea, at length rose, he walked with her down the lane and across the plaza to Mrs. Kirby's gate. Then, when she had disappeared, he went over to the Seminole, mounted his horse, and started for a ride on the pine barrens.

CHAPTER VII

He continued to think of this young girl as he rode. One of the reasons for this probably was the indifference with which she regarded him, now that her first curiosity had been satisfied; her manner was always pleasant, but Manuel evidently amused her more, and even Adolfo Torres; while to be with Margaret Harold she would turn her back upon him without ceremony, she had repeatedly done it. Winthrop asked himself whether it could be possible that he was becoming annoyed by this indifference, or that he was surprised by it? Certainly he had never considered himself especially attractive, personally; if therefore, in the face of this fact, he was guilty of surprise, it must be that he had breathed so long that atmosphere of approbation which surrounded him at the North, that he had learned, though unconsciously, to rely upon it, had ended by becoming complacent, smug and complacent, expectant of attention and deference.

The advantages which had caused this approving northern atmosphere were now known in Gracias. And Garda remained untouched by them. But that he should be surprised, or annoyed, by her indifference – this possibility was the more distasteful to him because he had always been so sure that he disliked the atmosphere, greatly. He had never been at all pleased by the knowledge that he inspired a general purring from good mammas, whenever his name was mentioned; he had no ambition to attract so much domestic and pussy-like praise. Most of all he did not enjoy being set down as so extremely safe; if he were safe, it was his own affair; he certainly was not cultivating the quality for the sake of the many excellent matrons who happened to form part of his acquaintance.

But, viewed from any maternal stand-point, Evert Winthrop was, and in spite of himself, almost ideally safe. He was thirty-five years old, and therefore past the uncertainties, the vague hazards and dangers, that cling about youth. His record of personal conduct had no marked flaws. He had a large fortune, a quarter of which he had inherited, and the other three-quarters gained by his own foresight and talent. He had no taste for speculation, he was prudent and cool; he would therefore be sure to take excellent care of his wealth, it would not be evanescent, as so many American fortunes had a way of becoming. He had perfect health; and an excellent family descent on both sides of the house; for what could be better than the Puritan Winthrops on one hand, and the careful, comfortable old Dutch settlers of New Amsterdam, from whom his mother came, on the other? He had a fair amount of good looks – one did not have to forgive him anything, physically; he had sufficient personal presence to escape the danger of being merely the cup, as it were, for the rich wine of his own good-luck. Though quiet in manner, rather silent, and not handsome, he was a man whom everybody remembered. Those who were not aware of his advantages remembered him as clearly as those who knew them all; his individuality was distinct. He had been a good son, he was now a good nephew; these facts were definitely known and proved; American mothers are not mercenary, and it is but just to add that this good sonship and good nephewship, as well as his good record in other directions, had had as much to do with the high appreciation that many of them had of him, as the amount of his income. He was, in short, a bright example of a person without drawbacks, he was a rare instance whose good points it was a pleasure to sum up; they summed him up, therefore, joyfully; they proclaimed the total; they said everything that was delightful about him. Going deeper, they were sure that he had broken none of the commandments. There had been times when Winthrop had almost felt like breaking them all, in order to get rid of this rampart of approval, which surrounded him too closely, like a wall of down. But there again – he could not be vicious simply to oblige these ladies, or rather to disoblige them; he must be what it seemed good to him to be. But he respectfully wished that they could realize how indifferent he was to their estimation of him, good or bad.

He was a man by no means easily pleased. He could not, therefore, always believe that other people were sincere when they were so unlike himself – so much more readily pleased, for instance, with him, than he was with them. For he was essentially modest at heart; though obstinate in many

of his ideas, he had not that assured opinion of himself, that solidly installed self-approbation, which men in his position in America (possessed of large fortunes which they have gained for the most part by their own talent) are apt, though often unconsciously, to cherish. As he was fastidious, it was no pleasure to him to taste the open advantages of his position; they were too open, he did not care for things so easily gained. And when these advantages were presented to him in feminine eyes and smiles, or a feminine handwriting, he could not even take a jocular view of it. For though he was a man of the world, he was not (this was another of his secrets) in the least blasé; he had his ideal of what the best of life should be, and he kept it like a Madonna in its shrine. When, therefore, this ideal was pulled by force from its niche, or, worse still, stepped down of its own accord, he was immensely disgusted, he felt a sense of personal injury, as if the most precious feelings of life had been profaned. He had believed in this woman, perhaps, to the extent of supposing her sweet and womanly; yet here she was thinking – yes, without doubt thinking (either for herself or for some one else) of the benefits which his position could confer. That the little advances she had made had been microscopically small, only made the matter worse; if she had enough of refinement to make them so delicate, she should have had enough to not make them at all. It was characteristic of this man that he never at such times thought that the offender might be actuated by a real liking for himself – himself apart from this millstone of his excellent reputation and wealth; this was a feature of the personal modesty that belonged to him. A man less modest (that is, the great majority of men), placed in a position similar to his, would have been troubled by no such poverty of imagination.

It must, however, be added that this modesty of Winthrop's was strictly one of his inner feelings, not revealed to the world at large. The world never suspected it, and had no reason for suspecting it; it had, indeed, nothing to do with the world, it was a private attribute. To the world he was a cool, quiet man, equally without pretensions and without awkwardnesses. One could not have told whether he thought well of himself – especially well – or not.

Why this man, so fully belonging to this busy, self-asserting nineteenth century, should have preserved so much humility in the face of his successes – success of fortune, of equilibrium, of knowledge, of accomplishment of purpose, of self-control – this would have been, perhaps, a question for the student of heredity. Was it a trait inherited from Puritan ancestors, some Goodman Winthrop of gentle disposition, a man not severe in creed or demeanor, nor firm in exterminating Indians, and therefore of small consequence in his day and community, and knowing it? Or was it a tendency inherited from some Dutch ancestress on the maternal side, some sweet little flaxen-haired great-grandmother, who had received in her maiden breast one of those deadly though unseen shafts – the shaft of slight – from which a woman's heart never wholly recovers?

But mental organizations are full of contradictions; looked at in another way, this deep, unexpressed personal humility in Evert Winthrop's nature, underneath his rather cold exterior, his keen mind and strong will, might almost have been called a pride, so high a demand did it make upon life. For if one has not attractive powers, love, when it does come, when it is at last believed in, has a peculiarly rich quality: it is so absolutely one's own!

The father of Evert Winthrop, Andrew Winthrop, was called eccentric during all his life. But it was an eccentricity which carried with it none of the slighting estimations which usually accompany the term. Andrew Winthrop, in truth, had been eccentric only in being more learned and more original than his neighbors; perhaps, also, more severe. He was a fair classical scholar, but a still better mathematician, and had occupied himself at various times with astronomy; he had even built a small observatory in the garden behind his house. But most of all was he interested in the rapid advance of science in general, the advance all along the line, which he had lived to see; he enjoyed this so much that it was to him, during his later years, what a daily draught of the finest wine is to an old connoisseur in vintages, whose strength is beginning to fail him. He once said to his son: "The world is at last getting into an intelligible condition. My only regret is that I could not have lived in the century which is coming, instead of in the one which is passing; but I ought not to complain, I have at

least seen the first rays. What should I have done if my lot had been cast among the millions who lived before Darwin! I should either have become a bacchanalian character, drowning in stupid drinking the memory of the enigmas that oppressed me, or I should have fled to the opposite extreme and taken refuge in superstition – given up my intellect, bound hand and foot, to the care of the priests. The world has been in the wilderness, Evert, through all the ages of which we have record; now a clearer atmosphere is at hand. I shall not enter this promised land, but I can see its shining afar off. You, my son, will enter in; prize your advantages, they are greater than those enjoyed by the greatest kings, the greatest philosophers, one hundred years ago."

This Puritan without a creed, this student of science who used more readily than any other the language of the Bible, brought up his only child with studied simplicity; in all that related to his education, with severity. The little boy's mother had died soon after his birth, and Andrew Winthrop had mourned for her, the young wife who had loved him, all the rest of his life. But in silence, almost in sternness; he did not welcome sympathy even when it came from his wife's only sister, Mrs. Rutherford. And he would not give up the child, though the aunt had begged that the poor baby might be intrusted to her for at least the first year of his motherless life; the only concession he made was in allowing the old Episcopal clergyman who had baptized Gertrude to baptize Gertrude's child, and in tacitly promising that the boy should attend, if he pleased, the Episcopal Church when he grew older, his mother having been a devoted Churchwoman. He kept the child with him in the large, lonely New England house which even Gertrude Winthrop's sweetness had not been able to make fully home-like and warm. For it had been lived in too long, the old house, by a succession of Miss Winthrops, conscientious old maids with narrow chests, thin throats, and scanty little knobs of gray-streaked hair behind – the sort of good women with whom the sense of duty is far keener than that of comfort, and in whose minds character is apt to be gauged by the hour of getting up in the morning. There had always been three or four Miss Winthrops of this pattern in each generation; they began as daughters, passed into aunts, and then into grandaunts, as nieces, growing up, took their first positions from them. Andrew Winthrop himself had spent his childhood among a number of these aunts – aunts both simple and "grand." But the custom of the family had begun to change in his day; the aunts had taken to leaving this earthly sphere much earlier than formerly (perhaps because they had discovered that they could no longer attribute late breakfasts to total depravity), so that when, his own youth past, he brought his Gertrude home, there was not one left there; they were alone.

The poor young mother, when death so soon came to her, begged that the little son she was leaving behind might be called Evert, after her only and dearly loved brother, Evert Beekman, who had died not long before. Andrew Winthrop had consented. But he was resolved, at the same time, that no Beekman, but only Winthrop, methods should be used in the education of the child. The Winthrop methods were used; and with good effect. But the boy learned something of the Beekman ways, after all, in the delightful indulgence and petting he received from his aunt Katrina when he went to visit her at vacation times, either at her city home or at her old country-house on the Sound; he learned it in her affectionate words, in the smiling freedom from rules and punishments which prevailed at both places, in the wonderful toys, and, later, the dogs and gun, saddle-horse and skiff, possessed by his fortunate cousin Lanse.

Andrew Winthrop was not that almost universal thing in his day for a man in his position in New England, a lawyer; he owned and carried on an iron-foundery, as his father had done before him. He had begun with some money, and he had made more; he knew that he was rich (rich for his day and neighborhood); but save for his good horses and his observatory, he lived as though he were poor. He gave his son Evert, however, the best education (according to his idea of what the best education consisted in), which money and careful attention could procure; but he did not send him to college, and at sixteen the boy was put regularly to work for a part of the day in the iron-foundery, being required to begin at the beginning and learn the whole business practically, from the keeping of books to the proper mixture of ores for the furnaces – those furnaces which had seemed to the child

almost as much a part of nature as the sunshine itself, since he had seen their red light against the sky at night ever since he was born. In the mean time his education in books went steadily forward also, under his father's eye – a severe one. Fortunately the lad had sturdy health and nerves which were seldom shaken, so that these double tasks did not break him down. For one thing, Andrew Winthrop never required, or even desired, rapid progress; Evert might be as slow as he pleased, if he would but be thorough. And thorough he was. Even if he had not been naturally inclined towards it, he would have acquired it from the system which his father had pursued with him from babyhood; but he was naturally inclined towards it; his knowledge, therefore, as far as it went, was very complete.

In four years he had made some progress in the secrets of several sorts of iron and several ancient languages. In six, he could manage the foundery and the observatory tolerably well. In the ninth year his part of the foundery went of itself, or seemed to, under his clear-headed superintendence, while he ardently gave all his free hours to the studies in science, in which his father now joined, instead of directing, as heretofore. And then, in the tenth year of this busy, studious life, Andrew Winthrop had died, and the son of twenty-six had found himself suddenly free, and alone.

He had never longed for his freedom, he had never thought about it; he had never realized that his life was austere. He had been fond of his father, though his father had been more intellectually interested in him as a boy who would see in all probability the fulness of the new revelation of Science, than fond of him in return. Andrew Winthrop's greatest ambition had been to equip his son so thoroughly that he would be able to take advantage of this new light immediately, without any time lost in bewilderment or hesitation; the 'prentice-work would all have been done. And Evert, interested and busy, leading an active life as well as a studious one, had never felt discontent.

The evening after the funeral he was alone in the old house. Everything had been set in order again, that painful order which strikes first upon the hearts of the mourners when they return to their desolate home, an order which seems to say: "All is over; he is gone and will return to you no more. You must now take up the burdens of life again, and go forward." The silent room was lonely, Evert read a while, but could not fix his attention; he rose, walked about aimlessly, then went to the window and looked out. It was bitterly cold, there was deep snow outside; an icy wind swayed the boughs of a naked elm which stood near the window. Against the dark sky to-night the familiar light was not visible; the furnaces had been shut down out of respect for the dead. For the first time there stirred in Evert Winthrop's mind the feeling that the cold was cruel, inhuman; that there was a conscious element in it; that it hated man, and was savage to him; would kill him, and did kill him when it could. The house seemed in league with this enemy; in spite of the bright fire the chill kept creeping in, and for the life of him he could not rid himself of the idea that he ought to go out and cover his poor old father, lying there helpless under the snow, with something thick and warm. He roused himself with an effort, he knew that these were unhealthy fancies; he made up his mind that he would go away for a while, the under-superintendent could see to the foundery during his absence, which would not, of course, be long. But the next day he learned that he could remain away for as long a time as he pleased – he had inherited nearly a million.

It was a great surprise. Andrew Winthrop had so successfully concealed the amount of his fortune that Evert had supposed that the foundery, and the income that came from it, a moderate one, together with the old house to live in, would be all. Andrew Winthrop's intention in this concealment had been to bestow upon his son, so far as he could, during his youth, a personal knowledge of life as seen from the side of earning one's own living – a knowledge which can never be acquired at second-hand, and which he considered inestimable, giving to a man juster views of himself and his fellow-men than anything else can.

In the nine years that had passed since his father's death Evert had, as has been stated, quadrupled the fortune he had inherited.

It was said – by the less successful – that Chance, Luck, and Opportunity had all favored him. It was perhaps Chance that had led the elder Winthrop in the beginning to invest some hundreds

of dollars in wild lands on the shore of Lake Superior – though even that was probably foresight. But as for Luck, she is generally nothing but clear-headedness. And Opportunity offers herself, sooner or later, to almost all; it is only that so few of us recognize her, and seize the advantages she brings. Winthrop had been aided by two things; one was capital to begin with; the other a perfectly untrammelled position. He had no one to think of but himself.

Early in the spring after his father's death he journeyed westward, looking after some property, and decided to go to Lake Superior and see that land also. He always remembered his arrival; the steamer left him on a rough pier jutting out into the dark gray lake; on the shore, stretching east and west, was pine forest, unbroken save where in the raw clearing, dotted with stumps, rose a few unpainted wooden houses, and the rough buildings of the stamping-mills, their great wooden legs stamping ponderously on iron ore. His land was in the so-called town; after looking at it, he went out to the mine from which the ore came; he knew something of ores, and had a fancy to see the place. He went on horseback, following a wagon track through the wild forest. The snow still lay in the hollows, there was scarcely a sign of spring; the mine was at some distance, and the road very bad; but at last he reached it. The buildings and machinery of the struggling little company were poor and insufficient; but few men were employed, the superintendent had a discouraged expression. But far above this puny little scratching at its base rose "the mountain," as it was called; and it was a cliff-like hill of iron ore. One could touch it, feel it; it was veritable, real. To Winthrop it seemed a striking picture – the great hill of metal, thinly veiled with a few trees, rising towards the sky, the primitive forest at its feet, the snow, the silence, and beyond, the sullen lake without a sail. The cliff was waiting – it had waited for ages; the lake was waiting too.

Winthrop took a large portion of his fortune and put it into this mine. A new company was formed, but he himself remained the principal owner, and took the direction into his own hands. It was the right moment; in addition, his direction was brilliant. For a time he worked excessively hard, but all his expectations were fulfilled; by means of this, and one or two other enterprises in which he embarked with the same mixture of bold foresight and the most careful attention to details, his fortune was largely increased.

When the war broke out he was abroad – his first complete vacation; he was indulging that love for pictures which he was rather astonished to find that he possessed. He came home, took a captain's place in a company of volunteers, went to the front, and served throughout the war. Immediately after the restoration of peace, he had gone abroad again. And he had come back this second time principally to disentangle from a web of embarrassments the affairs of a cousin of his father's, David Winthrop by name, whom he had left in charge of the foundery which he had once had charge of, himself. Having some knowledge of founderies, David was to superintend this one, and have a sufficient share of the profits to help him maintain his family of seven sweet, gentle, inefficient daughters, of all ages from two to eighteen, each with the same abundant flaxen hair and pretty blue eyes, the same pale oval cheeks and stooping shoulders, and a mother over them more inefficient and gentle and stooping-shouldered still – the very sort of a quiverful, as ill-natured (and richer) neighbors were apt to remark, that such an incompetent creature as David Winthrop would be sure to possess. This cousin had been a trial to Andrew Winthrop all his life. David was a well-educated man, and he had a most lovable disposition; but he had the incurable habit of postponing (with the best intentions) until another time anything important which lay before him; the unimportant things he did quite cheerily. If it were but reading the morning's paper, David would be sure to not quite get to the one article which was of consequence, but to read all the others first in his slow way, deferring that one to a more convenient season when he could give to it his best attention; of course the more convenient season never came. Mixed with this constant procrastination there was a personal activity which was amusingly misleading. Leaving the house in the morning, David would walk to his foundery, a distance of a mile, with the most rapid step possible which was not a run; the swing of his long arms, the slight frown of preoccupation from business cares (it must have been that), would have led any one

to believe that, once his office reached, this man would devote himself to his work with the greatest energy, would make every moment tell. But once his office reached, this man devoted himself to nothing, that is, to nothing of importance; he arrived breathless, and hung up his hat; he rubbed his hands, and walked about the room; he glanced over the letters, and made plans for answering them, pleasing himself with the idea of the vigorous things he should say, and changing the form of his proposed sentences in his own mind more than once; for David wrote a very good letter, and was proud of it. Then he sharpened all the pencils industriously, taking pains to give each one a very fine point. He jotted down in neat figures with one of them, little sums – sums which had no connection with the foundery, however, but concerned themselves with something he had read the night before, perhaps, as the probable population of London in A.D. 1966, or the estimated value of a ton of coal in the year 3000. Then he would do a little work on his plan (David made beautiful plans) for the house which he hoped some day to build. And he would stare out of the window by the hour, seeing nothing in particular, but having the vague idea that as he was in his office, and at his desk, he was attending to business as other men attended to it; what else was an office for?

Evert, as a boy, had always felt an interest in this whimsical cousin, who came every now and then to see his father, with some new enterprise (David was strong in enterprises) to consult him about – an enterprise which was infallibly to bring in this time a large amount of money. But this time was never David's time. And in the mean while his daughters continued to appear and grow. Evert, left master, had had more faith in David than his father had had; or perhaps it was more charity; for his cousin had always been a source of refreshment to him – this humorous, sweet-tempered man, who, with his gray-sprinkled hair and thin temples, his well-known incompetency, and his helpless family behind him, had yet no more care on his face than a child has, not half so much as Evert himself, with his youth and health, his success and his fortune, to aid him. But, curiously enough, David was quite well aware of his own faults; his appreciation of them, indeed, had given him a manner of walking slightly sidewise, his right shoulder and right leg a little behind, as though conscious of their master's inefficiency and ashamed of it. For the same reason he chronically hung his head a little as he walked, and, if addressed, looked off at a distance mildly instead of at the person who was speaking to him. But though thus conscious generally of his failings, David was never beyond a sly joke about them and himself. It was the way in which he laughed over these jokes (they were always good ones) which had endeared him to his younger cousin: there was such a delightful want of worldly wisdom about the man.

Having disentangled David, refunded his losses, and set him going again in a small way, Evert had come southward. He would have preferred to go back to Europe for a tour in Spain; but he felt sure that David would entangle himself afresh before long (David had the most inscrutable ways of entangling himself), and that, unless he were willing to continually refund, he should do better to remain within call, at least for the present. In the early spring another relative on his father's side, a third cousin, was to add himself to the partnership, and this young man, Evert hoped, would not only manage the foundery, but manage David as well; when once this arrangement had been effected, the owner of the foundery would be free.

All this was very characteristic of Evert Winthrop. He could easily have given up all business enterprises; he could have invested his money safely and washed his hands of that sort of care. To a certain extent he had done this; but he wished to help David, and so he kept the foundery, he wished to help two or three other persons, and so he retained other interests. This, at least, was what he said to himself, and it was true; yet the foundations lay deeper – lay in the fact that he had been born into the world with a heavy endowment of energy; quiet as he appeared, he had more than he knew what to do with, and was obliged to find occupation for it. During boyhood this energy had gone into the double tasks of education in books and in iron which his father had imposed upon him; in young manhood it had gone into the scientific studies in which his father had shared. Later had come the brilliant crowded years of the far-seeing conception and vigorous execution which had given him his

largely increased wealth. Then the war occupied him; it occupied fifty millions of people as well. After it was over, and he had gone abroad a second time, he had not been an idle traveller, though always a tranquil one.

The truth was, he could not lead a purely contemplative life. It was not that he desired to lead such a life, or that he admired it; it was simply that he knew he should never be able to do it, even if he should try, and the impossibility, as usual, tempted him. There must be something very charming in it (that is, if one had no duties which forbade it), this full, passive, receptive enjoyment of anything delightful, a fine picture, for instance, or a beautiful view, the sunshine, the sea; even the angler's contented quiescence on a green bank was part of it. These pleasures he knew he could never have in their full sweetness, though he could imagine them perfectly, even acutely. It was not that he was restless; he was the reverse. It was not that he liked violent exercise, violent action; he liked nothing violent. But, instead of sitting in the sunshine, his instinct was to get a good horse and ride in it; instead of lounging beside a blue sea, he liked better to be sailing a yacht over it; instead of sitting contemplatively on a green bank, holding a fishing-rod, he would be more apt to shoulder a gun and walk, contemplatively too, perhaps, for long miles, in pursuit of game. In all this he was thoroughly American.

He had a great love for art, and a strong love for beauty, which his studies in mathematics and science had never in the least deadened. As regarded determination, he was a very strong man; but he was so quiet and calm that it was only when one came in conflict with him that his strength was perceived; and there were not many occasions for coming in conflict with him now, he was no longer directing large enterprises. In private life, he was not in the habit of advancing opinions for the rest of the world to accept; he left that to the people of one idea.

On the present occasion he rode over the pine barrens for miles, every now and then enjoying a brisk gallop. After a while he saw a phaeton at a distance, moving apparently at random over the green waste; but he had learned enough of the barrens by this time to know that it was following a road – a road which he could not see. There was only one phaeton in Gracias, the one he himself had sent for; he rode across, therefore, to speak to his aunt.

CHAPTER VIII

She was returning with Margaret from her drive, and looked very comfortable; with a cushion behind her and a light rug over her lap, she sat leaning back under her lace-trimmed parasol.

"I enjoy these drives *so* much," she said to her nephew in her agreeable voice. "The barrens themselves, to be sure, cannot be called beautiful, though I believe Margaret maintains that they have a fascination; but the air is delicious."

"Do you really find them fascinating?" said Winthrop to Margaret.

"Extremely so; I drive over them for miles every day, yet never want to come in; I always long to go farther."

"Oh, well, there's an end to them somewhere, I suppose," remarked Mrs. Rutherford; "the whole State isn't so very broad, you know; you would come out at the Gulf of Mexico."

"I don't want to come out," said Margaret, "I want to stay in; I want to drive here forever."

"We shall wake some fine morning, and find you gone," said Mrs. Rutherford, "like the girl in the 'Dismal Swamp,' you know:

"'Away to the Dismal Swamp she speeds – '

I've forgotten the rest."

"'Through tangled juniper, beds of reeds,
And many a fen where the serpent feeds,
And man never trod before,'"

said Winthrop, finishing the quotation. "The last isn't true of the barrens, however, for man has trod here pretty extensively."

"You mean Indians?" said Mrs. Rutherford, rather as though they were not men, as indeed she did not think they were. She yawned, tapping her lips two or three times during the process with her delicately gloved hand, as people will, under the impression, apparently, that they are concealing the sign of fatigue. Mrs. Rutherford's yawn, however, was not a sign of fatigue, it was an indication of sheer bodily content; the soft air and the lazy motion of the phaeton were so agreeable to her that, if she had been imaginative, she would have declared that the Lotus-eaters must have yawned perpetually, and that Florida was evidently the land of their abode.

"You look too comfortable to talk, Aunt Katrina," said Winthrop, amused by the drowsy tones of her voice; "I think you would rather be rid of me. I will go off and have one more gallop, and be home before you."

Mrs. Rutherford smiled an indolent good-by; Margaret Harold looked straight before her. Winthrop turned off to the right, and was soon lost to view.

He pulled up after a while, and let his horse walk slowly along the trail; he was thinking of Margaret Harold. He was always seeing her now, it could not be otherwise so long as she continued to live with his aunt. But he said to himself that he should never really like her, and what he was thinking of at present was whether or not she had perceived this.

She was not easy to read. Just now, for instance, when she had begun to speak of the pine barrens, and to speak with (for her) a good deal of warmth, had he not perhaps had something to do with her falling into complete silence immediately afterwards? He had answered, of course; he had done what was necessary to keep up the conversation; still, perhaps she had seen – perhaps – Well, he could not help it if she had, or rather he did not care to help it. Whatever she might be besides, quiet, well-bred, devoted to the welfare of his aunt, she was still in his opinion so completely, so essentially

wrong in some of her ideas, and these in a woman the most important, that his feeling towards her at heart was one of sternest disapproval; it could not be otherwise. And she held so obstinately to her mistakes! That was the worst of her – her obstinacy; it was so tranquil. It was founded, of course, upon her immovable self-esteem – a very usual foundation for tranquillity! No doubt Lanse had required forgiveness, and even a great deal of forgiveness; there had, indeed, been no period of Lanse's life when he had not made large demands on this quality from those who were nearest him. But was it not a wife's part to forgive? Lanse could have been led by his affections, probably, his better side; it had always been so with Lanse. But instead of trying to influence him in that way, this wife had set herself up in opposition to him – the very last thing he would stand. She had probably been narrow from the beginning, narrow and punctilious. Later she had been shocked; then had hardened in it. She was evidently a cold woman; in addition, she was self-righteous, self-complacent; such women were always perfectly satisfied with themselves, they had excellent reasons for everything. Of course she had never loved her husband; if she had loved him she could not have left him so easily, within a few months – less than a year – after their marriage. And though seven years had now passed since that separation, she had never once, so far as Winthrop knew, sought to return to him, or asked him to return to her.

The marriage of Lansing Harold and Margaret Cruger had taken place while Winthrop was abroad. When he came home soon afterwards, at the breaking out of the war, he found that the young wife of nineteen had left her husband, had returned to live with Mrs. Rutherford, with whom she had lived for a short time before her marriage. She had come to Mrs. Rutherford upon the death of her grandmother, Mrs. Cruger; this aunt by marriage was now her nearest relative, and this aunt's house was to be her home. To this home she had now returned, and here it was that Evert first made her acquaintance. Lanse, meanwhile, had gone to Italy.

There had been no legal separation, Mrs. Rutherford told him; probably there never would be one, for Margaret did not approve of them. Lanse, too, would probably disapprove; they were well matched in their disapprovals! It was not known by society at large, Mrs. Rutherford continued, that there had been any irrevocable disagreement between the two; society at large probably supposed it to be one of those cases, so common nowadays, where husband and wife, being both fond of travelling, have discovered that they enjoy their travels more when separated than when together, as (unless there happens to be a really princely fortune) individual tastes are so apt to be sacrificed in travelling, on one side or the other. Take the one item of trains, Mrs. Rutherford went on; some persons liked to get over the ground by night, and were bored to death by a long journey by day; others became so exhausted by one night of travel that the whole of the next day was spent recovering from it. Then there were people who preferred to reach the station at the last minute, people who liked to run and rush; and others whose day was completely spoiled by any such frantic haste at the beginning. The most amiable of men sometimes developed a curious obstinacy, when travelling, concerning the small matter of which seat in a railway-carriage the wife should take. Yes, on the whole, Mrs. Rutherford thought it natural that husbands and wives, if possessed of strong wills, should travel separately; the small differences, which made the trouble, did not come up in the regular life at home. It was very common for American wives to be in Europe without their husbands; in the case of the Harolds, it was simply that the husband had gone; this at least was probably what society supposed.

Mrs. Rutherford further added that her listener, Winthrop, was not to suppose that Margaret herself had ever discussed these subjects with her, or had ever discussed Lanse; his name was never mentioned by his wife, and when she, the aunt, mentioned it, her words were received in silence; there was no reply.

"I consider," continued Mrs. Rutherford, warming with her subject – "I consider Margaret's complete silence the most extraordinary thing I have ever known in my life. Living with me as she has done all these years, shouldn't you suppose, wouldn't any one suppose, that at some time or other she would have talked it over with me, given me some explanation, no matter how one-sided – would have

tried to justify herself? Very well, then, she *never* has. From first to last, in answer to my inquiries (for of course I have made them), she has only said that she would rather not talk about it, that the subject was painful to her. Painful! I wonder what she thinks it is to me! She makes me perfectly miserable, Evert – perfectly miserable."

"Yet you keep her with you," answered Winthrop, not taking Mrs. Harold's side exactly, but the side of justice, perhaps; for he had seen how much his aunt's comfort depended upon Margaret's attention, though he was not prepared to admit that it depended upon that entirely, as Garda Thorne had declared.

"Yes," responded Mrs. Rutherford, "I keep her with me, as you say. But my house was really her home, you know, before her marriage, and of course it is quite the best place for her now, as things are; if she will not remain with her husband, at least her continuing to live always with her husband's aunt, his almost mother, is the next best thing that could be arranged for her. Appearances are preserved, you know; and Margaret has a great regard for appearances."

"Possibly too great," Winthrop answered. But his sarcasm was not intended to apply to the wife's regard for appearances – he also had a regard for appearances – it was intended to apply to the wife herself. His idea of her was that she had argued it all out carefully in her own mind (she was not a person who acted on impulse), and had taken her stand upon what she considered irrefragable grounds. In other words, she had sat apart and judged her husband. Instead of trying to win him or to keep him, she had made little rules for him probably, and no doubt very good little rules of their kind; but Lanse had of course broken them, he wasn't a man for rules; a man of his age, too, would hardly keep the rules made by a girl of nineteen. After repeated breakage of all her well-regulated little canons, she had withdrawn herself, and kept aloof; she had held herself superior to him, and had let him see that she did. Winthrop could imagine the effect of all this upon Lanse!

But no matter what Lanse had done that annoyed her (and it was highly probable that he had done a good deal), her duty as a wife, in Winthrop's opinion, clearly was, and would to the end of time continue, to remain with her husband – not to leave him, unless her life or the welfare of her children should be in actual danger; that was what marriage meant. The welfare of children included a great deal, of course; he held that a wife was justified in separating them from a father whose influence was injurious. But in this case there had been no questions of the sort, Lanse was not violent, and there were no children to think of. There was, indeed, nothing very wrong about Lanse save that he was self-willed, and did quite as he pleased on all occasions. But what he did was, after all, nothing very terrible; he was willing that other people should do as they pleased, also; he was not a petty tyrant. But this state of things had not satisfied his wife, who wished other people, her husband first of all, to do as *she* pleased. Why? Because she was always sure that she was right! This slender, graceful woman with the dark blue eyes and clear low voice had a will as strong as her husband's. She had found, probably, that her tranquillity and what she called her dignity – both inexpressibly dear to her – were constantly endangered by this unmanageable husband, who paid not the slightest heed to her axioms as to what was "right" and "not right," what was "usual" (Lanse was never usual) and "not usual," but strode through and over them all as though they did not exist. His course, indeed, made it impossible for her to preserve unbroken that serenity of temper which was her highest aspiration; for she was exactly the woman to have an ideal of that sort, and to endeavor to live up to it; it was not improbable that she offered her prayers to that effect every night.

All this was a very harsh estimate. But Winthrop's beliefs on these subjects were rooted in the deepest convictions he possessed. Such a character as the one he attributed to Margaret Harold was to him insufferable; he could endure easily a narrow mind, if with it there was a warm heart and unselfish disposition, but a narrow mind combined with a cold, unmoved nature and impregnable self-conceit – this seemed to him a combination that made a woman (it was always a woman) simply odious.

These things all passed through his thoughts again as he rode over the barrens. He recalled Lanse's handsome face as he used to see it in childhood. Lanse was five years older than the little

Evert, tall, strong, full of life, a hero to the lad from New England, who was brave enough in his way but who had not been encouraged in boldness, nor praised when he had been lawless and daring. Mrs. Rutherford had a phrase about Lanse – that he was "just like all the Harolds." The Harolds, in truth, were a handsome race; they all resembled each other, though some of them were not so handsome as the rest. A good many of them had married their cousins. They were tall and broad-shouldered, well made, but inclined to portliness towards middle-age; they had good features, the kind of very well-cut outline, with short upper lip and full lower one, whose fault, if it has a fault, is a tendency to blankness of expression after youth is past. Their hair was very dark, almost black, and they had thick brown beards of rather a lighter hue – beards which they kept short; their eyes were beautiful, dark brown in hue, animated, with yellow lights in them; their complexions had a rich darkness, with strong ivory tints beneath. They had an appearance of looking over the heads of everybody else, which, among many noticeable things about them, was the most noticeable – it was so entirely natural. Because it was so natural nobody had tried to analyze it, to find out of what it consisted. The Harolds were tall; but it was not their height. They were broad-shouldered; but there were men of the same mould everywhere. It was not that they expanded their chests and threw their heads back, so that their eyes, when cast down, rested upon a projecting expanse of shirt front, with the watch-chain far in advance; the Harolds had no such airs of inflated frog. They stood straight on their feet, but nothing more; their well-moulded chins were rather drawn in than thrust out; they never posed; there was never any trace of attitude. Yet, in any large assemblage, if there were any of them present, they were sure to have this appearance of looking over other people's heads. It was accompanied by a careless, good-humored, unpretending ease, which was almost benevolent, and which was strikingly different from the self-assertive importance of more nervous (and smaller) men.

As a family the Harolds had not been loved; they were too self-willed for that. But they were witty, they could be agreeable; in houses where it pleased them to be witty and agreeable, they were the most welcome of guests. The small things of life, what they called the "details," the tiresome little cares and responsibilities, annoyances, engagements, and complications, these they shed from themselves as a shaggy dog sheds water from his coat – they shook them off. People who did not love them (and these were many) remarked that this was all very pretty, but that it was also very selfish. The Harolds, if their attention had been called to it, would have considered the adjective as another of the "details," and would have shaken that off also.

Mrs. Rutherford in her youth never could help admiring the Harolds (there were a good many of them, almost all men; there was but seldom a daughter); when, therefore, her sister Hilda married Lansing of the name, she had an odd sort of pride in it, although everybody said that Hilda would not be happy; the Harolds seldom made good husbands. It was not that they were harassing or brutal; they were simply supremely inattentive. In this case, however, there had been little opportunity to verify or prove false the expectation, as both Lansing Harold and his wife had died within two years after their marriage, the wife last, leaving (as her sister, Mrs. Winthrop, did later) a son but a few days old. The small Lansing was adopted by his aunt. Through childhood he was a noble-looking little fellow, never governed or taught to govern himself; he grew rapidly into a large, manly lad, active and strong, fond of out-of-door sports and excelling in them, having the quick wit of his family, which, however (like them), he was not inclined to bestow upon all comers for their entertainment; he preferred to keep it for his own.

Evert remembered with a smile the immense admiration he had felt for his big cousin, the excited anticipation with which he had looked forward to meeting him when he went, twice a year, to see his aunt. The splendid physical strength of the elder boy, his liberty, his dogs and his gun, his horse and boat – all these filled the sparingly indulged little New England child with the greatest wonder and delight. Most of all did he admire the calm absolutism of Lanse's will, combined as it was with good-nature, manliness, and even to a certain degree, or rather in a certain way, with generosity – generosity as he had thought it then, careless liberality as he knew it now. When Evert was ten and

Lanse fifteen, Lanse had decided that his cousin must learn to shoot, that he was quite old enough for that accomplishment. Evert recalled the mixture of fear and pride which had filled his small heart to suffocation when Lanse put the gun into his hands in the remote field behind Mrs. Rutherford's country-house which he had selected for the important lesson. His fear was not occasioned so much by the gun as by the keen realization that if his father should question him, upon his return home, he should certainly feel himself obliged to tell of his new knowledge, and the revelation might put an end to these happy visits. Fortunately his father did not question him; he seldom spoke to the boy of anything that had happened during these absences, which he seemed to consider necessary evils – so much waste time. On this occasion how kind Lanse had been, how he had encouraged and helped him – yes, and scolded him a little too; and how he had comforted him when the force of the discharge had knocked the little sportsman over on the ground rather heavily. A strong affection for Lanse had grown up with the younger boy; and it remained with him still, though now not so blind a liking; he knew Lanse better. They had been widely separated, and for a long time; they had led such different lives! Evert had worked steadily for ten long, secluded years; later he had worked still harder, but in another way, being now his own master, and engaged in guiding the enterprises he had undertaken through many obstacles and hazards towards success. These years of unbroken toil for Evert had been spent by Lanse in his own amusement, though one could not say spent in idleness exactly, as he was one of the most active of men. He had been much of the time in Europe. But he came home for brief visits now and then, when his aunt besought him; she adored him – she had always adored him; she was never tired of admiring his proportions, what seemed to her his good-nature, his Harold wit, his poise of head; she was never so happy as when she had him staying with her in her own house. True, he had his own way of living; but it was such a simple way! He was not in the least a gourmand – none of the Harolds were that; he liked only the simplest dishes, and always demanded them; he wanted the windows open at all seasons when the snow was not actually on the ground; he could not endure questioning, in fact, he never answered questions at all.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.