NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

No. DLXXXIX.

DECEMBER, 1905.

NEW YORK AND THE HUDSON: A SPRING IMPRESSION.

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I.

It was a concomitant, always, of the down-town hour that it could be felt as *most* playing into the surrendered consciousness and making the sharpest impression; yet, since the up-town hour was apt, in its turn, to claim the same distinction, I could only let each of them take its way with me as it would. The oddity was that they seemed not at all to speak of different things—by so quick a process does any one aspect, in the United States, in general, I was to note, connect itself with the rest; so little does any link in the huge looseness of New York, in especial, appear to come as whole, or as final, out of the fusion. The fusion, as of elements in solution in a vast hot pot, is always going on, and one stage of the process is as typical or as vivid as another. Whatever I might be looking at, or be struck with, the object or the phase was an item in the pressing conditions of the place, and as such had more in common with its sister-items than it had in difference from them. It mattered little, moreover, whether this might be a proof that New York, among cities, most deeply languishes and palpitates, or vibrates and flourishes (whichever way one may put it), under the breath of her conditions, or

whether, simply, this habit of finding a little of *all* my impressions reflected in any one of them testified to the enjoyment of a real relation with the subject. I like, indeed, to think of my relation to New York as, in that manner, almost inexpressibly intimate, and as hence making, for daily sensation, a keyboard as continuous, and as free from hard transitions, as if swept by the fingers of a master-pianist. You cannot, surely, say more for your sense of the underlying unity of an occasion than that the taste of each dish in the banquet recalls the taste of most of the others; which is what I mean by the "continuity," not to say the affinity, on the island of Manhattan, between the fish and the sweets, between the soup and the game. The whole feast affects one as eaten—that is the point—with the general queer sauce of New York; a preparation as freely diffused somehow, on the East side as on the West, in the quarter of Grand Street as in the quarter of Murray Hill. No fact, I hasten to add, would appear to make the place more amenable to delineations that desire to be spoken of as hanging together.

I must confess, notwithstanding, to not being quite ready to point directly to the common element in the dense Italian neighborhoods of the lower East side and in the upper reaches of Fifth and Madison Avenues; though, indeed, I wonder at this inability in recollecting two or three of those charming afternoons of early summer, in Central Park, which showed the fruit of the foreign tree as shaken down there with a force that smothered everything else. The long residential vistas I have named were within a quarter of an hour's walk, but the alien was as truly in possession, under the high "aristocratic" nose, as if he had had but three steps to come. If it be asked why, the alien still striking you so as an alien, the singleness of impression, throughout the place, should still be so marked, the answer, close at hand, would seem to be that the alien himself fairly *makes* the singleness of impression. Is not the universal sauce essentially *his* sauce, and do we not feel ourselves feeding half the time from the ladle, as greasy as he chooses to leave it for us, that he holds out? Such questions were in my ears, at all events, with the cheerful hum of that Babel of tongues established in the vernal Park, and they supplied, beyond doubt, the livelier interest of any hour of contemplation there. I hate to drift into dealing with them at the expense of a proper tribute, kept distinct and

vivid, to the charming bosky precinct itself, the great field of recreation in which they swarmed; but it could not be the fault of the brooding visitor, and still less that of the restored absentee, if he was conscious of the need of mental adjustment to phenomena absolutely fresh. He could remember still how, months before, a day or two after his restoration, a noted element of one of his first impressions had been this particular revealed anomaly. He had been, on the Jersey shore, walking with a couple of friends through the grounds of a large, new rural residence, where groups of diggers and ditchers were working, on those lines of breathless haste which seem always, in the United States, of the essence of any question, toward an expensive effect of landscape-gardening. To pause before them, for interest in their labor, was, and would have been everywhere, instinctive; but what came home to me on the spot was that whatever *more* would have been anywhere else involved had here inevitably to lapse.

What lapsed, on the spot, was the element of communication with the workers, as I may call it for want of a better name; that element which, in a European country, would have operated, from side to side, as the play of mutual recognition, founded on old familiarities and heredities, and involving, for the moment, some impalpable exchange. The men, in the case I speak of, were Italians, of superlatively southern type, and impalpable exchange struck me as absent from *their* horizon to positive intensity, to mere unthinkability. It was as if contact were out of the question and the sterility of the passage between us recorded, with due dryness, in our staring silence. This impression was for one of the party a shock—a member of the party for whom, on the other side of the world, the imagination of the main furniture, as it might be called, of any rural excursion, of *the* rural in particular, had been, during years, the easy sense, for the excursionist, of a social relation with any encountered type, from whichever end of the scale proceeding. Had that not ever been, exactly, a part of the vague warmth, the intrinsic color, of any honest man's rural walk in his England or his Italy, his Germany or his France, and was not the effect of its so suddenly dropping out, in the land of universal brotherhood—for I was to find it drop out again and again—rather a chill, straightway, for the heart, and rather a puzzle, not less, for the head?

Shortly after the spring of this question was first touched for me I found it ring out again with a sharper stroke. Happening to have lost my way, during a long ramble among the New Hampshire hills, I appealed for information, at a parting of the roads, to a young man whom, at the moment of my need, I happily saw emerge from a neighboring wood. But his stare was blank, in answer to my inquiry; and, seeing that he failed to understand me, and that he had a dark-eyed "Latin" look, I jumped to the inference of his being a French Canadian. My repetition of my query in French, however, forwarded the case as little, and my trying him with Italian had no better effect. "What *are* you then?" I wonderingly asked—on which my accent loosened in him the faculty of speech. "I'm an Armenian," he replied, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for a wage-earning youth in the heart of New England to be—so that all I could do was to try and make my profit of the lesson. I could have made it better, for the occasion, if, even on the Armenian basis, he had appeared to expect brotherhood; but this had been as little his seeming as it had been that of the diggers by the Jersey shore.

To inquire of these things, on the spot, to betray, that is, one's sense of the "chill" of which I have spoken, is of course to hear it admitted, promptly enough, that there is no claim to brotherhood with aliens in the first grossness of their alienism. The material of which they consist is being dressed and prepared, at this stage, for brotherhood, and the consummation, in respect to many of them, will not be, cannot from the nature of the case be, in any lifetime of their own. Their children are another matter —as in fact the children, throughout the United States, are an immense matter, are almost the greatest matter of all; it is the younger generation who will fully profit, rise to the occasion and enter into the privilege. The machinery is colossal—nothing is more characteristic of the country than the development of this machinery, in the form of the political and social habit, the common school and the newspaper; so that there are always millions of little transformed strangers growing up in regard to whom the idea of intimacy of relation may be as freely cherished as you like. *They* are the stuff of whom brothers and sisters are made, and the making proceeds on a scale that really need leave nothing to desire. All this you take in, with a wondering mind,

and in the light of it the great "ethnic" question rises before you on a corresponding scale and with a corresponding majesty. Once it has set your observation, to say nothing of your imagination, working, it becomes for you, as you go and come, the wonderment to which everything ministers, and that is quickened well-nigh to madness, in some places and on some occasions, by every face and every accent that meet your eyes and ears. The sense of the elements in the caldron—the caldron of the "American" character—becomes thus about as vivid a thing as you can at all quietly manage, and the question settles into a form which makes the intelligible answer further and further recede. "What meaning, in the presence of such impressions, can continue to attach to such a term as the 'American' character?—what type, as the result of such a prodigious amalgam, such a hotchpotch of racial ingredients, is to be conceived as shaping itself?" The challenge to speculation, fed thus by a thousand sources, is so intense as to be, as I say, irritating; but practically, beyond doubt, I should also say, you take refuge from it—since your case would otherwise be hard; and you find your relief not in the least in any direct satisfaction or solution, but absolutely in that blest general drop of the immediate need of conclusions, or rather in that blest general feeling for the impossibility of them, to which the philosophy of any really fine observation of the American spectacle must reduce itself, and the large intellectual, quite even the large æsthetic, margin supplied by which accompanies the spectator as his one positively complete comfort.

It is more than a comfort to him, truly, in all the conditions, this accepted vision of the too-defiant scale of numerosity and quantity—the effect of which is so to multiply the possibilities, so to open, by the million, contingent doors and windows; he rests in it, at last, as an absolute luxury, converting it even into a substitute, into *the* constant substitute, for many luxuries that are absent. He doesn't *know,* he can't *say,* before the facts, and he doesn't even want to know or to say; the facts themselves loom, before the understanding, in too large a mass for a mere mouthful: it is as if the syllables were too numerous to make a legible word. The *il*legible word, accordingly, the great inscrutable answer to questions, hangs in the vast American sky, to his imagination, as something fantastic and *abracadabrant,* belonging to no known language, and it is under this convenient ensign

that he travels and considers and contemplates and, to the best of his ability, enjoys. The interesting point, in the connection, is moreover that this particular effect of the scale of things is the only effect that, throughout the land, is not directly adverse to joy. Extent and reduplication, the multiplication of common, cognate items and the continuity of motion, are elements that count, there, in general, for fatigue and satiety, prompting the earnest observer, overburdened perhaps already a little by his earnestness, to the reflection that the country is too large for any human convenience; that it can scarce, in the scheme of Providence, have been meant to be dealt with as we are trying, perhaps all in vain, to deal with it; and that its very possibilities of population themselves cause one to wince in the light of the question of intercourse and contact. That relation to its superficies and content—the relation of flat fatigue—is, with the traveller, a constant quantity; so that he feels himself justified of the inward, the philosophic, escape into the convenient immensity. And as it is the restored absentee, with his acquired habit of nearer limits and shorter journeys and more muffled concussions, who is doubtless most subject to flat fatigue, so it is this same personage who most avails himself of the liberty of waiting to see. It is an advantage—acting often in the way of compensation, or of an appeal from the immediate—that he becomes, early in his period of inquiry, conscious of intimately requiring, in whatever apparent inconsistency it may lodge him. There is too much of the whole thing, he sighs, for the personal relation with it; and yet he would desire no inch less for the relation that he describes to himself best perhaps either as the provisionally-imaginative or as the distantly-respectful. Diminution of quantity, even by that inch, might mark the difference of his having to begin to recognize from afar, as through a rift in the obscurity, the gleam of some propriety of opinion. What would a man make, many things still being as they are, he finds himself asking, of a *small* America?—and what may a big one, on the other hand, still not make of itself? Goodness be thanked, accordingly, for the bigness. The state of flat fatigue, obviously, is not an opinion, save in the sense attributed to the slumber of the gentleman of the anecdote who had lost consciousness during the reading of the play—it belongs to the order of mere sensation and impression.

II.

The process of the mitigation and, still more, of the conversion of the alien goes on, meanwhile, obviously, not by leaps and bounds or any form of easy magic, but under its own mystic laws and with an outward air of quite declining to be unduly precipitated. How little it may be thought of in New York as a quick business we readily perceive as the effect of merely remembering the vast numbers of their kind that the arriving reinforcements, from whatever ends of the earth, find already in possession of the field. There awaits the disembarked Armenian, for instance, so warm and furnished an Armenian corner that the need of hurrying to get rid of the sense of it must become less and less a pressing preliminary. The corner growing warmer and warmer, it is to be supposed, by rich accretions, he may take his time, more and more, for becoming absorbed in the surrounding element, and he may in fact feel more and more that he can do so on his own conditions. I seem to find indeed in this latter truth a hint for the best expression of a whole side of New York —the best expression of much of the medium in which one consciously moves. It is formed by this fact that the alien is taking his time, and that you go about with him meanwhile, sharing, all respectfully, in his deliberation, waiting on his convenience, watching him at his interesting work. The vast foreign quarters of the city present him as thus engaged in it, and they are curious and portentous and "picturesque" just by reason of their doing so. You recognize in them, freely, those elements that are not elements of swift convertibility, and you lose yourself in the wonder of what becomes, as it were, of the obstinate, the unconverted residuum. The country at large, as you cross it in different senses, keeps up its character for you as the hugest thinkable organism for successful "assimilation"; but the assimilative force itself has the residuum still to count with. The operation of the immense machine, identical after all with the total of American life, trembles away into mysteries that are beyond our present notation, and that reduce us, in many a mood, to renouncing analysis.

Who and what is an alien, when it comes to that, in a country peopled from the first under the jealous eye of history?—peopled, that is, by migrations at once extremely recent, perfectly traceable and urgently required. They are still, it would appear,

urgently required—if we look about, far enough, for the urgency; though of that truth such a scene as New York may well make one doubt. Which is the American, by these scant measures?—which is *not* the alien, over a large part of the country at least, and where does one put a finger on the dividing line, or, for that matter, "spot," and identify any particular phase of the conversion, any one of its successive moments? The sense of the interest of so doing is doubtless half the interest of the general question—the possibility of our seeing lucidly presented some such phenomenon, in a given group of persons, or even in a felicitous individual, as the dawn of the American spirit, while the declining rays of the Croatian, say, or of the Calabrian, or of the Lusitanian, still linger more or less pensively in the sky. Fifty doubts and queries come up, in regard to any such possibility, as one circulates in New York, with the so ambiguous element in the *launched* foreign personality always in one's eyes; the wonder, above all, of whether there be, comparatively, in the vastly greater number of the representatives of the fresh contingent, any spirit that the American does not find an easy prey. Repeatedly, in the electric cars, one seemed invited to take that for granted—there being occasions, days and weeks together, when the electric cars offer you nothing else to think of. The carful, again and again, is a foreign carful; a row of faces, up and down, testifying without exception to alienism unmistakable, alienism undisguised and unashamed. You do here, in a manner, perhaps, discriminate; the launched condition, as I have called it, is more developed in some types than in others; but I remember observing how in the Broadway and the Bowery conveyances in especial, they tended, almost alike, to make the observer gasp with the sense of isolation. It was not for this that the observer on whose behalf I more particularly write had sought to take up again the sweet sense of the natal air.

The great fact about his companions was that, foreign as they might be, newly inducted as they might be, they were *at home,* really more at home, at the end of their few weeks, or months, or their year or two, than they had ever in their lives been before; and that *he* was at home too, quite with the same intensity: and yet that it was this very equality of condition that, from side to side, made the whole medium so strange. Here again, however, relief may be sought and found—and I say this at the risk of

perhaps picturing the restored absentee as too constantly requiring it; for there is fascination in the study of the innumerable ways in which this sense of being at home, on the part of all the types, may show forth. New York offers to such a study a well-nigh unlimited field; but I seem to recall winter days, harsh, dusky, sloshy winter afternoons, in the densely-packed East-side street-cars, as an especially intimate surrender to it. It took its place thus, I think, under the general American law of *all* relief from the great equalizing pressure: it took on that last disinterestedness which consists in one's getting away from one's subject by plunging into it, for sweet truth's sake, still deeper. If I speak, moreover, of this general first grossness of alienism as presented in "types," I use that word for easy convenience and not in respect to its indicating marked variety. There are many different ways, certainly, in which obscure fighters of the battle of life may look, under new high lights, queer and crude and unwrought; but the striking thing, precisely, in the crepuscular, tunnel-like avenues that the "Elevated" overarches—yet without quenching, either, that constant power of any American exhibition rather luridly to light itself—the striking thing, and the beguiling, was always the manner in which figure after figure and face after face already betrayed the common consequence and action of their whereabouts. Face after face, unmistakably, was "low"—particularly in the men, squared all solidly in their new security and portability, their vague but growing sense of many unprecedented things; and, as signs of the reinforcing of a large local conception of manners and relations, it was difficult to say if they most affected one as promising or as portentous.

The great thing, at any rate, was that they were all together so visibly on the new, the lifted, level—that of consciously not being what they *had* been, and that this immediately glazed them over as with some mixture, of indescribable hue and consistency, the wholesale varnish of consecration, that might have been applied, out of a bottomless receptacle, by a huge whitewashing brush. Here perhaps was the nearest approach to a seizable step in the evolution of the oncoming citizen, the stage of his no longer being for you—for any complacency of the romantic, or even verily of the fraternizing, sense in you—the foreigner of the quality, of the kind, that he might have been *chez lui*. Whatever he might see himself becoming, he was never to see himself

that again, any more than you were ever to see him. He became thus, to my vision (which I have called fascinated for want of a better description of it), a creature promptly despoiled of those "manners" which were the grace (as I am again reduced to calling it) by which one had best known and, on opportunity, best liked him. He presents himself thus, most of all, to be plain—and not only in New York, but throughout the country—as wonderingly conscious that his manners of the other world, that everything you have there known and praised him for, have been a huge mistake; to that degree that the sense of this luminous discovery is what we mainly imagine his weighted communications to those he has left behind charged with; those rich letters home as to the number and content of which the Post-Office gives us so remarkable a statistic. If there are several lights in which the great assimilative organism itself may be looked at, does it not thus perhaps loom largest as an agent for revealing to the citizen-to-be the error in question? He hears it, under this ægis, proclaimed in a thousand voices, and it is as listening to these and as according to the individual more or less swiftly, but always infallibly, penetrated and convinced by them, that I felt myself see him go about his business, see him above all, for some odd reason, sit there in the street-car and with a slow, brooding gravity, a dim calculation of bearings, which yet never takes a backward step, expand to the full measure of it.

So, in New York, largely the "American" value of the immigrant who arrives at all mature is restricted to the enjoyment (all prepared to increase) of that important preliminary truth; which makes him for us, we must own, till more comes of it, a tolerably neutral and colorless image. He resembles for the time the dog who sniffs round the freshly-acquired bone, giving it a push and a lick, betraying a sense of its possibilities, but not —and quite as from a positive deep tremor of consciousness—directly attacking it. There are categories of foreigners, truly, meanwhile, of whom we are moved to say that only a mechanism working with scientific force could have performed this feat of making them colorless. The Italians, who, over the whole land, strike us, I am afraid, as, after the Negro and the Chinaman, the human value most easily produced, the Italians meet us, at every turn, only to make us ask what has become of that element of the agreeable address in *them* which has, from far back, so

enhanced for the stranger the interest and pleasure of a visit to their beautiful country. They shed it utterly, I couldn't but observe, on their advent, after a deep inhalation or two of the clear native air; shed it with a conscientious completeness which leaves one looking for any faint trace of it. "Color," of that pleasant sort, was what they had appeared, among the races of the European family, most to have; so that the effect I speak of, the rapid action of the ambient air, is like that of the tub of hot water that reduces a piece of bright-hued stuff, on immersion, to the proved state of not "washing": the only fault of my image indeed being that if the stuff loses its brightness the water of the tub, at least, is more or less agreeably dyed with it. That is doubtless not the case for the ambient air operating after the fashion I here note—since we surely fail to observe that the property washed out of the new subject begins to tint with its pink or its azure his fellow soakers in the terrible tank. If this property that has quitted him—the general amenity of attitude in the absence of provocation to its opposite—could be accounted for by its having rubbed off on any number of surrounding persons, the whole process would be easier and perhaps more comforting to follow. It will not have been his first occasion of taking leave of short-sighted comfort in the United States, however, if the patient inquirer postpones that ideal to the real solicitation of the question I here touch on.

What *does* become of the various positive properties, on the part of certain of the installed tribes, the good manners, say, among them, as to which the process of shedding and the fact of eclipse come so promptly into play? It has taken long ages of history, in the other world, to produce them, and you ask yourself, with independent curiosity, if they may really be thus extinguished in an hour. And if they are not extinguished, into what pathless tracts of the native atmosphere do they virtually, do they provisionally, and so all undiscoverably, melt? Do they burrow underground, to await their day again?—or in what strange secret places are they held in deposit and in trust? The "American" identity that has profited by their sacrifice has meanwhile acquired (in the happiest cases) all apparent confidence and consistency; but may not the doubt remain of whether the extinction of qualities ingrained in generations is to be taken for quite complete? Isn't it conceivable that, for something

like a final efflorescence, the business of slow comminglings and makings-over at last ended, they may rise again to the surface, affirming their vitality and value and playing their part? It would be for them, of course, in this event, to attest that had they been worth waiting so long for; but the speculation, at any rate, irresistibly forced upon us, is a sign of the interest, in the American world, of what I have called the "ethnic" outlook. The caldron, for the great stew, has such circumference and such depth that we can only deal here with ultimate syntheses, ultimate combinations and possibilities. Yet I am well aware that if these vague evocations of them, in their nebulous remoteness, may charm the ingenuity of the student of the scene, there are matters of the foreground that they have no call to supplant. Any temptation to let them do so is meanwhile, no doubt, but a proof of that impulse irresponsibly to escape from the formidable foreground which so often, in the American world, lies in wait for the spirit of intellectual dalliance.

III.

New York really, I think, is *all* formidable foreground; or if it be not, there is more than enough of this pressure of the present and the immediate to cut out the close sketcher's work for him. These things are a thick growth all round him, and when I recall the intensity of the material picture in the dense Yiddish quarter, for instance, I wonder at its not having forestalled, on my page, mere musings and, as they will doubtless be called, moonings. There abides with me, ineffaceably, the memory of a summer evening spent there by invitation of a high public functionary, domiciled on the spot—to the extreme enhancement of the romantic interest his visitor found him foredoomed to inspire—who was to prove one of the most liberal of hosts and most luminous of guides. I can scarce help it if this brilliant personality, on that occasion, the very medium itself through which the whole spectacle showed, so colors my impressions that if I speak, by intention, of the facts that played into them, I may really but reflect the rich talk and the general privilege of the hour. That accident, moreover, must take its place simply as the highest value and the strongest note in the total show—so much did it testify to the quality of appealing, surrounding life. The sense of this quality was already strong

in my drive, with a companion, through the long, warm June twilight, from a comparatively conventional neighborhood; it was the sense, after all, of a great swarming, a swarming that had begun to thicken, infinitely, as soon as we had crossed to the East side and long before we had got to Rutgers Street. There is no swarming like that of Israel when once Israel has got a start, and the scene here bristled, at every step, with the signs and sounds, immitigated, unmistakable, of a Jewry that had burst all bounds. That it had burst all bounds, in New York, almost any combination of figures or of objects, taken at hazard, sufficiently proclaims; but I remember how the rising waters, on this summer night, rose, to the imagination, even above the house-tops, and seemed to sound their murmur to the pale distant stars. It was as if we had been thus, in the crowded, hustled roadway, where multiplication, multiplication of everything, was the dominant note, at the bottom of some vast sallow aquarium in which innumerable fish, of overdeveloped proboscis, were to bump together, forever, amid heaped spoils of the sea.

The children swarmed above all—here was multiplication with a vengeance, and the number of very old persons, of either sex, was almost equally remarkable; the very old persons being in equal vague occupation of the doorstep, pavement, curbstone, gutter, roadway, and every one alike using the street for overflow. As overflow, in the whole quarter, is the main fact of life—I was to learn later on that, with the exception of some shy corner of Asia, no district in the world known to the statistician has so many inhabitants to the yard—the scene hummed with the human presence beyond any I had ever faced in quest even of refreshment; producing part of the impression, moreover, no doubt, as a direct consequence of the intensity of the Jewish aspect. This, I think, makes the individual Jew more of a concentrated person, savingly possessed of everything that is in him, than any other human, taken at hazard—or is it simply, rather, that the unsurpassed strength of the race permits of the chopping into myriads of fine fragments without loss of race-quality? There are small strange animals, known to natural history, snakes or worms, I believe, which, when cut into segments, wriggle away contentedly and live in the snippet as completely as in the whole. So the denizens of the New York Ghetto, heaped as thick as the splinters on the table of a glass-blower, had each, like the fine

glass particle, his or her individual share of the whole hard glitter of Israel. This diffused intensity, as I have called it, causes any array of Jews to resemble (if I may be allowed another image) some long nocturnal street where every window in every house shows a maintained light. The advanced age of so many of the figures, the ubiquity of the children, carried out in fact this analogy; they were all there for race, and not, as it were, for reason: that excess of lurid meaning, in some of the old men's and old women's faces, in particular, would have been absurd, in the conditions, as a really directed attention—it could only be the gathered past of Israel mechanically pushing through. The way, at the same time, this chapter of history did, all that evening, seem to push, was a matter that made the "ethnic" apparition, again, sit like a skeleton at the feast. It was fairly as if I could see the spectre grin while the talk of the hour gave me, across the board, facts and figures, chapter and verse, for the extent of the Hebrew conquest of New York. With a reverence for intellect, one should doubtless have drunk in tribute to an intellectual people; but I remember being at no time more conscious of that merely portentous element, in the aspects of American growth, which reduce to inanity any especial dismay quite as much as any high elation. The portent is one of too many—you always come back as I have hinted, with your easier gasp, to *that:* it will be time enough to sigh or to shout when the relation of the particular appearance to all the other relations shall have cleared itself up. Phantasmagoric for me, accordingly, in a high degree, are the interesting hours I here glance at content to remain—setting in this respect, I recognize, an excellent example to all the rest of the New York phantasmagoria. Let me speak of the remainder only as phantasmagoric too, so that I may both the more sweetly recall it and the sooner have done with it.

I have not done, however, with the impression of that large evening in the Ghetto; there was too much in the vision, and it has left too much the sense of a rare experience. For what did it all really come to but that one had seen with one's eyes the New Jerusalem on earth? What less than that could it all have been, in its far-spreading light and its celestial serenity of multiplication? There it was, there it is, and when I think of the dark, foul, stifling Ghettos of other remembered cities, I shall think by the same stroke of the City of Redemption, and evoke in par-

ticular the rich Rutgers Street perspective—rich, so peculiarly, for the eye, in that complexity of fire-escapes with which each house-front bristles and which gives the whole vista so modernized and appointed a look. Omnipresent in the "poor" regions, this neat applied machinery has, for the stranger, a common side with the electric light and the telephone, suggests the distance achieved from the old Jerusalem. (These frontal iron ladders and platforms, by the way, so numerous throughout New York, strike more New York notes than can be parenthetically named—and among them perhaps, most sharply, the note of the ease with which, in the terrible town, on opportunity, "architecture" goes by the board; but the appearance to which they perhaps most conduce is that of the spaciously organized cage for the nimbler class of animals in some great zoological garden. This general analogy is irresistible—it seems to offer, in each district, a little world of bars and perches and swings for human squirrels and monkeys. The very name of architecture perishes, for the fire-escapes look like abashed afterthoughts, staircases and communications forgotten in the construction; but the inhabitants lead, like the squirrels and monkeys, all the merrier life.) It was while I hung over the prospect from the windows of my friend, however, the presiding genius of the district, and it was while, at a later hour, I proceeded in his company, and in that of a trio of contributive fellow pilgrims, from one "characteristic" place of public entertainment to another: it was during this rich climax, I say, that the City of Redemption was least to be taken for anything less than it was. The windows, while we sat at meat, looked out on a swarming little Square, in which an antlike population darted to and fro; the Square consisted in part of a "district" public garden, or public lounge, rather, one of those small backwaters or refuges, artfully economized for rest, here and there, in the very heart of the New York whirlpool, and which spoke louder than anything else of a Jerusalem disinfected. What spoke loudest, no doubt, was the great overtowering School which formed a main boundary, and in the shadow of which we all comparatively crouched.

But the School must not lead me on just yet—so colossally has its presence still to loom for us; that presence which profits so, for predominance, in America, by the failure of concurrent and competitive presences, the failure of any others looming at all

on the same scale save that of Business, those in particular of a visible Church, a visible State, a visible Society, a visible Past; those of the many visibilities, in short, that warmly cumber the ground in older countries. Yet it also spoke loud that my friend was quartered, for the interest of the thing (from his so interesting point of view) in a "tenement-house"; the New Jerusalem would so have triumphed, had it triumphed nowhere else, in the fact that this charming little structure *could* be ranged, on the wonderful little Square, under that invidious head. On my asking to what latent vice it owed its stigma, I was asked in return if it didn't sufficiently pay for its name by harboring some five-and-twenty families. But this, exactly, was the way it testified—this circumstance of the simultaneous enjoyment by five-and-twenty families, on "tenement" lines, of conditions so little sordid, so highly "evolved." I remember the evolved fire-proof staircase, a thing of scientific surfaces, impenetrable to the microbe, and above all plated, against side friction, with white marble of a goodly grain. The white marble was surely the New Jerusalem note, and we followed that note, up and down the district, the rest of the evening, through more happy changes than I may take time to count. What struck me in the flaring streets (over and beyond the everywhere insistent, defiant, unhumorous, exotic face) was the blaze of the shops addressed to the New Jerusalem wants and the splendor with which these were taken for granted: the only thing indeed a little ambiguous was just this look of the trap too brilliantly, too candidly, baited for the wary side of Israel itself. It is not *for* Israel, in general, that Israel so artfully shines—yet its being moved to do so, at last, in that luxurious style, might be precisely the grand side of the City of Redemption. Who can ever tell, moreover, in any conditions and in presence of any apparent anomaly, what the genius of Israel may, or may not, really be "up to"?

The grateful way to take it all, at any rate, was with the sense of its coming back again to the inveterate rise, in the American air, of every value, and especially of the lower ones, those most subject to multiplication; such a wealth of meaning did this keep appearing to pour into the value and function of the country at large. Importances are all strikingly shifted and reconstituted, in the United States, for the visitor attuned, from far back, to "European" importances; but I think of no other mo-

ment of my total impression as so sharply working over my own benighted vision of them. The scale, in this light of the New Jerusalem, seemed completely rearranged; or, to put it more simply, the wants, the gratifications, the aspirations of the "poor," as expressed in the shops (which were the shops of the "poor"), denoted a new style of poverty; and this new style of poverty, from street to street, stuck out of the possible purchasers, one's jostling fellow pedestrians, and made them, to every man and woman, individual throbs in the larger harmony. One can speak only of what one has seen, and there were grosser elements of the sordid and the squalid that I doubtless never saw. That, with a good deal of observation and of curiosity, I should have failed of this, the country over, affected me as by itself something of an indication. To miss that part of the spectacle, or to know it only by its having so unfamiliar a pitch, was an indication that made up for a great many others. It is when this one in particular is forced home to you—this immense, vivid, *general* lift of poverty and general appreciation of the living unit's paying property in himself—that the picture seems most to clear and the way to jubilation most to open. For it meets you there, at every turn, as the result most definitely attested. You are as constantly reminded, no doubt, that these rises in enjoyed value shrink and dwindle under the icy breath of Trusts and the weight of the new remorseless monopolies that operate as no madnesses of ancient personal power thrilling us on the historic page ever operated; the living unit's property in himself becoming more and more merely such a property as may consist with a relation to properties overwhelmingly greater and that allow the asking of no questions and the making, for coexistence with them, of no conditions. But that, in the fortunate phrase, is another story, and will be, altogether, evidently, a new and different drama. There is such a thing, in the United States, it is hence to be inferred, as freedom to grow up to be blighted, and it may be the only freedom in store for the smaller fry of future generations. If it is accordingly of the smaller fry I speak, and of how large they massed on that evening of endless admonitions, this will be because I caught them thus in their comparative humility and at an early stage of their American growth. The life-thread has, I suppose, to be of a certain thickness for the great shears of Fate to feel for it. Put it, at the

worst, that the Ogres were to devour them, they were but the more certainly to fatten into food for the Ogres.

Their dream, at all events, as I noted it, was meanwhile sweet and undisguised—nowhere sweeter than in the half-dozen picked beer-houses and cafés in which our ingenuous *enquête,* that of my fellow pilgrim and I, wound up. These establishments had each been selected for its playing off some facet of the jewel, and they wondrously testified, by their range and their individual color, to the spread of that lustre. It was a pious rosary of which I should like to tell each bead, but I must let the general sense of the adventure serve. Our successive stations were in no case of the "seamy" order, an inquiry into seaminess having been unanimously pronounced futile, but each had its separate social connotation, and it was for the number and variety of these connotations, and their individual plenitude and prosperity, to set one thinking. Truly the Yiddish world was a vast world, with its own deeps and complexities, and what struck one above all was that it sat there at its cups (and in no instance vulgarly the worse for them) with a sublimity of good conscience that took away the breath, a protrusion of elbow never aggressive, but absolutely proof against jostling. It was the incurable man of letters under the skin of one of the party who gasped, I confess; for it was in the light of letters, that is in the light of our language as literature has hitherto known it, that one stared at this all-unconscious impudence of the agency of future ravage. The man of letters, in the United States, has his own difficulties to face and his own current to stem—for dealing with which his liveliest inspiration may be, I think, that they are still very much his own, even in an Americanized world, and that more than elsewhere they press him to intimate communion with his honor. For that honor, the honor that sits astride of the consecrated English tradition, to his mind, quite as old knighthood astride of its caparisoned charger, the dragon most rousing, over the land, the proper spirit of St. George, is just this immensity of the alien presence climbing higher and higher, climbing itself into the very light of publicity.

I scarce know why, but I saw it that evening as in some dim dawn of that promise to its own consciousness, and perhaps this was precisely what made it a little exasperating. Under the impression of the mere mob the question doesn't come up, but in

these haunts of comparative civility we saw the mob sifted and strained, and the exasperation was the sharper, no doubt, because what the process had left most visible was just the various possibilities of the waiting spring of intelligence. Such elements constituted the germ of a "public," and it was impossible (possessed of a sensibility worth speaking of) to be exposed to them without feeling how new a thing under the sun the resulting public would be. That was where one's "lettered" anguish came in—in the turn of one's eye from face to face for some betrayal of a prehensile hook for the linguistic tradition as one had known it. Each warm lighted and supplied circle, each group of served tables and smoked pipes and fostered decencies and unprecedented accents, beneath the extravagant lamps, took on thus, for the brooding critic, a likeness to that terrible modernized and civilized room in the Tower of London, haunted by the shade of Guy Fawkes, which had more than once formed part of the scene of the critic's taking tea there. In this chamber of the present urbanities the wretched man had been stretched on the rack, and the critic's ear (how else should it have been a critic's?) could still always catch, in pauses of talk, the faint groan of his ghost. Just so the East-side cafés—and increasingly as their place in the scale was higher—showed, to my inner sense, beneath their bedizzenment, as torture-rooms of the living idiom; the piteous gasp of which at the portent of lacerations to come could reach me in any drop of the surrounding Accent of the Future. The accent of the very ultimate future, in the States, may be destined to become the most beautiful on the globe and the very music of humanity (here the "ethnic" synthesis shrouds itself thicker than ever); but whatever we shall know it for, certainly, we shall not know it for English—in any sense for which there is an existing literary measure.

IV.

The huge jagged city, it must be nevertheless said, has always at the worst, for propitiation, the resource of its easy reference to its almost incomparable river. New York may indeed be jagged, in her long leanness, where she lies looking at the sky in the manner of some colossal hair-comb turned upward and so deprived of half its teeth that the others, at their uneven intervals, count doubly as sharp spikes; but, unmistakably, you can bear with some of her aspects and her airs better when you have

really taken in that reference, which I speak of as easy because she has in this latter time begun to make it with an appearance of some intention. She has come at last, far up on the West side, into possession of her birthright, into the roused consciousness that some possibility of a river-front may still remain to her; though, obviously, a justified pride in this property has yet to await the birth of a more responsible sense of style in her dealings with it, the dawn of some adequate plan or controlling idea. Splendid the elements of position, on the part of the new Riverside Drive (over the small suburbanizing name of which, as at the effect of a second-rate shop-worn article, we sigh as we pass); yet not less irresistible the pang of our seeing it settle itself on meagre, bourgeois, happy-go-lucky lines. The pity of this is sharp in proportion as the "chance" has been magnificent, and the soreness of perception of what merely might have been is as constant as the flippancy of the little vulgar "private houses" or the big vulgar "apartment hotels" that are having their own way, so unchallenged, with the whole question of composition and picture. The fatal "tall" pecuniary enterprise rises where it will, in the candid glee of new worlds to conquer; the intervals between take whatever foolish little form they like; the sky-line, eternal victim of the artless jumble, submits again to the type of the broken hair-comb turned up; the streets that abut from the East condescend at their corners to any crudity or poverty that may suit their convenience. And all this in presence of an occasion for noble congruity such as one scarce knows where to seek in the case of another great city.

A sense of the waste of criticism, however, a sense that is almost in itself consoling, descends upon the fond critic after his vision has fixed the scene awhile in this light of its lost accessibility to some informed and benevolent despot, some power working in one great way and so that the interest of beauty should have been better saved. Is not criticism wasted, in other words, just by the reason of the constant remembrance, on New York soil, that one is almost impudently cheated by any part of the show that pretends to prolong its actuality or to rest on its present basis? Since every part, however blazingly new, fails to affect us as doing more than hold the ground for something else, some conceit of the bigger dividend, that is still to come, so we may bind up the æsthetic wound, I think, quite as promptly as we

feel it open. The particular ugliness, or combination of uglinesses, is no more final than the particular felicity (since there are several even of these up and down the town to be noted) and whatever crudely-extemporized look the Riverside heights may wear to-day, the spectator of fifty years hence will find his sorrow, if not his joy, in a different extemporization. The whole thing is the vividest of lectures on the subject of individualism, and on the strange truth, no doubt, that this principle may in the field of art—at least if the art be architecture—often conjure away just that mystery of distinction which it sometimes so markedly promotes in the field of life. It is also quite as suggestive perhaps as to the ever-interesting question, for the artist, of the entirely relative nature and value of "treatment." A manner so right in one relation may be so wrong in another, and a house-front so "amusing" for its personal note, or its perversity, in a short perspective, may amid larger elements merely dishonor the harmony. And yet why *should* the charm ever fall out of the "personal," which is so often the very condition of the exquisite? Why should conformity and subordination, that acceptance of control and assent to collectivism in the name of which our age has seen such dreary things done, become on a given occasion the one *not* vulgar way of meeting a problem?

Inquiries these, evidently, that are answerable only in presence of the particular cases provoking them; when indeed they may hold us as under a spell. Endless, for instance, the æsthetic nobleness of such a question as that of the authority with which the spreading Hudson, at the opening of its gates, would have imposed on the constructive powers, if listened to, some proportionate order—would in other words have admirably given us collectivism at its highest. One has only to stand there and *see*—of such value are lessons in "authority." But the great vista of the stream alone speaks of it—save in so far at least as the voice is shared, and to so different, to so dreadful, a tune, by the grossly-defacing railway that clings to the bank. The authority of railways, in the United States, sits enthroned as none other, and has always, of course, in any vision of aspects, to be taken into account. Here, at any rate, it is the rule that has prevailed; the other, the high interest of the possible picture, is one that lapses; so that the cliffs overhang the water, and at various points descend to it in green slopes and hollows (where the landscape-

gardener does what he can), only to find a wealth of visible baseness installed there before them. That so familiar circumstance, in America, of the completion of the good thing ironically and, as would often seem for the time, insuperably baffled, meets here one of its liveliest illustrations. It at all events helps to give meanwhile the mingled pitch of the whole concert that Columbia College (to sound the old and easier name) should have "moved up"—moved up twice, if I am not mistaken—to adorn with an ampler presence this very neighborhood. It has taken New York to invent, for the thickening of classic shades, the "moving" University; and does not that quite mark the tune of the dance, of the local unwritten law that forbids almost *any* planted object to gather in a history where it stands, forbids in fact any accumulation that may not be recorded in the mere bank-book? This last became long ago *the* historic page.

It is, however, just because the beauty of the Hudson seems to speak of other matters, and because the sordid city has the honor, after all, of sitting there at the Beautiful Gate, that I alluded above to her profiting in a manner, even from the point of view of "taste," by this close and fortunate connection. The place puts on thus, not a little, the likeness of a large loose family which has had queer adventures and fallen into vulgar ways, but for which a glorious cousinship, never quite repudiated by the indifferent princely cousin—*bon prince* in this as in other matters—may still be pleaded. At the rate New York is growing, in fine, she will more and more "command," in familiar intercourse, the great perspective of the River; so that here, a certain point reached, her whole case must change and her general opportunity, swallowing up the mainland, become a new question altogether. Let me hasten to add that in the light of this opportunity even the most restless analyst can but take the hopeful view of her. I fear I am finding too many personal comparisons for her—than which indeed there can be no greater sign of a confessed preoccupation; but she figures, once again, as an heir whose expectations are so vast and so certain that no temporary sowing of wild oats need be felt to endanger them. As soon as the place begins to spread at ease, real responsibility, of all sorts, will begin, and the good-natured feeling must surely be that the civic conscience in her, at such a stage, will fall into step. Of the spreading woods and waters amid which the future

in question appears still half to lurk, that mainland region of the Bronx, vast above all in possibilities of Park, out of which it already appears half to emerge, I unluckily failed of occasion to take the adequate measure. But my confused impression was of a kind of waiting abundance, an extraordinary quantity of "nature," for the reformed rake, that is the sobered heir, to play with. It is the fashion, in the East, to speak of New York as poor of environment, unpossessed of the agreeable, accessible countryside that crowns the convenience not only of London and of Paris, but even, with more humiliating promptitude, that of Boston, of Philadelphia, of Baltimore. In spite, however, of the memory, from far back, of a hundred marginal Manhattanese miseries, an immediate belt of the most sordid character, I cannot but think of this invidious legend as attempting to prove too much.

The countryside is there on the most liberal of scales—it is the townside, only, that, having the great waters, and the greater distances generally, to deal with, has worn so rude and demoralized a face as to frighten the country away. And if the townside is now making after the countryside fast, as I say, and with a little less of the mere roughness of the satyr pursuing the nymph, what finer warrant could be desired than such felicities of position as those enjoyed, on the Riverside heights, by the monument erected to the soldiers and sailors of the Civil War and, even in a greater degree, by the tomb of General Grant? These are verily monumental sites of the first order, and I confess, that, though introduced to them on a bleak winter morning, with no ingratiation in any element, I felt the critical question, as to the structures themselves, as to taste or intention, as to the amount of involved or achieved consecration or profanation, carried off in the general greatness of the effect. I shall in fact always remember that icy hour, with the temple-crowned headlands, the wide Hudson vista white with the cold, all nature armor-plated and grim, as an extraordinarily strong and simple composition; made stern and kept simple as for some visit of the God of Battles to his chosen. He might have been riding there, on the northwind, to look down at them, and one caught, for the moment, the true hard light in which military greatness should be seen. It shone over the miles of ice with its lustre of steel, and if what, thus attested, it makes one think of was its incom-

parable, indestructible "prestige," so that association affected me both then and on a later occasion as with a strange indefinable consequence—an influence in which the æsthetic consideration, the artistic value of either memorial, melted away and became irrelevant. For here, if ever, was a great democratic demonstration caught in the fact, the nakedest possible effort to strike the note of the august. The tomb of the single hero, in particular, presents itself in a manner so opposed to our common ideas of the impressive, to any past vision of sepulchral state, that we can only wonder if a new kind and degree of solemnity may not have been arrived at in this complete rupture with old consecrating forms.

The tabernacle of Grant's ashes stands there by the pleasure-drive unguarded and unenclosed, the feature of the prospect and the property of the people, as open as an hotel or a railway-station to any coming and going, and as dedicated to the public use as builded things in America (when not mere closed churches) only can be. Unmistakable its air of having had, all consciously, from the first, to raise its head and play its part without pomp and circumstance to "back" it, without mystery or ceremony to protect it, without Church or State to intervene on its behalf, with only its immediacy, its familiarity of interest, to circle it about, and only its proud outlook to preserve, so far as possible, its character. The tomb of Napoleon at the Invalides is a great national property, and the play of democratic manners sufficiently surrounds it; but as compared to the small pavilion on the Riverside bluff it is a holy of holies, a great temple jealously guarded and formally approached. And yet one doesn't conclude, strange to say, that the Riverside pavilion fails of its expression a whit more than the Paris dome; one perhaps even feels it triumph by its use of its want of reserve as a very last word. The admonition of all of which possibly is—I confess I but grope for it—that, when there has been in such cases a certain other happy combination, an original sincerity of intention, an original propriety of site, and above all an original high value of name and fame, something in this line really supreme, publicity, familiarity, immediacy, as I have called them, *carried far enough,* may stalk in and out of the shrine with their hands in their pockets and their hats on their heads and yet not dispel the Presence. The question at any rate puts itself—as new ques-

tions, in America, are always putting themselves: Do certain impressions there represent the absolute extinction of old sensibilities, or do they represent only new forms of them? The inquiry would be doubtless easier to answer if so many of these feelings were not mainly known to us just *by* their attendant forms. At this rate, or on such a showing, in the United States, attendant forms being, in every quarter, remarkably scarce, it would indeed seem that the sentiments implied *are* extinct; for it would be an abuse of ingenuity, I fear, to try to read mere freshness of form into some of the more rank failures of observance. There are failures of observance that stand, at the best, for failures of sense—whereby, however, the question grows too great. One must leave the tomb of Grant to its conditions and its future with the simple note for it that, if it be not in fact one of the most effective of commemorations, it is one of the most missed. On the whole, I distinctly "liked" it.

V.

It is still vivid to me that, returning in the spring-time from a few weeks in the Far West, I reentered New York State with the absurdest sense of meeting again a ripe old civilization and travelling through a country that showed the mark of established manners. It will seem, I fear, one's perpetual refrain, but the moral was yet once more that values of a certain order are, in such conditions, all relative, and that, as some wants of the spirit *must* somehow be met, one knocks together any substitute that will fairly stay the appetite. We had passed great smoky Buffalo in the raw vernal dawn—with a vision, for me, of curiosity, character, charm, whatever it might be, too needfully sacrificed, opportunity perhaps forever missed, yet at the same time a vision in which the lost object failed to mock at me with the last concentration of shape; and history, as we moved Eastward, appeared to meet us, in the look of the land, in its more overwrought surface and thicker detail, quite as if she had ever consciously declined to cross the border and were aware, precisely, of the queer feast we should find in her. The recognition, I profess, was a preposterous ecstasy: one couldn't have felt more if one had passed into the presence of some seated, placid, rich-voiced gentlewoman, after leaving that of an honest but boisterous hoyden. It was doubtless a matter only of degrees and shades,

but never was such a pointing of the lesson that a sign of any sort may count double if it be but artfully placed. I spent that day, literally, in the company of the rich-voiced gentlewoman, making my profit of it even in spite of a second privation, the doom I was under of having only, all wistfully, all ruefully, to avert my lips from the quaint silver bowl, as I here quite definitely figured it, in which she offered me the entertainment of antique Albany. At antique Albany, to a certainty, the mature matron involved in my metaphor would have put on a particular grace, and as our train crossed the river for further progress I almost seemed to see her stand at some gable-window of Dutch association, one of the two or three impressed there on my infantile imagination, to ask me why then I had come so far at all.

I could have replied but in troubled tones, and I looked at the rest of the scene for some time, no doubt, as through the glaze of all but filial tears. Thus it was, possibly, that I saw the River shine, from that moment on, as a great romantic stream, such as could throw not a little of its glamour, for the mood of that particular hour, over the city at its mouth. I had not even known, in my untravelled state, that we were to "strike" it on our way from Chicago, so that it represented, all that afternoon, so much beauty thrown in, so much benefit beyond the bargain, the so hard bargain, for the traveller, of the American railway journey at its best. That ordeal was in any case at its best here, and the perpetually-interesting river kept its course, by my right elbow, with such splendid consistency that, as I recall the impression, I repent as little of having just now reflected with acrimony on the cost of the obtruded fact of the railroad to the Riverside view. One must, of course, choose between dispensing with the ugly presence and enjoying the scenery by the aid of the same—which but means, really, that to use the train at all had been to put one's self, for any proper justice to the scenery, in a false position. That, however, takes us too far back, and one can only save one's dignity by laying all such blames on our detestable age. A decent respect for the Hudson would confine us to the use of the boat—all the more that American river-steamers have had, from the earliest time, for the true *raffiné*, their peculiar note of romance. A possible commerce, on the other hand, with one's time—which is always also the time of so many other busy people—has long since made mince-meat of the rights of contemplation;

rights as reduced, in the United States, to-day, and by quite the same argument, as those of the noble savage whom we have banished to his narrowing reservation. Letting that pass, at all events, I still remember that I was able to put, from the car-window, as many questions to the scene as it could have answered in the time even had its face been clearer to read.

Its face was veiled, for the most part, in a mist of premature spring heat, an atmosphere draping it indeed in luminous mystery, hanging it about with sun-shot silver and minimizing any happy detail, any element of the definite, from which the romantic effect might here and there have gained an accent. There was not an accent in the picture from the beginning of the run to Albany to the end—for which thank goodness, one is tempted to say, on remembering how often, over the land in general, the accents are wrong. Yet if the romantic effect as we know it elsewhere mostly depends on them, why *should* that glamour have so shimmered before me in their absence?—how should the picture have managed to be a constant combination of felicities? Was it just *because* the felicities were all vaguenesses, and the "beauties," even the most celebrated, all blurs—was it perchance on that very account that I could meet my wonder, so promptly, with the inference that what I had in my eyes on so magnificent a scale was simply, was famously, "style"? I was landed by that conclusion in the odd further proposition that style could then exist without accents—a quandary soon after to be quenched, however, in the mere blinding radiance of a visit to West Point. I was to make that memorable pilgrimage a fortnight later—and I was to find my question, when it in fact took place, shivered by it to mere silver atoms. The very powers of the air seemed to have taken the case in hand and positively to have been interested in making it transcend all argument. Our Sunday of mid-May, wet and windy, let loose, over the vast stage, the whole procession of storm-effects; the raw green of wooded heights and hollows was only everywhere rain-brightened, the weather playing over it all day as with some great gray water-color brush. The essential character of West Point and its native nobleness of position can have been but intensified, I think, by this artful process; yet what was mainly unmistakable was the fact again of the suppression of detail as in the positive interest of the grand style. One has therefore only to take detail as another name

for accent, the accent that might prove compromising, in order to see it made good that style *could* do without them, and that the grand style in fact almost always must. How on this occasion the trick was played is more than I shall attempt to say; it is enough to have been conscious of our being, from hour to hour, literally bathed in that high element, with the very face of nature washed, so to speak, the more clearly to express and utter it.

Such accordingly is the strong silver light, all simplifying and ennobling, in which I see the place—see it as a cluster of high promontories, of the last classic elegance, overhanging vast receding reaches of river, mountain-guarded and dim, which took their place in the geography of the ideal, in the long perspective of the poetry of association, rather than in those of the State of New York. It was as if the genius of the scene had said: "No, you *sha'n't* have accent, because accent is, at the best, local and special, and might here by some perversity—how do I know, after all?—interfere. I want you to have something unforgettable, and therefore you shall have *type*—yes, absolutely have type, and even tone, without accent; an impossibility, you may hitherto have supposed, but which you have only to look about you now really to see expressed. And type and tone of the very finest and rarest; type and tone good enough for Claude or Turner, if they could have walked by these rivers instead of by their thin rivers of France and Italy; type and tone, in short, that gather in shy detail under wings as wide as those with which a motherly hen covers her endangered brood. So there you are—deprived of all 'accent' as a peg for criticism, and reduced thereby, you see, to asking me no more questions." I was able so to take home, I may add, this formula of the matter, that even the interesting facts of the School of the Soldier which have carried the name of the place about the world almost put on the shyness, the air of conscious evasion and escape, noted in the above allocution—scarce struck me as occupying the foreground of the picture. It was part of the play again, no doubt, of the gray water-color brush: there was to be no consent of the elements, that day, to anything but a generalized elegance—in which effect, certainly, the clustered, the scattered Academy played, on its high green stage, its part. But, of all things in the world, it massed, to my vision, more mildly than I had some-

how expected; and I take that for a feature, precisely, of the pure poetry of the impression. It lurked there with grace, it insisted without swagger—and I could have hailed it just for this reason indeed as a presence of the last distinction. It is doubtless too much to say, in fine, that the Institution, at West Point, "suffers," comparatively for vulgar individual emphasis, from the overwhelming liberality of its setting—and I perhaps chanced to see it in the very conditions that most invest it with poetry. The fact remains that, both as to essence and as to quantity, its prose seemed washed away, and I shall recall it in future much less as the sternest, the world over, of all the seats of Discipline, than as some great Corot-composition of young, vague, wandering figures in splendidly-classic shades.

VI.

I make that point, for what it is worth, only to remind myself of another occasion on which the romantic note sounded for me with the last intensity, and yet on which the picture swarmed with accents—as, absent or present, I must again call them—that contributed alike to its interest and to its dignity. The proof was complete, on this second Sunday, with the glow of early summer already in possession, that affirmed detail was not always affirmed infelicity—since the scene here bristled with detail (and detail of the importance that frankly *constitutes* accent) only to the enhancement of its charm. It was a matter once more of hanging over the Hudson on the side opposite West Point, but further down; the situation was founded, as at West Point, on the presence of the great stream and on the consequent general lift of foreground and distance alike, and yet infinitely sweet was the perception that style, in such conditions and for the success of such effects, had not really to depend on mere kind vaguenesses, on any anxious deprecation of distinctness. There was no vagueness now; a wealth of distinctness, in the splendid light, met the eyes—but with the very result of showing them how happily it could play. What it came back to was that the accents, in the delightful old pillared and porticoed house that crowned the cliff and commanded the stream were as right as they were numerous; so that there immediately followed again on this observation a lively recognition of the ground of the rightness. To wonder what this was could be but to see, straight-

way, that, though many reasons had worked together for them, mere time had done more than all, that beneficence of time enjoying in general, in the United States, so little even of the chance that so admirably justifies itself, for the most part, when interference happens to have spared it. Cases of this rare mercy yet exist, as I have occasion to note, and their consequent appeal to the touched sense within us comes, as I have also hinted, with a force out of all proportion, comes with a kind of accepted insolence of authority. The things that have lasted, in short, whatever they may be, "succeed" as no newness, try as it will, succeeds, inasmuch as their success is a produced interest.

There we catch the golden truth which so much of the American world strikes us as positively organized to gainsay, the truth that production takes time, and that the production of interest, in particular, takes *most* time. Desperate again and again the ingenuity of the offered, the obtruded substitute, and pathetic in many a case its confessed failure; this remark being meanwhile relevant to the fact that my charming old historic house of the golden Sunday put me off, among its great trees, its goodly gardens, its acquired signs and gathered memories, with no substitute whatever, even the most specious, but just paid cash down, so to speak, ripe ringing gold, over the counter; for all the attention it invited. It had character, as one might say, and character is scarce less precious on the part of the homes of men in a raw medium than on the part of responsible persons at a difficult crisis. This virtue was there within and without and on every face; but perhaps nowhere so present, I thought, as in the ideal refuge for summer days formed by the wide north porch, if porch that disposition may be called—happiest disposition of the old American countryhouse—which sets tall columns in a row under a pediment suitably severe, to present them as the "making" of a high, deep gallery. I know not what dignity of old afternoons suffused, with what languor, seems to me always, under the murmur of American trees and by the lap of American streams, to abide in these mild shades; there are combinations with depths of congruity beyond the plummet, it would seem, even of the most restless of analysts, and rather than try to say why my whole impression here melted into the general iridescence of a past of Indian summers hanging about mild ghosts half asleep, in hammocks, over still milder novels, I would renounce alto-

gether the art of refining. For the iridescence consists, in this connection, of a shimmer of association that still more refuses to be reduced to terms; some sense of legend, of aboriginal mystery, with a still earlier past for its dim background and the insistent idea of the River as above all romantic for its warrant. Helplessly analyzed, perhaps, this amounts to no more than the very childish experience of a galleried house or two round about which the views and the trees and the peaches and the pony seemed prodigious, and to the remembrance of which the wonder of Rip Van Winkle and that of the "Hudson River School" of landscape art were, a little later on, to contribute their glamour.

If Rip Van Winkle had been really at the bottom of it all, nothing could have furthered the whole case more, on the occasion I speak of, than the happy nearness of the home of Washington Irving, the impression of which I was thus able, in the course of an hour, to work in—with the effect of intensifying more than I can say the old-time charm and the general legendary fusion. These are beautiful, delicate, modest matters, and how can one touch them with a light enough hand? how can I give the comparatively coarse reasons for my finding at Sunnyside, which contrives, by some grace of its own, to be at once all ensconced and embowered in relation to the world and all frank and uplifted in relation to the River, a perfect treasure of mild moralities? The highway, the old State road to Albany, bristling now with the cloud-compelling motor, passes at the head of a deep, long lane, winding, embanked, overarched, such an old-world lane as one scarce ever meets in America; but if you embrace this chance to plunge away to the left you come out, for your reward, into the quite indefinable air of the little American literary past. The place is inevitably, to-day, but a qualified Sleepy Hollow—the Sleepy Hollow of the author's charming imagination was, as I take it, off somewhere in the hills, or in some dreamland of old autumns, happily unprofanable now; for "modernity," with its terrible power of working its will, of abounding in its sense, of gilding its toy, modernity, with its pockets full of money and its conscience full of virtue, its heart really full of tenderness, has seated itself there under pretext of guarding the shrine. What has happened, in a word, is very much what has happened in the case of other shy retreats of anchorites doomed to celebrity—the primitive cell has seen itself encompassed, in

time, by a temple of many chambers, all dedicated to the history of the hermit. The cell is still there at Sunnyside, and there is even yet so much charm that one doesn't attempt to say where the parts of it, all kept together in a rich conciliatory way, begin or end—though, indeed, I hasten to add, the identity of the original modest house, the shrine within the gilded shell, has been religiously preserved.

One has, in fact, I think, no quarrel whatever with the amplified state of the place, for it is the manner and the effect of this amplification that enable us to read into the scene its very most interesting message. The "little" American literary past, I just now said—using that word (whatever the real size of the subject) because the caressing diminutive, at Sunnyside, is what rises of itself to the lips; the small uncommodious study, the limited library, the "dear" old portrait-prints of the first half of the century—very dear to-day when properly signed and properly sallow; these things, with the beauty of the site, with the sense that the man of letters of the unimproved age, the age of processes still comparatively slow, could have wanted no deeper, softer dell for mulling material over, represent the conditions that encounter now on the spot the sharp reflection of our own increase of arrangement and loss of leisure. This is the admirable interest of the exhibition of which Wolfert's Roost had been, a hundred years before the date of Irving's purchase, the rudimentary principle—that it throws the facts of our earlier "intellectual activity" into a vague golden perspective, a haze as of some unbroken spell of the same Indian summer I a moment ago had occasion to help myself out with; a fond appearance than which nothing could minister more to envy. If we envy the spinners of prose and tellers of tales to whom our American air anciently either administered or refused sustenance, this is all, and quite the best thing, it would seem, that we need do for them: it exhausts, or rather it forestalls, the futilities of discrimination. Strictly critical, mooning about Wolfert's Roost of a summer Sunday, I defy even the hungriest of analysts to be: his predecessors, the whole connected company, profit so there, to his rueful vision, by the splendor of their possession of better conditions than his. It has taken *our* ugly era to thrust in the railroad at the foot of the slope, among the masking trees; the railroad that is part, exactly, of the pomp and circumstance, the

quickened pace, the heightened fever, the narrowed margin expressed within the very frame of the present picture, as I say, and all in the perfect good faith of collateral piety. I had hoped not to have to name the railroad—it seems so to give away my case. There was no railroad, however, till long after Irving's settlement—he survived the railroad but by a few years, and my case is simply that, disengaging *his* Sunnyside from its beautiful extensions and arriving thus at the sense of his easy elements, easy for everything but rushing about and being rushed at, the sense of his "command" of the admirable river and the admirable country, his command of all the mildness of his life, of his pleasant powers and his ample hours, of his friends and his contemporaries and his fame and his honor and his temper and, above all, of his delightful fund of reminiscence and material, I seemed to hear, in the summer sounds and in the very urbanity of my entertainers, the last faint echo of a felicity forever gone. That is the true voice of such places, and not the imputed challenge to the chronicler or the critic.

HENRY JAMES.