The Special Type

Henry James

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I note it as a wonderful case of its kind — the finest of all perhaps, in fact, that I have ever chanced to encounter. The kind, moreover, is the greatest kind, the roll recruited, for our high esteem and emulation, from history and fiction, legend and song. In the way of service and sacrifice for love I've really known nothing go beyond it. However, you can judge. My own sense of it happens just now to be remarkably rounded off by the sequel — more or less looked for on her part — of the legal step taken by Mrs Brivet. I hear from America that, a decent interval being held to have elapsed since her gain of her divorce, she is about to marry again — an event that will, it would seem, put an end to any question of the disclosure of the real story. It's this that's the real story, or will be, with nothing wanting, as soon as I shall have heard that her husband (who, on his side, has only been waiting for her to move first) has sanctified his union with Mrs Cavenham.

1

She was, of course, often in and out, Mrs Cavenham, three years ago, when I was painting her portrait; and the more so that I found her, I remember, one of those comparatively rare sitters who present themselves at odd hours, turn up without an appointment. The thing is to get most women to keep those they do make; but she used to pop in, as she called it, on the chance, letting me know that if I had a moment free she was quite at my service. When I hadn't the moment free she liked to stay to chatter, and she more than once expressed to me, I recollect, her theory that an artist really, for the time, could never see too much of his model. I must have shown her rather frankly that I understood her as meaning that a model could never see too much of her artist. I understood in fact everything, and especially that she was, in Brivet's absence, so unoccupied and restless that she didn't know what to do with herself. I was conscious in short that it was he who would pay for the picture, and that gives, I think, the measure of my enlightenment. If I took such pains and bore so with her folly, it was fundamentally for Brivet.

I was often at that time, as I had often been before, occupied — for various 'subjects' — with Mrs Dundene, in connection with which a certain occasion comes back to me as the first slide in the lantern. If I had invented my story I couldn't have made it begin better than with Mrs Cavenham's irruption during the presence one morning of that lady. My door, by some chance, had been unguarded, and she was upon us without a warning. This was the sort of thing my model hated — the one, I mean, who, after all, sat mainly to oblige; but I remember how well she behaved. She was not dressed for company, though indeed a dress was never strictly necessary to her best effect. I recall that I had a moment of uncertainty, but I must have dropped the name of each for the other, as it was Mrs Cavenham's line always, later on, that I had made them acquainted; and inevitably, though I wished her not to stay and got rid of her as soon as possible, the two women, of such different places in the scale, but of such almost equal beauty, were face to face for some minutes, of which I was not even at the moment unaware that they made an extraordinary use for mutual inspection. It was sufficient; they from that instant knew each other.

"Isn't she lovely?" I remember asking — and quite without the spirit of mischief — when I came back from restoring my visitor to her cab.

"Yes, awfully pretty. But I hate her."

"Oh," I laughed, "she's not so bad as that."

"Not so handsome as I, you mean?" And my sitter protested. "It isn't fair of you to speak as if I were one of those who can't bear even at the worst — or the best — another woman's looks. I should hate her even if she were ugly."

"But what have you to do with her?"

She hesitated; then with characteristic looseness: "What have I to do with anyone?"

"Well, there's no one else I know of that you do hate."

"That shows," she replied, "how good a reason there must be, even if I don't know it yet."

She knew it in the course of time, but I have never seen a reason, I must say, operate so little for relief. As a history of the hatred of Alice Dundene my anecdote becomes wondrous indeed. Meanwhile, at any rate, I had Mrs Cavenham again with me for her regular sitting, and quite as curious as I had expected her to be about the person of the previous time.

"Do you mean she isn't, so to speak, a lady?" she asked after I had, for reasons of my own, fenced a little. "Then if she's not 'professional' either, what is she?"

"Well," I returned as I got at work, "she escapes, to my mind, any classification save as one of the most beautiful and good−natured of women."

"I see her beauty," Mrs Cavenham said. "It's immense. Do you mean that her good−nature's as great?"

I had to think a little. "On the whole, yes.

"Then I understand. That represents a greater quantity than *I* , I think, should ever have occasion for."

"Oh, the great thing's to be sure to have enough," I growled.

But she laughed it off. "Enough, certainly, is as good as a feast!"

It was — I forget how long, some months — after this that Frank Brivet, whom I had not seen for two years,

knocked again at my door. I didn't at all object to him at my other work as I did to Mrs Cavenham, but it was not till he had been in and out several times that Alice — which is what most people still really call her — chanced to see him and received in such an extraordinary way the impression that was to be of such advantage to him. She had been obliged to leave me that day before he went — though he stayed but a few minutes later; and it was not till the next time we were alone together that I was struck with her sudden interest, which became frankly pressing. I had met her, to begin with, expansively enough.

"An American? But what *sort* — don't you know? There are so many."

I didn't mean it as an offence, but in the matter of men, and though her acquaintance with them is so large, I always simplify with her. "*The* sort. He's rich."

"And how rich?"

"Why, *as* an American. Disgustingly."

I told her on this occasion more about him, but it was on that fact, I remember, that, after a short silence, she brought out with a sigh: "Well, I'm sorry. I should have liked to love him for himself"

2

Quite apart from having been at school with him, I'm conscious — though at times he so puts me out — that I've a taste for Frank Brivet. I'm quite aware, by the same token — and even if when a man's so rich it's difficult to tell — that he's not everyone's affinity. I was struck, at all events, from the first of the affair, with the way he clung to me and seemed inclined to haunt my studio. He's fond of art, though he has some awful pictures, and more or less understands mine; but it wasn't this that brought him. Accustomed as I was to notice what his wealth everywhere does for him, I was rather struck with his being so much thrown upon me and not giving London — the big fish that rises so to the hook baited with gold — more of a chance to perform to him. I very soon, however, understood. He had his reasons for wishing not to be seen much with Mrs Cavenham, and, as he was in love with her, felt the want of some machinery for keeping temporarily away from her. I was his machinery, and, when once I perceived this, was willing enough to turn his wheel. His situation, moreover, became interesting from the moment I fairly grasped it, which he soon enabled me to do. His old reserve on the subject of Mrs Brivet went to the winds, and it's not my fault if I let him see how little I was shocked by his confidence. His marriage had originally seemed to me to require much more explanation than anyone could give, and indeed in the matter of women in general, I confess, I've never seized his point of view. His inclinations are strange, and strange, too, perhaps, his indifferences. Still, I can enter into some of his aversions, and I agreed with him that his wife was odious.

"She has hitherto, since we began practically to live apart," he said, "mortally hated the idea of doing anything so pleasant for me as to divorce me. But I've reason to believe she has now changed her mind. She'd like to get clear."

I waited a moment. "For a man?"

"Oh, such a jolly good one! Remson Sturch."

I wondered. "Do you call *him* good?"

"Good for *her*. If she only can be got to be — which it oughtn't to be difficult to make her — fool enough to marry him, he'll give her the real size of his foot, and I shall be avenged in a manner positively ideal."

"Then will she institute proceedings?"

"She can't, as things stand. She has nothing to go upon. I've been," said poor Brivet, "I positively have, so blameless." I thought of Mrs Cavenham, and, though I said nothing, he went on after an instant as if he knew it. "They can't put a finger. I've been so d—d particular."

I hesitated. "And your idea is now not to be particular any more?"

"Oh, about *her*," he eagerly replied, "always!" On which I laughed out and he coloured. "But my idea is nevertheless, at present," he went on, "to pave the way; that is, I mean, if I can keep the person you're thinking of so totally out of it that not a breath in the whole business can possibly touch her."

"I see," I reflected. "She isn't willing?"

He stared. "To be compromised? Why the devil *should* she be?"

"Why shouldn't she — for *you?* Doesn't she love you?"

"Yes, and it's because she does, dearly, that I don't feel the right way to repay her is by spattering her over."

"Yet if she stands," I argued, "straight in the splash—!"

"She doesn't!" he interrupted me, with some curtness. "She stands a thousand miles out of it; she stands on a pinnacle; she stands as she stands in your charming portrait — lovely, lonely, untouched. And so she must remain."

"It's beautiful, it's doubtless inevitable," I returned after a little, "that you should feel so. Only, if your wife doesn't divorce you for a woman you love, I don't quite see how she can do it for the woman you don't."

"Nothing is more simple," he declared; on which I saw he had figured it out rather more than I thought. "It will he quite enough if she *believes* I love her."

"If the lady in question does — or Mrs Brivet?"

"Mrs Brivet — confound her! If she believes I love somebody else. I must have the appearance, and the

appearance must of course be complete. All I've got to do is to take up—"

"To take up—?" I asked, as he paused.

"Well, publicly, with someone or other; someone who could easily be squared. One would undertake, after all, to produce the impression."

"On your wife naturally, you mean?"

"On my wife, and on the person concerned."

I turned it over and did justice to his ingenuity. "But what impression would you undertake to produce on—?"

"Well?" he inquired as I just faltered.

"On the person *not* concerned. How would the lady you just accused me of having in mind be affected toward such a proceeding?"

He had to think a little, but he thought with success. "Oh, I'd answer for her."

"To the other lady?" I laughed.

He remained quite grave. "To myself. She'd leave us alone. As it would be for her good, she'd understand."

I was sorry for him, but he struck me as artless. "Understand, in that interest, the 'spattering' of another person?"

He coloured again, but he was sturdy. "It must of course be exactly the right person — a special type. Someone who, in the first place," he explained, "wouldn't mind, and of whom, in the second, she wouldn't be jealous."

I followed perfectly, but it struck me as important all round that we should be clear. "But wouldn't the danger be great that any woman who shouldn't have that effect — the effect of jealousy — upon her wouldn't have it either on your wife?"

"Ah," he acutely returned, "my wife wouldn't he warned. She wouldn't be 'in the know'."

"I see." I quite caught up. "The two other ladies distinctly would."

But he seemed for an instant at a loss. "Wouldn't it be indispensable only as regards one?"

"Then the other would he simply sacrificed?"

"She would be," Brivet splendidly put it, "remunerated."

I was pleased even with the sense of financial power betrayed by the way he said it, and I at any rate so took the measure of his intention of generosity and his characteristically big view of the matter that this quickly suggested to me what at least might be his exposure. "But suppose that, in spite of 'remuneration', this secondary personage should perversely like you? She would have to be indeed, as you say, a special type, but even special types may have general feelings. Suppose she should like you too much."

It had pulled him up a little. 'What do you mean by 'too much'?"

"Well, more than enough to leave the case quite as simple as you'd require it."

"Oh, money always simplifies. Besides, I should make a point of being a brute." And on my laughing at this: "I should pay her enough to keep her down, to make her easy. But the thing," he went on with a drop back to the less mitigated real — "the thing, hang it! is first to find her."

"Surely," I concurred; "for she should have to lack, you see, no requirement whatever for plausibility. She must be, for instance, not only 'squareable', but — before anything else even — awfully handsome."

"Oh, 'awfully'!" He could make light of *that*, which was what Mrs Cavenham was.

"It wouldn't do for her, at all events," I maintained, "to be a bit less attractive than—"

"Well, than who?" he broke in, not only with a comic effect of disputing my point, but also as if he knew whom I was thinking of.

Before I could answer him, however, the door opened, and we were interrupted by a visitor — a visitor who, on the spot, in a flash, primed me with a reply. But I had of course for the moment to keep it to myself. 'Than Mrs Dundene!'

3

I had nothing more than that to do with it, but before I could turn round it was done; by which I mean that Brivet, whose previous impression of her had, for some sufficient reason, failed of sharpness, now jumped straight to the perception that here to his hand for the solution of his problem was the missing quantity and the appointed aid. They were in presence on this occasion, for the first time, half an hour, during which he sufficiently showed me that he felt himself to have found the special type. He was certainly to that extent right that nobody could — in those days in particular — without a rapid sense that she was indeed 'special', spend any such time in the company of our extraordinary friend. I couldn't quarrel with his recognising so quickly what I had myself instantly recognised, yet if it did in truth appear almost at a glance that she would, through the particular facts of situation, history, aspect, tone, temper, beautifully 'do', I felt from the first so affected by the business that I desired to wash my hands of it. There was something I wished to say to him before it went further, but after that I cared only to be out of it. I may as well say at once, however, that I never *was* out of it; for a man habitually ridden by the twin demons of imagination and observation is never — enough for his peace — out of anything. But I wanted to be able to apply to either, should anything happen, " 'Thou canst not say *I* did it!'" What might in particular happen was represented by what I said to Brivet the first time he gave me a chance. It was what I had wished before the affair went further, but it had then already gone so far that he had been twice — as he immediately let me know — to see her at home. He clearly desired me to keep up with him, which I was eager to declare impossible; but he came again to see me only after he had called. Then I instantly made my point, which was that she was really, hang it! too good for his fell purpose.

"But, my dear man, my purpose is a sacred one. And if, moreover, she herself doesn't think she's too good—"

"Ah," said I, "she's in love with you, and so it isn't fair."

He wondered. "Fair to *me?*"

"Oh, I don't care a button for you! What I'm thinking of is her risk."

"And what do you mean by her risk?"

"Why, her finding, of course, before you've done with her, that she can't do without you."

He met me as if he had quite thought of that. "Isn't it much more *my* risk?"

"Ah, but you take it deliberately, walk into it with your eyes open. What I want to be sure of, liking her as I do, is that she fully understands."

He had been moving about my place with his hands in his pockets, and at this he stopped short. "How much do you like her?"

"Oh, ten times more than she likes me; so *that* needn't trouble you. Does she understand that it can be only to help somebody else?"

"Why, my dear chap, she's as sharp as a steam−whistle."

"So that she also already knows who the other person is?"

He took a turn again, then brought out, "There's no other person for her but me. Of course, as yet, there are things one doesn't say; I haven't set straight to work to dot all my *i*'s, and the beauty of her, as she's really charming — and would be charming in *any* relation — is just exactly that I don't expect to have to. We'll work it out all right, I think, so that what I most wanted just to make sure of from you was what you've been good enough to tell me. I mean that you don't object — for yourself."

I could with philosophic mirth allay that scruple, but what I couldn't do was to let him see what really most worried me. It stuck, as they say, in my crop that a woman like — yes, when all was said and done — Alice Dundene should simply minister to the convenience of a woman like Rose Cavenham. "But there's one thing more." This was as far as I could go. "I may take from you then that she not only knows it's for your divorce and remarriage, but can fit the shoe on the very person?"

He waited a moment. "Well, you may take from me that I find her no more of a fool than, as I seem to see, many other fellows have found her."

I too was silent a little, but with a superior sense of being able to think it all out further than he. "She's magnificent!"

"Well, so am I!" said Brivet. And for months afterward there was much — in fact everything — in the whole picture to justify his claim. I remember how it struck me as a lively sign of this that Mrs Cavenham, at an early day, gave up her pretty house in Wilton Street and withdrew for a time to America. That was palpable design and diplomacy, but I'm afraid that I quite as much, and doubtless very vulgarly, read into it that she had had money from Brivet to go. I even promised myself, I confess, the entertainment of finally making out that, whether or no the marriage should come off, she would not have been the person to find the episode least lucrative.

She left the others, at all events, completely together, and so, as the plot, with this, might be said definitely to thicken, it came to me in all sorts of ways that the curtain had gone up on the drama. It came to me, I hasten to add, much less from the two actors themselves than from other quarters — the usual sources, which never fail, of chatter; for after my friends' direction was fairly taken they had the good taste on either side to handle it, in talk, with gloves, not to expose it to what I should have called the danger of definition. I even seemed to divine that, allowing for needful preliminaries, they dealt even with each other on this same unformulated plane, and that it well might be that no relation in London at that moment, between a remarkable man and a beautiful woman, had more of the general air of good manners. I saw for a long time, directly, but little of them, for they were naturally much taken up, and Mrs Dundene in particular intermitted, as she had never yet done in any complication of her chequered career, her calls at my studio. As the months went by I couldn't but feel — partly, perhaps, for this very reason — that their undertaking announced itself as likely not to fall short of its aim. I gathered from the voices of the air that nothing whatever was neglected that could make it a success, and just this vision it was that made me privately project wonders into it, caused anxiety and curiosity often again to revisit me, and led me in fine to say to myself that so rich an effect could be arrived at on either side only by a great deal of heroism. As the omens markedly developed I supposed the heroism had likewise done so, and that the march of the matter was logical I inferred from the fact that even though the ordeal, all round, was more protracted than might have been feared, Mrs Cavenham made no fresh appearance. This I took as a sign that she knew she was safe — took indeed as the feature not the least striking of the situation constituted in her interest. I held my tongue, naturally, about her interest, but I watched it from a distance with an attention that, had I been caught in the act, might have led to a mistake about the direction of my sympathy. I had to make it my proper secret that, while I lost as little as possible of what was being done for her, I felt more and more that I myself could never have begun to do it.

4

She came back at last, however, and one of the first things she did on her arrival was to knock at my door and let me know immediately, to smooth the way, that she was there on particular business. I was not to be surprised — though even if I were she shouldn't mind — to hear that she wished to bespeak from me, on the smallest possible delay, a portrait, full−length for preference, of our delightful friend Mr Brivet. She brought this out with a light perfection of assurance of which the first effect — I couldn't help it — was to make me show myself almost too much amused for good manners. She first stared at my laughter, then wonderfully joined in it, looking meanwhile extraordinarily pretty and elegant — more completely handsome in fact, as well as more completely happy, than I had ever yet seen her. She was distinctly the better, I quickly saw, for what was being done for her, and it was an odd spectacle indeed that while, out of her sight and to the exclusion of her very name, the good work went on, it put roses in her cheeks and rings on her fingers and the sense of success in her heart. What had made me laugh, at all events, was the number of other ideas suddenly evoked by her request, two of which, the next moment, had disengaged themselves with particular brightness. She wanted, for all her confidence, to omit no precaution, to close up every issue, and she had acutely conceived that the possession of Brivet's picture — full−length, above all! — would constitute for her the strongest possible appearance of holding his supreme pledge. If that had been her foremost thought her second then had been that if I should paint him he would have to sit, and that in order to sit he would have to return. He had been at this time, as I knew, for many weeks in foreign cities — which helped moreover to explain to me that Mrs Cavenham had thought it compatible with her safety to reopen her London house. Everything accordingly seemed to make for a victory, but there *was* such a thing, her proceeding implied, as one's — at least as *her* — susceptibility and her nerves. This question of his return I of course immediately put to her; on which she immediately answered that it was expressed in her very proposal, inasmuch as this proposal was nothing but the offer that Brivet had himself made her. The thing was to be his gift; she had only, he had assured her, to choose her artist and arrange the time; and she had amiably chosen me — chosen me for the dates, as she called them, immediately before us. I doubtless — but I don't care — give the measure of my native cynicism in confessing that I didn't the least avoid showing her that I saw through her game. "Well, I'll do him," I said, "if he'll come himself and ask me."

She wanted to know, at this, of course, if I impugned her veracity. "You don't believe what I tell you? You're afraid for your money?"

I took it in high good−humour. "For my money not a bit."

"For what then?"

I had to think first how much I could say, which seemed to me, naturally, as yet but little. "I know perfectly that whatever happens Brivet always pays. But let him come; then we'll talk."

"Ah, well," she returned, "you'll see if he doesn't come." And come he did in fact — though without a word from myself directly — at the end of ten days; on which we immediately got to work, an idea highly favourable to it having meanwhile shaped itself in my own breast. Meanwhile too, however, before his arrival, Mrs Cavenham had been again to see me, and this it was precisely, I think, that determined my idea. My present explanation of what afresh passed between us is that she really felt the need to build up her security a little higher by borrowing from my own vision of what had been happening. I had not, she saw, been very near to that, but I had been at least, during her time in America, nearer than she. And I had doubtless somehow 'aggravated' her by appearing to disbelieve in the guarantee she had come in such pride to parade to me. It had in any case befallen that, on the occasion of her second visit, what I least expected or desired — her avowal of being 'in the know' — suddenly went too far to stop. When she did speak she spoke with elation. "Mrs Brivet has filed her petition."

"For getting rid of him?"

"Yes, in order to marry again; which is exactly what he wants her to do. It's wonderful — and, in a manner, I think, quite splendid — the way he has made it easy for her. He has met her wishes handsomely — obliged her in every particular."

As she preferred, subtly enough, to put it all as if it were for the sole benefit of his wife, I was quite ready for

this tone; but I privately defied her to keep it up. "Well, then, he hasn't laboured in vain."

"Oh, it *couldn't* have been in vain. What has happened has been the sort of thing that she couldn't possibly fail to act upon."

"Too great a scandal, eh?"

She but just paused at it. "Nothing neglected, certainly, or omitted. He was not the man to undertake it—"

"And not put it through? No, I should say he wasn't the man. In any case he apparently hasn't been. But he must have found the job—"

"Rather a bore?" she asked as I had hesitated.

"Well, not so much a bore as a delicate matter."

She seemed to demur. "Delicate?"

"Why, your sex likes him so."

"But isn't just that what has made it easy?"

"Easy for *him* — yes," I after a moment admitted.

But it wasn't what she meant. "And not difficult, also, for *them* ."

This was the nearest approach I was to have heard her make, since the day of the meeting of the two women at my studio, to naming Mrs Dundene. She never, to the end of the affair, came any closer to her in speech than by the collective and promiscuous plural pronoun. There might have been a dozen of them, and she took cognizance, in respect to them, only of quantity. It was as if it had been a way of showing how little of anything else she imputed. Quality, as distinguished from quantity, was what *she* had. "Oh, I think," I said, "that we can scarcely speak for them."

"Why not? They must certainly have had the most beautiful time. Operas, theatres, suppers, dinners, diamonds, carriages, journeys hither and yon with him, poor dear, telegrams sent by each from everywhere to everywhere and always lying about, elaborate arrivals and departures at stations for everyone to see, and, in fact, quite a crowd usually collected — as many witnesses as you like. Then," she wound up, "his brougham standing always — half the day and half the night — at their doors. He has had to keep a brougham, and the proper sort of man, just for that alone. In other words unlimited publicity."

"I see. What more can they have wanted? Yes," I pondered, "they like, for the most part, we suppose, a studied, outrageous *affichage* , and they must have thoroughly enjoyed it."

"Ah, but it was only that."

I wondered. "Only what?

"Only *affiché*. Only outrageous. Only the *form* of — well, of what would definitely serve. He never saw them alone."

I wondered — or at least appeared to — still more. "Never?"

"Never. Never once." She had a wonderful air of answering for it. "I know."

I saw that, after all, she really believed she knew, and I had indeed, for that matter, to recognise that I myself believed her knowledge to be sound. Only there went with it a complacency, an enjoyment of having really made me see what could be done for her, so little to my taste that for a minute or two I could scarce trust myself to speak: she looked somehow, as she sat there, so lovely, and yet, in spite of her loveliness — or perhaps even just because of it — so smugly selfish; she put it to me with so small a consciousness of anything but her personal triumph that, while she had kept her skirts clear, her name unuttered and her reputation untouched, 'they' had been in it even more than her success required. It was their skirts, their name and their reputation that, in the proceedings at hand, would bear the brunt. It was only after waiting a while that I could at last say: "You're perfectly sure then of Mrs Brivet's intention?"

"Oh, we've had formal notice."

"And he's himself satisfied of the sufficiency—?"

"Of the sufficiency—?"

"Of what he has done."

She rectified. "Of what he has *appeared* to do."

"That *is* then enough?"

"Enough," she laughed, "to send him to the gallows!" To which I could only reply that all was well that ended

well.

5

All for me, however, as it proved, had not ended yet. Brivet, as I have mentioned, duly reappeared to sit for me, and Mrs Cavenham, on his arrival, as consistently went abroad. He confirmed to me that lady's news of how he had 'fetched', as he called it, his wife — let me know, as decently owing to me after what had passed, on the subject, between us, that the forces set in motion had logically operated; but he made no other allusion to his late accomplice — for I now took for granted the close of the connection — than was conveyed in this intimation. He spoke — and the effect was almost droll — as if he had had, since our previous meeting, a busy and responsible year and wound up an affair (as he was accustomed to wind up affairs) involving a mass of detail; he even dropped into occasional reminiscence of what he had seen and enjoyed and disliked during a recent period of rather far−reaching adventure; but he stopped just as short as Mrs Cavenham had done — and, indeed, much shorter than she — of introducing Mrs Dundene by name into our talk. And what was singular in this, I soon saw, was — apart from a general discretion — that he abstained not at all because his mind was troubled, but just because, on the contrary, it was so much at ease. It was perhaps even more singular still, meanwhile, that, though I had scarce been able to bear Mrs Cavenham's manner in this particular, I found I could put up perfectly with that of her friend. She had annoyed me, but he didn't — I give the inconsistency for what it is worth. The obvious state of his conscience had always been a strong point in him and one that exactly irritated some people as much as it charmed others; so that if, in general, it was positively, and in fact quite aggressively approving, this monitor, it had never held its head so high as at the juncture of which I speak. I took all this in with eagerness, for I saw how it would play into my work. Seeking as I always do, instinctively, to represent sitters in the light of the thing, whatever it may be, that facially, least wittingly or responsibly, gives the pitch of their aspect, I felt immediately that I should have the clue for making a capital thing of Brivet were I to succeed in showing him in just this freshness of his cheer. His cheer was that of his being able to say to himself that he had got all he wanted precisely *as* he wanted: without having harmed a fly. He had arrived so neatly where most men arrive besmirched, and what he seemed to cry out as he stood before my canvas — wishing everyone well all round — was: "See how clever and pleasant and practicable, how jolly and lucky and rich I've been!" I determined, at all events, that I would make some such characteristic words as these cross, at any cost, the footlights, as it were, of my frame.

Well, I can't but feel to this hour that I really hit my nail — that the man *is* fairly painted in the light and that the work remains as yet my high−water mark. He himself was delighted with it — and all the more, I think, that before it was finished he received from America the news of his liberation. He had not defended the suit — as to which judgment, therefore, had been expeditiously rendered; and he was accordingly free as air and with the added sweetness of every augmented appearance that his wife was herself blindly preparing to seek chastisement at the hands of destiny. There being at last no obstacle to his open association with Mrs Cavenham, he called her directly back to London to admire my achievement, over which, from the very first glance, she as amiably let herself go. It was the very view of him she had desired to possess; it was the dear man in his intimate essence for those who knew him; and for any one who should ever be deprived of him it would be the next best thing to the sound of his voice. We of course by no means lingered, however, on the contingency of privation, which was promptly swept away in the rush of Mrs Cavenham's vision of how straight also, above and beyond, I had, as she called it, attacked. I couldn't quite myself, I fear, tell how straight, but Mrs Cavenham perfectly could, and did, for everybody: she had at her fingers' ends all the reasons why the thing would be a treasure even for those who had never seen "Frank".

I had finished the picture, but was, according to my practice, keeping it near me a little, for afterthoughts, when I received from Mrs Dundene the first visit she had paid me for many a month. "I've come," she immediately said, "to ask you a favour"; and she turned her eyes, for a minute, as if contentedly full of her thought, round the large workroom she already knew so well and in which her beauty had really rendered more services than could ever be repaid. There were studies of her yet on the walls; there were others thrust away in corners; others still had gone forth from where she stood and carried to far−away places the reach of her lingering look. I had greatly, almost inconveniently missed her, and I don't know why it was that she struck me now as

more beautiful than ever. She had always, for that matter, had a way of seeming each time a little different and a little better. Dressed very simply in black materials, feathers and lace, that gave the impression of being light and fine, she had indeed the air of a special type, but quite as some great lady might have had it. She looked like a princess in Court mourning. Oh, she had been a case for the petitioner — was everything the other side wanted! "Mr Brivet," she went on to say, "has kindly offered me a present. I'm to ask of him whatever in the world I most desire."

I knew in an instant, on this, what was coming, but I was at first wholly taken up with the simplicity of her allusion to her late connection. Had I supposed that, like Brivet, she wouldn't allude to it at all? or had I stupidly assumed that if she did it would be with ribaldry and rancour? I hardly know; I only know that I suddenly found myself charmed to receive from her thus the key of my own freedom. There was something I wanted to say to her, and she had thus given me leave. But for the moment I only repeated as with amused interest: "Whatever in the world—?"

"Whatever in all the world."

"But that's immense, and in what way can poor *I* help—?"

"By painting him for me. I want a portrait of him."

I looked at her a moment in silence. She was lovely. "That's what — 'in all the world' — you've chosen?"

"Yes — thinking it over: full−length. I want it for remembrance, and I want it as you will do it. It's the only thing I do want."

"Nothing else?"

"Oh, it's enough." I turned about — she was wonderful. I had whisked out of sight for a month the picture I had produced for Mrs Cavenham, and it was now completely covered with a large piece of stuff. I stood there a little, thinking of it, and she went on as if she feared I might be unwilling. "*Can't* you do it?"

It showed me that she had not heard from him of my having painted him, and this, further, was an indication that, his purpose effected, he had ceased to see her. "I suppose you know," I presently said, "what you've done for him?"

"Oh yes; it was what I wanted."

"It was what *he* wanted!" I laughed.

"Well, I want what he wants."

"Even to his marrying Mrs Cavenham?"

She hesitated. "As well her as anyone, from the moment he couldn't marry *me*."

"It was beautiful of you to be so sure of that," I returned.

"How could I be anything else but sure? He doesn't so much as *know* me!" said Alice Dundene.

"No," I declared, "I verily believe he doesn't. There's your picture," I added, unveiling my work.

She was amazed and delighted. "I may have *that?*"

"So far as I'm concerned — absolutely."

"Then he had himself the beautiful thought of sitting for me?"

I faltered but an instant. "Yes."

Her pleasure in what I had done was a joy to me. "Why, it's of a truth—! It's perfection."

"I think it is."

"It's the whole story. It's life."

"That's what I tried for," I said; and I added to myself: "Why the deuce *do* we?"

"It will be *him* for me," she meanwhile went on. "I shall *live* with it, keep it all to myself, and — do you know what it will do? — it will seem to make up."

"To make up?"

"I never saw him alone," said Mrs Dundene.

I am still keeping the thing to send to her, punctually, on the day he's married; but I had of course, on my understanding with her, a tremendous bout with Mrs Cavenham, who protested with indignation against my 'base treachery' and made to Brivet an appeal for redress which, enlightened, face to face with the magnificent humility of his other friend's selection, he couldn't, for shame, entertain. All he was able to do was to suggest to me that I

might for one or other of the ladies, at my choice, do him again; but I had no difficulty in replying that my best was my best and that what was done was done. He assented with the awkwardness of a man in dispute between women, and Mrs Cavenham remained furious. "Can't 'they' — of *all* possible things, think! — take something else?"

"Oh, they want *him!*"

"Him?" It was monstrous.

"To live with," I explained — "to make up."

"To make up for what?"

"Why, you know, they never saw him alone."

THE END