around the city have manufactured and stored pinwheels, flares, Roman candles, and firecrackers that can be as powerful as small bombs. The authorities have issued their ritual warnings against the dangerous industry, raided a few pyrotechnic factories, and arrested dozens of street peddlers caught selling their products. Motorcycle patrols have checked trucks on the highways from Naples to the North and South and have regularly discovered boxes of firecrackers under layers of tomatoes and artichokes. But only a tiny part of the flammable material is ever seized. When the newspapers reappear on January 2 after the New Year’s vacation, they carry long casualty lists, as if a battle had been fought—Neapolitans and people elsewhere killed and maimed while setting off their beloved fireworks or when hit by a fun rocket.

The glove industry in the *basi* of Naples and the clandestine pyrotechnic shops are among the more picturesque of many hundreds of thousands of small enterprises spread over the length and breadth of Italy like the cells of a vigorous organism. Others include furniture and knitwear factories in various parts of the country, each with a few dozen workers; hole-in-the-wall operations in Apulia specializing in fake Louis Vuitton bags ("genuine" fakes that are sold as such and snapped up by Japanese tourists); small hotels and pensions along the coast and in resorts, run by the owners and their relatives; innumerable dressmakers and leatherware suppliers working for famous-label firms; goldsmiths clustered in Vicenza and Arezzo; some seventy ceramics makers in the majolica town of Faenza alone and many more in other places; manufacturers of fashion accessories and television antennas; and family establishments in the Alpine valleys whose computer-guided machines turn out "hand-carved" wooden sculptures of the Virgin Mary or of Walt Disney characters (unauthorized) that are shipped to distant outlets. Such small industries, immensely varied, account for nearly one-half of all the goods and services produced by Italy.

HENRY JAMES

(1843–1916)

The clash of American and European cultures fascinated Henry James. As an American expatriate in Europe for most of his life, he witnessed the contest first-hand. As a young man, James made several trips to Europe before deciding to make it his home, and in 1876 he settled in London. He became a British subject in 1915, a year before his death. He is one of the few Americans honored in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

A trip to Florence in 1880 provided the setting for *The Portrait of a Lady*, first published serially in *The Atlantic*. The Portrait of a Lady is probably James's finest novel, and is considered one of the best in the English language. It tells the story of a young American heiress who marries a middle-aged widower, Gilbert Osmond, only to find that she was wed for her money and betrayed by Madame Merle, a woman she took for a friend. The novel revisited James's familiar theme: the straightforward, newly rich American meeting the cultured, corrupt European.

*from The Portrait of a Lady*

It would certainly have been hard to see what injury could arise to her from the visit she presently paid to Mr. Osmond's hill-top. Nothing could have been more charming than this occasion—a soft afternoon in May, in the full maturity of the Italian spring. The two ladies drove out of the Roman Gate, beneath the enormous blank superstructure which crowns the fine clear arch of
that portal and makes it nakedly impressive, and wound between high-walled lanes, into which the wealth of blossoming orchards overdropped and flung a perfume, until they reached the small superurban piazza, of crooked shape, of which the long brown wall of the villa occupied in part by Mr. Osmond, formed the principal, or at least the most imposing, side. Isabel went with her friend through a wide, high court, where a clear shadow rested below, and a pair of light-arched galleries, facing each other above, caught the upper sunshine upon their slim columns and the flowering plants in which they were dressed. There was something rather severe about the place; it looked somewhat as if, once you were in, it would not be easy to get out. For Isabel, however, there was of course as yet no thought of getting out, but only of advancing. Mr. Osmond met her in the cold ante-chamber—it was cold even in the month of May—and ushered her, with her companion, into the apartment to which we have already been introduced. Madame Merle was in front, and while Isabel lingered a little, talking with Mr. Osmond, she went forward, familiarly, and greeted two persons who were seated in the drawing-room. One of these was little Pansy, on whom she bestowed a kiss; the other was a lady whom Mr. Osmond presented to Isabel as his sister, the Countess Gemini. "And that is my little girl," he said, "who has just come out of a convent."

Pansy had on a scanty white dress, and her fair hair was neatly arranged in a net; she wore a pair of slippers, tied, sandal-fashion, about her ankles. She made Isabel a little conventual curtsy, and then came to be kissed. The Countess Gemini simply nodded, without getting up; Isabel could see that she was a woman of fashion. She was thin and dark, and not at all pretty, having features that suggested some tropical bird—a long beak-like nose, a small, quickly-moving eye, and a mouth and chin that receded extremely. Her face, however, thanks to a very human and feminine expression, was by no means disagreeable, and, as regards her appearance, it was evident that she understood herself and made the most of her points. The soft brilliancy of her toilet had the look of shimmering plumage, and her attitudes were light and sudden, like those of a creature that perched upon the twigs. She had a great deal of manner; Isabel, who had never known any one with so much manner, immediately classified the Countess Gemini as the most affected of women. She remembered that Ralph had not recommended her as an acquaintance; but she was ready to acknowledge that on a casual view the Countess presented no appearance of wickedness. Nothing could have been kinder or more innocent than her greeting to Isabel.

"You will believe that I am glad to see you when I tell you that it is only because I knew you were to be here that I came myself. I don't come and see my brother—I make him come and see me. This hill of his is impossible—I don't see what possesses him. Really, Osmond, you will be the ruin of my horses some day; and if they receive an injury you will have to give me another pair. I heard them panting to-day; I assure you I did. It is very disagreeable to hear one's horses panting when one is sitting in the carriage; it sounds, too, as if they were not what they should be. But I have always had good horses; whatever else I may have lacked, I have always managed that. My husband doesn't know much, but I think he does know a horse. In general the Italians don't, but my husband goes in, according to his poor light, for everything English. My horses are English—so it is all the greater pity they should be ruined. I must tell you," she went on, directly addressing Isabel, "that Osmond doesn't often invite me; I don't think he likes to have me. It was quite my own idea, coming to-day. I like to see new people, and I am sure you are very new. But don't sit there; that chair is not what it looks. There are some very good seats here, but there are also some horrors."

These remarks were delivered with a variety of little jerks and glances, in a tone which, although it expressed a high degree of good-nature, was rather shrill than sweet.

"I don't like to have you, my dear?" said her brother. "I am sure you are invaluable."
"I don't see any horrors anywhere," Isabel declared, looking about her. "Everything here seems to me very beautiful."

"I have got a few good things," Mr. Osmond murmured; "indeed I have nothing very bad. But I have not what I should have liked."

He stood there a little awkwardly, smiling and glancing about; his manner was an odd mixture of the indifferent and the expressive. He seemed to intimate that nothing was of much consequence. Isabel made a rapid induction: perfect simplicity was not the badge of his family. Even the little girl from the convent, who, in her prim white dress, with her small submissive face and her hands locked before her, stood there as if she were about to partake of her first communion—even Mr. Osmond's diminutive daughter had a kind of finish which was not entirely artless.

"You would have liked a few things from the Uffizi and the Pitti—that's what you would have liked," said Madame Merle.

"Poor Osmond, with his old curtains and crucifixes!" the Countess Gemini exclaimed; she appeared to call her brother only by his family-name. Her ejaculation had no particular object; she smiled at Isabel as she made it, and looked at her from head to foot.

Her brother had not heard her; he seemed to be thinking what he could say to Isabel. "Won't you have some tea?—you must be very tired," he at last bethought himself of remarking.

"No, indeed, I am not tired; what have I done to tire me?" Isabel felt a certain need of being very direct, of pretending to nothing; there was something in the air, in her general impression of things—she could hardly have said what it was—that deprived her of all disposition to put herself forward. The place, the occasion, the combination of people, signified more than lay on the surface; she would try to understand—she would not simply utter graceful platitudes. Poor Isabel was perhaps not aware that many women would have uttered graceful platitudes to cover the working of their observation. It must be confessed that her pride was a trifle alarmed. A man whom she had heard spoken of in terms that excited interest, and who was evidently capable of distinguishing himself, had invited her, a young lady not lavish of her favours, to come to his house. Now that she had done so, the burden of the entertainment rested naturally upon himself. Isabel was not rendered less observant, and for the moment, I am afraid, she was not rendered more indulgent, by perceiving that Mr. Osmond carried his burden less complacently than might have been expected. "What a fool I was to have invited these women here!" she could fancy his exclaiming to himself.

"You will be tired when you go home, if he shows you all his bibelots and gives you a lecture on each," said the Countess Gemini.

"I am not afraid of that; but if I am tired, I shall at least have learned something."

"Very little, I suspect. But my sister is dreadfully afraid of learning anything," said Mr. Osmond.

"Oh, I confess to that; I don't want to know anything more—I know too much already. The more you know, the more unhappy you are."

"You should not undervalue knowledge before Pansy, who has not finished her education," Madame Merle interposed, with a smile.

"Pansy will never know any harm," said the child's father. "Pansy is a little convent-flower."

"Oh, the convents, the convents!" cried the Countess, with a sharp laugh. "Speak to me of the convents. You may learn anything there; I am a convent-flower myself. I don't pretend to be good, but the nuns do. Don't you see what I mean?" she went on, appealing to Isabel.

Isabel was not sure that she saw, and she answered that she was very bad at following arguments. The Countess then declared that she herself detested arguments, but that this was her brother's taste—he would always discuss. "For me," she said, "one should like a thing or one shouldn't; one can't like everything, of course. But one shouldn't attempt to reason it out—you never know where it may lead you. There are some very
good feelings that may have bad reasons; don't you know? And then there are very bad feelings, sometimes, that have good reasons. Don't you see what I mean? I don't care anything about reasons, but I know what I like."

"Ah, that's the great thing," said Isabel, smiling, but suspecting that her acquaintance with this lightly-flitting personage would not lead to intellectual repose. If the Countess objected to argument, Isabel at this moment had as little taste for it, and she put out her hand to Pansy with a pleasant sense that such a gesture committed her to nothing that would admit of a divergence of views. Gilbert Osmond apparently took a rather hopeless view of his sister's tone, and he turned the conversation to another topic. He presently sat down on the other side of his daughter, who had taken Isabel's hand for a moment; but he ended by drawing her out of her chair, and making her stand between his knees, leaning against him while he passed his arm round her little waist. The child fixed her eyes on Isabel with a still, disinterested gaze, which seemed void of an intention, but conscious of an attraction. Mr. Osmond talked of many things; Madame Merle had said he could be agreeable when he chose, and to-day, after a little, he appeared not only to have chosen, but to have determined. Madame Merle and the Countess Gemini sat a little apart, conversing in the effortless manner of persons who knew each other well enough to take their ease; every now and then Isabel heard the Countess say something extravagant. Mr. Osmond talked of Florence, of Italy, of the pleasure of living in that country, and of the abatements to such pleasure. There were both satisfactions and drawbacks; the drawbacks were pretty numerous; strangers were too apt to see Italy in rose-colour. On the whole it was better than other countries, if one was content to lead a quiet life and take things as they came. It was very dull sometimes, but there were advantages in living in the country which contained the most beauty. There were certain impressions that one could get only in Italy. There were others that one never got there, and one got some that were very bad. But from time to time one got a delightful one, which made up for everything. He was inclined to think that Italy had spoiled a great many people; he was even fatuous enough to believe at times that he himself might have been a better man if he had spent less of his life there. It made people idle and dilettantish, and second-rate; there was nothing tonic in an Italian life. One was out of the current; one was not dans le mouvement, as the French said; one was too far from Paris and London. "We are gloriously provincial, I assure you," said Mr. Osmond, "and I am perfectly aware that I myself am as rusty as a key that has no lock to fit it. It polishes me up a little to talk with you—not that I venture to pretend I can turn that very complicated lock I suspect your intellect of being! But you will be going away before I have seen you three times, and I shall perhaps never see you after that. That's what it is to live in a country that people come to. When they are disagreeable it is bad enough; when they are agreeable it is still worse. As soon as you find you like them they are off again! I have been deceived too often; I have ceased to form attachments; to permit myself to feel attractions. You mean to stay—to settle? That would be really comfortable. Ah yes, your aunt is a sort of guarantee; I believe she may be depended upon. Oh, she's an old Florentine; I mean literally an old one; not a modern outsider. She is a contemporary of the Medici; she must have been present at the burning of Savonarola, and I am not sure she didn't throw a handful of chips into the flame. Her face is very much like some faces in the early pictures; little, dry, definite faces, that must have had a good deal of expression, but almost always the same one. Indeed, I can show you her portrait in a fresco of Ghirlandaio's. I hope you don't object to my speaking that way of your aunt, eh? I have an idea you don't. Perhaps you think that's even worse. I assure you there is no want of respect in it, to either of you. You know I'm a particular admirer of Mrs. Touchett."

While Isabel's host exerted himself to entertain her in this somewhat confidential fashion, she looked occasionally at Madame Merle, who met her eyes with an insattentive smile in which, on this occasion, there was no infelicitous intimation
that our heroine appeared to advantage. Madame Merle eventually proposed to the Countess Gemini that they should go into the garden, and the Countess, rising and shaking out her soft plumage, began to rustle toward the door.

"Poor Miss Archer!" she exclaimed, surveying the other group with expressive compassion. "She has been brought quite into the family."

"Miss Archer can certainly have nothing but sympathy for a family to which you belong," Mr. Osmond answered, with a laugh which, though it had something of a mocking ring, was not ill-natured.

"I don't know what you mean by that! I am sure she will see no harm in me but what you tell her. I am better than he says, Miss Archer," the Countess went on. "I am only rather light. Is that all he has said? Ah then, you keep him in good humour. Has he opened on one of his favourite subjects? I give you notice that there are two or three that he treats à fond. In that case you had better take off your bonnet."

"I don't think I know what Mr. Osmond's favourite subjects are," said Isabel, who had risen to her feet.

The Countess assumed, for an instant, an attitude of intense meditation; pressing one of her hands, with the fingertips gathered together, to her forehead.

"I'll tell you in a moment," she answered. "One is Machiavelli, the other is Vittoria Colonna, the next is Metastasio."

"Ah, with me," said Madame Merle, passing her arm into the Countess Gemini's, as if to guide her course to the garden, "Mr. Osmond is never so historical."

"Oh you," the Countess answered as they moved away, "you yourself are Machiavelli—you yourself are Vittoria Colonna!"

"We shall hear next that poor Madame Merle is Metastasio!"

Gilbert Osmond murmured, with a little melancholy smile.

Isabel had got up, on the assumption that they too were to go into the garden; but Mr. Osmond stood there, with no apparent inclination to leave the room, with his hands in the pockets of his jacket, and his daughter, who had now locked her arm into one of his own, clinging to him and looking up, while her eyes moved from his own face to Isabel's. Isabel waited, with a certain unuttered contentedness, to have her movements directed; she liked Mr. Osmond's talk, his company; she felt that she was being entertained. Through the open doors of the great room she saw Madame Merle and the Countess stroll across the deep grass of the garden; then she turned, and her eyes wandered over the things that were scattered about her. The understanding had been that her host should show her his treasures; his pictures and cabinets all looked like treasures. Isabel, after a moment, went toward one of the pictures to see it better; but just as she had done so Mr. Osmond said to her abruptly—

"Miss Archer, what do you think of my sister?"

Isabel turned, with a good deal of surprise.

"Ah, don't ask me that—I have seen your sister too little."

"Yes, you have seen her very little; but you must have observed that there is not a great deal of her to see. What do you think of our family tone?" Osmond went on, smiling. "I should like to know how it strikes a fresh, unprejudiced mind. I know what you are going to say—you have had too little observation of it. Of course this is only a glimpse. But just take notice, in future, if you have a chance. I sometimes think we have got into a rather bad way, living off here among things and people not our own, without responsibilities or attachments, with nothing to hold us together or keep us up; marrying foreigners, forming artificial tastes, playing tricks with our natural mission. Let me add, though, that I say that much more for myself than for my sister. She's a very good woman—better than she seems. She is rather unhappy, and as she is not of a very serious disposition, she doesn't tend to show it tragically; she shows it comically instead. She has got a nasty husband, though I am not sure she makes the best of him. Of course, however, a nasty husband is an awkward thing. Madame Merle gives her excellent advice, but it's a good deal like giving a child a dictionary to learn a language with. He can look out the words, but he can't put them together. My sister needs a grammar, but unfortunately she is
not grammatical. Excuse my troubling you with these details; my sister was very right in saying that you have been taken into the family. Let me take down that picture; you want more light."

He took down the picture, carried it toward the window, related some curious facts about it. She looked at the other works of art, and he gave her such further information as might appear to be most acceptable to a young lady making a call on a summer afternoon. His pictures, his carvings and tapestries were interesting; but after a while Isabel became conscious that the owner was more interesting still. He resembled no one she had ever seen; most of the people she knew might be divided into groups of half-a-dozen specimens. There were one or two exceptions to this; she could think, for instance, of no group that would contain her Aunt Lydia. There were other people who were, relatively speaking, original—original, as one might say, by courtesy—such as Mr. Goodwood, as her cousin Ralph, as Henrietta Stackpole, as Lord Warburton, as Madame Merle. But in essentials, when one came to look at them, these individuals belonged to types which were already present to her mind. Her mind contained no class which offered a natural place to Mr. Osmond—he was a specimen apart. Isabel did not say all these things to herself at the time; but she felt them, and afterwards they became distinct. For the moment she only said to herself that Mr. Osmond had the interest of rareness. It was not so much what he said and did, but rather what he withheld, that distinguished him; he indulged in no striking deflections from common usage; he was an original without being an eccentric. Isabel had never met a person of so fine a grain. The peculiarity was physical, to begin with, and it extended to his immaterial part. His dense, delicate hair, his overdrawn, retouched features, his clear complexion, ripe without being coarse, the evenness of the growth of his beard, and that light, smooth, slenderness of structure which made the movement of a single one of his fingers produce the effect of an expressive gesture—these personal points struck our observant young lady as the signs of an unusual sensibility. He was certainly fastidious and critical; he was probably irritable. His sensibility had governed him—possibly governed him too much; it had made him impatient of vulgar troubles and had led him to live by himself, in a serene, impersonal way, thinking about art and beauty and history. He had consulted his taste in everything—his taste alone, perhaps; that was what made him so different from every one else. Ralph had something of this same quality, this appearance of thinking that life was a matter of connoisseurship; but in Ralph it was an anomaly, a kind of humorous excessiveness, whereas in Mr. Osmond it was the key-note, and everything was in harmony with it. Isabel was certainly far from understanding him completely; his meaning was not at all times obvious. It was hard to see what he meant, for instance, by saying that he was gloriously provincial—which was so exactly the opposite of what she had supposed. Was it a harmless paradox, intended to puzzle her? or was it the last refinement of high culture? Isabel trusted that she should learn in time; it would be very interesting to learn. If Mr. Osmond were provincial, pray what were the characteristics of the capital? Isabel could ask herself this question, in spite of having perceived that her host was a shy personage; for such shyness as his—the shyness of ticklish nerves and fine perceptions—was perfectly consistent with the best breeding. Indeed, it was almost a proof of superior qualities. Mr. Osmond was not a man of easy assurance, who chatted and gossiped with the fluency of a superficial nature; he was critical of himself as well as of others, and exacting a good deal of others (to think them agreeable), he probably took a rather ironical view of what he himself offered: a proof, into the bargain, that he was not grossly conceited. If he had not been shy, he would not have made that gradual, subtle, successful effort to overcome his shyness, to which Isabel felt that she owed both what pleased and what puzzled her in his conversation to-day. He suddenly asked her what she thought of the Countess Gemini—that was doubtless a proof that he was interested in her feelings; it could scarcely be as a help to knowledge of his own sister. That he should be so interested showed an inquiring mind; but it was a little singular that he should sac-
rifice his fraternal feeling to his curiosity. This was the most eccentric thing he had done.

There were two other rooms, beyond the one in which she had been received, equally full of picturesque objects, and in these apartments Isabel spent a quarter of an hour. Every thing was very curious and valuable, and Mr. Osmond continued to be the kindest of ciceroni, as he led her from one fine piece to another, still holding his little girl by the hand. His kindness almost surprised our young lady, who wondered why he should take so much trouble for her; and she was oppressed at last with the accumulation of beauty and knowledge to which she found herself introduced. There was enough for the present; she had ceased to attend to what he said; she listened to him with attentive eyes, but she was not thinking of what he told her. He probably thought she was cleverer than she was; Madame Merle would have told him so; which was a pity, because in the end he would be sure to find out, and then perhaps even her real cleverness would not reconcile him to his mistake. A part of Isabel's fatigue came from the effort to appear as intelligent as she believed Madame Merle had described her, and from the fear (very unusual with her) of exposing—not her ignorance, for that she cared comparatively little—but her possible grossness of perception. It would have annoyed her to express a liking for something which her host, in his superior enlightenment, would think she ought not to like; or to pass by something at which the truly initiated mind would arrest itself. She was very careful, therefore, as to what she said, as to what she noticed or failed to notice—more careful than she had ever been before.

They came back into the first of the rooms, where the tea had been served; but as the two other ladies were still on the terrace, and as Isabel had not yet been made acquainted with the view, which constituted the paramount distinction of the place, Mr. Osmond directed her steps into the garden without more delay. Madame Merle and the Countess had had chairs brought out, and as the afternoon was lovely, the Countess proposed they should take their tea in the open air. Pansy, therefore, was sent to bid the servant bring out the tray. The sun had got low, the golden light took a deeper tone, and on the mountains and the plain that stretched beneath them, the masses of purple shadow seemed to grow as richly as the places that were still exposed. The scene had an extraordinary charm. The air was almost solemnly still, and the large expanse of the landscape, with its gardenlike culture and nobleness of outline, its teeming valley and delicately-fretted hills, its peculiarly human-looking touches of habitation, lay there in splendid harmony and classic grace.

"You seem so well pleased that I think you can be trusted to come back," Mr. Osmond said, as he led his companion to one of the angles of the terrace.

"I shall certainly come back," Isabel answered, "in spite of what you say about its being bad to live in Italy. What was that you said about one's natural mission? I wonder if I should forsake my natural mission if I were to settle in Florence."

"A woman's natural mission is to be where she is most appreciated."

"The point is to find out where that is."

"Very true—a woman often wastes a great deal of time in the inquiry. People ought to make it very plain to her."

"Such a matter would have to be made very plain to me," said Isabel, smiling.

"I am glad, at any rate, to hear you talk of settling. Madame Merle had given me an idea that you were of a rather roving disposition. I thought she spoke of your having some plan of going round the world."

"I am rather ashamed of my plans; I make a new one every day."

"I don't see why you should be ashamed; it's the greatest of pleasures."

"It seems frivolous, I think," said Isabel. "One ought to choose something very deliberately, and be faithful to that."

"By that rule, then, I have not been frivolous."

"Have you never made plans?"

"Yes, I made one years ago, and I am acting on it to-day."
“It must have been a very pleasant one,” said Isabel.
“It was very simple. It was to be as quiet as possible.”
“As quiet?” the girl repeated.
“Not to worry—not to strive nor struggle. To resign myself. To be content with a little.” He uttered these sentences slowly, with little pauses between, and his intelligent eyes were fixed upon Isabel’s with the conscious look of a man who has brought himself to confess something.

“Do you call that simple?” Isabel asked, with a gentle laugh.
“Yes, because it’s negative.”

“What has your life been negative?”

“Call it affirmative if you like. Only it has affirmed my indifference. Mind you, not my natural indifference—I had none. But my studied, my wilful renunciation.”

Isabel scarcely understood him; it seemed a question whether he were joking or not. Why should a man who struck her as having a great fund of reserve suddenly bring himself to be so confidential? This was his affair, however, and his confidences were interesting. “I don’t see why you should have renounced,” she said in a moment.

“Because I could do nothing. I had no prospects, I was poor, and I was not a man of genius. I had no talents even; I took my measure early in life. I was simply the most fastidious young gentleman living. There were two or three people in the world I envied—the Emperor of Russia, for instance, and the Sultan of Turkey! There were even moments when I envied the Pope of Rome—for the consideration he enjoys. I should have been delighted to be considered to that extent; but since that couldn’t be, I didn’t care for anything less, and I made up my mind not to go in for honours. A gentleman can always consider himself, and fortunately, I was a gentleman. I could do nothing in Italy—I couldn’t even be an Italian patriot. To do that, I should have had to go out of the country; and I was too fond of it to leave it. So I have passed a great many years here, on that quiet plan I spoke of. I have not been at all unhappy. I don’t mean to say I have cared for nothing; but the things I have cared for have been definite—limited. The events of my life have been absolutely unperceived by any one save myself; getting an old silver crucifix at a bargain (I have never bought anything dear, of course), or discovering, as I once did, a sketch by Correggio on a panel daubed over by some inspired idiot!”

This would have been rather a dry account of Mr. Osmond’s career if Isabel had fully believed it; but her imagination supplied the human element which she was sure had not been wanting. His life had been mingled with other lives more than he admitted; of course she could not expect him to enter into this. For the present she abstained from provoking further revelations; to intimate that he had not told her everything would be more familiar and less considerate than she now desired to be. He had certainly told her quite enough. It was her present inclination, however, to express considerable sympathy for the success with which he had preserved his independence. “That’s a very pleasant life,” she said, “to renounce everything but Correggio!”

“Oh, I have been very happy; don’t imagine me to suggest for a moment that I have not. It’s one’s own fault if one is not happy.”

“You have lived here always?”

“No, not always. I lived a long time at Naples, and many years in Rome. But I have been here a good while. Perhaps I shall have to change, however; to do something else. I have no longer myself to think of. My daughter is growing up, and it is very possible she may not care so much for the Correggios and crucifixes as I. I shall have to do what is best for her.”

“Yes, do that,” said Isabel. “She is such a dear little girl.”

“Ah,” cried Gilbert Osmond, with feeling, “she is a little saint of heaven! She is my great happiness!”