



"And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

CHARACTERS FROM THE HOUSEHOLD
OF HENRY JAMES.

THE MASTER, . . . Henry St. George, novelist.
PAUL OVERT, . . . A young writer.
MISS FANCOURT, . . . A worshipper of genius.
DAISY MILLER, . . . A young American from
Schenectady, N. Y.

SCENE: *The library and work-room of St. George, in the rear of his London house. "A large high room, without windows, but with a wide skylight at the top, like a place of exhibition." The walls covered with bookshelves and prints; a table littered with proofs and manuscripts; a large leather lounge, on which Overt is seated smoking. St. George is pacing back and forth on a strip of brilliant red carpet, the length of the polished floor.*

THE MASTER: It is good of you to leave the ladies upstairs to drink their tea alone, and to come down to this book-factory. I had just reached the end of a paragraph and wanted a smoke.

OVERT (*earnestly*): It is a great privilege for me to be allowed to interrupt you.

THE MASTER: No, no, my boy! A talk with you is like a visit from one's old ideals. You see the visions that I saw thirty years ago.

OVERT: I hope mine may reach as fine a maturity.

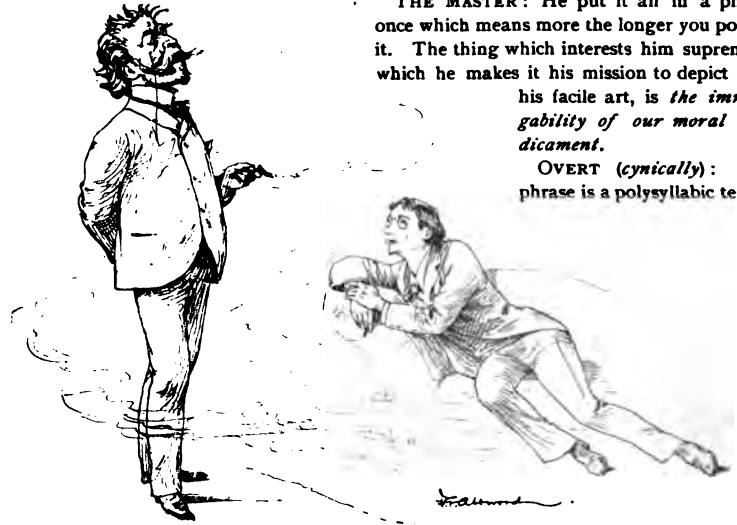
THE MASTER (*looking in his eyes*): You may say polite things upstairs in the drawing-room, but down here we talk to each other's hearts, honestly.

OVERT (*flushing*): You know I admire your achievements—

THE MASTER (*interrupting*): We talked that out once before, and Henry James put it all in his story, "The Lesson of the Master." What a wonderfully subtle man he is! You remember how unconcernedly he sat over there by the hearthstone while we talked, smoking and dreaming as we thought, but all the time seeing through our words into our very hearts. *There* is a man who has followed his Art as I would have you follow it. Don't waste your admiration on this Mess of Potage which you call my success—this forty volumes, and fine house, and carriages, and titled friends! My boy, my boy, you know better.

OVERT (*critically between rings of smoke*): Yes, I know what you mean. I do admire the way James does it. It is so very well-bred, so even in finish, so delicate in *nuances*. (*Smil-*

ing) Indeed it is all the other adjectives which artists use in a studio when they are talking about technic. You know the vocabulary! Well, *that* is Henry James—technic, technic, to the end of the story. But I want something more—I want life, with its imperfections, its unreasonableness, its lack of those subtleties which Art spends itself upon.



"A TALK WITH YOU IS LIKE A VISIT FROM ONE'S OLD IDEALS."

THE MASTER (*impatiently*): Please don't go over all those pet phrases of the hot-blooded young man who wants to indulge his senses, and call it "studying life." I know them as well as I do the studio cant about technic. I did not say that you could learn *everything* from James. But you can learn from him the possibilities of the English language in separating emotions which are classed together by the untrained observer. Surely you have been astounded at the flexibility of his phrases? Haven't you learned from them that our language is delicate, and refined, as well as virile?

OVERT: I have, I have! I read him always with sensations akin to those with which I watch my own warm breath turn to wonderfully delicate traceries of frost on a window-pane. I follow intently the needle-points of the crystals as they shoot across the smooth glass, until the apparently hap-hazard lace-work takes a definite pattern—as though it had been prearranged from all eternity. Is the breath of life but a vapor to hang for a

few moments in crystals of frost, and then melt into nothingness? I rouse from my reverie chilled to my heart. And *that* is reading Henry James!

THE MASTER: Your fancy does full credit to your feeling. What you do not see *now* is that your sensations are the usual chill which Youth feels in contact with Experience. Ten years from now you will begin to feel the surprising pathos, the warm-blooded charity, the tolerance of human eccentricity behind this crystal art which chills you. Then you will read "The Liar," "The Middle Years," "The Pupil," with tears in your eyes.

OVERT (*puzzled*): But what has he been driving at all these years that he has worked so faithfully at his art? That is what bothers me. Is he simply doing it for the sake of working?

THE MASTER: He put it all in a phrase once which means more the longer you ponder it. The thing which interests him supremely, which he makes it his mission to depict with his facile art, is *the immutability of our moral predicament*.

OVERT (*cynically*): The phrase is a polysyllabic terror.

THE MASTER (*smiling*): But, as our American friend drinking tea upstairs would say, "It gets there every time." The tragedy of living is in it—what the philosophers call heredity, environment, predestination and all the other abstractions—but which you and I know as the never-ending daily tussle with those things in us which we would give our very lives to make different. James sees it all as clearly, as pathetically, as any fiction-writer of his generation. We wonder now why his contemporaries called Thackeray a cynic; I suspect that our grandsons will wonder still more why we have called James cold and unsympathetic.

OVERT (*listening to footsteps on the stairs*): There come the young women! Now we shall have new light on the subject.

VOICES (*calling*): Please, may we come down?

THE MASTER: If you don't mind solid chunks of smoke.

OVERT: And a hot discussion.



"HOW CAN YOU, MR. OVERT?"

(Enter MISS FANCOURT and DAISY MILLER, in afternoon costume.)

MISS FANCOURT (to Overt): You promised to go with us to drink tea with the Princess Casamassima.

DAISY MILLER: And meet a lot of artistic and social freaks.

MISS FANCOURT: Henry James will be there, and you always enjoy his talk.

OVERT: Oh, yes, his talk is always good.

THE MASTER (explaining): James has been the cause of our dispute. Overt thinks he is a cold and unsympathetic artist (slyly), and all the other things that the Philistines call him.

MISS FANCOURT (gushingly): How can you, Mr. Overt. You, with the soul of an artist under your hat!

DAISY MILLER (impertinently): I suspect that his artist-soul is just as conventionally English as his plug hat.

MISS FANCOURT (mystified): What kind of hat?

DAISY MILLER (laughing): His plug-dicer, beaver, tile—don't you know your mother tongue?

OVERT: James is an American but he does not speak your language.

DAISY MILLER (positively): And that's what's the matter with Mr. James. If he wrote his native language we'd read him more over the pond.

THE MASTER: I've often wondered why you Americans do not more appreciate him.

DAISY MILLER: Well, I'll tell you. He's lived with you so long that we're not onto his curves. Do you catch on? His trolley's off the American wire. (The others look at her and at each other in mute astonishment.) Oh, but you are slow at learning the lingo.

We used to have a reading club in Schenectady—the girls of our set—to improve our minds, you know. Well, when we had finished "Barriers Burned Away," "St. Elmo," Farrar's "Life of Christ," and "Molly Bawn," one of the girls, a regular blue-stocking from Boston with glasses on her nose, proposed that we read Henry James. That roused my dander. "See here, girls," I said, "if you want to turn this into a circle of King's Daughters to read religious books and sew for the heathen, I'll resign at once." The Boston girl looked shocked and said "How can you be so rude. Mr. James writes the purest Boston English, and is highly approved by Charles Eliot Norton and the Harvard seniors." (Sighing) Oh, she made me tired. "Why doesn't he come to America again and learn something besides

metaphor, and a humor that plays about it all gently. There is none of the heat or prejudice about his stories which is so often evident in the writings of people you would not care to know. When I have finished one of Mr. James's stories I always feel that I should like to meet him in the alcove of a library and talk about it all with him as though it were true. (Starting.) And that's what I hope to do at Princess Casamassima's. I want to ask him whether he did not mean "The Real Thing" to be a satire on the artist's point-of-view, as much as on the poor dear gentleman and gentlewoman who tried to be useful. (To Daisy and Overt.) Come, this afternoon is almost over! (They follow her through the portières after adieus to THE MASTER.)

THE MASTER (soliloquizing as he turns to his desk): Ah, if I could only clothe my characters with garments woven with James's art they would live for a century or two. But I have marketed my crude inventions for the luxuries of a London establishment, for the pleasures of an ever-present success. But I know, and Overt and James know in their hearts, that it isn't the Real Thing. (Taking up his pen.) Come, charlatan, pick up your fool's wand and finish your daily tricks!

Droch



"HIS TROLLEY'S OFF THE AMERICAN WIRE."

Bostonese!" I said. "We don't all talk like prigs or vulgarians over here! In New York we're refined from our bangs to our boots, and don't you forget it!"

THE MASTER (getting control of his face): Thank you. I never understood why James was unpopular in America till I met you.

DAISY MILLER (protesting): O, you must not take me for a fair sample of an American girl. I had to go abroad for my health before I had had a year at a finishing school in New York. They put a polish on you there in which you can see to comb your hair. Mr. James has not caught on to the fact that we're getting mighty civilized in the States.

THE MASTER (turning to Miss Fancourt): Come, give us an English girl's defence of him.

MISS FANCOURT (with enthusiasm): He satisfies my longing for perfection in work. There is never anything in his stories to jar my taste. When he treats a disagreeable subject, he does it as a gentleman would talk about it to a refined woman—with polite phrases, delicate



NEW BOOKS.

ETIQUETTE FOR GIRLS. By Mrs. L. Heaton Armstrong. London: Frederick Warne and Company.

The Brownies at Home. By Palmer Cox. New York: The Century Company.

The White Islander. By Mary Hartwell Catherwood. New York: The Century Company.

Poems Here at Home. By James Whitcomb Riley. New York: The Century Company.

Essays in Idleness. By Agnes Repplier. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company.

An Embassy to Provence. By Thomas A. Janvier. New York: The Century Company.

Thumb-nail Sketches. By George Wharton Edwards. New York: The Century Company.

Topsy and Turvys. By P. S. Newell. New York: The Century Company.