

II

These reflections have surged up in my brain as I contemplate the recent case of my acquaintance, Mr. Omicron, and they are preliminary to a study of that interesting case. Scarce a week ago Omicron was sitting in the Omicron drawing-room alone with Mrs. Omicron. It was an average Omicron evening. Omicron is aged thirty-two. He is neither successful nor unsuccessful, and no human perspicacity can say whether twenty years hence he will be successful or unsuccessful. But anybody can see that he is already on the way to be a plain, well-balanced man. Somewhat earlier than usual he is losing the fanciful capricious qualities and settling down into the stiff backbone of the nation.

Conversation was not abundant.

Said Mrs. Omicron suddenly, with an ingratiating accent:

"What about that ring that I was to have?"

There was a pause, in which every muscle of the man's body, and especially the facial muscles,