

she should clasp her son again as she had done at their parting; but in the moment when their eyes met, the sense of strangeness came upon her like a terror. It was not hard to understand that she was agitated, and the son led her across the hall to the sitting-room, closing the door behind them. Then he turned toward her and said, smiling, —

“You would not have known me, eh, mother?”

It was perhaps the truth. If she had seen him in a crowd, she might have looked at him without recognition—not, however, without startled wonder; for though the likeness to herself was no longer striking, the years had overlaid it with another likeness which would have arrested her. Before she answered him, his eyes, with a keen restlessness, as unlike as possible to the lingering gaze of the portrait, had traveled quickly over the room, alighting on her again as she said, —

“Everything is changed, Harold. I am an old woman, you see.”

“But straighter and more upright than some of the young ones!” said Harold; inwardly, however, feeling that age had made his mother’s face very anxious and eager. “The old women at Smyrna are like sacks. You’ve not got clumsy and shapeless. How is it I have the trick of getting fat?” (Here Harold lifted his arm and spread out his plump hand.) “I remember my father was as thin as a herring. How is my father? Where is he?”

Mrs. Transome just pointed to the curtained door-way, and let her son pass through it alone. She was not given to tears; but now, under the pressure of emotion that could find no other vent, they burst forth. She took care that they should be silent tears, and before Harold came out of the library again they were dried. Mrs. Transome had not the feminine tendency to seek influence through pathos; she had been used to rule in virtue of acknowledged superiority. The consciousness that she had to make her son’s acquaintance, and that her knowledge of the youth of nineteen might help her little in interpreting the man of thirty-four, had fallen like lead on her soul; but in this new acquaintance of theirs she cared especially that her son, who had seen a strange world, should feel that he was come home to a mother who was to be con-