

back views and profils perdus. When she stood erect she took naturally one of the attitudes in which court-painters represent queens and princesses; so that I found myself wondering whether, to draw out this accomplishment, I couldn't get the editor of the Cheapside to publish a really royal **romance**, "A Tale of Buckingham Palace." Sometimes, however, the real thing and the make-believe came into contact; by which I mean that **Miss** Churm, keeping **an** appointment or coming to make one on days when I had much work in hand, encountered her invidious rivals. The encounter was not on their part, for they noticed her no more than if she had been the housemaid; not from intentional loftiness, but simply because, as yet, professionally, they didn't know how to fraternise, as I could guess that they would have like - or at least that the **Major** would. They couldn't talk about the omnibus - they always walked; **and** they **didn't** know what else to try - she wasn't interested in good trains or cheap claret. Besides, they must have felt - in the air - that she was amused at them, secretly derisive of their ever knowing how. She was not a person to **conceal** her **scepticism** if she had had a chance to show it. **On** the other **hand** **Mrs.Monarch** didn't think her tidy; for why else did she take pains to say to me (it was going out of the way, for **Mrs.Monarch**), that she **didn't** like dirty women?

**One** day when my young lady happened to be present with my other sitters (she even dropped in, when it was convenient, for a chat), I asked her to be so good as to lend a hand in getting tea - a service **with** **which** **she** **was** **familiar** and which was one of a class

that, living as I did in a **small** way, with slender domestic resources, I often appealed to my models to render. They liked to lay hands on my property, to break the sitting, **and** sometimes the china - I made them feel Bohemian. The next time I saw Miss Churm after this incident she surprised me *greatly by making* a scene about it - she accused me of having wished to humiliate her. She had not resented the outrage at the time, but had seemed obliging and amused, enjoying the comedy of asking **Mrs. Monarch**, who sat vague and silent, whether she **would** have cream and sugar, and putting an exaggerated simper into the question. She had tried intonations - as if she too wished to pass for the real thing; till I was afraid my other visitors would take **offence**.

Oh, they were determined not to do this; and their touching patience was the measure of their great need. They would sit by the hour, uncomplaining, till I was ready to use them; they would come back on the chance of being wanted and would walk away cheerfully if they were not. I used to go to the door with them to see in what magnificent order they retreated. I tried to find other employment for them - I introduced them to several artists. But they **didn't** **"take,"** for reasons I could appreciate, **and** I became conscious, rather anxiously, that after such disappointments they fell back upon me with a heavier weight. They did me the honour to think that *it was I who was most* their form. They were not picturesque enough for the painters, and in those days there were not so many serious workers **in** black and white. Besides, they had **an** eye to

the -great job I 'had mentioned to them - they had secretly set their hearts on supplying the right essence for my pictorial vindication of our fine novelist. They **knew** that for this undertaking I should **want** no costume-effects, none of the frippery of past ages - that it was a case in which everything would be contemporary and satirical **and**, presumably, genteel. If I could work them into it their future would be assured, for the **labour** would of course be long and the occupation steady.

One day **Mrs. Monarch** came without her husband - she explained his absence by his having had to go to the City. **While** she sat there in her **usual** anxious stiffness there came, at the door, a knock which I immediately **recognised** as the subdued appeal of a model out of work. It was followed by the entrance of a young man whom I easily perceived to be a foreigner and who proved in fact an Italian acquainted with no English word but **my** name, which he uttered in a way that made it seem to include all others. I had not then visited his country, nor was I proficient in his tongue; but as he was not so meanly constituted - what Italian is? - as to depend only on that member for **expression** he conveyed to me, in familiar but graceful mimicry, that he was in search of exactly the employment in which the lady before me was engaged. I was not struck with him at first, and while I continued to draw I emitted rough sounds of discouragement and dismissal. He stood his ground, however, not importunately, but with a dumb, **dog-**like fidelity in his eyes which amounted to innocent impudence - the manner of a devoted servant (he might have been **in the** house for years),

unjustly suspected. Suddenly I saw that this very attitude and expression made a picture, whereupon I told him to sit down and wait till I should be free. There was another picture in the way he obeyed me, and I observed as I worked that there were others still in the way he looked wonderingly, with his head thrown back, about the high studio. He might have been crossing himself in *St. Peter's*. Before I finished I said to myself: "The fellow's a bankrupt orangemonger, but he's a treasure."

When Mrs. Monarch withdrew he passed across the room like a flash to open the door for her, standing there with the rapt, pure gaze of the young Dante spellbound by the young Beatrice. As I never insisted, in such situations, on the blankness of the British domestic, I reflected that he had the making of a servant (and I needed one, but couldn't pay him to be only that, as well as of a model; in short I made up my mind to adopt my bright adventurer if he would agree to officiate in the double capacity. He jumped at my offer, and in the event my rashness (for I had known nothing about him) was not brought home to me. He proved a sympathetic though a desultory ministrant, and had in a wonderful degree the sentiment de la pose. It was uncultivated, instinctive; a part of the happy instinct which had guided him to my door and helped him to spell out my name on the card nailed to it. He had had no other introduction to me than a guess, from the shape of my high north window, seen outside, that my place was a studio and that as a studio it would contain an artist. He had wandered to England in

search of fortune, like other itinerants, and had embarked, with a partner and a small **green** handcart, on the sale of penny ices. The ices had melted away and the partner had dissolved in their train. My young man wore tight yellow trousers with reddish stripes and his name was Oronte. He was sallow but fair, **and** when I put him into some old clothes of my own he looked like an Englishman. He was as good as Miss Churm, who **could** look, when required, like an Italian.

## Iv

I thought **Mrs.Monarch's** face slightly **convulsed** when, on her coming back with her husband, she found Oronte installed. It was strange to have to **recognise** in a scrap of a **lazzarone** a competitor to her magnificent Major. **It** was she who scented danger first, for the Major was anecdotically unconscious. But Oronte gave us tea, with a hundred eager confusions (he had never seen such a queer process), and I think she thought better of me for having at last an **"establishment."** They saw a couple of drawings that I had made of the establishment, and **Mrs.Monarch** hinted that it never would have struck her that he had sat for them. **"Now** the drawings you make from us, they look exactly like **us,"** she reminded me, smiling in **triumph;** and I **recognised** that this was indeed just their defect. **When** I drew the Monarchs I couldn't, somehow, get away from them - get into the character I wanted to represent; and I had not the least desire **my** model should be discoverable in my picture. Miss Churm never was, and **Mrs.Monarch** thought I hid her, **very** properly, because she was vulgar; whereas if she was **lost**

it was only as the dead who go to heaven are lost - in the gain of an angel the *more*.

By this time I had got a certain start with "**Rutland Ramsay**," the first novel in the great projected series; that is, I had produced a dozen drawings, several with the help of the **Major** and his wife, and I had sent them in for approval. My understanding with the publishers, as I have already hinted, had been that I was to be left to do my work, in this particular case, as I liked, with the whole book committed to me; but my connection with the rest of the series was *only* contingent. There were moments when, frankly, it was a comfort to have the real thing under one's hand; for there were characters in "**Rutland Ramsay**" that were very much like it. There were people presumably as straight as the **Major** and women of as good a fashion as **Mrs. Monarch**. There was a great deal of country-house 'life - treated, it is true, in a fine, fanciful, ironical, generalised way - and there was a considerable implication of knickerbockers and kilts. There were certain things I had to settle at the outset; such things for instance as the exact appearance of the hero, the particular bloom of the heroine. the author of course gave me a lead, but there was a margin for interpretation. I took the **Monarchs** into my confidence, I told them *frankly* what I was about, I mentioned my embarrassments and *alternatives*. "Oh, take him!" **Mrs. Monarch** murmured sweetly, looking at her husband; and What *could* you want better than my wife?" the **Major** inquired, with the comfortable *candour* that now prevailed

between us.

I was not obliged to answer these remarks - I was only obliged to place my sitters. I was not easy in mind, and I postponed, a little timidly perhaps, the solution of the question. The book was a large canvas, the other figures were numerous, **and** I worked off at first some of the episodes in which the hero and the heroine were not concerned. **When** once I had set them up I should have to **stick** to them - I couldn't make my young man seven feet high in one place **and** five feet *nine* in another. I inclined on the whole to the latter measurement, though the Major more than once reminded me that he looked about as young as anyone. **It was** indeed quite possible to arrange him, for the figure, so that it would have been difficult to detect his age. After the spontaneous Oronte had been with me a month, and after I had given him to understand several different times that his native exuberance would presently constitute an insurmountable barrier to our further intercourse, I waked to a sense of his heroic capacity. **He** was only five feet seven, but the remaining inches were latent. I tried him almost secretly at first, for I was really rather afraid of the judgment my other models would pass on such a choice. If they regarded **Miss** Churm as little better than a snare, what would they think of the representation by a person so little the real thing as an Italian street-vendor of a protagonist formed by a public school?

If I went a little in fear of them it was not because they bullied me, because they had got an oppressive foothold, but because in their really pathetic decorum and mysteriously permanent newness

they counted on me so intensely. I was therefore very glad when Jack Hawley came home: he was always of such good counsel. He painted badly himself, but there was no one like him for putting his finger on the place. He had been absent from England for a year; he had been somewhere - I don't remember where - to get a fresh eye. I was in a good deal of dread of any such organ, but we were old friends; he had been away for months and a sense of emptiness was creeping into my life. I hadn't dodged a missile for a year.

He came back with a fresh eye, but with the same old black velvet blouse, and the first evening he spent in my studio we smoked cigarettes till the small hours. He had done no work himself, he had only got the eye; so the field was clear for the production of my little things. He wanted to see what I had done for the Cheapside, but he was disappointed in the exhibition. That at least seemed the meaning of two or three comprehensive groans which, as he lounged on my big divan, on a folded leg, looking at my latest drawings, issued from his lips with the smoke of the cigarette.

What's the matter with *you*?" I asked.

What's the matter with *you*!"

"Nothing save that I'm mystified."

"*You* are indeed. You're quite off the hinge. What's the meaning of this *nēw fad*?" And he tossed me, with visible irreverence, a drawing in which I happened to have depicted both *my* majestic models. I asked if he didn't think it good, and he replied that it struck him



as execrable, given the sort of thing I had always represented myself to him as wishing to arrive at; but I let that pass, I was so anxious to see exactly what he meant. The two figures in the picture looked colossal, but I supposed this was not what he meant, inasmuch as, for aught he **knew** to the contrary, I **might** have been trying for that. I maintained that I was working exactly in the same way as when he last had done me the honour to **commend** me.

"Well, there's a big hole somewhere," he answered; "wait a bit and I'll discover **it**." I depended upon him to do so; where else was the fresh eye? But he produced at last nothing more luminous than "I don't know - I don't like your **types**." This was lame, for a critic who had never consented to discuss with me anything but the question of execution, the **direction** of strokes and the mystery of values.

"In the drawings you've been looking at I think my types are very handsome."

"Oh, they **won't do!**"

"I've had a couple of new **models**."

"I see you have. **They won't do.**"

"Are you very sure of **that?**"

"**Absolutely** - they're stupid."

"You mean I am - for I ought to get round **that**."

"YOU **can't** - with such people. Who are they?"

I told him, **as far** as was necessary, and he declared, heartlessly: "**Ce sont des gens qu'il faut mettre à la porte.**"

"You've never seen them; they're awfully good," I compassionately objected.

"Not seen them? Why, all this recent work of yours droups to pieces with them. It's all I want to see of them."

"No one else has said anything against it - the Cheapside people are pleased."

"Everyone else is an ass, and the Cheapside people the biggest asses of all. Come, don't pretend, at this time of day, to have pretty illusions about the public, especially about publishers and editors. It's not for such animals you work - it's for those who know, *coloro che sanno*; so keep straight for me if you can't keep straight for yourself. There's a certain sort of thing you tried for from the first -, and a very good thing it is. But this twaddle isn't in it." When I talked with Hawley later about "Rufland Ramsay" and its possible successors he declared that I must get back into my boat again or I would go to the bottom. His voice in short was the voice of warning.

I noted the warning, but I didn't turn my friends out of doors. They bored me a good deal; but the very fact that they bored me admonished me not to sacrifice them - if there was anything to be done with them - simply to irritation. As I look back at this phase they seem to me to have pervaded my life not a little. I have a vision of them as most of the time in my studio, seated, against the wall, on an old velvet bench to be out of the way, and looking

like a pair of patient courtiers in a royal ante-chamber. I am convinced that during the coldest weeks of the winter they held their ground because it saved them fire. Their newness was losing its gloss, and it was impossible not to feel that they were objects of charity. **Whenever Miss** Churm arrived they went away, and after I was fairly launched in "**Rutland Ramsay**" Miss **Churm** arrived pretty often. They managed to express to me tacitly that they supposed I wanted her for the low life of the book, and I let them suppose it, since they had attempted to study the work - it was lying about the studio - without discovering that it dealt only with the highest circles. They had dipped into the most brilliant of our novelists without deciphering many passages. I still took an hour from them, now and again, in spite of Jack Hawley's warning: it would be time enough to dismiss them, if dismissal should be necessary, when the **rigour** of the season was over. Hawley had made their acquaintance - he had met them at **my** fireside - and thought them a ridiculous pair. Learning that he was a painter they tried to approach him, to show him too that they were the real thing; but he looked at them, across the big room, as if they were miles away: they were a compendium of everything that he most objected to **in** the **social** system of his country. Such people as that, all convention and patentleather, with ejaculations that stopped conversation, had no business in a studio. A studio was a place to learn to see, and how could you see through a pair of feather beds?

The main inconvenience I suffered at their hands was that, at first, I was shy of letting them discover how my artful little servant had begun to sit to me for "**Rutland Ramsay.**" They knew that I had been odd enough (they were prepared by this time to allow oddity to artists,) to pick a foreign vagabond out of the *streets*, when I might have had a person with whiskers and credentials; but it was some time before they learned how high I rated his accomplishments. They found him in an attitude more than *once*, but they never doubted I was doing him as an organ-grinder. There were several things they never guessed, and one of them was that for a striking scene in the novel, in which a footman briefly figured, it occurred to me to make use of **Major Monarch** as the menial. I kept putting this off, I didn't like to ask him to don the livery - besides the difficulty of finding a livery to fit him. At last, one day late in the winter, when I was at work on the despised **Oronte** (he caught one's idea in an instant), and was in the glow of feeling that I was going very straight, they came in, the Major and his wife, with their society laugh about nothing (there was less and less to laugh at), like country-callers - they always reminded me of that - who have walked *across* the park after church and are presently persuaded to stay to luncheon. Luncheon was over, but they could stay to tea - I knew they wanted it. The fit was on me, however, and I couldn't let my **ardour** cool and my work wait, with the fading daylight, while my **model** prepared it. So I asked **Mrs. Monarch** if she would mind laying it out - a request which, for an instant, brought all the

blood to her face. Her eyes were on her husband's for a second, and some mute telegraphy passed between them. Their folly was over the next instant; his **cheerful** shrewdness put an end to it. So far from pitying their wounded pride, I must add, I was moved to give it as complete a lesson as I could. They bustled about together and got out the cups and *saucers* and made the kettle boil. I know they felt as if they were waiting on my servant, **and** when the tea was prepared I said: "He'll have a cup, please - he's **tired**." **Mrs. Monarch** brought him one where he stood, and he took it from her as if he had been a gentleman at a party, squeezing a crush-hat with an elbow.

Then it came over me that she had made a great effort for me - made it with a kind of nobleness - and that I owed her a compensation. **Each** time I saw her after this I wondered what the compensation could be. I couldn't go on doing the wrong thing to oblige them. Oh, it was the wrong thing, the stamp of the work for which they sat - Hawley was not the only person to say it now. I sent **in** a *large* number of the drawings I had made for "**Rutland Ramsay**," and I received a warning that was more to the point than **Hawley's**. The artistic adviser of the house for which I was working was of opinion that many of **my** illustrations were not what had been looked for. **Most** of these illustrations were the subjects **in** which the **Monarchs** had figured. **Without** going into the question of what had been looked for, I *saw* at this rate I **shouldn't** get the other books to do. I hurled myself in despair upon **Miss Churm**, I put her through all her paces. I not only adopted **Oronte** publicly as my hero, **but** one morning when the **Major** looked in to see if **I** didn't require him to finish a figure

for the Cheapside, for which he had begun to sit the week before, I told him that I had changed my mind - I would do the drawing **from my man**. At this my visitor turned pale and stood looking at me.

"Is he your idea of an English **gentleman**?" he asked.

I was disappointed, I was nervous, I wanted to get on with my work; so I replied with irritation: "Oh, my dear Major - I **can't** be ruined for **you!**"

He stood another moment; then, without a word, he quitted the studio. I drew a long breath when he was gone, for I said to myself that I shouldn't see him again. I had not told him definitely that I was in danger of having my work rejected, but I was vexed at his not having felt the catastrophe in the air, read with me the moral of our fruitless collaboration, the lesson that, in the deceptive atmosphere of art, even the highest respectability may fail of being plastic.

I **didn't** owe my friends money, but I did see them again. They re-appeared together, three days later, **and** under the circumstances there was something tragic in the fact. It was a proof to me that they could find nothing else in life to do. They had threshed the matter out in a dismal conference - they had digested the bad news that they were not in for the series. If they were *not* useful to me even for the Cheapside their function seemed difficult to determine, and I could only judge at first that they had come, **forgivingly**, decorously, to take a last leave. This made me rejoice in secret that I had little leisure for a scene; for I had placed

both my other models in position together and I was pegging away at a drawing **from** which I hoped to derive glory. It had been suggested by the passage in which **Rutland Ramsay**, drawing up a chair to **Artemisia's** piano-stool, **says** extraordinary things to her while she ostensibly fingers out a difficult piece of music. I had done Hiss Churm at the piano before - it was an attitude in which she knew how to take on **an** absolutely poetic grace. I wished the two figures to "**compose**" together, intensely, and **my** little Italian had entered perfectly into my conception. The pair were vividly before me, the piano had been pulled out; it was a charming picture of blended youth **and** murmured love, which I had only to catch and keep. My visitors **stood** and looked at it, and I was friendly to them over my shoulder,

They made no response, but I was used to silent company and went on with my work, only a little disconcerted (even though exhilarated by the sense that this was at least the ideal thing), at not having got rid of them after **all**. Presently I heard **Mrs. Monarch's** sweet voice beside, **or** rather above me: "I wish her hair was a little better **don**." I looked up and she was staring with a **strange** fixedness at Miss Churm whose back was turned to her. "**Do** you mind my just touching **it**?" she went on - a question which made **me** spring up for an instant, as with the instinctive fear that she might do the young lady a harm. **But** she quieted me with a glance I shall never forget - I confess I should like to have been able to paint that - and went for a moment to **my** model. She spoke to her softly, laying a hand

upon her shoulder **and** bending over her; and as the girl, understandingly, gratefully assented, she disposed her rough curls, with a few quick passes, in such a way as to make **Miss Churm's** head twice as charming. It was one of the most heroic personal services I have ever seen rendered. Then **Mrs. Monarch** turned away with a low sigh and, looking about her as if for something to do, stooped to the floor with a noble humility and picked up a dirty rag that had dropped out of my paint-box.

The Major meanwhile had also been looking for something to do and, wandering to the other end of the studio, saw before him my breakfast things, neglected, unremoved. "I **say, can't** I be useful **here?**" he called out to me with an irrepressible quaver. I assented with a laugh that I fear was awkward and for the next ten minutes, while I worked, I heard the light clatter of china and the tinkle of spoons and glass. **Mrs. Monarch** assisted her husband - they washed up my crockery, they put it away. They wandered off into my little scullery, and I afterwards found that they had cleaned my knives and that my slender stock of plate had an unprecedented surface. **When** it came over me, the latent eloquence of what they were doing, I confess that my drawing was 'blurred for a moment - the picture swam. They had accepted their failure, but they couldn't accept their fate. They had bowed their heads in bewilderment to be perverse and cruel law in virtue of which the real thing could be so much less precious than the unreal; but they didn't want to starve. If my servants



were my models, my models might be my servants. They would reverse the parts - the others would sit for the ladies and gentlemen and they would do the work. They would still be in the studio - it was an intense dumb appeal to me not to turn them out. "Take us on," they wanted to say - "we'll do **anything.**"

When **all** this hung before me the afflatus vanished - my pencil dropped from **my** hand. My sitting was spoiled **and** I got rid of my sitters, who were also evidently rather mystified and awestruck. Then, alone with the Major and his wife, I had a most uncomfortable moment. He put their prayer into a single sentence: "I say, you know - just let us do for you, **can't you?**" I couldn't - it was dreadful to see them emptying my slops; but I pretended I could, to oblige them, for about a week. Then I gave them a sum of money to go away; and I never saw them again. I obtained the remaining books, but my friend Hawley repeats that Major and **Mrs. Monarch** did me a permanent harm, got me into a second-rate trick. If it be true I am **content** to have paid the price - for the memory.