

**THE EUROPEANS:
A SKETCH, VOL. I**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649230198

The Europeans: a sketch, Vol. I by Henry James

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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HENRY JAMES

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A SKETCH, VOL. I**

THE EUROPEANS.

A Sketch.

BY

HENRY JAMES, JR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

London:

MACMILLAN AND CO.

1878.

Mooney :
CLAY AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS.

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THE EUROPEANS.

CHAPTER I.

A NARROW grave-yard in the heart of a bustling, indifferent city, seen from the windows of a gloomy-looking inn, is at no time an object of enlivening suggestion; and the spectacle is not at its best when the mouldy tombstones and funereal umbrage have received the ineffectual refreshment of a dull, moist snow-fall. If, while the air is thickened by this frosty drizzle, the calendar should happen to indicate that the blessed vernal season is already six weeks old, it will

be admitted that no depressing influence is absent from the scene. This fact was keenly felt on a certain 12th of May, upwards of thirty years since, by a lady who stood looking out of one of the windows of the best hotel in the ancient city of Boston. She had stood there for half-an-hour—stood there, that is, at intervals; for from time to time she turned back into the room and measured its length with a restless step. In the chimney-place was a red-hot fire, which emitted a small blue flame; and in front of the fire, at a table, sat a young man who was busily plying a pencil. He had a number of sheets of paper cut into small equal squares, and he was apparently covering them with pictorial designs—strange-

looking figures. He worked rapidly and attentively, sometimes threw back his head and held out his drawing at arm's-length, and kept up a soft, gay-sounding humming and whistling. The lady brushed past him in her walk; her much-trimmed skirts were voluminous. She never dropped her eyes upon his work; she only turned them, occasionally, as she passed, to a mirror suspended above a toilet-table on the other side of the room. Here she paused a moment, gave a pinch to her waist with her two hands, or raised these members—they were very plump and pretty—to the multifold braids of her hair, with a movement half-caressing, half-corrective. An attentive observer might have fancied that

during these periods of desultory self-inspection her face forgot its melancholy ; but as soon as she neared the window again; it began to proclaim that she was a very ill-pleased woman. And indeed in what met her eyes there was little to be pleased with. The window-panes were battered by the sleet; the head-stones in the grave-yard beneath seemed to be holding themselves askance to keep it out of their faces. A tall iron railing protected them from the street, and on the other side of the railing an assemblage of Bostonians were trampling about in the liquid snow. Many of them were looking up and down; they appeared to be waiting for something. From time to time a strange vehicle drew near to the place

where they stood,—such a vehicle as the lady at the window, in spite of a considerable acquaintance with human inventions, had never seen before: a huge, low omnibus, painted in brilliant colours, and decorated apparently with jingling bells, attached to a species of groove in the pavement, through which it was dragged, with a great deal of rumbling, bouncing, and scratching, by a couple of remarkably small horses. When it reached a certain point the people in front of the grave-yard, of whom much the greater number were women, carrying satchels and parcels, projected themselves upon it in a compact body—a movement suggesting the scramble for places in a life-boat at sea—and were engulfed in its large