THE NOVELS OF HENRY JAMES: A STUDY, PP. 4-215

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The Novels of Henry James: A Study, pp. 4-215 by Elisabeth Luther Cary

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ELISABETH LUTHER CARY

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The Novels of Henry James

A Study

By

Elisabeth Luther Cary

With a Bibliography by Frederick A. King

G. P. Putnam's Sons New York and London The Knickerbocker Press 1905

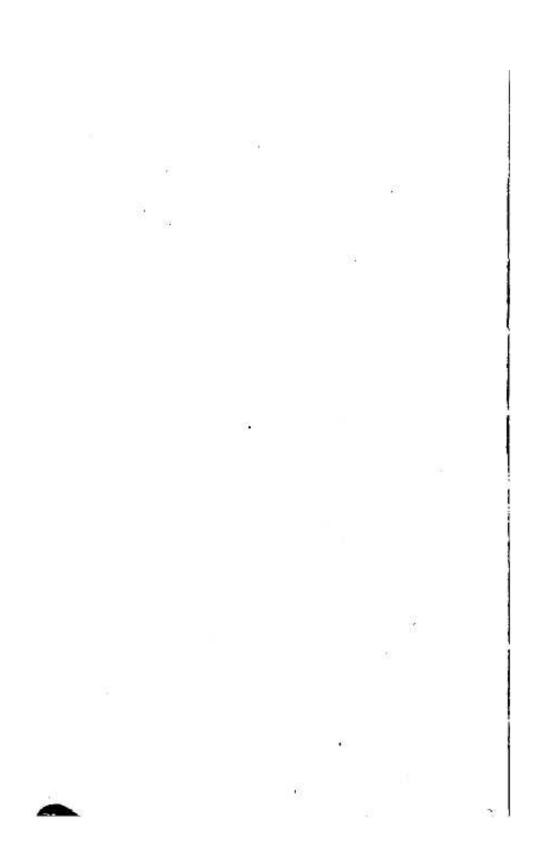
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the "cultivated minority," when the foreign galleries were not yet filled with American tourists, can forget its irresistible note of youthful receptivity, of eloquent rejoicing in "the beautiful scenic properties of English life," of bright suggestion that only a "poor disinherited Yankee" could properly appreciate the "points" of admirable England. As it grew more and more apparent that this England was to retain its fascination in the eyes of the itinerant critic, and that his interest in the enchanting English landscape was to wrap itself closely about the figures with which, he early noted, an English landscape is always amply relieved, it became a matter almost of anxiety to discover in what frame of mind he was to interrogate the much entangled human scene on which his eyes were so



HENRY JAMES'S HOUSE AT RYE, SUSSEX. Etched by Mr. Lionel Lindsey.



intelligently bent. Already seen to be gifted with an extraordinary capacity for self-expression, and amazingly perceptive, responsive, accurate, and imaginative, he set us at liberty to indulge in brilliant expectations. early novels seemed the vanguard of a body of literature that should win an easy triumph over the commonplace. Some of us shook our heads, to be sure, over what we vaguely suspected to be their "foreign flavour," their apparent derivation from sources with which we were not ourselves intimately acquainted; but there was compensation in having the pleasure of such an undeniably rare quality, and furnished for us by one of our own race, of our national family. He has told us that to be at once fresh and ripe of mind was what Lowell predominantly understood by being a good American, and on his own part he has never ceased to be one in that particular sense.

But if it is true that "America is Opportunity," it was logical enough to feel, as many early readers of Mr. James vociferously did feel, that a species of practical joke was cruelly played upon that innocent country when its most promising and competent novelist made prompt use of the opportunity to leave it. It was at least, perhaps, a measure of the American desire to possess him that his flitting was so openly resented. Such naïve resentments have slipped, however, into the background of the national consciousness. Concern for the dignity of the country has come with time to mean in serious minds some-