

**THE ODD NUMBER;
THIRTEEN TALES**

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The odd number; thirteen tales by Guy de Maupassant & Jonathan Sturges & Henry James

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GUY DE MAUPASSANT & JONATHAN STURGES & HENRY JAMES

THE ODD NUMBER; THIRTEEN TALES

The Odd Number

THE ODD NUMBER

Thirteen Tales

By

Guy de Maupassant

THE TRANSLATION

By JONATHAN STURGES

AN INTRODUCTION

By HENRY JAMES

NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE

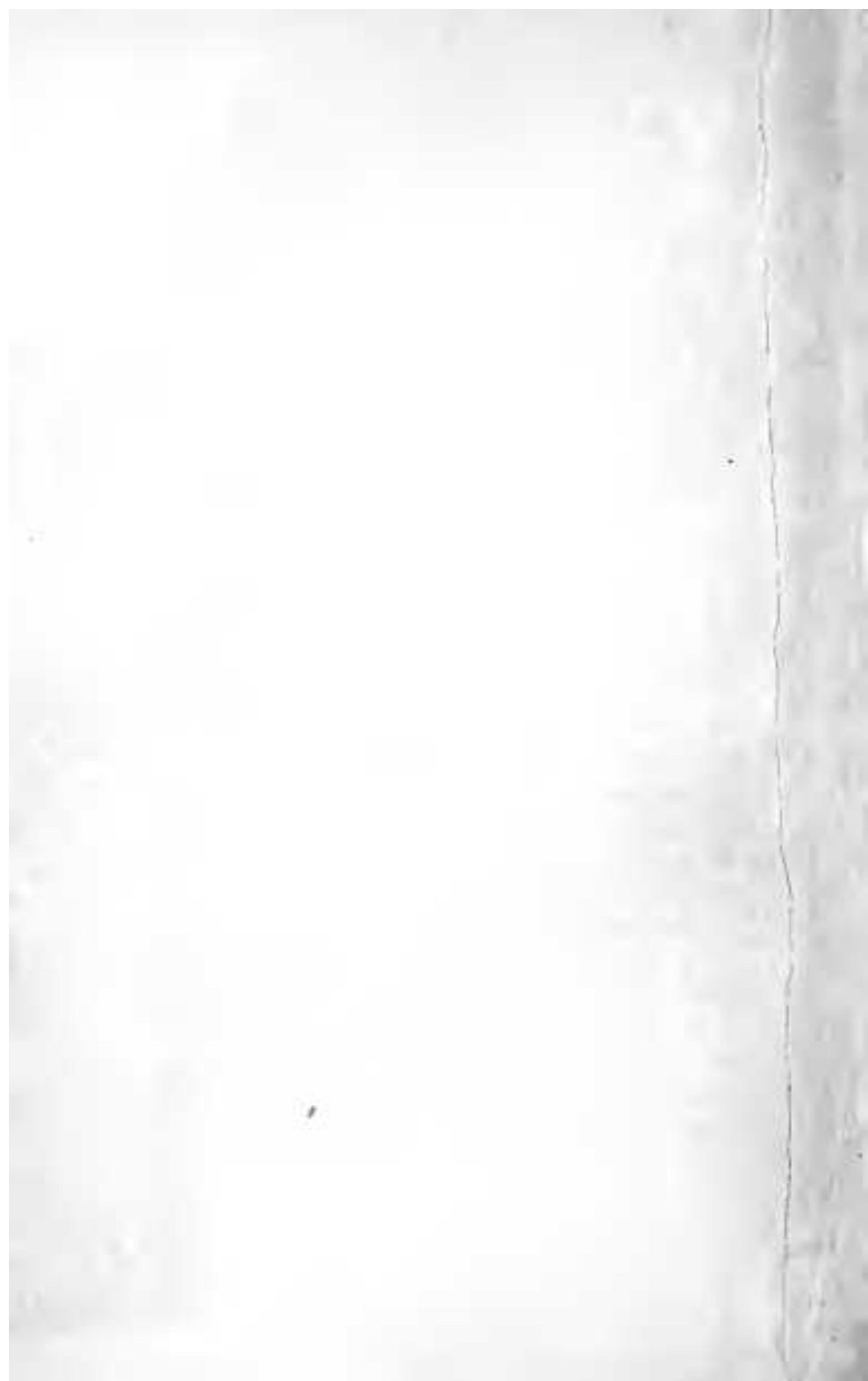
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INTRODUCTION.

GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

IT is so embarrassing to speak of the writers of one country to the readers of another that I sometimes wonder at the complacency with which the delicate task is entered upon. These are cases in which the difficult art of criticism becomes doubly difficult, inasmuch as they compel the critic to forfeit what I may call his natural advantages. The first of these natural advantages is that those who read him shall help him by taking a great many things for granted; shall allow him his general point of view and his terms—terms which he is not obliged to define. The relation of the American reader to the French writer, for instance, is, on the contrary, so indirect that it gives him who proposes to mediate between

them a great deal more to do. Here he has in a manner to define his terms and establish his point of view.

The first simplification he is prompted to effect is therefore to ask the reader to make the effort to approach the author as nearly as possible in the supposed spirit of one of his own (one of the author's) fellow-countrymen. If the author be French, remember that, as it is to Frenchmen he addresses himself, it is profitless to read him without a certain displacement of tradition. If he be German, reflect in the same way that it was far from his business to write in such a manner as would conciliate most the habits and prejudices of the English-speaking mind. There are doubtless many people all ready to regard themselves as injured by a suggestion that they should for the hour, and even in the decent privacy of the imagination, comport themselves as creatures of alien (by which we usually understand inferior) race. To them it is only to be answered that they had better never touch a foreign book on any terms, but lead a contented life in the homogeneous medium of the dear old mother-speech. That life, by compensation, they will of course endeavor to make as rich as possible; and there is