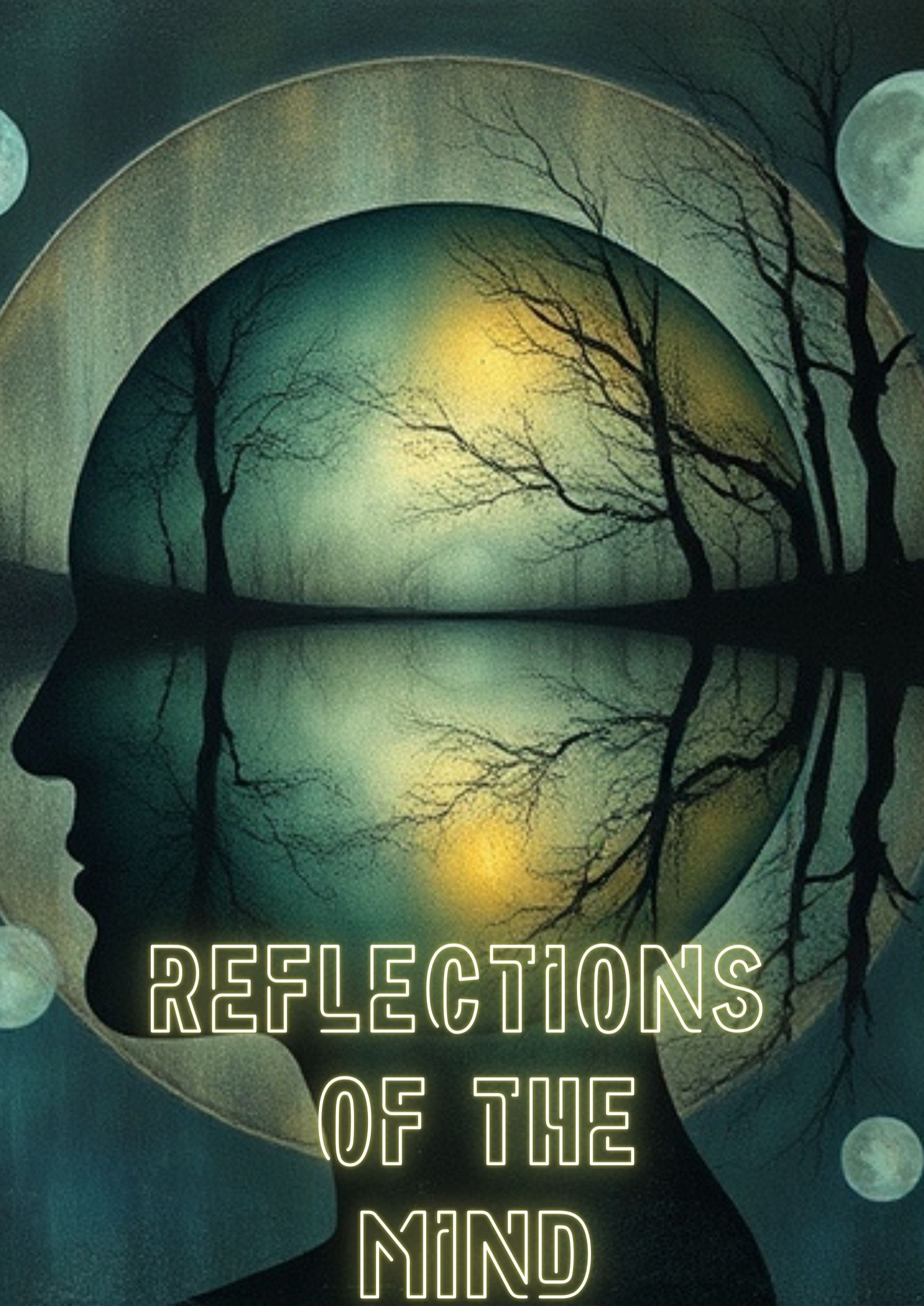
REFLECTIONS
OF THE
MIND

"Well, the deuce and all with a woman when she begins to read stuff like that is her inability to generalize. You women take everything home to yourselves. You try to deduct conclusions from your own lives which men like Schopenhauer have scanned the centuries for. The natural course of your life could hardly have provided you with the pessimism with which—I hope you will pardon my remark, my dear—you have treated me several times in the past few months. Chamfort and Schopenhauer did that. But these are not subjects a man discusses easily with his wife." "Indeed? Then that is surely an error of civilization. If a man can discuss such matters more easily with a woman who is not his wife, it is because there is no frankness in marriage. Dick, did it ever occur to you that a man and woman, strongly attracted toward one another, might live together many years without understanding each other?" "God forbid!" "How easily you say that!" "I have heard that most women think they are not understood, but I never reflected on the matter." "You and I have not troubled one another much with our doubts and perplexities." "You and I have been very happy together—I hope." There was a little pause before the last two words, as if he had expected her to anticipate them with something, and there was a half interrogative note in his voice. She made no response, so he went on, "I've surely not been a hard master—and I hope I've not been selfish. I know I've not been unloving." "And I hope you've not suffered many discomforts on my account. I think, as women go, I am fairly reasonable—or I have been." For some reason Shattuck seemed to find the cigar he was smoking most unsatisfactory. Either it had been broken, or he had unconsciously chewed the end—a thing which he detested—and there was a pause while he discarded the weed, and selected a fresh one. He appeared to be reflecting as he lighted it, and if his mind could have been read, it would have probably been discovered that he was wondering how it had happened that the conversation had taken this turn, and mentally cursing his own stupidity in making any remarks on the Schopenhauer. He was conscious all the time that his wife was looking rather steadily at him, and he knew that at least a conventional reply was expected of him. "My dear girl," he said, "I look back on ten very satisfactory years of married life. You have been a model wife, a charming companion—and if occasionally it has occurred to me—just lately—that my wife has developed rather singular, to say the least, unflattering ideas of life, why, you have such a brilliant way of putting it, that I am more than half proud that you've the brains to hold such ideas, though they are a bit disconcerting to me as a husband. I suppose the development is logical enough. You were always, even as a girl, inclined to making footnotes. I suppose their present daring is simply the result of our being just a little older than we used to be. I suppose if we did not outgrow our illusions, the road to death would be too tragic." For a moment she made no reply. Then, as if for the first time owning to the idea which had long been uppermost in her mind, she said suddenly: "The truth of the matter is, that I really believe marriage is foolish. I do believe that no man ever approached it without regretting that civilization had made it necessary, and that many men would escape, at the very last moment, if women did not so rigidly hold them to their promises, and if, between two ridiculous positions, marriage having been pushed nearest, had not become desperately inevitable." "How absurd, Naomi, when you see the whole procession of men walking,— according to their dispositions—calmly or eagerly to their fate every day." "Nevertheless, I think the pre-nuptial confessions of a majority of men of our class, would prove that what I say is true." "Are you hinting that it was true in your case?" "Perhaps." Shattuck gave an amused laugh. "Do you mean to say that you kept me to the point?" "Not exactly. At that time I had an able bodied father who would have had to be dealt with. Besides, a man does not own up even to himself—not always—when he finds himself face to face with the inevitable. I am not speaking of what men talk about in such cases, or of what they do, but of what they feel,—of the fact that, in too many instances, Nature not having meant men for bondage, after they have passed the Rubicon to that spot from which the code of civilized honor does not permit them to turn back, they usually have a period of regret, and are forced to make a real effort to face the Future,—to go on, in fact."

The smile had died out of Shattuck's face and he said quite seriously: "As far as we are concerned, Naomi, I have very different recollections of the whole affair." "Have you? And yet, months before we were married, I knew that it would not have broken your heart if the wedding had not come off at all." "My dear, the modern heart does not break easily in this age. We are schooled to meet the accidents of life with some philosophy." "And yet to have lost you then, would have killed me." Shattuck looked at her sharply, with, one might almost have said, a new interest, but she was no longer looking at him. She went on, hurriedly: "You loved me, of course. I was of your world. I was a woman that other men liked, and therefore a desirable woman. I was of good family—altogether your social equal, in fact, quite the sort of woman it became you to marry. I pleased you—and I loved you." "Thank you, my dear," he said. "In ten years, I doubt if you have ever made so frank a declaration as that—in words." He was wondering, if, after all, she were going to develop into an emotional woman, and his heart gave a quick leap at the very thought—for there are hours when a woman who runs too much to head has a man at a cruel disadvantage. "Things are so much harder, so much more complex for a woman," she went on. "For the protection of the community?" "Perhaps. Still, it is not always pleasant to be a woman,—and yet think; a woman whose reason has been mistakenly developed at the expense of her capacity to enjoy being a woman, and who is forced at the same time to encounter the laws of Nature, and pay at the same time, the penalty of being a woman, and the penalty of knowledge. For, just so surely as we live, we must encounter love.—" "You might take it out," interrupted the husband, "in feeling flattered that it takes so much to conquer such as you." "So we might, but that, once conquered, neither man nor Nature has any further use for us, and regret, like art, is long. Not even you can deny," she exclaimed, sitting up in some excitement, and letting her cushions fall in a mess all about her, "that life is very unfair to women." "Well, I don't see that. Physically it is a little rough on you, but there are compensations." "I have never been able to discover them. Love itself is hard on a woman. It seems to stir a man's faculties healthily. They seem the stronger and more fit for it. It does not seem to uproot a man's whole being. Does it serve women in that way?" "I bear witness that it makes some of you deucedly handsome. And I have heard that it makes some of you—good." "Yes, as chastisement does. No, Life seems to have adjusted matters between men and women very badly, very unjustly." "And yet, as this life is the only one we know we must adjust ourselves to it as we find it." "No, no. We had better have accepted the thing as Nature gave it to us. We came into this world like beasts—why aren't we content to live like beasts, and make no pretenses? Women would have nothing to expect then, and there'd be no such thing as broken hearts. In spite of all the polish of civilization, man is simply bent on conquest. Woman is only one phase of the chase to him—a chase in which every active virile man is occupied from his cradle to his grave. You are the conquerors. We are simply the conquered." Shattuck tried to make his voice light, as he said: "Not always unhappy ones, I fancy." "I suppose all men flatter themselves that way, and argue that probably the Sabine women preferred their fate to no fate at all." "Don't be bitter on so old and impersonal a topic, Naomi. It is the law of life that one must give, and one must take. That the emotions differ does not prove that one is better than the other." Shattuck took a turn up and down the long room, not quite at ease with himself. Mrs. Shattuck seemed to be thinking. As he passed her, he stopped, picked up her cushions, and re-arranged them about her, with an idle caress by the way, a kiss gently dropped on the inside of her white wrist. She followed his every movement with a strange speculative look in her eyes, almost as if he were some new and strange animal that she was studying for the first time.

When she spoke again, it was to go on as if she had not been interrupted, "It seems to me that man comes out of a great passion just as good as new, while a woman is shattered—in a moral sense—and never fully recovers herself." Shattuck's back was toward her when he replied. "Sorry to spoil any more illusions, dear child, but how about the long list of men who are annually ruined by it? The men in the prisons, the men who kill themselves, the men who hang for it?" "Those are crimes. I am not talking of the criminal classes, but of the world in which normal people live." "Our set," he laughed, "but that is not the whole world, alas!" "I know that men—well bred, cultivated, refined, even honorable men,—seem to be able to repeat every emotion of life. A woman scales the heights but once. Hence it must depend, in the case of women capable of deep love—on the men whether the relation into which marriage betrays them be decent or indecent. What I should like to be able to discover is—what provision does either man or civilization propose to make for the woman whom Fate, in wanton irony, reduces, even in marriage, to the self-considered level of the girl in the street?" There was amazement—even a foreboding—on Shattuck's face as he paused in his walk, and, for the first time speaking anxiously ejaculated, "I swear I don't follow you!" She went on as if she had not been interrupted, as if she had something to say which had to be said, as if she were reasoning it out for herself: "Take my case. I don't claim that it is uncommon. I do claim that I was not the woman for the situation. I was an only child. My father's marriage had not been happy. I was brought up by a disappointed man on philosophy and pessimism." "Old sceptics, and modern scoffers. I remember it well." "Before I was out of my teens, I had imbibed a mistrust for all emotions. Perhaps you did not know that? You may have thought, because they were not all on the outside, that I had none. My poor father had hoped, with his teachings, to save me from future misery. He had probably thought to spare me the commonplace sorrows of love. But he could not." "There is one thing, my child, that the passing generation cannot do for its heirs—live for them—luckily. Why, you might as well forbid a rose to blossom by word of mouth, as try to thwart nature in a beautiful healthy woman." "It seems to me that to bring up a woman as I was brought up only prepares her to take the distemper the quicker." "I do not remember that of you. But I do know that no woman was ever wooed as hotly as you were—or ever—I swear it—more ardently desired. No woman ever led a man the chase you led me. If ever in those days you were as anxious for my love as you have said you were this evening, no one would have guessed it, least of all I." "My reason had already taught me that mine was but the common fate of all women: that life was demanding of me the usual tribute to posterity: that the sweetness of the emotion was Nature's trick to make it endurable. But according to Nature's eternal plan, my heart could not listen to my head—it beat so loud when you were by, it could not hear, perhaps. But there was something of my father's philosophy left in me, and when I was alone it would speak, and be heard, too. Even when I believed in you—because I wanted to—and half hoped that all my teaching was wrong, I made a bargain with myself. I told myself, quite calmly, that I knew perfectly well all the possibilities of the future. That if I went forward with you, I went forward deliberately with open eyes, knowing what, logically, I might expect to find in the future. Ignorance—that blissful comfort of so many women,—was denied me. Still, the spell of Nature was upon me, and for a time I dreamed that a depth of passionate love like mine, a life of loyal devotion might wrap one man round, and keep him safe—might in fact, work a miracle—and make one polygamous man monogamous. But, even while that hope was in my heart, reason rose up and mocked it, bidding me advance into the Future at my peril. I did it, but I made a bargain with myself, I agreed to abide the consequences—and to abide them calmly."

"And during all those days when I supposed we were so near together—you showed me nothing of this that was in your heart." "Men and women know very rarely anything of the great struggles that go on in the hearts of one another. Besides, I knew how easily you would reply— naturally. We are all on the defensive in this life. It was with things deeper than words that I was dealing—the things one does—not says. Even in the early days of our engagement I knew that I was not as essential to you as you were to me. Life held other interests for you. Even the flattery of other women still had its charm for you. Young as I was, I said to myself: 'If you marry this man—with your eyes open—blame yourself, not him, if you suffer.' I do believe that I have been able to do that." Shattuck was astride his chair again, his elbows on the back, his chin in his hands. He no longer responded. Words were dangerous. His lips were pressed close together, and there was a long deep line between his eyes. "My love for you absorbed every other emotion of my life. But I seemed to lack some of the qualities that aid to reconcile other wives to life. I seemed to be without mother-love. My children were dear to me only because they were yours. The maternal passion, which in so many women is the absorbing emotion of life, was denied me. My children were to me merely the tribute to posterity which Life had demanded of me as the penalty of your love—nothing more. I must be singularly unfitted for marriage, because, when the hour came in which I felt that I was no longer your wife, your children seemed no longer mine. They merely represented the next generation—born of me. I know that this is very shocking. I have become used to it,—and, it is the truth. I have not blamed you, I could not—and be reasonable. No man can be other than Nature plans or permits, but how I have pitied myself! I have been through the tempest alone. In spite of reason,—in spite of philosophy—I have suffered from jealousy, from shame, from rage, from self contempt. But that is all past now." She had not raised her voice, which seemed as without feeling as it was without emphasis. She carefully examined her handkerchief corner by corner, and he noticed for the first time how thin her hands had become. "Naturally," she went on in that colorless voice, "my first impulse was to be done with life. But I could not bring myself to that, much as I desired it. It would have left you such a wretched memory of me. You could never have pardoned me the scandal—and I felt that I had at least the right to leave you a decent recollection of me." Shattuck's head fell forward on his arms.—The idea of denial or protest did not occur to him. The steady voice went monotonously on. "I could not bear to humble you in the eyes of others even by forcing you to face a scandal. I could not bear to humble you in your own eyes by letting you suspect that I knew the truth. I could not bring myself to disturb the outward respectability of your life by interrupting its outward calm. To be absolutely honest—though I had lost you, I could not bring myself to give you up,—as I felt I must, if I let any one discover—most of all you—what I knew. So, like a coward, I lived on, becoming gradually accustomed to the idea that my day was past, but knowing that the moment I was forced to speak, I would be forced to move on out of your life. Singularly enough, as I grew calm, I grew to respect this other woman. I could not blame her for loving you. I ended by admiring her. I had known her so well—she was such a proud woman! I looked back at my marriage and saw the affair as it really was. I had not sold myself to you exactly—I had loved you too much to bargain in that way; nevertheless, the marriage had been a bargain. In exchange for your promise to protect and provide for me,—to feed me, clothe me, share your fortune with me, and give me your name, I had given you myself,—openly sanctioned by the law, of course—I was too great a coward to have done it otherwise, in spite of the fact that the law gives that same permission to almost any one who asks for it." "Naomi," he groaned from his covered mouth, "what ghastly philosophy."

"Isn't that the marriage law? How much better am I after all than the poor girl in the street, who is forced to it by misery? To be sure, I believe there is some farcical phrase in the bargain about promising to love none other,—a bare-faced attempt to outwit Nature,—at which Nature laughs. Yet this other woman, proud, high-minded, unselfish, hitherto above reproach, had given herself for love alone —with everything to lose and nothing to gain. I have come to doubt myself. I have had my day. For years it was an enviable one. No woman can hope for more. What right have I to stand in the way of another woman's happiness? A happiness no one can value better than I, who so long wore it in security. I bore my children in peace, with the divine consolation of your devotion about me. What right have I to deny another woman the same joy?" Shattuck sprang to his feet. "It's not true!" he gasped. "It's not true!" The woman never even raised her eyes. She went on carefully inspecting the filmy bit of lace in her hands. "It is true," she replied. "Never mind how I discovered it. I know it. That is why she has gone abroad alone. I did not speak until I had to. I am a coward, but not enough of one to bear the thought of her alone in a foreign country with mind and emotions clouded. I may be cowardly enough to wish that I had never found it out,—I am not coward enough to keep silent any longer." A torrent of words rushed to the man's lips, but he was too wise to make excuses. Yet there were excuses. Any fair-minded judge would have said so. But he knew better than to think that for one moment they would be excuses in the mind of this woman. Besides, the first man's excuse for the first sin has never been viewed with much respect under the modern civilization. He felt her slowly rise to her feet, and when he raised his head to look at her— not yet fully realizing what had happened to him—all emotion seemed to have become so foreign to her face, that he felt as if she were already a stranger to him. She took a last look round the room. Her eyes seemed to devour every detail. "I shall find means to give you your freedom at once." "You will actually leave me—go away?" "Can we two remain together now?" "But your children?" "Your children, Dick—I have forgotten that I have any. I have had my life. You have still yours to live." She swept by him down the long room, everything in which was so closely associated with her. Before she reached the door, he was there—and his back against it. She stopped, but she did not look at him. If she could have read the truth in his face, it would have told her that she had never been loved as she was at that moment. All that she had been in her loyalty, her nobility, was so much a part of this man's life. What, compared to that, were petty sins, or big ones? He saw the past as a drowning man sees the panorama of his existence. Yet he knew that everything he could say would be powerless to move her. It was useless to remind her of their happy years together. They could never be happy again with this between them. It would be equally useless to tell her that this other woman had known, but too well, that he would never desert his wife for her. Had he not betrayed her? Of what use to tell her how he had repented his folly, that he could never understand it himself? There were the facts, and Nature, and his wife's philosophy against him. And he had dared be gay the moment the steamer slid into the channel! Was that only this morning? It seemed to be in the last century. She approached, and stretched her hand toward the door. He did not move. "Don't stop me," she pleaded. "Don't make it any harder than it is. Let me take with me the consolation of a decent life together—a decent life decently severed." He made one last appeal—he opened his arms wide to her. She shrank back with a shudder, crying out that he should spare her her own contempt—that he should leave her the power to seek peace—and her voice had such a tone of terror, as she recoiled from him, that he felt how powerless any protest would be. He stepped aside. Without looking at him she quickly opened the door and passed out. The Divorcée nervously rolled up her manuscript.

The usual laugh was not forthcoming. No one dared. Men can't rough-house that kind of a woman. After a moment's silence the Critic spoke up. "You were right to read that story. It is not the sort of thing that lends itself to narrating. Of course you might have acted it out, but you were wise not to." "I can't help it—got to say it," said the Journalist: "What a horrid woman!" The Divorcée looked at him in amazement. "How can you say that?" she exclaimed. "I thought I had made her so reasonable. Just what all women ought to be, and what none of us are." "Thank God for that," said the Journalist. "I'd as lief live in a world created and run by George Bernard Shaw as in one where women were like that." "Come, come," interrupted the Doctor, who had been eyeing her profile with a curious half amused expression, all through the reading: "Don't let us get on that subject to-night. A story is a story. You have asked, and you have received. None of you seem to really like any story but your own, and I must confess that among us, we are putting forth a strange baggage." "On the contrary," said the Critic, "I think we are doing pretty well for a crowd of amateurs." "You are not an amateur," laughed the Journalist, "and yours was the worst yet." "I deny it," said the Critic. "Mine had real literary quality, and a very dramatic climax." "Oh, well, if death is dramatic—perhaps. You are the only one up to date who has killed his heroine." "No story is finished until the heroine is dead," said the Journalist. "This woman, —I'll bet she had another romance." "Did she?" asked the Critic of the Divorcée, who was still nervously rolling her manuscript in both hands. "I don't know. How should I? And if I did I shouldn't tell you. It isn't a true story, of course." And she rose from her chair and walked away into the moonlight. "Do you mean to say," ejaculated the Violinist, who admired her tremendously, "that she made that up in the imagination she carries around under that pretty fluffy hair? I'd rather that it were true—that she had picked it up somewhere." As we began to prepare to go in, the Doctor looked down the path to where the Divorcée was still standing. After a moment's hesitation he took her lace scarf from the back of her chair, and strolled after her. The Sculptor shrugged his shoulders with such a droll expression that we all had to smile. Then we went indoors. "Well," said the Doctor, as he joined her—she told me about it afterwards—"was that the way it happened?" "No, no," replied the Divorcée, petulantly. "That is not a bit the way it happened. That is the way I wish it had happened. Oh, no. I was brought up to believe in the proprietary rights in marriage, and I did what I thought became a womanly woman. I asserted my rights, and made a common or garden row." The Doctor laughed, as she stamped her foot at him. "Pardon—pardon," said he. "I was only going to say 'Thank God.' You know I like it best that way." "I wish I had not told the old story," she said pettishly. "It serves me quite right. Now I suppose they've got all sorts of queer notions in their heads." "Nonsense," said the Doctor. "All authors, you know, run the risk of getting mixed up in their romances—think of Charlotte Brontë." "I'm not an author, and I am going to bed,—to repent of my folly," and she sailed into the house, leaving the Doctor gazing quizzically after her. Before she was out of hearing, he called to her: "I say, you haven't changed a bit since .” She heard but she did not answer. The next day we all hung about the garden, except the Youngster, who disappeared on his wheel early in the day, and only came back, hot and dusty, at tea-time. He waved a hand at us as he ran through the garden crying: "I'll change, and be with you in a moment," and leapt up the outside staircase that led to the gallery on which his room opened, and disappeared. I found an opportunity to go up the other staircase a little later—the Youngster was an old pet of mine, and off and on, I had mothered him. I tapped at the door. "Can't come in!" he cried. "Where've you been?" "Wait there a minute—and mum—. I'll tell you." So I went and sat in the window looking down the road, until he came, spick and span in white flannels, with his head not yet dried from the douching he had taken.

"See here," he whispered, "I know you can keep a secret. Well, I've been out toward Cambrai—only sixty miles—and I am tuckered. There was a battle there last night—English driven back. They are only two days' march away, and oh! the sight on the roads. Don't let's talk of it." In spite of myself, I expect I went white, for he exclaimed: "Darn it, I suppose I ought not to have told you. But I had to let off to some one. I don't want to tell the Doctor. In fact, he forbade my going again." "Is it a real German victory?" I asked. "If it isn't I don't know what you'd call it, though such of the English as I saw were in gay enough spirits, and there was not an atmosphere of defeat. Fact is—I kept out of sight and only got stray impressions. Go on down now, or they'll guess something. I'm not going to say a word—yet. Awful sorry now I told you. Force of habit." I went down. I had hard work for a few minutes to throw the impression off. But the garden was lovely, and tea being over, we all busied ourselves in rifling the flowerbeds to dress the dinner table. If we were going in two days, where was the good of leaving the flowers to die alone? I don't suppose that it was strange that the table conversation was all reminiscent. We talked of the old days: of ourselves when we were boys and girls together: of old Papanti, and our first Cotillion, of Class Days, and, I remembered afterward, that not one of us talked of ourselves except in the days of our youth. When the coffee came out, we looked about laughing to see which of the three of us left was to tell the story. The Lawyer coughed, tapped himself on his chest, and crossed his long legs. It was a cold December afternoon. The air was piercing. There had been a slight fall of snow, then a sudden drop in the thermometer preceded nightfall. Miss Moreland, wrapped in her furs, was standing on a street corner, looking in vain for a cab, and wondering, after all, why she had ventured out. It was somewhat later than she had supposed, and she was just conventional enough, in spite of her pose to the exact contrary, to hope that none of her friends would pass. She knew her set well enough to know that it would cause something almost like a scandal if she were seen out alone, on foot, on the very eve of her wedding day, when all well bred brides ought to be invisible— repenting their sins, and praying for blessings on the future in theory, but in reality, fussing themselves ill over belated finery. She had had for some years a number of poor protégées in the lower end of the city, which she had been accustomed to visit on work of a charitable nature begun when she was a school girl. She had found work enough to do there ever since. It was work of which her father, a hard headed man of business, strongly disapproved, although he was ready enough to give his money. Jack was of her father's mind. She realized that when she returned from the three years' trip round the world, on which she was starting the day after her wedding, she would have other duties, and she knew it would be harder to oppose Jack,—and more dangerous—than it had been to oppose her father. In this realization there was a touch of self-reproach. She knew, in her own heart, that she would be glad to do no more work of that sort. Experience had made her hopeless, and she had none of the spiritual support that made women like St. Catherine of Sienna. But, if experience had robbed her of her illusions, she knew, too, that it had set a seal of pain on all the future for her. She could never forget the misery she had seen. So it had been a little in a desire to give one more sop to her conscience, that she had dedicated her last afternoon to freedom to her friends in the very worst part of the town. If her mother had remained at home, she would never have been allowed to go. All the more reason for returning in good season, and here it was dark! Worse still, the trip had been in every way unsuccessful. She had turned her face homeward, simply asking herself, as she had done so many times before, if it were "worth while," and answered the question once more with: "Neither to me nor to them." She had already learned, though too young for the lesson, that each individual works out his own salvation,—that neither moral nor physical growth ever works from the surface inward.

Opportunity—she could perhaps give that in the future, but she was convinced that those who may give of themselves, and really help in the giving, are elected to the task by something more than the mere desire to serve. In her case the gift of her youth and her illusions had done others no real good, and had more or less saddened her life forever. If she were to really go on with the work, it would only be by giving up the world—her world,—abandoning her life, with its luxury, its love, everything she had been bred to, and longed for. She did not feel a call to do that, so she chose the existence to which she had been born; the love of a man in her own set,—but the shadow of too much knowledge sat on her like a shadow of fear. She was impatient with herself, the world, living,—and there was no cab in sight. She looked at her watch. Half past four. It was foolish not to have driven over, but she had felt it absurd, always, to go about this kind of work in a private carriage, and to-day she could not, as she usually did, take a street car for fear of meeting friends. They thought her queer enough as it was. An impatient ejaculation escaped her, and like an echo of it she heard a child's voice beside her. She looked down. It was a poor miserable specimen. At first she was not quite sure whether it were boy or girl. Whimpering and mopping its nose with a very dirty hand, the child begged money for a sick mother—a dying mother—and begged as if not accustomed to it—all the time with an eye for that dread of New England beggars, the man in the blue coat and brass buttons. Miss Moreland was so consciously irritated with life that she was unusually gentle. She stooped down. The child did not seem six years old. The face was not so very cunning. It was not ugly, either. It was merely the epitome of all that Miss Moreland tried to forget—the little one born without a chance in the world. With a full appreciation of the child's fear of the police,—begging is a crime in many American towns—she carefully questioned her, watching for the dreaded officer herself. It was the old story—a dying mother—no father—no one to do anything—a child sent out to cunningly defy the law, but it seemed to be only for bread. Obviously the thing to do was to deliver the child up to the police. It would be at once properly cared for, and the mother also. But knew too much of official charity to be guilty of that. The easiest thing was to give her money. But, unluckily, she belonged to a society pledged not to give alms in the streets, and her sense of the power of a moral obligation was a strong notion of duty, which had descended to her from her Puritan ancestors. There was one thing left to do. "Do you know Chardon Street?" she asked. The child nodded. There was a flower shop on the corner. She led the child across to it, entered, and asked for an envelope. She wrote a few lines on a card, enclosed it and sealed the envelope. Then she went out to the side-walk again with the child. Stooping over her she made sure that the little one really did know the street. "It isn't far from here," she said. "Give that to any one there, and somebody will go right home with you to see your mother, to warm you, you poor little mite, and feed you, and make you quite happy." She did not explain, and the child would not have understood, that she vouched for a special donation for the case as a sort of commemorative gift. The sum was large—it was a quixotic sort of salve to a sick conscience which told her that she ought to go herself. The child, still sobbing, turned away, and drearily started up the hill. She did not go far, however. Miss Moreland had her misgivings on that point. And, just as she was about to draw a breath of relief, convinced that, after all, she would go, the girl stopped deliberately in the shadow of a tree, and sat down on the snowcovered curbstone. No need to ask what the trouble was. The poor are born with a horror of organized charity. It obliges them to be looked over in all their misery; it presumes a worthiness, or its pretence, which they resent almost as much as they do the intrusion of the visiting committee. This disinclination is as old as poverty, and is the rock ahead of all organized charity.

Its exemplification was very trying to Miss Moreland at that moment, and the crouching figure was exasperating. She pursued the child. She pulled her rather roughly to her feet. It was so provoking to have her sit down in the cold, and to so personify all that she wanted so ardently,—it was purely selfish, she knew that,—to put out of her mind. There seemed but one thing to do: go with the child. She knew that if she did not, she would not sleep that night, nor smile the next day—and that seemed so unfair to others. Besides, it was not yet so very late. Bidding the child hurry, she followed her up the hill, and down the other side to a part of the city with which she was not familiar. The child cried quietly all the way. Miss Moreland was too vaguely uncomfortable to talk to her, as they hurried along. It was in front of a dark house that they finally stopped, and went up the stone steps into a hall so dark that she was obliged to take the child's dirty cold hands in hers to be sure of the way. Perhaps it was a foolish distaste for the contact, combined with her frame of mind, which prevented her from noticing facts far from trifles, which came back to her afterward. She groped her way up the uncarpeted stairs, and followed her still whimpering guide along what seemed an upper corridor, stumbled on what she immediately knew was the sill of a door, lurched forward as the child let go of her hand, and, before she recovered her balance, the door closed behind her. She called to the child. No answer. She felt for the door, found it—it was locked. She was in perfect darkness. A terrible wave of sickness passed over her and left her trembling and weak. All she had ever heard and found it difficult to believe, coursed through her mind. The folly of it all was worse. Fifteen minutes before all had been well with her— and now—! Through all her terror one idea was strong within her. She must keep her head, she must be calm, she must be alertly ready for whatever happened. The whole thing had seemed so simple. The crying child had been so plausible! Yet—to enter a strange dark house, in an unknown part of the city! How absurd it was of her! And that—after noticing—as she had—that, cold as the halls were and uncarpeted, there was neither smell of dirt nor humanity in the air! While all these thoughts pursued one another through her mind she stood erect just inside the door. She really dared not move. Suddenly a fear came to her that she might not be alone. For a moment that fear dominated all other sensations. She held her breath, in a wild attempt to hear she knew not what. It was deathly still! She backed to the door, and began cautiously feeling her way along the wall. Inch by inch, she crept round the room, startled almost to fainting at each obstacle she encountered. It was a large room with an alcove—a bedroom. There was but little furniture, one door only, two windows covered with heavy drapery, the windows bolted down, and evidently shuttered on the outside. When she returned to the door, one thing was certain, she was alone. The only danger she need apprehend must come through that one door. Yet she pushed a chair against the wall before she sat down to wait—for what? Ah, that was the horror of it! Was it robbery? There was her engagement ring, a few ornaments like her watch, and very little money! Yet, as she had seen misery, even that might be worth while. But was this a burglar's method? A ransom? That was too mediæval for an American city. If neither, then what? She had but one enemy in the world, her Jack's best friend, or at least, he was his best friend until the days of her engagement. But he was a gentleman, and these were the days when men did not revenge themselves on women who frankly rejected the attentions they had never encouraged. It was weak, she knew it, to even remember the words he had said to her when she had refused to hear the man she was to marry slandered by his chum—still she wished now that she had told Jack, all the same. If she could only have a light! There was gas, but no matches. To sit in the dark, waiting, she knew not what, was maddening. Then a new terror came over her. Suppose she should fall asleep from fatigue and exhaustion, and the effect of the dark?

It seemed days that she sat there. She knew afterward that it was only five hours and a half, but that five hours and a half were an eternity—three hundred and thirty minutes, each one of which dragged her down, like a weight, into the black abyss of the unknown; three hundred and thirty minutes of listening to the labored beating of her own heart— it was an age, after all! Only once did she lose control of herself. She imagined she heard voices in the hall—that some one laughed—was there still laughter in the world? In spite of herself, she rushed to the door, and pounded on it. This was so useless that she began to cry hysterically. Yet she knew how foolish that was, and she stumbled back to her chair, sank into it, and calmed herself. She would not do that again. What was her mother thinking? Poor mama! What would Jack say, when, at eleven o'clock, he ran in from his bachelor's dinner—his last—which he was giving to a few friends? What would her father say? He had always prophesied some disaster for her excursions into the slums. Her imagination could easily picture the mad search that would be made—but who could find a trace of her? The blackness, the fear, the dread, were doing their work! She was numb! She began to feel as if she were suspended in space, as if everything had dropped away from her, as if in another instant she would fall—and fall—and fall—. Suddenly she heard a laugh in the hall again—this time there was no mistake about it, for it was followed by several voices. Some one approached the door. A key was inserted and turned in the lock. She started to her feet, and steadied herself! The door swung open quickly—some one entered. By the dim light in the hall behind, she saw that it was a man—a gentleman in evening clothes, with a hat on the back of his head, and a coat over his arm. But while her alert senses took that in, the door closed again—the man had remained inside. The thought of making a dash for the door came to her, but it was too late. She heard the scratching of a match—a muttered oath at the darkness in a thick voice—then a sudden flood of light blinded her. She drew her hands quickly across her eyes, and was conscious that the man had flung his hat and coat on the bed before he turned to face her. In a moment all her fear was gone. She stumbled weakly as she ran toward him, crying hysterically, "Jack, dear Jack, how did you find me? I should have gone mad if you had been much later! Take me home! Take me home—" Had Miss Moreland fainted, as a well-conducted girl of her class ought to have done, this would have been a very different kind of a story. Unluckily, or luckily, according as one views life—in the relief of his presence, all danger of that fled. Unluckily for him, also, the appearance of his bride-elect in such an unexpected place was so appalling to him that his nerve failed him entirely. Instead of clasping her in his arms as he should have done, he had the decency to recoil, and cover his face instinctively from her eyes. Miss Moreland stopped as if turned to stone. She was conscious at first of but one thing—he had not expected to find her there. He had not come to seek her. Then, for what? A sudden flash illumined her ignorance, and behind it she grasped at the vague accusation her other suitor had tried to make to her unwilling ears. Her outstretched hands fell to her sides. He still leaned against the wall, where the shock had flung him. The exciting fumes of the wine he had drunk too recklessly evaporated, and only a dim recollection remained in his absolutely sobered brain of the idiotic wager, the ugly jest, the still more contemptible bravado that had sent him into this hell. He did not attempt to speak. When her strained voice said: "Take me home, please," he started and the fear that had been on her face was now on his. A hundred dangers, of which she did not dream, stood between that room and a safe exit in which she should not be seen, and that much of this wretched business—which he understood now only too well—miscarry. He started for the door. "Stay here," he said. "You are perfectly safe," and he went out, and closed and locked the door behind him.

For the man who plotted without, and the woman who sat like a stone within that room, the next half hour were equally horrible. But time was no longer measured by her! She never remembered much more of that evening. She had a vague recollection that he came back. She had a remembrance that he had helped her stand—given her a glass of water—and led her down the uncarpeted stairs out into the street. Then she was conscious that she walked a little way. Then that she had been helped into a carriage, and then she had jolted and jolted and jolted over the pavings, always with his pale face opposite, and she knew that his eyes were full of pity. Then everything seemed to stop, but it was only the carriage that had come to a standstill. She was in front of her own door. A voice said in her ear, "Can you stand?" And she knew she was on the steps. She heard the bell ring, but before her mother could catch her in her arms as she fell, she heard the carriage door bang, and he was gone forever. All that night she lay and tossed and wept and raved, and longed in her fever to die. And all night, he walked the streets marvelling at himself, at Nature, and at Civilization, between which he had so disastrously fallen, and wondering to how many men the irremediable had ever happened before. And the next morning, early, messengers were flying about with notices of the bride's illness.—Miss Moreland's wedding was deferred by brain fever. When she recovered, her hair was white, and she had lost all taste for matrimony, but she had found instead that desire for anything rather than personal existence, which made her the ardent, self-abnegating worker for the welfare of the downtrodden that the world knew her. There was a moment of surprised silence. Some one coughed. No one laughed. Then the Journalist, always ready to leap into a breach, gasped: "Horrible!" "Getting to be a pet word of yours," said the Lawyer. The Violinist tried to save the situation by saying gently: "Well, I don't know. It is the commonest of all situations in a melodrama. So why fuss?" The Trained Nurse shrugged her shoulders. "I know that story," she said. "You do not," snapped the Lawyer. "You may know a story, but you never heard that one." "All right," she admitted. "I am not going to add footnotes, don't be alarmed." "You don't mean to say that is a true story?" ejaculated the Divorcée. "As for me," said the Critic, "I don't believe it." "No one asked you to," replied the Lawyer. "It is only another case of the Doctor's pet theory—that whatever the mind of mortal mind can conceive, can come to pass." "I suppose also that it is a proof of another of his pet theories. Scratch civilized man, and you find the beast." The Doctor was lying back in his chair. He never said a word. Somehow the story seemed a less suggestive topic of conversation than usual. "The weather is going to change," said the Doctor. "There's rain in the air." "Well, anyway," said the Journalist, as we gathered up our belongings and prepared to shut up for the night, "the Youngster's ghost story was a good night cap compared to that." "Not a bit of it," said the Critic. "There's the foundation of a bully melodrama in that story, and I'm not sure that it isn't the best one yet—so full of reserves." "No imagination, all the same," answered the Critic. "As realistic in subject, if not in treatment, as Zola." "Now give us some shop jargon," laughed the Lawyer. "You've not really treated us to a true touch of your methods yet." "I only do that," laughed the Critic, "when I'm getting paid for it. After all, as the Violinist remarked, the situation is a favorite one in melodrama, from the money-coining 'Two Orphans' down. The only trouble is, the Lawyer poured his villain and hero into one mould. The other man ought to have trapped her, and the hero rescued her. But that is only the difference between reality and art. Life is inartistic. Art is only choosing the best way. Life never does that." "Pig's wrist," said the Doctor, and that settled the question. On Friday night, just as we were finishing dinner—we had eaten inside—the Divorcée said: "It may not be in order to make the remark, but I cannot help saying that it is so strange to think that we are sitting here so quietly in a country at war, suffering for nothing, very little inconvenienced, even by the departure of all the men.

The field work seems to be going on just the same. Every one seems calm. It is all most unexpected and strange to me." "I don't see it that way at all," said the Journalist. "I feel as if I were sitting on a volcano, knowing it was going to erupt, but not knowing at what moment." "That I understand," said the Divorcée, "but that is not exactly what I mean. I meant that, in spite of that feeling which every one between here and Paris must have, I see no outward signs of it." "They are all about us just the same," remarked the Doctor, "whether you see them or not. Did it ever happen to you to be walking in some quiet city street, near midnight, when all the houses were closed, and only here and there a street lamp gleamed, and here and there a ray of light filtered through the shuttered window of some silent house, and to suddenly remember that inside all these dark walls the tragedies of life were going on, and that, if a sudden wave of a magician's wand were to wipe away the walls, how horrified, or how amused one would be?" "Well," said the Lawyer, "I have had that idea many times, but it has come to me more often in some hotel in the mountains of Switzerland. I remember one night sitting on the terrace at Murren, with the Jungfrau rising in bridal whiteness above the black sides of the Schwarze-Monch, and the moon shining so brightly over the slopes, that I could count any number of isolated little chalets perched on the ledges, and I never had the feeling so strongly of life going on with all its joys and griefs and crimes, invisible, but oppressive." "I am afraid," said the Doctor, "that there is enough of it going on right here—if we only knew it. I had an example this afternoon. I was walking through the village, when an old woman called to me, and asked if I were the doctor from the old Grange. I said I was, and she begged me to come in and see her daughter-inlaw. She was very ill, and the local doctor is gone. I found a young, very pretty girl, with a tiny baby, in as bad a state of hysteria as I ever saw. But that is not the story. That I heard by degrees. It seems the father-in-law, a veteran of 1870, now old, and nearly helpless, is of good family, but married, in his middle age, a woman of the country. They had one son who was sent away to school, and became a civil engineer. He married, about two years ago, this pretty girl whom I saw. She is Spanish. He met her somewhere in Southern Spain, and it was a desperate love match. The first child was born about six weeks before the war broke out. Of course the young husband was in the first class mobilized. The young wife is not French. She doesn't care at all who governs France, so that her man were left her in peace. I imagine that the old father suspected this. He had never been happy that his one son married a foreigner. The instant the young wife realized that her man was expected to put love of France before love of her, she began to make every effort to induce him to go out of the country. To make a long story short, the son went to his mother, whom he adored, made a clean breast of the situation, and proposed that, to satisfy his wife, he should start with her for the Spanish frontier, finding means to have her brother meet them there and take her home to her own people. He promised to make no effort to cross the frontier himself, and gave his word of honor to be with his regiment in time. He knew it would not be easy to do, and, in case of accident, he wished his mother to be able to explain to the old veteran. But the lad had counted without the spirit that is dominant in every French woman to-day. The mother listened. She controlled herself. She did not protest. But that night, when the young couple were about to leave the house, carrying the sleeping baby, they found the old man, pistol in hand, with his back against the door. The words were few. The veteran stated that his son could only pass over his dead body—that if he insisted, he would shoot him before he would allow him to pass: that neither wife nor child should leave France. It was in vain that the wife, on her knees, pleaded that she was not French—that the war did not concern her—that her husband was dearer to her than honor—and so forth.

The old man declared that in marrying his son she became French, though she was a disgrace to the name, that her son was a born Frenchman; that she might go, and welcome, but that she would go without the child, and, of course, that ended the argument. The next morning the baby was christened, but the tale had leaked out. I suppose the Spanish wife had not kept her ideas absolutely to herself—and the son joined his regiment. The Spanish wife is still here, but, needless to say, she is not at all loved by her husband's family, who watch her like lynxes for fear she will abduct the child, and she has developed as neat a case of hysterical mania of persecution as I ever encountered. So you see that even in this quiet place there are tragedies behind the walls. But I seem to be telling a story out of my turn!" "And a forbidden war story, at that," said the Youngster. "So to change the air—whose turn is it?" The Journalist puffed out his chest. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said, as he rose to his feet, and struck, the traditional attitude of a monologist, "I regret to inform you that you will be obliged to have a taste of my histrionic powers. I've got to act out part of this story—couldn't seem to tell it in any other form." "Dora!" A slender young woman turned at the word, so sharply spoken over her shoulder, and visibly paled. She was strikingly attractive, in her modish tailor frock, and her short tight jacket of Persian lamb, with its high, collar of grey fur turned up to her ears. Her singularly fair skin, her red hair, her brown eyes, with dark lashes, and narrowly pencilled eyebrows that were almost black, gave her a remarkable look, and at first sight suggested that Nature had not done it all. But a closer observation convinced one that the strange combination of such hair and such eyebrows was only one of those freaks by which Nature now and then warns the knowing to beware even of marvellous beauty. In this case it stamped a woman as one who—by several signs—might be identified by the initiated as one of those, who, without reason or logic, spring now and again from most unpromising soil! She had walked the entire length of the station from the wide doors on the street side to the swing doors at the opposite end which gave entrance to the tracks. As she passed, no man had failed to turn and look after her, as, with her well hung skirts just clearing the wet pavement, she stepped daintily over the flagging, and so lightly that neither boots nor skirt were the worse for it. One sees women in Paris who know that art, but it is rare in an American. She must have been long accustomed to attracting masculine eyes, and no wonder, for when she stepped into the place she seemed to give a color to the atmosphere, and everything and everybody went grey and commonplace beside her. It was a terrible night in November. The snow was falling rapidly outside, and the wind blew as it can blow only on the New England coast. It was the sort of night that makes one forced to be out look forward lovingly to home, and think pityingly of the unfortunate, while those within doors involuntarily thank God for comfort, and hug at whatever remnant of happiness living has left them. The railway station was crowded. The storm had come up suddenly at the close of a fair day. It was the hour, too, at which tradespeople, clerks, and laborers were returning home to the suburbs, and at which the steamboat express for New York was being made up—although it was not an encouraging night for the latter trip. The pretty young woman with the red hair had looked through the door near the tracks, and glanced to the right, where the New York express should be. The gate was still closed. She was much too early! For a second she hesitated. She glanced about quickly, and the look was not without apprehension. It was evident that she did not see the man who was following her, and who seemed to have been waiting for her near the outer door. He did not speak, nor attract her attention in any way. The crowd served him in that! After a moment's hesitation, she turned toward the ladies' waiting room, and just as she was about to enter, the man behind addressed her—and the word was said so low that no one near heard it—though, by the start she gave, it might have been a pistol shot. "Dora!" She stood perfectly still.

The color died out of her face; but only for an instant. She looked alarmed, then perplexed, and then she smiled. She was evidently a young woman of resources. The man was a stalwart handsome fellow of his class—though it was almost impossible to guess what that was save that it was not that which the world labels by exterior signs "gentleman." He might easily have been some sort of a mechanic. He was certainly neither a clerk nor the follower of any of the unskilled professions. He was surely countrybred, for there was a largeness in his expression as well as his bearing that spoke distinctly of broad vistas and exercise. He was tall and broad-shouldered. He stood well on his feet, hampered as little by his six feet of height and fourteen stone weight as he was by the size of his hands. One would have easily backed him to ride well and shoot straight, though he probably never saw the inside of what is called a "drawing-room." There was the fire of a mighty emotion in his deep-set eyes. There were signs of a tremendous animal force in his square chin and thick neck, but it was balanced well by his broad brow and wide-set eyes. He seemed at this moment to hold himself in check with a rigid stubbornness that answered for his New England origin, and Puritan ancestry! Indeed, at the moment he addressed the woman, but for his eyes, he might have seemed as indifferent as any of the stone figures that upheld the iron girders of the roof above him! Still smiling archly she moved forward into the waiting room and, passing through the dense crowd that hung about the door, crossed the room to an open space. Without a word the man followed. The room was dimly lighted. The crowd that surged about them, coming and going, and sometimes pressing close on every side, seemed not to note them. And, if they had, they would have seen nothing more remarkable than an extremely pretty young woman conversing quietly with a big fellow in a reefer and long boots—a rig he carried well. "Dora!" he said again, and then had to pause to steady his voice. Dora wet her red lips with the pointed tip of her tiny tongue; swallowed nervously once or twice, before she spoke. She was now facing him, and still smiling. He kept his eyes fixed on her face. He did not respond to the smile. His eyes were tragic. He seemed to be seeking something in her face as if he feared her mere words would not help him. "Why, Zeke," she said at last, when she realized that he could not get beyond her name, "I thought you had gone home an hour ago! Why didn't you take the?" "I changed my mind! To tell you the truth, I heard that you were in town this afternoon. I have been watching for you—for some time." "Well, all I can say is—you are foolish. Where's the good for you fretting yourself so? I can take care of myself." "I can't get used to you being about in the city streets alone." "How absurd!" "I have been absurd a great many times of late—in your eyes. Our ideas don't seem to agree any more." "No, Zeke, they don't!" "Why speak to me in that tone, Dora? Don't do it!" He looked over her head, as if to be sure of his hold on himself. He was ghastly white about his smooth-shaven, thick lips. Both hands were thrust deep into his reefer pockets. "What's come to you, Zeke?" she asked nervously. His was not exactly the face one would see unmoved! He answered her without looking at her. It was evident he did not dare just yet. "Nothing much, I reckon. I've been a bit down all day. I really don't know why, myself. I've had a queer presentiment, as if something were going to happen. As if something terrible were coming to me." "Well, I'm sorry. You've no occasion to feel like that, I'm sure." "All right, if you say so. What train shall we take?" He stretched out one hand to take the small bag she carried. She shrank back instinctively, and withdrew the bag. He must have felt rather than seen the movement, it was so slight. His hand fell to his side. Still, he persisted. "I'm dead done up, Dora. I need my dinner, come on!" "Then you'd better take the  train. You've just time," she said hurriedly. "All right. Come on!" He laid his hand on her shoulder with a gesture that was entreating. It was the first time he had touched her.