

Cecily regarded him intently for another moment. Then she sank back into Addie Tristram's great armchair, asking, "Will she do it well?"

"No," said Harry. "She's a good sort, but she won't do it well."

Cecily sighed and turned her head towards the window.

"Why do you do it? Do you care for her?"

"I like her. And I want money. She's very rich. Money might be useful to me."

"You seem very rich. Why do you want money?"

"I might want it."

There was silence for a moment. "Well, I hope you'll be happy," she said presently.

She herself was the reason—the embodied reason (was reason ever more fairly embodied?), why he was going to marry Janie Iver. The monstrosity of it rose before his mind. When he told of his engagement, there had been for an instant a look in her eyes. Wonder it was at least. Was it disappointment? Was it at all near to consternation? She sat very still now; her gaiety was gone. She was like Addie Tristram still, but like Addie when the hard world used her ill, when there were aches to be borne and sins to be reckoned with. As he watched her, yet another new thing came upon him, or a thing that seemed to be as new as the last quarter chimed by the old French clock on the mantel-piece, and yet might date back so long as three days ago. Even now it hardly reached consciousness, certainly did not attain explicitness. It was still rather that Janie was no mistress for Blent and that this girl was the ideal. It was Blent still rather than himself, Blent's mistress rather than his. But it was enough to set a new edge on his questioning. Was he to be the man—he who looked on her now and saw how fair she was—was he to be the man to deny her her own, to rob her of her right, to parade before the world in the trappings which were hers? It was all so strange, so overwhelming. He dropped into a chair by him and pressed his hand across his brow. A low murmur, almost a groan, escaped him in the tumult of his soul.