

articles which served as an excuse for a visit to New York or tempted her to delightful hours with the mail-order catalogue.

Mrs. Balfame detested this bustling common efficient brother-in-law, although at the end of two years, the twelfth of her married life, she was keeping a maid-of-all-work and manicuring her nails. She treated him with an unswerving sweetness, a natural quality which later developed into the full flower of graciousness, and even gave him a temperate measure of gratitude. She was a just woman; and it was not long after his advent that she began to realise the ambition latent in her strong character and to enter upon a well defined plan for social leadership.

She found it all astonishingly easy. Of course she never had met, probably never would meet, the really wealthy families that owned large estates in the county and haughtily entertained one another when not entertaining equally exclusive New Yorkers. But Mrs. Balfame did not waste time in envy of these people; there were old families in her own and neighbouring villages, proud of their three or four generations on the same farm, well-to-do but easy-going, democratic and, when not so old as to be "moss-backs," hospitable to new notions. Many, indeed, had built new homes in the expanding village, which bade fair to embrace choice bits of the farms.

Mrs. Balfame always had dominated these life-long neighbours and associates, and the gradual newcomers were quick to recognise her power and her superior mind; to realise that not to know Mrs. Balfame was to be a commuter and no more. Everything helped her. Even the substantial house, inherited from her