

At the other end of the gallery, the double doors, leading into the drawing-room, were open. In the wide, outstanding basket-grate piled-up logs and coal burned clear and fiercely red. The promised heat of the room was alluring; for, sitting so long writing the letter to her lawyer and that explanatory statement to Lucia Fitz-Gibbon, she had grown chilly. And the northerly snow-threatening wind seemed, as she noted, in the last few minutes to have got queerly right inside the house. One of the maids must have neglected to shut a window, she supposed, somewhere below. As she mounted the stairs, cold draughts of air swept up them alongside and around her, causing her instinctively to draw her fur stole more closely over her shoulders and her bosom.

The high serenity, lately and so deliciously recaptured, possessed her still. Yet, pausing here upon the gallery, she became sensible the perfect shining of it was blurred by vague insidious alarms. These—for she strove to be very reasonable—she put down to physical causes, the unsteady action of her heart, which, as she fancied, occasionally missed a beat. And, though clinging all the while manfully to reason, she also became sensible of an