

the modern moral problem undoubtedly is that of turning all those dependents into independents. For such fortunes are in reality exactly what they are here in romance; shameful drugs poisoning private honour, and permanent pestilences threatening public health. Excuses are made for them in politics and the press, the same excuses which the stunted and half-witted soul of the little plutocrat makes for them in this story. But the very excuses offered are enough to prove the whole situation to be inexcusable. They have a flat and fourth-rate character which has hardly ever before belonged to the ruling minds of a human society. Ours is perhaps the first generation of men which has allowed itself to be ruled, not merely by men who might have undignified characters, but by men who must have undignified aims. The mere millionaire has already proved his inferior intelligence by seeking what he pretends to have proved his superior intelligence by finding. Military courage or tribal loyalty may be rudimentary and barbaric virtues, but they were virtues; it has been left for our own time to allow men to rise to national and international power wholly and solely by their vices, and these only the meaner vices. Hence it follows that a plutocracy, unlike an aristocracy, has not any sad or even sulky legend surrounding its decay and death; for all men feel in their hearts that