

conscience or principle how she hated the heavy mass of flesh sleeping heavily beside her.

For at least eight years, ever since their fortunes had improved and she had found leisure for the novels and plays of authors well-read in life, she had longed for a room, a separate personal existence, of her own. She was no dreamer, but this exclusive and ladylike apartment often had floated before her mental vision, chastely papered and furnished in a cold pale blue (she had an uneasy instinct that pink and lavender were immoral); and by day it should look like a boudoir. She was too wise to make a verbal assault upon this or any foreign word, for she found the stage, her only guide, strangely casual or contradictory in these minor details; but although her little world found no trouble in discovering what Mrs. Balfame increasingly knew, what she did not know they suspected so little that they never even discussed her limitations. Handicapped by circumstances early and late she might be, but she had managed to insinuate the belief that she was the superior in all things of the women around her, their born and natural leader.

Mrs. Balfame had never given expression to this desire for a deliquescent bedroom, being a woman who thought silently, spoke guardedly, and, both patient and philosophical, rarely permitted what she called her imagination to wander, or bitterness to enter her soul.

The Balfames were by no means well enough off, even now, to refurnish the old bedrooms long since denuded by a too economical parent after his children had married and moved away, but a few mornings since she had remarked casually that as the springs of the conjugal bed were sagging she thought she should send it