

To give him his due, Ward tried to look through Bertha's eyes. He could almost do it by imagining himself back in Ned Thomas's store and talking to her over the counter. There was nothing on earth then but her eyes and her. But the world had turned on its axis a hundred times since he weighed his last quarter's worth of sugar, and he, being only a human being, had turned with the world. That this turning process involved a slight change in his attitude toward Bertha he did not deny, but that it had really altered his affection for her he would not admit. It did occur to him that he might, during his visit home, have called her his postmaster-general a few times and spoken more of the jolly days they had spent together along the shore, but then the cares of life beyond Barnsville had to be given due consideration; childish things must be left behind when a man faced sales managers and ticket agents.

He tried indeed to look through Bertha's eyes, but there was a mirror in his room and the smoke of his cigars made fantastic wreaths in it, fancy rings, and maiden-heads—plural. The question of daily entertainment came up. Bertha had hers. Barnsville might be back-woodsy but it was not dead. At this time of year there were corn-roasts and autumn parties of every kind. She could attend them. But how about a lonely drummer in an isolated burg? Could anyone blame him for making the best of material at hand? If a girl came out of a post-office, for instance, and looked back at him, was he not justified in smiling, and waiting for her on the street-corner upon his next trip? And these chance acquaintances probably *did* have some effect upon a man. They took a lot of the boyish fancies out of his