

expression of suspicion, almost of distrust, come into his face. No doubt he knew nothing of this other party who were to join the Cresslers in the vestibule. Why should this girl speak to him? Something had gone wrong, and the instinct of the man, no longer very young, to keep out of strange young women's troubles betrayed itself in the uneasy glance that he shot at her from under his heavy eyebrows. But the look faded as quickly as it had come. Laura guessed that he had decided that in such a place as this he need have no suspicions. He took the cigar from his mouth, and she, immensely relieved, realised that she had to do with a man who was a gentleman. Full of trepidation as she had been in crossing the vestibule, she was quite mistress of herself when the instant came for her to speak, and it was in a steady voice and without embarrassment that she said:

"I beg your pardon, but I believe this is Mr. Jadwin."

He took off his hat, evidently a little nonplussed that she should know his name, and by now she was ready even to browbeat him a little should it be necessary.

"Yes, yes," he answered, now much more confused than she, "my name is Jadwin."

"I believe," continued Laura steadily, "we were all to be in the same party to-night with the Cresslers. But they don't seem to come, and we—my sister and my aunt and I—don't know what to do."

She saw that he was embarrassed, convinced, and the knowledge that she controlled the little situation, that she could command him, restored her all her equanimity.

"My name is Miss Dearborn," she continued. "I believe you know my sister Page."