

THE THREAD OF FLAME

don't demand it as much as many other women; and then—it's hard to put into words—the conviction has come to me that—that whenever I'm ready for it I shall get it. I'm not ready for it, yet." Her amber eyes rested on me with the utmost truthfulness. "It's odd; but I'm not. The very fact that I don't demand it yet, some women, you know, are like that, and I suppose some men, but that very fact shows that it's wiser not to congest one's life by tackling too many things at a time. The one thing I'm growing certain of is that it all depends on oneself as to whether or not the windows of heaven are open to pour us out blessings, and that whatever I want, within reason, I shall get in the long run."

It was partly this theory of life, and partly a sense of assurance and relief, that led me on to talk of my personal situation. As Drinkwater had done, she dismissed my mental misfortunes as incidental, interesting pathologically, but not morally decisive. As to my return to New York after having actually found my way home I felt obliged to give her some explanation. It was while I was doing this that she asked, as if casually:

"Do you like Colonel Stroud?"

"No," I said, bluntly. "Do you?"

"I can see that he has a sort of fascination . . . for other women." She nodded, more thoughtfully, "I don't trust him."

"Neither do I."