

The Fate of Woman

struggle no longer to be great! At least not while the thermometer is three hundred and sixty degrees in the shade!"

"No, don't struggle to be great—talk to *me*. I followed you here," he stated superfluously.

"And I was wondering how we *both* happened to come to this woods this morning," she said quite insincerely.

"Such odd and happy coincidences are usually pre-arranged—like Mark Twain's 'impromptu' speeches. I had to see you this morning—I always have to see *you*, you know, to revive my faith in humanity after I've dined formally with a party of our leading citizens of Middleton!—As I did last night. The Barretts had the courage to stay away. Very risky! Their absence was not favorably received!"

"But the Barretts' objections to the Middleton dinner-parties would not be the same as yours, would they?" Barnabetta asked.

"No. Their objections are—snobbish; mine, moral; the veneer that encrusts the real self of the average highly-esteemed American in a town like this, makes dinner-talk (to put it mildly) difficult! I often wonder what would happen if, at one of their genteel gatherings, I came right out with my true opinions about anything at all! It would crack the dishes, I dare say! In communities like this, strewn all over our broad map, nobody is ever known to think below the surface. They don't want to. They haven't