

JAVA HEAD

Yes, that was the sensible course, even in the face of his own multiplying years. They were twenty-five more than Sidsall's; yet, he added in self-extenuation, he was not definitely snared in middle age: he was still elastic in body and youthful, but for graying hair, in appearance. His birth was eligible from every social consideration and, though he was not rich, he had enough independently to assure the safety of his wife's future. This did not come entirely, or now even in the larger part, from the Mongolian Marine Insurance Company, but took the form of a comparatively small but secure private income.

He paused to wonder if it had not been that latter fact which had prevented his being successful — successful that was, in William Ammidon's meaning of the word. He had not made money nor a position of importance among men of affairs. Such safety, he decided, was a dangerous possession judged by the standards he was now considering. A few thousand a year for life struck at the root of activity. It induced a critical detached attitude toward life, overemphasized the importance of the cut of the trouser and the validity of pedigree. It was a mistake he danced noticeably well.

Drifting, together with almost everyone else, he had reached his present position, past forty, by imperceptible degrees, obscurely influenced by the play of what he intrinsically was on circumstances or accident or fate.

Although he had never done so before, he compared himself with Gerrit Ammidon. The other's refusal to accept a partnership in the family firm or command the California clipper was known. Gerrit and himself were alike in that they apprehended the values of life more