

THE DIVINE FIRE

full of strange harmonies, adjustments, compensations. His chin, rather long in a front view, rather prominent in profile, balanced the powerful proportions of his forehead. His upper lip, in spite of its slender arch, betrayed a youthful eagerness of the senses ; but this effect was subtilized by the fineness of his lower lip, and, when they closed, it disappeared in the sudden, serious straightening of the lines. Even his nose (otherwise a firm feature, straight in the bridge and rather broad at the end) became grave or eager as the pose of the head hid or revealed the nostrils. He had queer eyes, of a thick dark blue, large, though deep set, showing a great deal of iris and very little white. Without being good-looking he was good to look at, when you could look long enough to find all these things out. He did not like being looked at. If you tried to hold him that way, his eyes were all over the place, seeking an escape ; but they held *you*, whether you liked it or not.

It was uncanny, that fascination. If he had chosen to exert it in the interests of his shop he could presumably have cleaned those friendly young men out any day. But he never did exert it. Surrounded by wares whose very appearance was a venal solicitation, he never hinted by so much as the turn of a phrase that there was anything about him to be bought. And after what had passed between them, they felt that to hint it themselves—to him—would have been the last indelicacy. If they ever asked the price of a book it was to propitiate the grim grizzled fellow, so like a Methodist parson, who glared at them from the counter.

They kept their discovery to themselves, as if it had been something too precious to be handled, as if its charm, the poetry, the pathos of it must escape under discussion. But any of them who did compare notes agreed that their first idea had been that the shop was absurdly too big for the young man ; their next that the young man was too big for the shop, miles, oh miles too big for it ; their final impression being the tragedy of the disproportion, the misfit. Then, sadly, with lowered voices, they admitted that he had one flaw ; when the poor fellow got excited, don't you know, he sometimes dropt—no—no, he skipped—his aitches. It didn't happen often, but they felt it terrible that it should