

made Eustis men respected for hundreds of years. She has chosen to leave us, so there is nothing to do but be thankful for it."

Dale stood shifting irresolutely from one foot to the other. No one who had ever known his prowess and lion-like courage on the football field would have suspected him of this sudden irresolution, this sudden capitulation before his mother's majestic onslaught. "Mother, you are unkind and unreasonable."

"Dale, there is no further use in our talking about anything so unpleasant. I'm sure you realize now I am only doing what is necessary for our happiness.

"About Cynthia, make no mistake in my feelings toward her. I don't hate her or even dislike her. To me Cynthia is not so much a person as a force, an undisciplined force, which has been let loose to trouble our modern world. Try to understand that if I thought she loved you truly and simply in the way which means love to me and all the people of my generation, I would be the first to say 'Go, and bring her back; we both need her.' But she is not the girl to carry on the Eustis tradition, she is just a flame in the wind blown hither and thither by mad gusts of passion which she can neither understand nor control. I will not have you destroyed for her amusement."

Slowly she held out her arms in the deep, maternal gesture which seemed to envelop her son like endless veils of soft, clinging chiffon. A moment later he was in her arms with his head on her shoulder, his body racked by heavy sobs.

CHAPTER XVI

JANE TALBOT was eating her breakfast in rather gloomy silence when the doorbell rang and her maid left the room to answer it. Jane felt rather weary this Christmas morning, not at all up to planning any gaieties for the day. She was sorry it was Christmas as she was nearly always sorry when it was Christmas, or Thanksgiving, or New Year, or any of those holidays on which one was supposed to be unthinkingly gay.

She was particularly annoyed because Aurelia Bronson of all people had accompanied her husband to visit his mother at her lonely estate out on the far end of Long Island. It was a visit of ceremony only, it goes without saying, and happened each year at Christmas time. Old Mrs. Bronson, though monstrously fat and almost crippled by rheumatism, knew perfectly well of the state of affairs between her son and daughter. She had no intention of interfering in any way with their lives, being quite content to devote her energies entirely to prolonging her days upon the earth which she loved so well. She was confessedly selfish, quite willing