

# 《HOUSE OF MIRTH, THE(ISBN=9780553213201)》

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## 编辑推荐

One of Wharton's earliest definitions of her heroine, in the library of her bachelor friend and sometime suitor Lawrence Selden, indicates that she appears "as though she were a captured dryad subdued to the conventions of the drawing room." Indeed, herein lies Lily's problem. She has, we're told, "been brought up to be ornamental," and yet her spirit is larger than what this ancillary role requires. By today's standards she would be nothing more than a mild rebel, but in the era into which Wharton drops her unmercifully, this tiny spark of character, combined with numerous assaults by vicious society women and bad luck, ultimately renders Lily persona non grata. Her own ambivalence about her position serves to open the door to disaster: several times she is on the verge of "good" marriage and squanders it at the last moment, unwilling to play by the rules of a society that produces, as she calls them, "poor, miserable, marriageable girls."

## 内容简介

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## 作者简介

The upper stratum of New York society into which Edith Wharton was born in 1862 provided her with an abundance of material as a novelist but did not encourage her growth as an artist. Educated by tutors and governesses, she was raised for only one career: marriage. But her marriage, in 1885, to Edward Wharton was an emotional disappointment, if not a disaster. She suffered the first of a series of nervous breakdowns in 1894. In spite of the strain of her marriage, or perhaps because of it, she began to write fiction and published her first story in 1889.

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## 在线试读部分章节

### Chapter 1

Selden paused in surprise. In the afternoon rush of the Grand Central Station his eyes had been refreshed by the sight of Miss Lily Bart.

It was a Monday in early September, and he was returning to his work from a hurried dip into the country; but what was Miss Bart doing in town at that season? If she had appeared to be catching a train, he might have inferred that he had come on her in the act of transition between one and another of the country-houses which disputed her presence after the close of the Newport season; but her desultory air perplexed him. She stood apart from the crowd, letting it drift by her to the platform or the street, and wearing an air of irresolution which might, as he surmised, be the mask of a very definite purpose. It struck him at once that she was waiting for some one, but he hardly knew why the idea arrested him. There was nothing new about Lily Bart, yet he could never see her without a faint movement of interest: it was characteristic of her that she always roused speculation, that her simplest acts seemed the result of far-reaching intentions.

An impulse of curiosity made him turn out of his direct line to the door, and stroll past her. He knew that if she did not wish to be seen she would contrive to elude him; and it amused him to think of putting her skill to the test.

"Mr. Selden -- what good luck!"

She came forward smiling, eager almost, in her resolve to intercept him. One or two persons, in brushing past them, lingered to look; for Miss Bart was a figure to arrest even the suburban traveller rushing to his last train.

Selden had never seen her more radiant. Her vivid head, relieved against the dull tints of the crowd, made her more conspicuous than in a ball-room, and under her dark hat and veil she regained the girlish smoothness, the purity of tint, that she was beginning to lose after eleven years of late hours and indefatigable dancing. Was it really eleven years, Selden found himself wondering, and had she indeed reached the nine-and-twentieth birthday with which her rivals credited her?

"What luck!" she repeated. "How nice of you to come to my rescue!"

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"What luck!" she repeated. "How nice of you to come to my rescue!"

"Oh, almost any -- even to sitting on a bench and talking to me. One sits out a cotillion -- why not sit out a train? It isn't a bit hotter here than in Mrs. Van Osburgh's conservatory -- and some of the women are not a bit uglier."

"And there isn't another till half-past five." She consulted the little jewelled watch among her laces. "Just two hours to wait. And I don't know what to do with myself. My maid came up this morning to do some shopping for me, and was to go on to Bellomont at one o'clock, and my aunt's house is closed, and I don't know a soul in town." She glanced plaintively about the station. "It hotter than Mrs. Van Osburgh's, after all. If you can spare the time, do take me somewhere for a breath of air."

"Shall we go over to Sherry's for a cup of tea?"

"So many people come up to town on a Monday -- one is sure to meet a lot of bores. I'm as old as the hills, of course, and it ought not to make any difference; but if old enough, you're not," she objected gaily. "I'm dying for tea -- but isn't there a quieter place?"

"The resources of New York are rather meagre," he said; "but I'll find a hansom first, and then we'll invent something."

A rapid shower had cooled the air, and clouds still hung refreshingly over the moist street.

They turned into Madison Avenue and began to stroll northward. As she moved beside him, with her long light step, Selden was conscious of taking a luxurious pleasure in her nearness: in the modelling of her little ear, the crisp upward wave of her hair -- was it ever so slightly brightened by art? -- and the thick planting of her straight black lashes. Everything about her was at once vigorous and exquisite, at once strong and fine. He had a confused sense that she must have cost a great deal to make, that a great many dull and ugly people must, in some mysterious way, have been sacrificed to produce her. He was aware that the qualities distinguishing her from the herd of her sex were chiefly external: as though a fine glaze of beauty and fastidiousness had been applied to vulgar clay. Yet the analogy left him unsatisfied, for a coarse texture will not take a high finish; and was it not possible that the material was fine, but that circumstance had fashioned it into a futile shape?

"Oh, dear, I'm so hot and thirsty -- and what a hideous place New York is!" She looked despairingly up and down the dreary thoroughfare. "Other cities put on their best clothes in summer, but New York seems to sit in its shirtsleeves." Her eyes wandered down one of the side streets. "Some one has had the humanity to plant a few trees over there. Let us go into the shade."

"Your street? Do you live here?"

"Ah, yes -- to be sure: What a nice-looking building! I don't think I've ever seen it before." She looked across at the flat-house with its marble porch and pseudo-Georgian facade. "Which are your windows? Those with the awnings down?"

"And that nice little balcony is yours? How cool it looks up there!"

Her colour deepened -- she still had the art of blushing at the right time -- but she took the suggestion as lightly as it was made.

"Oh, I'm not dangerous," he said in the same key. In truth, he had never liked her as well as at that moment. He knew she had accepted without afterthought: he could never be a factor in her calculations, and there was a surprise, a refreshment almost, in the spontaneity of her consent.

"There's no one here; but I have a servant who is supposed to come in the mornings, and it's just possible he may have put out the tea-things and provided some cake."

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