

Chapter- VI

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of New
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Edith Wharton never saw the woman's building, possessed by her. In 1893, she was decorating her new house at 'Lord's End' in Newport, Rhode Island, writing, entertaining occasional house guests, and fighting off the spells of depression that would, a year later, result in a nervous collapse so severe that she would be incapacitated for close two years. Her distance in 1893 from even so conservative a phenomenon as the woman's building was immense; at the age of thirty-one, she was just becoming aware of her own situation as a woman. Moreover, she was not by disposition or upbringing a person to join with any group of people working toward a social goal, much less get out and campaign or march. Until the First World War taught her how to work corporately, she remained the perfect product of her old New York rearing, which told her to refrain from personal direct political actions and statements.

Many Americans, in contrast, were vocal. After thirty years of steady but comparatively static activity, the woman Movement, as it was called at that time, picked up widespread support in the United States between the early nineties and the end of the Great War. The mood showed itself politically in suffrage campaigns directed toward passage of the nineteenth Amendment, which finally succeeded in 1920.

Edith was very much affected by the woman movement, *The House of Mirth*, a best seller in 1905, she became one of its most unlikely yet important independent thinkers and critics. The culture at large boasted symbols of progress like the world famous woman's building or the Amazonian Gibson Girl, announcements each of the modern women's from Victorian structure. After all the New woman could work outside the home in dignified occupations, she could marry whom she pleased, she could divorce if she had to, she could even take liquor and smoke cigarettes if she were truly daring with enthusiasm in

the air, Edith Wharton sounded a sour-note. Relentlessly, she examined the function between popular optimism and the reality as she saw it. Typical women in her view - no matter how privileged nonconformist, or assertive (indeed, offer in proportion to the degree in which they embodied these qualities) were not free to control their own lives, and that conviction became the foundation of her argument with American optimism for more than twenty years. She agreed that the position of women in American society was the crucial issue of the new century; she did not believe that change was occurring. In her view, the American woman was far from being a new or whole human being.

It is important to remember that Wharton is not alone in her work. The nineties (in the nineteenth century) saw a generation of women writers develop in America, and for many, the decade was a time of exploration. Like their male counterparts -- Hamlin Garland, Stephen Crane, Frank Norris - women in the 1890's consciously experimented; they played with

form, often preferring short sketches to long fictions, and frequently chose to work regionally.

Wharton's cynical parable about the 'New Woman' is short and begins quaintly. 'Once upon a time a number of children lived together in the valley of childish things playing all manner of delightful games, and studying the same lesson books'. But one day, Wharton tells us, a little girl, one of their numbers, decided that it was time to see something of the world about which the lesson books had taught her and as none of the children cared to leave their games, she set out alone to climb the pass which led out the valley. The girl manages the difficult trip into the outer world where "she saw cities and men, learned many useful arts, and in so doing grew to be a woman.

The little girl decides (now a grown-up) to return to the valley with a new knowledge and skills. On the arduous way back she meets a man, one of her old playmates - a "dull" boy when they were young but now a visionary like

herself, with plans for the valley of building bridges and draining swamps and cutting roads through the jungle. The newly grown-up woman had similar plans and resolves to work together with the man after they complete their exhausting journey. She does not get the chance. The children in the valley, although, glad at first to see her, soon resent her maturity; at her approach they move off with their toys. She locates her fellow traveler who was the only grown man in the valley.

Wharton's bitter parable first summarizes the position she would hold for many years. She showed her commitment to a healthy, productive 'New woman', yet her conviction that America, rhetoric and world's fairs aside, continued to prevent infantile females. She would express the idea in 1907 in *The Fruit of the Tree* in 1920 in *The Age of Innocence*, in 1928 in *The Children*. It is one paradigm of her lifelong argument with American culture on the subject of woman. She would never change her mind on this point.

Throughout her long career, Edith Wharton was able to imagine very few happy endings. Other authors showed women escaping in droves from bad matches into happy ones and thus they affirmed at one, and, the same time woman's right to be happy and self determined along with society's insistence that the highest estate for her was the married one. However, as Wharton was coming to see it in the nineties, though of course she was not alone in her view, expectations of wives and modern men's expectations of themselves could be vastly different matters. Men, like the faceless clod in "*The valley of Childish Things*", were afraid of strong women; they wanted wives less intelligent and less sophisticated than themselves. In part, Wharton may have been generalizing from her own impressions about reactions to her. She was a brilliant woman who as *The Touchstone* in 1900 would hint, could probably see herself scaring the men she met (of course, she scared many women too). But whatever her route to the idea, and given her own marriage it could not have been entirely biographical, the belief that is seen purposefully sought

out states weaker than themselves stayed with her all her life.

For *Bunner Sisters*, her first alter at long fiction, victimization of women by a deprived man was the subject Wharton chose; and in 1892, with just one published fiction behind her, she sent the piece to Scribner's magazine. The novella was not accepted for publication on the ground that it was full of depression. Not that Burlingame said as much, rather her hedged, diplomatically, by saying that fine as the novella was, it lacked a cheerful juncture at which to split the tale into two installments Wharton on her side long remained fond of the story, including it in her 1916 collection *Xingu and other stories*. Still *Bunner Sister* is most fairly thought to be a work of depression and Burlingame was correct about one thing: the novella is depressing.

In most of Edith Wharton's Jamesian novels, she concentrates upon the aspirations of women and reflects in a variety of situations and deprivations peculiarly theirs. She has

sympathy with her women characters and her insight into their lives, she reveals an implicit feminism as they relate, ordinarily at some disadvantage, to individual men or to a society, which men control and dominate.

In the last century, American women have moved away from a position in which fixed conventions and by standards of propriety towards a position of relative freedom, in which they can act because of whatever promises the most fulfillment for them as individuals in a particular situation. Wharton observed this movement through two generations of American women. Repeatedly, she questioned the validity of a woman's submitting to the restrictions imposed upon her in a male oriented society. However, Wharton's final world would seem to be that she purchases freedom at great risk with a relatively static society.

Wharton at first simplifies the characteristics of Bessie Westmore and Justine and the "new" women; But Bessie soon develops into more than the clinging,

petulant wife, whereas Justine moves from freedom to conformity and emerges a new identity of the woman, very forceful, creative, dominant and independent. She learns to fight for what she wants, but she fights with what Amherst identifies as traditionally feminine weapons. Ironically, these weapons are superficially feminine but are not feminist in their thrust using them, she grows strong enough to rebel but not to stand her ground with thoughtful and determined assurance. She never goes beyond her use of weeping and her tendency to bargain with her husband, who would rather placate her than talk rationally to an overly emotional, cloying, "Feminine" creature. Her growth towards independence makes her insist that he shares his time with his family and allows her to defy his demand that she no longer enjoys the friendship of divorced woman whose freedom she envies.

Grandma Scrimser, a God-fearing woman, is trying to preach a new religion has been another positive influence on Vance as a young man. Her random fancies have often

stirred Vance's imagination. She was the only one in Euphoria who was able to dimly guess what he was grouping for, someone he really loved and who was to him "womanhood vast and dominant..." (*Hudson River Bracketed*, 330) In fact, this is the key sentence to Edith Wharton's philosophy as regards womanhood. Towards the end of her works, as witnessed in *Hudson River Bracketed* and *The Gods Arrive*, womanhood does emerge as vast and dominant.

Blake Nevius often quoted remark with regard to Edith Wharton's novels is "the theme of wasteful submission of a superior nature to an inferior one." (Nevius, 107-8)

Zeena Frome in *Ethan Frome* is of a mean nature though Laura Lou can hardly be labeled thus. Yet, both have a very firm hold on their spouses. Both are so absorbed in their ailments that they make an attempt to participate in their husband's words or work. A sense of duty in both the men prevents them from resorting to any hasty solution regarding their marriage. The solution offered by "The other woman" Mattie in *Ethan*

Frome is very drastic and the end-result is catastrophe. Conversely, the women in her novels at first seem to be humble and acquiescent, but they prove more firm and courageous than the men. At the end of *The House of Mirth* Lily Bart refuses to regain her social position by blackmailing her enemy or by spending her inheritance pretentiously. Lily in the eyes of the reader at least, attains some degree of victory over the "frivolous society" which destroyed her on the other hand, Selden has by the end of the book become enmeshed in social values which constrict his ability to love. Despite the fact that he has urged Lily to seek his "republic of the spirit" but she rejects the conventions of small talk, speaks openly to her on the evening of her death. He hears her tale of courage and resolution, which she has gained at the expanse of her life itself. However, Selden stands embarrassed, chivalrously offering her a pillow and stirring the fire on the hearth, unable to respond to her fervent belief in him.

In her fiction, Wharton documents social change as it affected woman's status, and she reflects beyond such documentation the evolution in her own personal views on the role of women in society. Throughout her fifty-year career, two subjects are central in nearly all of her fiction: divorce and extramarital affair. Wharton records clearly in her work the degree of public acceptance of divorce as such tolerance increased decade by decade. Nevertheless, her own views on divorce, marriage and love affairs are not always entirely consistent, even among stories and novels published in the same year. She tended to adopt a relativistic view on these subjects, considering the moral implications of the individual situation presented in each work.

For instance, at a time when divorce was scarcely condemned in American life, let alone in American literature Wharton recorded with sympathy the disadvantaged position of the divorced women. But after *The Age of Innocence* (1920), she tended often to celebrate the women's then widely accepted

freedom to dissolve a marriage and she applauded, rather than pitied, the women who liberated herself from a life-wasting alliance. But, throughout the 1920's and 1930's, she also satirized the casual abuse of divorce by both men and women. A sheltered marriage can destroy, but it can also bring salvation. Without choice, women exist without hope; women who choose carelessly injure themselves and others.

The development of the Edith Wharton's heroines can be studied with reference to the sequence of novels involved in this present thesis. Almost a quarter of a century had passed since Lily Bart in *The House of Mirth*, had lived out her pathetic life, a failure. The emotions had been frozen, the decisions, which seemed so right had plunged her helplessly downward. The man, who had seemed to understand her most, had let her down. Society had imposed so many restrictions on her that even survival was denied to her. Twenty-five years later, Halo is a freer creature, to think and feel as she wants. Impulsive actions do not lead to dire

consequences - she can be closeted alone with another man for hours together in her library and no one bothers. Lily is seen leaving Selden's apartment and so much is read into this harmless visit.

The hold of environment has weakened and Edith Wharton gives greater scope for the development of her chart unhampered by the restrictions of society Vance too is a change from the usual Wharton male. He emerges stronger, has an aim in life to which he gives complete devotion and peruses it with a relentless energy. In Hudson River Bracketed, Edith Wharton has created for the first time a very strong woman and a relatively strong man. "Here at last, is a picture of a man," says Auchincloss. (Auchincloss, 52)

Edith Wharton seems to understand that a woman wastes her life if she is too weak or indecisive to form an unconventional relationship when she finds herself happy with the conventional relationship. Halo has in fact wasted three years of her life married to Tarrant. At the first opportunity,

she breaks free and comes back to Vance. He consoles her after her pathetic outburst on hearing the news of Laura Lou's death.

Power seems to have swing in his favour and he comforts her as if she were a child, "he wondered if at crucial moments the same veil of unreality would always fall between himself and the soul nearest him, if the creator of imaginary begins must always feel along among the real ones." (*Hudson River Bracketed*, 407)

From the first page of the novel, Lily Bart is hard at work using the skills of her trade - charm, sex appeal, solicitude to entertain and give pleasure to other people. Her assignment is to practice the social arts, which consist of dressing well, serving tea properly, receiving and making visits, being a helpful and engaging houseguest, and playing bridge. These chores create a busy work schedule for the leisure class young woman; and it is work in Wharton's opinion, however degrading one need only consider Lily's meeting on the train with Percy Gryce,

a dull young Bachelor worth millions, to appreciate the talent and training that go into her job of drawing him out.

Lily is excellent at her job. Not only she mastered the social arts, but also she knew how to use them to soothe and flatter the egoism of other people, particularly men, in order to gain her own ends without appearing direct or threatening on the surface. She perfectly embodies society's ideals of the female as decorative subservient, dependent, and submissive, the upper-class norm of the lady as non assertive, docile member of society.

But only on the surface, in fact Lily has merely learned to suppress and camouflage her own impulses and ambitions. Even though she acquits herself of the social arts in which she has seen so carefully bred, she transgresses other moral and social regulations with which society expects compliance. She visits Selden alone in his apartment; she gets deeply into debts; she borrows money from a married man Gus Trenor

and is seen --- his town house late at night; she spends alone with another married man Dorset and becomes the object of rumours; she takes a job as private secretary to make herself strong and dependent. She has "fits of angry rebellion against fate, when she longed to drop out of the race and make an independent life for herself." (*Hudson River Bracketed*, 61)

The job she has been trained for is highly specialized and her skills, if she does not choose to use them as some rich man's wife, are not transferable. She has the opportunity to make money, as a human being hates a millionaire shop and refuses the job; it is simply a vulgar variant on what she is trying to escape. All her training and hard work wasted. Lily realizes late in the novel that she is no more than some superfine human merchandise.

Her utility within that class is clearly spelled out by Wharton. Men go out into the commercial world to accumulate a woman, all his money and property and power do not

extend beyond the narrow mercantile world into the social realism and into society at large. Therefore, for a rich man, ownership of a woman is not a luxury, but a necessity. She is his means of disseminating Wall Street power beyond the limited masculine world of Wall Street. Hence, the economics of being a woman in Lily's world amounts to working as a wife, and working hard, to translate financial power into social power by displaying a particular man's wealth for him. Put simply the man makes money on Wall Street, which he then brings to Fifth Avenue for a woman to turn into social power to aggrandize him.

Early in the novel *Ethan Frome*, we are introduced to Halo who is shown as a very restless young girl. There are always engagements to attend, people to be met, commitments to be fulfilled with women's problems always foremost on her mind. Edith Wharton is quick to show the adverse effects of a marriage gone wrong. After three years of marriage, this spirited girl lacks the energy to do even a mundane thing like

changing into country clothes to go out for a drive. Instead of bringing out the best in her, marriage has dulled her senses into a habit of routine. She has become a proper society hostess, the perfect wife. Too late, she realizes the heavy price to be paid for the luxuries of life. It is difficult to imagine her as the same girl who out of sheer impulse would go up the mountaintop with a strange boy to watch the sunrise in the early hours of the morning. It would be unfair to attribute this change in Halo as a result of marriage alone. Change is also brought about by time, and Halo is after all three years older and consequently more mature. Impulsive actions of earlier years have given way to a more balanced and sober behavior, which come with maturity of years.

In this sequel, there is a big change in Halo's own character and a very obvious change in Vance attitude to Halo. In *Hudson River Bracketed*, Vance had always idealized her; she was goddess - like the custodian of the unknown who initiated him into the mysteries of the past. She was something he

coveted, and in *The Gods Arrive*, once he has got her, begins to tire of her just as part. Meanwhile, it is left over to try to make the relationship work, and when she fuels it breaking beyond repair, she makes a dignified exit, leaving Vance free of any obligation he may owe towards her.

Vance has no force in his personal life; he has no approach to literary life. The cruise on which he embarks as the novel opens, it's indicative of his drifting nature. He himself is aware of his complex nature as he confesses to his grandmother, "It's a whole complex things - it's me as the Lord made me, I suppose: a bunch of ill assorted odds and ends. I couldn't make any woman happy - so what's the use of worrying about it." (*The Gods Arrive*, 368)

The biggest problem that confronts Halo is living with another man without being married to him. One way of looking at marriage was that it was a trick or a sham. Vance's previous marriage had been on such sham. On the other hand, it was a means of binding two

people together, once the tide of passion had receded. Yet, it had been unable to hold together the marriage of Halo and Lewis Tarrant. So, marriage is not the solution for the successful working of a man-woman relationship.

The Wharton woman has travelled a long way. The negative-thinking Lily of *The House of Mirth* or Mattie Silver of *Ethane Frome* are a thing that Halo also has. In a sense, she (Mattie Silver) has been let down by the man she loves, but that is not the end of the world for her. There is so much more to live for and it is unthinkable to her that taking one's life is the only way out of such a dilemma. It is only the freedom she craves for. "Freedom to live without a name, or anyone or look after you." (*The Gods Arrive*, 355). The horrified Lewis Tarrant exclaims. Worse still, she is pregnant and now even more reason that she needs to give a father's name to the child. Since she has broken off with Vance, Tarrant offers her the choice to come back to him once more, promising to give his name to Vance's child. It is ironic that

both the men in her life, who had rejected her, want her back. Lewis Tarrant makes the offer now and Vance will do later.

Vance's life is not easy going either. His novel *colossus* is a failure. His plans for marrying Floss Delancy are crushed. He finally sees the unscrupulous side of her nature. His grandmother Scrimser, the one woman who had always understood him, dies. Hemmed in by pain, he goes back to the house on the Hudson River to be united with Halo once more. Seeing him so powerless and broken down, makes Halo strong and confident, sure of herself and needed. It is interesting to note that the analysis has been made by Black Nevius, of the three women in Vance's life. Laure Lou represents an ideal of womanhood easily satisfied by the standards of Euphoria. In addition, her influence on Vance is regressive, the attraction exerted by Floss Delaney is wholly irrational, and for that reason powerful and dangerous. Halo "calls forth the most permanent and reliable, if not the deepest impulses of his creative imagination." (Nevius, 233 - 34)

In her last complete work, she paints a very different and complete picture of the woman. She emerges as the supreme creator; Vance comes back to her as an earring child comes back to his mother and the mother is all forgiving, encompassing him with all her love. Her personality is many sided, she is his inspiration his love, his protector. Her role is "to defend his privacy, not to invade it." (*The Gods arrive*, 34). All along their stormy relationship, it is she who tries to adjust to him. All along, it is Halo alone who is working at it. Edith Wharton seems to suggest that unless both the people involved in effort, they can never be successful. Both must learn to reach half way. When Halo had felt an unbearable strain with Vance, she had left him each to go his own way. She is a woman who will create instead of criticize.

For the first time the Wharton woman is seen in the role of homemaker. This again, is another facet of woman, the creator. Lily in *The House of Mirth*, was not interested in domesticity, Charity in *Summer* had a positive

dislike for anything to do with the house work. Zeena Frome alienated herself totally from the domestic scene and the hired girl Mattie Silver tried hard but could not make a success of the housework. Halo is the first woman to be seen again, the background of her home, even if home meant a hotel room or a rented cottage. She is always doing something to make the house a home for Vance. Even trivial domestic chores such as polishing the brass lamps, stirring the pots, selecting the right flowers for the vase on Vance's table, getting the right lamp-shades or the correct menu for dinner add so much more to Halo's personality.

Louis Auchincloss calls Halo an "Irritatingly efficient." (Auchincloss, 40) Blake Nevius says, "Halo", in *The Gods Arrive*, "Withdraws voluntarily into the background, content like the heroine of a sentimental novel to suffer nobly and uncomplainingly." (Nevius, 234) Outside the house, she is seen working hard in the garden, weeding, snipping, and enjoying the rewards of her layout when the seeds sown in

spring, contend in a bonfire of bloom. James Tuttleton observes that she is one of the “Superior individuals in Mrs. Wharton’s fiction, who triumph over the power of social institution.” (Tuttleton, 396) It is not that Halo has been battling against social institutions; it is just that she chooses to attach more importance to the individual self.

The social institutions have the power to hurt her, yet they do not have the power to disrupt her life. “The old instinct of order and propriety” (*The Gods Arrive*, 101) seems to be her guiding light. This instinct tells her not to blindly follow social norms but to do her best as is dictated by her reasoning. It is this that finally gives her courage to be free, to live alone and sort out her life, as only she knows best. Earlier in choosing to live with Vance without marriage, she was not craving for novelty like the one the young Bohemian set with whom Vance liked associate. Rather, she does it because she feels the instinctive need to do so. She never wants to blind Vance to herself. Sure,

of her love for him, she is never sure of his for her.

In addition, until she can be sure, she does not want to do anything that will regret her. Earlier, she does not press for a divorcee Will Tarrant because once she is free, she feels Vance will be obliged to marry her. Concealing the fact of her pregnancy from him, she does not want to use it as a reason to force his hands. Only in the end, when he finally comes back to her she tells him the news of the coming child.

This again is a re-enforcement of Edith Wharton's advocacy of motherhood as the final role of woman. The term motherhood encompasses not the narrow meaning of childbearing alone, but the much broader qualities of head and heart, the quality of be compassionate, to be able to cherish befriend, love, protect, inspire, forgive to create and construct.

The depth of Lily's tragedy becomes fully apparent shortly before her death when she

sits in Nettie Struthers's tenement kitchen while the young woman prepares supper and feeds the baby.

Lily's image of marriage has been so necessarily class-defined in terms of conspicuous consumption that she never saw its potential to secure a bond of faith and courage between a man and woman in order to bring them into the continuity of life through parenthood. *The House of Mirth* does not idealize motherhood *per se*. It uses an image of motherhood to reinforce its criticism of American marriage, especially in the leisure class, which is so obsessed with producing ornamental wives that the companionate potential of the institution is missed.

Lily's final action in *The House of Mirth* shows the leisure class complete (and appropriately absentee) victory over her desire for autonomy. She dies by her own hand but not by her conscious will: it is not really suicide. "She did not, in truth, consider the question very closely - the

physical craving for sleep was her only sustained sensation." (*The House of Mirth*, 521). Ironically, Lily craves in the end the docility society has all along expected of her. She increases the dosage of sleeping medicine to achieve "the gradual cessation of the inner throb, the soft approach of passiveness ---- the sense of complete subjugation." (*The House of Mirth*, 521-22)

That depressing victory is mitigated somewhat by Wharton's important final image of Lily. She dies very passive, hallucinating that she cradles in her arm, the infant girl-child of another woman. Literally, a self-embrace, the poignancy of which recalls the night she spent in Gerty's arms at the end of book I, this image does not really imply unfulfilled motherhood; Lily has no illusion that the baby is hers.

Rather, the book ends with Lily's imagining the warmth of Nettie Struthers's infant following through her drugged, passive dying body. In the arms of the ornamental leisure

class Lily lies the working-class infant female whose vitality succors the dying woman. In the union of the leisure and working classes lies a new hope – the New woman that Wharton would bring to mature life in her next novel.

The Novel, *The Fruit of the Tree* (1907), sets out to be a very modern book. Wharton clearly wanted to sleep the large audience she had attracted with *The House of Mirth*, and she picked subject matter that could compete with contemporary best-sellers like Ellen Glasgow's *The Wheel of Life* or Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (The political position of which she disliked intensely). Hildegard Hawthorne explained at the time, rather awkwardly it must be owned. "In her last book, *The Fruit of the Free*; Mrs Wharton uses the dramatic situation in which the opposing ideas represented by layout and capital now stand in such clear definition as the background on which to spread the web of her plot." (Hawthorne, 218) Like its predecessor or even more so, then, *The Fruit of the Tree* is an economic novel. It is also a problem-

novel that skirts in addition with being a muckraker.

Wharton's plot is complicated. The novel's main characters are a reform minded industrialist, John Amherst, and a trained surgical nurse, Justine Brent; although they marry halfway through the story, they are simply friends when the book opens. Justine works in the local hospital, where she attends a man whose hand has been mangled irreparably. Amherst is an assistant manager at the mill. Because he would not take bribes, Amherst is fired. But then, Bessie Westmore, the young widow who inherited the mill, falls in love with him, they marry and he becomes the manager of the whole operation. His plans for factory reform and his marriage, however soon go sour because of Bessy; she resents the attention and money he puts into the mill. The couple therefore separates and Amherst takes a new job in South America. While he is gone, Bessy has a terrible riding accident; for weeks, she lies in bed with no hope of survival, paralyzed and in agony: she is prevented from dying

only by her doctor's superhuman exertions, Justine, Bessie's friend request; and it is that act, months later which ruins Justine's life. Discovery of the euthanasia poisons her marriage to go Amherst.

Critics point out that *The Fruit of the Tree*, attempts so much that it does not do justice to its separate strands, and the book as a whole does not hang together. On the one hand there is the difficult topic of euthanasia on the other hand, is the story of John Amherst's desire to reform working conditions at the Westmore Mill and Wharton's handling of this industrial setting has drawn attention.

Nursing was a coming profession for women at the turn-of-the-century. It had only been forty years since Florence Nightingale and then, in this country Clara Barton, had introduced the concept of training nurses. Before that, although women had always been expected to tend the sick, they were not trained for the job and no respectable woman worked in a hospital. The care of sick and

dying strangers was left to Dickensian creatures recruited from poorhouses and prisons.

As a matter of fact, between 1890 and 1900 the number of young women enrolled in training schools in the united states multiplied eleven fold and the number of schools more than twelve fold.

In 1896, nurses formed the American nurses association, which established its own journals four years later. Nursing is also an attractive profession for a young woman like Justine, because it was one of the few occupations that did not require money to enter. To become a typist or stenographer a young woman had to have enough money to attend a business college, unless she was lucky enough to have a friend or relative who could teach her the skills she needed (and could lend her a typing machine to practice on). Nursing schools, once one was admitted, provided room and board in exchange for student-labor on the hospital wards. Indeed the setup might look so attractive to some

young women that *The Women's Book* in its lead chapter on occupations devotes a lot of space to the profession and collections. "Those who imagine that the chief duties of the trained nurse whether in private or hospital practice are to take temperature of patients and make delicacies in the way of Jellies, broths and eggnog have but small knowledge of the real duties developing upon the competent nurse." (*The Women's Book*-I, 40-41) Blake Nevius correctly describes Bessy as "a composite portrait of everything that Edith Wharton disliked in her own sex." (Nevius, 104)

Thus, we see that the 'New Woman' of Edith Wharton works in hospitals as a nurse, and she also goes to work in factories in order to earn money to feed up her family. Her New Woman is proved to be creative, forceful and dominant. Edith Wharton's concept about New Woman proves to be exact.
