



# Twilight Sleep

*Edith Wharton*

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## **Twilight Sleep** Edith Wharton

This is Edith Wharton outstanding satirical novel of the Jazz Age. This acclaimed bestseller, themes about sex, drugs, work, money.

Twilight Sleep portrays the self-absorption of the upper class Pauline Manford and her extended family in 1920's New York. Pauline fills every moment of her day with "mental uplift [. . .] Psycho-analysis [. . .] Silent Meditation [. . .] and Facial massage." She delivers a speech to the "Birth Control League" one week and the "National Mothers' Day Association" the next, seeing no hypocrisy in doing so. In her search for fulfillment, she turns to the panaceas offered by a guru called "the Mahatma" as well as the services of a quack psychoanalyst. A number of incidents result from the suggestion that immoral activities may be taking place at "Dawnside," the Mahatma's retreat. This places Pauline, who has become an advocate of the Mahatma, in a delicate position because her husband is investigating the charges of impropriety. Pauline, however, manipulates the situation so that it is in the best interests of the family for Dexter to drop his investigation.

The title of the novel refers to the drugged state induced in women to avoid pain during childbirth, but also stands as a metaphor for the empty lives of characters who spend their time engaged in frivolous activities for which they are "rested and doctored to make up for exertions that led to nothing." The novel addresses subjects such as the social ramifications of easy divorce, and the incursion of mass culture in all its forms on private life."

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