

Chapter Twelve: Inez Milholland_The West, 1916

In Chapter Twelve, titled "Inez Milholland," the narrative unfolds around Inez's life, intertwining her personal aspirations with the broader suffrage movement in the West during 1916. After secretly eloping with Eugen Boissevain, Inez's longing for a child is juxtaposed against her pivotal role in advocacy for women's voting rights, a movement that gained momentum with states in the West granting women suffrage.

The chapter outlines pivotal reasons why the suffrage movement found success in Western states, including the need for settlers to gain statehood, organized activism, and the formation of coalitions among diverse women, contributing to a united effort for the vote. The National Woman's Party emerged, aiming to galvanize the women's vote against President Woodrow Wilson, whom they viewed as an obstacle.

Events escalate as suffragists challenge Wilson at public speeches, notably when Mabel Vernon interrupts him, boldly demanding answers about enfranchisement. Inez Milholland shines at the National Woman's Party convention, advocating for women's rights with her passionate rhetoric, drawing large crowds and encouraging women to prioritize their collective interests over political parties.

However, the touring campaign leads to Inez's deterioration in health. Despite ongoing illness, including a tonsil infection and subsequent anemia, she continues to speak out, drawing admiration from audiences. Her efforts elicit significant media attention, but her condition worsens, eventually necessitating hospitalization for her severe health issues.

The author details the struggle of Inez, caught between her commitment to activism and her physical decline. As her health fails, the narrative highlights the increasing peril of her condition, leading to hospitalizations and blood transfusions. She remains optimistic about the suffrage movement, despite the backdrop of her ultimate challenge for survival.

In a tragic turn, Inez Milholland passes away on November 25, 1916, at just thirty years old, becoming a martyr for the suffrage cause. Her death incites an outpouring of grief and leads to her memorialization in Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol, underscoring her significance as a symbol of liberty and empowerment for future generations of women. The chapter concludes with reflections on the impact of her life and death, paving the way for continued efforts toward women's rights, notably as the nation plunges into World War I shortly thereafter.