

"You may be wrong in supposing that the people at whose houses she visits know nothing about her habits."

"Is it at all likely they do, Roger? Do you think it is? I know at least that my cousin dispensed with her services as soon as she came to the knowledge of certain facts concerning these very points."

"Excuse me—certain rumours—very uncertain facts."

When you are cross, the slightest play upon words is an offence. I knocked at the door in dudgeon, then turned and said—

"My Cousin Judy, Mr. Roger—"

But here I paused, for I had nothing ready. Anger makes some people cleverer for the moment, but when I am angry I am always stupid. Roger finished the sentence for me.

"Your Cousin Judy is, you must allow, a very conventional woman," he said.

"She is very good-natured, anyhow. And what do you say to Lady Bernard?"

"She hasn't repudiated Miss Clare's acquaintance, so far as I know."

"But, answer me—do you believe Lady Bernard would invite her to meet her friends if she knew all?"

"Depend upon it, Lady Bernard knows what she is about. People of her rank can afford to be unconventional."

This irritated me yet more, for it implied that I was influenced by the conventionality which both he and my husband despised, and Sarah opening the door that instant, I stepped in, without even saying good-night to him. Before she closed it, however, I heard my husband's voice, and ran out again to welcome him.

He and Roger had already met in the little front garden. They did not shake hands—they never did—they always met as if they had parted only an hour ago.

"What were you and my wife quarrelling about, Rodge?" I heard Percivale ask, and paused on the middle of the stair to hear his answer.

"How do you know we were quarrelling?" returned Roger, gloomily.

"I heard you from the very end of the street," said my husband.

"That's not so far," said Roger; for indeed one house, with, I confess, a good space of garden on each side of it, and the end of another house finished the street. But notwithstanding the shortness of the distance, it stung me to the quick. Here had I been regarding, not even with contempt, only with disgust, the quarrel in which Miss Clare was mixed up; and half-an-hour after my own voice was heard in dispute with my husband's brother from the end of the street in which we lived! I felt humiliated, and did not



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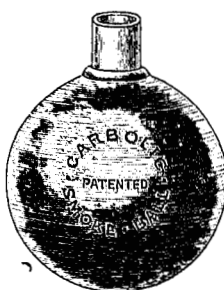
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