

"I can't help that, and, further, I don't believe it."

"Tell me just what Anna Helder said. I have the right to know. Ted is my brother, and I'm most awfully fond of him. Besides, I know just what this will mean to him."

Kitty made no reply.

"You will not be so foolish as to break your engagement for anything so small and petty, or, at least, you'll give Ted a chance to explain?"

"There is nothing that can be explained," said Kitty hardly, "and I have written to him to-day, breaking everything off."

"Does your mother know?"

"Nobody knows. I engaged myself to him without asking anybody, and I disengage myself in the same way—that's all," said the girl proudly.

Again Clare felt an insane desire to shake her. Her chagrin was infinite. This had happened at a most inopportune moment. There was very much at stake where her own position was concerned, and, knowing Mrs. Rodney's present state of mind, she had no doubt but that this would militate seriously against both her and Cyril's prospects.

She was in the mood to quarrel with anybody—with Ted, with Anna Helder, with Kathleen most of all. Only she dared not. Admirable mistress of herself, she preserved an expression of profound regret which was most convincing.

"I think you have been most premature. But I hope that even yet you'll give Ted a chance to explain. Promise me that you will, before you speak to your mother or let anybody in the family or outside of it know what has happened."

"I can't promise anything, and, as I have said, there is no explanation possible. Anna Helder sent me a package of Ted's letters this morning. They cover a