

her by a merciful Providence in order that she might make that "fresh start all over again" which is the never-realized ideal of erring humanity. Marietta had been a young lady fourteen years before, and fourteen years meant much — meant everything to people who progressed as fast as the Emerys. Uncertain of themselves, they had not ventured to launch Marietta boldly upon the waves of a society the chart of which was so new to them. She had no coming-out party. She simply put on long skirts, coiled her black hair on top of her head, and began going to evening parties with a few young men who were amused by the tart briskness of her tongue and attracted by the comeliness of her healthful youth. She had married the first man who proposed to her — a young insurance agent. Since then they had lived in a very comfortable, middling state of harmony apparently on about the same social scale as Marietta's parents. That this feat was accomplished on a much smaller income was due to Marietta's unrivaled instinct and trained capacity for keeping up appearances.

All this history had been creditable, but nothing more, and Mrs. Emery often looked at her elder daughter with compunction for her own earlier ignorance and helplessness. She could have done so much more for Marietta if she had only known how. Mrs. Mortimer was, however, a rather prickly personality with whom to attempt to sympathize, and in general her mother felt the usual -in-law conclusion about her daughter's life: that Marietta could undoubtedly have done better than to marry her industrious, negligible husband, but that, on the whole, she might have done worse; and it was much to be hoped that her little boy would resemble the Emerys and not the Mortimers.

No such philosophical calm restrained her emotions about Lydia. She was in positive beauty and charm all that poor Marietta had not been, and she was to have in the way of backing and management all that poor Marietta had lacked. It seemed to Mrs. Emery that her whole life had been devoted to learning what to do and what not to do for Lydia. At the time of action drew nearer she nerved her-