

the faculty of selecting his creeds ever stickles about the trouble one will give him. He only thinks of the advantages it will bring with it.

"Perhaps it doesn't explain. That's what mamma said, anyhow." Thus Marianne, as if it didn't matter much, either way. Then, more convincingly: "I don't believe Steptoe is lying, because I can't see what she has to gain by it. Besides, I pulled the photo out of the *passe-partout*, and it was gummed in, and the name on the back."

"Did you say so to your mother?"

"Yes, and she said I must have been mistaken, because, if not, the story would have been true."

"I can't see"—Mrs. Eldridge is talking reflectively, introspectively—"I cannot see *why* your husband did not tell you all about it! Suppose your sister *was* married to this man first, I don't see that it was any such hanging matter. Unless . . ."

"Unless what?"

"Well!—nothing, dear. That is, perhaps I oughtn't to say . . ."

"Charlotte!—that's you all over! You know you're wanting to say all the time. *Do speak out and have done with it!*" Marianne got up uneasily, and walked from place to place in the room. The cat went back to the sofa cushion, and resumed her task of getting a little sleep.

Charlotte means to say, in time. Trust her! "You know, dear Marianne, that all this is the *merest* speculation. We really know *nothing!* And ten to one, when you do speak of it to Titus, he'll be able to clear it all up. Besides, after all, it could only be the sort of thing that's always happening, and one says nothing about it as long as the parties get married afterwards. . . ."

Marianne interrupts stormily. "Will you have the goodness, Charlotte, to tell me what you mean, and not beat about the bush? You can't mean that poor Kate . . ."

"I can't tell you anything, dear, if you get so excited. (Your hair's coming undone. A pin?—here's one.) Remember, I'm only mentioning this as *one* of the possibilities, and I don't suppose it's true. But if it were ever so true, I don't see that it would be anything to fly out about. After