

won't be back till Wednesday." This will not bear close analysis; but Marianne was not pricking pins at a tissue, and all purposes were answered. When the children went out for their walk, they brought back word that Mrs. Eldridge would "come instead of to-morrow." And that is how on this particular Monday evening these two ladies are agreeing that this coffee is too strong, and there's no hot water, and the more florid one of the two is saying that she must speak to Steptoe about it.

The heat of the weather tells differently on them, which has to do with our epithet for Marianne's complexion. Charlotte's look is rather sallow than usual, as she leans back fanning the full lids of her half-closed eyes. She is not bad-looking, certainly—probably has been very graceful when she was a girl.

The coffee-incident must have interrupted a conversation, for the sound of resumption is in Charlotte's remark as she sips it. "I should write" is what she says.

"Which to? Him or her?"

"Her. No!—him. I should write to him."

"Which do you mean?"

"Him."

"I don't know what to say."

"What you've been saying to me just now."

"Nonsense, Charlotte! How can you talk such stuff?"

"Well!—I *should*." After which neither lady spoke for awhile, but seemed to be thinking over points raised. Marianne uneasily, and even with an occasional impatient jerk, resented as selfish by a cat asleep on her knees; Charlotte introspectively, but as one enjoying some internal satisfaction.

Presently Marianne spoke, looking curiously at her friend, as though she suspected this concealed something. "I wish you would say plainly what you mean, Charlotte," she said.

Charlotte answered evasively. "It doesn't the least follow that what I should do you ought to do." She had on Marianne the sort of effect the ringed snake is said to have on the oriole—was sure her victim would jump down her throat if she hid her time. And if Marianne did this of her own accord, she herself would clearly be free from all