

Laura put her hand on the cabinet and gave it a little shake. It seemed very firm. It was probably never moved. It would certainly not be moved by the Missendens. She then took the telegram out of her pocket and put it behind the row of gloves—the row next the wall. It must be seen there at once. Then, being of a tidy turn of mind, she set to straighten the gloves she had inadvertently disarranged. In so doing she must have touched the telegram. It slipped behind the cabinet. Laura went upstairs. She waited until she was cool and then joined the group under the trees. As she approached it she noticed particularly Violet; noticed the graceful bend of her head, as she leant forward to listen to a man who was talking to her. He was sitting on the grass at her feet. Why should a clever man, as this one was, be so infatuated with a woman as stupid as Violet undoubtedly was? Laura felt lonely and neglected. Why had she been allowed to spend an hour by herself at the village post-office. She had wanted to, of course, but she would have liked to have found difficulty in doing it. If Violet had gone, every man of the party would have sworn to a sudden desire to buy stamps at that particular moment.

The whole thing was obviously unfair. But she said gaily how delightful they all looked.

Someone asked if Mrs. Toft was amusing.

“She’s never that,” said Lady Missenden. “She’s such a grumbler.”

“She amused me rather,” said Laura. “She told me that her first husband was a Mormon, but couldn’t afford to keep no more than her. I can imagine he must have got tired of her! Poor Mr. Toft, I feel sorry for him.”

“Perhaps they don’t live together,” said someone.