

Lady Trevelyan was over thirty, and a woman after that age is a human manuscript! On her face life had written strange contradictions. An open, candid eye looked out in kindness over a shifty mouth—a strange blue mouth, which had the appearance of being berry-stained or bruised. Her weather-beaten skin had not known soothing cosmetics nor softening powder; she had lived exposed to glare of sun and gusts of a wind which blew always in this funnel-like road between the mountains. Her autumn-leaf hair was piled unceremoniously on her head, more for disposal than adornment, in a design suggesting a Chinese pagoda.

Mrs. Silver, her neighbor, was a fat, peevish example of a woman deprived of a past. Her husband had absorbed all the past, and she had to be content to live in the departed war-time glories of her lord. She was laboriously occupied attending to the present, while keeping an eye on the future, which latter did not interest Mr. Silver, save as a pleasant vista ending in a white monument whereon would be inscribed his valorous deeds as a hero.

Mrs. Silver petulantly envied Lady Trevelyan her past and her thinness. Lady Trevelyan envied Mrs. Silver a stationary husband and her avoirdupois, so they were friends.

A quick step on the uneven stones of the long walk leading through Mrs. Silver's front vegetable garden caused both women to straighten,