

the proper use of her tongue? "Like any common person," thought Lady Stapleton, fuming mentally. "Like any hack evangelist picked off the street and hired at so much a turn." What, indeed, could they be thinking of?

Fortunately she could rely on the complete sympathy of the company, the audience being composed almost wholly of her friends or those who fain would win access to the magic circle. There were, in fact, but three men present, and they were merely reporters, who subsided in a stale flavour of tobacco and beer behind a table in a corner, and were, so to speak, obliterated. In the ordeal of waiting one of them yawned expansively; another inquired gently of his neighbour "What's on to-day?" and received the whispered answer, "Gas, as usual." Reporters are born irreverent, live without grace, and die impenitent.

"Isn't it wearisome?" some one remarked, turning significantly to the leader.

Lady Stapleton shook out her laces and frowned. She was a handsome woman, with a Junoesque presence and the thoroughbred mien of generations of good blood. Her age might be fifty, or by 'r Lady five years more, making allowance for cosmetics and skill in dressing. An imperious aristocrat, she nevertheless professed democratic sympathies, and was even suspected of Platonic flirtations with socialism. Not that she ever made the mistake of soiling her jewelled hands with anything common or unclean; no, she merely touched the people with an elegant finger as with a divining-rod, observing "You ail here and here," and generously prescribed. Her system was an immediate social success. "Have you been to dear Lady Stapleton's meeting?" was