

"I can't understand it, Gerald," he was saying. "No, don't come in at present, my dears;" he waved his white, delicate hand to his daughters. "We'll join you in the tennis-court presently. Yes, Gerald, as I was saying, it seems the most incomprehensible and unheard-of arrangement."

The girls smiled gently, first into their brother's face, then at one another. They moved away, going through a little shrubbery, and passing out into a large kitchen garden, where Betty, the old cook, was now standing, picking raspberries and currants into a pie-dish.

"Betty," said Liliás, the eldest girl, "has Martha dusted our trunks and taken them upstairs yet? And has Susan sent up the laces and the frilled things? We want to set to work packing, as soon as ever the children are in bed."

"Bless your hearts, then," said old Betty, laying her pie-dish on the ground, and dropping huge ripe raspberries into it with a slow deliberate movement, "if you think that children will go to bed on the finest day of the year any time within reason, you're fine and mistook, that's all. Why, Miss Joey, she was round in the garden but now, and they're all a-going to have tea in the hay-field, and no end of butter they'll eat, and a whole batch of my fresh cakes. Oh, weary, weary me, but children's mouths are never full—chattering, restless, untoward things are children. Don't you never go to get married, Miss Marjory."

"I'll follow your example, Betty," laughed back Marjory Wyndham. "I knew that would fetch the old thing," she continued, turning to her sister. "She does hate to be reminded that she's an old maid, but she brings it on herself by abusing matrimony in that ridiculous fashion."

"It's all because of Gerald," answered Liliás—"she is perfectly wild to think of Gerald's going away from us, and taking up his abode in London with those rich Pagets. I call it odious, too—I almost feel to-night as if I hated Va-