

if she had seen. She nodded gently and with a gesture indicated that they had better take no notice.

Nevertheless, there was constraint upon them as they sat down at the round table. They could not talk naturally, and nothing seemed to taste properly until the door opened and Celia came back—a chastened Celia.

"Sorry I was rude, Tommy," she said, taking her tea. "The fact is that you are almost too much of a blessing sometimes, and I am getting irritable in my old age, and then," with an attempt at lightness, "there was Christine's poem. It was really much better than the last one you sent me. It's not fair!"

"Really," said Tommy delightedly. "Do you think I am improving? I wanted to ask you, but I was afraid of your chaffing, you know. I think it's rather better myself, eh?" He asked the question of Celia, but he looked at Ada. His voice was hopeful.

"Much better," said Celia.

"Lovely!" said Christine, eating muffin.

Ada, who was still looking faintly troubled, said nothing. Tommy's face fell.

"If I only had another name," he reflected despondingly. "But a man can't write up to a name like mine."

Christine nodded sympathetically. "We could lend you ours for poetical purposes," she said kindly. "Brown is such a nice flat name. Nothing to live up to, all on a dead level. 'Brown!' Somehow it never seems quite as if it belonged to me!"

Celia dropped her spoon with a faint clatter. Ada's face lifted with its listening look, and Tommy's face grew violently red.

"I mean," went on the girl unconsciously, "that