

"I've found what I want, Mrs. Toft, thank you!" cried Laura.

She started off as fast as she could walk. Half way up the drive the boy with the telegram overtook her; exactly as she had planned it. "A telegram?" she said. "I'll take it." She held out her hand. The boy hesitated; but there was a cricket match going on, and every moment was precious. He handed it over to Laura.

She put it in her pocket. When she got up to the house she saw, in the distance, a group of people sitting under the shade of the trees. They all looked so cool and comfortable. She looked at the shimmering haze of heat through which she would have to pass to reach them. She decided to go into the house first, and get cool before she joined them.

She went in through the hall. On the top of a cabinet, which stood against the wall, arranged in rows were Lord Missenden's gloves. She smiled. How ridiculous it was the number of boots and gloves men had! She stood still. There was a dead silence, except for the ticking of clocks. The half-hour chimed on one as she stood listening. It was the big clock in the outer hall. Through the door she saw beyond into the big hall. It looked so cool, so spacious, so comfortable. Great vases of flowers stood on the tables. It all looked so delightful, so English, so luxurious.

What would it look to Dick Egerton coming from Africa? What a home-coming! What would it all count if he was disappointed in Violet? It could be a hell, of that she was certain. She knew enough of men to know what it must be to come home to a wife like that. Why should Violet have it all her own way? Why should her husband think her a saint, when she was only too stupid to be anything else?