

Committed to his Charge

The name conveyed to her the idea of a stranger come among them. When strangers did come it was always a time of excitement and speculation until it was decided whether they joined "the bankers and that lot" or the "church set," of which last-named Mrs. Forby, Mrs. Lindsay and Mrs. Lyte were the leaders and governors.

"Marion Crawford—what of her? What should she know about it—I haven't heard of her. A man? Marion! Whatever *was* his mother thinking of?—some silly goose of a woman like Dulcie's mother, maybe. Well, I thought George Eliot queer enough for a woman, but I don't wonder *she* wanted to hide herself—I have read quite a bit about *her*." The emphasis of Mrs. Forby's remarks was not favourable to the gifted author. "I never could read the books of a woman like that—no, never!"

Mrs. Stuart knew "Silas Marner" by heart, and was then deep in the biography. She shifted uneasily in her chair, but said nothing.

"And this Marion Crawford—he writes, too, I suppose," continued Mrs. Forby. "It does seem to me such a flying in the face of nature mixing 'em up like that. *Male and female*