

"He took all of nine shillings in coarpers once on a time." She couldn't compete with the lady in birth and position, but she had a proper pride in her race, for all that.

The lady and Miss Fossett looked at one another, and the latter said: "It's quite possible. They do sometimes." And Lizarann felt flattered and that she had done her duty. And that when she told her father, he would certainly give her a peppermint-drop. She had a sense of an improved position as she went back to her sewing. But the two ladies went on talking about her under their breath, and she fancied they were resuming some incidents of the previous Saturday at Tallack Street. Teacher seemed to have heard something of them, and she now connected them with her pupil. As the lady ripened towards departure she became more audible.

"It only shows the truth of what I'm always saying to Sir Murgatroyd. How can you *expect* them to be any better when they have such wretched homes? Give them air and light and sanitation and things, and then talk goody to them if you like. . . . Oh dear!—I must rush. I've promised to go with Sibyl and those Inglis girls to Hurlingham this afternoon." Then the lady had a recrudescence of her perception that Lizarann was funny, for she turned round, going away, to say to Miss Fossett: "Oh dear, how funny they are! Fancy an Asker!" and, as it were, fell a little into Miss Fossett's bosom to find sympathy, afterwards kissing her, and saying, "But how good you are!" rather gushily, and making off. She did say, however, to Lizarann: "Good-bye, little person! Consider I've kissed you. I would, only it's such a sticky day."

Much of this conversation would have been quite unintelligible to the child, even if she had heard the whole of it. Her mind was not prepared to receive it, as, not having had much time to reflect since her birth, she had not noticed that her domestic life had anything exceptional about it. Extension of her social circle had not, so far, convinced her that there was anything unusual in their rows and quarrels; in fact, she was gently creeping on to a belief that Steptoes—their inclusive name—was the rule, and the balance of the Universe the exception. But her