

adverse critics in church, was just the very first Sunday Amos had been prevented from accompanying her. She had become by this time so accustomed to Joe's absence that it had ceased to be a matter of consideration with her how it affected others than herself. She had not even now the slightest objection to appear in her pew alone. She was perfectly satisfied with the position and prospects of her affairs, and she had quite forgotten, or quite ignored, the fact that society considered she owed some explanation, perhaps even some apology to it, for circumstances so unusual. Coming out of church, the rector's wife was the first of her own set whom she encountered. But she dropped her short sentence as if each word had been iced, and turned away with an "excuse me," which palpably meant, "I consider your attentions something very like an impertinence."

Many eyes had watched this interview. It was rigidly copied by some, while others took it as a license for still more marked disapproval, so that the aisle and porch of Bradley Church was a place of intolerable humiliation to Edith that day.

"Oh, Joe, Joe!" she cried in the solitude to which her wounded feelings drove her,—*"Oh, Joe, Joe, if you had been here!"*

For long it was all she could say, all she could think of, if only Joe had been there. And it is in precisely such trials as these that women suffer without help. Even very good women, socially wronged and humiliated, do not feel as if they have any right to carry such troubles to the ear of God Almighty. A sort of false shame holds them back. "How can God care whether Mrs. A—— or Lady B—— speaks to me or not?" If Edith had put her thoughts into words, they would have been on that wise.

But God does care. No matter how small the thorn that hurts the feet of His child, He cares about the wound. He knows that it is precisely these small thorns that cause the bitterest, often the most depressing, suffering.

So Edith chafed and suffered all that day, as she had never suffered in her life before. Yet, though she wrote a long letter to Joe, she had the wisdom and patience to say nothing of her trouble. Her heart ached for his love and his protection, but why should she ask him to leave plans and projects for their future which were full of profit and pleasure? She would not trouble herself, and certainly she would not trouble Joe about their liking or their disliking.

Still, she did not sleep at all that night; and the whispering of evil thought about her made her ears tingle and her heart ache. Edith knew, as certainly as if she had been actually present, how her name and her affairs were thrown from one spiteful mouth to another.

It was a dreary day, also, one of those wet days which at the end of September are so unspeakably dreary. The servants who had been going out were disappointed, and they contrived to infuse some of their own discontent through all the house.

"What a perfectly wretched day it has been!" said Edith, as she at length recognized the fact that the whole cross, weary