

As she sat down, she said demurely, "I am not to talk to you. Let us gossip: that is not talk."

"Oh, no," he said, joyously. "I am just about in a state for mere chat, which involves no thinking. Mrs. Lyndsay has been severe."

"I have to fight her a little myself, dear, good, obstinate creature as she is. I suppose she did not talk to you at all,— not a word, I presume?"

"I decline, Miss Anne, to betray the weaknesses of my nurses."

"That is well. Negations often answer questions quite sufficiently in the affirmative. I know she did talk to you, and about that miserable tombstone. She cannot help it, poor mother!"

"Yes. I thought it pitiable. She seemed unable to escape from it."

"It is like her; but it is not wise. Margaret is persistent always. Her likes and dislikes are changeless. She is obstinate in her kindness, her loves, and her charities. As good as gold, we say; but goodness, like gold, is not an insurance of fertile results in all its relations. I mean that goodness can be sometimes exasperating. But, as usual, my tongue is indiscreet. I would like you to understand her. She is worth the trouble."

"Thank you. I never can forget her tenderness and her kind carefulness. Never!"

"Our real battles are over my books. She says my little library is a wilderness of books, and every autumn, on my return, I find the servants have had orders to dust my books."

"How dreadful!"