

After this came a pause of a few moments, in which both sisters worked in silence.

"I wonder, now, *which* of those two was the husband," said Mrs. Betsey at last, in a slow reflective tone, as if she had been maturely considering the subject.

In the mean time it had occurred to Miss Dorcas that this species of minute inquisition into the affairs of neighbours over the way was rather a compromising of her dignity, and she broke out suddenly from a high moral perch on her unconscious sister.

"Betsey," she said, with severe gravity, "I really suppose it's no concern of ours *what* goes on over at the other house. Poor dear Papa used to say if there was anything that was unworthy a true lady it was a disposition to gossip. Our neighbours' affairs are nothing to us. I think it is Mrs. Chapone who says, 'A well-regulated mind will repress curiosity.' Perhaps, Betsey, it would be well to go on with our daily reading."

Mrs. Betsey, as a younger sister, had been accustomed to these sudden pullings-up of the moral check-rein from Miss Dorcas, and received them as meekly as a well-bitted pony. She rose immediately, and, laying down her knitting work, turned to the book-case. It appears that the good souls were diversifying their leisure hours by reading for the fifth or sixth time that enlivening poem, Young's *Night Thoughts*. So, taking down a volume from the book-shelves and opening to a mark, Mrs. Betsey commenced a sonorous expostulation to Alonzo on the value of time. The good lady's manner of rendering poetry was in a high-pitched falsetto, with inflections of a marvellous nature, rising in the earnest parts almost to a howl. In her youth she had been held to possess a talent for elocution, and had been much commended by the amateurs of her times as a reader of almost professional merit. The decay of her vocal organs had been so gradual and gentle that neither sister had perceived the change of quality in her voice, or the nervous tricks of manner which had grown upon her, till her rendering of poetry resembled a preternatural hoot. Miss Dorcas beat time with her needle and listened complacently to the mournful adjurations, while Jack, crouching himself with his nose on his forepaws, winked very hard and surveyed Miss Betsey with an