

answer she got. She felt angry with Charlotte, who, for all her profession of belief that her surmises were probably baseless, seemed to be always supporting the one that ascribed most lawlessness to her husband and sister.

"What if it was?" said she. "Everything if it was." She couldn't argue to save her life. But she dealt with dialectical difficulties in a method of her own that was quite as effectual. This time it told forcibly.

"Don't blaze out at me like that, Marianne," said the enemy. "I can't help it. I suppose everyone was somebody's Kate once—even Jezebel and Judas Iscariot!" The selection sounded trenchant, and no Biblical critic was at hand. "Besides, as I said, it wasn't a hanging matter, at the worst."

"I thought you said you were strict, Charlotte."

"So I am. But this sort of thing *does* take place, and one knows it, and I don't see the use of going on nagging for ever." Marianne's religious feelings prompted her towards pointing out that the Almighty might not subscribe to this view; but she was not quick enough. Charlotte continued: "And how a girl who knows nothing can know if a ceremony's done correctly is more than I can tell. Look at vaccination—all the little ivories exactly alike! Why, you may be vaccinated from a mad bull and never be a penny the wiser!"

Any metaphor or analogy makes Marianne's head go round, and she still keeps silence. Charlotte ends with consolation: "And when you come to think of it, if they weren't correctly married, it was all to the good."

"What on earth you mean, Charlotte, I cannot imagine!"

"Well, dear!—I should have thought anyone would spot that at once. Even John saw that! Of course, if the first marriage was irregular, there *was* no breach of the Seventh Commandment." Marianne felt a distinct relief from one of the nightmare apprehensions about her husband's past that Charlotte's ingenious speculations had aroused. She and her friend shared with a large section of the respectable World, strict and otherwise, the idea that trespassers who jump over a wedding-ring fence should be prosecuted, while poachers on unenclosed property may escape with a caution.