

altogether. Has he spoken to you about it? . . . Well!—of course he wouldn't do that. But has he 'approached the subject'? Of course, that is what he would do—'approach the subject.' "

"No—no one has said a word about it. But I guessed, soon after I came down, that the play was doomed. I did not at first suppose it was your family, as a matter of course. I thought you might have settled to throw it up on your own account." She made a sort of impatient disclaimer—a head-shake that flung that possibility aside, and forgot it. But she said nothing, and he continued: "There was a row, I suppose? Don't tell me more about it than you like. Don't tell me anything if you. . . ."

"I prefer to tell you. Who is there that I can talk to about it if not to you?" This was the soul-brush again; and again Challis's inner consciousness gasped at the choice he had to make between giving way to a luxury, a dangerous intoxication, and attempting to freeze the conversation down to a safe temperature.

Duty dictated a struggle for the latter. He affected a manner of equable unconcern fairly well. "No one," said he, "unless you were to make a confidante of . . ." He stopped short of saying "Marianne," conscious of difficulties ahead. But he could shelve the side-issue, and fall back on the previous question with a sense of getting out of shoal water. "There *was* a row, then . . . well!—a warm discussion, suppose we say? It's more refined, certainly. What form did it take?"

"Then we mustn't go so quick," said Judith. "Or I shan't have time." She was inconsecutive; but it was clear, when she paused in her walk through the long grass, that it was for an anchorage. "Suppose we sit down a little here," she said. "Unless you mind?" Challis didn't.

"Here" was an oak trunk that must have said to itself when it was a sapling—four hundred years ago, maybe—"I will see to it, when I am grown up, that my roots shall live above ground, and be thick with moss; and one shall be horizontal and a seat for a king, who shall lean against me contented. But he shall go, that lovers may come; and they shall make up *my* contentment, and I shall hear their voices in the twilight." Challis half made this little legend