

"Good gracious, Mother!" she began in the energetic fashion which was apt to make her most neutral remarks sound combative.

Mrs. Emery dried her eyes with a gesture of protest, adjusted her gray pompadour deftly, and cut off her daughter's remonstrance, "Oh, you needn't tell me I'm foolish, Marietta. I know it. I just suddenly got so impatient it didn't seem as though I could wait another minute!"

The younger woman accepted this explanation of the tears with a murmured sound of somewhat enigmatic intonation. Her thin dark face settled into a repose that had a little grimness in it. She began putting the flowers into a vase that stood between the reproduction of a Giotto Madonna and a Japanese devil-hunt, both results of the study of art taken up during the past winter by her mother's favorite woman's club. Mrs. Emery watched the process in the contemplative relief which follows an emotional outbreak, and her eyes wandered to the objects on either side the vase. The sight stirred her to speech. "Oh, Marietta, how *do* you suppose the house will seem to Lydia after she has seen so much? I hope she won't be disappointed. I've done so much to it this last year, perhaps she won't like it. And Oh, I *was* so tried because we weren't able to get the new sideboard put up in the dining-room yesterday!"

Mrs. Mortimer glanced without smiling at a miniature of her sister, blooming in a shrine-like arrangement on her mother's writing-desk. She shook her dark head with a gesture like her father's, and said with his blunt decisiveness, "Really, Mother, you must draw the line about Lydia. She's only human. I guess if the house is good enough for you and father it is good enough for her."

She crossed the room toward the door with a brisk rattle of starched skirts, but as she passed her mother her hand was caught and held. "That's just it, Marietta—that's just what came over me! *Is* what's good enough for us good enough for Lydia? Won't anything, even the best, in Endbury be a come-down for her?"