

"It's a pity—but there, they'll understand," she added.

With that she was gone, and Estelle, feeling her face flushing already with the moist heat of the room, asked whether the ladies near the French window would mind if it was opened a little.

At this Mrs. Atherley, the wife of the veterinary surgeon, and a small, weary-faced creature, ostentatiously rose and seated herself at the other side of the room.

"Discretion is the better part of valour," she announced. "I suppose you've been walking home, Miss Rodney, and feel warm with the exertion?"

"No. I came up the hill on the bus, but I have been working in rather bad air all the afternoon, and, somehow, one never gets used to it."

"Dear Mrs. Rodney's drawing-room is rather low in the ceiling, and, of course, there is a great deal of furniture in it, and that uses up the air-space," said Mrs. Craddock, the grocer's wife. "We take in a delightful paper called the *Connoisseur*, and we are gradually altering the whole style of our house. Austere simplicity is the note it strikes, and last week a writer advocated the Japanese idea of house decoration—one picture, one ornament at a time in a room until one gets tired of them. Then put out a fresh one of each. Edgar was quite taken with the idea."

Estelle's fine mouth trembled a little with inward amusement as she pictured Mr. Craddock, with his white apron very tightly drawn across his too ample front, posing as a devotee of Japanese art!

"How awfully funny!" giggled Clara Ironside, who played the American organ in the chapel. "A ripping idea for people who can't afford to buy many pictures or ornaments! What did you say was the name of the paper, Mrs. Craddock?"

