

have assigned to him, to be attired for it in the cast-off garments of some reprobate of the Parisian stage.

"I can't see what the ways of French people have to do with the matter. When I said what I did just now I wasn't thinking of that sort of thing."

"Then, dear, perhaps you'll tell me what you *were* thinking of. Because I can't make out, for the life of me." This came rather coldly from Charlotte.

"It's very simple. I meant that if Titus is tired of me, I had just as soon that he should go away to someone else. And so I would—just as soon. S-s-sooner!" If Marianne had stopped on the penultimate word, there might have been no breakdown. But it came, with the intensification of her courageous little falsehood; came in the stereotyped course one knows so well—first, the failure of the lips to be still, then the quickened breath, and then the final irrepressible tears. Then the beseeching to be left alone—only just for one minute! . . . all will be right in a minute, only don't speak to me, please! Go on talking!

"There!—I've been a fool, and I'm sorry." As she said this, Mrs. Challis returned to her pocket a handkerchief that had dried her tears, certainly, but had finished by taking a very unpoetical part in the transaction. The cat, bered by her demonstrativeness, had left her lap for a short stretch on the rug, and now returned with returning quiet.

Mrs. Eldridge took a base advantage. "No, dear!—you're very, very brave about it. I know just what I should feel myself. Any woman would feel exactly as you do. . . . Oh no, dear!—of course we both thoroughly understand. There's nothing really wrong, and nobody is to be suspected of anything."

"You don't see what—I—mean!" said Marianne. "You never have, Charlotte. But it ought to be simple enough. You don't suppose I think Titus isn't to be trusted away from my apron-strings after all the years I've known him."

"I don't know, dear. Don't ask me! Men are men. However, if you *can* trust him, I don't see what you want."

"I can want a great deal, and I do. I want him not to care about other people more than his own home."

"You want him not to care so much about this girl? Isn't that it?"