

CHAPTER IX

WHEN unwillingly the same roof shelters two women of very opposite temperaments for any length of time, one can always feel the gathering of an inevitable rupture—a tenseness of atmosphere, as before a thunder and lightning storm; a sort of rolling up of clouds—if you know what I mean; silent at first, then a few warning mutterings; and then, at last, rather to the relief of everyone, comes the interview in which they say what they really think of each other. Ever since Esmeralda's entrance into our so-different world I had felt this crisis impending—had sensed its inevitability, while the, as I may say, humidity increased. Just what would stand revealed when the clouds parted no one could foretell; but at tea time on the afternoon of the momentous ride I saw that things were undoubtedly coming to a head.