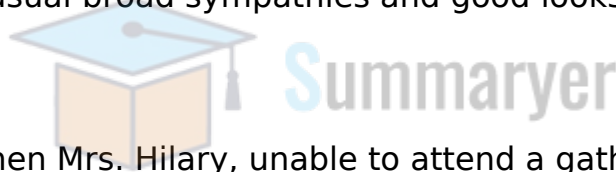


AN EXPENSIVE PRIVILEGE

"An Expensive Privilege" opens with the narrator recounting a particularly uncomfortable situation involving Mrs. Hilary Musgrave and Lady Mickleham, which pits the former's disapproval against the latter. The narrator, surprised by Mrs. Hilary's attitude given her usual broad sympathies and good looks, dives into the history of their discord.



The issue began when Mrs. Hilary, unable to attend a gathering due to illness and a visiting cousin, had asked Lady Mickleham (Dolly) to chaperone Miss Phyllis at the Duchess of Dexminster's party. Miss Phyllis, finding herself abandoned by Dolly at the event, experiences a series of social blunders culminating in an encounter with Lady Mickleham, who nonchalantly dismisses her prior negligence. Mrs. Hilary, outraged by Dolly's behavior, brands her a disgraceful flirt, a charge the narrator playfully disputes by questioning whether prolonged conversations necessarily imply flirtation.

The tension escalates as the narrator reveals having been the person with Lady Mickleham when Miss Phyllis found them, aiming to demonstrate the innocence of the situation. However, this revelation only serves to alienate Mrs. Hilary further, disappointed by what she perceives as the narrator's complicity in the affair.

Despite attempts to rationalize his actions and assuage Mrs. Hilary's indignation, the narrator is eventually dismissed from her presence, a gesture signifying a possible end to their friendship. In contrast, a subsequent encounter with Lady Mickleham in the park hints at the superficiality of high society's relational dynamics, as the narrator contemplates 'sacrificing' his relationship with Dolly for reconciliation with Mrs. Hilary, only to jest about the entire ordeal.

This chapter showcases the intricate social webs and the significance placed on appearances within aristocratic circles, with a focus on the often frivolous and

unfounded bases for judgment and disapproval. Through witty dialogue and a satirical lens, the narrative critiques the superficial value systems governing social relationships and the precarious nature of status within this setting.

