

A QUICK CHANGE

In "A Quick Change," Dolly and Mr. Carter engage in a playful and winding conversation filled with wit and subtle flirtations. Dolly begins by bemoaning the dullness of attending the theater with her husband, Archie, prompting a discussion on the nature of respectability and decency, cleverly masked under the guise of banal social norms. Mr. Carter, with his characteristic discretion, compliments Dolly in a manner that revisits their shared history and inside jokes, notably a past conversation about Dolly's "dimples" that seems to bridge a deeper, more intimate connection between them. This banter serves as a prelude to reminiscing about a particular evening in Monte, where personal vulnerabilities and the follies of youth were laid bare. The dialogue meanders through memories of financial woes, mistaken impressions of character, and the frivolity of their past judgments, all while maintaining a light-hearted tone.

Their interaction reveals much about their relationship dynamics, characters, and the social milieu they navigate. Dolly, ever the spirited and somewhat capricious figure, plays with the idea of social appearances and genuine affection. Mr. Carter, on his part, balances between participating in Dolly's flirtations and maintaining a veneer of gentlemanly conduct. The narrative cleverly uses their dialogue to explore themes of regret, the passage of time, and the complexities of human emotions and social relations, all under the pretext of deciding whether to attend a theater performance.

As their reminiscing unfolds, the chapter also touches on their shared history of misjudgment regarding another guest's character based on superficial observations—a common human error that they now look back on with a mix of amusement and mild remorse. Despite the playful banter, there is an underlying tone of what might have been, as well as a recognition of the enduring bond between them, whether of friendship or something more substantial. This is encapsulated by their final

arrangement to attend the theater together, setting aside Archie's plans in favor of shared company, which reflects the ongoing dance of their relationship—constantly moving between social decorum and the genuine affection they hold for one another.

