

Olivia was essentially a serious girl, woman now. (Wasn't she already twenty-four ?) She had strong feelings, definite views, a very personal standard of right and wrong. She could not, would never be able to, take life in a careless way. Nor could she take people carelessly, lightly. Perhaps there was something heavy in her nature. She thought of her nature with a weight lying in it. And Betty and Brett were so different. They spoke often of people as she never could, as one might speak of dancing puppets in a show. They seemed to trust no one, more, they seemed not to want to trust anyone. They talked of "people" being this or that, as you might talk of cats, or serpents, or tigers being this or that, lumping them together with their characteristics en masse. They held apparently a rotten opinion of the human creature, seldom dealing out praises when they spoke of men and women. She felt that they were full of mistrust, that they considered trustfulness merely an exhibition of world-ignorance, the trade-mark of want of knowledge of the world. And yet they themselves were numbered among "people", as the cat, the serpent, the tiger is numbered among cats, serpents, tigers.

Of course, in thought they instinctively put themselves away from all the others, felt themselves to be "different", as each man and woman secretly does and must.

"And I am different", Olivia said to herself.

Robert Hichens