

Now it is a noticeable fact that we do not much mind what men think of us, or what humiliating secret they discover of our means, parentage, or object, provided that each thinks and acts thereupon in isolation. It is the exchange of ideas about us that we dread most; and the possession by a hundred acquaintances, severally insulated, of the knowledge of our skeleton-closet's whereabouts, is not so distressing to the nerves as a chat over it by a party of half-a-dozen—exclusive depositaries though these may be.

Thomas Hardy, *Desperate Remedies*