

James had asked her for a bottle of cleaning fluid.

Suddenly, out of the pigeon-holes of her mind, tumbled the covers of the chairs which James wanted to clean. The very pattern of the exquisite needlework presented itself.

"Oh!" she exclaimed.

"What's the matter, dearest? This excitement has been too much for you. Do let me handle your father. Believe me, I can do it in our joint interest."

She gazed at him queerly, a tiny, vertical line between her dark eyebrows.

"Has father done something dishonest?"

The colour rushed back into her cheeks as she spoke, but her eyes remained upon his. When he made no reply, she continued:

"Are you threatening to expose some fraud, a fraud connected with—chairs?"

"God! You are clever!" said James, unable to hide his admiration, or to believe that she had swooped upon the truth.

She sighed.

"Then it is true."

There was no interrogation in those four words.

"Well, yes; it is true." He hurried on, fearing that she might interrupt him. "I wanted to spare you knowledge of that. Fortune has placed in my hands a weapon. I am using it for both our sakes. Between our two selves, my dearest, I can admit to you that I should not really ruin your father. What an idea!"