

dare not let the chance slip, lest a worse thing should befall us."

"Then what do you intend to do?"

"I intend to do the only thing possible in the circumstances; I intend to tell Stillingfleet the truth, and then leave him to deal with it as he thinks fit."

"And supposing that he wishes to be acknowledged as your son?"

"I shall at once acknowledge him."

"Even though it ousts Archie from being your heir?"

"Certainly! Archie is no more my heir than Sophy is."

"And have you no thought for me, Conrad?"

Lady Clayton's face was pitiful to look upon.

"Yes, my dear; but you should have had a thought for yourself when first you did this thing. I cannot save you from the consequences of your own actions: nobody can do that except the Omnipotent Being Whom men call God—and apparently He rarely interferes with the course of events in order to do so."

"Then you place my fate in Mark's hands?"

"Nay, Griselda, not I. You placed it there yourself nearly forty years ago."

At that moment the door was thrown open, and the butler announced, "Mr. Stillingfleet."