

people who would recognise you as the brother who used to visit my father and mother at those lodgings. I have friends who will help me."

He looked at her and again his expression changed.

"Sit down," he said, "and let us talk it over."

He pushed a chair to her, and she sat down in it. Then he stood up facing her, his back to the fireplace.

"My dear niece," he said, "you are quite right. Lady Roseveare knows some of my secrets. On the other hand I know some of hers, and we have made a bargain over it. Lady Roseveare might or might not give me away. But as a matter of fact, nothing can be served by raking up an old scandal, except that it might possibly have the effect of killing my daughter. Now I cannot imagine anyone wanting to hurt Cecile."

"Nor I," said Freda. "I wouldn't hurt a hair of her dear head for worlds."

His face softened from the look of haggard despair which it had worn despite his light manner.

"That being so," he said, "why should we not come to an amicable arrangement? Need we bring the lawyers in more than is necessary? I grant you that there would have to be some dovetailing before our story could figure creditably in court. Supposing I were to acknowledge you—on the proofs? There would be a nine days' wonder, but people would soon forget. After all—I don't mind confessing to you that—it hasn't been very happy. Why I did it is immaterial. I make no defence. But the dead—