

of Damocles." He laughed as he spoke the hackneyed old phrase. "And Damocles knew the sword was there, or there'd have been no point in it."

The two had rather lost track of his mood. They looked at one another again.

"You've a lot to think of. We'll leave you," said the Colonel.

"But—but what am I to do?" Old Neeld's voice was almost a bleat in his despair. "Am I to tell people at Blentmouth?"

"The communication should come from an authoritative quarter," Edge advised.

"It's bound to be a blow to her," said Neeld. "Suddenly lifted up, suddenly thrown down! Poor girl!"

"Justice is the first thing," declared Wilmot Edge. Now he might have been on a court-martial.

They knew nothing whatever of the truth or the true position.

"We may rely on—on Lord Tristram—to treat the matter with every delicacy, Edge."

"I'm sure of it, Neeld, I'm sure of it."

"He has been through what is practically the same experience himself."

"A very remarkable case, very remarkable. The state of the law which makes such a thing possible——"

"Ah, there I don't agree, Edge. There may be hardships on individuals, but in the interests of morality——"

"You must occasionally put up with damned absurdity," Harry interrupted rather roughly. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Neeld. I—I'm a bit worried over this."

They sat silent then, watching him for a few moments. He stood leaning his arm on the mantel-piece, his brows knit but a smile lingering on his lips. He was seeing the scene again, the scene in which he was to tell Cecily. He knew what the end of it would be. They were strangers now. The scene would leave them strangers still. Still Mina Zabriská would be left to cry, "You Tristrams!" Given that they were Tristrams, no other result was possible. They had been