

He said you were the only girl with a real head in the county. He saw more in his thick-headed way than I've done till to-day."

He stopped and looked at her, and for the first time she coloured a little. Though she was dark, she was naturally pale, and the colour gave her an extraordinary beauty which she usually lacked.

"By Jove, you *are* a deal prettier than you were," said Bexley. "You've fooled me for years, my dear."

"Oh, Sir John!" said Cecilia.

"I thought you were still a little girl, — you're a clever woman."

She smiled at him.

"Be a bit nice to Jack, Cecilia. You could twist him round that little finger of yours."

"Oh, I like him, really," said Cecilia.

Bexley opened his lips, as if he were going to speak, but he thought better or worse of it.

"Now for subsoil drainage and a cigar," he sighed.

Cecilia put her hand on his arm.

"You're very nice to papa, you know," she said, with a smile.

"Well, you're very nice to me," said Sir John. And when he was deep in the soil, Cecilia walked among the roses.