

For a moment Mr. Disney sat still. Then again he rose slowly.

"Have I tumbled into Bedlam?" he asked.

"It was done in the Bearsdale Case," suggested Lady Evenswood. "Of course there was a doubt there——"

"Anyhow a barony—but a viscounty would be more convenient," murmured Southend.

Mina was puzzled. These mysteries were beyond her. She had never heard of the Bearsdale Case, and she did not understand why—in certain circumstances—a viscounty would be more convenient. But she knew that something was being urged which might meet the difficulty, and she kept eager eyes on Mr. Disney. Perhaps she would have done that anyhow; men who rule heads and hearts can surely draw eyes also. Yet at the moment he was not inspiring. He listened with a smile (was it not rather a grin?) of sardonic ridicule.

"You made me speak, you know," said Southend. "I'd rather have waited till we got the thing into shape."

"And I should like you to see the boy, Robert."

"Bedlam!" said Mr. Disney with savage conviction. "I'll talk to you about what I came to say another day, Cousin Sylvia. Really to-day——!" With a vague awkward wave of his arm he started for the door.

"You will try?" cried the Imp, darting at him.

She heard him say, half under his breath, "Damned persistent little woman!" before he vanished through the door. She turned to her companions, her face aghast, her lips quivering, her eyes dim. The magician had come and gone and worked no spell; her disappointment was very bitter.

To her amazement Southend was radiant and Lady Evenswood wore an air of gratified contentment. She stared at them.

"It went off better than I expected," said he.

"It must be one of Robert's good days," said she.

"But—but—" gasped the Imp.

"He was very civil for him. He must mean to think about