

It never occurred to him to regret, even for a moment, that he had not taken her at her word, and had not accepted her offer. That would have been to spoil his dream, not to realise it. He asked perfection or nothing, being still unhealed of that presumptuous way of his, which bade the world go hang, if it would not give him exactly what he chose. The Tristram motto was still, "No compromise!"

An unexpected ally came to his assistance. He received a sudden summons from Mr. Disney. He found him at work, rather weary and dishevelled. He let Harry in at once, but kept him waiting while he transacted some other business. Here was the place to see him, not in a drawing-room; his brusque words and quick decisions enabled him to do two men's work. He turned to Harry and said without preface:

"We're going to arbitrate this Barililand question, on behalf of the Company, you know, as well as ourselves. Another instance of my weakness! Lord Murchison's going over for us. He starts in a fortnight. He asked me to recommend him a secretary. Will you go?"

Here was help in avoiding Cecily. But what about Blinkhampton? Harry hesitated a moment.

"I should like it, but I've contracted certain obligations of a business kind at home," he said.

"Well, if you're bound, keep your word and do the work. If you find you're not, I should advise you to take this. It's a good beginning. This is Tuesday. Tell me on Saturday. Good-bye." He rang a hand-bell on the table, and, as his secretary entered, said "The Canadian papers, please."

"I'm very grateful to you, anyhow."

"That's all right, Tristram, good-bye."

There was no doubt what would be the practical way of showing gratitude. Harry went out.

He left Mr. Disney's presence determined to accept the offer if Iver could spare his services for the time. The determining cause was still Blent, or his cousin at Blent. Blinkhampton was not far enough away; it rather threw him