

Lady Hilda Tregellis, then, that I've heard you talk about so often, Artie ?

'Why, of course, Father. You didn't know who it was, then, didn't you? Lady Hilda, I'm afraid you've been stealing a march upon the poor unsuspecting hostile Progenitor.'

'Not quite that, Mr. Berkeley,' Hilda replied, laughing; 'only after the very truculent character I had heard of your father as a regular red-hot militant Radical, I thought I'd better not send in my name to him at once for fear it might prejudice him against me before first acquaintance.'

The Progenitor looked at her steadfastly from head to foot, standing before him there in her queenly beauty, as if she were some strange wild beast that he had been requested to inspect and report upon for a scientific purpose. 'Lady Hilda Tregellis!' he said slowly and deliberately; 'Lady Hilda Tregellis! So this is Lady Hilda Tregellis, is it? Well, all I can say is this, then, that as far as I can judge her, Lady Hilda Tregellis is a very sensible, modest, intelligent, well-conducted young woman, which is more than I could possibly have expected from a person of her unfortunate and distressing hereditary antecedents. But you know, my dear, it was a very mean trick of you to go and take an old man's heart by guile and stratagem in that way!'

Hilda laughed a little uneasily. The Progenitor's manner was perhaps a trifle too open and unconventional even for her. 'It wasn't for that I came, Mr. Berkeley,' she said again with one of her sunny smiles, which brought the Progenitor metaphorically to her feet again, 'but to talk over this matter of the poor Le Bretons with your son. Oh, Mr. Arthur, something must really be done to help them. I know you say there's nothing to be done; but there must be; we must find it out; we must invent it; we must compel it. When I sat there this morning with that dear little woman and saw her breaking her full heart over her husband's trouble, I said to myself, somehow, Hilda Tregellis, if you can't find a way out of this, you're not worth your salt in this world, and you'd better make haste and take a rapid through-ticket at once to the next, if there is one.'

'Which is more than doubtful, really,' the Progenitor muttered softly half under his breath; 'which, as Strauss has conclusively shown, is certainly a good deal more than doubtful.'

Arthur took no notice of the interruption, but merely answered imploringly, with a despairing gesture of his hands, 'What are we to do, Lady Hilda? What can we possibly do?'