

Julia received his remarks either with a vacant stare or an ill-timed giggle. She was a big, stout girl, with no pretensions to good looks, and still less to brains, but she had a very large fortune and so was a person of consideration.

When Julia had giggled herself out of the room, John Burney drank two glasses of port and bade his son follow him to his study—a room with double doors, where the most private transactions were possible.

Arrived there and the doors locked, he drew from his pocket the £950 cheque which purported to have been drawn by Lady Sarah Gwynne, laid it on the table, and said, in a voice which was to his face as an icicle to Vesuvius in full blast,—

“What do you know about that?”

Frazer Burney knitted his jaw still tighter and looked stonily at the toes of his shiny shoes.

“You fool! You utter, idiotic fool!” stormed Vesuvius, still in a whisper, but red hot lava this time.

“Blasting your own future and risking mine. My God! Why was I ever cursed with such a thing for a son?”

“I’m sorry——”

“Sorry!!!”—and Vesuvius choked, and came nearer to apoplexy than he had ever been in his life, at the disparity between the apology and the offence.

“I had to pay or be posted,” growled the young man, while the elder was still wrestling with his air tubes, “and I knew you wouldn’t.”

“And—you thought you’d force my hand in this way!”

That was so obvious that the young man did not deem it necessary to reply.

“Very well,” said Mr. Burney. “You know the penalty, I presume. Ten years across seas will be about the size of it. You will be thirty-three when