

"Oh, was that the conference?" he asked slowly. "Well, what has the conference decided?" It was Mina whom he questioned, for which Southend at least was profoundly thankful. "He'd have bitten my head off, if the women hadn't been there," he confided to Iver afterwards.

Mr. Disney slowly sat down again. Mina did not perceive the significance of this action, but Lady Evenswood did.

"It's such an extraordinary case, Robert. So very exceptional! Poor Addie Tristram! You remember her?"

"Yes, I remember Addie Tristram," he muttered—"growled," Mina described it afterwards. "Well, what do you want?" he asked.

Lady Evenswood was a woman of tact.

"Really," she said, "it can't be done in this way, of course. If anything is to come before you, it must come before you regularly. I know that, Robert."

The Imp had no tact.

"Oh, no," she cried. "Do listen now, Mr. Disney. Do promise to help us now!"

Tact is not always the best thing in the world.

"If you'll tell me in two words, I'll listen," said Mr. Disney.

"I—I can't do that. In two words? Oh, but, please——"

He had turned away from her to Southend.

"Now then, Southend?"

Lord Southend felt that he must be courageous. After all the women were there.

"In two words? Literally?"

Disney nodded, smiling grimly at Mina's clasped hands and imploring face.

"Literally—if you can. There was a gratuitous implication that Southend and the rest of the world were apt to be loquacious.

"Well, then," said Southend, "I will. What we want is——" After one glance at Lady Evenswood, he got it out. "What we want is—a viscounty."