

"That's all right," said Bexley.

"She said she would rather be an old maid than marry any one like him. I think she hates him, John."

"Then we'll consider it settled that they are to marry if we can arrange it," said the baronet, firmly. "Of course, being a baronet is a poor thing. But you won't think any the worse of me for that. It wasn't my fault, you know."

Clarendon shook his head.

"You are a very curious character, John, and there are times when I imagine that I don't quite understand you —"

"Nonsense," said Bexley.

"Oh, yes, there are," insisted Clarendon. "But, if your boy can persuade her, I'll consent. He can't. When did he think of this?"

"Well," said Bexley, "I've thought of it for him. He knows nothing about it. You mustn't drop a word about it to Cecilia. This is our plan, Tom. I know he likes her very much, and he'll make a good husband if she's got half the sense that you have."

"I believe she's no fool, though so soft-hearted," said Clarendon. "You think I should say nothing?"

"I feel sure you shouldn't, but, if you think it