

would. Still, I would like to mention that we really don't know the thing is incurable. In fact, it may be a malady which is readily susceptible to the proper treatment, and he has done wisely in going to England."

A little gleam of hope crept into Jacinta's eyes. "I had hardly dared to think of that," she said.

"Well," said Brown, "I really fancy the thing may not be as serious as you and Mr. Jefferson, perhaps naturally, seem to fear. Now, as you know, I was going to England about the new fruit contracts in a week or two, and there is no particular reason why I shouldn't go the day after to-morrow. I should make it my business to see Mr. Austin has the best advice which can be got from the specialists in that country. Only, my dear, I want to ask a very plain question. Supposing he is cured—what then?"

"I'm afraid you must shape the question differently," and a trace of colour crept into the whiteness of Jacinta's face.

"Then I will tell you what I know. You sent that man to Africa, and he went because he was in love with you. He is also a man I have a considerable liking for—and you are my only child. I am getting old, and would like to see you safely settled before I go. There are," and he made a little gesture, "occasions on which one must speak plainly."

Jacinta's face was crimson at last, but she in no way attempted to question the correctness of the announcement he had made.

"Mr. Austin, at least, never told me what you seem to be so sure about—and it is scarcely likely that he will ever do so now," she said.

Brown smiled a little, and tapped the palm of his hand with his glasses.

"My dear," he said, "I think you know better. Of