

chair rather grudgingly, and turned to old Mr. Neeld for an explanation of the visit.

Neeld had fussed himself into a seat already, and had drawn some sheets of paper covered with type-writing from his pocket. He spread them out, smoothed them down, cleared his throat, and answered Harry's look by a glance at Edge. Mr. Neeld was in a fidget, a fidget of importance and expectancy.

"You will know," said Edge gravely, "that no ordinary matter has led me to call on you, Mr. Tristram. However little we may be responsible for the past, we have to recognise it. I should not, under ordinary circumstances, have sought your acquaintance. You must consider this interview purely as one of a business kind. I have just returned to England. For two months I have been out of the way of receiving letters or newspapers. I went to the Imperium Club to-night—I arrived only this morning—and dined in Neeld's company. As it chanced, we spoke of you, and I learnt what has happened since I left England. I have lost no time in calling on you."

Neeld was listening and fidgeting with his sheets of paper. The Colonel's preamble excited little interest in Harry. The reaction of his struggle was on him; he was courteously but not keenly attentive.

"It is not agreeable to me to speak of my brother to you, Mr. Tristram. Doubtless we should differ if we discussed his character and conduct. It is not necessary."

"Is Sir Randolph Edge concerned in what you have to say to me?" asked Harry.

"Yes; I am sorry to say he is. Another person is concerned also."

"One moment. You are, of course, aware that I no longer represent my family? Legally I'm not even a member of it. It is possible that you ought to address yourself to Lady Tristram—my cousin—or to her lawyers."

"I have to speak to you. Is the name of the Comtesse d'Albreville known to you, Mr. Tristram?"