

cheek and a smile that radiated sweetness and light. How on earth could Mark——? But that bitter, useless question was taboo.

Her own smile was more natural than it had been at breakfast; but Sheila did not fail to detect the lurking shadow in her eyes, nor the significant fact that she did not eagerly tear open the paper and plunge into the latest letter from Belfast.

"Mums, haven't you spent enough of this glorious morning grinding at Emile Faguet?" she said, kneeling down and laying a hand over the open page. "You look tired—worried."

"I *am* worried," Lady Forsyth admitted with a direct look, and Sheila's colour ebbed a little.

"Unhappy, are you—about Mark?" she asked very low.

"Yes. Haven't I reason to be?"

"But, Mums—she seems a very sweet person. And if he cares——"

"My dear, you're as bad as the rest of them."

Lady Forsyth was so rarely impatient with her that Sheila set her lips a moment before venturing further.

"Well, you know, she *is* extraordinarily attractive."

"Is she? I don't see it."

"Isn't that, perhaps, because—you won't see it?"

"*Sheila!*"

"Dearest—I'm sorry. But surely he must know her better than we do, because—he cares. And you don't give her a chance if you shut your heart against her. It's so unlike you. And it will be very hard on Mark . . . if she——"

"Oh, child, be quiet!" Championship from this quarter was intolerable; and setting her hands on the girl's shoulders she gave them a gentle shake. "There's no call to waste any of your sweet pity on Mark. If he speaks to-day—and I have a horrid