

appear at his very best—particularly when, as now, the Reverend Mr Finlake, with all his Oxford education, was of the party. She looked at her husband anxiously.

But Seymour did not mind. He had reached a plane of thought higher than that whereon such little things can sting and torment a man. Or, in more homely phrase, he had bravely swallowed his stiff dose of medicine, and his stomach would not be turned by the faint after-taste of it. Mr Copland might come to dinner as often as he cared, and drop as many h's as he chose.

He did not come too often—and never without explicit invitation. Once he came on four consecutive nights—but that was during the short visit to the castle of Mr and Mrs Reed of Brisbane. The host supported the society of these Colonial visitors with unruffled composure. Mr Reed was a plain sensible man, very easy to entertain—because he knew something about sheep-farming, and enjoyed riding over the moor to see the last six acres of reclaimed pasture. Mrs Reed was the sister of Gladys—when that was remembered, one had successfully lifted her to the higher plane of thought, far, far beyond the range of ordinary criticism.

Of all the people with whom Mr Copland talked, the one preferred by him was Seymour—above all of them—even the little furniture man and secret partner or protégé. He was fond of his son-in-law: was intensely grateful for the manner in which the "dear fellow" had stood by him throughout "those law difficulties." Far from exhibiting any repugnance for frank discussion of his catastrophe, he constantly recurred to the topic.

"Yon stood by me grandly—But, by Jove, what a mess we made of it, didn't we?" He never seemed really to understand the precise reason of Seymour's monetary sacrifice, or of his own punishment; he never seemed ethically comprehensive of a well-marked difference between right and wrong. "We were hard hit, both of us, by Jingo. The death of our old friend, Sir Gregory, knocked the legs from under me, and down I went—must go down. What a man that was, Brent! Such a brain—and a heart of gold. You may be sure of this: if Stuart had not been taken from us by death, he would have pulled us through—both of us, Brent—both of us."

He called his son-in-law Brent now—an affectionate curtailment, a pet name.