

Nance clasped her hands on the closed doors of the cab, formulating a sudden prayer that help might be vouchsafed her; then she spoke, with eyes fixed steadily in front of her.

"I am not a child, Walter," she said in a very low voice. "And you *must* speak to me—for Clo's sake. And if you won't, then I must tell you that I know all about her staying away from the theatre the other night—about her having no headache, but wanting to see Deerehurst—about her going to Carlton House Terrace at nine o'clock—I know it all, because she told me——"

Gore drew a quick, amazed breath.

"She told you?"

She nodded. Her throat felt very dry.

"Clodagh told you that?"

"Yes. Who told *you*?"

He made no answer.

"Walter, was it Lady Frances Hope?"

"What does that matter?"

"It was Lady Frances?"

He put his hand wearily over his eyes.

"If you wish to know, it was."

"I guessed so. I always hated her. The other day, as we drove from Paddington after seeing Clodagh off, we passed her in the Park with Valentine Serracauld. He must have seen or guessed, or heard from Deerehurst—and told her. He is an enemy of Clo's, too, since the time at Tuffnell.

"Oh, Walter!" She turned suddenly, and looked at him—"Walter, have you ever really known Clodagh?"

The pain and question in her voice broke through his wounded self-esteem.

"Clodagh has made a fool of me, Nance," he said harshly. "She has never been straight with me—never from the very first."

"And do you know why?"

"No; I can't pretend that I know why."

His tone was very bitter.

"Because she cares too much. She idealises too much."

Gore made a sound that might have been meant for a laugh.