

operation was about to be performed, and he the preparations of doctors and nurses. Silence reigned in the room until Blair, almost unintentionally, broke it.

"One is dead," he said, in very gentle tones so soft and low, that the words would not have reached his auditor had not her whole faculties been absorbed in listening.

She nodded. "Two remain. They are apart and they ought to be together."

"You are treading on delicate ground," she suggested.

"Do you think I do not know that every one knows as well as you do? Do you know I have been on the brink of saying it on many occasions, but I have always drawn back? Now I can refrain no longer. I am compelled by a force stronger than my own will. I see two lives drifting into a vortex which can only deepen if the present course is pursued and persisted in."

Lady Abercromby took two or three steps forward, until she was near enough to touch Lady Dion if she wished. Now her eyes sought his face no longer turning away through nervousness, as she had done at the beginning.

"I cannot and will not see two lives wrecked. Two beautiful characters weighed down with a load they need not bear, without saying what