

timidly kissed his hand had he not been so quick to see and prevent her.

Meanwhile Victoria, still conscious of the clinging of Felicia's arms about her, was comparing — secretly and inevitably — the daughter-in-law that might have been, with the daughter-in-law that was to be. Now that Fate's throw was irrevocably made, she found herself appreciating Lydia as she had never done while the chances were still open. Lydia had refused her Harry; Felicia had captured him. Perhaps she resented both actions; and would always — secretly — resent them. But yet, in Lydia — Lydia with her early maturity, her sweet poise and strength of nature, she foresaw the companion; in Felicia, the child and darling of her old age. And looking round on this crooked world, she acknowledged, now as always, that she had got more than she deserved, more — much more — than her share.

A conviction that Cyril Boden did his best to sharpen in her. With the invincible optimism of his kind, he scoffed at the misgivings which she confided to him, and to him only, on the score of Felicia's lack of training, her touchy and passionate temper, and the little unscrupulous ways that offended a fastidious observer.

"What does it matter?" he said to her — "she is in love — head over ears. You and he can make of her what you like. She will beat him if he looks at anybody else; but she will have ten children, and never have a thought or an interest that isn't his. And as to the money —"

"Yes — the money!" said Victoria, dejectedly. "What on earth will they do with it all? Harry is so rich already."

"Do with it!" Boden turned upon her. "Grow a few