

These were cruel words, but Lady Lyndon scarcely winced under them. She was prepared for them, and able to make every allowance for anything he might say.

"I know how you feel," she said ; "but before you blame me too much you might take into consideration for a moment for whose sake it was done. It was not for my own sake ; I had nothing to lose nor gain, remember that."

"Then it is true ?" he said, in the same sullen voice. "I had hoped that perhaps it might be a trumped-up story."

"We are going to treat it as such," said his mother. "It is that I have come to talk about, and not to listen to any useless recriminations. If you will help me I'll fight the case out to the bitter end, and deny everything ; but of course unless I have your co-operation I can do nothing."

"Where is the good ?" he asked, almost savagely. "It would only be a losing game from the beginning, besides dragging the whole story through the public prints. I don't think that anything would be gained by it, but much lost."

"And will you walk out quietly, then, and allow that insufferable upstart to usurp your place ?" she asked, shutting her lips with something almost like a snarl.

"There is nothing else I can do, and you know it," he answered. "I wish to heavens you had dropped me in the Lough, or over these battlements, before you brought me to this. What am I to do ?" he asked, turning upon her fiercely. "I have no occupation, I have no talents, no profession, whereby I can earn my living. We need not expect anything from him. I shall have to beg or starve."