

"With an obvious solution," said Lady Evenswood, "if only we lived in the realms of romance."

"I have suggested a magician," put in Southend. "Though he doesn't look much like one," he added with a laugh.

Mina did not understand his remark, but she caught Lady Evenswood's meaning.

"Yes," she said, "but Harry wouldn't do that either."

"He doesn't like his cousin?"

"Yes, I think so." She smiled as she added, "And even if he didn't that mightn't matter."

The other two exchanged glances as they listened. Mina, inspired by a subject that never failed to rouse her, gained courage.

"Any more than it mattered with Miss Iver," she pursued. "And he might just as likely have given Blent to Cecily in that way as in the way he actually did—if she'd wanted it very much and—and it had been a splendid thing for him to do."

Lady Evenswood nodded gently. Southend raised his brows in a sort of protest against this relentless analysis.

"Because that sort of thing would have appealed to him. But he'd never take it from her; he wouldn't even if he was in love with her." She addressed Lady Evenswood especially. "You understand that?" she asked. "He wouldn't be indebted to her. He'd hate her for that."

"Not very amiable," commented Southend.

"Amiable? No!" Amiability seemed at a discount with the Imp.

"You know him very well, my dear?"

"Yes, I—I came to." Mina paused, and suddenly blushed at the remembrance of an idea that had once been suggested to her by Major Duplay. "And I'm very fond of her," she added.

"In the dead-lock," said Southend, "I think you'll have to try my prescription, Lady Evenswood."

"You think that would be of use?"

"It would pacify this pride of Master Harry's perhaps."

Mina looked from one to the other.