



The Husbands of Edith

look of surprise at the Englishwoman. "I have known everything from the first. Mrs. Medcroft and I are closer friends than you may have thought." She gave Edith a meaning look, and a moment later was whispering to her in a private corner of the private office: "My dear, I don't know what it means, but you must tell me everything as soon as possible. I am your friend. Whatever it all is, it's ripping!"

There was a great deal of pow-wowing and chatter, charges and refutations, excuses and explanations. Mr. Medcroft finally waved every one aside in the most *déagé* manner imaginable.

"Don't crowd me! Hang it all, I'm not a curiosity. There is n't anything to go crazy about. My friend, Mr. Brock, has just done me a trifling favour. That's all. The whole story will be in the London papers this morning. Buy 'em. I'm going up to my wife's room to see my baby. I'll come down and explain everything when I've had a bit of a breathing spell. It's annoying to have had this fuss about a simple little matter of generosity on the part of my friend, who, I've no doubt, has been a most exemplary husband. I'll see to it, by Gad, that he receives the proper apologies. And, for that matter, my wife may have something to say about the outrage that has been perpetrated."

He took it all very much as if the world owed him an explanation and not *vice versa*. As he was stalking from the room, Brock bethought himself to ask, —

"When did you arrive, old man?"

"Last night on the 12.10. I registered as Smith. It was so late that I decided not to disturb Edith. They said in the office that you'd gone to bed, Brock. Now that I