

## CHAPTER FIVE

He might really be backing a foreign, philanthropic ruler and State-founder, and a British Foreign Minister, against the rather sinister Chancellor of the Exchequer that Mr. Gurnard undoubtedly was. It might suit him; perhaps he had shares in something or other that depended on the success of the Duc de Mersch's Greenland Protectorate. I knew well enough, you must remember, that Fox was a big man--one of those big men that remain permanently behind the curtain, perhaps because they have a certain lack of comeliness of one sort or another and don't look well on the stage itself. And I understood now that if he had abandoned--as he had done--half a dozen enterprises of his own for the sake of the Hour, it must be because it was very well worth his while. It was not merely a question of the editorship of a paper; there was something very much bigger in the background. My Dimensionist young lady, again, might have other shares that depended on the Chancellor of the Exchequer's blocking the way. In that way she might very well talk allegorically of herself as in alliance with Gurnard against Fox and Churchill. I was at sea in that sort of thing--but I understood vaguely that something of the sort was remotely possible.

I didn't feel called upon to back out of it on that account, yet I very decidedly wished that the thing could have been otherwise. For myself, I came into the matter with clean hands--and I was going to keep my hands clean; otherwise, I was at Fox's disposal.

"I understand," I said, the speech marking my decision, "I shall have dealings with a good many of the proprietors--I am the scratcher, in fact, and you don't want me to make a fool of myself."

"Well," he answered, gauging me with his blue, gimlet eyes, "it's just as well to know."

"It's just as well to know," I echoed. It was just as well to know.