

spend at least a couple of hours ; after which Susanna would drive him gently once round the park, take him to the House of Lords, wait twenty minutes, and then land him at the Imperium. He lit a cigar and took up the *Economist* ; it was not the moment for anything exciting.

"A lady to see you, my lord—on important business."

Excessive comfort is enervating. After a brief and futile resistance he found Mina Zabriská in the room, and himself regarding her with mingled consternation and amusement. Relics of excitement hung about the Imp, but they were converted to business purposes. She came as an agent. The name of her principal awoke Southend's immediate interest.

"She's come up to London?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, both of us. We're at their old home."

Southend discovered his *pince-nez* and studied her thin mobile little face.

"And what have you come up for?" he asked after a pause.

Mina shrugged her shoulders. "Just to see what's going on," she said. "I daresay you wonder what I've got to do with it?" His manner seemed to assent, and she indicated her position briefly.

"Oh, that's it, is it? You knew the late Lady Tristram. And you knew——" Again he regarded her thoughtfully. "I hope Lady Tristram—the new one—is well?"

There was the sound of a whispered consultation outside the door ; it drew Mina's eyes in that direction.

"That's all right," he smiled. "It's only my wife scolding the butler for having let you in. This is my time for rest."

"Rest!" exclaimed Mina rather scornfully. "You wrote to Cecily as if you could do something."

"That was rash of me. What do you want done? I've heard about you from Iver, you know."

"Oh, the Ivers have nothing to do with this. It's just between Cecily and Mr. Tristram."