

glance. "Was it nothing? You came to plead your friend's cause, I think. Surely that was something? I thought it a great deal. And what was it you said of Mr. Hardinge? Ah! I *have* forgotten that, but I know how you extolled him—praised him to the skies—recommended him to me as a desirable suitor." She makes an impatient movement, as if to shake something from her. "Why have you come to-day?" asks she. "To plead his cause afresh?"

"Not his—to-day."

"Whose then? Another suitor, maybe? It seems I have more than even I dreamt of."

"I do not know if you have dreamed of this one," says Curzon, perplexed by her manner. Some hope had been in his heart in his journey to her, but now it dies. There is little love truly in her small, vivid face, her gleaming eyes, her parted, scornful lips.

"I am not given to dreams," says she, with a petulant shrug. "I know what I mean always. And as I tell you, if you *have* come here to-day to lay before me, for my consideration, the name of another of your friends who wishes to marry me, why I beg you to save yourself the trouble. Even the country does not save me from suitors. I can make my choice from many, and when I *do* want to marry, I shall choose for myself."

"Still—if you would permit me to name *this* one," begins Curzon, very humbly, "it can do you no harm to hear of him. And it all lies in your own power. You can, if you will, say yes, or——" He pauses. The pause is eloquent, and full of deep entreaty.