

"I can't always," he answered, flushing under her implied praise. "Sometimes—it just takes hold of me. Don't you sing yourself? I'm sure you've got music in you."

She suppressed a small sigh. "Oh yes. It's one of my poor little half-fledged talents; useless for want of proper development. My elder sister's the clever one, and *she* got all the chances. She found me convenient sometimes for duets."

"Duets? Good. I know plenty. Let's have a try. What was her line?"

"Classical. Mostly German."

Mark was silent a moment, raking his memory. Then he had an inspiration. "Mendelssohn's 'I would that the love' . . . ? Wasn't that the sort of thing?"

"Yes. Very much so."

"Right! We'll give them a treat. You take the air."

She shook her head. "You're going much too fast. I never said I'd sing; and—I've rather forgotten the words."

"You won't slip out of it that way!" he told her; and leaning close he crooned under his breath: "'I would that the love I bear thee, My lips in one word could say; That soft word——'"

"Oh yes, I remember now," she cut him short rather abruptly; but a faint colour showed in her cheeks and this time she did not lift her lashes. "Very pretty, but drenched with sentiment. That's the worst of German songs."

"Well, you can't beat the music of 'em," he persisted, rebuffed a little by her tone, and hoping it was assumed for the benefit of Miss Videlle, who was most vexatiously in the way. "I'm set on it anyhow. Are you ready?"

Taking her smile for consent he moved one hand, beating time in the air; then, without preliminary,