

She had much that was pleasant to say, much of the prospects of his success, of his "training-on," as easy-mannered Theo had put it to Mina Zabriskä.

"And if you do, you'll be able to think now that you've done it all off your own bat," she ended.

"You've found out my weaknesses, I see," he laughed.

"Oh, I doubt if there's any such thing as an absolute strength or an absolute weakness. They're relative. What's an advantage in one thing is a disadvantage in another."

"I understand," he smiled. "My confounded conceit may help me on in the world, but it doesn't make me a grateful friend or a pleasant companion?"

"I believe George Southend agrees as far as the grateful friend part of it is concerned. And I'm told Lord Hove does as to the rest. But then it was only Flora Disney herself who said so."

"And what do you say?"

"Oh, pride's tolerable in anybody except a lover," she declared.

"Well, I've known lovers too humble. I told one so once; he believed me, went in, and won."

"You gave him courage, not pride, Mr. Tristram."

"Perhaps that's true. He's very likely got the pride by now." He smiled at his thoughts of Bob Broadley.

"And you've settled down in the new groove?" she asked.

He hesitated a moment. "Oh, nearly. Possibly there's still a touch of the 'Desdichado' about me. His would be the only shield I could carry, you see."

"Stop! Well, I forgive you. You're not often bitter about that. But you're very bitter about something, Mr. Tristram."

"I want to work, and nobody will in August. You can't get the better of your enemies if they're with their families at Margate or in the Engadine."

"Oh, go down and stay at Blent. No, I'm serious. You say you're proud. There's a good way of showing good pride.