

It was the day before she departed, that having by then got accustomed to speak of Robert's death with composure, she had startled Lydia by asking to see Etherington's letter once more before she went. Then she turned on her friend suddenly: "Why, I read something in this letter which you seemed to have missed."

"What's that?" questioned Lydia.

"That the writer loves you!" she returned with decision.

"What mean you?" and it was Lydia's turn to rival the blush-rose.

"Why, I read it in every word and line."

The other said never a word, and her friend returned the letter and took her departure; but her words sank into Lydia's soul as a great wonder, which had expanded into an expectancy, which now had its culmination.

They stood looking at each other, she first red, then pale. Then he seemed to read the signs for which he had dared hope, for he went forward and took her hands.

"Miss Bradford, Lydia," he said, "I have come for you. I could not keep away. Will you—will you be my wife?"

Her eyes continued to look into his as he came nearer, and she whispered, "Yes," as he took her in his arms, and kissed her lips.

It was some moments ere either could recover from their emotion, then she gently withdrew from his embrace.