

seemed to be considered quite a model of all the virtues. It was on the top wave of this reputation that I was swept back to England for the second time; and those who had been kind to me before were even kinder. I understand very well what sort of idea you had of me before we met. It was like an introduction to a volume, which gives the reader a clue before he begins.

There is nothing I need write about my life in America during the two years I spent there after my return, for I have no big things to repent of, or be glad of, during that time. But there is just one thing about someone else, not myself, I should like to tell. In a big city, far west, I met Alma—quite by accident. She was married, not to the man who for her sake had sent all her company east, years ago, but to a friend of his, whom she had known through him, and who knew the whole of her story. She was still lovely, though her outlines were sharpened; and she seemed happy in a quiet way. I was playing in the town where she lived, and she asked me to call on her. I went gladly, for I had loved her through all the years, and had never forgotten, though we had passed out of each others' lives. At first, she was slightly reserved, though sweet and affectionate; but one night her husband had gone east on business, and we sat up very late after the theatre, talking. She told me a good many things about the past, but dwelt mostly on her gratitude to her husband. I thought then, in my heart, that it should be the other way round, for she was so charming, so exquisitely refined and gentle, while he appeared not only commonplace, but even rather common. Now I understand exactly how she felt.

In describing the success her marriage had been, she attributed her happiness entirely to the fact that her