

"It strikes me you do us credit; and now I suppose I can announce that you'll receive?"

Nairn and his wife and Evelyn came in. Nairn, shaking hands with Vane very heartily, looked down at him with twinkling eyes.

"I'd have been glad to see ye, however ye had come," he asserted, and Vane fully believed him. "For a' that, this is no the way I would have wished to welcome ye."

"When a man won't take his friends' advice, what can he expect?" retorted Vane.

Nairn nodded, smiling.

"Let it be a warning. If the making of your mark and money is your object, ye must stick to it and think of nothing else. Ye canna accumulate riches by spreading yourself, and philanthropy's no lucrative, except maybe to a few."

"It's good counsel, but I'm thinking that it's a pity," Mrs. Nairn remarked. "What would ye say, Evelyn?"

The girl was aware that the tone of light banter had been adopted to cover deeper feelings, which those present shrank from expressing; but she ventured to give her thoughts free rein.

"I agree with you in one respect," she said. "But I can't believe the object mentioned is Mr. Vane's only one. He would never be willing to pay the necessary price."

It was a delicate compliment uttered in all sincerity, and Vane's worn face grew warm. He was, however, conscious that it would be safer to avoid being serious, and he smiled.