

They were quite silent as they crossed the soft turf to Oxford Street, and climbed to the top of a 'bus, where the air blew about them freshly. But soon Frances found her tongue again, and talk flowed freely as it should between old friends.

It was nearly five when they reached the little flat, and the porter handed Miss Sheldon a card.

When she read the name a flush burst all over her face like the sunset glow.

"He said he'd come back, miss, at six o'clock," the porter volunteered. She nodded, and as they moved on upstairs, Adrian pondered on that blush.

"That is one of my Scotch friends," she observed, carelessly, handing him the card as she put her latch key in the door. "Will you stay and see him?"

As it was put in the form of a question rather than expressed desire, Adrian prudently declined; and there was such a large wonder in his mind that he could scarcely bring himself to ordinary speech as they had their simple meal.

"You will have a great deal to say to each other, so I shall not stay," he said. "I half-promised the Rickmans to dine there to-night. Their hour is eight on Sunday, so I shall just have time to get down. You'll excuse me going rather hurriedly."

She said she would, and Adrian saw that she did not know very well what she did say; and he told himself, as he went downstairs, with a quiet smile on his lips, that he had been a fool and blind not to suspect all along what ailed her. He met Allardyce in the doorway, and gave him a keen look. The study of human nature was his business, and that open, honest face, which bore the seal of an upright life, and of a conscience at peace with God and man, pleased him well. He walked along the quiet street breathing an inward prayer for the welfare of both, and his own heart was touched by a feeling of kinship with them, though he knew it was ordered that he should walk through life a solitary and lonely man as far as the ties of wife and home were concerned.