

"Perhaps I ought not to have come to-day, and yet I seemed to be urged to it. I will go away now. After a time I shall come again, if I may."

"You may, just as you did before, after a time," she replied, expressing no surprise, and accepting his words as he uttered them. "I am glad to have seen you."

So he went away, satisfied, though longing to ask a thousand questions. Yet he dared not; there was something hidden in the woman's heart, and written on her face, which forbade the smallest curiosity, even on the part of a friend so faithful. There was an inwardness, a sacredness, in her new vision of life, which threw a halo round her. Hargreaves had many strange thoughts, and again his loneliness dwelt with him, oppressing him more keenly than it had done at Reutensee.

For that reason, and for another, it seemed natural for him to go out to Park Lane before he returned to Norfolk Street.

"The Countess has been out driving, sir; she has just come in," the man said, indicating, though he did not say so, that his mistress might prefer not to be disturbed.

"Take her my card," Hargreaves said serenely, and waited, knowing very well that he would be immediately admitted. She received him in her own sitting-room with a gay smile.

"Well, I have made my first public appearance with my husband and my son, and now they have gone a further expedition without me. How are you to-day? and whence this intense, somewhat sad look on the face that was so gay yesterday?"

"I have had a glimpse to-day of the inwardness of life, Countess," he answered. Then he told her in a few words, well chosen, of his errand that day, and the impression he had carried away with him. As she listened, her face grew very grave, even to sadness; and when she spoke, the sound of tears was in her voice.

"What you say lifts me up; it may be that yet I shall touch the hand of my friend," was all she said; and from that day