

"We thought you were abroad," she said. "It is pleasant to see you again."

"I returned last night. Sophia Ryder told me where you were to be found. It was quite impossible for me to stay away."

His directness of speech seemed to amuse her a little, but her inward agitation was to be detected in the trembling of the fingers which held the needle.

"Sit down," she said quietly. "Richard isn't at home this morning. He went immediately after breakfast up to town. Probably he will go to Norfolk Street to inquire after you. I expect him before dinner."

She did not suggest that he might remain till then, but went on quickly, as if dreading any interval of silence.

"He finished his new book last night, and has taken it with him."

"Finished it? By Jove, that's powerful work! Have you—have you read any of it?"

"I have read it all."

She laid down the dainty garment she was stitching, and the eyes which turned towards the sunny garden were full of a light which made Hargreaves wonder and keep silent, waiting he did not know for what. At last she turned to him slowly, and he never forgot her look.

"God has given to me my heart's desire. You, who have through all been so truly my friend and his, will, I know, rejoice with me."

Hargreaves did not ask what her heart's desire was; he understood.

"I knew it was in him, and I also knew that nobody in the world could bring it out, save only you."

"When I read it, the words which must move, and for good only, every heart that reads them," she said, with a sob in her voice, "I could thank God for all that has passed; and—and—for the future I do not fear."

Hargreaves rose to his feet. An uncontrollable emotion was upon him. He walked down the rose-lined path and back again, pausing before her humbly.