

the 'Ome Secretary and good for a thumpin' tip. I 'appen to know," grinning and nodding.

It appeared the Home Secretary could not escape the inconveniences of fame. All the same he managed to reach his destination unperceived by those he had come to see.

He was admitted by the elderly servant, who showed him into a drawing-room that gave a pleasant impression of brightness and comfort.

"What name, sir?" she asked, holding the door-handle. She had not seen him before: she did not know he was her master.

"Oh, you need not mention any name," he answered. "Just say that I—that some one has called."

The door closed and he sat down to wait, the resounding beat of his heart seeming to fill the room. A minute passed; two minutes, three; how long was the agony of suspense to last? At length his straining ear caught the sound of a foot on the stair, then the rustle of a woman's dress in the hall outside. He rose, his whole being athrill, the door opened, and Florence walked in. His heart stopped. For one breathless never-to-be-forgotten instant all feeling was suspended. The two looked at each other with fixed eyes; then without a word Florence advanced, holding out both her hands. He took them eagerly, bending over them as if they were his Queen's.

"You have come," she said simply. "It is good of you, good, good—part of your great goodness."

"It is good of you to allow me," was the response.

They meant to say so much to each other. Both had lain awake planning speeches for the supreme moment, and when it came this was all they could think of. For a full minute they stood dumb, holding each other's hands without being aware of it. Unconsciously Evan noted what a change had come over her. She was still, he felt, incomparably beautiful; but the beauty was not the beauty of other days. So an angel might look after great tribulation. The fresh delicately rounded face had become thin and long and very white, the eyes had ceased to dance and had grown pathetically large; and there were lines of suffering where once had been dimples. Even the luxuriant hair was losing its lustre. Yet she was surpassingly beautiful, with a higher beauty than had once enraptured him.