

not have given him such a hint unless she thought it was justified. Still, she might be mistaken and he feared to risk too much; then there were other difficulties—he was not rich. He went to the writing-room, knitting his brows, and stopped abruptly when he found Alice there alone. She put aside a half-finished letter, as if she did not want him to go away, and he advanced to the table and stood looking down at her.

"I did not send the telegram stating that I had found Lawrence."

"No," she said, smiling, "I know you didn't. But why do you wish to explain this?"

Foster hesitated. "To begin with, it must have looked as if I wanted to boast about keeping my promise and hint that you owed me something."

"But you were glad you were able to keep your promise?"

"I was," said Foster; "very glad, indeed."

Alice gave him a quick glance that thrilled him strangely. "So Lawrence said for you what you would have liked to say yourself? One would imagine he knew your feelings."

"Yes," said Foster steadily, "I didn't tell him, but I think he did know."

He stopped and Alice looked down at the table for a moment. Then she looked up again and met his fixed gaze.

"After all, you would have liked to have my gratitude?"

There was something in her face that stirred his blood, and forgetting his drawbacks he made a reckless plunge.