

"Exactly. She thinks that I am going to bring you back this afternoon. We will talk about it as we go, dear. Suppose you were to put on your hat now. The carriage will be here in ten minutes."

Janetta prepared for her departure in a somewhat bewildered spirit. She did not know precisely what Lady Caroline meant. She even felt a little nervous as she took her place in the victoria and cast a last look at the stately house in which she had spent some nineteen or twenty pleasant hours. It was Lady Caroline who spoke first.

"We shall miss your singing to-night" she said, amiably. "Mr. Adair was looking forward to some more duets. Another time, perhaps—"

"I am always pleased to sing," said Janetta, brightening at this address.

"Yes—ye—es," said Lady Caroline, with a doubtful little drawl. "No doubt: one always likes to do what one can do so well; but—I confess I am not so musical as my husband or my daughter. I must explain why dear Margaret did not say good bye to you, Miss Colwyn. I allowed her to remain in the belief that she was to see you again to-night, in order that she might not be depressed during her ride by the thought of parting with you. It is always my principle to make the lives of those dear to me as happy as possible," said Margaret's mother, piously.

"And if Margaret had been depressed during her ride, Mr. Adair and Sir Philip might have suffered some depression also, and that would be a great pity."

"Oh, yes," said Janetta. But she felt chilled, without knowing why.

"I must take you into my confidence," said Lady Caroline, in her softest voice. "Mr. Adair has plans for our dear Margaret. Sir Philip Ashley's property adjoins our own: he is of good principles, kind-hearted, and intellectual: he is well off, nice-looking, and of a suitable age—he admires Margaret very much. I need say no more, I am sure."

Again she looked keenly at Janetta's face, but she read there nothing but interest and surprise.

"Oh—does Margaret know?" she asked.

"She feels more than she knows," said Lady Caroline, discreetly. "She is in the first stage of—of—emotion. I did not want the afternoon's arrangements to be interfered with."

"Oh, no! especially on *my* account," said Janetta, sincerely.

"When I go home I shall talk quietly to Margaret," pursued Lady Caroline, "and tell her that you will come back another day, that your duties called you home—they do, I am