





Grenville looked at her with the shy air of a man who modestly hates being the hero of his own conversation, but Lady Ashford was at once so firm and so bisecting that she had soon extracted from him the information she asked for.

"Well," she said, when he had finished, "and so it all came to this. The world, when first you entered it, was enchanted for you by two necromancers, love and religion, who coloured it with colours, and filled it with objects of ambition which gradually, as years went on, dissolved or faded from your sight, till at last you woke up to find that you now consider realities. Like most gentlemen nowadays, you happened not to be rich, and the first reality that came home to you was the want of some more money. Accordingly you began to dabble in what you describe as business, and you found your wits were far sharper than you expected. You did not, however, make your fortune in the first six weeks, and you were beginning to think that real life was a failure, when you suddenly stumbled into a high-toned success—a sort of success better than what you were looking for in the city, for it gives you a promise not of fortune only, but of fame. Now to a man ambitious like you—for you always were ambitious—this luck ought to be intoxicating. Still, it is success not as you used to conceive it, but as you dreamed of it with the feelings of a poet, not as a practical man. I want you to turn your back on this, and go and get you."

"When?" she asked, looking at him with great pleasure, but he only said, "I have succeeded in anything."

Lady Ashford looked at him for a moment, then she answered, "do you know, Grenville?" she said, "that? Shall I? You have the opportunity of it, and other people know you have. You are a success, though you have not yet satisfied them. Success in your position, is success in its most flattering sense. I heard our host saying, as he went in to dinner, that he never had known so good a fire as yours. You were always a figure of some interest in society, and of a sudden you are beginning to make a stir in it. I have realized mine tonight before you entered the drawing-room. You cannot pretend you were unconscious of the same thing yourself. Well," she said, sighing, "listen to this. I was told long ago by somebody who ought to have known, how nothing is so sweet to a man





