

He was interrupted by the apparition at the study window of Caroline's white-clad figure. She beckoned to them. "It is nearly dinner-time. My uncle is in the dining room. Do come in."

Mr. Farquhar, without a word, left his companion, and entered the house by the side-door. Vaughan joined Caroline at the window. He detained her there. In the soft evening light he looked at her earnestly, and appeared to derive great and growing satisfaction from the sight. Truly it was a pleasant one. The glamour of youth was about her—a starlike purity, a childlike grace, in trembling conjunction with the budding consciousness of womanhood. Moreover, with the spiritual beauty, the impalpable enchantment that environed her, there was mingled something intensely real and human; something that told of depths as yet untroubled lying far under the unrippled calm and translucence of her soul; something that, while it suggested faults and shortcomings, also revealed the power to conquer the one, and the nobleness that made up for the other. Because, whatever else was there, there was also Truth, unsullied and uncrooked by conventional sophistries or cowardly self-delusion—truth, white, crystalline, and absolute. Whoso have such are not without a reflex of God's presence, albeit they have not yet recognized His voice.

How much of all this did Vaughan see as he looked at her, and then gently took her hand? She glanced at him in shy surprise as he did so,—but she let it stay.

"We have had a long talk—my uncle and I," said he.

She turned in quick anxiety.

"O, Vaughan! is he displeased at anything? He is not angry with you, is he?"

"Displeased!—angry! what would make you think so? No, indeed. Don't look so alarmed, dear!"

He spoke very tenderly, and drew closer to her, softly stroking the hand he held. Caroline's head drooped instinctively; her heart was beating fast. Some curious and exclusively feminine intuition made her aware that this was neither the old, careless fondness of the boy, nor the more chastened, yet admiring regard he had sufficiently indicated since his return home. Some contradictory, restless feeling made her strive to disengage her hand, though, poor little hand! it felt very happy in his clasp. But he held it firmly; he bent his head lower still, close to her ear, whispering, "We were talking of *you*, and of me, Carry. You can guess what is my uncle's dearest wish; or, if you cannot, you *know*, you must feel, what is mine. Is it yours, also? Carry, tell me that you love me!"