

"You know I wrote and told you," said Caroline gently. "And he is better now that when I wrote that letter."

"It was quite impossible for me to leave town *then*," he rejoined, with a curious, sharp discontent in his tone. It startled Caroline; she looked at him, inquiringly. "I am really grieved—I am uneasy about my uncle," he said; "and you too?" He glanced at her for a moment. "You look pale and fagged; you have been overtasking your strength."

"O no; I am very well," she answered cheerily. And then, with the true woman's instinct of consolation, and the true woman's foolish, fond, narrow-minded way of judging that to be the sweetest consolation to him which could be dearest to her, she crouched on a footstool at his feet, and took his hand. "All will be well, now you are come home!" she murmured.

He leaned his head upon his other hand, and said nothing. She was perhaps the more content that he did not overwhelm her by any of the caresses with which he had been wont to respond to the faintest indications of fondness on her part. It was her nature to be rather restless under demonstrations of tenderness in general. If she missed them now, it was without any painful sense of loss; and besides her heart yearned over him, wearied and troubled as he looked, it had room for little else.

"I shall see him to-night?" was his next question.

"O yes; he expects us both, after tea. But you must not look so sad, dear Vaughan. He is stronger to-day; the doctor says so."

"My dear Caroline," he replied, with a sort of uncontrollable irritation, "You must remember, if I have not quite your philosophy, I have more at stake. He is of my flesh and blood."

Her eyes, of painful wonderment, were more reproachful than many words. He seemed to feel them so; he stooped, and kissed her forehead.

"I am unhappy about him. I have never known him seriously ill before. Forgive me, I can't think of anything else."

Forgive him? What had she to forgive? It was only natural, and good, and noble, that he should be grieved so much as even to be unreasonable and hasty. And the thought came upon her with a pang, of the cruel injustice she, even she, had rendered him, when two days ago, she had vaguely, very vaguely thought, that his duty to his uncle at Redwood should come before his duty to his friend in London. She had a royal munificence of soul, which never rested content with simply correcting an error. She must be lavish of that which she had withheld—She must bestow all the treasures in her store to make up for having been unduly careful of them. So now, the treasure of her love