

She rose at once, crushed the letter into her pocket, and resumed her place at the urn. Vaughan seated himself close beside her, and the length of the table almost estranged them from Mr. Farquhar, who sat at the farther end. Breakfast commenced. Vaughan trifled with his spoon, and made intensely earnest efforts to balance it on the edge of his cup.

"Have you read your letter all through?" at last he said.

"Yes. It is not a long one."

A pause; during which the gentleman rapidly cut slices of ham, and distributed the same to his friend and himself.

"I was not aware you corresponded with Miss Kendal," he resumed in a low tone. "(Carry, won't you have some ham?) Is it of long standing—the correspondence, I mean?"

"No, thank you. Miss Kendal has written to me several times since she left Redwood."

"And you to her?"

"Once or twice. O, Vaughan, it is not courteous of you to go on talking like this."

"Farquhar, try that pie. I particularly wish to know about Miss Kendal. What has her ladyship been doing all this time? What is she about now?"

"Wait a more fitting opportunity, and I will tell you," said Caroline, colouring, as, with a slight and not ungraceful assumption of dignity, she turned from her questioner, and addressed some remark to Mr. Farquhar.

Vaughan vexedly bent all his attention on his plate, and would not for some time join in the conversation of the others. At length, however, with a sort of magnanimous toss of the head, and a frank, half-apologetic smile, he pushed away his plate, in token of having finished his breakfast, leaned his head on his hand, and appeared to be listening with great interest to what they were saying. But some how, Caroline was not her easy natural self, and this evident scrutiny did not tend to increase her composure. She answered at random; she fell into reverie, in spite of her frequent self-corrections, when she would look round with a start, and eagerly begin to join in the conversation. It was a relief when she could rise from the table and quit the room.

But on the staircase Vaughan overtook and detained her.

"You slippery little thing, I want to speak to you."

"I am going to my uncle. He has a cold."

"It is n't a mortal complaint. Now curiosity is—suspense is. With those two diseases I am suffering, and in a very bad way. Come into the drawing-room."