

onward at an increased pace, and conversation was checked for a time. When they drew rein, it was to dismount from their horses, and, leaving them in charge of the groom, to ascend the much-talked-of Crooksforth Hill.

Caroline, in glee, ran forward. Vaughan linked his arm within his friend's, and they followed more deliberately.

"Well, what do you think of my cousin? Isn't she pretty?"

"She is pretty," returned Mr. Farquhar, with an unusually sententious air.

Vaughan was surprised; and oddly too, felt both relieved and annoyed at the moderation of the reply.

"Is that all you have to say? Why, I myself was struck when I saw her last night. She was a mere school-girl when I left Redwood—a child, comparatively."

"She is little more now, I think." And the speaker's eye followed the lithe figure of Caroline, as she bounded up the somewhat steep ascent.

Once she turned back to look at them, and her laughing face and golden hair flashed on them for a moment, like a sudden light upon the bare, brown hill. But, presently, in its dusky crest of pines she was lost to view.

"She is very young still; her manner is unformed, and so forth," Vaughan then resumed. "She has little of what you would call 'style,' or *l'air de société*. But all that will come."

"Will it?"

"Of course it will. Miss Maturin is not likely to lack those necessary graces when they become necessary. At present, in this country circle, their absence may pass unnoticed; but trust me," added the young man, slightly chafed by the other's indifference, "you'll hear of her yet in London."

Mr. Farquhar seemed amused.

"You defend Miss Maturin's claims as a belle and a woman of the world with most creditable zeal," he remarked.

But even while Vaughan looked at him, a little puzzled as to his meaning, the unconscious subject of their talk came towards them, back from the summit of the hill. She was arranging some sprigs of heather, purple, pink, and white, into a little bouquet.

"Are not these lovely? Look, Vaughan, this is a peculiar kind of heather which does not grow on the moorlands."

"I see; it is very pretty. How carefully you have arranged them. Are they for me?"

"No, indeed; I gathered them for my uncle. He has a mountaineer's love of heather."