

"I expect Madame de Vigney by this evening's train," said Miss Kendal as she left. "I shall bring her to see you very soon; you are to be great friends, you know."

Her encouraging smile, her cheerful tone, bore their effect. Caroline smiled back again; but it was a smile that set Miss Kendal musing, as she walked quickly home.

"There is something more than anxiety stirring that child's heart; something quite unaccustomed to her thoughts is, little by little, finding place among them. I know it."

And perhaps she was right. Yet Caroline herself, if not absolutely unconscious of a mysterious, impalpable cloud somewhere, would never have recognized whence it came, or in what it consisted. The face of the world was dimmed; but where hung the mists that subdued its brightness?

Very impalpable were the mists as yet, and very easily to be dispelled. That night, about seven o'clock, they all vanished at the mere echo of a sound—Vaughan's step in the corridor, Vaughan's hand on the latch of the study-door. There stood Caroline beside the fire, before which was drawn closely the white-clothed tea-table, in waiting for the traveller.

He strode into the room. The first thing Caroline noticed, in the midst of her blushing joyfulness, was how cold and tired he looked.

"I am tired," he admitted, "and cold too. Winter seems coming fairly upon us. How pleasant the fire looks."

And he bent over it, rubbing his hands sedulously, while Caroline was happily busy in making tea, and giving orders for certain refreshments to be brought in, which she had planned beforehand for his delectation. No clouds now on the girl's heart or face, as she made her arrangements with blithe officiousness, placed his chair, and gayly offered her fingertips to lead him thereto.

He flung himself into the chair, and wearily and languidly began to eat.

"Dear Vaughan, how worn out you look! Tell me — is your friend —"

She felt ashamed for not having thought of his friend before, and hesitated.

"O, he is quite right now—has been getting better daily," said Vaughan, hurriedly. "And—and everything is all settled—quite right. You need not be uneasy," he added with a brief glance, that made her blush, as she remembered for the first time the whole of the circumstances connected with his departure. "I wish you had as good news to tell me," he went on; "I am completely dismayed to hear of my uncle's continued illness. I was not prepared——"