

say to—to you," he said, turning to Vaughan, while Caroline went to the bell. "You know—it was well to make it quite clear—about Redwood. You will be satisfied?"

"My dear uncle," he replied, fervently, a flush of colour coming to relieve the apprehensive pallor of his face, "can you doubt—can you question?"

"That is well—that is well," and Mr. Hesketh returned the pressure of his hand. "So when I see my two children happy," he wandered on, "for they love one another—they love one another, Miss Kendal——" But the utterance of the name set him right. He looked up, with a half smile of courteous apology. "I forgot—I forgot. I think I am tired. Children, come here a minute. Stand there—just there—side by side. Nay, sweet, you are not frightened?" For Caroline was trembling, partly from nervous anxiety, partly from shyness. But Vaughan took her hand, and whispered to her reassuringly. He put his arms around her.

"You love her, Vaughan?" said the old man, looking at him straightly and fixedly. The gaze of those eyes, curiously bright, intensely earnest, smote the young man like a sharp weapon. He winced; the blood seemed to career madly up into his brain. He felt blinded—dizzy for the moment. But conscience held but a brief dominion. He had gathered himself together anew in another instant, cool, calm, and collected; he drew the girl closer to his heart, and bent down and kissed her brow. "I love her!" said he, and Carry, altogether broken down by a tumult of emotions, both sad, painful, and sweet, drooped her head on to his arm, and cried quietly. For a little while Mr. Hesketh looked at them both. He clasped within his own their joined hands.

"I have said 'God bless you' many a time, without thinking for *whose* blessing it was I asked. But now I think I know better what it means. God bless you; I suppose no one deserves his blessing. But try——" The low, musing tone faded into silence.

Never before had Mr. Hesketh spoken with such solemnity on such a subject. Caroline was awed. Vaughan felt embarrassed: he thought it was time for this scene to end. He was relieved when Caroline gently disengaged herself from his arm, and ran to the door to answer a low-tapped summons. "It is Mr. Clayton," she said, coming back to them.

The old gentleman raised himself in his chair. "I am ready—I am ready," he called out impatiently. "Bid him come."

Vaughan, equally impatient, turned to leave the room.

"Yes," the invalid went on, with nervous haste, "you and Caroline can go, but tell Mr. Clayton——"