

listened to her, conversed with her. It was perilous. The very atmosphere that surrounded Blanche de Vigny was one of witchery, most alluring and enchanting; and the alloy of sophistication, which, to many men, would have been an antidote to the charm of all the rest, was not so to Vaughan. Perhaps his instinct was not subtle enough to detect it, perhaps his taste was not sufficiently refined to object to it. Be that as it may, Madame de Vigny, with her dainty prettiness, her finished grace and elegance, her fascinations without number, was to Vaughan Hesketh absolutely and imperiously irresistible. By every turn of her head, every dimple in her cheek, every varied glance of her dark eyes, now shy, now saucy, now half-averted, and again turned full upon him in bewildering radiance, by every smallest gesture or movement, she drew him to her as by a glamour most potent and most tyrannical. He had not sat beside her five minutes before the chains were writhing about him. He had neither the strength nor the desire to escape from them. Every other consideration gave way to the one selfish, and, therefore, sufficing delight of looking at her, basking in her smiles, yielding to the delirious magic of her presence.

To be sure, there was no immediate demand made upon his prudence. Miss Kendal was poring over some old books at a side table, and, as for the conversation that was passing between himself and Madame de Vigny, the whole world might have taken notes of it, without at all disconcerting either of them. But, when Caroline entered, the state of affairs changed. Madame de Vigny rose, and eagerly advanced towards her. Miss Kendal was beforehand, however, and already held her old pupil by the hand. A very informal introduction took place, and the young girl and the brilliant woman greeted each other cordially and kindly.

But poor Caroline! she stood facing her new acquaintance, admiring with enthusiastic and innocent delight her beauty and grace. Quite unmindful, quite unconscious of herself, poor, worn, and wind-blown wildflower, she gazed on the attractions of this perfectly-cultivated, luxuriously-cared-for blossom, and never thought how its brilliance made herself look doubly faded and forlorn. For, truly, she was both. Undue confinement to the house, and the continuous though hardly recognized weight of care and responsibility, had stolen the roses from Carry's fresh cheek, had subdued the brightness of her smile, and had left dark marks, as of fatigue or exhaustion, under her eyes. Her dress, too—more adapted for a sick chamber than for the drawing-room—lacked all the grace and exquisite finish of the other's. Madame de Vigny's silk robe, with its delicate embroidered trimming, her velvet and miniver, the