

"I ought to beg pardon," she observed, as she set the poker down. "I forgot I was n't at home. It seems wonderfully natural sitting here with you opposite to me. You had better go on with Schiller's 'Wallenstein'—where we left off."

With all the dry, half-humorous manner and tone, there was a certain ring of pathos which Caroline felt magically. The latent tears sprang to her eyes again, and almost involuntarily, as if obeying some olden, long-lost, but resumed influence, she slipped from her chair, crouched on the hearth-rug, and leaned her head against Miss Kendal's knee. For a minute or two no notice was apparently taken, but then a hand—not a small nor an especially delicate hand, but one of harmonious formation, and of an expressive physiognomy, so to speak—was laid on Caroline's soft hair, and rested there with a sort of steady content that was more eloquent than a score of ingeniously-varied caresses.

"Well, have you nothing more to tell me?"

"You have not said a word of yourself yet," said Caroline, in a low voice.

"One at a time, my dear; don't entangle affairs. After you have made your statement, like the man in the first scene of a French play, I'll enter and unroll *my* budget."

Caroline began twisting and untwisting the fringe of Miss Kendal's mantle. A silence.

"Do you find that assist you much?" asked the lady, peering down curiously. "I would by no means grudge even my best cape to such an end, but—"

"Ah! don't laugh at me," she cried, suddenly; and in a burst of candour she told that with which her thoughts were full—her engagement to Vaughan Hesketh.

Miss Kendal made no observation while she went on detailing many things that, her tongue once loosed, it was happiness for her to dwell on. At length she paused, and shyly glanced up at her companion's face.

"I suppose you are surprised?"

"My dear, I expected it—my dear, I expected it," said Miss Kendal, abruptly.

There was another pause. Caroline waited. At last the firm but gentle hands drew her head slightly back; the governess leaned over and kissed her pupil's forehead.

"God bless you, my dear child. Now," in quite a changed tone, "if you like, I will tell you my two-years' history."

And she immediately began her record. In not too many terse sentences, with some few graphic touches after her own peculiar style, Miss Kendal gave account of herself.