

burst of children's talking, and presently the sound of approaching footsteps, made his heart beat stormily. Then he heard the faintest murmur of a voice among the rest—her voice—and detected the movement of the door-handle, as if a gentle touch were laid on it at the other side. He sprang from his chair; he met her face to face, as she entered.

She leaned on Miss Kendal's arm, and the children hung about her. She had only a smiling bow, perfectly graceful, perfectly unembarrassed, to bestow on Vaughan. She was in her travelling attire—rose-lined bonnet and furred mantle—and her maid just then brought her gloves to her, at the same time announcing that everything was ready.

"Will you—are you leaving us for long?" Vaughan forced himself to say.

She stood just within the doorway, drawing on her gloves deliberately, but ever and anon giving a smile, a caress, a few words, to one or other of the children. She glanced up at Vaughan for an instant—a single, transient, glittering glance—"It is quite uncertain when I shall return. Adieu, Mr. Hesketh ! *Saluez pour moi Mademoiselle Maturin, je vous en prie.*"

And again twining her arm within that of her old governess, she turned to go. Through the square hall into the porch, and through the well-ordered garden to the gate, whereat the carriage waited, the children followed in a troop, loud with their regrets that "cousin Blanche was going away," impetuous in their demands on her attention. She embraced them all, fondly but hurriedly, then escaped from them. The steps were down—the man stood by the door to assist his mistress. Madame de Vigny clung for a minute to Miss Kendal, kissed her hastily on both cheeks, then, drawing her veil over her face, she prepared to spring in. Another hand than the servant's held hers for a minute, and the flushed face of Vaughan met her eyes. He murmured a few words. She bent her head courteously, nothing more.

Another minute, and the carriage drove off, and the rest stood watching the brown fallen leaves that had been tossed aside by its relentless wheels. The children had run outside the gate, and were tossing the withered leaves about, laughing in their quickly-regained glee. Vaughan's eyes were strained forward with an expression eloquent enough of the bitter, desperate wretchedness he felt. Miss Kendal looked at him; she was not without pity, even where she had little liking.

"Will you come in again for a few minutes?" she asked him.

"No—no, thank you. I am going on a long walk," returned he, passing his hand about his brows wearily and perplexedly—"that will be best. Good-morning!"

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