

She crouched closer to him ; a sickly dread oppressing her. But the old man's gaze in resting on her seemed to forget everything else. He let drop the hand of Vaughan which he had held. Gradually the meaning in his eyes altered, though they were still intently fixed on the girl's face.

"It is a long time—a long time since!" he murmured to himself. "Laura—you are the same Laura. Where are the beech trees?"

He gazed round, in a mazed, bewildered way. Caroline twined her arms around his neck, in desperate fear. Never before had she heard her mother's name upon his lips.

"No, no," he said, at length. "I know you, my child, Caroline. You were even as my own daughter—always. I made you happy? May I tell her so?"

She clung to him, speechless. His eyes smiled on her—till the last.

They took her away.

* * After a little while, the thick clouds that seemed choking her burst into a passionate rain of tears. All sense and feeling were lost for the time, steeped in that wild flood. From it she subsided into a motionless, pallid calm, that for awhile half alarmed Miss Kendal, who watched over her. But it did not last long. A sudden recollection overwhelmed her.

"Now, I must not stay here; now he is gone, this is not my home—any more," she cried, starting to her feet. "I must go—somewhere."

The sense of forlornness, of desolation, smote her. She covered her face with her hands. It was such a change, and she was half a child yet. She felt lost, bewildered, as if suddenly removed from the sunny garden she had known all her life long, to a dreary desert, bare, hopeless, trackless.

"My child, my dear child," cried Miss Kendal, the rare tears standing in her eyes, don't speak, don't look like that. Come to me. I am waiting for you, longing for you; come!"

She held her arms stretched towards her. The girl raised her head, looked earnestly, yearningly, for a moment, then, with a sad wailing sigh, she crept into her embrace.

"Take me away! only take me away from here!" was all she said.

"Truly, I will," said the governess, with a sort of gloomy triumph, as she gathered her close to her heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

So Caroline went with Miss Kendal to Beacon's Cottage. For three long, heavy days, the girl seemed almost yearningly to linger on the mar-