

The door closed behind her, the laughing voices gradually grew indistinct. Vaughan put down his book, and seated himself from sheer want of knowing what to do. He was very ill at ease. We are accustomed to bestow a world of compassion on mental pangs, far less intolerable than the complicated ones in whose bonds he writhed just then. The wind blustered without, the fire crackled within, and Miss Kendal's knitting needles clicked in familiar harmony. Discord rather, to Vaughan's ears. He hated the sound, he longed to escape from it, and from her. But he was one in whom passion, however fierce, almost always instinctively veiled its front to prudence. Self-preservation was with him so radically the first law of his being, that even from himself his well-trained impulses were fenced and guarded round.

So he stayed; and after a brief silence, recommenced conversation with Miss Kendal. That lady replied deliberately, with a certain reticence which usually characterized her manner, and kept her eyes fixed on her work, at which she laboured indefatigably the while she spoke. All of a sudden, Vaughan having just finished a rather elaborate exposition of the differences between the climate of England and that of the Continent, Miss Kendal looked him full in the face, with—"So you knew Madame de Vigny in London?"

Altogether dismayed, as he really was, by this abrupt and unprovoked assault, he gathered self-possession enough to reply with every appearance of easy courtesy. "I had the pleasure of meeting her at Mrs. Bingley's house," he added, after a minute's silence. "She is a very charming person."

"Who? Which? Discriminate your pronouns, I beg," said Miss Kendal, with a lowering brow, and an impatient tapping of her foot.

"Both, indeed!" cried Vaughan, with a light laugh. "Mrs. Bingley is an old acquaintance; I owe many pleasant hours to her hospitality. Madame de Vigny—I cannot presume to praise."

"She is a pretty creature," Miss Kendal observed, in a milder tone. "I wonder, I shall be curious to see, if she and Caroline will like one another."

Vaughan rejoined promptly that he hoped so. A pause, during which a brilliant idea flashed into the mazes of his busy thoughts, and, for an instant, seemed to illumine their perplexity.

"Caroline, on her side, is almost enthusiastic in her anticipations," he declared; "she is most anxious that Redwood and its neighbourhood should be made as attractive as possible to the new arrival."

And then, by a felicitous progression, he slid to the riding question. He had been telling Madame de Vigny that her desire to ride might be

gratified
her por
even in

To
herself
cotton,

He s
excursi
the view

"It
grim su
from ear
not yet
of subje

At th
energy o
be lost o
towards
difference
have been
Caroline

"Quit
walk bac
driving vi
panes. S
stay till th
he did not
self, as he
bruised wi

a woman a
And so
storm in h
raged with

Miss K
domain. I
themselves
piercing lig
before she w

And the
with alacrit
dishevelled.