

thinks (as I feared before) that a few days must terminate all. Nothing more can be done."

He was unaffectedly shocked. He had not thought his uncle's illness so serious.

The doctor went on. "Miss Maturin guesses nothing of the truth. She should be told — at once. It is impossible to say how —"

But the great London physician waxed impatient over this consumption of his golden minutes, and the other was compelled to break off and follow him.

Vaughan was left, standing at the foot of the wide staircase, to enter into the newly-created chaos of his thoughts, and to reduce it to order as he best might. He passed in review as calmly as he could—and he was sufficiently calm now to calculate chances and probabilities—all the circumstances of his position. His uncle, he knew, had executed the will by which Redwood descended to him; but he knew well, also, that the property had been thus bequeathed in full reliance on the approaching union of Caroline and himself. Should any suspicion occur to the old man, Vaughan reflected, that aught stood in the way of that union, or that his love for the young girl was less than he fondly believed it to be, it would not be too late even then to alter the will—to his utter confusion and ruin. But then, what was it that the doctor had just now informed him? . . . The guilty exultation throbbed at his heart for an instant, but if he could not quite banish it thence, he veiled it over decently at once; it shocked his taste, if it failed to wound his conscience. And he paced up and down the broad hall; his eyes bent on the floor, muttering to himself that it was a cursed turn of fate. He wished to Heaven (in the vain *parlance* of one who never thought of, nor believed in, that which he adjured) that things had happened otherwise.

And thus he thought, calculated and planned, and five minutes—or it might have been an hour—had fled by, when a light rustling in the corridor at the head of the stairs disturbed him, and Caroline's voice called him: "Vaughan, I was about to fetch you—please come. My uncle is certainly better—he is sitting up. He would like to see you."

He hardly seemed to understand; she had to repeat the words. She looked so smiling and glad in her good news—something of the old happiness and careless grace was visible in her for the minute. She waited. He could do nothing but ascend the stairs to her side. She looked up at him with eyes dewy in thankfulness. She slipped her hand into his, poor child, in happiest, most confiding faith. The new joy took her unawares, and made her unwontedly demonstrative.

"Vaughan, I am sure he is better."