

ness in her erect little figure. They had come into the garden by the study window; it was still open, and she walked swiftly towards it. Vaughan followed close, but she would not see his hand extended to assist her up the step. She sprang in; she hardly paused in the room, but went at once to the door leading to the hall.

Then Vaughan detained her.

"I have not displeased you? I am not so doubly, trebly miserable as that? Give me one word."

"Mr. Hesketh, vous me faites de chagrin. Permit that I pass."

"Tell me, at least——" He paused, as she flashed on him a glance of sparkling indignation. He grew desperate. His passions slipped from their control. "I swear to you," he cried, "I swear——"

"Silence, monsieur; you have no right to speak to me in this manner. I *shall* pass."

In good time sounded Miss Kendal's voice in the hall. Blanche opened the door, closed it behind her with energy, and joined her friend. She was a clever little person, and able to disguise her emotions to perfection.

"We have been walking on the terrace; it is so pleasant. I hurried away when I heard you call."

Miss Kendal, pre-occupied herself, scarcely heeded either the words or the aspect of the speaker. Had she done so, she might have penetrated beneath the apparent ease, howsoever skilfully assumed. But she led the way to the pony-chaise, which awaited them, with compressed lips and thoughtful eyes.

Blanche made one or two remarks as they drove off, to which she received very abstracted replies. At last she asked, "Mr. Hesketh—the old gentleman—is he better?"

Then, as if the spring of her meditations had been touched, Miss Kendal turned quickly, looked her blooming companion full in the face, said, "I believe I have seen him for the last time. Poor Caroline!"

No more. The lips were compressed again. Madame de Vigny averted her head without reply, and the silence continued unbroken till they reached home.

CHAPTER XI.

Vaughan Hesketh, issuing from the study some half-hour afterwards, met Dr. Barclay and the physician from London descending the stairs into the hall. Both looked grave at sight of him, and, after an awkward pause of hesitation, Dr. Barclay took him aside. "I think it well to tell you — that — that Sir —— has just seen your uncle. He