

"All about her! How do you suppose I should know 'all about her' in this little time?"

"Well, I mean all you know. Is she pretty?"

"Yes—I believe she is thought so," said Vaughan, stirring the fire, till the blaze forced Caroline to retreat to a more respectful distance.

"Is she old?" was the next question.

"Old! What do you mean?" he exclaimed, with a hasty glance at her

"I mean, how old is she?"

"I did not ask her."

"But she is not a girl? She is older than I am?"

"Very possible."

"And is she pleasant—intelligent? Shall we like her, do you think?"

"I'm sure I can't tell," he said with some impatience; "people's tastes differ so much."

"Then, do *you* like her?" said Caroline, smiling at his caution.

Her smile seemed to annoy him. He rose from his chair abruptly.

"O, I like her very well. Don't you think we may go to my uncle's room now?"

So they went. Caroline must perforce reserve her questions for some future opportunity. It did not occur that night. After an hour's desultory conversation with the invalid, Vaughan retired to his own room. As he bade Caroline good-night, he whispered to her, "I'm so wearied, dear, I hardly know what I'm doing this evening. You must pardon!"

Pardon was radiantly smiled on him. "Poor Vaughan! Dear Vaughan!" was her comment to herself.

CHAPTER IX.

Vaughan was certainly less "tired" in the morning, as it was only natural and to be expected that he should be. He was vivacious, conversational, gay. If his vivacity was somewhat restless, and his talk more like a refuge from uncomfortable silence than a spontaneous flow of words, Caroline did not detect it.

"Carry, we must go for a walk this morning. I long for a ramble through the pine wood again!"

"This morning? O, I am so sorry! Did you not hear my uncle beg me to be with him this morning? Indeed, I always sit with him till our early dinner hour."

"And so the best part of the day goes. And it is such a pleasant day, too."

He was veritably beginning to view things *en couleur de rose*. It was