

—of her confidence supreme and unquestioning—spent itself on this silent, gloomy Vaughan Hesketh. There was no test which her trust would not have withstood, just then. His silence, his gloom, were only natural—only called forth the more her tender wish to comfort and to cheer. Therefore she talked on as she had been used to do when his looks gave fond reply to her free, artless prattling—when his gay laugh, his caressing tone, had told of his own delight in listening. Now, he leaned his head upon his hand, and only an occasional glance or brief ejaculation attested that he heard. Once he broke in with an abrupt question.

"You have had no visitors, I suppose, at Redwood?"

"Two or three called, but I did not see them. Miss Kendal has been."

"Of course she has," muttered Vaughan, between his teeth. Then he seemed to plunge into deep thought, from which he roused himself as if by an effort. His face took a gentler expression, a smile began to dawn.

"And how is Miss Kendal?" he asked.

"Very well indeed. She seems very happy at Beacon's Cottage, with her little pupils."

"I am glad to hear it—I am very glad to hear it," pronounced Vaughan, settling his feet on the fender, and folding his arms meditatively. Caroline looked up, surprised and glad, but said nothing. "I have heard some things of Miss Kendal," he pursued after a pause, "which have greatly altered my opinion of her. Whilst I was in London, I happened to meet a—a person who knew a good deal about her."

"How strange! Ah! Vaughan, I'm so glad."

He did not look at her, though her eyes were raised to his face, with their rare, dewy lustre shining in them. He was gazing fixedly into the fire.

"But who is the person?" was her next question. "Who is it that knows Miss Kendal?"

"Why I happened to meet at a friend's house a Madame de Vigny."

"O, I know!" cried Caroline in glee. "She is a niece of Lady Camilla Blair's. She is going to stay with Miss Kendal at Beacon's Cottage. She was to arrive by this evening's train."

"She has arrived," said Vaughan, after a moment's hesitation. "She travelled in the same carriage with myself."

"Did she? How very pleasant! O, Vaughan, you can tell me all about her. What is she like?" And Caroline drew her little stool closer to the fender, and arranged herself in an attitude of pleased attention, resting her elbow on her knee, her chin on her hand, with her alert look raised to Vaughan's face. "What is she like? Tell me all about her."