

heavy, with the oppression of a woe that could find no tears; the lips were white—they moved tremulously, but made no utterance. With a sudden, sharp sob, she stretched her arms to Vaughan, as in entreating, blind reliance upon him for help, strength and comfort. Better had she put her trust in some Egyptian or Hindoo deity of wood or stone. That, at least, would not betray, though it failed to aid. But the idolatries of these civilized days are lavished on what is frailer than wood, harder than stone, while deaf and obtuse, it may be, as either.

Vaughan Hesketh was perfectly capable, had he so chosen, of assuming the semblance of the very tenderness for which poor Carry's desolate heart was yearning. *Had he so chosen*—but he felt not the slightest inclination thereto; and inclination was the guiding rule of his actions, as self-gratification was their aim and end.

Therefore he only took her hands in his, and led her to the sofa. "Lie down—you are quite overcome." And he stood over her for a minute, suggesting calm, composure, and such popular prescriptions, in the hard, dry tone of a philosopher, or a stoic, or a man of the world. He might have been either, or all of these, as he stood there uttering his sedative sentences at stated intervals. But Caroline saw nothing, heard nothing, felt nothing of the hollowness and mocking unreality of his looks, gestures, and tones. He was Vaughan—she loved him—she believed in him. In such a woman's nature faith and love spring from the selfsame root—they have their being and growth together—they fade and fall together. She *could* not doubt, because she loved him. She loved, as she trusted, with her whole heart. No little thing would have power to shake either the confidence or the love.

She had pressed her face against the hand that held her own. She was quite still, quite silent, till presently she raised her face, and suffered her eyes to give a long wandering gaze round the room at the familiar objects on every side, and the old man's especial chair that was placed opposite to her. Then something smote at her heart, and would not be denied. Long-drawn sobs heralded the passionate burst of tears that at once relieved and exhausted her. When they were spent, she sank back among the sofa-cushions, wearily, hopelessly.

"That is right," said Vaughan, in approbation; "rest yourself for a little while. Perhaps you could sleep."

She shook her head.

"Try; it will do you good. *Do try*," he said, anxiously; for in truth he began to feel perplexed. He had a good deal to think of—to do, perhaps—and much time had been wasted already.