

that they must all be gathered together in the breakfast-room at the further side of the cottage, equally out of sight and of hearing. She might leave the house, and be waiting there, ignorant and helpless. He chafed sorely; he was about to leave the room, that he might at least watch the carriage, to see that it did not bear her away, when a silken rustling without the door transfixed him. He leaned on the back of a chair, watching the door, prepared to spring forward when she should enter.

But she did not enter; instead, Miss Kendal trod deliberately into the room, looked at him with a fixed look of cold inquiry, and said, "Madame de Vigny is on the point of leaving. May I ask your message?"

"I wish to see herself," said Vaughan. His face flushed high; he advanced to the door, but there he was arrested, quite as much by Miss Kendal's clear, steadfast eye, as by her tall and unusually majestic presence. "I *must* see her," he said again, but in a more subdued tone.

"What have you to say to her, Vaughan Hesketh?" Miss Kendal sternly asked; "what is your mission here? Is it one you dare avow to me?"

"By what right do you question me thus, madame?" he returned, fiercely. "Who constituted *you* observer and censor of my actions? I am answerable to no authority of yours; I acknowledge no such tyranny."

"Nevertheless, you must be content at present to be ruled by such tyranny," said Miss Kendal, with grim complacency. "I shall certainly observe your actions, so far as they concern those in whom I am interested; and I am afraid it is likely that I shall censure them also. To go still farther, if I see occasion, I shall oppose—circumvent them to the best of my ability. I give you fair warning."

"It is unnecessary," he ground out the words between his teeth—"I have long been aware of your systematic plan of conduct towards me."

"That's a mistake of yours. You may have dreaded such a systematic watch upon you, but you have not had it till now. But we waste time, and mine is precious. What is your business with Madame de Vigny?"

"I shall only answer that question to herself; I will not be prevented seeing her. If you refuse to let me pass by the door, here is the window;" to which window he strode, and began to unfasten it.

"Take care—don't hurt my flowers," said Miss Kendal, coolly. "You are putting yourself to a great deal of fuss and trouble for nothing," she added. "The door is quite free to you, be assured; I have no intention of forcibly detaining you, as you seem to apprehend. There is no such conspiracy afoot."

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