

the accessories of an antique and celebrated mansion; and it had also all the comfort and luxury that modern civilization could procure.

It was this latter characteristic that made "the Court," as it was commonly called, so popular. Picturesque old houses are sometimes draughty and inconvenient, but no such defects were ever allowed to exist at the Court. Everything went smoothly: the servants were perfectly trained: the latest improvements possible were always introduced: the house was ideally luxurious. There never seemed to be any jar or discord: no domestic worry was ever allowed to reach the ears of the mistress of the household, no cares or troubles seemed able to exist in that serene atmosphere. You could not even say of it that it was dull. For the master of the Court was a hospitable man, with many tastes and whims which he liked to indulge by having down from London the numerous friends whose fancies matched his own, and his wife was a little bit of a fine lady who had London friends too, as well as neighbors, whom she liked to entertain. The house was seldom free from visitors; and it was partly for that very reason that Lady Caroline Adair, being in her own way a wise woman, had arranged that two or three years of her daughter's life should be spent at Miss Polehampton's very select boarding-school at Brighton. It would be a great drawback to Margaret, she reflected, if her beauty were familiar to all the world before she came out; and really, when Mr. Adair would insist on inviting his friends constantly to the house, it was impossible to keep the girl so mewed up in the schoolroom that she would not be seen and talked of; and therefore it was better that she should go away for a time. Mr. Adair did not like the arrangement; he was very fond of Margaret, and objected to her leaving home; but Lady Caroline was gently inexorable and got her own way—as she generally did.

She does not look much like the mother of the tall girl whom we saw at Brighton, as she sits at the head of her breakfast-table in the daintiest of morning gowns—a marvelous combination of silk, muslin and lace and pale pink ribbons—with a tiny white dog reposing in her lap. She is a much smaller woman than Margaret, and darker in complexion: it is from her, however, that Margaret inherits the large, appealing hazel eyes, which look at you with an infinite sweetness, while their owner is perhaps thinking of the menu or her milliner's bill. Lady Caroline's face is thin and pointed, but her complexion is still clear, and her soft brown hair is very prettily arranged. As she sits with her back to the light, with a rose-colored curtain behind her, just tinting her delicate cheek (for Lady Caroline is always careful of appearance), she looks quite a young woman still.

It is Mr. Adair whom Margaret most resembles. He is a tall and exceedingly handsome man, whose hair and moustache and pointed beard were as golden once as Margaret's soft tresses, but are now toned down by a little grey. He has the alert blue eyes that generally go with his fair complexion, and his long limbs are never still for many minutes together. His daughter's tranquility seems to have come from her mother; certainly it cannot be inherited from the restless Reginald Adair.