

arrival in the house. Indeed, he left himself so little time that he had to dress in extraordinary haste, and went downstairs at last in the conviction that he was unpardonable late.

But apparently he was wrong.

For the drawing-room was tenanted by one figure only— that of a young lady in vening dress. Neither Lady Caroline nor Mr. Adair had appeared upon the scene; but on the hearthrug, by the small crackling fire— which, in deference to the chilliness of an English June evening, had been lighted—stood a tall, fair, slender girl, with pale complexion, and soft, loosely-coiled masses of golden hair. She was dressed in pure white, a soft loose gown of Indian silk, trimmed with the most delicate lace: it was high to the milk-white throat, but showed the rounded curves of the finely-moulded arm to the elbow. She wore no ornaments, but a white rose was fastened into the lace frill of her dress at her neck. As she turned her face towards the new comer, Sir Philip suddenly felt himself abashed. It was not that she was so beautiful—in those first few moments he scarcely thought her beautiful at all—but that she produced on him an impression of serious, virginal grace and innocence which was almost disconcerting. Her pure complexion, her grave, serene eyes, her graceful way of moving as she advanced a little to receive him stirred him to more than admiration—to something not unlike awe. She looked young: but it was youth in perfection: there was some marvelous finish, delicacy, polish, which one does not usually associate with extreme youth.

"You are Sir Philip Ashley, I think?" she said, offering him her slim cool hand without embarrassment.

"You do not remember me, perhaps, but I remember you perfectly well, I am Margaret Adair."

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## CHAPTER III.

### AT HELMSLEY COURT.

"Lady Caroline has brought you back, then?" said Sir Philip, after his first pause of astonishment.

"Yes," said Margaret, serenely. "I have been expelled."

"Expelled! *You?*"