

Mr. Adair broke into a sudden laugh, "Intellectual? Our Daisy?—our Pearl?" he said. "Wait until you see her, then ask the question if you like."

"I am afraid I don't quite understand."

"Of course you don't. It is the partiality of a fond father that speaks, my dear fellow. I only meant that these young, fresh, pretty girls put such questions out of one's head." "She must be very pretty then," said Sir Philip, with a smile.

He had seen a great many beautiful women, and told himself that he did not care for beauty. Fashionable, talkative women were his abomination. He had no sisters, but he loved his mother very dearly; and upon her he had founded a very high ideal of womanhood. He had begun to think vaguely, of late, that he ought to marry: duty demanded it of him, and Sir Philip was always attentive, if not obedient, to the voice of duty. But he was not inclined to marry a girl out of the schoolroom, or a girl who was accustomed to the enervating luxury (as he considered it) of Helmsley Court: he wanted an energetic, sensible, large-hearted, and large-minded woman who would be his right hand, his first minister of state. Sir Philip was fairly wealthy, but by no means enormously so; and he had other uses for his wealth than the buying of pictures and keeping up stables and kennels at an alarming expense. If Miss Adair were so pretty, he mused, it was just as well that she was not at home, for, of course, it was possible that he might find a lovely face an attraction: and much as he liked Lady Caroline, he did not particularly want to marry Lady Caroline's daughter. That she treated him with great consideration, and that he had once overheard her speak of him as "the most eligible *parti* of the neighborhood," had already put him a little on his guard. Lady Caroline was no vulgar, match-making mother, he knew that well enough; but she was in some respects a thoroughly worldly woman, and Philip Ashley was an essentially unworldly man.

As he went upstairs to dress for dinner that evening, he was struck by the fact that a door stood open that he had never seen opened before: a door into a pretty, well-lighted, pink and white room, the ideal apartment for a young girl. The evening was chilly, and rain had begun to fall, so a bright little fire was burning in the steel grate, and casting a cheerful glow over white sheepskin rugs and rose-colored curtains. A maid seemed to be busying herself with some white material—all gauze and lace it looked—and another servant was, as Sir Philip passed, entering with a great white vase filled with red roses.

"Do they expect visitors to-night?" thought the young man, who knew enough of the house to be aware that the room was not one in general use, "Adair said nothing about it, but perhaps some people are coming from town."

A budget of letters was brought to him at that moment, and in reading and answering them he did not note the sound of carriage-wheels on the drive, nor the bustle of an