

perhaps a little stoop, tired from the toil of the years in which he had amassed the wealth which he was coming to share with his little girl. That was the name he gave her in his letters. Short letters they had been, explaining little, but often repeating his desire that she should fully qualify herself for the position it would be hers to fill, telling her that all the hopes and desires of the writer's heart were centred upon his little girl, and that he was always "her affectionate father Matthew Rawdon."

Today her dreams were clearer than ever. They seemed a very foreshadowing of his presence. It was the restlessness of expectation which had drawn her to persuade Mrs. Montresor to come out to spend these last hours in the open fields.

It was nearly five o'clock when they started on their homeward drive. On reaching Fitholt they were met by the house-keeper with the news that Mr. Rawdon had already arrived two hours before his time. Ellnor waited for no comment, she flew up the steps, and across the hall, to the small drawing-room where, she was told, he was awaiting her.

An other woman would have paused—tried to prepare herself for the meeting. Ellnor thought only of the end of suspense. She threw open the door.

He had seen the carriage drive up, heard her coming, he was standing in the middle of the room awaiting her.

"Father?" then she stopped short.

Was this he this her father? There must be some mistake. A small man stood there. His right hand held the wrist of his left, as if seeking support even from himself. One foot shuffled nervously over the other. His clothes hung loosely, and set badly. He was spare and thin, his scant hair was iron-gray and stubbly, inclined to stand upright, his beard was stubbly also, and apparently of recent growth. Above all, he did not look a gentleman. He came forward and spoke. His voice was a redeeming point. It was soft and musical coming from such a man, it was a surprise. So were his eyes, when he lifted them as he drew near. Habitually they were downcast. He came, leaving the custody of his own wrist, and rubbing his hands together.

"Is this," he said, "is this my little girl?"

She lifted her head and blushed. Was it for him, or for her thoughts of him?

"Yes, father, I am Ellnor."

He leant forward and kissed her brow—he had no occasion to stoop. As he did so, his eyes met hers. She saw them, wistful pleading, as though asking forgiveness for she knew not what, perhaps for his presence. Her heart reproached her, everything was his, even herself. It was a relief when Mrs. Montresor came in. If she felt surprise, she was too clever to show it, and her somewhat effusive greet-

ing gave Ellnor time to recover herself. She gave her father his tea; he begged her to. His face lit up at every small office she performed for him. He watched her, he gloated over her, her freshness, her sweetness, her beauty.

"My little girl," he said to himself, more than once, hugging his own wrist.

Mrs. Montresor saw the strained look upon the girl's face, the trembling of her hands among the tea-cups. As soon as the function was over, she proposed to conduct Mr. Rawdon over his own house.

"Messrs. Ridgway and Smithson were so good as to consult me about the arrangements," she said. "I hope they will meet with your approval."

"Sure to do that ma'am—sure to do that," he answered.

"Ellnor, dear," said Mrs. Montresor, "you look tired. Had you not better go and take your hat off? Meet us in the long gallery. We will wait for you there."

Ellnor was thankful for the respite, for the chance of solitude. In safety within her own room, she flung herself upon her



"WAS THIS HER FATHER?"

bed; she was overwrought, over-excited, and her dismay found vent in ready tears—a fit of childish, heart-broken sobbing.

"What should she do? What should she do? Who was he? What was he? And the Peytons were coming to call?"

Then, the fit of crying over, and being a child still, and simple in her ways, she knelt beside him and prayed for strength to do her duty. When Mrs. Montresor came to seek her nearly an hour later, she was sitting calmly by the window.

"You should have come down, Ellnor," she said, busying herself about the room; "your father was disappointed."

"I was very tired, dear Monty. I am sorry."

There was a quiet, constrained tone in the young voice that was new to it. Mrs. Montresor was a good woman, but of coarser stuff than her charge. She went over to her side. "Tut, dear child—don't fret, he has kind eyes—you must take care of him—£300,000 he's a prince compared to many a man I've seen feted for half

the money."

Ellnor drew back a little.

"It is time to dress for dinner," she said. "I mustn't vex my father by being late—is he gone to his room?"

Instinct had revealed to her her lesson. There was a burden she must stoop to carry, but to the world she must walk upright.

With curious consistency she chose the handsomest dinner dress in her wardrobe for her toilette, one which she had put aside as unfitting her years. The train and bodice were of grey velvet, falling open in front over a petticoat of brocade and old lace. Indeed, it was better suited for a woman of forty; but, when her maid had gathered her hair into a tight knot on the top of her little head, and she had fastened a great bunch of roses in her bosom, she looked a quaint and dainty lady, and moved with a newly born dignity pretty to see. She glanced at herself in the pier-glass. "Had it been different," she thought, "I could have put on my white