

Christian was in her cousin's way—Adelaide soon made this evident. There was no room in either the brougham or the victoria for three well-grown women, so Christian had generally to stay at home.

As long as she was in mourning for her mother, the Fordhams had sufficient excuse for declining all invitations on her behalf; but when the girl began to recover her spirits a little and to take interest in the people who came to the house, then the real difficulties began. Christian was no beauty; she was not really as handsome as Adelaide—who had good features, and a finely-developed figure—but people often found her attractive.

She had a beautiful complexion, and her hair was of that chestnut-brown which was so admired; her eyes were pretty too, though, as her shortsight obliged her to wear pince-nez, this was hardly so apparent, but it was when she smiled that people lost their heart to her.

Christian was rather a dangerous young woman, though she did not know it; for when she liked people she could not help making herself pleasant to them; it was not that she flirted, but that she took an interest in them.

And so it was that after some little festivity, Adelaide would follow her mother into her room. 'Mother, I do wish you would speak to Christian,' she would say severely; 'it was really dreadful the way she went on with Mr. Masters. She was sitting in corners with him, and laughing so loudly that every one turned to look at them; she has no right to behave as though she were a schoolgirl at her age—Christian is seven-and-twenty,'—and so on, until Mrs. Fordham was goaded on to speak to her erring niece, and then there were ructions.