

"I am Miss Rawdon, of Firkholt," said Ellinor, a little stiffly. She did not care to be confounded with "no end of people."

vision of Mrs. Montresor, standing up and looking for her charge, presented itself. Catching sight of her in her present alarm-

I dabble in colour a little myself," said Peyton. He seemed to have no intention of leaving. He went back with them to the shade of the elm trees, and stayed chatting, directing most of his conversation to Mrs. Montresor, until Jacky (the page) appeared with the luncheon basket, prompted by his own inner cravings. Then at last Mr. Peyton remembered the claims of his fishing tackle. He held Ellinor's hand for a moment as he said farewell.

"I hope we may soon meet again," he said. "My mother has been meaning to call upon you, but she has scarcely been able to leave the house for some weeks."

When he was gone they spread the snowy cloth upon the grass, and such a collation as women love, cold chicken, and a fresh young lettuce, a bottle of Sauterne, and crisp pastry sheltering green gooseberries.

Afterwards Ellinor lay with her head resting against Mrs. Montresor's knee, gazing up through the trellis work of green to the blue depths beyond. She dreamed peacefully a vague, fanciful dream, half pleasant retrospect, half anticipation. She felt that her morning's encounter had broken the isolation of her life. Strange that it should happen upon this day, of all others: for its close was to reveal to her her one near link with her kind—the unknown father who yet had shaped her destiny. Miss Rawdon was distinctly an heiress, the sum of her expectations had been vaguely hinted at as nearly half a million. She had stepped from her school life to this glorious independence, to be mistress of Firkholt, "the place in Hamp-



"SHE WAS YOUNG AND FAIR."

Oh," he said eagerly. "I know. Your father has bought that property—a splendid property it is, too."

"I am expecting my father to-night."

"That's jolly for you," he said sympathizingly. "At least, I suppose it is."

She looked at him gravely. How was it that she felt she could say to this stranger what was in her heart.

"It is not strange?" she said, almost below her breath. "I have never seen him—that I can remember. I have been at school all these years, and he has been in America."

"Well, that is rather a stunner—to drop all at once into a parent when you are full grown; but I expect it will be all right."

He smiled at her so kindly that the commonplace words seemed the deepest sympathy. By this time she had taken his image with some clearness into her mind, as she never again quite lost it. A tall, well-made man of thirty, with kind, grey eyes that smiled pleasantly; a broad and rather high forehead, where the hair already grew a little thin about the temples. The rest of the features were slight and finely cut; the chin slightly pointed.

"Somebody would have liked to paint him," she thought; "one of those old men, Velasquez or Rembrandt."

They had reached the bridge, and the

ing vicinity, she hurried forward.

"There is my friend," said Ellinor, "Mr. Montresor. Will you come and be introduced to her?"



"SHE LAID WITH HER HEAD RESTING AGAINST MRS. MONTRESOR'S KNEE."

She felt pleased at the consternation visible on her guardian's face as she drew near.

"This is Mr. Peyton, Mrs. Montresor: he has kindly protected me from a ferocious bull in the other field. It seems we are upon Sir Arthur Peyton's ground."

"I am very much obliged to Mr. Peyton: but you should not have waddled so far away, Ellinor, and you are quite heated. Come and sit down."

"I hear you have been drawing the ruins.

shire" bought and fitted up for her reception. And the royal giver of all this was her father, known only through letters delivered to her through the medium of Miss Lake.

Her school days had been watched over vicariously by Messrs. Ridgway and Smithson, solicitors; but now, he was coming—the being who should crown his gifts with his presence.

She had often pictured him. Tall she fancied him, with hair turning iron grey;