

As to Mrs. Melrose, whose life, according to the doctor, was only a matter of weeks, possibly months, Victor believed that the shock of her old father's death had affected her much more acutely than the murder of her husband. She fretted perpetually that she had left her father to strangers, and that she could not help to lay him in his grave. Felicia too had cried a little, but had soon consoled herself with the sensible reflection — so it seemed to Tatham — that at least her poor old Babbo was now out of his troubles.

His thoughts strayed on to the coming hour and Felicia's future. It amused the young man's mere love of "eventful living" to imagine her surprise, if what he shrewdly supposed was going to happen, did happen. But no one could say — little incalculable thing! — how she would take it.

The handle of the door was turned, and some one entered. He looked round, and saw Felicia. Her black dress emphasized the fairylike delicacy of her face and hands; and something in her look — some sign of smothered misery or revolt — touched Tatham sharply. He hurried to her, bidding her good morning, for she had not appeared at breakfast.

"And I wanted to see you before they all come. How is your mother?"

"Just the same." She allowed him but the slightest touch of her small fingers before she turned abruptly to the row of water-colours. "Who painted those?"

"Miss Penfold. Don't you know what a charming artist she is?"

"They are not at all well done!" said Felicia. "Amateurs have no business to paint."