

TOO SOON:
A STUDY OF A GIRL'S HEART.

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TOO SOON.

CHAPTER I.

The Cousins.

IN one of the quietest of the quiet streets of Bloomsbury there is a house rather larger than those on each side of it—larger, and seemingly older, for it has a quaint old-fashioned door-heading, the street door itself has carved panels, and the window-frames have a broad antiquated solidity unmatched by any others in the street.

Within the house a look of former times is even more apparent. The entrance hall is shut in by glass doors; from the midst of the spacious black-and-white pavement in the inner hall springs a massive oak staircase, which takes its square, leisurely way up to the top of the house, making an open room-like well in the front centre of it, and guarded on each landing, where it pauses for a good broad breathing space, by solid oak standards with heavy round knobs atop, shining though as their maker never meant them to shine, under a coat of most incongruous varnish. There is no carpet on the dark, slippery oak steps, and Miss Fraser's footsteps echo as she goes, key-basket in hand, to her cousin's study.

But she stops when she reaches the end of the landing gallery which extends on each side along the square