

**THE PRINCESS  
CASAMASSIM; A  
NOVEL IN THREE  
VOLUMES: VOL. I**

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The Princess Casamassim; a novel in three volumes: Vol. I by Henry James

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**HENRY JAMES**

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THE  
PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

A Novel

BY  
HENRY JAMES

*IN THREE VOLUMES*

VOL. I.

London  
MACMILLAN AND CO.  
AND NEW YORK  
1886



THE  
PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA

I

'OH yes, I daresay I can find the child, if you would like to see him,' Miss Pynsent said ; she had a fluttering wish to assent to every suggestion made by her visitor, whom she regarded as a high and rather terrible personage. To look for the little boy she came out of her small parlour, which she had been ashamed to exhibit in so untidy a state, with paper 'patterns' lying about on the furniture and snippings of stuff scattered over the carpet—she came out of this somewhat stuffy sanctuary, dedicated at once to social intercourse and to the ingenious art to which her life had been devoted, and, opening the house door, turned her eyes up and down the little street. It would presently be tea-time, and she knew that at that solemn hour Hyacinth narrowed the circle of his wanderings. She was anxious and impatient, and in a fever of excitement and complacency, not wanting to keep Mrs. Bowerbank waiting, though she sat there, heavily and consideringly, as if she meant to stay ; and wondering not a little whether the object of her quest would have a dirty face. Mrs. Bowerbank had intimated so definitely that she thought it remarkable on Miss Pynsent's part to have taken



care of him gratuitously for so many years, that the humble dressmaker, whose imagination took flights about every one but herself, and who had never been conscious of an exemplary benevolence, suddenly aspired to appear, throughout, as devoted to the child as she had struck her solemn, substantial guest as being, and felt how much she should like him to come in fresh and frank, and looking as pretty as he sometimes did. Miss Pynsent, who blinked confusedly as she surveyed the outer prospect, was very much flushed, partly with the agitation of what Mrs. Bowerbank had told her, and partly because, when she offered that lady a drop of something refreshing, at the end of so long an expedition, she had said she couldn't think of touching anything unless Miss Pynsent would keep her company. The cheffonier (as Amanda was always careful to call it), beside the fireplace, yielded up a small bottle which had formerly contained eau-de-cologne and which now exhibited half a pint of a rich gold-coloured liquid. Miss Pynsent was very delicate; she lived on tea and watercress, and she kept the little bottle in the cheffonier only for great emergencies. She didn't like hot brandy and water, with a lump or two of sugar, but she partook of half a tumbler on the present occasion, which was of a highly exceptional kind. At this time of day the boy was often planted in front of the little sweet-shop on the other side of the street, an establishment where periodical literature, as well as tough toffy and hard lollipops, was dispensed, and where song-books and pictorial sheets were attractively exhibited in the small-paned, dirty window. He used to stand there for half an hour at a time, spelling out the first page of the romances in the *Family Herald* and the *London Journal*,

and admiring the obligatory illustration in which the noble characters (they were always of the highest birth) were presented to the carnal eye. When he had a penny he spent only a fraction of it on stale sugar-candy; with the remaining halfpenny he always bought a ballad, with a vivid woodcut at the top. Now, however, he was not at his post of contemplation; nor was he visible anywhere to Miss Pynsent's impatient glance.

'Millicent Henning, tell me quickly, have you seen my child?' These words were addressed by Miss Pynsent to a little girl who sat on the doorstep of the adjacent house, nursing a dingy doll, and who had an extraordinary luxuriance of dark brown hair, surmounted by a torn straw hat. Miss Pynsent pronounced her name Enning.

The child looked up from her dandling and patting, and after a stare of which the blankness was somewhat exaggerated, replied: 'Law no, Miss Pynsent, I never see him.'

'Aren't you always messing about with him, you naughty little girl?' the dressmaker returned, with sharpness. 'Isn't he round the corner, playing marbles, or—or some jumping game?' Miss Pynsent went on, trying to be suggestive.

'I assure *you*, he never plays nothing,' said Millicent Henning, with a mature manner which she bore out by adding, 'And I don't know why I should be called naughty, neither.'

'Well, if you want to be called good, please go and find him and tell him there's a lady here come on purpose to see him, this very instant.' Miss Pynsent waited a moment, to see if her injunction would be obeyed, but she got no satisfaction beyond another gaze of deliberation, which made her feel that the child's perversity was as great as the

beauty, somewhat soiled and dimmed, of her insolent little face. She turned back into the house, with an exclamation of despair, and as soon as she had disappeared Millicent Henning sprang erect and began to race down the street in the direction of another, which crossed it. I take no unfair advantage of the innocence of childhood in saying that the motive of this young lady's flight was not a desire to be agreeable to Miss Pynsent, but an extreme curiosity on the subject of the visitor who wanted to see Hyacinth Robinson. She wished to participate, if only in imagination, in the interview that might take place, and she was moved also by a quick revival of friendly feeling for the boy, from whom she had parted only half an hour before with considerable asperity. She was not a very clinging little creature, and there was no one in her own domestic circle to whom she was much attached; but she liked to kiss Hyacinth when he didn't push her away and tell her she was tiresome. It was in this action and epithet he had indulged half an hour ago; but she had reflected rapidly (while she stared at Miss Pynsent) that this was the worst he had ever done. Millicent Henning was only eight years of age, but she knew there was worse in the world than that.

Mrs. Bowerbank, in a leisurely, roundabout way, wandered off to her sister, Mrs. Chipperfield, whom she had come into that part of the world to see, and the whole history of the dropsical tendencies of whose husband, an undertaker with a business that had been a blessing because you could always count on it, she unfolded to Miss Pynsent between the sips of a second glass. She was a high-shouldered, towering woman, and suggested squareness as well as a pervasion of the upper air, so that Amanda reflected that