

**ABSALOM'S HAIR &
A
PAINFUL MEMORY**

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Absalom's hair & A painful memory by Bjornstjerne Bjornson

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BJORNSTJERNE BJORNSON

**ABSALOM'S HAIR &
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PAINFUL MEMORY**

THE NOVELS OF
BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSSON

Edited by *EDMUND GOSSE*

Fcap, 8vo, cloth

Synnöve Solbakken

Arne

A Happy Boy

The Fisher Lass

The Bridal March, & One Day

Magnhild, & Dust

Captain Mansana, & Mother's Hands

Abialom's Hair, & A Painful Memory

LONDON

WILLIAM HEINEMANN

21 Bedford Street, W.C.

ABSALOM'S HAIR
&
A PAINFUL MEMORY

BY

BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON

(Translated from the Norwegian)

LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1898

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22.8

ABSALOM'S HAIR

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CHAPTER I

HARALD KAAS was sixty.

He had given up his free, uncriticised bachelor life; his yacht was no longer seen off the coast in summer; his tours to England and the south had ceased; nay, he was rarely to be found even at his club in Christiania. His gigantic figure was never seen in the doorways; he was failing.

Bandy-legged he had always been, but this defect had increased; his herculean back was rounded, and he stooped a little. His forehead, always of the broadest—no one else's hat would fit him—was now one of the highest, that is to say, he had lost all his hair, except a ragged lock over each ear and a thin fringe behind. He was beginning also to lose his teeth, which were strong though small, and blackened by

ABSALOM'S HAIR

tobacco; and now, instead of "deuce take it" he said "deush take it."

He had always held his hands half closed as though grasping something; now they had stiffened so that he could never open them fully. The little finger of his left hand had been bitten off "in gratitude" by an adversary whom he had knocked down: according to Harald's version of the story, he had compelled the fellow to swallow the piece on the spot.

He was fond of caressing the stump, and it often served as an introduction to the history of his exploits, which became greater and greater as he grew older and quieter.

His small sharp eyes were deep set and looked at one with great intensity. There was power in his individuality, and, besides shrewd sense, he possessed a considerable gift for mechanics. His boundless self-esteem was not devoid of greatness, and the emphasis with which both body and soul proclaimed themselves made him one of the originals of the country.

Why was he nothing more?

He lived on his estate, Hellebergene, whose