

**DUST BEFORE THE
WIND; A NOVEL IN
TWO VOLUMES. VOL I**

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Dust before the wind; A novel in two volumes. Vol I by May Crommelin

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MAY CROMMELIN

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DUST
BEFORE
THE
WIND



A Novel

By

MAY CROMMELIN

In Two Volumes

Volume 1

LONDON:
BLISS, SANDS & FOSTER,
CRAVEN STREET, STRAND.

1894.

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DUST BEFORE THE WIND.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

"'Tis true 'tis pity; and pity 'tis
'Tis true."

BY way of preface, let it be understood that this story is only written because it is said to be true.

Surely, in the affairs of daily life, an ounce of fact is worth a pound of fiction. "But that is not art," cry the crowd. There are many strange tales we all know, which, if they were written, no one would believe.

Pro says, confidentially: You see, my dear friend, when you write a story you must make it seem like ordinary life. Now the end of

your tragedy, for instance. It might happen so in a Greek play, but in real life——

Con : But that is just the gist of the matter. It did so happen. Why suppress all that is extraordinary in daily existence? If, on the contrary, we note it carefully, as doctors and other scientific men do facts that come under their observation, we shall get nearer what we infants in the night are crying for—the Light of Truth.

Pro (sarcastically) : Perhaps you would like a fact I can vouch for also, as being strictly true. It is a recent Irish story. Two young fellows who were moonlighters suspected a “boy” of informing upon them. So they asked him to come out for a walk one evening and murdered him in a lonely valley, where two roads met. A year or so later their father was thrown from his gig, driving by that same spot, and killed. When the old priest heard of it—probably knowing the previous story through the confessional—he raised his hands, exclaiming : “The ways of God are wonderful !”

Con : Well—— ?

Pro ; Well, there is another moral for you.

To me it is pure coincidence. But you will see the finger of Providence, most probably, in it. The Jews were more poetic when they imagined an angel of the Lord, with a drawn sword, stopping Balaam's ass.

Con (vexed) : I was not pointing any moral. Has life a moral, beyond the lessons of practising common sense and honesty ? also of reverence for Nature's laws, for, if broken, the father's sins are naturally visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

Pro : There I agree. Up to that point the wicked flourish like a green bay tree ; and they do not often perish suddenly and come to a fearful end. On the contrary, they go down to their graves in peace, as David likewise remarked, leaving riches and children behind them. I confess to reflecting sometimes that if I had had the ordering of this world, I could have made a better job of it.

Con : It all does seem a frightful muddle at times ; and I get very depressed when the apparent injustice of things strikes me. If we are in a great school, we should wish to see the master deal out prizes and punishments.

Pro: Precisely. Otherwise one may come to think His existence a myth, invented by some wise monitors to keep the naughty boys in order.

Con (with eagerness): So you acknowledge the value of signs that eternal justice is working among us—though we may not recognize it often. Were not steam, electricity, with us always, and did we guess their presence a century ago? “The mills of God grind slowly.” A thousand years in His sight are as one day. If we are creatures of eternity, what matters time, if the justice that is our right comes at last?

Pro: Humph. Being sinful myself, I confess to a weakness towards mercy. Your story preaches—an eye for an eye. But have we not had a Christian upbringing, which started us in life on a higher plane than the Jew whose noble wish (which we read out on Sundays) was to wash his footsteps in the blood of his enemies. Your sinner, a woman, is punished remorselessly; not so the man. Quite true to life; only as to justice——

Con: With the measure she meted was it