

**BESIDE STILL WATERS:
A NOVEL; IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. III**

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Beside Still Waters: A Novel; In Three Volumes, Vol. III by William Mackay

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WILLIAM MACKAY

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A NOVEL; IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. III**

BESIDE STILL WATERS

A NOVEL

BY

WILLIAM MACKAY

AUTHOR OF 'THE POPULAR IDOL,' 'PRO PATRIA,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III

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BESIDE STILL WATERS

CHAPTER I

A BRUISED REED

FROM the congenial shelter of the public-house, nearly opposite, James Gates, Esq., turf prophet and man about town, watched Ruth alight from the rickety four-wheeler. His keen and delicate sense of humour was wonderfully tickled when Hoppy descended, displaying to the greatest advantage his gala costume.

Mr Molt was quite unconscious of the

interest which he was exciting in the breast of Mr Gates. He was confused by the roll of the traffic, the size and regularity of the houses, the variety of the faces and dresses. In Wapshot he knew every face he encountered. Here, he did not recognise one.

Moreover, we know that Mr Molt being a fisherman, was a bit of a philosopher. It will, therefore, be readily inferred that his brain was severely exercised by the transactions in which he was now taking an active part. Hoppy's mind was more than ever puzzled by the attempt to make the ways of the world harmonise with the doctrines of the Book which Ruth had taught him to read. 'Honour thy father.' The Book said that with a distinctness and directness quite undeniable. No amount of Revision could cause the disappearance of that mandate. But was Ruth honouring her father? Hoppy could scarcely go so far as to believe it. Indeed, he admitted that she was deceiving

and disobeying him. But Ruth, in his eyes, could do no wrong; so this heathen of the Thames Valley settled the matter to his own satisfaction, by supposing the Commandment in question to be a dead letter, and his young mistress to be perfectly justified in taking the somewhat extraordinary course she had adopted.

He had just come to this illogical and irreligious conclusion when a close brougham drew up behind his own cab, and a lady descended to the pavement, whose appearance immediately attracted his attention. He had never seen the lady before; and yet the face differed from all the others that had passed him. Its features seemed familiar to him. Here was more subject matter for reflection. Hoppy was born to be puzzled.

Meanwhile, Ruth entered the mansion in which Dick's chambers were situated. In a timid and scarcely audible voice she asked the hall porter to give her information as to their whereabouts. That admirable man

directed her to the 'fust floor.' She ascended the stone steps, and came to a door on which Dick's name was inscribed on a tiny brass plate.

The door was open. It was left so purposely, she argued, for was he not expecting her? He was ill, and to knock might disturb him. She would enter. With a palpitating heart, she still further opened the portal, and stood in a broad carpeted passage, at the further end of which was a *portière* partly drawn. That surely would be the entrance to his sitting-room. The passage that she traversed was dark.

She heard voices; she heard Dick's voice. How her heart beat! A woman's voice! How her heart ceased to beat.

She drew the *portière* slightly. Ah! cruel sight. There, in the middle of the room, stood a woman, with big bold eyes and painted face; but, with all her disguise, Ruth recognised Polly Parsons. Dick stood before Polly. Ruth could not choose but gaze. The