

**BESSY RANE. A
NOVEL. IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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Bessy Rane. A Novel. In Three Volumes, Vol. II by Mrs. Henry Wood

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MRS. HENRY WOOD

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VOLUMES, VOL. II**

BESSY RANE

A Novel

BY
MRS. HENRY WOOD,

AUTHOR OF
"EAST LYNN," "THE CHANNINGS," "ROLAND YORKE,"
ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. II.



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BESSY RANE.

CHAPTER I.

MORNING VISITORS.

IN the dining-parlour at Mrs. Cumberland's, with its large window open to the garden and the sweet flowers, stood Ellen Adair. It was the favourite morning-room. Mrs. Cumberland, up in good time to-day, for it was barely eleven o'clock, had stepped forth into the garden, and had disappeared amid its remoter parts.

Ellen Adair, wearing a dress of cool pink muslin, almost as thin as gauze, stood in a reverie. A pleasant one, to judge by the soft blush on her face and the sweet smile that parted her lips. She was twirling the plain gold ring round and round her finger, thinking no doubt of the hour when it was put on, and the words spoken with it. Bessy Rane

had wholly refused to give back the ring she was married with, and Ellen retained the other.

The intimacy with Arthur Bohun, the silent love-making, had been going on always. Even now, she was listening lest haply his footsteps might be heard; listening with hushed breath and beating heart. Never a day passed but he contrived to call, on some plea or other, at Mrs. Cumberland's, morning, afternoon, or evening: and this morning he might be coming, for aught she knew. At the close of the past summer, Mrs. Cumberland had gone to the Isle of Wight for change of air, taking Ellen and her maid Jelly. She hired a secluded cottage in the neighbourhood of Niton. Singular to say, Captain Bohun remembered that he had friends at Niton—an old invalid brother officer, who was living there in great economy. On and off, on and off, during the whole time of Mrs. Cumberland's stay—and that lasted five months, for she had gone the beginning of September, and did not come home until the end of February—was Arthur Bohun paying visits to this old friend. Now for a day or two; now for a week or two; once for three weeks together. And still Mrs.

Cumberland suspected nothing! It was as if her eyes were held. Perhaps they were: there is a destiny in all things, and it must be worked out. It is true that she did not see or suspect half the intimacy. A gentle walk once a day by the sea was all she took. At other times Ellen rambled at will; sometimes attended by Jelly, alone when Jelly could not be spared. Captain Bohun took every care of her, guarding her more jealously than he would have guarded a sister: and this did a little surprise Mrs. Cumberland.

"We ought to feel obliged to Captain Bohun, Ellen," she said on one occasion. "It's not many a young man would sacrifice his time to us. Your father, and his, and my husband the chaplain, were warm friends for a little time in India: it must be the knowledge of that that induces him to be so attentive. Very civil of him!"

Ellen coloured vividly. Eminently truthful, of a nature antagonistic to deceit, she yet did not dare to say that perhaps that was *not* Captain Bohun's reason for being attentive. How could she hint at Captain Bohun's love, plain though it was to her own heart, when he had never spoken a syllable to her about