

THE MORNING OF TO-DAY

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The Morning of To-Day by Florence Bone

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FLORENCE BONE

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OF TO-DAY**

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BY
FLORENCE BONE ⁷⁴⁵



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BOX 7

TO
LUCY

CHAPTER I

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds;
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool, sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.—*Gray.*

THE mellow beneficence of September lay over the wild ways of the North Riding of Yorkshire early in the eighteenth century. But where the woods crept up to kiss the moorland, and the miles of heather glowed with royal purple, the face of the earth was as it is today. For in those quiet precincts there is only change in the landscape of hearts. It was the hour of four in the afternoon, and already in hillside homesteads the day was nearly done. There was everywhere an air of that sweet, old-fashioned leisure which the world has nearly lost. It lingered in the slant sunlight that threw shadows across the winding road between the steep ways of Black Hambleton and the little market town of Thirsk. It hovered under the rustle of amber woods that covered the hillside between the village of Garth and the edge of the moors, and it crept about the atmosphere of Windygarth.

Practically, there was no village in the hollow

between two hills, where the rooks chanted requiems in the elms about the gray old church tower. It was only a hamlet, where few people came even to the sombre service on Sunday morning. There were three or four cottages opposite to the lych-gate, but most of the inhabitants of Garth were those who lay under the crooked gravestones and beneath the long grass where daisies grew undisturbed.

A winding lane with ragged hedges lined with meadowsweet led upward from the hamlet of Garth to an old past-haunted homestead, standing alone upon a patch of level land halfway up the side of the moor. It faced the wide and wonderful view of the far-reaching countryside and the distant hills. Upon its right rose an almost precipitous cliff, heather-clad and bracken-bordered, that led away to the moors. And behind it, reached by a narrow path across the turf, lay the mysterious lake of Greymire.

Even in the eighteenth century Windygarth was very old. The suns of two hundred summers had mellowed its brick walls to a crimson hue. Every year the ivy crept over the edge of its three red-roofed gables, and was cut away only to come again. The crimson Rambler about its deep-browed porch stole up to the window above. Once Windygarth had been a manor-house, but it had sunk to the level of a farmstead. The Saxtons had lived there for centuries, but little remained of their former status save its pride. Yet there was about each member of that typically taciturn North Riding family a grace of bearing, a refinement of attitude, and an aloofness from their kind which was a remnant of

the days of their ancestors. And there were some who said that Mistress Kezia had refilled the empty coffers of Windygarth.

Ten years before the beginning of this story it had been the home of two brothers, who lived their individual lives untrammelled by the ways of one another. Hugh farmed his own land and reaped his own corn when the desire for this world's goods came upon him, but the key to his character was a reputation for riding straight to hounds, and all that he cared for was fox hunting. When the winter morning broke balmy upon the hillside, and the sound of the horn wound over the moor, Hugh forgot his farm and everything else except the huntsman's thrill as he went away to follow the hounds. And Antony, his brother, dreamed through life still, though there were silver threads in his long hair, and lines about the sweet curve of his thoughtful lips. He spent his time with the sheep and in solitary rambles over the moorland, or among the few brown books that Windygarth possessed. He was regarded by the countryside as something between an innocent and a wizard, in whom there was a strange, if uncanny, charm which they could neither understand nor resist. His deep blue eyes were growing dim, but they could see the invisible.

There came a summer when Hugh Saxton left Windygarth for an indefinite period, and his absence proved to be the forerunner of an upheaval of startling import. He journeyed into Scotland on horseback, through the dales, and over the wild Border, and his purpose was to find foxes to replenish the