

**ANGELS & MINISTERS: FOUR
PLAYS OF VICTORIAN
SHADE & CHARACTER. [NEW
YORK-1922]**

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Angels & Ministers: Four Plays of Victorian Shade & Character. [New York-1922] by Laurence Housman

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LAURENCE HOUSMAN

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Introduction

THE Victorian era has ceased to be a thing of yesterday; it has become history; and the fixed look of age, no longer contemporary in character, which now grades the period, grades also the once living material which went to its making.

With this period of history those who were once participants in its life can deal more intimately and with more verisimilitude than can those whose literary outlook comes later. We can write of it as no sequent generation will find possible; for we are bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh; and when we go, something goes with us which will require for its reconstruction, not the natural piety of a returned native, such as I claim to be, but the cold, calculating art of literary excursionists whose domicile is elsewhere.

Some while ago, before Mr. Strachey had made the name of Victoria to resound as triumphantly as it does now, a friend asked why I should trouble to resuscitate these Victorian remains. My answer is because I myself am Victorian, and because the Victorianism to which I belong is now passing so rapidly

into history, henceforth to present to the world a colder aspect than that which endears it to my own mind.

The bloom upon the grape only fully appears when it is ripe for death. Then, at a touch, it passes, delicate and evanescent as the frailest blossoms of spring. Just at this moment the Victorian age has that bloom upon it—autumnal, not spring-like—which, in the nature of things, cannot last. That bloom I have tried to illumine before time wipes it away.

Under this rose-shaded lamp of history, domestically designed, I would have these old characters look young again, or not at least as though they belonged to another age. This wick which I have kindled is short, and will not last; but, so long as it does, it throws on them the commentary of a contemporary light. In another generation the bloom which it seeks to irradiate will be gone; nor will anyone then be able to present them to us as they really were.

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**The Queen:
God Bless Her!**

Dramatis Personæ

QUEEN VICTORIA
MR. JOHN BROWN

LORD BEACONSFIELD
A FOOTMAN