

# **A HUMBLE ENTERPRISE**

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A humble enterprise by Ada Cambridge

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**ADA CAMBRIDGE**

**A HUMBLE  
ENTERPRISE**



A  
HUMBLE ENTERPRISE

BY  
ADA CAMBRIDGE

AUTHOR OF  
"THE THREE MISS KINGS," "FIDELIS,"  
"A LITTLE MISS," ETC.

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ST. CLAIR SIMMONS*

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## CHAPTER I

### THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

**J**OSEPH LIDDON was deaf, and one day, when he was having a holiday in the country, he crossed a curving railway line, and a train, sweeping round the corner when he was looking another way, swept him out of existence. On his shoulder he was carrying the infrequent and delightful gun—reminiscent of happy days in English coverts and stubble fields—and in his hand he held a dangling hare, about the cooking of which he was dreaming pleasantly, wondering whether his wife would have it jugged or baked. When they stopped the train and gathered him up, he was as dead as the hare, dissolved into mere formless tatters, and his women-folk were not allowed to see him afterwards. They came up from town

to the inquest and funeral—wife and two daughters, escorted by a downy-lipped son—all dazed and bewildered in their suddenly transformed world; and a gun and a broken watch and a few studs, that had been carefully washed and polished, were the only “remains” on which they could expend the valedictory kiss and tear. Their last memory of him was full of the gay bustle of farewell at Spencer Street when he set forth upon his trip. It was such an event for him to have a holiday, and to go away by himself, that the whole family had to see him off. Even young Joe was on the platform to carry his father’s bag, and buy him the evening papers, his train being the Sydney express, which did not leave till after office hours. When they knew how the holiday had ended, their bitter regrets for not having accompanied him further were greatly soothed by the knowledge that they had gone with him so far—had closed their life together with an act of love that had made him happy.

He had been born a gentleman in the technical sense, and had lived a true man in every sense. In spite of this—to a great extent, probably, because of it—he had not

been very successful in the world ; that is to say, he had not made himself important or rich. Money had not come to him with his gentle blood, and he had not had the art to command it, nor ever would have had. It is a pursuit that requires the whole energies of one's mind, and his mind had been distributed a good deal. He was fond of books, which was a fatal weakness ; he was fond of little scientific experiments, which was worse ; he was indifferent to the sovereign rule of public opinion and the advantages enjoyed by those who can cut a dash, which was worst of all. And, besides, he was deaf. He had begun to grow deaf when quite a young man, after having a fever, and by the time he was fifty one had to shout at him.

So, when at fifty-six he met his untimely end, because he could not hear the train behind him, he was in the position of a clerk in a merchant's office, highly valued and trusted indeed, but worth no more than £370 per annum, which salary he had received for sixteen years. The £70 had paid the rent of the little house in which he had dwelt with his family for the greater part of that time, and on