

**MISS LUDINGTON'S  
SISTER: A ROMANCE  
OF IMMORTALITY**

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Miss Ludington's Sister: A Romance of Immortality by Edward Bellamy

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# MISS LUDINGTON'S SISTER

A

*ROMANCE OF IMMORTALITY*

BY

EDWARD BELLAMY

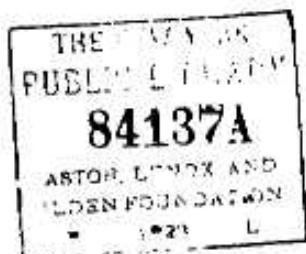
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## MISS LUDINGTON'S SISTER.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE happiness of some lives is distributed pretty evenly over the whole stretch from the cradle to the grave, while that of others comes all at once, glorifying some particular epoch and leaving the rest in shadow. During one, five, or ten blithe years, as the case may be, all the springs of life send up sweet waters; joy is in the very air we breathe; happiness seems our native element. During this period we know what is the zest of living, as compared with the mere endurance of existence, which is, perhaps, the most we have attained to before or since. With men this culminating epoch comes often in manhood, or even at

maturity, especially with men of arduous and successful careers. But with women it comes most frequently perhaps in girlhood and young womanhood. Particularly is this wont to be the fact with women who do not marry, and with whom, as the years glide on, life becomes lonelier and its interests fewer.

By the time Miss Ida Ludington was twenty-five years old she recognized that she had done with happiness, and that the pale pleasures of memory were all which remained to her.

It was not so much the mere fact that her youth was past, saddening though that might be, which had so embittered her life, but the peculiarly cruel manner in which it had been taken from her.

The Ludingtons were one of the old families of Hilton, a little farming village among the hills of Massachusetts. They were not rich, but were well-to-do, lived in the largest house in the place, and were regarded somewhat as local magnates. Miss Ludington's childhood had



been an exceptionally happy one, and as a girl she had been the belle of the village. Her beauty, together with her social position and amiability of disposition, made her the idol of the young men, the recognized leader of the girls, and the animating and central figure in the social life of the place.

She was about twenty years old, at the height of her beauty and in the full tide of youthful enjoyment, when she fell ill of a dreadful disease, and for a long time lay between life and death. Or, to state the case more accurately, the girl did die,—it was a sad and faded woman who rose from that bed of sickness.

The ravages of disease had not left a vestige of her beauty,—it was hopelessly gone. The luxuriant, shining hair had fallen out and been replaced by a scanty growth of washed-out hue; the lips, but yesterday so full, and red, and tempting, were thin, and drawn, and colorless, and the rose-leaf complexion had given place to an aspect so cruelly pitted, seamed, and

scarred that even friends did not recognize her.

The fading of youth is always a melancholy experience with women; but in most cases the process is so gradual as to temper the poignancy of regret, and perhaps often to prevent its being experienced at all except as a vague sentiment.

But in Miss Ludington's case the transition had been piteously sharp and abrupt.

With others, ere youth is fully past its charms are well-nigh forgotten in the engrossments of later years; but with her there had been nothing to temper the bitterness of her loss.

During the long period of invalidism which followed her sickness her only solace was a miniature of herself, at the age of seventeen, painted on ivory, the daguerreotype process not having come into use at this time, which was toward the close of the third decade of the present century.

Over this picture she brooded hours together

when no one was near, studying the bonny, gladsome face through blinding tears, and sometimes murmuring incoherent words of tenderness.

Her young friends occasionally came to sit with her, by way of enlivening the weary hours of an invalid's day. At such times she would listen with patient indifference while they sought to interest her with current local gossip, and as soon as possible would turn the conversation back to the old happy days before her sickness. On this topic she was never weary of talking, but it was impossible to induce her to take any interest in the present.

She had caused a locket to be made, to contain the ivory miniature of herself as a girl, and always wore it on her bosom.

In no way could her visitors give her more pleasure than by asking to see this picture, and expressing their admiration of it. Then her poor, disfigured face would look actually happy, and she would exclaim, "Was she not beautiful?"