

**ANNIE DE VERE. A
TALE, FOR THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY**

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Annie de Vere. *A Tale, for the Nineteenth Century* by A. M. C. A.

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A Tale

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BY
A. M. C. A.



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ANNIE DE VERE.

CHAPTER I.

"I never spoke the word 'farewell,'
But with an utterance faint and broken,
A heart-sick yearning for the time
When it shall never more be spoken."

"PARTINGS! farewells! a chord stronger or weaker, says a modern writer, is snapped asunder in every parting; and time's busy fingers are not practised in resplicing broken ties. Meet again we may; will it be in the same way? with the same sympathies? with the same sentiments?" Events like these cast a tinge of sadness upon our daily path.

"Come, Emily, into the garden; this is the last evening we shall spend together!"

Thus spake a tall handsome girl, fashionably dressed, and striking in her appearance, to her school-fellow whose light curly hair and simple toilet formed a contrast to that of her friend. The two girls were now about to separate, after a two years' sojourn at a boarding-school in C—. School-friendship is ardent—there is often a close bond of union wherever it subsists; there are the same hopes, the same aspirations, the same desires; and when the times arrive that the friends *must* part, each to her respective

home, each to enter on her peculiar sphere in life, then comes the true test of friendship—the trial of separation.

These two friends were contrasts; friends frequently are so; their natural disposition, temperament, homes, home influence, were the very opposite the one to the other.

Annie de Vere was an orphan; her parents had died in India. She and her brother Arthur had been early sent to England, and placed under the care of their grandmamma Lady de Vere; though a kind and indulgent guardian, she was perhaps not the most judicious person to have the charge of young people. Still Annie knew no other home, and was not really sorry to be returning to Barford; but there was a drawback to her happiness, she would then be alone, without a companion of her own age. How, she thought, she should miss her friend Emily Marsden!

Emily's prospect was quite the reverse. She was a clergyman's daughter, one of a large family, four sisters and two brothers, longing to have her home again, and she equally desirous to see them.

The two girls stepped out of the large school-room window, strolled down the gravel path to the old elm tree, at the end of the garden, beneath whose shady branches was placed a rustic bench. This seat had always been a favourite resort of the two friends, here oftentimes had they sat together.

"The last time we may be together," sighed Annie.

"Well!" replied her friend, "I don't think you need take such a gloomy view of our separation; we shall probably meet again. Your grandmamma may take Langleigh Hall for another season, as she did two winters ago, and then we shall frequently see one another."

"Yes, grandmamma may do so," said Annie, a bright

smile coming over her countenance. "She always says she never enjoyed such good health as during the winter she passed at Westcombe; the soft mild air of Devonshire suited her. But my brother Arthur did not like it, he found it so very dull."

"Then, Annie," suggested her friend, "if you do not come to Langleigh Hall, you can surely visit at our house, so do not be so down-hearted, darling."

"You always do look on the bright side of everything, Emmy. What shall I do without you? but we must bear our cross," added she, as she touched a handsome gold cross that she always wore suspended around her neck, the gift of her brother. "It is very naughty of me to be so melancholy when really I have such a bright prospect before me. Grandmamma so good and kind, she wrote yesterday to tell me that she had had my sitting-room prepared, painted, and decorated just as I said, I should like to have it when I left school; and I am to have a horse of my own to ride with Arthur during his vacations. But after all, Emmy, one cannot be really happy without an object in life, something to do, or some one to love. Now *here*, we have had several objects in view; there have been our studies, there has been Mrs. Harcourt to please, and then last, though far from least, your own dear self to love."

"Really, Annie," said her friend laughing, "much as I love you, I think it is a good thing we are obliged to separate; we are too essential the one to the other."

"No! no!" vehemently exclaimed Annie.

"I remember," added, Emily, "before I came to school, saying one day to papa that I was so pleased I was coming here, as then I should have a specified object in life; and he said to me, that we ought always to have an object in view, whether at home or at school, that 'man's

chief end was to glorify God,' and that no one, if he were a Christian, could be placed in a position where he could not do so; and I have often thought of this since I have been here. Now, Annie, I am certain, if on your return home you will try and find some path of usefulness, you will succeed."

"Ah! ah! Emmy, you good little creature, it is easy for you to talk in this way, giving such excellent advice! You who lived so snugly in that quiet parsonage in Devonshire, your father and mother perfect saints, devoted to good works, and your sister Isabel a model clergyman's daughter; but look at my position, living in a fashionable town, grandmamma fond of gaiety, not that I see any harm in that, for people must live and act in a way befitting their station and, and—"

"Now, Annie, don't talk in this way," said her friend interrupting her.

"Well, Emmy, time will show how we shall act!"

"Hark! there is the prayer-bell! the last time we shall kneel together! We must hasten to the house."

The two girls entered the school-room just as the young people were taking their places for evening prayers.

It was with mingled feelings of joy and sadness that that party assembled that evening. Some were there who in all human probability would never again kneel side by side at the throne of grace. Two of the pupils were the following week to leave England for the distant shores of India, a third for the Cape of Good Hope, others were returning to their homes, some in Scotland, others in Ireland,—shall we meet again? was a thought that occurred to many of them. Still happiness was depicted on most of the countenances. Returning home to-morrow! Home! there is sweetness in the thought.

Such was Emily Marsden's feeling, though her school days had been happy ones, for there she had formed a warm friendship with Annie de Vere; she had also appreciated Mrs. Harcourt, and all the instruction she had received from her. Yet her heart was at home, and she longed for the morrow, when she should find herself in her mother's arms. Of home she dreamt that night, home was her first thought as she awoke with the early dawn.

"How I wish, Annie, you were coming home with me," were Emily's first words the next morning.

"Ah! Emmy, *you* beginning *to wish* now, when you lectured me for doing so last evening; now *I* am going to be so contented, and not wish for anything I do not possess. Are you going to travel alone?"

"As far as Stapleton: there papa will meet me, and we shall drive home by the coach. Oh! the country will be looking beautiful, the hedges covered with roses and honeysuckles; you have never seen Westcombe to perfection, coming down there in the autumn. But I must not chatter in this way, there is some one knocking at the door."

A kind elderly lady entered, and invited Emily to come to breakfast, saying, at the same time, "that parting words with Annie would not strengthen her for her journey."

"Then," replied Emmy, "we will say good-bye to each other at once." The two friends threw themselves into each other arms, kissed one another, and professed, as they truly felt, the most devoted love and attachment.

After this demonstrative leave-taking, Emily bid farewell to her other school friends, hastily partook of breakfast, the cab arrived, conveyed her to the station, the train left the town, and she was speedily whirled on the great iron road towards her beloved home.