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NO. 171.  
AN ILL-REGULATED MIND:  
A NOVEL**

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**KATHARINE WYLDE**

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# AN ILL-REGULATED MIND

*A NOVEL*

BY

KATHARINE WYLDE

AUTHOR OF 'A DREAMER'



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# AN ILL-REGULATED MIND.

## PART I.

"TOO HAPPY IN THY HAPPINESS."

—Keats.

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### CHAPTER I.

**M**R. COLE was a self-made man. He had begun life without relations, without schooling, without money to speak of. He was only a boy in a bookshop; a Dissenter, moreover, brought up by a pious mother under the eye of the minister, whose chapel he attended twice every Sunday. The minister had a pretty daughter, very unlike her parents. Young Hugh Cole took to reading the books and thinking a bit on his own account. He became a good man of business, and there were passages between him and the minister's daughter. After a while Hugh opened a bookshop on his own account—(an old bookshop; he had a poor opinion of modern writings and cheap editions). About the same time, his mother being dead, he gave up Dis-

sent, and with it the minister's daughter. After a year or two he married some one else, and before long was left a widower. By degrees he became prosperous, if not exactly rich, and an authority in his own line of business. He had educated himself; was refined by nature, and had acquaintances among gentlefolk. At the age of fifty he was bald and a little withered. He was something of a pedant, and a good deal of a philanthropist. His speech was apt to be dry, and he kept his feelings to himself; but in secret he did a good many quixotic things. He was fond of young people, and they of him; and there was often a twinkle in his eye when he made his driest and quietest remarks.

Mr. Cole had a son—Lewis. At one time the fancy took him to make a gentleman of his boy. The youngster was sent to a good school, where young gentlemen were his associates. It soon became evident that Master Lewis had a will of his own. He made formal complaints against the system of instruction, and was quite too many for the young gentlemen. At last he was dismissed in disgrace, having broken a boy's arm in too energetic punishment of some conduct he had stigmatized as cowardly and detestable. Mr. Cole reproved his son, though with the aforesaid twinkle in his eye, and looked for another school. Either the boy's reputation preceded him, or the scent of the shop clung to his name. No schoolmaster to



Mr. Cole's mind would receive him. With the quiet twinkle in his eye the bookseller gave up the desire for gentility, and resolved to educate Lewis himself. Aware of a certain skimpiness in his own appearance, of a stoop and a tendency to short sight, he made a great point of open air and athletics. For the rest, he let the boy alone a good deal, and turned him loose into the bookshop. On his twenty-first birthday Lewis was a head and shoulders above his little father; bright-eyed, healthy complexioned, and straight as an arrow. Mr. Cole looked at his "performance" — so he called his son — and pronounced himself satisfied. Lewis was not at all satisfied.

"I want work," said he.

"That is your business," replied Mr. Cole. "My department has been to fit you for work."

Lewis walked up and down the room, stamping to get rid of some superfluous energy.

"I am ready for anything I" he exclaimed.

"I am proud to observe it," said Mr. Cole.

"But I don't care about this century," continued Lewis, presently. "I want a few heroes to worship——"

"And a heroine," suggested Mr. Cole.

"Yes, and a heroine. And I should like to be a hero; but heroism has gone out of date," said Lewis with a sigh.

"True," said Mr. Cole; "there were no heroes after Troy."

"If no worthier led the way,"

quoted Lewis,

"Resolved

That, of a thousand vessels, mine should be  
The foremost prow in pressing to the strand—  
Mine the first blood that tinged the Trojan sand."

"He was a useful man, Protesilaus," assented Mr. Cole.

"Oh, the Trojan business was a mistake altogether, perhaps," said Lewis; "but, you see, it's advantageous living near the world's beginning. There's such a lot to be done, and there aren't so many to do it. And even one's mistakes are important, because they're the first mistakes."

"Quite so, Lewis. Only, who told you the world was near its end?"

"But there were heroes after Troy," said Lewis. "Dante, now; he was a man!"

"You are welcome to write another 'Commedia,' if you can," said Mr. Cole.

"Ah, but I couldn't. We don't believe in those things nowadays. My *Inferno* wouldn't be horrible enough, for I know folks aren't as bad as they seem, so don't deserve much of a punishment. And the *Paradiso* would be a mitigated sort of place too, for no man is as good as he seems either—at least, I'm not, and I suppose I mustn't pride myself on any special singularity. Then as to Purgatory—I am not ready with a theory. I don't know about that central idea of improve-

ment. The books I have read lately seem to teach that deterioration is the rule here, there and everywhere."

"Deluded Dante! I hope his shade hears not this exposure of his ignorance."

"Oh, I admire him above all men. I hope his shade is listening! Besides, he didn't only write a divine comedy. He was active and a worker. All the men of heroic days were. If they wrote divine comedies, they didn't lock themselves up in musty old bookshops to do it. But now we are all crammed tight into grooves; and we can't even peep over the edges without being taken up for poaching. Dante didn't only write a divine comedy. He loved like a hero; and wrote the 'Vita Nuova.'"

And Lewis took a copy from his pocket and slammed it on the table. Mr. Cole pushed his spectacles up into his hair (what there was of it), and sat down in his arm-chair by the fire.

"Well," he said, gravely, "love is a form of heroism that never goes out of date. I trust you will find a Beatrice, my son."

"Hugoline?" said Lewis, in an accent of profound contempt.

"I hope so," said Mr. Cole, with increasing gravity.

"Now, father," said Lewis, after a minute's silence, tossing up his head as he spoke and looking as tall as he could, "it is high time to put an