

**A VALIANT  
IGNORANCE: A  
NOVEL, VOL. II**

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A Valiant Ignorance: A Novel, Vol. II by Mary Angela Dickens

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**MARY ANGELA DICKENS**

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A  
VALIANT IGNORANCE

A Novel

BY  
MARY ANGELA DICKENS

AUTHOR OF "CROSS CURRENTS," "A MERE CYPHER," ETC.

"Thy gold is brass!"

PRINCE HOHENSTIEL SCHWANGAU

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

London  
MACMILLAN & CO.  
AND NEW YORK  
1894

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## A VALIANT IGNORANCE

### CHAPTER I

THE oppressive autumn weather continued for the next week and more, but the atmosphere in the house at Chelsea gradually cleared; at least, the electrical disturbances which had, as a matter of fact, culminated in Julian's departure for the club, subsided. As the days went on, Julian gradually recovered his spirits. His temper, which had given way so suddenly and completely under the strain put upon it by the unprecedented thwarting to which he had been subjected, recovered its careless easiness. The injured expression of moodiness disappeared wholly from his face, and his manner resumed its buoyancy.

Nevertheless, the life of the present autumn was by no means the life of the past spring. Partly, of course, the different framework was responsible; life, especially at this particular

moment, when winter society was as yet hardly formed, consisted by no means wholly of a social existence. It was, in fact, distinctly "slack" and heavy on social lines as compared with the high pressure of the season; and the introduction into the routine of life of a certain number of hours of regular work on Julian's part—the first practical acknowledgement in the house in Queen Anne Street, that work had anything to do with life—could not fail to alter the tone to some extent. But there was a subtle change in Julian himself, which was hardly to be accounted for on such broad lines. He had recovered his normal mental temperature, indeed, but the interval of disturbance seemed to have had some indefinable effect upon him. He had recovered himself—but it was himself with a difference. It was almost impossible to narrow the difference into words. To say that he was colder to his mother, or that he stood deliberately aloof from her, would not have been true. But there was a touch of independence about his whole personality which was new to it; a certain suggestion of a separate life and separate interests, such as must inevitably come to a man sooner



or later, which seemed to tinge his intercourse with her—superficially the same as it remained—with something of carelessness, and even a hint of unconscious patronage.

If the change was felt by Mrs. Romaine, she made no sign; or, at least, entered no protest. After the little explanation which had taken place in the railway carriage she had utterly ignored the cloud which his moodiness had created; and she ignored its passing away. When Julian was at home she was always bright and pleasant; always charmed to have him with her; always ready to let him go. Her little jokes at his expense in his new character of a worker were full of tact. Her playful allusions to her own solitary days were always light and gay. Nevertheless, the characteristics which the ten weeks of their absence from town had brought to her face grew and intensified during the ten days that followed their return. Her eyes grew more restless, her mouth more sensitive, as though the strained, sharpened look of anxiety which haunted her face during the hour which preceded Julian's return, and during the whole evening, when, as happened several times in

the course of that ten days, he dined out, went deep enough to leave lasting tokens of its presence. Her questions as to his work, and the new friends, the new haunts, consequent upon it, seemed to come from her lips—far less self-confident in expression in these days—almost in spite of herself. They were always uttered with a playfulness which hardly masked a slight nervousness underneath; a nervousness which seemed to be a reminiscence of that first evening.

She was sitting alone in her drawing-room one afternoon towards the end of the second week of their return; she had a book in her hand, and a tea-table before her. But she had neither poured herself out any tea, nor could she be said to be reading. Every two or three minutes her attention seemed to wander; her eyes would stray vaguely about the room, and she would rise and move restlessly across it, to give some wholly unnecessary touch to a drapery or a glass of flowers. Once she had seated herself at her writing-table to begin a trivial note; but the impulse had failed to carry her through, and she had returned to her chair and her book.

It was half-past four, and she was expecting Julian. He had dined out on three consecutive nights, and was doing so again to-night. And in reply to her laughing protest against "never seeing him," he had promised carelessly to come home and have afternoon tea with her.

The door-bell rang at last, and as the drawing-room door opened she lifted a smiling face with a gaily approving comment on his punctuality.

"Good boy!" she began. Then she broke off and laughed lightly, though the brightness of her face suddenly ceased to be genuine.

The figure on the threshold was that of Marston Loring.

"Thank you," he said; "I am glad you think so!"

"The observation was not intended for you, I'm sorry to tell you," returned Mrs. Romaine, as she rose to receive him. "And I'm afraid even if I applied it to you, you would hardly condescend to accept it. How do you do? When did you come back? Sit down and let me give you some tea."