

**UNDINE; A ROMANCE
OF MODERN DAYS:
AND OTHER STORY**

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Undine; A Romance of Modern Days: And Other Story by Caroline Birley

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CAROLINE BIRLEY

**UNDINE; A ROMANCE
OF MODERN DAYS:
AND OTHER STORY**

UNDINE;

A Romance of Modern Days:

AND OTHER STORIES.

BY

CAROLINE BIRLEY,

*Author of "We are Seven; A Tale for Children;" "A Heap of Stones;"
"Barney's Neighbour;" &c.*



MANCHESTER:

JOHN HEYWOOD, DEANSGATE AND RIDGEFIELD;
AND 11, PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS,
LONDON.

1883.

251.

g.

911.

DEDICATION.

As a child, playing by a stream, casts a careless handful of wild flowers upon its bosom, bidding them glide onward with the current, so do I send forth these idle fancies to float for one brief moment on the sea of life, before they sink into oblivion. And as the child, not quite in incredulity, calls after its frail craft to bear fond messages to dear companions far away, so would I link with these short stories loving remembrances to friends which may not reach them, and thoughts of love and faith in them that they will never know.

HART HILL, MANCHESTER,

September, 1883.

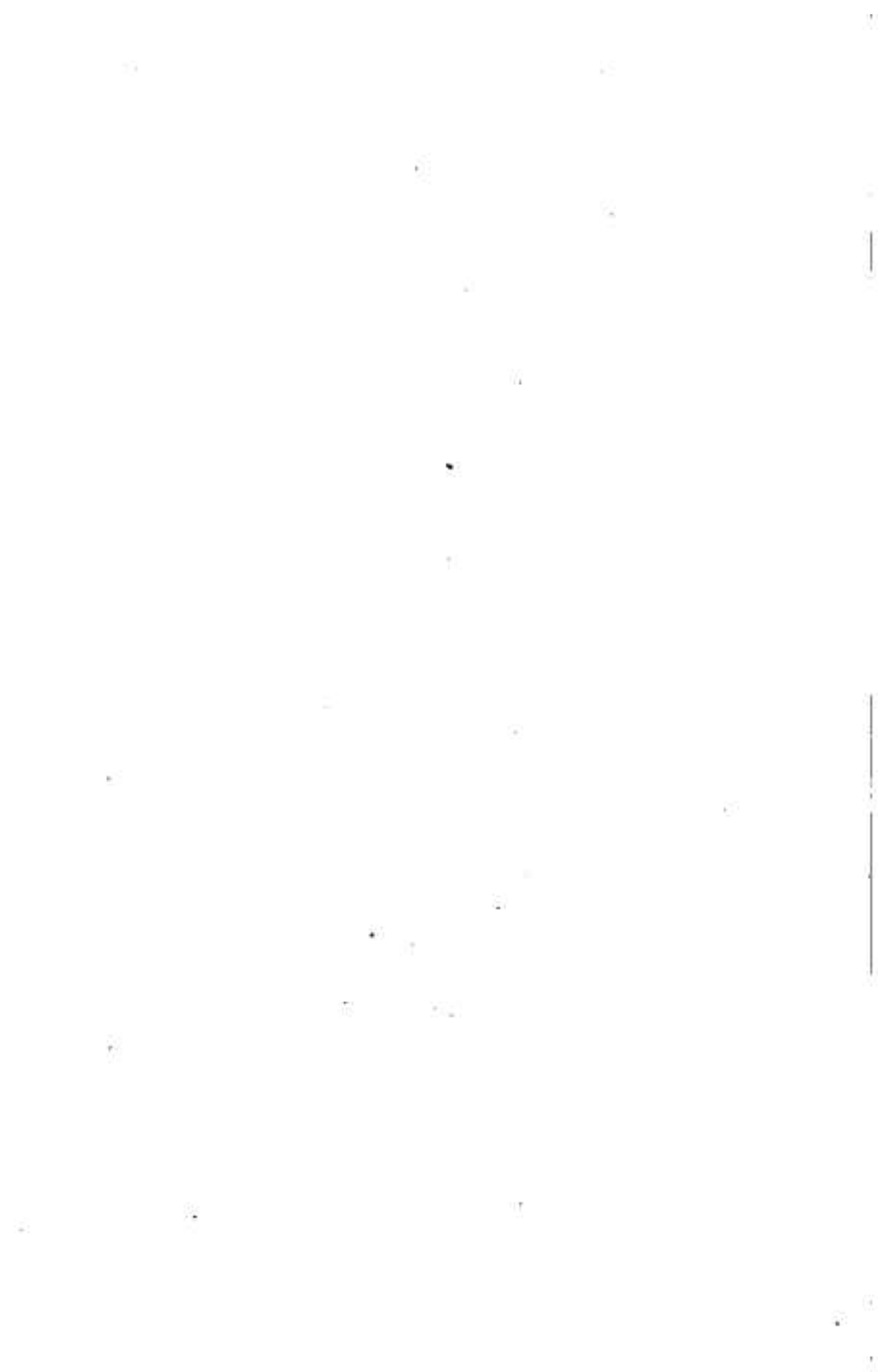




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Madine : A Romance of Modern Days.

PART I.

A BUD.

" A lily thou wast when I saw thee first,
A lily-bud not opened quite,
That hourly grew more pure and white,
By morning, and noontide, and evening nursed :
In all of nature thou hadst thy share ;
Thou wast waited on
By the wind and sun ;
The rain and the dew for thee took care ;
It seemed thou never could'st be more fair."

Song to M. L.—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

THE noontide train from London was speeding through the midland counties one sunny May-day, many years ago, passing by orchards white with lovely promise for the time to come, and sheltered homesteads where the apples would be stored and garnered ; dashing through the fields where the lambkins were playing with their mothers, or nestling at their side ; the cattle grazing quietly, or standing in the river to bathe their feet in the cool clear waters, with an expression of calm contentment on their placid features, peculiar to the race ; now skirting the wood where orchises and hyacinths were

springing, which earlier in the season had resounded to the huntsman's cheery horn, or to the glad opening bark of some experienced hound ; now by parks and gardens, where the lime-trees and hawthorns were scenting the air with their fragrance, and the tall horse chestnuts lifted their spiral blooms to heaven.

May, merry May ! But, though it was pleasant enough for the first-class passengers to lean back among the cushions, thinking of nothing in particular, with the fresh wind blowing on their faces, and all the bright scenes of pastoral beauty flitting before their eyes, what was their lazy enjoyment, compared to the vivid delight of the third-class travellers, mechanics and artisans going out a-pleasuring—for one sweet holiday to leave the closeness of the streets and alleys, and spend it in the pure country air ? Look ! Pale, haggard faces of weary men and careworn women are crowding at the window ; childish tongues prattling of the daisies and buttercups, which are to them, alas ! poor little ones, more of names than of realities, or fervently appealing to "Mother, mother !" to look at the white May hedges, or the boats on the canal. Fathers are talking of their childhood, and women remembering their girlish days. Laughter and shouting and singing arises as they get further from the town, and they will be half sorry when the journey is ended, and so much of their brief holiday is over.

Not so Captain Mervyn Legh, across whose countenance the least delay brings an impression of impatience strangely at variance with the satisfied and pleasant smile which it wears when the train is again in motion, and, comfortably established with his feet on the opposite seat, and in full enjoyment of his capital cigar, he can, without personal effort, feel that he is hastening towards the attainment of his desires with the utmost possible speed. Smoking just suits his present mood ; it calms his restlessness, but does not prevent