

**EDITH; OR,
LIFE'S CHANGES**

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Edith; Or, Life's Changes by Edith

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LIFE'S CHANGES.

He came too late, neglect had tried
Her constancy too long,
Her love had yielded to her pride,
And the deep sense of wrong.

DUBLIN:

WILLIAM ROBERTSON, SACKVILLE-ST.

LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, & CO.

1858.

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EDITH.

CHAPTER I.

“Soft as the memory of buried love,
Pure as the prayer that childhood wafts above.”
—BYRON.

“SHE is a pretty girl, decidedly—a very pretty girl, *Blanchè*; but still, as you say, I would rather talk to Edith, to Miss Waldron, she is such a fascinating little thing, and has fifty times more in her, too, in a quiet way. She is *nicer*, moreover; it is a lady’s word, but it suits her; she is nicer than either of the other girls.”

“No doubt, you know Miss Edith was always my especial favourite—in fact, I believe it was I who first drew your attention

to her, for she is not a girl absolutely to strike a man's admiration at once."

"Quite a mistake, my dear fellow. You praised her, certainly, but I admired her from the first evening she walked into your sister's drawing-room. There was something in the very turn of her silken curls that won my heart instanter, and her voice completed the charm, it is so peculiarly soft, so exactly herself. If she had but some ten or twenty thousand pounds there is no saying how far I might be tempted."

"Yes, but she has not, nor is ever likely to have," rejoined the second speaker, a smart, good-looking man, of somewhere about forty, or it might chance a little more; "she has not a penny," he said, drily, "and, under the circumstances, considering what a confoundedly good-looking fellow you are, and all that, I must say, I think you are going on rather fast—carrying the joke a little too far, in fact.

If Edith Waldron happens to be an uncommonly nice little girl, I do not see that that is any reason why you should do your best to make her unhappy. I must say, I think it is a shame."

"Unhappy! pooh! nonsense," returned his companion laughing, though his very handsome face flushed suddenly, as he caused an additional puff to emerge from his meerschaum; "nonsense, man! You do not mean to insinuate that you are so desperately primitive as to hold such an antediluvian idea. I knew Oldfield was a hundred years behind the rest of the world, but really I did not think it contained such an utterly exploded notion. Why, my dear fellow, girls are not so *green* now-a-days as to be made unhappy by a little harmless flirtation; surely, you do not believe in the theory of broken hearts and blighted affections, a myth exploded before I was born?—that would be too good."

“ I said nothing about broken hearts, nor thought of them,” returned the elder gentleman, somewhat tartly; “ Edith Waldron is no fool, nor would I insult her by insinuating the idea that there was the slightest chance of her caring seriously about you ; but I do say, that you are doing your best to make her do so, and I believe that you care about her, too, not a little either.”

“ And so I do—of course I do,” retorted the young man, laughingly, and yet with a tone of truth in the softness of his musical voice, “ I think her the very dearest little girl I know ; but I utterly repudiate the idea of having the smallest intention of causing her a moment’s unhappiness, even if I had the power of doing so. Why, my dear fellow, her heart is precisely like an India-rubber ball, the moment the pressure is removed, it will spring back into its original shape. She is of far too

soft materials for deep impressions or lasting ones."

His voice fell slightly on the last words.

"I don't agree with you; I do not think you know Edith at all!" exclaimed Dr. Tylden, impatiently; "that may be the way in the great world (your world, at least), but as you say Oldfield is an old-fashioned place, and since Edith has lived there all her life, you cannot expect her to be beyond it. I say, and repeat, you are going too far."

"How! committing myself?" inquired his companion, quietly; "is that your meaning?"

"No; you know well it is not," rejoined Tylden, sharply; "there is not the smallest danger of a breach of promise, &c.; but, in fact, you know how long I have known Edith Waldron, and I say that I think you are going the shortest road towards destroying her greatest charm, her belief in