

**THE DESULTORY
MAN; IN TWO
VOLUMES. VOL. I**

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The Desultory Man; In Two Volumes. Vol. I by G. P. R. James

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G. P. R. JAMES

**THE DESULTORY
MAN; IN TWO
VOLUMES. VOL. I**

THE
DESULTORY MAN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"RICHELIEU," "DARNLEY," "DE L'ORNE," "PHILIP AUGUSTUS,"
"HENRY MASTERTON," "MARY OF BURGUNDY,"
"JOHN MARSTON HALL," "THE GIPSY,"
AND "ONE IN A THOUSAND."

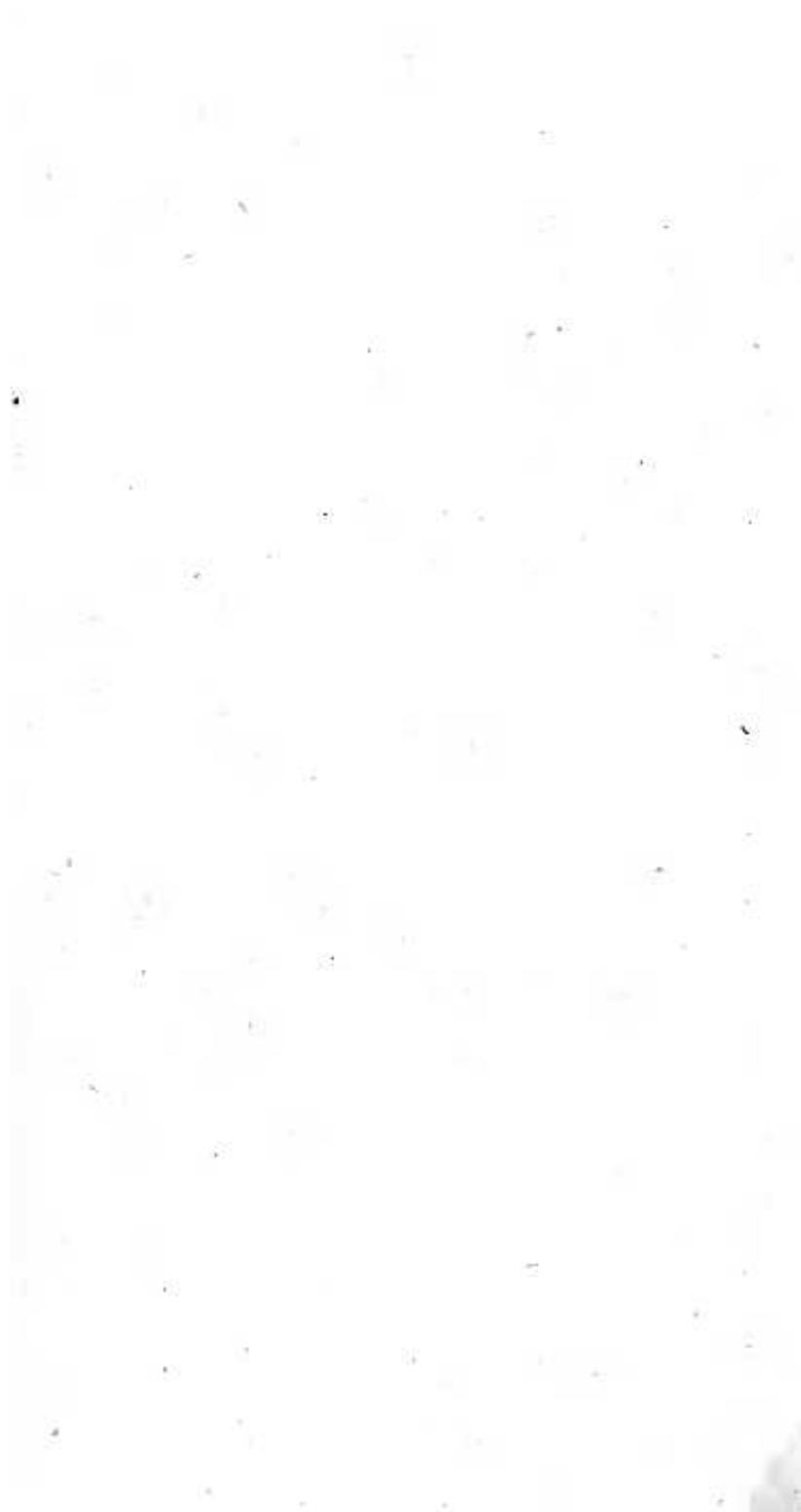
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, 82 CLIFF-ST.

1836.



TO MISS M. L. BOYLE.

MY DEAR MISS BOYLE,

I dedicate to you a work, the greater part of which was written many years ago, and long before I had the slightest intention of submitting anything I wrote to public criticism. It was intended originally for the amusement of some of my personal friends; but many of the papers got beyond that limited circle, and some I published myself anonymously in various periodicals.* Those which were so published, received from persons whom I believed to be competent judges, so much praise that I determined to attempt a longer and more laboured composition, and to strive without concealment for the approbation of the public. Many of my friends attempted to dissuade me from so doing; and, while they assured me that they doubted not my capability of acquitting myself well, endeavoured to make me look upon literary efforts in a light in which such ennobling pursuits could never appear to my eyes.

* N. B. Many more of the tales contained in these volumes have since been published in periodicals, and I believe I may say without presumption that they have been uniformly favourably received, though the author's name was withheld. Thus as near as possible two thirds of the work has been already before the public.

Suspecting, notwithstanding their praises, that their view was to save me from a disappointment which they saw that my own want of abilities would inevitably call upon me, I induced a friend to lay the first volume of a romance I had begun before one to whose judgment I might well look with full reliance. The opinion which was pronounced upon that volume led me to proceed at once, without hesitation ; but still I had many a voice raised, among my friends, against my purposes. The dread of criticism was endeavoured to be instilled into me, the difficulty of calling public attention was displayed to deter me, the slight foundation for my hopes of fame, the anxiety of suspense, and the bitterness of disappointment. But still, supported by the opinion of a few in whom I had greater confidence, I persevered ; and never have regretted that I did so.

You, my dear young friend, are about to try the same adventure ; and I cannot do better than dedicate to you these pages, from the success of which my first literary hopes were derived. At the same time I cannot help feeling in regard to your forthcoming romance, a considerable share of responsibility, as it is upon my opinion, given after having read it through, and thought of it in every point of view, that you are about to send it forth to seek the favour of the world. The feeling of that responsibility has of course been increased by hearing persons for whom we both entertain a high esteem, address to you the same dissuasions which were employed towards myself at the outset of my literary career, and by having been asked whether, with the deep and sin

cere regard which my wife and myself feel towards you and all the members of your immediate family circle, I can judge impartially of your book. I feel the responsibility, however, without apprehension, for I know that *I am* impartial: and the sincerity of my regard for you and yours, instead of taking from my impartiality, has only rendered it more stern and severe. I say to you now, as I said when first I read the work, "Go on, and fear not." I will stake any small literary reputation I may possess upon your success. Whether the work may have the vogue of some romances written upon the fashionable *coleries* of the day, I do not know; but I think it may have more; and I do not scruple to assert that every one who can estimate genius guided by high principles, and the poetry of the heart inspired by noble feelings, and guided by pure taste, will read that work (especially the second volume) with delight and approbation. This is the best success which can attend any work: those who are worthy of loving what is good, and capable of appreciating what is beautiful, will admire and approve; and a long line of illustrious ancestors may—if such things be permitted—look down on you with applause, as you send into the world a book which contains so much of which you may be justly proud. I say again, go on to success; and I may add in the words of Francis the First, "*Ma lance contre un écuyer d'Espagne, vous gagnerez la partie.*"

To you then I dedicate the following pages, not because I think them at all worthy of your acceptance, but because they contain those things from which I first ob-

tained an augury of future success. May my auguries in your favour be verified even more fully than in my own case ; but that they will be verified to the full extent of your expectations, is the strongest conviction of,

My dear Miss Boyle,

Yours most truly,

G. P. R. JAMES.

The Cottage, Great Marlow,
26th September, 1836.

THE
DESULTORY MAN.

" Ven dulce soledad, y al alma mía
Libra del mar horrisono agitado
Del mundo corrompido
Y benigna la paz y la alegría
Vuelve al dolcente corazón."

MELÉNDEZ.

I sit alone, with time sufficient before me to put down a record of the last year of my existence, and with the desire, if it be possible, to gather together into one view all the thoughts, and feelings, and incidents, and anecdotes, which have filled up one of the most painful periods of my existence. Of the many acts which went before that epoch I must speak, though briefly, in order that others may comprehend how I am what I am; but I will not dwell thereon, for the detail might be tedious to others, and in some degree would be painful to myself, although, in looking back upon the occurrences of those earlier years, I already begin to experience that sort of interest which clings in general to the past. Time acts upon events as upon fine pictures, softening every harshness, mellowing every teint, and blending all into richness and harmony. It is true that sometimes he takes away the brighter colours, and leaves but the darker shades, and in the end is sure to obliterate all entirely: but, even to the last, there is a pleasure in tracing the faint remains of things once bright, as we gaze upon an old painting and seek out, amid the wreck of beauties, those that the waves of time have not yet swept away.

The very mention of those days calls up again to view the events they brought with them, almost as vividly as at the time. In solitude and silence, the images of a thousand things gone for ever come back upon my mind. The past alone is ours; it is our grand posses-