

**ORLANDO. IN
THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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Orlando. In three volumes, Vol. I by Clementina Black

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CLEMENTINA BLACK

**ORLANDO. IN
THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

ORLANDO.

BY

CLEMENTINA BLACK,

AUTHOR OF "A SUSSEX IDYL," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ORLANDO.

CHAPTER I.

IN PICCADILLY.

“ACT I., SCENE I. — A street. — Enter two gentlemen.”

THE wisdom of our ancestors has rendered familiar to us all the time-honoured stage-direction that stands at the head of this chapter. Reading it, we foresee at once the introductory scene to follow, in which, under colour of discussing the future, a first and a second gentleman will artfully reveal to us the past. Once more must this well-worn prelude be sounded; but the externals of scenery, actors and costumes, must be filled in in words.

The street, then, was Piccadilly; the time, afternoon; and the season, that in which the most ardent lovers of London begin to dream of green lawns and breezy moors. The first and second gentlemen, entering from Bond Street and from St. James's Street respectively, met in the fuller stream that runs between those two affluents. The younger seemed to be about twenty-two or twenty-three years old, was well-grown, well-looking, and well-dressed, a favourite, apparently, both with nature and with fortune.

The other was not to be described in so few words. A first glance proclaimed him accustomed to good society; one who was used to wear his clothes and regulate his bearing according to the latest standard of fitness; a model after whom it would be safe to dress or speak. A second glance might gather, perhaps, some subtle indication, too fine to be rendered in words.

of military training ; but, beyond that, no hint of tastes, disposition, or pursuits. His face was, as a witness of character, altogether impenetrable, conveying merely the slightly sinister impression which we are apt to receive from impenetrability. It could only be said of him, at a first meeting, that he looked like a gentleman : a convenient formula, into which the speaker can put whatever measure he pleases of the condemnation implied in faint praise.

The younger man's face, on the contrary, was of very unusual openness. Its lights and shadows were as changeable as those reflected by a river beneath a sunny, but cloud-flecked, sky. His name was on many people's lips, and generally in the simple form of Christian and surname—Lawrence O'Brien, with no formality of 'Mr.' Everybody liked him ; a sociable and confiding temper, an inclination to universal friendli-

ness, and a worldly position that quieted every apprehension of his ever wanting to borrow money, had produced their natural effect, and perhaps no man in London had more and pleasanter acquaintances, or fewer intimate friends. Just now, as he came down Bond Street, the face which everybody liked was overcast. The sight of a friend was, however, always enough to restore its brightness, and the clouds gave way, as the two men met, to a particularly pleasant smile.

“Why, Grove,” he said, “I thought you were out of town!”

His words had a lingering of the seductive, incurable Irish accent, and from his tone you might have supposed that his whole anxiety had been a desire for this meeting, which was not by any means the case.

“Going on Monday,” Captain Grove replied. “I thought *you* would have been off before this.”

“I’m for the north by to-night’s mail, to Corriewhuillie—Sydenham’s, you know. Going my way? I must just look in at Bailey’s, about a gun of mine he has.”

They turned into St. James’s Street, and Captain Grove dropped a careless observation on its emptiness. His companion answered with an absent “Yes.” A moment’s pause followed; then, seeming to take a sudden resolution, O’Brien drew a long sigh, and said abruptly—

“I say, Grove—you know everything about everybody—do you think it is true that Miss Glendinning is to marry that fool of a cousin of hers?”

Captain Grove’s feeling at this appeal would best have expressed itself in the words of Benedick, ‘Sits the wind in that corner?’ but quotation was not a practice in which he excelled, and his personal feeling attained no clearer outward form than a subdued “Ah!”