

**THE BARON OF
EPPENFELD; OR, THE
POOR CLARE. A
MEDIEVAL ROMANCE**

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The Baron of Eppenfeld; Or, the Poor Clare. A Medieval Romance by John J. Hayden

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BARON OF EPPENFELD;

OR,

THE POOR CLARE.

A Mediæval Romance.

BY

JOHN J. HAYDEN.

" 'Tis thus with our life while it passes along,
Like a vessel at sea amidst sunshine and song :
Gaily we glide in the gaze of the world,
With streamers aloft and with canvas uncurl'd ;
All gladness and glory to wandering eyes,
Yet chartered by sorrow and freighted with sighs.
Fading and false is the aspect it wears,
Like the smiles we put on just to cover our tears :
And the withering thoughts which the world cannot know,
Like heart-broken exiles lie burning below :
Whilst the vessel drives on to that desolate shore,
Where the dreams of our childhood are vanished and o'er."
T. K. HAYDEN.



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1878.

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“ Assuming now a conjuror’s office, I
Thus on your future fortune prophesy :
Soon as your novelty is o’er,
And you are young and new no more,
In some dark dirty corner thrown,
Mouldy with damps, with cobwebs strown,
Your leaves shall be the book-worm’s prey,
Or sent to chandler-shop away,
And doom’d to suffer public scandal,
Shall line the trunk or wrap the candle.

* * * * *

Again should it be asked your page,
‘ Pray what may be the author’s age ?
Your faults no doubt will make it clear,
I scarce have seen my twentieth year.

* * * * *

Now then your venturous course pursue :
Go, my delight ! Dear book, adieu !”

M. G. LEWIS : *Preface to “ The Monk.”*

THE BARON OF EPPENFELD.

CHAPTER I.

'Twas a wild night ; the rain came down in torrents ; the wind howled through the tall, gaunt, spectral trees that, naked and leafless, overhung the lonely road. Now a lull would occur, and now the demon of the storm seemed to rage with redoubled fury. The tall oaks bent and swayed like reeds beneath the furious blast, the thunder rolled overhead, and the vivid flashes of lightning lit up with a ghastly brilliancy the scene of havoc and desolation extending round on every side. During one of these pauses, when the tempest momen-

tarily relaxed its fury, as though collecting its energies for a fresh and stupendous effort, a traveller, closely muffled in a long riding-cloak, turned an angle of the road. His steed seemed weary and exhausted, for the foam stood in heavy flakes on his glossy coat, and the blood trickled down his flanks where his rider had applied the spur in the apparently vain hope of urging him to further efforts of speed and endurance. The horseman pulled up for an instant, and peered anxiously forward into the darkness, as though seeking some human habitation, however humble, where he might obtain a night's lodging for himself and his jaded steed. He was wholly unable to discern any place of the kind, and he prepared to quit the spot. At that instant a more than usually vivid flash showed him the ruins of what appeared to be an ancient feudal castle, huge and of great extent, standing on a considerable eminence, about

a quarter of a mile from the road. In spite of his anxiety, there was something in its general appearance that so irresistibly attracted his attention, that hastily pulling up, so as almost to throw back his horse on its haunches, he remained with eyes fixed on the shadowy outline of the ancient keep.

A second flash gave him a still clearer view of this huge structure, which, like some tutelary genius of other days, overlooked the surrounding country, claiming respect as a mighty monument of men and times long since passed away, with their hopes and fears, their interests, their customs, their laws, and buried for ever in the yawning bottomless gulf of time. At length, unable longer to restrain his curiosity, he sprang to the ground, and wading through the mud, securely fastened his horse by the bridle to the trunk of a large tree, and crossing the hedge, advanced over the fields towards the castle. This he

was unable to approach without considerable difficulty, as the ground was rendered moist and yielding by the rain ; and encumbered as he was by his riding-boots, he often sank to his knees in the clayey soil. But at length his perseverance was rewarded, for he found himself at the foot of the steep hill on which stood the castle. From this spot he was enabled to pursue his course without much difficulty, for the earth, unlike that of the level fields, was hard, firm, and but little affected by the water. When about half way up the ascent, he easily, in spite of the blinding rain, discerned clearly and distinctly the dark outline of the ruin. He posted himself beneath the spreading branches of a venerable oak, which, by sheltering him from the rage of the tempest, permitted him to bestow his undivided attention on the object before him. There it stood ; its massive walls, memorials of its former strength, were rent and torn by

slow decay, and by exposure to the storms and vicissitudes of successive centuries ; its wide and yawning moat was choked with foul noxious weeds, beneath whose shade lurked the noisome toad and the deadly adder ; its wide and noble gateway whence in days gone by had ridden forth successive nobles, in all the pomp of feudal power, with troops of vassals and steel-clad men-at-arms, with the fluttering of pennons, the clash of weapons, the neighing of horses, and the loud fanfares of trumpets which had welcomed its lords returning from battle or from the chase, loaded with the spoils of hostile chieftains, or with the sylvan trophies of the lonely greenwood ; which had seen many a youthful bride pass beneath its frowning arch with her relations and splendid suite ; which had seen crowds of knights and barons press the pavement beneath on the occasion of some high festival, and which,