

**THE MONKS OF  
THELEMA: A NOVEL, IN  
THREE VOLUMES, VOL. III**

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The Monks of Thelema: A Novel, in Three Volumes, Vol. III by Walter Besant & James Rice

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**WALTER BESANT & JAMES RICE**

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THREE VOLUMES, VOL. III**



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*Chatto & Windus*  
THE

# MONKS OF THELEMA.

A Novel.

BY

WALTER BESANT AND JAMES RICE,

AUTHORS OF

"READY-MONEY MORTIBOY," "THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY," "BY  
CELIA'S ARMOUR," "THIS SON OF VULCAN," "MY LITTLE  
GIRL," "THE CASE OF MR. LUCRAFT," "WITH HARP  
AND CROWN," "WHEN THE SHIP COMES  
HOME," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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1878.





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## THE MONKS OF THELEMA.

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### CHAPTER I.

“Or I am mad, or else this is a dream.”

MRS. BOSTOCK continued to take the same gloomy view of Alma's wonderful fortune. Instead of rejoicing with her husband, and holding up her head as he did, she went about downcast and murmuring, instead of thanking Heaven. She said it was unnatural; she laughed to scorn her daughter's earnest efforts to make herself a lady; she even went so far as to declare that it was a flying in the face of Providence.

There is only one manner of meeting with opposition possible to men whose powers of utterance are not equal to their powers of indignation. Everybody knows that method :

most women have experienced its force, and can testify to the remarkable lack of results which follow its exhibition. What one "damn," in fact, cannot effect, fifty cannot. Yet a certain artistic pride in rising to the occasion carries on the swearer. But even after the greatest provocation, followed by the most extraordinary efforts, you always feel, as a merchant skipper once complained to me with tears in his eyes, after swearing till the topmasts trembled, that you have hardly done justice to the subject. The Bailiff did his best, poor man ; and yet his wife remained obdurate.

No one sympathised with her, except, perhaps, Miranda, to whom she poured out her soul.

"How should the girl be fit," asked her mother, "to be a gentleman's wife? It isn't from her father that she'd learn the soft ways that Master Alan has been used to, that's quite certain. Then he'll turn round some day and blame me for it—me, his mother's own maid, as held him in my arms before he was a day old!"

"But Alma looks soft and gentle," said



Miranda ; "and I am quite sure that Alan would never impute any blame to you."

Mrs. Bostock spread out her hands and nodded her head.

"Soft and gentle!" she echoed. "Miss Miranda, a cat is soft and gentle; but a cat has got a temper. Only a cat has manners; which," she added, after a pause, "my daughter hasn't got."

"Bostock," she went on, "thinks it will be a fine thing for him. So it will, no doubt. Alma thinks it will be a fine thing to sham grand lady. Well, until she tires of it, no doubt it will be. Instead of learning her gratitude and duty to her husband—instead of trying to see how she can prevent being a shame and disgrace to him—goes into the village and flaunts round, trying to make that blacksmith's girl burst with spite, while her father goes to Athelston market, and makes believe he's equal to the biggest farmer in the place."

This was a gloomy, but a true picture.

"And no taste in dress," the ex-lady's-maid went on. "Anything that's got a colour in it: here a bit of red, and there a bit of

yellow. It makes me ashamed, I declare, Miss Miranda, just to see you in that lovely pearl-grey, so cool and sweet this hot morning, is a rest for weary eyes. There! you always had, next to my lady, the true eye for colour. That is born with a woman."

Then Miranda took the step which she had been meditating since the first news of the engagement. It was not a thing which gave her any pleasure; quite the contrary. It gave her a great deal of pain; it was a step which would keep before her eyes a subject on which she was compelled to think—Alan's engagement and his *fiancée*! In fact, she asked Mrs. Bostock to send Alma to Dalmeny Hall, to stay with herself until the wedding.

Mrs. Bostock hesitated.

"Would Mrs. Dalmeny like it?"

"My mother is almost entirely confined to her own room. Alma will see little or nothing of her."

"And the ladies of Weyland Court?"

"Alma will probably see none of them," said Miranda, smiling. "We shall not make her a Sister of our Monastery."

"It's more than kind of you, Miss Miranda,

and I know it is all for Mr. Alan's sake. The banns are to be put up next Sunday, and her things to be got ready and all. But I can manage better without her, and up here with you she will be out of mischief, and learning nothing but what's good."

"Out of mischief, at least," said Miranda.

"Unless you're a lady, and can make your daughter a lady," said Mrs. Bostock, "it's a dreadful difficult thing to bring up a girl. Full of deceit they are, and cunning as no one would believe. Look as innocent, too, if you trust their looks, which I don't, nor wouldn't let one of them go out o' sight for five minutes. Even now, while I'm here, I shouldn't wonder if Alma isn't carrying on with—— But she shan't say I made mischief," concluded the good woman, as if her whole discourse had tended to the praise and honour of her daughter.

Alma was not "carrying on" with any one. She was harmlessly employed before the biggest looking-glass in the house, practising the art of walking as she had seen Miss Nelly walk, with her long skirts gathered up in the left hand, and a parasol in the right. She