

**ZAIDEE: A
ROMANCE. IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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Zaidee: A Romance. In Three Volumes, Vol. I by Margaret Oliphant

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A Romance

BY

MARGARET OLIPHANT

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.



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Z A I D E E

BOOK I.

Z A I D E E .



CHAPTER I.

THE GRANGE.

“SOME call it the Uplands, sir, and some call it the Grange,—to us hereabouts it is nought but the Squire’s house ; that’s the name.”

Such would be the answer of the Cheshire peasant of whom you asked the designation of this old-established family dwelling-place : it is both the Uplands and the Grange in reality, but the Squire’s house, its simplest and most common distinction, is sufficiently satisfactory. The scenery about is Cheshire scenery—nothing grand or elevated certainly, but, after its bare, bleak, windy fashion, wild enough to please a moderate taste for desolation. The principal feature in the landscape is a low rocky hill, where a shelf of bare brown whinstone, almost as hard as granite, alternates with

a slope of that close, slippery hill-side turf, rich with thyme and low-springing plants of heather, with bits of clover and crowflower, and infant prickles of furze, which seems to seize and hold fast the warmth of sunshine better than the most velvet greensward. A strange, eerie-looking, solitary windmill, the very picture of useless labour, flapping its long solemn wings in the air, crowns one dreary mound; on the other is a small round tower of observation, surmounted by a gallery, whence you can look out upon the sea; and the summit of this dreary little hill, and these two buildings standing out abrupt and gaunt from its points, strike sheer upon the sky without a softening tree. To be so minute in real extent, and so slightly elevated, the loneliness and silence of this place is remarkable: below it a long stretch of pasture, the flattest and least varied of Cheshire fields, stretches away towards the bleak sandbanks and unfeatured coast,—a treacherous shore, where the waves roll in strong and wild, with a tawny foam and ocean force, but where there is scarcely either rock or headland—nothing but the border of dry and powdery sand, and the hidden shifting banks that make this shore so dangerous, and without either beauty or interest to claim a second glance from an unacquainted eye.

The trees of the district are few and scanty; twisted and struggling oaks, Scotch firs, gaunt and defiant,