

**KING ARTHUR. NOT
A LOVE STORY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649287529

King Arthur. Not a love story by Dinah Craik

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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DINAH CRAIK

**KING ARTHUR. NOT
A LOVE STORY**

KING ARTHUR

Not a Love Story

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN," &c.

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P R E F A C E .

THIS book is founded on facts, which happened a good many years ago in America; the adopting parents were American; the child died young. I have re-told the story, with necessary artistic variations, because it teaches truths not always recognized. The world, voluble enough on the duties of children to parents, is strangely silent on the far more momentous ones of parents to children. This simple, and in the main point true tale, may suggest to some thoughtless readers what the Heavenly Father means when He sends to earthly fathers and mothers the blessing, and responsibility of a child.

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KING ARTHUR.

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CHAPTER I.

FULLY twenty years before the great St. Gothard tunnel was made or thought of, when Andermatt was still the favorite resting-place of travelers passing from Switzerland into Italy, and *vice versâ*, a group of half a dozen persons sat round the *table d'hôte* of the principal hotel there, eating their rather meagre dinner. For it was early in June, and the stream of regular tourists had not yet begun to flow.

Not at any season do travelers pause long here, the valley of Uri being considered by pleasure-seekers in general a rather dull place. Perhaps; and yet it has its charms. It is a high level plateau, solemn and still, in the heart of the Alps. Through it comes pouring down the wild river Reuss, and up from it climb three desolate mountain roads, leading to three well-known passes—the St. Gothard, the Furca, and the Oberalp.

The valley itself is smooth and green, though too high above the level of the sea to be very fertile. Little corn is grown there, and the trees are few and small, but the pasturage during the brief summer—only three

months—is abundant, and extending far up the mountain sides. Every yard of available land is cultivated, and the ground is "*parsemé*" (to use a French word for which there is no English equivalent), with that mass of wild flowers which makes Switzerland in June a perfect garden wherever you turn your eyes.

But these and all other beauties of the place were invisible to the travelers, for a dense white mist had suddenly come down and blotted out everything.

"To-day would have been worse even than yesterday for those young fellows to have crossed the St. Gothard from Italy, as they told me they did," said one of the three quiet English-speaking guests at the head of the table, looking across at the three voluble Italians at the foot of it.

"Scarcely more detestable weather than when we crossed, doctor. My wife has taken all these five days to get over it; and is hardly well yet."

"Oh yes, dear," said the lady—the only lady at table—small and ordinary in appearance, but with a soft voice and sweet eyes, which continually sought her husband's. He was tall, thin, and serious: in fact, had taken the head of the table and said grace in unmistakable clerical fashion. He looked the very picture of an English clergyman, and she of a clergyman's wife. One seemed about forty, the other fifty years old.

The third traveler, addressed as "Doctor," was not English, though he spoke our language with a far better pronunciation than most of us do. But he spoke it with a slight nasal twang, said to be inevitable, in consequence of climate, with our Transatlantic cousins. Also

he had a gaunt, lean, dried-up appearance; but his long bony limbs were agile and strong, and his brown face was both shrewd and kindly; full of humor, yet at the same time full of tenderness, with no small amount of capacity as well.

"My dear Mrs. Trevena, I guess we had the devil's own weather (begging your pardon!) that day we crossed from Italy. When the snows begin to melt the Pass is worse and more dangerous than in the middle of winter. And in addition, we had that soaking rain. I am sure I was drenched to the skin for eight mortal hours. Medically speaking, I wonder any one of us, especially the women, came through the journey alive. But you say you're all right now, ma'am?"

"Oh yes," answered Mrs. Trevena, smiling. She seemed a person so accustomed to be "not strong," that she preferred to smile at illness, and make as light of it as possible. "I only hope the other two women—the only women who were in the sledges besides myself—came off as easily. I suppose they went on at once, for I have not seen them in the hotel since. Have you, Dr. Franklin?"

"Yes," said the doctor. He was not a man of many words.

"Are they here still, do you know?"

"Yes," he answered again, with still greater abruptness and brevity.

"I wish I had known it, and I would have inquired how they were. I felt so sorry for the lady—she was certainly a lady, though she was shabbily dressed, and so muffled up, it was almost impossible to see her face.

The old mulatto woman, who seemed her maid, was very anxious over her. They had not half wraps enough—yet when I offered her a rug she refused it with a mere shake of the head. She couldn't be English, or, hearing me speak, she would surely have spoken."

"No—not English."

"What was she then? German?"

"American. My dear lady, you will not find two mouthfuls on that *poulet*. It looks more like an overgrown sparrow; really, the food here is abominable."

"No wonder," said the clergyman mildly. "I believe they have to carry up nearly everything from the valleys below—several thousand feet. Nothing will grow here—not even the chickens. What a place Andermatt must be to live at in winter!"

"Yet they do live here. Madame told me to-day—so far as I could understand her English—I wish I spoke better French, Austin!—that they keep the hotel open all winter. Her elder children go to school at Lucerne, but the two little boys learn from the *pasteur* here. They go to him every day in a sledge, drawn by Juno, the huge St. Bernard who is always lying at the hotel door."

"Listen to her!" said the grave clergyman, turning upon the little sweet-faced woman an affectionate look. "I do believe if my wife were dropped down in the wilds of Africa, within three days she would have made friends with all the blackamoors, big and little—especially the little ones—have found out all their affairs, and been made the confidante of all their sorrows."

"In the language of signs—as now," laughed Mrs. Trevena.