

**ELIOT THE YOUNGER;  
A FICTION IN  
FREEHAND; VOL. III**

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Eliot the younger; a fiction in freehand; Vol. III by Bernard Barker

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**BERNARD BARKER**

**ELIOT THE YOUNGER;  
A FICTION IN  
FREEHAND; VOL. III**



# ELIOT THE YOUNGER.

A Fiction in Freehand.

BY

BERNARD BARKER.

"For several virtues  
Have I liked several women . . .  
"Without the which, this story  
Were most impertinent."  
*Tempest* (Act iii., sc. 1. - Act i., sc. 2.)

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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1878.

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# ELIOT THE YOUNGER.

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## CHAPTER I.

ST. JOHN'S WOOD.

**N**O. 19, Elysium Place, St. John's Wood. A bed and a head. Not the head of the bed, but the head of a body, breathing and beautiful, and belonging solely and exclusively to Phoebe Langham, spinster.

It is Sunday morning—a Sunday in May. The bells of the neighbouring church of St. Kold Without (Reverend Luke Warmer, incumbent) are just ringing their final in-

vitation to service as Miss Langham awakes to the mixed sweets of mundane existence,

“Rubbing her sleepy eyes with lazy wrists,  
And doubling overhead her little fists  
In backward yawns——”

(as the critic-killed (?) poet prettily expresses it); and anon she is sitting bolt-upright in bed, gazing with tranquil vision upon the admirable confusion of her dainty chamber.

Sixteen shillings in silver, a half-sovereign, three cigarettes, a box of chocolate creams, a tress of back-hair, a bootlace, a penny, a pair of gloves, a fan, a handkerchief, a letter, half-a-dozen hairpins, and an odd garter—such is the *concordia discors* that bewilders the toilet-table; whilst from the “near” hind-bedpost hangs a circle of promiscuous petticoats, thrown thither, lasso-fashion, on the previous night, when its fair owner had shuffled off this mortal coil of underclothing.

For the rest, a coquettish little hat, bird-breasted and bewitching, lies upon a neigh-



bouring chair, the inflexible back of which is draped with a tartan shawl of the clan McGregor; and over the hearthrug are scattered, broadcast, silk stockings, two-and-threepenny garters, and diminutive high-heeled shoes.

So soon as Miss Langham had taken her breakfast—the coffee and egg of matutinal monotony—she turned out of bed and began dressing. The petticoats, each and every of them, were duly adjusted about her trim little waist; the stockings were rescued from the helpless, distorted attitude into which stockings invariably fall when taken off and sent empty away; and the shoes, whose toes had hitherto been turned disconsolately in to each other, were now made merry with the life and motion of feminine feet. Lastly, the back-hair was promoted to head-quarters, and a fresh white dressing-robe being belted about her person, the young lady was in a sufficiently advanced stage of toilet to appear before her

fellow-creatures. (That the reader has been permitted to attend the dress rehearsal—to enact Actæon, without in any wise “going to the dogs” in consequence—is one of the many advantages accruing to those who are the companions of a novelist through his pages. For the privileges of the Press are manifold and beautiful.)

Five months have passed by since Miss Langham forsook her uncle’s hostelry at Abingdon. The move from country to town was a momentous one, and the change it had worked in our friend Phœbe almost appeared as a transformation. So, at least, it might strike a superficial observer; but in reality this transformation was simply a development. As a rule, granted a pretty face, warm fancy, quick wit, unschooled passions, and no education (secular or sectarian) to speak of, and the chances are that the possessor of these will either make an early and ill-considered match with

the first available fellow-fool of her own class —will very imprudently marry the barber—or that a worse thing will befall her; that she will play Semele to some errant Jupiter, scorching her wings, and peradventure becoming martyr to an unpremeditated offspring.

In Phœbe's case, as we have seen, exceptional circumstances saved her from either of the issues we have mentioned. The inevitable love affair had arisen, but it had resulted neither in marriage nor betrayal. From the Semele point of view, *il vaut mieux se marier que de brûler*, doubtless holds good; but happy the Jupiter who can avoid both burnt-offering and the sacrifice at that other altar where so many tragedies have been initiated! Between such Scylla and Charybdis Richard Eliot's good angel had guided him.

Coming to London, Phœbe had sought out her kinswoman, whom she found to be an elderly female of dried-up sympathies