

**A SCANDAL - OR, IS
IT TRUE?: A NOVEL,
IN TWO VOLUMES**

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A Scandal - Or, Is It True?: A Novel, in Two Volumes by H. Elrington

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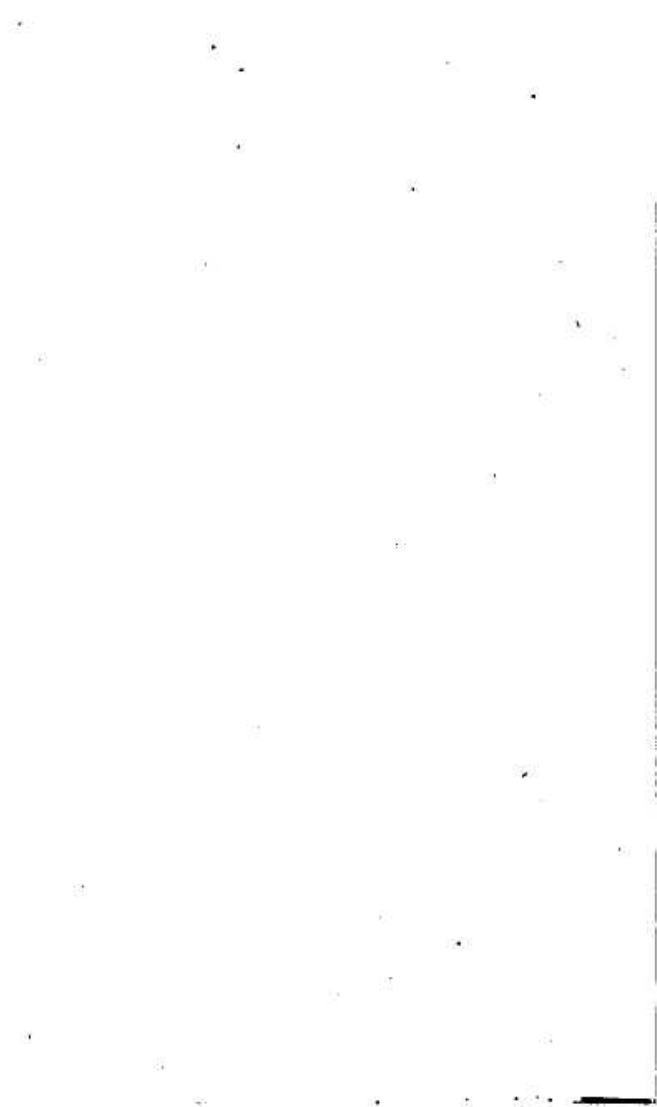
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251. f. 109.







IS IT TRUE?

CHAPTER I.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

ONCE the actual trouble and annoyance was over, Leon Hastings thought very little more about his expedition to the circus with Mrs. Fitz-Eustace. He made his aunt laugh rather more than was good for her over the account of their adventures, and then it passed almost out of his memory, his head was so full of

other things; but I do not think Mrs. Fitz-Eustace herself ever forgot it to the end of her fussy little life.

Very often in after years her friends grew weary of hearing the oft-repeated tale how Mr. Hastings took her to the circus, invariably winding up with the remark—

“And we saw it all for a very moderate charge—for a penny apiece, my dear.”

When Leon reached Mrs. Woodward's house, after seeing Mrs. Fitz-Eustace safely home, he found, on looking at his watch, that Signor Moloni's entertainment had occupied a much larger space of time than he imagined.

He and Evelyn were to take the Beresfords and Clementina for a row that evening; it had been settled for some time, and that they were all to have tea at the Beresfords before starting.

It now only wanted a quarter of an hour of the time they had fixed to meet, and although he made as much haste as he could, he was a good deal late when he came in sight of the little lawn of Beech Cottage.

A group was already assembled under the beech trees when he entered. A light table had been carried out, and Geraldine was making tea at it, apparently intent on nothing else at present, with her serious mouth and bright laughing eyes; Evelyn was beside her, waiting to hand round the cups. Mrs. Beresford was dispensing delicious-looking strawberries and cream, and Clementina sat on the wooden seat, looking very handsome, and much less languid than usual.

But—Leon could hardly believe his eyes at first—but yes, there was no mistaking him, there lying at full length on the grass, the red sunset glow that was lighting up the

whole group and bronzing the leaves of the beech trees, falling on his dusty locks and yellow freckles, was no less a personage than the sandy-haired boy. He was devouring strawberries and cream with zest and a rapidity of despatch that would not have disgraced the Irish Mail, and looking for all the world, as Leon thought in his first disgusted sensations, just like a great yellow ugly dog.

However, it was a very good-natured dog, and sprang up to greet Leon with a warmth that almost upset him ; unfortunately, it upset his own strawberries and cream down the back of Clementina's Skye terrier, who spent the rest of the evening in great bodily discomfort in consequence.

"Take care, Rupert," said Mrs. Beresford in her gentle tones, but it was too late.

Leon abhorred this boy, partly for the boy's