

**THE HERITAGE OF
LANGDALE; A NOVEL. IN
THREE VOLUMES, VOL. III**

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The Heritage of Langdale; A Novel. In Three Volumes, Vol. III by Mrs. Alexander

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MRS. ALEXANDER

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THREE VOLUMES, VOL. III**

THE
HERITAGE OF LANGDALE.

A Novel.

BY
MRS. ALEXANDER,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOOING O'T," "WHICH SHALL IT BE?" "RALPH
WILTON'S WEIRD," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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THE HERITAGE OF LANGDALE.

CHAPTER I.

EVENING was closing in on the day after the events last recorded. John Langley had returned from his daily avocations, and finished his frugal dinner he had eaten alone. Harold, never very fond of his father's society, had taken advantage of his character of an invalid to have his irregular but tolerably frequent meals and potations served upstairs. It had been a most trying period to him, this incarceration in his father's gloomy, respectable abode. But Langley was resolute; he

knew what the consequences would be if he left him free and unwatched in his bachelor lodgings, so Harold was obliged to submit to his fate, which was always his destiny whenever his father chose seriously to oppose him. How heartily he cursed his hard fate, the crotchets of his sire, the obstinacy and bad taste of his intended bride, the meddling of the insolent stranger, for it was of course now well known who had rescued Maud—all can be imagined, but even this mental exercise was but poor pastime, and to show himself with a broken arm was too dangerous an experiment. He therefore bore his imprisonment as best he might, to the diminution of Mr. Langley's stock of Hollands and Burgundy.

With his accustomed methodical habit, John Langley turned to his accounts after dinner, and having made sundry entries and calculations, put away his books and ascended to his son's room. He found the interesting invalid looking very pallid, dishevelled, and unkempt. Harold was one of those who, wanting in innate self-respect, only care to

dress for company. He was seated by the fire, a table with a bottle and glass upon it beside him, and a dice-box in his hand.

"Good-evening to you," said Mr. Langley, drawing a chair opposite his son, and laying a letter he held on the table. "What are you doing, Harold?"

"Just throwing a main, sir, right hand against left, though the right has to trust his adversary with the bones."

"Um! I like not the pastime! How is your arm, boy?"

"So-so — a little stronger, I think; I hunger for the time when it will be able to pay my debts to that meddling foreign adventurer."

"He stands well with the Countess of Helmsford."

"Ay, sir, she is mad about him; I should not wonder if she forgot herself so far as to take him for a husband, as well as a lover."

"If that be so he is no rival of *yours*?"

"Of mine! No; it's not like he would turn from a wealthy full-blown beauty to a little beggarly white-faced chit——"

“Stay, Harold; I find people begin to speak of her as the possible heiress of Langdale! Lady Helmsford does not hesitate to say so; Craggs spoke to me only to-day to the same effect——”

“Ha!” interrupted Harold, “that’s serious! Was there ever such infernal ill-luck as my being trapped at Langdale? Still, this Monteiro acted in the matter of the rescue as the devoted servant of Lady Helmsford; that is his line.”

“Perhaps so, and so far ’tis better! You know I applied formally to that insolent woman for the restoration of my ward; here is her reply, most artfully worded: ‘Dear Sir,’—mark that! It is little more than ten days since, with scorn, she drove me from her house, ordering her lacqueys, in my hearing, never to admit me again. Now I am ‘Dear Sir,—I have your letter of yesterday’s date. I do not pretend to oppose your just claim to the custody of your ward; she should be ready to accompany you to-morrow, so far as I am concerned, but she is in truth seriously indisposed and ill at ease. The physicians whom

I have called in to see her can testify to the truth of this statement—she is unable to leave her chamber. In a few days she will doubtless be better able to bear the transit, and I shall be happy to restore her to your care. Indeed, I think of returning for a season to Paris, in which case I should of course be guided by your will in the disposal of Mistress Langley.

“ I have the honour to be, sir,

“ Yours faithfully,

“ ‘ E. HELMSFORD.’ ”

John Langley read every word of this letter down to the signature in a dry bitter tone, and then stopping, looked at his son.

“ Well, sir,” said the young man, reaching over to the wine and filling his glass, “ it is very fair and civil. Women like coddling each other when they are sick ; we will have her here next week, and quite time enough, in my opinion.”

“ Do not drink more,” returned Langley, pushing the bottle away ; “ it seems to me you have already had too much. So—the