

**THE HEIRESS: A
NOVEL. IN TWO
VOLUMES. VOL. I**

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The Heiress: A Novel. In Two Volumes. Vol. I by Ellen Pickering

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ELLEN PICKERING

**THE HEIRESS: A
NOVEL. IN TWO
VOLUMES. VOL. I**

THE HEIRESS.

VOL. I.

Ma quando io avrò durata l'eroica fatica di trascrivere questa storia da questo dilavato e graffiato autografo, e l'avrò data, come suol dirsi, alla luce, si troverà egli poi chi duri fatica di leggerla ?—**MANZONI.**

My task is done, my song hath ceased, my theme
Has died into an echo ; it is fit
The spell should break of this protracted dream.
The torch shall be extinguish'd which hath lit
The midnight lamp ; and what is writ is writ—
Would it were worthier ! But I am not now
That which I have been ; and my visions flit
Less palpably before me ; and the glow
Which in my spirit dwelt, is fluttering, faint and low.

BYRON.

Pickering, Ellen

THE HEIRESS;

A NOVEL.

"She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes."—*Byron.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:

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1834.

Richard B. Brown
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24

THE HEIRESS.

CHAPTER I.

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellow'd to that tender light,
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which waves in every auburn tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent—
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart where all is innocent!

BYRON.

It was towards the end of May; not sufficiently warm to occasion a dislike to motion; not one of those still and noiseless evenings, whose almost death-like silence fills the mind with a feeling resembling awe, if not awe itself; when the heart, ashamed of its own emotion amid such an unearthly calm, yields to the dreamy softness of the scene—or, wretched and repining itself, quarrels with the rebuking calm, and

"To stillness gives
The cold, harsh names of brutal apathy."

No!—it was an evening the very reverse of such an one. It was, like life, all change—half hope—half fear—mingling

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and mixing, till it would have been difficult to tell which had the mastery. It seemed formed to delight :

"Who would not view
The green earth always green,
Or the blue sky always blue?"

True it was an azure sky ; but then there were clouds of fantastic shape, careering o'er its sea of blue, and changing the shadows and the shades of all beneath. It was warm, but then there was a light fresh breeze playing around, and rustling the bright green leaves. The bustle of the day was over, but the birds were not yet weary of singing ; the labourer whistled as he sought his humble but happy home ; the mother sat at her cottage door, singing to the crowing baby in her lap ; and the merry children laughed and shouted as they joined in the animated game of cricket, or chased each other across the common.

Perhaps I should coax few to agree with me, were I to say I consider this scene of childish merriment to be in strict accordance with the shifting shade and sunshine on the surrounding woods and fields ; and yet to my mind such is the fact. I dote on children, but I never see them playing, that the thought of their future trials and sorrows does not cause the sigh to mingle with the smile, and shadow the brightness of that which is, by anticipating the gloom of what may be. I might, were I so inclined, appeal to the frowns and sullen looks of more than one urchin, as proofs that even the dawn of life is not without its storms, and that the infant of seven may, comparatively speaking, suffer as much from wounded pride and disappointed ambition as the elder of seventy :—but I am not so inclined.

The hours of childhood are, perhaps, the brightest portions of our existence, and in most minds the season of purer thoughts and more generous feelings than our after-lives exhibit. Jack may frown, and Jane may look sullen ; the one may cry to lose his top, the other to break her doll ; but the frown, and the sullen look, and the grief for the lost plaything, will pass away, and be seen no more ; even as yon tiny dark cloud, gliding across the azure sky, will disappear in the west, "and leave not a shadow behind." Alas ! alas ! it is not so in after-life ; and it is this that makes the chief difference between the sorrows of childhood and the sorrows of manhood ; the sorrows of the child are fleeting, the grief of a moment !—the sorrows of the man are lasting, the grief

of years! The storm of an hour, though furious, may be forgotten, and its trace effaced; for the storm of years there is no Lethé! it is the constant dripping that wears the stone; it is the last feather that breaks the camel's back.

But why pursue the subject? We shall meet with enough of sorrow in our way through life, without stepping out of our path to seek it. If men and children *look* happy, let us believe them to be so; and if we know them to be not happy, then let us think:

"Earth has its pangs for all; its happiest breast,
Not his who meets them least, but bears them best"

For my part, I mean to write as merry a book as my own rather gloomy temperament and the fashion of the times will allow; that is, like the evening I have tried to describe, a tale made up

"Of hopes and fears, and gloom and shine."

What can have happened? There is neither a shout nor a laugh to be heard. The labourer has ceased to whistle in the middle of a bar; the mother forgets to play with her infant, and heeds not its wailing cry; the curs bark unchidden; the ball, discharged by a careless hand, bowls down the middle wicket, unchecked and unmarked by the staring batter. What can be the matter? and why do men, women, and children, ay, even cats and dogs, look towards that dusty road? "Sister Anne, sister Anne, what do you see coming?"

"An open landaulet and four, with two ladies inside, a man and a maid in the rumble-tumble, and a beautiful black and white setter behind." "Who are the ladies, and what are they like?" "Time will show."

The carriage approached; bats and balls were flung down, and all sought to gain a distinct view of the travellers. Two of the boys, encouraged by the smiles of one of the ladies, and the good-natured looks of the servant, clung to the carriage behind; whilst another parted with a portion of his supper to make friends with the handsome setter. Every hat was off; bows and curtsies, for in this secluded village such things still were, became universal, save in one or two instances, where an excess of curiosity occasioned a forgetfulness of manners. The homage was at first silent; a murmur was heard, and then arose a long, loud, deafening shout.

A gate at the end of the common delayed the progress of the carriage for a few moments, and before it could proceed

again, men were at the horses' heads, and it was surrounded by most of the inhabitants of the village of Hurlstone. The welcomes were loud and fervent. "Long life and happiness to our dear young lady!" sounded from every tongue; all crowded to catch a glimpse; all strove to win a word. Their young lady, evidently unprepared for the recognition, leant back for a moment to subdue her feelings; and, having succeeded in some slight degree, proceeded to acknowledge the courtesies of the crowd, and answer their eager inquiries and congratulations. The tears stood in her dark blue eyes, and struggled with the smile on her bright lips, as she bent forward to speak to the villagers. They listened to her tremulous but sincere thanks in perfect silence, answered by another shout, and then intimated their intention of releasing the horses, and drawing the carriage themselves to the house. The idea distressed her, and, repressing her emotion, she spoke firmly but kindly to those around her.

"I thank you most warmly for your good wishes and kind intention, but you will, I am sure, allow me to proceed quietly and unattended at my earnest request. I left Hurlstone blessed with parents—I return an orphan; rejoicing and congratulation, therefore, ill suit the first day of my arrival. Though I decline your attendance at present, I am not the less grateful for your friendly purpose, and hope to be always welcomed home with equal warmth; and to prove I have not forgotten the precepts and examples of those we have lost. And now good evening, and a happy morrow to all."

The people saw the tears in her eyes; felt for her sorrow, and respected her wishes. The hands were taken from the horses' reins; respectful good evenings were uttered by all, and the carriage again proceeded on its way, each one among the crowd feeling convinced that the young lady's words, and bow, and smile, were directed particularly to himself. As the carriage arrived at a turn in the road that would hide it from their sight, three cheers were given for their young lady, and then the confusion of tongues recommenced.

Some thought her thinner, some thought her paler; each one had something to say and to think, but all agreed she was a perfect beauty, and nothing less than an angel. The confusion of Babel could but have slightly exceeded the confusion of Hurlstone, as all claimed the honour of having first recognised the Heiress; but the causes of the confusion were widely different. The former was the murmur of sinful men, who had rebelled against a just but merciful Creator: the