

**KOHELETH:
A NOVEL**

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Koheleth: A Novel by Lewis Austin Storrs

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LEWIS AUSTIN STORRS

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KOHELETH.

A Novel.

BY
LEWIS AUSTIN STORRS.



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WILSON & LIPPINCOTT

KOHELETH.

CHAPTER I.

AN ANACHRONISM—TRUMBULL COURT.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife
They keep the even tenor of their way.

—Gray.

IT may seem impertinent for me to enter into an introductory description of New London, county town of New London County, in the virtuous State of Connecticut; it has such important claims on popular attention that I fear its very respectable residents may frown slightly on any attempts of mine to exploit its reputation. Just as I imagine a really good freak, who had established himself in the dime show business, must regard superciliously the subordinate showman who barks his history for the instruction of the spectators. But—to err is human, as we who studied the Latin Reader learned incidentally with the major fact that the infinitive takes the neuter. It may be there are some who have not been blessed with any positive knowledge about this reputable New England port, and for their sakes I have thought wise to put down a few data concerning it, even at the hazard of giving umbrage to those, whose local pride may resent such minuteness. For

I must charge these latter that though New London has struggled for many years with the qualifying title of a city, the most enthusiastic imagination cannot call it a rushing and populous place, while its peculiar prerogatives to popular recognition are purely collateral to its municipal existence. Moreover, in further justification of myself let me say, I have heard of persons who have lived so long in New York City they have forgotten where Brooklyn is and positively never heard of Jersey. Why then should they not be uninformed of places still more remote?

The New Yorker who goes down to New London sniffs the briny heaviness of the old maritime town, swathes himself in an outing shirt, and sauntering forth with his blackest pipe stuck between his metropolitan teeth, feels that he has reached the frontier of that unenfranchised State known conventionally, with a contemptuous twang on the accent, as "da-own East." If he stays there a week he will be so saturated with the imbuing saltiness that it is dollars to doughnuts he will go back to the city and bawl to his wife that her peak is luff when she sails forth in all the gigantic grandeur of crinoline expansiveness.

Perhaps you have been down to New London for the annual regatta, or have run into the harbor with the yachts or in the naval service; or you have driven up in a smart rig from Eastern Point or Pequot, past the menacing posts of Trumbull and Griswold. In any case, you have not forgotten the picturesque provincialism and quaint fashion of the little town, as it nestles on the expanding Thames, under the grim shadow of its historic forts. You remember the drawl of its nautical vernacular, that was so charmingly *en rapport* with its sleepy enter-

prise, you recall the stern New England dignity of its composure and the pervading odor of sea-craft that set you talking of forestays and royal sheets as glibly as a bo's'n's mate before you had been there a round day. I am sure you fell in love with the curious old seaboard town at the same time that you smiled at its antiquated fashions.

But perhaps you loved it afar off, in a sort of Platonic way, and did not push your acquaintance to vulgar familiarity, remembering that the old aphorism beginning, "'Tis distance lends enchantment," has a wider application than mountains and landscapes. In fact, it is to be hoped, you were cautious of your intimacy, for romance often depreciates before reality, and your longshoreman with the melodious slang of his craft might fall into a rather loathsome and ribald fellow by association. And if you are a man—men are such very gormands!—a lunch or cigar of local purveyance might dispose you against the place unconvertably. I imagine then you have not urged your acquaintance farther than the town's hostelry, which you are bound to know if you are a sporting man, or possibly Winthrop's Point, where you may have gone to learn the quality of your sporting proclivities. I am sure at any rate you never visited Trumbull Court which is not a thoroughfare to any of the conspicuous events or places of the town and would be wholly out of your way. Perhaps too it is not there to-day, or is very, very changed. To be sure it used to seem as enduring in its unchangeableness as the everlasting hills, but viewed by the perspective of a longer vision, I know it cannot have escaped the universal ravages of time. For the time of which I am writing was a generation and more ago, in the days

of the merchant marine and the whaling service and the good old-fashioned folk, the most of whom have passed on to the city which is in truth unchangeable, eternal in the heavens.

There have been no old-fashioned folk since the Civil War. In a sense that struggle, instead of perpetuating, determined the republic, much as the Civil War in the time of the first Cæsar marked the merger of the Roman republic into the Empire. Not that the United States have become politically an *imperium* in the same sense as Rome became such, not that the war of the rebellion did not by its issue put a wise adjudication on the fundamental law; of all its effects none was more salutary than its sustaining of federal power. But nevertheless the war was the most punctuating epoch that has marked our history. We have always been rather a commercial than a martial people; the war did not alter that and yet it changed our whole condition. It was the first probation of our unity, an apocalypse of our power, it conjured the spirit of glory and glamor and triumph. By the issue of Appomattox we passed from a confederacy to a people, from provincialism to the peerage of nations, from frugality into an era of fabulous wealth and enterprise and colonization. The Grand Army came back from Dixie to scatter itself through the nation and dominate its politics and romance for a score of years. The adventure and license of the camp inoculated the body politic, the narrow morality of the fathers was looked at askance; then entered voluptuousness in the room of prudery, cis-Atlantic religiousness began to debate with exotic rationalism, the municipal corruptionist flourished like a green bay tree, everybody was merry as a marriage bell, and the devil, swinging on his