

**NOT WISELY, BUT  
TOO WELL; A  
NOVEL; VOL. I**

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Not wisely, but too well; a novel; Vol. I by Rhoda Broughton

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**RHODA BROUGHTON**

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COLLECTION  
OF  
BRITISH AUTHORS.

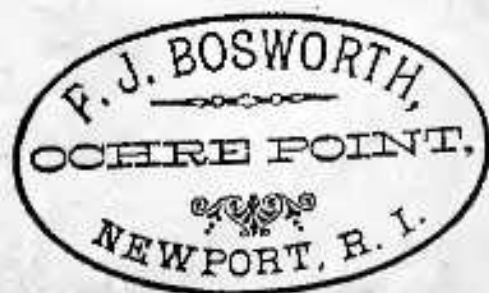
VOL. 935.

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NOT WISELY, BUT TOO WELL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



TAUGHNITZ EDITION.

By the same Author,

COMETH UP AS A FLOWER . . .	1 vol.
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A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"COMETH UP AS A FLOWER."

*Rhoda Broughton*

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VOL. I.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1867.

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## NOT WISELY, BUT TOO WELL.

### CHAPTER I.

"A THING of beauty is a joy for ever." That is my text for this chapter, and my service is going to be an amplification and enlarging upon that idea. Keats meant it in a purely material sense, for his intense perception of the beautiful was confined to material objects; but I, having adopted it for my motto, intend it to be taken in a nobler, wider, more spiritual sense. The subject I am going to write about is to my mind "a thing of beauty;" for what is more preëminently so than a tender, "loving, passionate, human soul, made more tender, more loving, by many a sore grief," by many a gnawing sorrow, till towards the hour of its setting, whether calm or whelmed to the last in storm-clouds, it shines with a chaste mellow radiance such as our earth lamps do not afford us here, borrowed (oh, priceless loan!) from the fountains of light above? Love in such a soul, growing purified from the drossy, worthless part of earthly passion which oftentimes forms the largest share of it, is raised higher



and higher above this world's low level, above its dull swampy flats, till it merges in that better, boundless love which is the essence of the Deity, a love free from the sharp sting of disappointment, free from the mortal taint of satiety, and which decay is powerless to soil with its foul, polluting fingers.

Even taking it in its narrow material sense, I agree very fully and heartily with the sentiment of Keats' suggestive line, and thank him most humbly and sincerely for saying for me, so pithily and concisely, what I should never have been able to say so well for myself. Yes! I subscribe to the opinion of that born Greek, whom some anachronism isolated from his kin and his country, and set amongst uncongenial money-making Britons, full twenty centuries too late. I subscribe to it; but yet I know, on the other hand, that we all learned, on no less authority than the copy-books, which exercised our powers of handwriting in the days of our hard-worked, highly educated youth, that "Beauty is a fading flower;" and, applied particularly to woman's loveliness, there is none more favourite among that bundle of dull platitudes, of insipid, trite common-places which enrol themselves under the head of moral maxims. Of course it is true — tiresomely, provokingly, heart-breakingly true; so true as to be almost a self-evident proposition. Which of you, O daughters of Eve! has not made this interesting discovery in natural history for yourself, by one or

other of the following pleasant processes? Either, standing after the manner of your kind, considering your *tout ensemble*, in that teller of such gall-bitter, such treacle-sweet truths, your looking-glass, you make the discovery, some fine day, that you have lost your most effective, aggressive weapon against mankind. Your little sword is dented; your pretty arrows have lost their points; your power is gone from you. Disarmed you stand there; like "brave Kempenfelt," your "victories are o'er," and very ruefully you have to own to yourself that your soft, much prized fascinations, which, perchance, made your small world so cheery a place, have gone away from you, never to come back again any more. "Eheu fugaces!" They have slipped away, treacherous ones, out of your reluctant clasp, "most cunningly did steal away," as is the wont of the brief good things of this troublesome world of ours, leaving us very heart bare, and sore, and grumbling; none the worse, perhaps, for that at last. Or else you have this truth exemplified in a manner some degrees less painful to your own feelings; seeing old Time, that busy artificer, performing on the countenance of an intimate friend. Curiously you watch him, as, with his graver's tool, he draws horizontal, parallel lines along the smooth brow; designs skilfully a simple yet ingenious pattern of crow's feet at the corner of each haggard eye, pares down the rounded contours, and cuts them into sharp points

and angles, and paints out with his dull grays and drabs the rosy flush of colour from the once love-bright cheek. Ay, me! Ay, me! indeed. What so frail, so butterfly lived as beauty in the individual? Hardly are we consoled by the reflection that at least in the species it seems perennial. But though the visible presence of this fairest of earth's visitants — this living witness that Eden once existed — is so sadly short, yet in memory it out-lives all the other powers that sway our destinies. Great kingdoms grew into being in the old times, at least we suppose so, we having now nothing of them but their dark old tombs. Big men did big things, and might as well never have done them for all we know about them, seeing that they rot now in such un-rescued, irrecoverable oblivion. Even the most learned of our pundits in the historical and antiquarian line have but the most shadowy impression of what brave deeds were done, of what wise thoughts were thought, of how men lived and loved, and believed and hoped in that *diu* far dawning. As for the bulk of us ignoramuses or *ignorami* (as I suppose would be the correct plural), it is a great chance if we know the names of the four great empires that people talk so much about nowadays.

But when shall we cease to hear the trailing garments of Helen the well-robed, the goddess of women, sweeping down the shadowy echoing corridors of Priam's cool, wide palace? And when, oh