

**MY ONLY LOVE; A
NOVEL, IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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My only love; a novel, in three volumes, vol. I by Emilia Aylmer Blake

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EMILIA AYLMER BLAKE

**MY ONLY LOVE; A
NOVEL, IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

MY ONLY LOVE.

A NOVEL,

BY

EMILIA AYLMER BLAKE.

AUTHOR OF 'A CROWN FOR LOVE,' 'NELSON,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES,

VOL. I.

οὐκ ἴσθ' ἐραστικῆς θάστις οὐκ ἀλλ' εἰλεῖ

EURIPIDES.

' But this was taught me by the dove,
To die—and know no second love,
This lesson yet hath man to learn,
Taught by the thing he dares to spurn:
The bird that sings within the brake,
The swan that swims upon the lake,
One mate, and one alone, will take.

BYRON

London :

REMINGTON AND CO.,

133, NEW BOND STREET, W.

[Removed from 5, Arundel Street, Strand.]

1880.

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MY ONLY LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

SWEET SIXTEEN.

'Outre tous ces discours, toutes ces gentillesces
Ne vous faisait-il point aussi quelques caresses ?

'Oh, tant ! Il me prenait et les mains et les bras,
Et de me les baiser il n'était jamais las.'

MOLIERE, *Ecole des Femmes*.

FAR away in old world Cornwall I was bred,
though not born, under the wing of a loving,
aged foster parent, my father's mother, a
widow, who cared but for me in the world.
No two companions ever were more
opposite than we, in tastes and fashions of

heart and mind, and yet I loved her well, having no other truly to love. Our home was a neat house of modest pretensions, in a marine town, which I shall call Stormouth, half fashionable in the 'season' and occasionally galvanised into a show of life by garrison balls and theatricals: but we, my grannie and I, cared for none of these things. From childhood to girlhood I had been acquainted with few even of other children, but passed my time in such solitary play as I could, until my grannie got masters—the best the neighbourhood could afford—to teach me all I was inclined to learn; and then I devoted myself to study and hard work, being possessed with a precocious ambition to do and to be something under the sun which my poor father and unknown mother closed their eyes upon so early.

I was indeed an orphan, 'deprived of light,' as the Greek origin of the word derives it; to live and die in the cold shadow of the world's neglect, unless by some means I could lift myself above it, and this was early made known to me through my grannie's frequent lament, 'What will be-

come of my poor child? Bread and cheese I can give you,' she would say, 'but what is that to a girl like you? Connection is everything, connection and position, and all our people are in their graves but you and I. How ever are you to marry?'

That never troubled me; but I took pleasure to read of the fair Gabrielle, how in a similar strait, a fortune-teller promised her higher destinies than those dues of her birth she was deprived of: upon me too, it was borne in by some prophetic instinct, that I should win a hero's heart, some Henri Quatre, whom heaven should make for me to be his wife, perhaps; his love, assuredly; his mistress? no, never!

A cruel death fair Gabrielle died by poison. Ah, well! that I might have braved. Since wishes were my only possessions, why should I not wish, like the wisest of the three sisters in the Eastern tale, to be the Caliph's wife, rather than his cook's or baker's? and she had her wish! Was I not, by my mother's side, a daughter of that wondrous land of the sun, where miracles are common as the light of noon? My name, too, Leila? Memories also I

had of a stately life in London, where my father, the tenant for life of an inheritance entailed in the male line, used to boast of his little Indian beauty, his only child, and say to other fathers, proud of their five, six, or seven, 'I have eight in one.' He was recalled to serve in India, and slain in battle in the prime of manhood. He left me an infant, not able yet to realise the tremendous loss to be felt every hour of my future life more and more keenly, but I wept as much as a little child could weep when they told me papa was gone away—dead—and I begged to die too, and go to him in heaven.

The crown without the cross! To that I was not born. Happily the spirit of a child is elastic as its tread, and will not break under one blow. At thirteen I began to feel as a woman, and often and often would I walk alone by the sea, making companions of the melancholy waves, in mournful envy of other girls of my age, whom I saw caressed and praised by a fond father, while I had none to cling to under heaven but the poor old grandmother, who rather reproved than en-

couraged my too demonstrative affection. She had lived through too much to feel in common with the young passionate heart that chafed under her very kindness, and hungered for other love than hers.

About this time it happened that a name I had caught from my father's lips, to be ever remembered with honor and regard, rose very high in fame, and became common in every house throughout England. I do not repeat it here, for what cause will appear hereafter; enough that its great possessor passed one day in our humble town, marking an epoch in the annals of the same as surely as he fixed the attention of every man, woman, child and quadruped in the place. I too was stirred by the hubbub and clatter of hoofs: I marked him rising in his saddle while a attendant orderly jogged, regulation wise, with the brisk trot of his horse. I watched the great man alight, measuring him with my eyes—six feet of heroic manhood—my father's height, and a presence not unlike his. Something much more than a mortal, though I felt that it would be a sin to give way to my impulse—to fall down and wor-