

**ETHELSTONE;
A TALE**

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Ethelstone; a tale by Anonymous .

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ANONYMOUS .

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A TALE.

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LONDON, M.DCCC.LIV.

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ETHELSTONE.



CANTO I.

GREY Hall of Ethelstone! far out at sea
Benighted vessels steer their course by thee;
Tossed on the surges in the fading light,
When nearer objects only mock the sight,
Thou, built upon the summit of a hill,
Through unseen danger guid'st the pilot still.
Fair may thy bowers have been, O Ethelstone!
Merry with voices silent now and gone—
Bright was thy dwelling on a former day,
Filled with the forms that since have passed away—
When, deep in leafy groves, the flowers sweet
Bent down at the light tread of childish feet,
Now, when the shades of night enshroud the earth,
Dim are thy lights, and heard no more thy mirth;

Though ever, at the same late, lonely hour,
Is lit a lamp in Lady Ethel's bower ;
Who, scarce emerged from girlhood, and yet pale
With thought, awaits her absent lover's sail ;
And thus, through many years, is seen to keep
Her faithful watch o'er the Atlantic deep.

Sole heiress of a wealthy sire,
She sits unsought and silent there ;
And looks, as though the hope and fire
Of youth, were quenched in early care.
For Ethel has her mother's eyes,
Her mother's voice, and pensive brow —
That mother, once so worshipped, lies
Forgotten with her kindred now.
And he who worshipped her hears not
The slightest mention of her name ;
Dark and unhappy was her lot—
A broken heart, an injured fame.
But, oh ! in comfort rest thee here,
Below the earth's long-hardened crust,
For slander shall not reach the ear,
Or falsehood wring the heart of dust.
And if, poor wife and mother, Time,
That sometimes even rights the dead,
Hath proved thee innocent of crime,
And planted lilies o'er thy head—

It matters little now to thee,
Sleeping beneath the cypress tree.

There, near the mother, rests the son ;
One dying of neglect, and one
Was lost 'mid all that most endears
The memory of our youthful years.
The father who so rarely smiled,
Yet brightened, when his favourite child
Drew near, and all that wealth could give
Was fondly lavished on his path ;
Yet, Heaven ! thy chastened sons must live !
And by his solitary hearth
The grey-haired parent sits alone —
Though all that cheered his heart is gone.

Untended is the once gay hall,
The play-ground now is desolate,
And grass and nettles, rank and tall,
Grow up and choke its wicket gate ;
The moping, discontented hound
Howls in his kennel, night and day —
He misses the accustomed sound
Of voices, calling him to play ;
And sparrows in the chimneys build,
And ivy climbs the walls at will ;
The ancient courts, that once were filled
With childhood's laugh, are cold and still :

Long spider's-webs are on the wall
And ceiling of that little room,
Where tiny bed and playthings, all
Are left to dust, and damp and gloom.
Poor Ethel! all her tender care
Soothes not her parent's sorrowing mind;
Made harsher still by his despair,
He bids her hence, in tones unkind—
She turns from him her mournful brow,
But where is she to wander now?
Not underneath the chestnut shade—
Where, with the lost one, oft she played!

'Two weary years have passed away
Since that most sad, unhappy day;
And down beside the bubbling spring
Where first the primrose glads the sight,
And where the fairies form their ring
And revel in the moon's full light,
Beneath the twisted, scented thorn
Sits Ethel, in the light of morn.
And one, whose bright and rapturous gaze
The glorious Hope of youth betrays—
Whose eyes so often search for hers,
Too eloquent interpreters!
Is near her, sketching her sweet face,
Her form of elegance and grace—

It matters little whence he came,
Nor yet what titles graced his name ;
Whatever was his heritage,
His brow was like an open page,
Whose characters, distinct and bold,
Spoke there the spirit, warm and true—
Why care, then, Reader, to be told,
How ranked he in the world's cold view ?

Fairest of all the fairy spots
That here th' admiring gazer sees,
Where hawthorns grow in rugged knots,
And shed their blossoms in the breeze ;
And where, beside the mossy creek,
The water-wagtail builds her nest,
Or wild bee, humming, comes to seek
The flow'rets that she loves the best ;
How suited to a scene like this !
To those whose voices love and bliss
So soften, that the timid hare
Wakes not among the Meadow-sweet,
But slumbers even at Ethel's feet.

Fondly and long the lover lingers
O'er each fair line his pencils trace ;
There must be magic in those fingers,
So like, so truthful is that face,