

**HEALEY,
A ROMANCE**

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Healey, A Romance by Jessie Fothergill

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JESSIE FOTHERGILL

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A ROMANCE**



HEALEY: A ROMANCE.

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H E A L E Y

A ROMANCE

BY

JESSIE FOTHERGILL

*' Hope nothing, if I thus may speak
To thee, a woman, and thence weak.
Hope nothing, I repeat.*

*Farewell all wishes, all debate,
All prayer for this cause, or for that I
Weep, if that aid thee, but depend
Upon no help of outward friend ;
Espouse thy doom at once, and claave
To fortitude without reprieve.'*

—WORDSWORTH

IN THREE VOLUMES

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1875

251. b. 830.


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HEALEY: A ROMANCE.

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P R O E M.

* Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.—ECCLESIASTES.

OME people live who know misery only by comparison with their happiness; so utterly have they lived in light, that they cannot conceive shade, pure and simple. They have never found their path suddenly swerve aside from the pleasant south, to go on under the bleak grey easterly rocks, or along a sunless northern shore. They have walked in warmth and light all their lives; and if here and there, "few and far between," transient clouds have thinly and feebly veiled their sun, they have no doubt

made much ado—have called out loudly that they were in great and unheard-of trouble, and their companions along the same radiant flower-set path have agreed with them, pitied them, fostered their conviction that they were martyrs. . . . Why not? They knew no better.'

A long pause followed that idea, and the thinker's lips curled with bitterness as well as with amusement—a needless thing, for their expression at its best was never too sweet.

'But there are other people, those at the opposite end of the scale; they conceive no more truly of happiness than the very happy conceive of misery. They know, at least they have heard of a thing called happiness, which must be felt, they suppose, by people whom they have seen smiling, and walking with light, untired steps; speaking in clear, unsubdued voices, which have vibrations of delight coming from causes they do not understand, and have never felt. Sometimes they may pass years—

lustrums and decades—and be no happier; their sorrow is positive and perpetual; their joy, if ever they have any, is negative; it is just a slight lifting of the cloud above them; so many pounds off the load that oppresses them; one or two shades removed from the shadow that broods over them. Sunshine, warm, rich, full, they know not; if it came, would they understand it? A long enough apprenticeship to sadness may make people incapable of being glad; may destroy their faculties for joy.

· ‘What was it I once read about an old man who had been long, long years in a French prison? He would have died there; but there was a Revolution, when the prison was thrown open, and his sons came to him, burst open the doors of his cell, and called upon him to come out and be free once more. He sat and looked vacantly at them. He did not know who they were; for him the meaning of ‘freedom,’ ‘life,’ ‘light,’