

**TWO STORIES: MARY
MANSFIELD AND
NOTHING TO DO**

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Two Stories: Mary Mansfield and Nothing to Do by M. H.

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M. H.

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Mary Mansfield

[Frontispiece]

MARY MANSFIELD

AND

NOTHING TO DO

TWO STORIES BY

M. H.

LONDON

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

27, PATERNOSTER ROW

1897

MARY MANSFIELD

CHAPTER I.

'Tis not for man to trifle: life is brief,
And sin is here.
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear.
We have no time to sport away the hours;
All must be earnest in a world like ours.'

'Redeeming the time.'—EPR. v. 16.

It was the close of a July day. The sun, which had shone for hours with more than usual brightness, had sunk at last; the rosy blush, which, ere sinking, it had sent over the almost cloudless sky, had disappeared, and the grey shades of night were beginning to gather round. The song of the

birds was hushed—only a gentle twitter was heard ere they settled themselves to sleep; whilst in the fields the cattle were lying in groups, many under the shade of the leafy trees, composing themselves to rest. The dew was falling, refreshing the parched ground and the drooping flowers, after the day of burning heat.

A strange quiet pervaded the whole of nature, and influenced every living thing—even the two young girls who sat at the open window of a small room in the Manor-house of Ludley, in one of the midland counties of England. They had sat for some time at that window, having, as the younger of the two termed it, 'a good talk,' and yet enjoying the sights and sounds of nature around them.

They were not sisters, not even relations, only friends. A stranger would have guessed their ages to be anything from six-

teen to twenty; and certainly, if asked, at first sight, to say which was the prettier of the two, would at once have pointed to the fair girl with the regular features, the bright complexion, and the sunny ringlets—Mary Mansfield, the sister of the proprietor of Ludley Manor-house. And yet there were many who, on a closer inspection, would have said that the intelligent countenance, and thoughtful, dark eyes of Eva Campbell, pleased them better than the more beautiful face of her friend. Both were just returned from school, and were entering on their home duties; childhood and girlhood lay behind them; school days were done, and life and its realities were before them. They talked of these things as they sat. Mary had rattled on about the life she would have to lead, the calls to make, the parties to go to, the places to visit, the rides to take. Eva listened quietly, as her