

**A SECRET
INHERITANCE. IN THREE
VOLUMES. VOL. II**

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A Secret Inheritance. In Three Volumes. Vol. II by B. L. Farjeon

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B. L. FARJEON

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A SECRET INHERITANCE

VOL. II.

To Dear Lillie

Oct 16 1890

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SECRET INHERITANCE

BY

B. L. FARJEON,

AUTHOR OF "GREAT PORTER SQUARE," "IN A SILVER SEA,"
"THE HOUSE OF WHITE SHADOWS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II

LONDON

WARD AND DOWNEY

12, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

1887

CHAPTER XIV.

“ I TRAVELLED for many months alone. I made acquaintances which never ripened into friendships, and seldom did twenty-four hours pass without my thoughts wandering to Silvain. Thinking it not unlikely that one or both of the brothers had returned to their home in Germany, I wrote several letters to them there, without receiving an answer. This portentous silence increased rather than diminished my interest in the man I loved as a brother. In speaking of him in these terms I am but giving faithful expression to the feelings I entertained for

him ; up to that time I had never met a human being, man or woman, who had so entirely won my affectionate regard.

“ Family circumstances rendered me more than ever my own master ; I was free to go whithersoever my inclination led me, and certainly my inclination pointed clearly to that part of the world where I should be most likely to find my dear friend. But I had no clue to guide me ; to turn east, west, north, or south, in search of him would have been a hap-hazard proceeding, and to hope for success in so unintelligent a search would have been the hope of a madman. My anxiety with respect to the fate of Silvain and Kristel never deserted me, but it was many years before I was enabled to take up the links in the chain.

“ During those years a great and happy change occurred in my own life. I interrupt

the course of my narrative here to remark that it is singular I should be relating this history fully, for the first time, within a comparatively short distance of places in which the most pregnant—and indeed terrible—incidents in the career of the twin brothers were brought to my knowledge. My wife is acquainted with some portions of this history, but not with all. The lighthouse in which Avicia was born is within a hundred miles of this spot. Indirectly it led me to the acquaintance of the lady who became my wife, and to as great a happiness as any man can hope to enjoy.

“Nerac is not my birthplace, and it was in passing through the lovely village on one of my visits to the village by the sea—visits made in the vain hope of obtaining intelligence of Silvain—that I was introduced to her. I pass over the records of a time

which lives in my remembrance as a heavenly summer. Happy is the man who has enjoyed such a season. Happier is the man to whom such a season is the harbinger of such home joys as have fallen to my lot.

“When I first made the acquaintance of my wife, and for some years afterwards, her parents were alive, and I saw that it would be cruel to ask her to leave them. I did not put her love to such a test. I settled in Nerac, and married there.

“It is a solemnly strange reflection by what chance threads we are led to our destiny—a destiny which may be one of honour or shame, and which may bring a blessing or a curse into the lives of others whom, but for the most accidental circumstance, we should never have seen. The doctrine of responsibility is but little understood. Thus, had it not been for my chance meeting with

Silvain in London, I should never have known my wife, and it seems to me impossible that I should have been a happy or a good man without her. Such women as she keep men pure.

“Midway between Nerac and the village by the sea to which Kristel led his brother in his pursuit of the girl who was to bring them to their doom lies a forest of great extent, and it was in this forest, after a lapse of four years, that I came once more into association with Silvain and Avicia.* I was called in that direction upon important business ; at that period of my life I was an ardent pedestrian, and if the opportunity offered, was glad to make my way on foot, without respect to distance. I may confide to you that I was in the habit of taking a great deal of exercise because I was afraid of growing fat.