

**A PASSION IN TATTERS:
A NOVEL, IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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A Passion in Tatters: A Novel, in Three Volumes, Vol. II by Annie Thomas

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ANNIE THOMAS

**A PASSION IN TATTERS:
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VOLUMES, VOL. II**

A PASSION IN TATTERS.

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By ANNIE THOMAS,

(MRS. FENDER CUDLIP.)

AUTHOR OF "DENNIS DONNE," "THE DOWER HOUSE," ETC.

"Love's a tyrant and a slave,
A torment and a treasure;
Having it, we know no peace—
Wanting it, no pleasure."
Elizabeth Philp.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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A PASSION IN TATTERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE season was closing fast, and people who had patiently fried and broiled while it was the fashion to do so, found London unendurable simultaneously, and fled into divers parts of the world in search of fresh air, fresh scenes, and fresh excitement.

Sir Roland and Miss Huntingdon had been down in Devon in their new home for a fortnight, and during that period friendly little letters, full of exquisitely touched descriptions of the scenery around Clyst Abbott, as their old manor-house was called, came from Ethel to Arthur Carhayes.

"She writes very prettily," he said to his wife, when he had finished reading the first of these effusions.

The pair were on uncomfortable terms still. Stella had not the faintest notion that her husband's coolness to her arose from his sense of wrong about these

imaginary meetings between Rupert and herself; therefore, in her ignorance of this primary cause for the estrangement, she conceived one out of her own consciousness, and made up her mind that it was Ethel—Ethel, “the wicked little flirt whom he wouldn’t marry when he could”—who was alienating him.

“She writes very prettily—Ethel Huntingdon writes very prettily. Would you like to read a vigorous little sketch she has written of their neighbourhood and their neighbours?”

He half held the letter out to her as he spoke, and then, though her heart was not her husband’s, the demon jealousy entered it on his account. She made no movement to take the letter; she resolved that she would betray neither anger, interest, nor surprise about Miss Huntingdon and Miss Huntingdon’s audacity.

“Thank you,” she said, “if I have time.” And he put it down on the table, from which she never attempted to move it.

After this he made no mention of Ethel’s letters, though if he chanced to be breakfasting with her he read them openly enough before her, and so matters had gone on for a fortnight.

The date of the Carhayeses’ going down to Carhayes Place was definitely fixed, and their mother was ready to go with them, and in the hearts of both

husband and wife there lived a hope that this bitterness would be cast out when they came to be thrown together in their own quiet country home.

At this juncture Stella would have forfeited half her fortune to be able to speak freely to her husband. But her tongue was tied by the cord that is the hardest of all to be loosed, a sense of injustice. Day after day she prayed that some opening might be made which might enable her to tell him something which she could not bring herself to tell him in cold blood and without encouragement.

And this something was that Rupert Lyon, the man who had been as a brother to him, was in very sad straits. For a report had reached her through some indifferent channel that the artist, who lived by his art, was not able to pursue it now, being ill, if not unto death, at least unto incapability.

And she, hearing this, and knowing that he was poor, and remembering that she was endowed with wealth that she had once hoped might be his, was tongue-tied on the subject, because it was palpable to her that Arthur had conceived a hatred and aversion to his name.

She made an effort to break through the ice by speaking to Arthur's mother. But Arthur's mother was insatiable as regarded the claims of her son, and thought that these had been lightly esteemed enough

already on account of that "plain dark-faced man, in whom she could never see anything marvellous."

Stella entered upon the subject the day before they were to leave town, subtly using flattery as her agent.

"Mother dear," she said, "you are so sensible, and so kind-hearted too, that I feel as if I could say anything to you. I have heard news about Mr. Lyon that has made me feel very unhappy."

"My dear Stella, I am sick of Mr. Lyon's name," the old lady replied, with a heightened colour.

"But I have heard he is ill," Stella urged.

"He has a wife to nurse him."

"But, mamma, you know—or don't you know?—that he is very poor; and now that he can't work I hear that he is getting into difficulties," and young Mrs. Carhayes gulped down a sob with a mighty effort as she spoke.

"Well, my dear, we know that you can't rush to the rescue every time he has an influenza cold, that is certain," Mrs. Carhayes said, calmly; and Stella knew that it was hopeless trying to extract sympathy for a man, however fallen, who had once been chosen before Arthur.

On the morning of their leaving town Arthur Carhayes had another letter from Clyst Abbott, but this time it was from Sir Roland.

"You would be doing me a great favour," the old

gentleman wrote, "if you would take us on your way down to Cornwall and spend a few days with us. I know you are a capital farmer—Ethel has called my attention to sundry pamphlets that you have written—and, as I think of taking the land into my own hands, I want a few words of advice. If Mrs. Carhayes will accompany you, we shall be charmed to see her."

This letter, without a single misgiving, Arthur put into his wife's hands, hoping rather wistfully that she would accept the invitation. But Stella had an antipathy to the Huntingdons by this time. She dated her husband's changed manner from the time of his coming under Miss Ethel's influence, and so she had no inclination to trust herself to the tender mercies of Miss Ethel as a hostess.

"It is utterly impossible that I go there with you, Arthur," she said; "I can't allow your mother to go on, as our visitor, alone."

"Poor old fellow, I should like to see what he wants to be at," Mr. Carhayes said, cordially; "I should be sorry for him to ruin himself by amateur farming now."

"As it is the first time in his life that he has ever thought of doing anything good and useful, according to what I have heard, let us hope that the scheme may prosper," Stella said with a little curl of the lip and a