

**TWO ON A TOWER; A  
ROMANCE IN THREE  
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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Two on a tower; a romance in three volumes, Vol. II by Thomas Hardy

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*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

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THE TRUMPET MAJOR.

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD.

THE HAND OF ETHELBERTA.

A LAODICEAN (ILLUSTRATED).

# TWO ON A TOWER.

A Romance.

BY

THOMAS HARDY,

AUTHOR OF "FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD,"  
"THE TRUMPET MAJOR," ETC.

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## TWO ON A TOWER.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE summer passed away, and autumn, with its infinite suite of tints, came creeping on. Darker grew the evenings, tearfuller the moonlights, and heavier the dews. Meanwhile the comet had waxed to its largest dimensions,—so large that not only the nucleus but a portion of the tail had been visible in broad day. It was now on the wane, though every night the equatorial still afforded an opportunity of observing the singular object, which would soon disappear altogether from the heavens for perhaps thousands of years.

But the astronomer of the Rings-Hill Speer was no longer a match for his celestial materials. Scientifically he had become but a dim vapour of himself; the lover had come into him like an armed man, and cast out the student, and his intellectual situation was growing a life-and-death matter.

The resolve of the pair had been so far kept: they had not seen each other in private for three months. But on one day in October he ventured to write a note to her:—

“I can do nothing! I have ceased to study, ceased to observe. The equatorial is useless to me. This affection I have for you absorbs my life, and outweighs my intentions. The power to labour in this grandest of fields has left me. I struggle against the weakness till I think of the cause, and then I bless her. But the very



desperation of my circumstances has suggested a remedy ; and this I would inform you of at once.

“ Can you come to me, since I must not come to you? I will wait to-morrow night at the edge of the plantation by which you would enter to the column. I will not detain you ; my plan can be told in ten words.”

The night after posting this missive to her he waited at the spot mentioned.

It was a melancholy evening for coming abroad. A blustering wind had risen during the day, and still continued to increase. Yet he stood watchful in the darkness, and was ultimately rewarded by discerning a shady muffled shape that embodied itself from the field, accompanied by the scratching of silk over stubble. There was no longer any disguise as to the nature of their meeting. It was a

lover's assignation, pure and simple ; and boldly realizing it as such, he clasped her in his arms.

“ I cannot bear this any longer ! ” he exclaimed. “ Three months since I saw you alone ! Only a glimpse of you in church, or a bow from the distance, in all that time ! What a fearful struggle this keeping apart has been ! ”

“ Yet I would have had strength to persist, since it seemed best,” she murmured, when she could speak, “ had not your words on your condition so alarmed and saddened me. This inability of yours to work, or study, or observe,—it is terrible ! So terrible a sting is it to my conscience that your hint about a remedy has brought me instantly.”

“ Yet I don't altogether mind it, since it is you, my dear lady, who have displaced the work ; and yet the loss of time nearly

distracts me, when I have neither the power to work nor the delight of your company."

"But your remedy! Oh, I cannot help guessing it! Yes; you are going away!"

"Let us ascend the column; we can speak more at ease there. Then I will explain all. I would not ask you to climb so high, but the hut is not yet furnished."

He entered the cabin at the foot, and, having lighted a small lantern, conducted her up the hollow staircase to the top, where he closed the slides of the dome to keep out the wind, and placed the observing-chair for her.

"I can stay only five minutes," she said, without sitting down. "You said it was important that you should see me, and I have come. I assure you it is at a great risk. If I am seen here at this time, I am ruined for ever. But what would I not