

**WITH HARP AND
CROWN: A NOVEL, IN
THREE VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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With Harp and Crown: A Novel, in Three Volumes, Vol. II by Walter Besant

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WALTER BESANT

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THREE VOLUMES, VOL. II**

WITH HARP AND CROWN.

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A *Novel.*

BY THE AUTHORS OF
"READY-MONEY MORTIBOY,"
"MY LITTLE GIRL," "THIS SON OF VULCAN," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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WITH HARP AND CROWN.



CHAPTER I.

MR. RHYL OWEN sat opposite, watching his guest with loving eyes. He was a soft-hearted creature, though he was the master of a Commercial Academy; and it went to his heart to think that this fair young creature should actually want the commonest necessaries of life. He cut the bread and poured out the tea with zealous solicitude.

"Is it good? is it refreshing?" asked he. "Now, do have another slice—some more bread: eat plenty of bread with it; and now the tea—we must do without the milk, because I've drunk it all up myself—a greedy beast! Some people like a bloater with a meat tea. I say bacon's

more wholesome. As for sprats, now, I suppose a young lady like you wouldn't look at them."

"I would have looked at anything five minutes ago. Oh, Mr. Owen, I am so much obliged. It is so horrid to be hungry."

She finished her tea, and then looked up, with her familiar laugh.

"That's right," he nodded, and smiled back. "Already you look filled out in the cheeks, in a manner of speaking; though you're not, no more than your sister, like my Winifred for plumpness. Tell me, Miss Adie, you are not often so bad as this upstairs, eh?"

"I don't think we have ever been quite so bad before, even before Marion was able to sell her sketches. But then we have been thrown back. It was necessary for Fred, who must have a good appearance when he goes into the City to look for a secretaryship, to have a new suit of clothes, with a great-coat, this weather. That took all our spare money, as you may guess. Then we have had to pawn things—my father's watch and chain, and even his sword. You may think how Marion liked that."

"My dear, you had better not tell me more

than you think right," said Mr. Owen, with some delicacy about hearing further particulars.

"Why not? It is no use pretending to be proud—we have nothing to conceal; we have been ladies and gentlemen—now we are not, I suppose. What else is there to say? There is no shame in being poor."

She laughed, but she spoke a little bitterly.

"Poor Miss Marion!"

"Yes, it's hardest on Marion, isn't it? because she does all the work for us. Besides, she was the eldest, and had been most with poor papa. I hope she will bring some money home with her."

"Perhaps your brother—"

"Oh," she laughed again, "Fred never brings any money home; he takes all the money out. But that will do about myself. How have the boys been to-day—good?"

"Boys never are good. They are born bad—original sin, you know—and it is our duty to thrash them till they grow good. Listen, there's some one at the door again. If it is Mrs. Candy, she is coming to have a row. Perhaps it's— Why"—his face lit up all over with plea-

sure — "it's actually Winifred, home two hours before I expected her."

It was Winifred. She came running into the room, threw her arms about her father, and gave him two great smacks, one on each cheek; then caught Adie by the chin, held her face up to the light critically, and kissed that too.

"You are the prettiest girl in all London," she whispered.

Then she took the lid off the tea-pot and examined its contents, put in some water, and got another cup and saucer. Then she threw off her hat and jacket; and then, everything ready, she sat down and prepared to enjoy herself in a businesslike manner.

"It is perfectly delicious," she said. "Tea made, Adie to tea with us, and a fire. Father, this is worth living for, isn't it?"

He sucked his pipe and nodded.

"Bread and butter, Adie, dear. How sorry I am I wasn't home to have tea with you! No, I won't have any bacon, thank you. There are times, father, when you feel yourself a man to be envied, eh? Your daughter in the Civil Service, like a proud young com-