

**THE ATHELINGS;  
OR, THE THREE  
GIFTS, VOL. III**

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The Athelings; or, The three gifts, Vol. III by Margaret Oliphant

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**MARGARET OLIPHANT**

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THE ATHELINGS

# THE ATHELINGS

OR

THE THREE GIFTS

BY MARGARET OLIPHANT

" 'T' the case wherein they live, their thoughts do lie  
The roofs of palaces; and nature prompts them,  
To simple and low things, to place it such  
Beyond the reach of others."

VERMOREL

IN THREE VOLUMES

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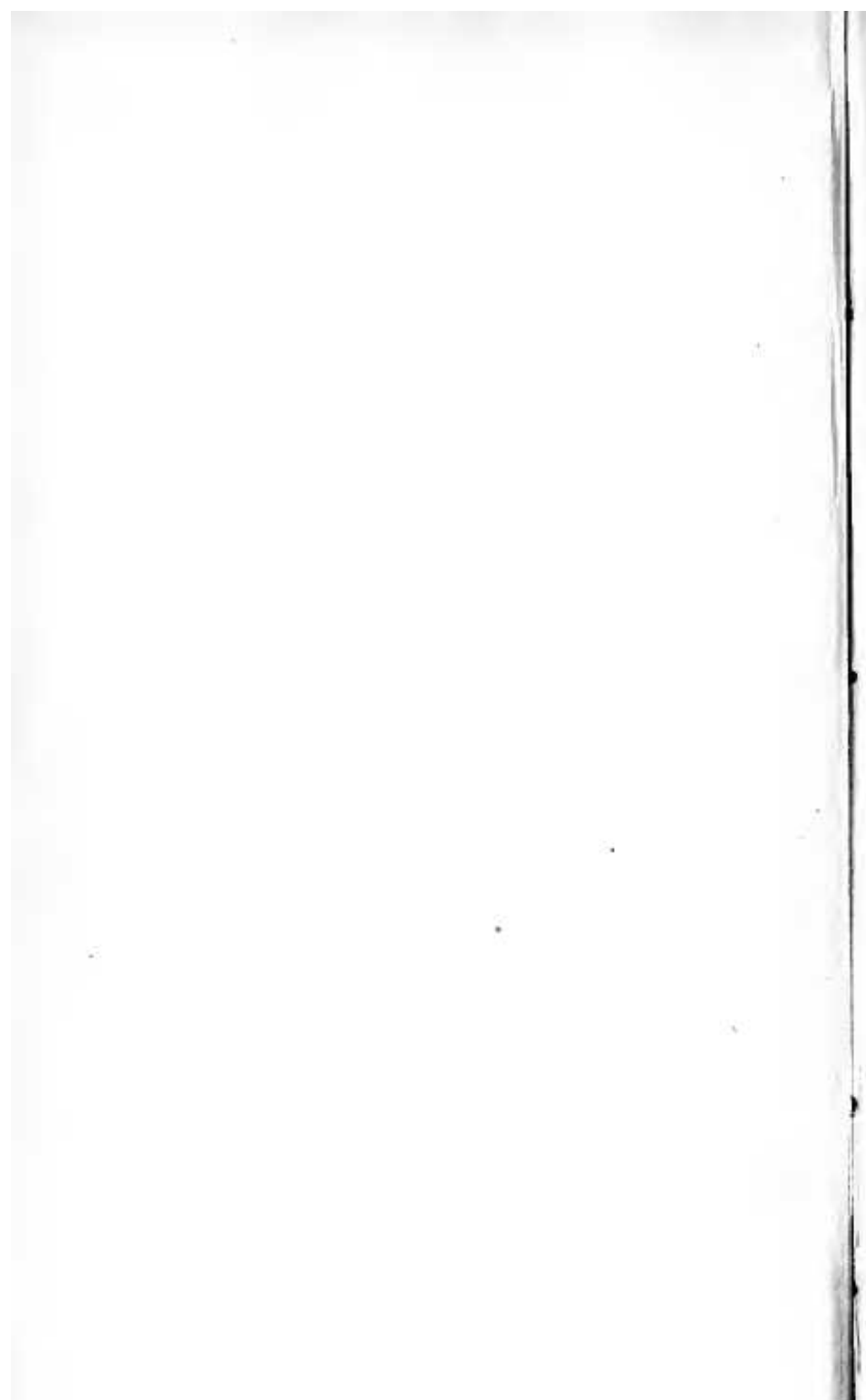


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THE ATHELINGS

BOOK III.—WINTERBOURNE HALL.





# THE ATHELINGS.

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## BOOK III.—CHAPTER I.

### AN OLD STORY.

“Now, mother,” said Charlie, “I’m in real earnest. My father would tell me himself if he were here. I want to understand the whole concern.”

Mrs Atheling and her son were in Charlie’s little room, with its one small lattice-window, overshadowed and embowered in leaves—its plain uncurtained bed, its small table, and solitary chair. Upon this chair, with a palpitating heart, sat Mrs Atheling, and before her stood the resolute boy.

And she began immediately, yet with visible faltering and hesitation, to tell him the story she had told the girls of the early connection between the present Lord Winterbourne and the Atheling family. But

Charlie's mind was excited and preoccupied. He listened, almost with impatience, to the sad little romance of his father's young sister, of whom he had never heard before. It did not move him at all as it had moved Agnes and Marian. Broken hearts and disappointed loves were very far out of Charlie's way; something entirely different occupied his own imagination. He broke forth with a little effusion of impatience when the story came to an end. "And is this all? Do you mean to say this is the whole, mother? And my father had never anything to do with him but through a girl!"

"You are very unfeeling, Charlie," said Mrs Atheling, who wiped her eyes with real emotion, yet with a little policy too, and to gain time. "She was a dear innocent girl, and your father was very fond of her—reason enough to give him a dislike, if it were not sinful, to the very name of Lord Winterbourne."

"I had better go on with my packing, then," said Charlie. "So, that was all? I suppose any scamp in existence might do the same. Do you really mean to tell me, mother, that there was nothing but this?"

Mrs Atheling faltered still more under the steady observation of her son. "Charlie," said his mother, with agitation, "your father never would mention it to any one. I may be doing very wrong. If he only were here himself to decide! But if I tell you, you