THE STORY OF HELEN DAVENANT. IN THREE YOLUMES. YOL. III

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The Story of Helen Davenant. In Three Volumes. Vol. III by Violet Fane

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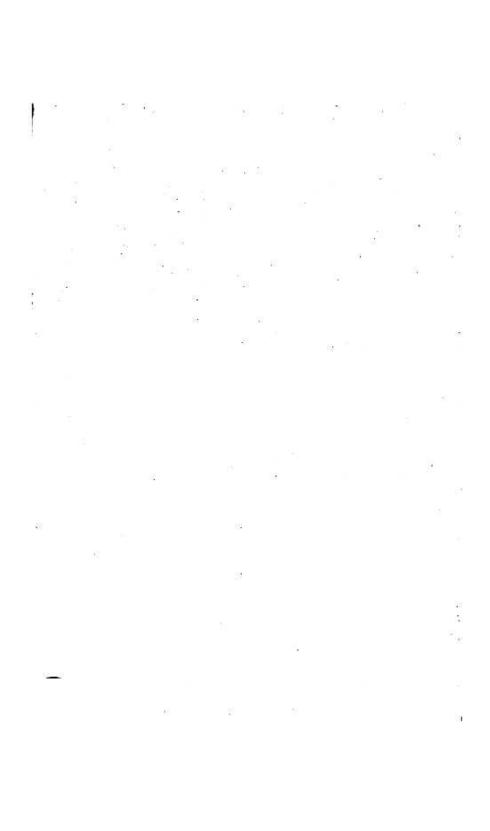
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VIOLET FANE

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HELEN DAVENANT.

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BY

VIOLET FANE,

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THE STORY OF

HELEN DAVENANT.

CHAPTER I.

My cousin Courtenay arrived at St. Petersburg a little more than a week before the fancy ball, in response to a telegram which had been sent to him by the Ambassador. There was a dinner-party at the British Embassy on the same night, and he was introduced to me by Lord Silchester whilst the guests were assembling.

"I must present you to Miss Collingwood, my god-daughter and ward," he said vol. III. B wearing an expression rather as though he were playing a practical joke upon the new military attaché, "a young lady who has been good enough to come out here and keep house for a forlorn old bachelor."

I looked at Courtenay with the greatest interest, pleased to think that he could not know who I was; and endeavoured to analyse my first impressions of him apart from any pre-conceived notions.

His face, as Miss Warden had said, was "charming," rather than regularly handsome. Its expression was variable, and the eyes were full of fire and intelligence. He had the effect of being dark, but his hair was not quite black, and his eyes were blue. His figure was tall and soldier-like, and his voice earnest and sympathetic. He was greeted by the French Ambassador, and two or three other guests, as an old friend. They addressed him as "mon cher," and ex-

pressed great pleasure at meeting him He appeared to respond to their again. welcome in a very hearty and cordial manner. It was evident that, unlike his predecessor, he got on well with foreigners. I know not how it happened that, as soon as I had looked in Courtenay Davenant's face, I felt for certain that he would one day care for me. It was not vanity that prompted this thought, for, with this consciousness of what must now, inevitably, come to pass, I possessed also the conviction that, had circumstances been other than they were, it would have been utterly impossible, probably, to bring about any such result. In a word, Courtenay would come to love me now simply because all such love must be, of necessity, hopeless, and barren of fruition. I said to myself that I would in no way strive either for, or against, what I felt to be so certainly

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