

COLLECTION  
OF  
BRITISH AUTHORS  
TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 1275.

EXPIATED.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

112  
EXPIATED.

BY THE  
AUTHOR OF "BEHIND THE VEIL."

*COPYRIGHT EDITION.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LEIPZIG  
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1872.

*The Right of Translation is reserved.*



## E X P I A T E D.

## CHAPTER I.

As MRS. PONSONBY returned from her drive on the morning of which we wrote in the preceding chapter, she had also met Percy Delacombe. He had been able to leave Tenby sooner than he expected, and had alighted from the train at a station short of Swansea, and nearer to Trecoed than the latter; preferring to return home by the public footway, which, as already mentioned, ran at the foot of the castle-knoll.

Percy met the carriage as he was about to cross the stile into the park with this object. He exchanged greetings with Mrs. Ponsonby, and then struck into the path, arriving at the ruin some time after Alice had done so. Finding himself there, the associations connected with the spot inspired Percy, as they had done Alice herself, with the wish to revisit it. He accordingly quitted the footpath, and ascending the acclivity, reached the keep while Alice was still inside, and with the results above described.

Mrs. Ponsonby meanwhile had returned to Ceni-

arth, and should have employed herself in taking lunch. Alice, however, who was her usual companion at that meal,—Sir Edgar rarely appeared,—was not forthcoming; and, on enquiring for her, Mrs. Ponsonby found that she had gone out walking upwards of two hours previously. “In the direction of the castle,” her informant stated.

The castle!

The words set Mrs. Ponsonby's vigilance, now attracted towards every circumstance which might favour the suspicion she had begun to entertain, on the alert at once. That was exactly the way he, Percy Delacombe, would be walking home, and much about the same time; could there have been any arrangement, any assignation between them?

Suspicious at the very least! Alice was most rarely absent from lunch; as far as Mrs. Ponsonby could recall, never had been absent before to-day: besides, she had been ailing; a lengthened walk was out of the question. Something else, too, suggested itself. Her meeting with the presumed lovers at that identical spot, and with some appearance of confusion on the part of one of them at least, some months previously: wholly forgotten by Mrs. Ponsonby, or nearly so, as long as there was no ulterior fact with which to connect it, but full of significance now that this was supplied!

Was it possible?

Had things fallen out so opportunely, that the espionage she had established, hitherto without any very definite results or what were capable of being produced as such to Sir Edgar, was now, by the

merest accident, on the point of leading to actual detection!

Mrs. Ponsonby trembled with eagerness and excitement.

A hasty lunch: Mrs. Ponsonby was too agitated to eat. Then she also put on her walking-dress, and started in the direction which Alice had pursued the same forenoon.

As she crossed the lawn, she was met by Sir Edgar, who had just come in from his ride.

"Where are you going in such a hurry, Bertha?" asked the baronet.

"Merely for a walk, Edgar," answered Mrs. Ponsonby, who had no intention of disclosing her purpose unless it should result in success.

"You seem very enthusiastic about it," said Sir Edgar; "I had no idea that the exercise had such attractions for you. By the way," he added, "it is just as well that I met you. Don't you walk in that direction."

"What direction?" said Mrs. Ponsonby, following the motion of the baronet's hand, who pointed, as he spoke, in the line of some shrubberies; "do you mean towards the village?"

"Yes," answered Sir Edgar; "it is unsafe. Hatfield has been with me again this morning about that . . . about the bridge, you know; he came some weeks since, but I could not attend to it then. Now, he tells me that it is as much as any one's life is worth to cross it; the stream is so swollen with the rain that it is up to the planking,