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STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS BY M. E. BRADDON

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

“Egypt, thou knewst too well,
My heart was to thy rudder tied by the strings,
And thou shouldst tow me after; o’er my spirit
Thy full supremacy thou knewst; and that
Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods
Command me.”

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS

A NOVEL.

BY

M. E. BRADDON,

AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," ETC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1873.

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STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

"Give me a look, give me a face,
That makes simplicity a grace;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free:
Such sweet neglect more taketh me
Than all the adulteries of art;
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart."

THE scene was an ancient orchard on the slope of a hill, in the far west of England: an orchard bounded on one side by an old-fashioned garden, where roses and carnations were blooming in their summer glory; and on the other by a ponderous red-brick wall, heavily buttressed, and with a moat at its outer base—a wall that had been built for the protection of a more important habitation than Hawleigh Vicarage. Time was when the green slope where the rugged apple-trees spread their crooked limbs in the sunshine was a prim pleasance, and when the hill was crowned by the grim towers of Hawleigh Castle. But the civil wars made an end of the gothic towers and machicolated galleries that had weathered many a storm, and nothing was now left save a remnant of the old wall, and one solitary tower, to which some archeologically-minded vicar in time past had joined the modest parsonage of Hawleigh parish. This was a low

white building, of the farmhouse type, large and roomy, with bow-windows to some of the lower rooms, and diamond-paned casements to others. In this western land of warm rains and flowers the myrtles and roses climbed to the steeply-sloping roof, and every antique casement was set in a frame of foliage and blossom. It was not a mansion which a modern architect would have been proud to have built, by any means, but a dwelling-place with which a painter or a poet would have fallen madly in love at first sight.

There were pigeons cooing and boop-boop-booping among the moss-grown corbels of the tower; a black-bird in a wicker cage hanging outside one of the narrow windows; a skylark in a little green wooden box decorating another. The garden where the roses and carnations flourished had somewhat of a neglected look, not weedy or forlorn, only a little unkempt and over-luxuriant, like a garden to which the hireling gardener comes once a week, or which is left to the charge of a single outdoor labourer, who has horses and pigs upon his mind, nay perhaps also the daily distraction of indoor duties, in the boot-and-knife-cleaning way.

Perhaps, looking at the subject from a purely poetical point of view, no garden should ever be better kept than that garden at Hawleigh. What ribbon-bordering, or artistically variegated mosaic of lobelia, and petunia, and calceolaria, and verbenas, could ever equal the wild beauty of roses that grew at their own sweet will against a background of seringa and arbutus—shrubs that must have been planted by some unknown benefactor in the remote past, for no incumbent of late years had ever been known to plant anything? What prim platter-like circles of well-behaved bedding-out plants, spick and span from the greenhouse, could charm the sense like the various and