

fellow's lips, while I was nursing him. The night he died, he confessed it in his delirium—poor, poor Archie. And the shock of hearing the truth knocked me off my head, and laid me down with the fever. I thought, when you ran away, that you had made up your mind that it would not be wise to marry a poor digger after all; so I tried to reconcile myself to my fate.”

Ariadne looked up at him with tearful eyes full of reproach.

“But it is all right now,” he hastened to say, cheerily. “As soon as I was strong enough, I left the Rand for the Cape, to seek you; and arrived just in time to secure a berth when I found that you and Kathleen had booked for the *Garth*. I've managed to scrape a few hundred pounds together before I left the Transvaal; and if you—if—if you still——”

Here Hector broke down; but Ariadne finished the sentence for him in a whisper, as she put her soft lips to his ear.

“And you are sure you don't regret losing that wedding tour in a bullock-waggon to Matabeleland?” he whispered back, with a spice of his old teasing manner.

“Oh, I'm getting too old for any more rambling!” cried Ariadne, gaily.

“What a very old lady you look, to be sure!” answered Hector, laughing.

“But, you know, a widow always feels old, even if she doesn’t look it.”

To which arch retort Hector replied with a look of mock gravity—

“Pray don’t be alarmed! You won’t have cause to feel old very much longer!”

Just then Kathleen joined them, and the midnight bell rang out across the sea.

“Oh, that’s the midnight bell!” exclaimed Ariadne.

“Wedding bell, more likely,” said Kathleen.

Then they laughed together happily.

“How fast the ship sails to-night!” said Ariadne, as she paused near the gangway, to take a last look at the beauty of the night before going below.

“Not too fast,” whispered Hector, as he lifted her down the steep steps; “for we are sailing homeward together, little one, for all time and eternity!”

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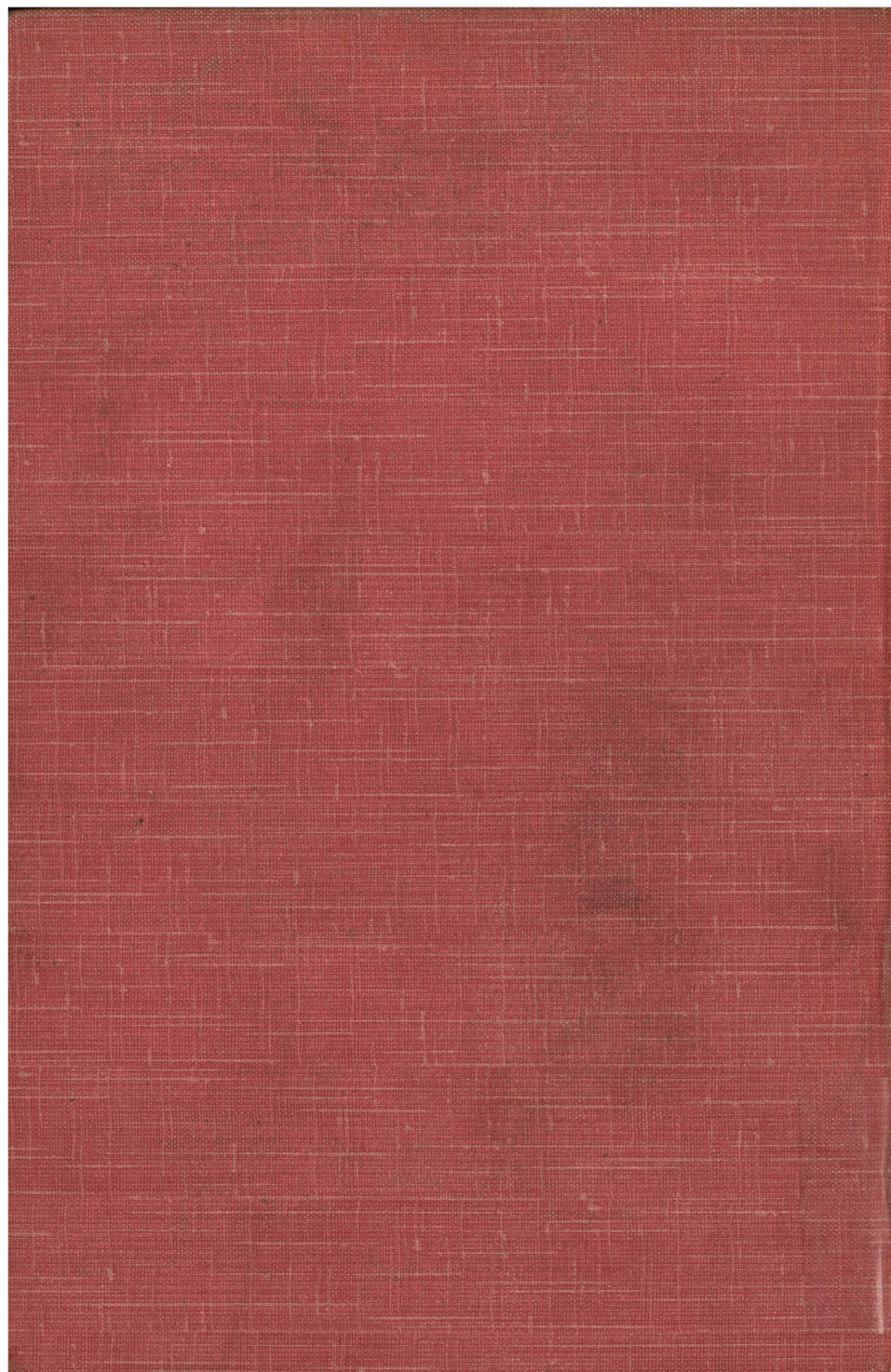
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INDEX

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------------------|----|
| A | | ESCOTT, T. H. S.— | |
| ADAMS, Herbert— | | A Trip to Paradoxia | 3 |
| A Virtue of Necessity | 7 | Elocution, The Art of (Ross Ferguson) | 4 |
| ALEXANDER, Geo.— | | Epicurean, The (edited by Justin Hannaford) | 6 |
| Introduction to "Art of Elocution" | 4 | | |
| America Abroad (J. W. Cundall) | 21 | F | |
| Anna Marsden's Experiment (Ellen Williams) | 15 | Fame, the Fiddler (S. J. A. Fitz-Gerald) | 16 |
| Asmodens (edited by Justin Hannaford) | 6 | Famous Hamlets (C. Scott) | 4 |
| Ashes Tell no Tales (Mrs A. S. Bradshaw) | 7 | FERGUSON, Ross— | |
| ASCHER, Isidore G.— | | The Art of Elocution | 4 |
| A Social Upheaval | 8 | Fetters of Fire (Compton Reade) | 7 |
| B | | Fellow-Passengers (R. Pyke) | 18 |
| Bachelor Ballads (H. A. Spurr) | 21 | FITZ-GERALD, S. J. Adair— | |
| BACKFORD, Geo.— | | Fame, the Fiddler | 16 |
| Vathek | 6 | That Fascinating Widow | 17 |
| Bible Stories Retold | 4 | The Grand Panjandrum | 19 |
| BRADSHAW, Mrs Albert S.— | | | |
| Ashes Tell no Tales | 7 | G | |
| Gates of Temptation | 14 | GALT, John— | |
| Bye-ways of Crime (R. J. Power-Berrey) | 4 | Ringan Gilhaize | 6 |
| C | | Gates of Temptation, The (Mrs A. S. Bradshaw) | 14 |
| CARNIE, T. West— | | Gentleman Digger, The (Comtesse de Brémont) | 9 |
| In Quaint East Anglia | 5 | Girl of the North, A (H. Millicite) | 7 |
| Comedy of Temptation (T. Coutts) | 9 | GOLSWORTHY, Arnold— | |
| COURTIS, Tristram— | | A Cry in the Night | 7 |
| Pottle Papers | 20 | Death and the Woman | 18 |
| Comedy of Temptation | 9 | GRAY, Druid— | |
| Pottle's Progress | 21 | Nonsense Numbers, etc. | 19 |
| CUNDALL, J. W.— | | Pillypingle Pastorals | 20 |
| London | 21 | Grand Panjandrum, The (S. J. A. Fitz-Gerald) | 19 |
| America Abroad | 21 | GREEN, Percy B.— | |
| Cry in the Night (A. Golsworthy) | 7 | A History of Nursery Rhymes | 5 |
| D | | Green Passion (A. P. Vert) | 10 |
| DANIELS, Heber— | | Guides, etc. | 21 |
| Dona Rufina | 13 | H | |
| Darab's Wine-Cup (B. Kennedy) | 16 | HALL, Sydney— | |
| Dan Leno, Hys Eooke (Dan Leno) | 20 | Temptation of Edith Watson | 9 |
| Death and the Woman (A. Golsworthy) | 18 | Hamlets, Some Famous (C. Scott) | 4 |
| Devil in a Domino (C. L'Epine) | 17 | HERMAN, Henry— | |
| Devil on Two Sticks (Le Sage) | 6 | The Sword of Fate | 9 |
| DE BRÉMONT, Comtesse— | | Hypocrite, The (Anonymus) | 13 |
| A Son of Africa | 7 | | |
| The Gentleman Digger | 9 | I | |
| DE SOISSON— | | In Monte Carlo (H. Sienkiewicz) | 1 |
| The Path of the Soul | 5 | In Quaint East Anglia (T. W. Carnie) | 25 |
| Dolomite Cavern (W. P. Kelly) | 11 | | |
| Dona Rufina (Heber Daniels) | 13 | J | |
| E | | Jocular Jingles (Druid Gray) | 19 |
| East Anglia, In Quaint (T. W. Carnie) | 21 | JOHNSON, Dr— | |
| "ENGLISH WRITERS OF TO-DAY" | | Rasselas | 6 |
| Series— | | K | |
| Rudyard Kipling (G. F. Monkshood) | 1 | KELLY, W. Patrick— | |
| Thomas Hardy (W. L. Courtney) | 2 | The Dolomite Cavern | 11 |
| Geo. Meredith (Walter Jerrold) | 2 | KENNEDY, Bart— | |
| Bret Harte (T. E. Pemberton) | 2 | A Man Adrift | 5 |
| Richard Le Gallienne (C. R. Gull) | 2 | Darab's Wine-Cup | 16 |
| Arthur Wing Pinero (H. Fyffe) | 2 | The Wandering Romanoff | 13 |
| W. E. Henley (G. Gamble) | 2 | | |
| English Parnassian School (Sir G. Douglas) | 2 | | |
| Realistic Writers (J. Hannaford) | 2 | | |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------------------------|----|
| L | | READE, Compton— | |
| Lady of the Leopard, The (C. L'Epine) | 12 | Letters of Fire | 7 |
| Lady of Criswold, The (L. Outram) | 14 | Resurrection of His Grace (C. Rae-Brown) | 15 |
| LE SAGE— | | Ringan Gilhaize (Edited by Sir G. Douglas) | 6 |
| Amodens; or, The Devil on Two Sticks | 6 | S | |
| L'EPINE, Charles— | | SADLEIR, Mrs Maria M — | |
| The Devil in a Domino | 17 | Such is the Law | 7 |
| The Lady of the Leopard | 12 | SCOTT, Clement— | |
| LENO, Dan— | | The Wheel of Life | 2 |
| Dan Leno, Hys Booke | 20 | Madonna Mia | 11 |
| LONGSTAFF, W. Luther— | | People, Plays, and Places | 3 |
| Weeds and Flowers | 6 | Sisters by the Sea | 3 |
| The Tragedy of the Lady Palmist | 12 | Famous Hamlets | 4 |
| Lord Jimmy (G. Martyn) | 14 | Seven Nights with Satan (J. I. Owen) | 10 |
| London (J. W. Cundall) | 21 | Shadows (E. Martin) | 18 |
| M | | Shama (Anonymous) | 8 |
| Man Adrift, A (B. Kennedy) | 5 | Shadow on The Manse (C. Rae-Brown) | 12 |
| Madonna Mia (C. Scott) | 11 | SIENKIEWICZ, Henryk— | |
| MARTYN, Geo.— | | In Monte Carlo | 12 |
| Lord Jimmy | 14 | Sisters by the Sea (C. Scott) | 3 |
| MARTIN, Ernest— | | Son of Africa, A (Comtesse de Brémont) | 7 |
| Shadows | 18 | Social Upheaval, A (I. G. Ascher) | 8 |
| M'MILLAN, Mrs Alec— | | SPRIGHT, T. W.— | |
| The Weir Well | 9 | Mora; One Woman's History | 7 |
| Miss Malevolent (Author of "The Hypocrite") | 9 | SPUR, Harry A.— | |
| MILICITE, Helen— | | Bachelor Ballads | 21 |
| A Girl of the North | 7 | Stage, Year Book of (Greening and Hannaford) | 5 |
| MONKSHOOD, G. F.— | | Such is the Law (M. M. Sadleir) | 7 |
| Woman and the Wits | 5 | Sword of Fate, The (H. Harman) | 9 |
| Rudyard Kipling | 1 | T | |
| My Lady Ruby | 12 | Temptation of Edith Watson (S. Hall) | 9 |
| MOORE, Thomas— | | That Fascinating Widow (S. J. A. Fitz-Gerald) | 17 |
| The Epicurean | 6 | THOMPSON, Creswick J.— | |
| Mora (T. W. Speight) | 7 | Zoroastro | 9 |
| My Lady Ruby (G. F. Monkshood) | 12 | Tragedy of the Lady Palmist, The (W. L. Longstaff) | 12 |
| N | | Trip to Paradoxia, A (T. H. S. Escott) | 3 |
| New Tale of the Terror, A (Author of "The Hypocrite") | 8 | V | |
| Nonsense Numbers (D. Grayl) | 19 | Vathek (Edited by Justin Hannaford) | 6 |
| Nursery Rhymes, A History of (P. B. Green) | 5 | VERT, Anthony P.— | |
| O | | The Green Passion | 10 |
| Obscure Apostle (Orzeszko) | 7 | Virtue of Necessity, A (H. Adams) | 7 |
| Ontrageous Fortune (Anonymous) | 10 | W | |
| OUTRAM, Leonard— | | Wandering Romanoff, The (B. Kennedy) | 13 |
| The Lady of Criswold | 14 | Weeds and Flowers (W. L. Longstaff) | 6 |
| OWEN, J. L.— | | Weird Well, The (A. M'Millan) | 9 |
| Seven Nights with Satan | 10 | Wheel of Life, The (C. Scott) | 2 |
| P | | WILLIAMS, Ellen— | |
| Path of the Soul (C. S. de Soisson) | 5 | Anna Marsden's Experiment | 15 |
| People, Plays, and Places (C. Scott) | 3 | Woman and the Wits (G. F. Monkshood) | 5 |
| Pelican Tails (F. M. Boyd, etc.) | 17 | Y | |
| Pillypingle Pastorals (D. Grayl) | 20 | Year Book of the Stage (Greening and Hannaford) | 5 |
| Pottle Papers, The (T. Coultis) | 20 | Z | |
| Pottle's Progress, The (T. Coultis) | 21 | Zoroastro (C. J. S. Thompson) | 9 |
| POWER-BERRY, R. J.— | | | |
| Bye-Ways of Crime | 4 | | |
| PYKE, Rivington— | | | |
| The Fellow-Passengers | 18 | | |
| R | | | |
| RAE-BROWN, Campbell— | | | |
| The Shadow on the Manse | 12 | | |
| The Resurrection of His Grace | 15 | | |
| Rasselas (Edited by Justin Hannaford) | 6 | | |



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