

**HE THAT WILL NOT  
WHEN HE MAY**

VOLUME I.

BY  
MRS. OLIPHANT

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**HE THAT WILL NOT WHEN  
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## CHAPTER I.

THE Easter holidays were drawing near an end, and the family at Markham Chase had fallen into a state of existence somewhat different from its usual dignified completeness of life. When I say that the head of the house was Sir William Markham, once Under-Secretary for the Colonies, once President of the Board of Trade, and still, though in opposition, a distinguished member of his party and an important public personage, it is scarcely necessary to add that his house was one of the chief houses in the county, and that “the best people” were to be found there, especially at those times when fashionable gatherings take place in the country. At Easter the party was of the best kind, sprinkled with great personages, a party such as we should all have liked to be asked to meet. But these fine people had melted away; they had gone on to other great houses, they had got on the wing for town, where, indeed, the Markhams themselves were going early, like most Parliamentary people. Sir William too was away. He was visiting the head of his party in one of the midland counties, helping to settle the programme of enlightened and patriotic opposition for the rest of the session, some untoward events having deranged the system previously decided upon. To say that Sir William’s absence was a relief would be untrue; for though he was somewhat punctilious and overwhelming in his orderliness he was greatly admired by his family, and loved—as much as was respectful and proper. But when he went away, and when all the fine people went away, the house without any demonstration slid smoothly, as it were down an easy slope of transition, into a kind of nursery life, delightful to those who were left behind. The family consisted, to begin at the

wrong end, of two schoolboys, and two little girls who were in the hands of a governess. But mademoiselle was away too. There was nobody left at home but mamma and Alice—imagine the rapture of the children thus permitted to be paramount! There was a general dinner for everybody at two o'clock; and in the afternoon, as often as not, Lady Markham herself would be persuaded to go out to their picnic teas in the woods, and all kinds of juvenile dissipations. The nursery meals were superseded altogether. Old Nurse might groan, but she dared not say a word, for was not mamma the ringleader in everything? There was no authority but hers in the house, and all the servants looked on benignant. In the evening when it was impossible to stay out any longer, they would dance, Alice “pretending” to be the dancing mistress, which was far better fun than *real* dancing. There was no need to run away, or to keep quiet for fear of disturbing papa. In short, a mild Carnival was going on in the house, only dashed by the terrible thought that in a week the holidays would be over. In a week the boys would go back to school, the girls to their governess. The budding woods would become to the one and the other only a recollection, or a sight coldly seen during the course of an orderly walk. Then the boys would have the best of it. They would go away among all their friends, with the delights of boating and cricket, whereas the little girls would relapse into blue sashes and a correct appearance at dessert, followed, alas, in no small time, by complete loneliness when mamma went to London, and everybody was away.

“Don’t let us think about it,” said little Bell; “it will be bad enough when it comes. Oh, mamma, come and play the *Tempête*. Alice is going to teach us. Harry, you be my partner, you dance a great deal the best.”

This produced a cry of indignant protestation from Mary, whom they all called Marie with a very decided emphasis on the last syllable. "I pulled Roland about all last night," she said, "when he was thinking of something else all the time; it is my turn to have Harry now."

"Don't you see," said Alice, "that Roland is much more your size? It doesn't do to have a little one and a big one in the *Tempête*. He mustn't think of anything else. Don't you know Rol, if you don't take a little trouble you will never learn to dance, and then no one will ask you out when you grow up. I should not like, for my part, when all the others went out to be always left moping at home."

"Much I'd mind," said Roland with a precocious scorn of society. But just then the music struck up, and the lesson began. Roland was generally thinking of something else, but Harry threw himself into the dance with all the simple devotion of a predestined guardsman. That was to be a great part of his duty in life, and he gave himself up to it dutifully. The drawing-room was very large, partially divided by two pillars, which supported a roof painted with clouds and goddesses in the taste of the seventeenth century. The outer half was but partially lighted, while in the inner part all was bright. In the right-hand corner, behind Lady Markham, was a third room at right angles to this, like the transept crossing a long nave, divided from the drawing-room by curtains half-drawn, and faintly lighted too by a silver lamp. Thus the brilliant interior where the children were dancing was thrown up by two dimnesses; the girls in their light frocks, the bright faces and curls, the abundant light which showed the pictures on the walls, and all the details of the furniture, were thus doubly gay and bright in consequence. The children moving back and forward, Alice now

here, now there, with one side and another as necessity demanded, flitting among them in all her softer grace of young womanhood; and the beautiful mother, the most beautiful of all, smiling on them from the piano, turning round to criticise and encourage, while her hands flashed over the keys, made the prettiest picture. There was an *abandon* of innocent gaiety in the scene, an absence of every harsh tone and suggestion which made it perfect. Was there really no evil and trouble in the place lighted up by the soft pleasure of the women, the mirth of the children? You would have said so—but that just then, though she did not stop smiling, Lady Markham sighed. Her children were in pairs, Harry and Bell, Roland and Marie—but where was Alice’s brother? “Ah, my Paul!” she said within herself, but played on. Thus there was one note out of harmony—one, if no more.

Almost exactly coincident with this sigh the door of the drawing-room opened far down in the dim outer part, and two men came in. The house was so entirely given up to this innocent sway of youth, that there was no reason why they should particularly note the opening of the door. It could not be papa coming in, who was liable to be disturbed by such a trifle as a dance, or any serious visitor, or even the elder brother, who would, when he was at home, occasionally frown down the revels. Accordingly, their ears being quickened by no alarm, no one heard the opening of the door, and the two strangers came in unobserved. One was quite young, not much more than a youth, slim, and, though not very tall, looking taller than he was; the other was of a short, thick-set figure, neither graceful nor handsome, who followed his companion with a mixture of reluctance and defiance, strange enough in such a scene. As they came towards the light this became still more noticeable. The second stranger did not seem to have any affinity with the

place in which he found himself, and he had the air of being angry to find himself here. They had the full advantage of the pretty scene as they approached, for their steps were inaudible on the thick carpet, and the merry little company was absorbed in its own proceedings. All at once, however, the music ceased with a kind of shriek on a high note, the dancers, alarmed, stopped short, and Lady Markham left the piano and flew forward, holding out her hands. "Paul!" she cried, "Paul!"

"Paul!" cried Alice, following her mother, and "Paul!" in various tones echoed the little girls and boys. The strange man who had come in with Paul had time to remark them while the other was receiving the greeting of his mother and sister.

"I thought some one would be sure to come and spoil the fun," Roland said, taking the opportunity to get far from the little ring of performers.

"Now we shall get no more good of mamma," said his little partner with a disconsolate face; but what was this to the joy of the mother and elder sister, whose faces were lighted up with a sudden happiness, infinitely warmer than the innocent pleasure which the new-comers had disturbed!

"We thought you were not coming," said Lady Markham. "Oh, Paul, you have been hard upon us not to write! but no, my dear, I am not going to scold you. I am too happy to have you at last. Have you had any dinner? Alice, ring the bell, and order something for your brother."

"You do not see that I am not alone, mother," said Paul, with a tone so solemn that both the ladies were startled, not knowing what it could mean. "I have brought with me a very particular friend,



who I hope will stay for a little.” It was then for the first time that Lady Markham perceived her son’s companion.

“You know,” she said, “how glad I always am to see your friends; but you must tell me his name,” she added with a smile, holding out her hand, “this is a very imperfect introduction.” The sweetness of her look as she turned to the stranger dazzled him. There was a moment’s confusion on the part of both the men, as this beautiful, smiling lady put her delicate fingers into a rough hand brought forth with a certain reluctance and shamefacedness. She too changed colour a little, and a look of surprise came into her face on a closer view of her son’s friend.

“I thank you for your kind reception of me, my lady,” said the man; “but Markham, you had better explain to your mother who I am. I go nowhere under false pretences.”

Now that the light was full upon him the difference showed all the more. His rough looks, his dress, not shabby, still less dirty, but uncared for, his coarse boots, the general aspect of his figure, which was neither disorderly nor disreputable, but unquestionably not that of a gentleman, seemed to communicate a sort of electric shock to the little company. The boys pressed forward with a simultaneous idea that Paul was in custody for something or other, and heroic intentions of pouncing upon the intruder and rescuing their brother. Alice gazed at him appalled, with some fancy of the same kind passing through her mind. Only Lady Markham, though she had grown pale, preserved her composure.

“I cannot be anything but glad to see a friend of my boy’s,” she said, faltering slightly; but there passed through her mind a silent thanksgiving: Thank Heaven, his father was away!

“This is Spears,” said Paul, curtly. “You needn’t be so fastidious; my mother is not that sort. Mamma, this is a man to whom I owe more than all the dons put together. You ought to be proud to see him in your house. No, we haven’t dined, and we’ve had a long journey. Let them get us something as soon as possible. Hallo, Brown, put this gentleman’s things into the greenroom—I suppose we may have the greenroom?—and tell Mrs. Fry, as soon as she can manage it, to send us something to eat.”

“I took the liberty to order something directly, as soon as I saw Mr. Markham, my lady,” said Brown. There was a look of mingled benevolence and anxiety in this functionary’s face. He was glad to see his young master come back, but he did not conceal his concern at the company in which he was. “The greenroom, my lady?”

“The greenroom is quite a small room,” said Lady Markham, faltering. She looked at the stranger with a doubtful air. He was not a boy to be put into such a small place; but then, on the other hand——

“A small room is no matter to me,” said Spears. “I’m not used to anything different. In such a career as mine we’re glad to get shelter anywhere.” He laughed as he spoke of his career. What was his career? He looked as if he expected her to know. Lady Markham concealed her perplexity by a little bow, and turned to Brown, who was waiting her orders with a half-ludicrous sentimental air of sympathy with his mistress.

“Put Mr. Spears into the chintz-room in the east wing; it is a better room,” she said. Then she led the way into the brightness, on the verge of which they had been standing. “It is almost too warm

for fires," she said, "but you may like to come nearer to it after your journey. Where have you come from, Paul? Children, now that you have seen Paul, you had better go up stairs to bed."

"I knew how it would be," said Marie; "no one cares for us now Paul has come."

"No one will so much as see mamma as long as he is here," said Bell; while the boys, withdrawing reluctantly, stopping to whisper, and throw black looks back upon the stranger as they strolled away, wondered almost audibly what sort of fellow Paul had got with him. "A bailiff, *I* think," said Roland; "just the sort of fellow that comes after the men in *Harry Lorrequer*." "Or he's done something, and it's a turnkey," said Harry. Elder brothers were in the way of getting into trouble in the works with which these young heroes were familiar. Thus at Paul's appearance the pretty picture broke up and faded away like a phantasmagoria. Childhood and innocence disappeared, and care came back. The aspect of the very room changed where now there was the young man, peremptory and authoritative, and the two ladies tremulous with the happiness of his return, yet watching him with breathless anxiety, reading, or trying to read, every change in his face.

"Your last letter was from Yorkshire, Paul; what have you been doing? We tried to make out, but we could not. You are so unsatisfactory, you boys; you never will give details of anything. Did you go to see the Normantons? or were you——"

"I was nowhere—that you know of, at least," said Paul. "I was with Spears, holding meetings. We went from one end of the county to another. I can't tell you where we went; it would be harder to say where we didn't go."

Lady Markham looked at her son's companion with a bewildered smile. "Mr. Spears, then, Paul—I suppose—knows a great many people in Yorkshire?" She had not a notion what was meant by holding meetings. He did not indeed look much like a man who would know many "people" in Yorkshire. "People" meant not the country folks, you may be sure, but the great county people, the Yorkshire gentry, the only class which to Lady Markham told in a county. This was no fault of hers, but only because the others were beyond her range of vision. No, he did not look like a man who would know many people in Yorkshire; but, short of that, what could Paul mean? Lady Markham did not know what significance there really was in what Paul said.

"We saw a great many Yorkshire people; but I go where I am called," said the stranger, "not only where there are people I know."

Seen in the full light, there was nothing repulsive or disagreeable about the man. He looked like one of the men who came now and then to the Chase to put something in order; some clock that had gone wrong, or something about the decorations. He sat a little uneasily upon the sofa where he had placed himself. His speech was unembarrassed, but nothing else about him. He was out of place. To see him there in the midst of this family it was as if he had dropped from another planet; he did not seem to belong to the same species. But his speech was easy enough, though nothing else; he had a fine melodious voice, and he seemed to like to use it.

"I hope we did good work there," he said; "not perhaps of a kind that you would admire, my lady: but from my point of view, excellent work; and Markham, though he is a young aristocrat, was of great use. An enthusiast is always a valuable auxiliary. I do not

know when I have made a more successful round. It has taken us just a week.”

Lady Markham bowed in bewildered assent, not knowing what to say. She smiled out of sheer politeness, attending to every word, though she could not form an idea of what he meant. She did not care, indeed, to know what Mr. Spears had been doing. It was her son she wanted to know about; but the laws of politeness were imperative. Meanwhile Paul walked about uneasily, placing himself for one moment in front of the expiring fire, then moving from spot to spot, looking intently at some picture or knick-knack he had seen a thousand times before. “You have been getting some new china,” he burst forth, after various suppressed signs of impatience. Now that he had brought his friend here, he did not seem desirous that his mother should attend so closely to all he said.

“New china! my dear boy, you have known it all your life,” said Lady Markham. “We have only shifted it from one cabinet to another. It is the same old *Sèvres*. Perhaps Mr. Spears takes an interest in china. Show it to him, Paul. It is a valuable cup; it is supposed to have been made for Madame du Barry.”

“No,” said the strange visitor, “I know nothing about it. What makes it valuable, I wonder? I don’t understand putting such a price on things that if you were to let them drop would be smashed into a thousand pieces.”

“But you must not let it drop,” said Lady Markham, with a little alarm. “I daresay it is quite a fictitious kind of value. Still, I like my *Sèvres*. It is a very pretty ornament.”

“Just so,” said Spears, with a certain patronage in his tone. “In a luxurious house like this decoration is necessary—and I don’t say that it has not a very good effect. But in the places I am used to, a common teacup would be far more useful. Still, I do not deny the grace of ornament,” he added, with a smile. “Life can go on very well without it, but it would be stupid to go against it here.”

Lady Markham once more made him a little bow. He spoke as if he intended a compliment; but what did the man mean? And Paul set down the cup roughly as if he would have liked to bring the whole *étagère* to the ground. Altogether it was a confusion, almost a pain, to have him here and yet not to have him. There were so many things she wanted to ask and to know. She gave her son a wistful look. But just then Brown came in to say that the hasty meal which had been prepared was ready. Lady Markham rose. She put out her hand to take her son’s arm.

“Were you coming, mother? Don’t take so much trouble; it would only be a bore to you,” said Paul. “Spears and I will get on very well by ourselves without bothering you.”

The tears started into Lady Markham’s eyes. She turned a wondering look upon Alice as Paul and his companion went away down the dim length of the room, disappearing from them. Alice had been hovering about her brother, trying to say a word to him now and then, but Paul was too much intent upon what was going on between his friend and his mother to pay any attention. The look of dismay and wonder and blank disappointment that passed between them could not be described. Had Paul been alone they would both have gone with him to the dining-room: they would have sent away Brown and waited on him—his mother carving for him, Alice flitting about to get anything he wanted. They would

have asked a hundred questions, and given him a hundred details of home events, and made the whole atmosphere bright with tender happiness and soft laughter and love. Now they stood and looked at each other listening to the footsteps as they crossed the hall.

“It is all this man whom he has brought with him,” Lady Markham said.

## CHAPTER II.

THE children were all open-eyed and open-mouthed next morning to see Paul's friend. As for the boys, they did not feel at all sure what might have been going on during the night, or whether Paul's friend would be visible in the morning. "It is money those sort of fellows want," Roland said; and then the question arose whether papa being away mamma would have money enough to satisfy such a claimant. The little girls besieged Alice with questions. Who was that strange man? He looked exactly like the man that came to wind the clocks.

"He is a friend of Paul's; hush—hush!" said Alice; "you must all be very polite and not stare at him."

"But how can he be a friend?" demanded Bell.

"He is a bailiff," said Roland. "In *Harry Lorrequer* there is somebody exactly like that."

"Oh, hush, children, for mamma's sake! he will come in directly. He is Paul's friend. Grown-up people do not go by appearances like children. Paul says he has done him more good than all the dons. Most likely he is a very learned man—or an author or something," Alice said.

"Oh, an author! they're a queer lot," said Harry, with relief. At all events, an author was less objectionable than a bailiff.

Lady Markham came in before these questions were over. She was not all so bright as usual. Though she smiled upon them as they all came round her, it was not her own natural smile; and she



had a cap on, a thing which she only wore when she was out of sorts, a kind of signal of distress. The family were divided as to this cap. Some of them were in favour of it, some against it. The little girls thought it made their mother look old, whereas Alice was of opinion that it imparted dignity to her appearance.

“I don’t want to have a mother just as young and a great deal prettier than I am,” she said. But Bell and Marie called out, “Oh, that odious cap!”

“Why should mamma, only because she is mamma, cover up all her pretty hair? It is such pretty hair! mine is just the same colour,” said Bell, who was inclined to vanity.

Lady Markham smiled upon this charming nonsense, but it was not her own smile. “Has any one seen Paul this morning?” she said, with a sigh.

What a change there was in everything! Paul had not come into his mother’s dressing-room last night to talk over all he had been doing and meant to do, as had always been his habit when he came home. And when Lady Markham went to her boy’s room on her way down stairs, thinking of nothing but the little laughing lecture she was wont to administer on finding him not yet out of bed—which was the usual state of affairs—what was her surprise to find Paul out of his room, already dressed, and “gone for a walk.” Brown meeting her in the hall told her this with a subdued voice and mingled wonder and sympathy in his face.

“Mr. Markham is turning over a new leaf, my lady,” he said, with the license of an old servant, who had seen Paul born, so to speak.

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