

**HE THAT WILL NOT  
WHEN HE MAY**

VOLUME II.

BY  
MRS. OLIPHANT

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**HE THAT WILL NOT  
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## CHAPTER I.

AT Markham Chase there had been great wonder and consternation at the sudden departure of the elders of the family. Bell had been called to her mother's room in the morning, and the morals of the house, so to speak, placed in her hands. She was thirteen, a great age, quite a woman. "Harry will help you: but he is careless, and he is always out. You will promise to be very careful and look after everything," Lady Markham had said. Bell, growing pale with the solemnity of this strange commission, gave her promise with paling cheek, and a great light of excitement in her eyes; and when they heard of it, the others were almost equally impressed. "There is something the matter with Paul," Bell said; and when the carriage drove away the solemnity of the great house all to themselves made a still greater impression upon them. It is true that Mrs. Fry showed signs of thinking that she was the virtual head of the establishment, and Brown did not pay that deference to Bell's orders which she expected as mamma's deputy to receive; but still they all acknowledged the responsibility that lay upon them to conduct themselves better than girls and boys had ever conducted themselves before. The girls naturally felt this the most. They would not go out with their brothers, but stayed indoors and occupied themselves with various rather grimy pieces of needlework begun on various occasions of penitence or bad weather. To complete them felt like a proper exercise for such an occasion; and Bell caused the door to be shut and all the windows in front of the house. She and Marie established themselves in their mother's special sanctuary—the west room; where after a while the work languished, and where the elder sister, with a sense of

seniority and protection, pointed out all the pictures to Marie, and gave her their names. “That is me, when I was a baby,” said Bell, “just below the Rafil.”

“The Raffle,” said Marie. “I thought a raffle was a thing where you drew lots.”

“So it is,” said the elder with dignity, “but it is a man’s name, too. It is pronounced a little different, and he was a very fine painter. You know,” said the little instructress with great seriousness, “what the subject is—the beautiful lady and the little boy?”

“I know what they all are quite well,” said Marie, impatient of so much superiority; “I have seen them just as often as you have. Mamma has told me hundreds of times. That’s me too as well as you, underneath the big picture, and there’s Alice, and that’s papa—as if I didn’t know!”

“How can you help knowing Alice and papa; any one can do that,” said Bell; “but you don’t know the landscapes. That one is painted by two people, and it is called Both. At least, I suppose they both did a bit, as mamma does sometimes with Alice. There is some one ringing the bell at the hall door! Somebody must be coming to call. Will Brown say ‘My lady is not at home,’ or will he say ‘The young ladies are at home,’ as he does when Alice is here? Oh, there it is again! Can anything have happened? Either it is somebody who is in a great hurry, or it is a telegram, or, Marie, quick, run to the schoolroom and there we can see.”

As they neared the hall they ran across Brown, who was advancing in a leisurely manner to open the door. “Young ladies,”

said Brown, "you should not scuttle about like that, frightening people. And I wonder who it was that shut the hall door."

Bell made no reply, but ran out of the way, and they reached the schoolroom window in time to see what was going to happen. At the door stood some one waiting. "A little gentleman" in light-coloured clothes, with a large white umbrella. There was no carriage, which was one reason why Brown had taken his time in answering the bell. He would not, a person of his importance, have condescended to open the door at all but for a curiosity which had taken possession of him, a certainty in his mind that something of more than ordinary importance was going on in the family. The little gentleman who had rung the bell had walked up the avenue slowly, and had looked about him much. He had the air of being very much interested in the place. At every opening in the trees he had paused to look, and when he came to the open space in front of the house, had stood still for some time with a glass in his eye examining it. He was very brown of hue, very spare and slim, exceedingly neat and carefully dressed, though in clothes that were not quite like English clothes. They fitted him loosely, and they were of lighter material than gentlemen usually wear in England; but yet he was very well dressed. He had neat small feet, most carefully *chaussés*; and he had carried his large white umbrella, lined with green, over his head as he approached the door. When Brown threw the great door open, he was startled to see this trim figure so near to him upon the highest step. He had put down his white umbrella, and he stood with a small cardcase between his finger and thumb, as ready at once to proclaim himself who he was.

"Sir William Markham?" he asked. The little cardcase had been opened, and the white edge of the card was visible in his hand.

“Not at home, sir,” said Brown.

“Ah! that’s your English way. I am not a novice, though you may think so,” said the little gentleman. “Take in this card and you will see that he will be at home for me.”

“Beg your pardon, sir,” said Brown. Though he had no objection to saying “not at home” when occasion demanded, he felt offended by being supposed to have done so falsely when his statement was true. “Master is not a gentleman that has himself denied when he is here. When I say not at home, I mean it. Sir William left Markham to-day.”

“Left to-day!—that is very unlucky,” said the stranger. He stood quite disconcerted for the moment, and gnawed the ends of his moustache, still with the card half extended between his finger and thumb. “You are sure now,” he added in a conciliatory tone, “that it is not by way of getting rid of intruders? I am no intruder. I am—a relation.”

“Very sorry, sir,” said Brown; “if you were one of the family—if you were Mr. Markham himself, I couldn’t say no different. Sir William, and my lady, and Miss Alice, they went to Oxford this morning by the early train.”

“Mr. Markham himself—who is Mr. Markham?” he said, with a peculiar smile hovering about his mouth. “I am—a relation; but I have never been in England before, and I don’t know much about the family. Is Mr. Markham a son, or brother—perhaps brother to Sir William?”

“The eldest son and heir, sir,” said Brown, with dignity. “You’ll see it in the *Baronetage of England* all about him, ‘Paul Reginald, born May 6, 18—.’ He came of age this year.”

The brown face of the stranger was full of varying expression while this was said—surprise, a half amusement, mingled with anger; emotions much too personal to be consistent with his ignorance of the family history. Strange, when he did not know anything about it, that he should be so much interested! Brown eyed him very keenly, with natural suspicion, though he did not know what it was he suspected. The little gentleman had closed his card-case, but still held it in his hand.

“So,” he said, “the heir; then perhaps he is at home?”

“There is nobody at home but the young ladies and the young gentlemen,” said Brown, testily. “If any of the grown-up ones had been in the house or about the place, I’d have said so.”

Brown felt himself the master when the heads of the family were away, and this sort of persistency did not please him.

“I’d like to see the young ladies and gentlemen,” said the stranger. “I’d like to see the house. You seem unwilling to let me in; but I am equally unwilling to come such a long distance and then go away——”

“Well, sir,” said Brown, embarrassed, “Markham Chase, though it’s one of the finest places in the county, is not a show-place. I don’t say but what the gardener would take a visitor round the gardens, and by the fish-pond, and that, when the family are away; but it has never been made a practice to show the house. And it cannot even be said at present that the family are away.



They've gone on some business as far as Oxford. They might be back, Sir William told me, in two days."

"My man!" said the stranger, "I can promise you your master will give you a good wiggling when he hears that you have sent me away."

"A good—what, sir?"

Brown grew red with indignation; but all the same a chill little doubt stole over him. This personage, who was so very sure of his welcome, might after all turn out to be a person whom he had no right to send away.

"I said a wiggling, my good man. Perhaps you don't understand that in England. We do in our place. Come," he said, drawing out the card, and with it a very palpable sovereign, "here's my name. You can see I'm no impostor. You had better let me see the house."

The card was a very highly glazed foreign-looking piece of pasteboard, and upon it was the name of Mr. Augustus Markham Gaveston, at full length, in old English characters. And now that Brown looked at him again, he seemed to see a certain likeness to Sir William in this pertinacious visitor. He was about the same height, his eyes were the same colour, and there was something in the sound of his voice—Brown thought on the whole it would be best to pocket the indignity and the sovereign, and let the stranger have his way.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said; "Sir William didn't say nothing to me about expecting a relation, and I'm not one that likes to take liberties in the absence of the family; but if so be as your

mind is set upon it, I think I may take it upon me to let you see the house.”

“I thought we should understand each other, sooner or later,” said the stranger, with a smile. “Sir William could not tell you, for he did not know I was coming,” he said, a moment afterwards, with a short laugh. “I’ve come from—a long way off, where people are not—much in the way of writing letters. Besides, it is so long since he’s seen me, I dare say he has forgotten me: but the first glance at my card will bring it all back.”

“I don’t doubt it, sir,” said Brown. He had taken the sovereign, though not without doubts and compunctions, and now he felt himself half unwillingly bound to the service of this unknown personage. He admitted him into the hall with a momentary pang. “The house was built by the great-grandfather of the present baronet,” he said. “This hall is considered a great feature. The pillars were brought from Sicily; they’re no imitation, like what you see in many places, but real marble. On the right is the dining-room, and on the left the drawing-room. There is a fine gallery which is only used for balls and so forth——”

“Ah—we’ll take them in turn,” said the little gentleman. He put down his big white umbrella, and shook himself free of several particles of dust which he perceived on his light coat. “I’ll rest here a moment, thank you,” he said, seating himself in the same big chair in which Colonel Lenny had fallen asleep. “This reminds me of where I’ve come from. I dare say Sir William brought it over. Now fetch me some iced water or seltzer, or cold punch if you’ve got such a thing. Before I start sight-seeing, I’d like a little rest.”

Brown stared with open mouth; his very voice died away in the blank wonder that filled him.

“Cold—punch!” he said.

The stranger laughed.

“Don’t look so much like a boiled goose. I don’t suppose you have cold punch. Get me some seltzer, as I say, or iced water. I don’t suppose a man who has been anywhere where there’s a sun can do without one of them. Oh, yes, there’s a little sun in England now and then. Something to drink!” he added, in peremptory tones.

Brown, though he felt the monstrous folly of this order from a man who had never set foot in the house before, felt himself moving instinctively and very promptly to obey. It was the strangest thing in the world, but he did it, leaving the stranger enthroned in the great chair of Indian bamboo.

Mr. Augustus Markham Gaveston, however, had no inclination to sleep. He sat sunk in the chair, rubbing his hands, looking about him with his little keen blue eyes.

“So this is Markham Chase,” he said to himself. His eyes shone with a mischievous eager light. There was a little triumph in them and some amusement. Though he was far from being a boy, a sort of boyish gleam of malicious pleasure was in his face, as if he had done something which it had not been intended or desired that he should do, and thus had stolen a march upon some one in authority. He pulled off his gloves in a leisurely way, finger by finger, and threw them into his hat, which he had placed at his feet. Then he rubbed his hands again, as if ready for anything or everything.

“The dining-room to the right, the drawing-room to the left, and a fine gallery—for balls and that sort of thing,” he repeated, half under his breath.

The little girls had watched anxiously from the schoolroom window as long as there was anything to see. They had seen the little gentleman come in, which filled them with excitement. It was not a telegram, so there was nothing to be afraid of. Their hearts jumped with excitement and wonder. Who could it be?

“I ought to go and see what he wants,” said Bell. “Mamma left the charge of the house to me.”

“Oh, Bell—a strange gentleman! you would not know what to say to him, though it is only a little gentleman,” said Marie.

“Oh yes, I know quite well. I shall ask him if he wants papa, and that I am so sorry there is no one at home—and could I tell papa any message? that is what Dolly Stainforth says.”

“She is seventeen,” said Marie; “and you—you are only so little—he will laugh at you. Bell, don’t go. Oh, I don’t like to go—  
—”

“He is little, too,” said Bell. “You can stay away if you please, but I am going to see what it all means. Mamma left the charge to me.”

Marie followed, shy, but curious.

“Oh, I wish the boys were here,” she said.

“The boys!” cried Bell, with much contempt. “Who would pay any attention to them? But you need not come unless you like. Mamma left the charge to me.”

Whether to be left alone, or to be dragged to the encounter to speak to a strange gentleman, Marie did not know which was worst. It was the first, however, which was most contrary to all her traditions. She scarcely remembered that such a thing had ever happened. So she followed, though ill at ease, holding a corner of Bell's frock between her fingers. As for Bell, she had the courage of a lion. She walked quite boldly through all the passages, and never felt the slightest inclination to run away, till she suddenly caught a glimpse of two neat little feet, protruding from two lines of light trousers, on the other side of the hall. Then she gave a start and a little cry, and clutched at Marie behind her, who was more frightened than she.

They stopped within the door, in a sudden *accès* of fright. Nothing was visible but the grey trousers, the little feet in light cloth boots, and two hands rubbing each other; all the rest of the stranger's person being sunk in the big chair.

When he heard this exclamation, he roused himself, and turned a wideawake head in their direction.

"Ah! the young ladies!" he said. "How are you, my little dears? It is you I most want to see." And he held out to them the hands which had been seen rubbing themselves together so complacently a moment before.

"We are the Misses Markham. We are never spoken to like that," said Bell. Then she collected all her courage for the sake of her duty. "I am the eldest," she said. "Papa and mamma are gone away, if you wanted to see them; but if you have any message you wish to leave——"

“Come here,” he said. “I don’t wish to leave any message. Don’t be frightened. I want to make friends with you. Come here and talk to me. I am not a stranger. I am a—sort of a relation of yours.”

“A relation!” said Bell. And as Brown’s solemn step was heard advancing at this moment, the little girls advanced too. Brown carried a tray with a long glass upon it, a fat little bottle of seltzer water, and a large jug of claret-cup. Colonel Lenny had been very thirsty too when he fell asleep in that same chair, but he had not been served in this way. The little girls came forward, gravely interested, and watched with serious eyes while the little gentleman drank. He nodded at them before he lifted the glass to his lips with a comical air.

“My name is Markham as well as yours,” he said. “I’ve come a long way to make your acquaintance. This respectable person here—what do you call him, Brown?—wanted to send me away; but I hope now that you have come you will extend your protection to me, and not allow him to turn me away.”

“Are you a cousin?” said Bell.

“Well—perhaps not exactly a cousin; and yet something of that sort.”

“Are you one of the Underwood Markhams?” the little girl continued. “The people that nurse says would get Markham if we were all to die?”

“They must be very disagreeable people, I think,” said the stranger, with a smile.

“Oh, *dreadful!* They never come here. Nurse says they were in such a way when we were all born. They thought papa was going to let them have it—as if it were not much more natural that Paul should have it! You are not one of those people, are you, Mr.—Markham? Is that really your name?”

“I am not one of those people, and my name is Gus. What is yours? I want to know what to call you, and your little sister. And don’t you think you had better take me to see the house?”

“Oh,” cried Bell, looking more serious than ever; “but we could not call a gentleman, quite an old gentleman, like you, Gus.”

“Do you think I am an old gentleman?” he said.

“Well, not perhaps such a very old gentleman,” said Bell, hesitating.

Marie, trusting herself to speak for the first time, said in a half-whisper—

“Oh, no—not very old; just about the same as papa.”

The stranger burst into a laugh. This seemed to amuse him more than the humour of the speech justified.

“There is a difference,” he said; “a slight difference. I am not so old as—papa.”

“Do you know papa? Do you know any of them? You must have met them,” said Bell, “if you are in society. Alice came out this year, and they went everywhere, and saw everybody, in society. Mamma told me so. Alice is the eldest,” the little girl went on, pleased to enter into the fullest explanations as soon as she had got started. “That is, not the eldest of all, you know, but the eldest

of the girls. She was at all the balls, and even went out to dinner! but then it is no wonder, she is eighteen, and quite as tall as mamma.”

“Is she pretty?” said the gentleman.

He went on drinking glass after glass of the claret-cup, while Brown stood looking on alarmed, yet respectful. (“Such a little fellow as that, I thought he’d bust hisself,” Brown said.)

“She is not so pretty as mamma,” said the little girl. “Everybody says mamma is beautiful. I am the one that is most like her,” continued Bell, with naïve satisfaction. “There is a picture of her in the drawing-room; you can come and see.”

“Miss Isabel,” cried Brown, taking her aside. There was something important even in the fact of being taken aside to be expostulated with by Brown. “We don’t know nothing about the gentleman, miss,” said Brown. “I don’t doubt that it is all right—still he mightn’t be what he appears to be; and as it is me that is responsible to Sir William——”

“You need not trouble yourself about that, Brown,” said Bell, promptly. “Mamma said I was to have the charge of everything. I shall take him in and show him the pictures and things. I will tell papa that it was me. But Brown,” she added in an undertone, certain doubts coming over her, “don’t go away; come with us all the same. Marie might be frightened; I should like you to come all the same.”

Meantime the stranger had turned to Marie.

“Where do you come in the family?” he said. “Are there any younger than you?”



“No,” said Marie, hanging her head. She was the shy one of the family. She gave little glances at him sidelong, from under her eyelids; but edged a little further off when he spoke.

“Are you afraid? Do you think I would do you any harm?” said the little gentleman. “It is quite the other way. Do you know I have brought some sweetmeats over the sea, I can’t tell you how far, expressly for you.”

“For me!” Marie was fairly roused out of her apathy. “But you didn’t know even our names till you came here.”

“Ah! there’s no telling how much I knew,” said the stranger with a smile.

He had risen up, and he was not very formidable. Though he was not handsome, the smile on his face made it quite pleasant. And to have sweetmeats brought, as he said, all that way, expressly for *you*, was a very ingratiating circumstance. Marie tried to whisper this wonderful piece of information to Bell when her interview with Brown was over. But Bell had returned to all her dignity of (temporary) head of the house.

“If you will follow me,” she said, trying to look, her sister said afterwards, as if she were in long dresses, and putting on an air of portentous importance, “we will take you to see the house. Brown, you can come with us and open the doors.”

The visitor laughed. He was very little taller than Bell, as she swept on with dignity at the head of the procession. Brown, not quite satisfied to have his *rôle* taken out of his hands, yet unwilling to leave the children in unknown company, and a little curious himself, and desirous to see what was going on, followed with

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