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The Hand Of Ethelberta

Thomas Hardy

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The Hand Of Ethelberta Thomas Hardy
The Hand of Ethelberta: A Comedy in Chapters is a novel by Thomas Hardy, published in 1876. It was written, in serial form, for the Cornhill Magazine, which was edited by Leslie Stephen, a friend and mentor of Hardy's.

At the beginning of the book, we are told that Ethelberta was raised in humble circumstances but, through her work as a governess, married well at the age of eighteen. Her husband died two weeks after the wedding and, now twenty-one, Ethelberta lives with her mother-in-law, Lady Petherwin. In the three years that have elapsed since the deaths of both her husband and father-in-law, Ethelberta has been treated to foreign travel and further privilege by her benefactress, but restricted from seeing her poor family.
The events of the story concern Ethelberta's career as a famous poetess and storyteller as she struggles to support her family and conceal her secret—that her father is a butler. Beautiful, clever, and rational, she easily attracts four very persistent suitors (Mr. Julian, Mr. Neigh, Mr. Ladywell, and Lord Mountclere), but is reluctant to give her much-coveted hand.

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