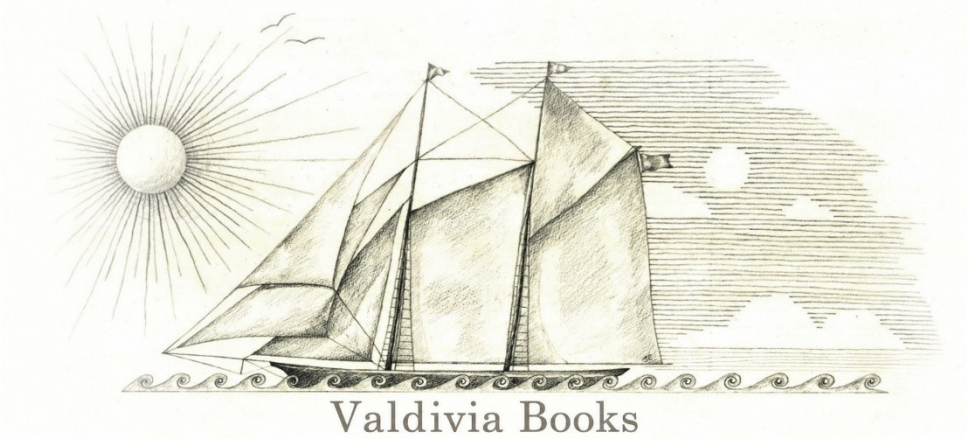


Memoirs of a 20th Century Gentleman

Reading Sample —

Part Two: Innocence Lost

by

James B. Hansom

This sample presents the prose.
Typography and page layout may differ in the published edition.

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1988 - 'To be Mothered'

Once when I was twelve, my Mother came into my room around one o'clock in the morning:

I am sleeping. She is drunk, and very angry. She sees my father lying in the bed, instead of me. Taking her bottle of vodka, she smashes it on the wall over my head. Screaming. I wake in a daze. The shattered glass digs deep into my body, my arms, my legs. I struggle to get out, to get away.

I spring from the bed, tumble down the stairs, trying desperately to grasp onto the rail. The blood makes it impossible. At the bottom, I see her coming. She is shouting, screaming at my father. He is not here.

I make it to the hallway. She is coming. I'm at the front door. She is coming. I fumble at the latch. She is coming. I fall outside as I slam the door shut behind me. I crawl into the bushes just as she comes out. I can see her walk past, inches from me. I freeze.

I wait.

For hours it seems, not daring to breathe for fear of discovery. She goes back inside. I can hear music: Elvis, playing clearly. I crawl through the bushes and onto our neighbour's lawn.

The cold is on me now. I am just in my underpants. As I shiver, I feel a thousand points of pain. I look up at the stars, they don't seem to twinkle anymore. And slowly my eyes close: peaceful slumber, all the sweeter now.