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CLASSICS

Edward Payson Roe
Complete Works



Series Sixteen

The Complete Works of
EDWARD PAYSON ROE

(1838-1888)



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The Delphi Classics Catalogue

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "E. P. Roe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

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Version 1

The Complete Works of
EDWARD PAYSON ROE



By Delphi Classics, 2026

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Complete Works of Edward Payson Roe



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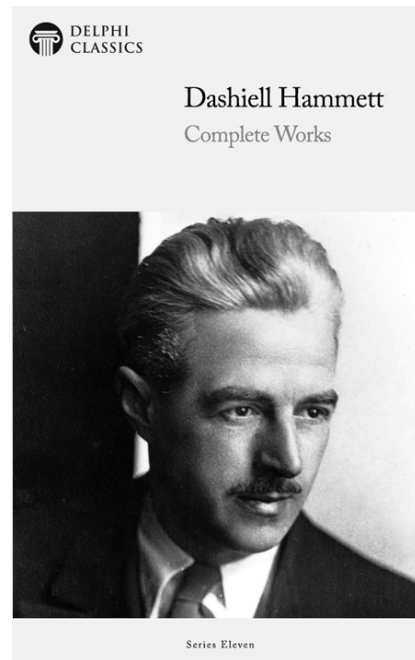
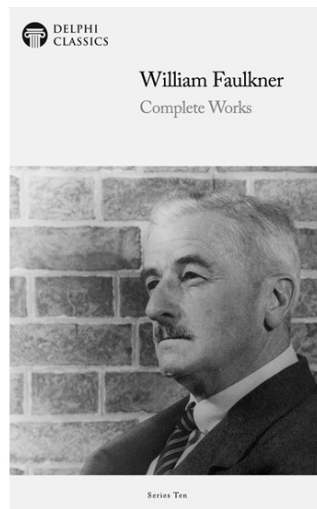
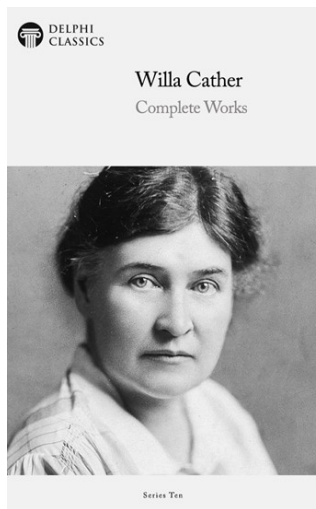
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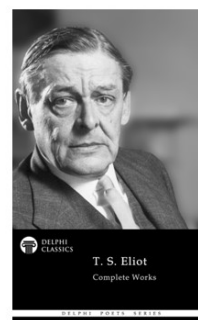
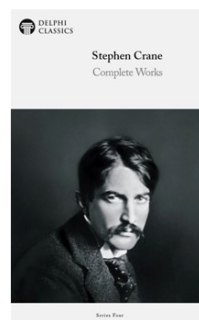
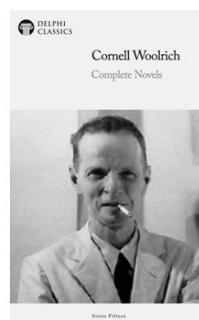
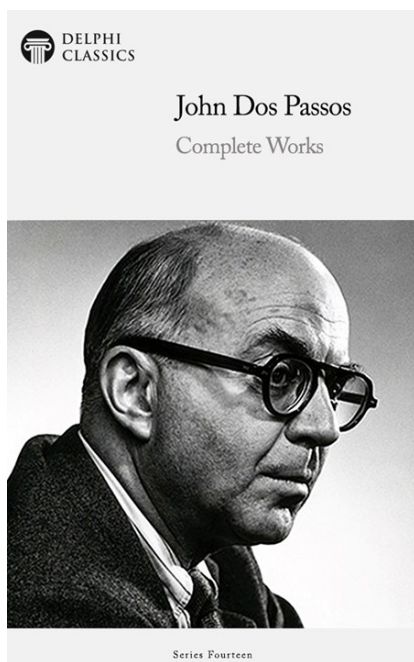


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The Novels



New Windsor, New York — Edward Payson Roe was born in the village of Moodna, now part of New Windsor, New York.



Mouth of the Moodna Creek on the Hudson, 1874

Barriers Burned Away (1872)



In 1838 Edward Payson Roe was born in the village of Moodna, now part of New Windsor, New York. He studied at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, before taking on ecclesiastical studies at Auburn Theological Seminary, New York. During the American Civil War, Roe served as a Union army chaplain, ministering to sick and wounded soldiers in Virginia hospitals and writing weekly dispatches as a war correspondent for the *New York Evangelist*. His harrowing experiences of the conflict would influence much of his later novels.

Barriers Burned Away, his first novel, is set against the backdrop of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, one of the most transformative disasters in American history, which not only reshaped urban architecture, but also helped redefined popular literature. Written in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, the book capitalised on the national trauma to create one of the nineteenth century's earliest and most enduring bestsellers. By blending historical realism with evangelical romance, *Barriers Burned Away* reflected the anxieties of a rapidly industrialising nation, while profoundly shaping the trajectory of American moral fiction.

It tells the story of Dennis Fleet, a virtuous but impoverished young man from the countryside, who travels to Chicago to support his destitute family. Entering the bustling metropolis, Dennis faces the stark socio-economic divides of the Gilded Age. Initially, he secures employment at an art gallery owned by a wealthy, cynical German sceptic. Fleet falls deeply in love with the owner's proud daughter, Christine Ludolph. The "barriers" of the title are both literal and figurative, representing the rigid social hierarchies, class distinctions and religious skepticism that separate the young lovers. The novel's climax occurs during the Great Chicago Fire. As the city burns, the artificial barriers of wealth and social status dissolve in the face of survival. Dennis heroically rescues Christine from the flames, a harrowing ordeal that breaks through her emotional and spiritual resistance, eventually leading to her Christian conversion.

The immediate context of the novel's creation is deeply tied to Roe's personal experience as a Presbyterian minister. Following the news of the disaster, he travelled from his parish in New York to the smouldering ruins of Chicago. Deeply moved by the physical devastation and the shared humanity of the survivors, he spent several days exploring the ruins. Roe later recounted that the story grew in his mind during these wanderings, conceived as a vehicle to represent how divine providence could bring spiritual rebirth out of material destruction.

Serialized first in *The New York Evangelist*, the story offered immediate theological comfort to a grieving nation, framing the catastrophic fire not merely as a tragedy, but as a purifying crucible that could level the corrupting inequalities of modern urban life. The story had a lasting impact on late nineteenth-century American fiction, establishing a blueprint for the "muscular Christian" romance. Before Roe, American religious fiction was often viewed by critics as overly sentimental or didactic. Roe successfully fused a gripping, real-time historical event with a high-stakes romance, proving that wholesome, morally instructive literature could compete commercially with the sensationalist "dime novels" of the time.

Barriers Burned Away became an instant phenomenon, selling hundreds of thousands of copies and launching Roe into a career as one of the most commercially successful American novelists of his generation. Furthermore, the book anticipated

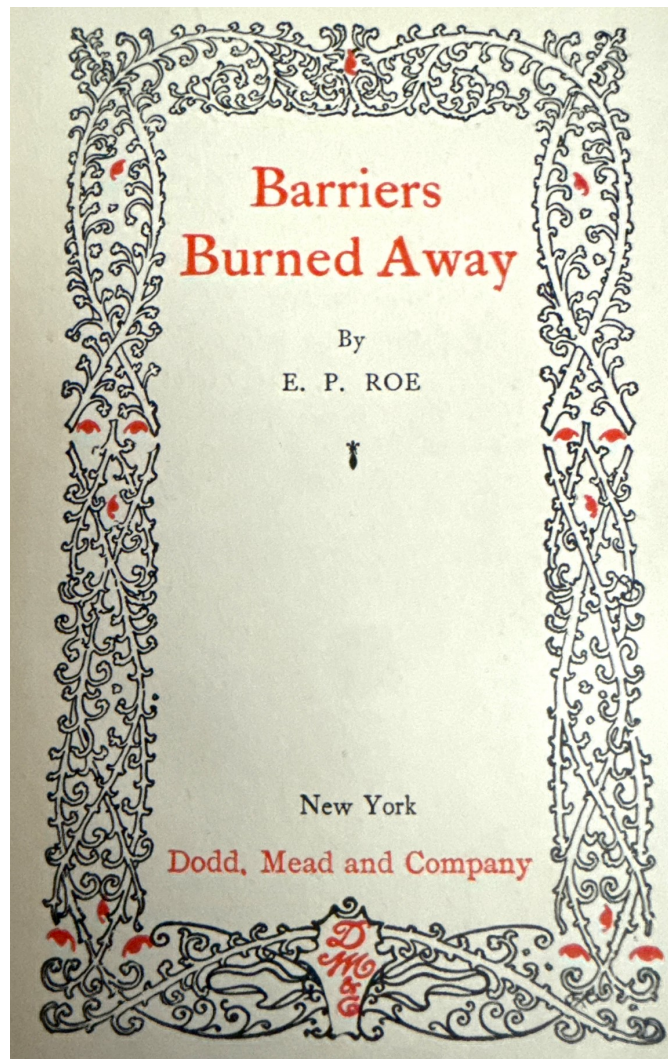
the Social Gospel movement in literature, charting a path for later authors to use fiction as a tool to address urban poverty, class warfare and the moral responsibilities of wealth. Ultimately, Roe's debut novel stands as a crucial cultural text of the Gilded Age. Through its vivid depiction of the burning of Chicago, it captures a pivotal moment when America was forced to confront the fragile nature of its material progress. By burning away the artificial boundaries of class and skepticism, the tale helped to reassure contemporary readers that beneath the chaos of modern industrialisation, a democratic and spiritual brotherhood could still be forged.



An 1871 depiction of the Great Chicago Fire



Aftermath of the fire, corner of Dearborn and Monroe Streets, 1871



The first edition's title page

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Roe as a young man



The 1925 silent film adaptation of the novel

This Book

IS REVERENTLY DEDICATED TO
THE MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION



I SHALL SAY but few words in regard to this first child of my imagination.

About one year ago our hearts were in deepest sympathy with our fellow-citizens of Chicago, and it occurred to me that their losses, sufferings, and fortitude might teach lessons after the echoes of the appalling event had died away in the press; and that even the lurid and destructive flames might reveal with greater vividness the need and value of Christian faith.

I spent some days among the smouldering ruins, and then began the following simple story, which has grown into larger proportions than I at first intended. But comparatively a small part of the narrative is occupied with the fire, for its scenes are beyond description, and too strange and terrible to be dwelt upon. Therefore the thread of my story is carried rapidly through that period of unparalleled excitement and disaster.

Nearly all the scenes introduced are historical, and are employed to give their terrible emphasis to that which is equally true in the serenest and securest times.

E. P. R.

CHAPTER I DELPHI CLASSICS

End of Sample