

**Edwards, Amelia Ann Blandford** (1831–1892). English novelist, journalist, travel writer, and Egyptologist. After abandoning a burgeoning career as a musician, Edwards began writing for the periodical press in 1851. Throughout that decade, she published stories and articles in a range of popular magazines, including *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal*, *Household Words*, *Eliza Cook's Journal*, *Literary World*, *The Ladies' Companion*, and the *Illustrated London News*. Edwards also worked briefly on the staff of the *Saturday Review* and the *Morning Post*. Her first novel, *My Brother's Wife*, a sensational tale of murder and betrayal, was published in 1855 and received largely positive reviews. Edwards followed up this success with the equally sensational *The Ladder of Life* (1857) and *Hand and Glove* (1858). Her first three novels have received little or no critical attention, but deserve recognition for their contribution to early women's crime writing and as prototypes of 1860's **sensation fiction**. It was *Barbara's History* (1864), however, which established her as an important contemporary novelist and it was her most significant critical success. *A Million of Money* followed in 1864 and two collections of short stories in the same decade. Edwards's shorter fiction continues to be anthologized in modern collections, particularly of supernatural tales. "The Phantom Coach" is perhaps the best known of these shorter works. Although her fiction was characterised by sensational themes and tropes, critics persistently dissociated her from the current controversy raging over the Sensation Novel, identifying Edwards as a talented and superior novelist, "far above the Miss **Braddon** school" (*Standard* p.6). In addition to fiction, Edwards also wrote various non-fictional works that reflected her varied interests. These include *A Summary of English History* (1856), *A History of France* (1858), and a biographical study of Cervantes. She also published translations and original musical and lyrical compositions. Two more novels appeared in the 1870s and her final work of fiction, *Lord Brackenbury*, was published in 1880. By this time, Edwards's main energies were focused on archaeology and conservation. A trip to Egypt in 1873–74 had proved to be revelatory and instilled in Edwards a passion for ancient Egyptian archaeology that would inform her activities for the remainder of her life. In 1877 she published an account of the Egypt trip as *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* to enthusiastic reviews and it remains her most enduring success. The interest in Egypt was not confined to travel writing. Edwards studied hieroglyphics and corresponded with the leading specialists of the day. She was later awarded honorary doctoral degrees from Columbia College, New York and Smith College, Massachusetts in recognition of her contribution to scholarship. A successful lecture tour of America near the end of her life culminated in her final publication, *Pharaohs, Fellahs and Explorers* (1891), a collection of her essays and lectures on ancient Egypt. Edwards's indefatigable work to conserve Egypt's ancient monuments led to the founding of the Egypt Exploration Fund in 1882, which was later renamed the Egypt Exploration Society (Beller p.352). AMB

Sources: *Standard* 1866, Beller 2011  
 493 words (500)

Beller, A. (2011). "Amelia B. Edwards." In Pamela K. Gilbert (Ed.), *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* (349–360) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Review of *Half a Million of Money*. *The Standard* (4 Apr. 1866): 6.

## Biog:

Anne-Marie Beller is a lecturer in Victorian Literature at Loughborough University, UK. She is the author of books on Mary Elizabeth Braddon and has published numerous articles and chapters on sensation fiction and Victorian women's popular fiction. Anne-Marie contributed chapters on Braddon and Amelia Edwards to Blackwell's *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* (2011). She is currently working on a critical edition of Geraldine Jewsbury's *Athenaeum* reviews and editing two special issues of *Women's Writing*.