

**The Enchantress**  
by  
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From  
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Compiled  
by  
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## THE ENCHANTRESS

*Painted by W. Boxall    Engraved by J. Thomson*

THE  
BOOK OF BEAUTY.

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THE ENCHANTRESS.

WATER—the mighty, the pure, the beautiful, the unfathomable—where is thy element so glorious as it is in thine own domain, the deep seas? What an infinity of power is in the far Atlantic, the boundary of two separate worlds, apart like those of memory and of hope! or in the bright Pacific, whose tides are turned to gold by a southern sun, and in whose bosom sleep a thousand isles, each covered with the verdure, the flowers, and the fruit of Eden! But, amid all thy hereditary kingdoms, to which hast thou given beauty, as a birthright, lavishly as thou hast to thy favourite Mediterranean? The silence of a summer night is now sleeping on its bosom, where the bright stars are mirrored, as if in its depths they had another home and another heaven. A spirit, cleaving air midway between the two, might have paused to ask which was sea, and which was sky. The shadows of earth and earthly things, resting omen-like upon the waters, alone shewed

which was the home and which the mirror of the celestial host.

But the distant planets were not the only lights reflected from the sea; an illuminated villa, upon the extreme point of a small rising on the coast, flung down a flood of radiance from a thousand lamps. From the terrace came the breath of the orange-plants, whose white flowers were turned to silver in the light which fell on them from the windows. Within the halls were assembled the fairest and noblest of Sicily.

Every one, they say, has a genius for something—that of Count Arezzi was for festivals. A king, or more, the Athenian Pericles, might have welcomed his most favoured guests in such a chamber. The walls were painted in fresco, as artists paint whose present is a dream of beauty, and whose future is an immortality. Each fresco was a scene in Arcadia; and the nymphs, who were there gathering their harvest of roses, were only less lovely than the Sicilian maidens that flitted past. Among these was one much darker than her companions; her Eastern mother had bequeathed to her her black hair and her olive skin; in her eye was that brightness, and on her cheek was that freshness, which belong only to the earliest hour of youth—the blush had been too fleeting to burn, the smile too clear to cast that shadow which even light flings as it lengthens. But to-night the colour was heightened, the eyes wore a deeper shade, for the hue of



the downcast lash was upon them, and the sweet half-opened mouth was too earnest for a smile.

Lolah was listening to those charmed words which change the girl at once into the woman—we step not over the threshold of childhood till led by Love. Alas, this knowledge is almost always heralded by a sorrow! That morning had Lolah heard from her stern uncle, that the love she bore to her cousin Leoni di Montefiore was a childish toy, and as such was to be put away; and all her happiness had been destroyed by having to reflect upon it. Poor Lolah! how hard it is to teach the young that life is made up of many parts; and that wealth, rank, power, are more to be desired than affection! To-night she was listening to Leoni—and who ever thought of the future when the present has first taught us we love and are beloved?—still, her eyes were filled with tears, and her heart beat heavier than usual. Leoni spoke of hope; but is not hope only a more gentle word for fear? And yet, with that mysterious contradiction which makes the fever of human existence, neither would have renounced the certainty of the other's affection for the careless content of yesterday. Strange, that ignorance should be our best happiness in this life, and yet be the one we are ever striving to destroy!

Leoni and his cousin stood in one of the deep windows; she leaning as if to inhale the fragrance of an Indian rose, and mark a flower which, brought from a far land, seemed more delicate than its

bright companion. A pedestal of the green malachite stood beside, and on it a vase carved with the sacrifice of Iphigenia; these shut them out from the rest of the dancers.

“My father,” exclaimed Leoni, “gave his daughter to her father;”—then a bitter thought of the wasted heritage, which had made his noble name a fetter rather than an aid, for a moment caused the lover to pause.

“Holy Mother!—but my uncle has just entered the room; let me go, ere he finds me talking to you.”

Lolah waited not for an answer; another moment, and she had passed her slender arm through that of one of her companions, and was lost in the crowd. It was so sudden, Leoni scarcely believed she was gone: surely her sweet low sigh was on the air—no! it was but the breath of the Bengal rose. His eye wandered round; it fell on the sculptured vase, and there stood the Grecian father, a witness to the sacrifice of his youngest and loveliest child.

“Even so, my gentle Lolah, will the altar be thy tomb.”

Leoni started, for a figure now stepped from the shade of the column: not only his last words, but their whole conversation must have been heard.

“Yes, Don Leoni,” said the intruder, replying rather to his thoughts and look, “I have heard your discourse; pardon me when I say it was wilfully overheard. It is long since I have hearkened to the eager and happy words of young affection,

and I listened as if to music; and, like music, they have died in hearing."

Leoni thought he would as soon that the dialogue had not been quite so attractive—strange, that it should be so to the cold and proud Donna Medora!

Again his companion answered to his thoughts—  
"You marvel at my speech; I could wonder myself at this still lingering sympathy with the base lot of humanity: but mortal breath and mortal frame cannot quite break away from mortal ties. Don Leoni, I pity you—I wish to serve you: I know not, if in giving you wealth I give you happiness; but wealth I can give. This is not the place for such words as mine must be. Breathe not in living ear what I have said: my power to serve you depends on your silence. Come to-morrow to our palazzo."

Medora turned from him, and descended the terrace. The weakness of our nature—how soon any strong emotion masters it! Leoni stood breathless with surprise and hope; he had once or twice before seen Donna Medora, and he had heard much of her. Young—she had seen but three-and-twenty summers deepen into autumn; beautiful—for it was as if Heaven had set its seal on her perfect face,—her life was one of sadness and solitude. The cathedral where she knelt, the poor whom she aided, the sick-room of her aged father, and her own lonely chamber—these were the haunts of Medora. When about

seventeen, a severe illness had stricken her even unto death; almost by a miracle she was restored to life, but never to youth—the shadow of the grave, to which she had so nearly approached, seemed to rest upon her. Her glad laugh never again made the air musical as with the singing of a bird in spring; her light step forgot the dance; and her lute was given to another. The sympathy she once had for joy was now kept entire for sorrow; but the mother who died in her arms, the father whose long and sickly age she soothed and supported, thought her nature had, in so nearly approaching heaven, caught something of its elements. And Lolah, who, as a distant relative, sometimes visited Don Manfredi's chamber, said that Medora was almost an angel; and added—"I should think her quite one, but that I do not fear her, and that she seems unhappy."

It was reported that love and religion had held a bitter conflict in her heart. Before her illness she had been betrothed to a young cavalier; on her recovery she refused to fulfil her engagement, alleging that the instability of life had taught her the vanity of human ties: all she now asked, was to devote what remained of existence to her aged parents. Remonstrances, prayers, were alike unavailing; and the young Count Rivoli became one of the Knights of Malta. Some years had since passed; and in the gay and hurrying circle of Palermo, Medora's name was rarely mentioned.

Leoni dwelt upon her promise of assistance;

but the more he reflected, the more hopeless it seemed. How could she give wealth, the daughter of one of Sicily's poorest nobles?

Our young Sicilian was naturally of a daring and reckless temper; and resolving to hope, without analysing why or wherefore, he re-entered the saloon. He danced no more with Lolah; yet he had the satisfaction of seeing her look sad and languid while dancing with another. But how restless was the night that followed! Hope is feverish enough at all times; what must it be when stimulated by curiosity!

The first blush of morning awakened Leoni from his light slumbers: he looked out; the hue of the sky was that too of the sea; the waves of the Mediterranean floated on as if freighted with roses; yet how Leoni wished they were glittering with the clear colourless light of noon! Never say that time is of equal length: the movement of the hours is as irregular as the beating of the heart which measures them. A year of ordinary life, if counted by hopes, fears, and fancies, was in that lingering morning. At length, noon sounded from many a turret; and, regardless of the heat, the young Count hurried to the palazzo.

When he reached the pier, a crowd of boatmen offered their services.

“What, ho! Michele and Stefano! I have tried the swiftness of the Santa Catharina before now. Remember, I am as impatient as . . . .”



“Your lordship always is,” replied Stefano, who, having an answer always ready, always answered.

Leoni jumped into the boat, whose celerity shewed that the wax taper her pious rowers offered to Santa Catherina yearly on the day of her fête, was not thrown away; though, perhaps, the activity of the brothers who rowed did as much as their piety towards sending the little vessel swiftly through the waters.

“You want to land,” said Michele, “at San Marco’s steps?” turning the head of the boat to the accustomed landing-place.

The steps to which San Marco lent his name had been worth many a sequin to them; for the winding path to the left led to Lolah’s villa.

“No, no,” replied Leoni; “to the Nymph’s Cove.”

“Signor,” returned Michele, “those steps lead only to Count Manfredi’s garden.”

“And it is thither I am going.”

The boatmen exchanged looks of astonishment bordering on dismay, which was not diminished by the silence of the usually gay cavalier. Montefiore leant back in the boat: as the interview drew nigh, a feeling of fear—not fear, that was what none of his house had ever yet known—but of awe, stole over him. Many a mood had that morning passed through his mind; disbelief—but surely the sad seriousness of such a one as Donna Medora could never stoop to mockery!—then hope, like a sweet summer-

shower, when dark clouds break away into sudden light—till all his thoughts fixed on one mysterious circumstance—that he was the only person who had seen her the preceding evening. The Count d'Arezzi himself was not aware that she had been among his guests.

While musing on the singularity of this, they arrived at the landing-place, and found the Senora's page in waiting. Dumb from his birth, the boy Julio had been brought up in the Manfredi family, where his weak frame and want of language had exempted him from all but the lightest tasks.

“What would the Senora Lolah say to this visit?” cried Stefano, the moment his master was out of hearing. “The lady Medora is beautiful as an angel; I marvel we never rowed cavalier hither before.”

“*We* never have; but *I* have, and in an evil hour. Well had it been for my first master if he had never looked on a face so fair and so false. I remember when I was wont of an evening to row the Count Rivoli to this very spot. We used to see a white veil waving among the trees—it was the Senora watching his approach: they were very happy then. But I know not how it was, unless it be the inconstancy of women; for change is as natural to them as it is to the sea. The lady Medora was taken dangerously ill: during her fearful sickness, never was truer lover than my master; the shrine of Our Lady was laden with gifts; and

night after night he paced beneath the window of her room,—till she who lay dying above, could scarcely look paler than he who watched below. And yet, on her recovery she refused to wed him. She declared, that, in her danger, she had made a vow not to marry. They say the young Count knelt at her feet, but in vain; and for her sake he forswore the face of woman and his native country. Count Rivoli is now a Knight of Malta. What has the Senora Medora to do with another lover?"

"Well, yonder gallant's step is not much like a lover's," replied Stefano, as a bend in the path enabled them to see the slow and thoughtful pace at which Leoni followed his guide.

The boy who led the way walked feebly and languidly, and Montefiore hurried him not. The gloom of the neglected garden added to that on his spirits; and the wild eyes and pale face of his dumb attendant seemed to fix his attention painfully. It was a countenance whose unhappiness was catching; for Leoni thought how terrible was his lot, debarred from that noblest privilege of humanity, interchange of thought, and its sweetest interchange of feelings! The boy stopped suddenly at the door of a summer-house, so hidden by the dark branches of the pine-trees around, that the stranger might have passed it by unnoticed. They entered together; the page approached his mistress, pointed to the visitor, and then left the room.

Without rising from her own seat, Medora

signed to Leoni to take the one opposite. At first she seemed so absorbed in thought, that even his entrance was insufficient to rouse her; she evidently hesitated to speak, as if she had not yet resolved on the purport of her words. Her young and impetuous companion found the silence very oppressive; but even his impetuosity was subdued by the gloom around him.

Panelled with the scarce woods of other lands, whose cornices were carved in quaint wreaths of flowers, mingled with crosses of divers shapes and the family arms, it was obvious that a rich though barbarous taste had here once lavished its wealth. But Time had, as usual, laughed the works of man to scorn; and pomp amidst its decay sickened over its vanity. The colours were all merged in the heavy black of age; the gildings were tarnished; and the cornices broken and defaced. The temple, of which but a few fallen columns remain—the mighty city, whose stately fragments are strewed in the desert—are solemn, not sorrowful. But the desolation of yesterday comes home to every man's heart—to-morrow its portion may be his own; and the faded tapestry, the discoloured floor, and the mouldering painting, speak of sorrow which still exists, and poverty which is still endured.

Leoni gazed round the gloomy banquet-room, and remembered a festival which had been given there; he was a child at the time, and perhaps his memory lent something of its own gaiety to the

scene. But he was roused from his reverie by Medora's voice.

"My silence, Count," said she, "must seem strange; but when you have heard the story I am about to reveal, you will not marvel that I hesitate to speak words which are even as those of Fate. You love, and you are beloved; surely you might be happy. There is but one obstacle, that of wealth. Leoni, I can make you rich—rich as the fabled kings, who poured forth gold like water; dare you accept the offer?"

"On what conditions?" exclaimed Leoni, almost unconsciously clasping the cross of the order which hung at his neck.

"On none," returned his companion. "Fear not my conditions, but your own use of the wealth I can bestow. Dare you take your destiny into your own hands? But I will place my life before you, and then judge for yourself."

Medora rose from her seat.

"Not here, where the uncharmed air might bear away my words, dare I tell my history. Count Leoni, you have heard of wondrous and fearful secrets, whose spell is over stars and over spirits; you have heard of mortals to whom immortal power is given—such power is mine. You deem you are speaking to your cousin—would that you were! I have but the borrowed likeness of her whose life long since reached its appointed boundary. Give me your hand, and in a few minutes we shall be in



my own dwelling, amid those immeasurable deserts where only my story may be communicated. Do you consent to accompany me?"

Leoni answered by taking the hand extended towards him. Even as he touched it, a dense vapour filled the room; he felt himself raised with a sudden and dizzy velocity; he leant back; the cloud was as the wave on which a swimmer floats, borne by no effort of his own; and a pleasant sensation of sleep came over him. He was roused by the light touch of his companion, and startled into consciousness. They were standing on the top of a mighty tower; one of those, whose height, seen from below, seems to reach even unto the heavens—but the summit once gained, we only find what an immeasurable upward distance remains. A hot bright noon filled the air with light, but not with fertility; for far as the eye could reach—and the clear colourless atmosphere seemed to extend the sight even to infinity—spread an arid desert, as if sand were an element, and only shared its empire with the sky. But immediately around the tower lay the giant ruins of a once glorious city; one of those built when the world was in the strength of its youth, and reared buildings which were the work of centuries, and yet but the work of a life: the cradle and the grave were then far apart. Now the shadow of the last rests upon the first, and all life groans beneath the weight and darkness thereof. Then the marble of the quarry and the gold of the mine lay on the

surface; the fertile soil of the East yielded forth its abundance; and the labour, which was in man's destiny, needed not to be all given to that sad and perpetual strife with hunger which belongs to our worn-out and weary age.

It seemed, however, as if Time had long paused in his work of destruction; the vast masses of carved granite, the broken columns, the shattered walls where once four chariots drove abreast, all remained as they had done for ages. Year after year the burning sunshine forbade the rain to fall, and speedily dried up the dews of night; no green moss, no creeping plant, as in his native Italy, hid the ruin which they were aiding: the bare white marble shone distinct from the sands.

Leoni turned to his companion; her face and garb were wholly changed: she stood upon her native tower, and had resumed her native shape. As Medora, she had been so like his own Lolah—a slight, low figure, whose grace was that of childhood; the same sweet pleading eyes; alike, save that hope gave its gladness to the face of Leila, while that of Medora had all the mournfulness of memory. But the glorious beauty of the being at his side, though it wore the shape, had scarce the semblance of mortality. The face had that high and ideal cast of beauty which made the divinities of Greece divine; for the mind was embodied in the features. The large blue eyes were of the colour of the noon, when heaven is full of light; they looked

upon you like the far-off shining of some vast and lonely planet. Her garb and turban had an Oriental splendour; a silver veil mingled with her rich profusion of hair, which was bound by strings of costly pearls. Round her arm was rolled a band of gold, and on her hand she bore a signet of some strange clear stone, covered with mystic characters. Her height and step were like a queen's, such as might have beseeemed the young Empress of Palmyra, ere she walked in the triumph of the Roman conqueror.

“I may not enter,” said she, “the hall of my father's tomb but in mine own shape: follow me.”

Casting the golden sandals from her feet, she led the way down a flight of black marble steps. They paused at the foot of the tower; two enormous doors flew open, and though it was the bright light of noon he had left behind, Leoni stood dazzled at the glory of the hall. The crystal roof was traversed by a shining zodiac, lit by a pale unearthly flame; the black marble floor was covered with inscriptions in gold, but they were in unknown ciphers: Leoni observed, however, that they were similar to those on the girdle and the border of his companion's robe. The gigantic pillars which supported the vast dome were also of black marble, covered, in like manner, with golden hieroglyphics. Between them were immense vases, each one a varying mosaic of precious stones, and filled with the same pale flame which lighted the zodiac

above. In the centre of the hall stood a huge crystal globe, and upon its summit a funeral urn of the purest alabaster, on which neither figure nor sign was graven. Around were placed seven silver tripods, whereon were burning odoriferous woods, which filled the air with their perfumes.

“In yonder urn,” said Medora, “lie the ashes of my father. I have obtained that gift in search of which his life was spent; and yet I would that our mingled ashes were strewn on those elements we have mastered, and in vain.”

She now seated herself on a radiant throne opposite, and Leoni leant on the lion's skin at her feet. We have said that Leoni was of a race to whom fear was unknown, yet he felt his heart beat quicker than ordinary, and his glance quailed before the melancholy and spiritual beauty of the eyes now shining upon him.

“You see in me,” said his mysterious companion, “the only living descendant of those Eastern Magi to whom the stars revealed their mysteries, and spirits gave their power. Age after age did sages add to that knowledge which, by bequeathing to their posterity, they trusted would in time combat to conquer their mortality. But the glorious race perished from the earth, till only my father was left, and I his orphan child. Marvels and knowledge paid his life of fasting and study. All the spirits of the elements bowed down before him; but the future was still hidden from his eyes, and Death was

omnipotent. His power of working evil had no bounds, but his power of good was limited; and yet it was good that he desired. How dared he put in motion those mighty changes, which seemed to promise such happiness on earth, while he was ignorant of what their results might be? and of what avail was the joy he might pour out on life, over whose next hour the grave might close, and only make the parting breath more bitter from the blessings which it was leaving behind?

“ I was no unworthy daughter of such a sire; I advanced in these divine studies even to his wish, and looked to the future with a hope which many years had deadened in himself, but from which I caught an omen of ultimate success. Alas! he mastered not his destiny: I have said before, his ashes are in yonder urn. A few unwholesome dews on a summer night were mightier than all his science. For a time I struggled not with despair; but youth is buoyant, and habit is strong. Again I pored over the mystic scroll—again I called on the spirits with spell and with sign. Many a mystery was revealed, many a wonder grew familiar; but still Death remained at the end of all things, as before. One night I was on the terrace of my tower. Above me was the deep blue sky, with its stars—worlds filled, perchance, with the intelligence which I sought. On the desert below was the phantasm of a great city. I looked on its small and miserable streets, where hunger and cold reigned paramount, and



man was as wretched as if flung but yesterday on the earth, and there had been as yet no time for art to yield its assistance, or labour to bring forth its fruit. I gazed next on scenes of festivity, but they were not glad; for I looked from the wreath into the head it encircled, and from the carcanet of gems to the heart which beat beneath—and I saw envy, and hate, and repining, and remorse. I turned my last glance on the palace within its walls; but there the purple was spread as a pall, and the voice of sorrow and the cry of pain were loud on the air. I bade the shadows roll away upon the winds, and rose depressed and in sorrow. I was not alone: one of those glorious Spirits, whose sphere was far beyond the power of our science, whose existence we rather surmised than knew, stood beside me.

“ From that hour a new existence opened before me. I loved, and I was beloved—love, to which imagination gave poetry, and mind gave strength, was the new element added to my being. Alas! how little do the miserable race to which I belong know of such a feeling! They blend a moment’s vanity, a moment’s gratification, into a temporary excitement, and they call it love. Such are the many, and the many make the wretchedness of earth. And yet your own heart, Leoni, and that of my gentle cousin, may witness for my words, there are such things as truth, and tenderness, and devotion in the world; and such redeem the darkness and degradation of its lot. Nay, more—if ever the mystery of

our destiny be unravelled, and happiness be wrought out of wisdom, it will be the work of Love.

“ It matters little to tell you of my blessedness ; but my very heart was filled with the light of those radiant eyes, which were to me what the sun is to the world. Yet one dark shadow rested on my soul, beyond even their influence. Death had been the awful conqueror with whom my race had so often struggled, and to whom they had so often yielded. A mortal, I loved an immortal, and the fear of separation was ever before me ; yet a long and a happy time passed away before my fear found words.

“ It was one evening we were floating over the earth, and the crimson cloud on which we lay was the one where the sun’s last look had rested. Its gleam fell on a small nook, while all around was fast melting into shade. Still, it was a sad spot which was thus brightened—it was a new-made grave. Over the others the long grass grew luxuriantly, and speckled, too, by many small and fragrant flowers ; but on this, the dark-brown earth had been freshly turned up, and the red worm writhed restlessly about its disturbed habitation. Some roses had been scattered, but they were withered ; their sweet leaves were already damp and discoloured. All wore the present and outward signs of our eternal doom—to perish in corruption.

“ The shadows of the evening fell, deepening the gloom into darkness—the one last bright ray had long been past, when a youth came from the adjacent

valley. That grave but yesterday received one who was to have been his bride—his betrothed from childhood, for whose sake he had been to far lands and gathered much wealth, but who had pined in his absence and died. He flung himself on the loathsome place, and the night-wind bore around the ravings of his despair. Woe for that selfishness which belonged to my mortality! I felt at that moment more of terror than of pity. I thought of myself: Thus must I, with all my power, my science, and loved by one into whose sphere Death comes not, even thus must I perish! True, the rich spices, the perfumed woods, the fragrant oils, which would feed the sacred fire of my funeral pyre, would save my mortal remains from that corruption which makes the disgust of death even worse than its dread. A few odoriferous ashes alone would be left for my urn. Yet not the less must I share the common doom of my race,—I must die!

“ ‘Nay, my beautiful!’ said the voice, which was to me as the fiat of life and of death, so utterly did it fill my existence; ‘why should we thus yield to a vague terror? Listen, my beloved! I know where the waters of the fountains of life roll their eternal waves—I know I can bear you thither and bid you drink from their source, and over lips so hallowed Death hath no longer dominion. But, alas! I know not what may be the punishment. Like yourselves, the knowledge of our race goes on increasing, and our experience, like your own, hath its

agonies. None have dared what I am about to dare, and the future of my deed is even to me a secret. But what may not be borne for that draught which makes my loved one as immortal as my love !'

"I gazed on the glorious hope which lighted up his radiant brow, and I said to him, 'Give me an immortality which must be thine.' Worlds rolling on worlds lay beneath our feet when we stood beside the waters of life. A joyful pride swelled in my heart. I, the last and the weakest of my race, had won that prize which its heroes and its sages had found too mighty for their grasp. A sound as of a storm rushing over ocean startled me when I stooped to drink, the troubled waves rose into tumultuous eddies, their fiery billows parted, and from amid them appeared the dark and terrible Spirit of Necessity. The cloud of his awful face grew deeper as it turned on me. 'Child of a sinful and a fallen kind!' said he, and he spoke the language most familiar to my ear, which yet sounded like that of another world, 'who have ever measured by their own small wisdom that which is infinite—drink, and be immortal! Be immortal, without the wisdom or the power belonging unto immortality. Drink !'

"I shrank from the starry waters as they rose to my lip, but a power stronger than my will compelled me to their taste. The draught ran through my veins like ice. Slowly I turned to where my once-worshipped lover was leaning. The same change had passed over both. Our eyes met, and

each looked into the other's heart, and there dwelt hate—bitter, loathing, and eternal hate. I had changed my nature; I was no longer the gentle, up-looking mortal he had loved. I had changed my nature; he was no longer to me the one glorious and adored being. We gazed on each other with fear and abhorrence. The dark power, whose awful brow was fixed upon us like Fate, again was shrouded in the kindling waters. By an impulse neither could control, the Spirit and I flung ourselves down the steep blue air, but apart, and each muttering, 'Never! never!' And that word 'never' told our destiny. Never could either feel again that sweet deceit of happiness, which, if it be a lie, is worth all truth. Never more could each heart be the world of the other.

“ Our feelings are as little in our power as the bodily structure they animate. My love had been sudden, uncontrollable, and born not of my own will—and such was my hate. As little could I master the sick shudder his image now called up, as I could the passionate beating of the heart it had once excited. I stood alone in my solitary hall—I gazed on the eternal fire burning over the tomb of my father, and I wished it were burning over mine. For the first time I felt the limitations of humanity. The desire of my race was in me accomplished—I was immortal; and what was this immortality? A dark and measureless future. Alas, we had mistaken life for felicity! What was my knowledge? it only



served to shew its own vanity ; what was my power, when its exercise only served to work out the decrees of an inexorable necessity ? I had parted myself from my kind, but I had not acquired the nature of a spirit. I had lost of humanity but its illusions, and they alone are what render it supportable. The mystic scrolls over which I had once pored with such intenseness, were now flung aside ; what could they teach me ? Time was to me but one great vacancy ; how could I fill it up, who had neither labour nor excitement ? I sat me down mournfully, and thought of the past. Why, when love is perished, should its memory remain ? I had said to myself, So long as I have life, one deep feeling must absorb my existence. A change—and that too of my own earnest seeking—had passed over my being ; and the past, which had been so precious, was now as a frightful phantasm. The love which alters, in its inconstancy may set up a new idol, and worship again with a pleasant blindness ; but the love which leaves the heart with a full knowledge of its own vanity and nothingness,—which saith, The object of my passion still remains, but it is worthless in my sight—never more can I renew my early feeling—I marvel how I ever could have loved—I loathe, I disdain the weakness of my former self ;—ah, the end of such love is indeed despair !

“ Do you mark yonder black marble slab, which is spread as over a tomb ? It covers the most silvery fountain that ever mirrored the golden light

of noon, or caught the fall of the evening dew, in an element bright as themselves. The radiant likeness of a Spirit rests on those waters. I bade him give duration to the shadow he flung upon the wave, that I might gaze on it during his absence. The first act of my immortality was to shut it from my sight. There must that black marble rest for ever.

“ Why need I tell you of the desolation with which centuries have passed over my head? At length I resolved to leave my solitude, to visit earth; to seek, if I could not recall, my humanity; to interest myself in my species, and help even while I despised them. The thousand hues of sunset were deepening into the rich purple of twilight, when I paused over a Sicilian palace. Lemon and orange trees crowded the terrace, and their odours floated upwards towards an apartment where every casement was flung open for the sake of air. One emaciated hand stretched out on the purple silk coverlet, the other extended towards an aged female beside, reclined a young and beautiful girl; she was dying. A week of fever had done the work of years; life had burnt fiercely out; and the fragile tenement, wasted and worn away, lay in that languid repose which is the harbinger of death. The long black hair hung in pall-like masses; it had been loosened in the restlessness of pain. Her mother kept bathing the sunken temples with aromatics, but they throbbed no longer, and the sufferer motioned to her to desist. She now asked rest rather than relief; but life yet



## MEDORA

*Painted by H. Corbould    Engraved by J. Hayward*

put forth its last energy in affection, and clasping her mother's hand, she turned her large soft eyes to her father. He stood watching her, as though, while he watched, life could not escape. Suddenly, a slight convulsion passed over the face of the dying girl; she gasped as if for air, and raised herself on her pillow without assistance, but sank back with the effort;—she was dead. A wild scream broke from the mother, and she fell senseless by the bed. The father caught the lifeless hands of his child, and, mad with despair, implored her not to leave him. Loud sobs came from the further part of the chamber: there was now no one to disturb by that passion of sorrow.

“ Human misery is an awful sight. The old nurse approached the corse; she smoothed the long dark hair,—she placed a chaplet of roses on the brow, and a few fresh flowers in the lifeless hand. The rich light from the open casement fell on the white dress, and still whiter face, with a mocking cheerfulness. The aged creature could restrain her grief no longer; she rushed to a darker part of the room, and wept. A thought struck me: over the departed I had no power; but I could spare the agony of the living. Yes, I would take upon myself human relations, would bind myself by human ties,—I would be to them even as a daughter. The next moment I had assumed the shape of their child.

“ Far in an unfrequented track of the southern

seas lies a small island; there are aged trees and early blossoms; and amid them myriads of shining insects and bright-winged birds make the solitude glad with life; but they are its sole inhabitants. Once, driven away by a tempest from its ordinary course, a ship discovered the little isle. The Spaniards landed; they took possession in the name of the Madonna, and with pieces of grey rock piled up a cross. Human eye has never since dwelt on that lovely and lonely shore; but beneath the shadow of that cross lie the mortal remains of your cousin Medora.—Gradually I allowed some sign of returning life to appear; the old nurse, who was bending over the body, was the first to exclaim, ‘Bring a looking-glass, for there is’ breath within those lips.’ The slight cloud left on the mirror was as the very atmosphere of hope; eyes dim with weeping, cheeks pale with watching, were lighted up on the instant.

“I felt a new and keen happiness in the happiness I had given. \* It needs not to tell how I gradually recovered, and how the parents, whose very life seemed bound up in their child’s, were never weary of gazing on their recovered treasure. But a grief of which I had not dreamt awaited me. Medora had been betrothed to a young Sicilian nobleman. The moment an interview was permitted, the lover was at my feet, full of that hope and that joy he was never to know again. You are aware how the marriage was broken off, on the plea of a vow to the Virgin made

in the extremity of danger; but you know not the agony I inflicted, or that I endured, in listening to the passionate despair of Rivoli; and when he said, ‘Your death I might have borne—it was the will of God, and life would have lived on a hope beyond the grave; but thus to find you changed to me, to think that you can hold our love an offence in the sight of Heaven, and that I, who have loved, and who do love you so unutterably, that I should be the first sacrifice you offer up,—this, Medora, is more than I can bear!’

“In listening thus, how I repented me of my rash interference with the course of human life! If I had given joy, I had also caused more sorrow; and, worse, I had reason to question whether the grief of the marriage thus broken off did not embitter, despite of all my care, the brief period of Donna Maria’s life.

“I have now little more to say of myself. The last few years have been devoted to Don Manfredi’s declining age; wearisome has the task been, and still I have clung to it. I own, yet shun, the fatal truth, that my lot is but an awful solitude, without duties or affections—those ties and blessings of humanity.—And now for the wealth I offer you: I know not of its consequences, but I know those consequences can be but in your own acts. I do no more than a mere mortal might. On this interview there is imposed the condition—secrecy; on the possession of riches there is none.

The spirits of riches are the first and the meanest which yield to science : it shall be my care that they reach you in simple and ordinary channels. Speak !”

“ Give me,” exclaimed Leoni, “ give me wealth ; give me Lolah !”

A purple cloud filled the glorious hall ; again stupor overwhelmed him ; again he awakened, and there he was in the lonely summer-room, and Medora, with her pale child-like face and black garments, at his side ; but he met the large dark eyes filled with a strange wild light, and he knew it was no dream.

“ Leave me now,” said Medora ; “ but on your life be silent. Life and secrecy are one. Farewell !”

Dizzy with expectation, Leoni returned to the boat. The clock of San Francisco’s abbey struck ; he had been away but one hour. Pallid and abstracted, there was something in his look that effectually silenced the boatmen ; nay, they remained in gloomy stillness after he had left them.

“ He has met with a refusal,” at length said Stefano.

“ Rather say, that there is evil in yon dreary palazzo and that pale girl, and that their influence is on him. The lady Medora is kind and generous, but there is a curse follows her ; and when did ever gift of hers turn to good ?”

“ The notary Signor Grazie awaits your plea-

sure," said a domestic, on Leoni's entrance to his palace.

The notary's business was soon told. The Marchese Ravenna, a distant relative of the young Count, had made him his heir; and boundless was the wealth the aged miser left behind him. That evening saw Leoni a welcome guest at his uncle's; and but a few weeks fled past, ere orange-flowers bound the bridal tresses of his gentle cousin. The same day died Count Manfredi; and, as if her life were one with his, Donna Medora breathed her last at the very moment of her father's death.

"One, two, three; so late, so very late," exclaimed the Countess di Montefiore, "and Leoni still from home; there was a time when I dreamed not of keeping these solitary vigils."

Wearily Lolah arose from the velvet ottoman, and again the hour was struck by one of their own clocks, a few minutes later than the Abbey; it was succeeded (for the time-piece was a rare device of a skilful artist) by a sweet and lively air—one of those Neapolitan barcarolles which, like the glad music of Memnon's lyre, seemed inspired by the morning sunshine.

"Mockery," sighed the youthful watcher, "for the flight of time to be told in music!"

She began to pace the room,—that common resource of extreme lassitude, when sleep, to which the will consents not, hangs heavy on the eyelids.



Truly night was made for sleep ; since to its wakeful hours belongs an oppression unknown to the very dreariest hours of day. The stillness is so deep, the solitude so unbroken, the fever brought on by want of rest so weakens the nerves, that the imagination exercises despotic and unwholesome power, till, if the heart have a fear or a sorrow, up it arises in all the force and terror of gigantic exaggeration.

The Countess had long since dismissed her attendants ; yet the pearls still braided her hair, which hung nearly to her feet, in two large plaits ; and a white silk robe, carelessly fastened at the waist, shrouding her whole figure in its loose folds, gave her something of that ghost-like appearance with which our fancy invests the habitants of another world. And truly, with her pale cheek and melancholy eyes, she looked like a spirit wandering mournfully around the scene of former pleasures. Yet what luxury was there not gathered in that gorgeous room ? The purple silk curtains excluded the night-dews, while they allowed the air to enter freighted with odours from the orange-trees on the terrace below. The nuns of the Convent of St. Valerie, so celebrated for their skill in embroidery, had exerted their finest art in transferring all the flowers of spring to the white velvet ottomans : you might have asked, which was real—the rose on the cushion, or that which hung from the crystal vase ? The jewels lavished on the toys scattered round, had been held a noble dower by the fairest maiden

in Sicily. On the walls were pictures, each one a world of thought and of beauty. The Grecian landscapes of Gaspar Poussin, who delighted in the graceful nymph, and the marble fane which recalled a mythology all poetry; as if in his dreams he had dwelt in Thessaly. The rugged scenes which Salvator Rosa loved to delineate—the forest, dark with impenetrable depths; the bare and jagged rock, rough as if Nature had forgotten it; the aged pine riven by the lightning, and beside it some bandit, desolate and stricken as the tree by which he stood, but with a cruel defiance in his looks, as though he longed to resent on all the injuries he had received from a few. Near at hand hung one of the glad earths and sunnyskies in which the more buoyant spirit of Claude Lorraine revelled, as if its native element were sunshine. There were portraits too, the noble and the beautiful of her race; faces which told a whole history—and yet Lolah marked them not.

But one twelvemonth had she been a bride, and her husband's presence was unfamiliar to his home. Day after day did some unkind friend—for when do friends not delight in the sorrow of the prosperous?—come to her with tales how the Count's wealth was lavished on others less lovely than herself. And even that very evening had her father been with her, telling her that no wealth could hold out against Leoni's reckless prodigality—against his mad passion for gaming. In pity to the gentle creature, who could only lean on his bosom and weep, he

might not tell her that the husband of her love was an object of universal suspicion, and that sorcery and the once stainless name of Montefiore were coupled together. He left her with those words of fondness which are never, and those words of comfort which ever are, said in vain. Wretched she had long been, but not till to-night had she owned the truth even to herself—owned that all her dreams of happiness, all the fairy creations of her fancy, had melted away, like the gardens and palaces she had seen painted on the air in the Bay of Naples.

Weak, selfish, and vain, Leoni's was the very nature which wealth corrupts; he looked upon it but as the source of self-gratification. He forgot that the power with which the rich man is endued, is a sacred duty, whose neglect brings its own punishment; and that he who seeks pleasure with reference to himself, not others, will ever find that pleasure is only another name for discontent. At first Lolah was the idol of his heart—she became his bride—and a few happy weeks were passed in retirement and bliss; but Leoni soon looked beyond the small circle of the heart. They went to Palermo, and there he took delight in magnificence; his vanity exulted in glittering display, it was gratified by envy and wonder. Fête succeeded fête, till he himself grew weary of his prodigal hospitality: he craved for variety; and Lolah's timid and gentle temper was ill fitted to be the check he needed. Gambling soon became a habit; his enormous losses were an excitement; he

knew he could repair them with a wish—he cared not, therefore, for the money he lost; but he desired to conquer fortune, and held success to be the triumph of skill. In the early part of his career, that evil and grudging feeling with which people regard great and sudden wealth, exhausted itself in prophecies of the certain ruin to which the young spendthrift Count was hastening; and when those prophecies were not fulfilled, their utterers were disappointed; they viewed it as a sin that he had proved their omens untrue. In sad truth, half our forebodings of our neighbours are but our own wishes, which we are ashamed to utter in any other form.

Gradually, the crowds at the Montefiore palace grew less noble; those whose consequence was diminished by its splendour, were the first to turn away; their example was followed by those who had nothing to gain; then went those who are ever led by example;—till the palace only gathered the dissipated and the dishonoured; the needy, who made want their plea, for even they needed an excuse; and the gamester, who was reckless whither he went, so that he indulged his passion. Old friends one after another became cold, and new friends were insolent and familiar. All this cut deep, and Leoni plunged still more madly into every possible excess; and when all other aids to forgetfulness failed, the red wine-cup was drained for oblivion.

Pale and sad the young Countess passed the weary hours in her splendid solitude; she felt the

loss of friends less than Leoni, for had she not lost her husband? That evening had, however, been spent from home; it was the time of the Carnival—she had been to a masque as an Indian maiden; and now sat up for Leoni's return, half in girlish vanity, half because she could not bear the day to close without seeing him: she knew that he would let himself in by a private portal, which he had had expressly made, and that he must cross that chamber on his way to his own. Chilly and fatigued, she again drew the rich flower-wrought cashmere around her; for a moment she sat, her cheek resting on her hand; at length she leaned back on the ottoman, and sunk into disturbed and half-conscious slumber. She was roused by a noise—and starting up to meet Leoni, saw a stranger in the act of putting aside the curtains of the window through which he was entering. Excess of terror made her speechless for a moment; when the man, who was in the garb of a boatman, said,

“For the love of the saints, be calm, lady! I would lay down my life in your service; just hear me.”

Lolah now recognised Stefano, who had before their marriage brought her many a note and flower from Leoni.

“Is the Count within?” asked he anxiously.

“I expect him every instant; but tell me your business at this strange hour.”

Stefano hesitated.



## LOLAH

*Painted by W. Boxall    Engraved by W. H. Mote*

“Perhaps it were best I should, and yet—do you know where I could find his Excellency?”

Lolah shook her head mournfully.

“Lady, I must then tell you all;” and he looked aside, and spoke hastily, as if unwilling to watch the misery his words must cause. “Lady, to-morrow this palace will be seized by the officers of the Inquisition, the Count—now St. Rosalie punish his enemies!—is accused of sorcery—to-morrow he will be arrested. My brother is one of their servants; but the Count is our old patron—he gave me a hint—I rowed hither—by means of a fishing-hook I fastened a rope to the balcony, and sprung up: I know every room of the palace, and thought to take my chance of meeting the Count Leoni; my boat lies below—a ship will sail from the bay at the break of day—they need sail fast, for they have better wine aboard than they would wish to have known in Palermo.”

“Holy Virgin! if my husband should not return!” exclaimed Lolah, wringing her hands in an agony. Stefano had not a word of comfort for such an emergency. Suddenly the Countess rose from her seat: “I will trust in the blessed saints for his return: what is the latest period that we can escape?”

“It will not be light this half hour, and I will answer for his safe pilotage while dark; but if the day once break, the fishermen will be abroad, and there will not be a chance of escape.”

Lolah sank on her knees, and remained for a few moments with her face hidden between her hands in earnest prayer. Rising from the ground, she hastily addressed Stefano.

“ Will you remain here and wait as long as you dare for the Count’s arrival? I will return in a few minutes; I only go to make some brief preparation for our flight.”

“ *Your* flight?” ejaculated the boatman, “ you are in no danger.”

“ It matters not,” answered she passionately; “ I will not leave my husband’s side.”

Ten minutes had scarcely elapsed, when she reappeared in a plain dark travelling dress, and dragging with her a large horseman’s cloak.

“ This will conceal him, as he must stay for no change of apparel. But can it be so long? why, it is a quarter of an hour since you told me we had but half a one;” and the gay and fairy chime of the time-piece told four o’clock.

“ It is very dark still,” said she, looking from the window.

“ Yes, lady, it is very dark, the moon set an hour ago; but do not you lean out, the night-dew is falling heavily.”

Again Lolah turned to the time-piece, the hand marked that five minutes more had passed away; she looked to Stefano, but he only shook his head and muttered some indistinct sound. A little rosary of coral and of the many-coloured lavas of Vesuvius



hung at her waist—she prized it, for it was her dead mother's gift to her in her earliest childhood, and it was linked with the hope and affection of other years: her hand trembled so that she could not count the beads, but she repeated the prayers, at first audibly, and then the words died away in faint murmurs; at length she herself knew not what she was uttering. Her cheek, which had been pale as the funereal marble, burned with crimson, her lips were white and apart—the fever of her mind had communicated itself to her frame. With an unsteady step she again approached the balcony—“Tell me,” said she, faintly, “is there a grey streak amid those clouds? I cannot see.”

“Lady, it is still dark; hist!” at this moment, a distant step was heard in the corridor; nothing but hearing made intense by anxiety could have caught it.

“Mother of God! I thank thee, it is Leoni!”

She sprang forward; but her head grew dizzy, and she leant for a moment against the table for support. Leoni entered the room, haggard with his excited vigil, his cloak disordered, his rich vest left open at the throat, as if in the agitation of the gaming-table he had loosened it to give himself air; a contraction, seemingly habitual, darkened his forehead; he was young still, but the expression and colours of youth were gone. He advanced moodily and abstractedly, when his eye was caught by the appearance of Stefano, who had lost not

a moment in fastening the coils of the rope to the balcony.

“Robber!” shouted he; but the hand which sought his sword was arrested by Lolah’s light touch on his arm.

“Be still, for your sweet life’s sake,” said she, in an earnest whisper, that fixed his attention at once; “yonder faithful creature has risked his for your’s; we must fly, or to-morrow dawns for you in the dungeons of the Inquisition; all is ready for flight, only come.”

Leoni turned still paler; then rallying with the high courage of his race, exclaimed, “Who dares accuse me? and what is my crime?”

“That matters not,” said Stefano; “my brother gave me the hint; you fly to-night, or are a prisoner in the morning. In the name of the good St. Rosalie, don’t stand talking; you have lost time enough already; we have settled every thing while waiting for you;—as if any good Christian ever kept such hours!” but these last words were muttered in an under-tone.

“Come, my husband, there will be opportunity enough for explanation; fling this cloak round you, and follow me,” said the Countess, stepping onwards.

“Never, Lolah,” rejoined Montefiore, startled by the danger, which a conscious feeling in his own heart foreboded was true; “never shall you be exposed to the hardship and danger of such a flight, for me, so worthless, so neglectful!” But she was already at the foot of the ladder.

“Come, Signor; ten minutes more, and we are lost!”

Leoni followed, though almost unconsciously; and in an instant more, Stefano was steering his boat into the bay.

“Lolah, why are you here?” burst from him in the bitter accents of self-reproach, as he felt her head sink on his shoulder.

“Nay, my Leoni,” said the low sweet voice on which he once hung with such passionate love, “where should I be but where rests all my earthly happiness? with my head on your heart, Leoni, love mine, I am very, very happy!”

Gently his arm enfolded the confiding and child-like form that rested upon him, and all the memory of their early tenderness gushed into his thoughts; while she, with a woman’s engrossing devotedness, forgot every thing but that her husband was once more her own.

“You must just pass for two runaways,” said Stefano, “who have bribed me to row you beyond a powerful noble’s reach, and who mean to stay from Palermo, till, for the daughter’s sake, the lover is forgiven.”

“Whither are we going?” asked Montefiore.

“On board yonder vessel, which bears a smuggling cargo; and pray you, at the port where she stops, lose no time in embarking for another. Do you remember the Marchese di Gonzarga?”

“Ay, the stripling! the sweeping away of

whose ducats is the only instance of luck that ever awaited me at that accursed rouge-et-noir table."

"I doubt you owe something of your present plight to him; he is nephew to the Grand Inquisitor."

"And my husband is then the victim of his vile revenge!" cried the Countess, in a tone of delight.

Stefano made no answer: the next moment they were close to the ship, and he, fastening the boat to its side by a rope, sprung on board, to be spokesman for the party. Lolah trembled as the fragile bark rocked to and fro beneath the dark stern of the vessel, from which hung a lantern, whose dim light shewed what she deemed their perilous position. Leoni might have felt the beating of the heart pillowed on his own; but he had himself been so long the sole object of his thoughts, that his wife's fear, not being shared by himself, never entered his mind.

"How provoking it is that I should have lost my last rouleau! I have not a ducat; and you hurried me so, that I had no time to bring away any thing!" exclaimed he, peevishly. "What the devil terms shall we come to with these rascals, without money?"

"I have here three rouleaux," said the Countess; "I should have brought away more gold, but for its weight—I therefore preferred my diamonds, as to their sale we must look for our future support."

A smile passed over Montefiore's face; dearly

did Loláh love his smile; but now rather, a thousand times rather would she have met his darkest frown.

“All is settled; you are to give the Captain fifty crowns on arriving in port; for the sake of his own pretty Agata, he said he would not be hard upon two young lovers:—I thought,” added Stefano, in a whisper, “I might so promise, as I knew my lady had brought jewels away with her.”

“Give me the rouleaux,” said the Count, “and do you take them, Stefano; and when I return I will increase them a hundredfold.”

“Keep your money, good your Excellency; what I have done was in honour and love for your noble house. Keep your gold; it would little benefit me, I trow!”

Leoni rose in anger, and began hastily to ascend the side of the ship. Stefano helped the Countess, who, as with his aid she climbed the knotted ropes, whispered,

“Take the gold, and lay it out in masses at the shrine of St. Rosalie, and this ring—my father gave it me; he will thankfully redeem it, and bless you, as his child does now.”

“Come, come, Stefano, here’s what will furnish you with many a merry night;” and Montefiore again pressed the money into Stefano’s hand, who did not now reject it: the voice in which he muttered his good wishes was inaudible; and as he sprung into his boat, the tears of a three-year-old child

stood in the eyes of the hardy rower. The Captain civilly shewed the fugitives into a small cabin; and a fresh breeze filling the sails, bore them rapidly from Sicily.

Next morning, all was astonishment and consternation in Palermo; there was the palace with its splendid ornaments, its almost regal train of servants; there were the gorgeous dresses, there were the golden caskets filled with jewels and perfumes; but where were the Count and Countess? The domestics searched every room in dismay; not only were they gone, but not a vestige remained of their flight. A strange suspicion rose in every mind, pale and affrighted they crowded together, and then surmise found speech. What if the demon, for whose wealth their lord had bartered his immortal soul—what if he had exacted, at length, his fearful tribute: had he carried off his victim bodily? But then the Countess, their gentle and pious mistress, could she be involved in such awful doom?—A loud knocking at the portal broke off their discourse; every one hurried to the door—to admit the officers of the Inquisition. All search was fruitless, all inquiry vain. The palace was confiscated, and its rich furniture sold; the Marchese di Montefiore was summoned to appear on a charge of sorcery; he came not to answer the accusation, and sentence of outlawry was passed against him. A thousand wild rumours were afloat, which finally merged in one—that unearthly retribution had

been exacted for unearthly riches. Yet there were two in Palermo who knew the truth; the father of Lolah, who died shortly after, a lonely and broken-hearted man; and Stefano—but he kept the secret as one of life and death; and when he perished in a storm at sea, it was buried with him in the deep and fathomless waters.

But now to return to our fugitives. At the first port they touched, they re-embarked, and finally landed at Marseilles; a small but lovely cottage on the sea-shore received them, an olive plantation encircled the house, and the Provence rose looked in at the casements. The far plains were covered with heath and thyme on one side, and on the other was the sea, where the rich vessels of the merchants seemed to sail to and fro for ever. Fear and fatigue had severely tried a frame so frail as that of Lolah; and her husband's apprehension on her account for a time recalled his love:—perhaps they are more inseparable than we are ready to admit. Leoni felt that he was the only link between Lolah and life—his care the barrier between her and death: at length his gentle watchfulness was rewarded by the smile returning to her lip, and the rose to her cheek. Lolah thought she was very happy; in truth, from her birth, nature and fortune had been at variance: her delicate health unfitted her for either crowds or late hours—a constitutional timidity made her shrink from strangers—she had neither the talents which require, nor the spirits which enjoy an enlarged sphere of action: the

affectionate monotony of her present life was just suited to her.

Not so to her husband, who soon desired more activity, more variety, more excitement: a thousand times did he ask himself of what avail was his boundless wealth, if he made it not the minister of pleasure? Every evening that he marked the sea redden beneath the setting sun, he vowed it should be the last. At length he resolved on leaving their cottage; and, after travelling for a few days, they settled in a superb *château* near Lyons. Lolah trembled at the magnificence which again surrounded them. Once she ventured to remonstrate on their lavish expenditure; but Leoni only laughed, and said, "You will not find here the miserable superstition of the Sicilians; and great part of my wealth was placed abroad. First we will dazzle these provincials, and then proceed to Paris."

In fact, Leoni feared yet to enter that most *caravanseraï*-like capital; he wished to be somewhat forgotten of his countrymen, before he risked meeting with them. Half Lyons was soon collected at the *château*: what was splendour to Leoni, unless it were envied and admired? Perhaps the secret of his character was, that he was a very vain man, and yet had nothing in himself whereby that vanity was gratified; this forced him upon external resources. Again he delighted in bewildering by his magnificence, and astonishing by its extent. But in this



enjoyment Lolah took no part; in this new display of riches, she saw but a confirmation of the suspicions which had driven them from Palermo: and Leoni—to whom, in spite of his selfishness, her devotion, her uncomplaining abandonment of home, friends, name, for his sake, had endeared her more and more, and who felt that Lolah was his only link with the past, the sole remembrance of his early and happy youth—Leoni felt bitterly the barrier that doubt drew between his wife and himself. He was mortified to think that his very power degraded him in her eyes; that she confounded him with the alchemists and sorcerers, whom he despised as they were despised in that military and feudal age. A thousand times he was on the point of revealing his secret, and then again the memory of the secrecy so mysteriously enjoined arose within him. A visitor at their fêtes, a passer-by on the road, who caught sight of the youthful couple, would have envied their happiness; but whosoever could have looked within on the hidden depths of their troubled minds, would have seen fear, discontent, sorrow for the past, and misgiving for the future.

One night there was a superb entertainment; the Countess presided, pale and melancholy; the Count, weary of himself, and therefore of his guests, secretly compared them with the brilliant groups that had assembled in his palazzo at Palermo, and thought how little his provincial set were worthy of the cost and taste bestowed upon them.

In reality, display had lost its novelty, and consequently its charm in his eyes. The evening had not half passed away, when Lolah was astonished by his coming up to her and whispering, "For Heaven's sake, find some excuse for dismissing these people! Illness will do; for I am sure you look pale enough."

She might have re-echoed her husband's words, for he himself looked wild and haggard. Still, it was near midnight when their guests dispersed; and Leoni—on returning from conducting la Presidente de Lanville, always the latest of the late, to her huge family coach—silently approached one of the windows, and stepping out upon the terrace, stood as if absorbed in the lovely view—and lovely indeed it was. Below, was a smooth turf, which sloped down to a lake, whose surface reflected the moonshine broken and tremulous; the moon herself was rising on the other side of the château, and so was invisible; but her light lay silvery on the grass, and lent a softness, sweeter even than colour, to many-shaped beds, which were filled with flowers. In the middle of the garden was a fountain; to a certain height the water shot up in a bright and straight column, suddenly the stream divided and came down in a glittering shower to the marble basin below, and the falling of this fountain was the only sound that broke the perfect stillness. A quiet step approached, a soft hand was laid on his arm, and Lolah whispered, "Is it not beautiful?" How often will the

lips frame some indifferent question, when the heart is full of the most important!

“Will you then regret to leave it?” said Leoni, as they wandered through the maze of odoriferous flower-pots, “for we must go to-morrow.”

Lolah gazed upon his face, but words died on her lips.

“That wearisome Madame de Lanville,” continued he, “entertained me this evening with her delight that she should soon have a worthy guest to introduce to me; for that in a week’s time the Count Gonzaga, the nephew of the great cardinal, would spend a few days at her house, on his way to the south of France; and she was so sure I should find him a charming acquaintance. Plague on the old simpleton, and the Count too! what cursed chance brings him here?”

“My Leoni, why should you fear him?” murmured Lolah.

“Fear him, nonsense! But it would be very disagreeable to have the old and foolish story which banished us from Palermo, set abroad in Lyons:” and, lost in gloomy meditation, he sank on a carved stone seat by the lake. For a moment the Countess stood irresolute by his side—suddenly dropping on one knee, she leant her beautiful head on his arm, and watching his countenance with those eloquent eyes which had never looked upon him but in love, said, in a low pleading voice,

“Leoni mine, my heart has never had one

thought hidden from you, how can you bear to shut yours so utterly from me?"

He made her no answer except by kissing her eyes, as if he might not see and resist their eloquent pleading: but his young wife had gained courage—the worst was over—and her very fondness, which made his anger such a thing of fear, now urged her to endeavour to persuade, if she could not convince. She implored him to say what was the secret of his wealth; to justify its possession, if possible—if not, to fling it from him: what lot could there be in life which she would not be ready to share with him? Had his wealth made him happy? oh, no! it had sown division between them; it had exiled him from his own land; it was now about to force him to become a wanderer again.

"I tell you, my beloved husband, this secret is to me even as death; I kneel to the Madonna, and my thoughts are not with prayer; in society I shrink from every eye with a vague but ever-present fear—a word, a look, sends the colour from my cheek, and curdles the life-blood at my heart; and yet I know not what I dread: and sleep, oh, sleep is very terrible! for then, Leoni, you tell me what it is death to hear, and I start from my pillow—but when I waken I disbelieve your guilt:—you guilty, Leoni? oh, no! no!" and again her head sank, while the moonlight fell on her pale cheek, and eyes glistening with earnestness and tears.

Weak and self-indulgent, accustomed to yield in

all things to the impulse of the moment, Leoni was a very unfit person to be intrusted with a mystery and a secret: he sufficed not to himself; he felt weary of his unshared thoughts; and at this moment he was irresolute—he would even have wished to throw all the responsibility of decision on the fragile and gentle creature by his side.

In the deep stillness of that moonlit midnight he told her all; his voice died in silence, which was interrupted by a faint shriek from his wife; she pointed to the lake, but strong terror made her speechless—a faint silvery outline of a form was seen in the distant air; it came nearer, and the shadow fell dark upon the wave; a stately and lovely female slowly advanced across the water, which yielded not beneath her shining feet. The flashing of her radiant eyes fell upon the culprit—she raised her hand, whereon shone the starry talisman as it shone when she bade the spirits give him wealth unbounded and at a wish. She beckoned Leoni. A power was on him which forced him to obey—he sprang towards the lake—he sank below the surface—twice he emerged from the bright waves, again they closed over his head, and the moon shone upon one unbroken line of light. The strange and beautiful being gazed on the spot with a look of horror; she wrung her hands as if in the helplessness of despair—a low cry came upon the wind, and its mysterious utterer had disappeared. An influence stronger than even fear or

love had riveted Lolah like a statue to the place ; but as that figure melted into air, a terrible life returned to her—she rushed towards the lake, and with one wild shriek plunged into its depths.

Next morning, the birds were singing among the boughs, the bees were gathering their early honey amid the flowers, the sun had turned the lake into a sheet of gold—when the servants were drawn to the spot by a light-blue scarf floating on the waters ; they knew it was what their mistress had worn the night before. The silver flowers embroidered on it, glittering in the sunshine, first caught the eye ; assistance was procured, and the bodies were soon found. The wreath of white lilies yet bound the raven tresses of Lolah, some of whose lengths had become entangled round the neck of her husband. They parted them not, but carried them to the château. Ere noon, every inhabitant of Lyons had mourned over their youthful, but marble-like beauty. None knew their history ; none ever solved the mystery of their fate—but there were many affectionate hearts that grew sorrowful for their sake—and kind hands buried them together in the same grave.

One morning a marble urn was found upon their tomb, though none could tell who placed it there. On it was exquisitely carved a veiled female figure, with hands clasped as if in prayer, and head bowed down as if weeping ; she was kneeling at the foot of the Cross : a scroll below was graven with one single word—Submission !