

ragamuffins in the populous streets; it was leafing when Petrarch indited pages to his Laura; when Dante gazed melancholily upon his Beatrice—Oh, what a little time we have!"

"Then let us make the most of it," he said.

He reached for her hand, which lay upon the cover; but, without apparent notice of his movement, she drew back her hand.

"I have waited patiently for weeks."

She faced him with an enigmatical smile, lighted a match, blew it out, and drew a line across the center of the table.

He laughed. "What, again?"

"Observe."

"Why, there is a break in it!" eagerly and joyously.

She leaned over. "So there is;" but there was no surprise in her voice.

"Is it possible for me to come through?"

"There is one way."

"Put the caskets before me, Portia; I shall not be less wise than Bassanio."

She touched her lips with the knuckle of a finger, in a mood reflective. "A camel and the needle's eye."

"That referred to the rich man. All the world loves a lover, even the solemn old prophets."

"Are you sure?" a return of the old malice.