

# PRISONERS

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## CHAPTER I

Grim fate was tender, contemplating you,  
And fairies brought their offerings at your birth ;  
You take the rose-leaf pathway as your due,  
Your rightful meed the choicest gifts of earth.  
ARTHUR C. LEGGE.

FAY stood on her balcony, and looked over the ilexes of her villa at Frascati ; out across the grey-green of the Campagna to the little compressed city which goes by the great name of Rome.

How small it looked ! what a huddled speck with a bubble dome, to be represented by so stupendous a name !

She gazed at it without seeing it. Her eyes turned towards it mechanically because it contained, somewhere within its narrow precincts, the man of whom she was thinking, of whom she was always thinking.

It was easy to see that Fay—the Duchess of Colle Alto—was an Englishwoman, in spite of her historic Italian name.

She had the look of perfect though not robust