

Sir Mortimer

much, in her gentle, filial sorrow, to her great chamber above the gardens, where she wrote and studied, and to her closet, where before an eastern window was set the low chair beside which she kneeled in prayer for her living and her dead. She prayed much alone, but once a day, when the morn was young, she sent for one who was named her gentlewoman indeed, but to whom all her train gave deference, knowing of the love between this lady and their mistress. The lady came, beautiful, patient, with lips that smiled on life, and wonderful dark eyes in which the smile was drowned. The Countess took her morning kiss and the fair coolness of her pressed cheek, then praised the flowers in her hands, all jewelled with the dew—a lovely posy to be set amongst the Countess's little library of pious works. Then on this as on other days the two fair women read together, their soft voices making tremulous music of the stately Latin. The reading done, they kneeled side by side, dark hair against light, praying silently, each her own prayers. It was a morning rite, poignantly dear to them both; it began and helped upon its way the livelong lingering day. They arose