

Empress Octavia

under the lion's claws, her firmness of character had been crushed, the horror of that time still weighed upon her heart. When Rufus visited her in her illness, he made a favorable impression upon her, his resolute nature awed her, and she dared not oppose her parents' wishes. But, since the Jew had become one of the Emperor's favorites, she no longer understood him.

Gazing out into the blue radiance of the moonlight, she ventured to sing a song under her breath. Rufus asked harshly what it meant, and she stopped, —

"I will light a lamp," she said timidly.

"Why? The moon shines brightly enough," he answered. Lucretia suppressed a yawn; and he asked whether she always felt sleepy in his society, and when her eyes filled with tears, he looked at her so sternly that she forced them back in alarm. Her fear seemed to touch his heart. Kissing her, he said: "Do not be angry with me, Lucretia! You know I do not mean what I say." The words had their effect upon her timid nature, and she embraced him with her white arms, while, for a time, he condescended to treat her tenderly.

"Oh, how beautiful the night is at your side!" she whispered, almost believing that