

gazed, the colour began to surge back strongly to his face. Her sumptuous calm smote him like a vision from the mighty past.

"Semiramis, Queen of Nineveh!" he murmured, enthralled.

Then he saw her hand half stretched towards him from the sleeve of the gorgeous tunic, with the long fingers pale and limp, yet forming themselves, as it almost seemed, into some gesture of appeal. Perhaps he began to realise at that moment something of the love he had repudiated,—a love for which he had sought in vain from her English sister,—for his face grew grey again, touched by a vague remorse, and unconsciously he obeyed her mystic beckoning. And when he was closer, she drew him on still, until he needs must see the sombre rings about the eyes, the heavy shadowed lids, the poor lips, red yet and half parted, but grave, now, after that last smile of hers!

And suddenly he was smitten anew by her loveliness—not the superb thing of the moment before—but some strange touching purity of expression on the dead face, lifted and turned a little aside from him on its tender throat, with the black massed hair shading it mysteriously.

And that hand stretched towards him! He stooped and caught the poor limp thing to his breast.

"Mahlee!" he cried huskily, and bent to cover with a man's passionate kisses the exquisite fingers which lay in his. But stooping closer, he caught as upon that night under the locust tree, their pale golden gleam, and again that old subtle aversion, which he had never named to himself, revived within him. Slowly, almost reluctantly, as he had done once before, he let the hand fall before his lips had touched it.

Then for a long moment he gazed at her. And the blood receded again from his face, until it had assumed its old pallor. His eyes were gentle, infinitely pitying,