

**CHRISTIE  
JOHNSTONE:  
A NOVEL**

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Christie Johnstone: a novel by Charles Reade

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**CHARLES READE**

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LA FEMMINA  
CATTOLICA



# CHRISTIE JOHNSTONE

A NOVEL

BY

CHARLES READE



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## CHRISTIE JOHNSTONE.

### CHAPTER I.

VISCOUNT IPSDEN, aged twenty-five, income eighteen thousand pounds per year, constitution equine, was unhappy! This might surprise some people; but there are certain blessings the non-possession of which makes more people discontented than their possession renders happy.

Foremost among these are 'wealth and rank;' were I to add 'beauty' to the list, such men and women as go by fact, not by conjecture, would hardly contradict me.

The fortunate man is he who born poor, or nobody, works gradually up to wealth and consideration, and having got them dies before he finds they were not worth so much trouble.

Lord Ipsden started with nothing to win; and naturally lived for amusement. Now, nothing is so sure to cease to please as pleasure, — to

11

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amuse, as amusement. Unfortunately for himself he could not at this period of his life warm to politics; so, having exhausted his London clique, he rolled through the cities of Europe in his carriage, and cruised its shores in his yacht. But he was not happy!

He was a man of taste, and sipped the arts and other knowledge as he sauntered Europe round.

But he was not happy.

'What shall I do?' said l'ennuyé.

'Distinguish yourself,' said one.

'How?'

No immediate answer.

'Take a prima donna over,' said another.

Well, the man took a prima donna over, which scolded its maid from the Alps to Dover in the *lingua Toscana* without the *bocca Romana*, and sang in London without applause; because what goes down at La Scala does not generally go down at Il Teatro della Regina, Haymarket.

So then my Lord strolled into Russia. There he drove a pair of horses, one of whom put his head down and did the work; the other pranced and capricoled alongside, all unconscious of the trace. He seemed happier than his working brother; but the biped whose career corre-

sponded with this playful animal's, was not happy!

At length an event occurred that promised to play an adagio upon Lord Ipsden's mind. He fell in love with Lady Barbara Sinclair; and he had no sooner done this than he felt, as we are all apt to do on similar occasions, how wise a thing he had done!

Besides a lovely person, Lady Barbara Sinclair had a character that he saw would make him; and in fact, Lady Barbara Sinclair was, to an inexperienced eye, the exact opposite of Lord Ipsden.

Her mental pulse was as plethoric as his was languid.

She was as enthusiastic as he was cool.

She took a warm interest in everything.

She believed that government is a science, and one that goes with *copia verborum*,

She believed that in England government is administered, not by a set of men whose salaries range from eighty to five hundred pounds a year, and whose names are never heard, but by the First Lord of the Treasury, and other great men.

Hence she inferred that it matters very much to all of us in whose hand is the rudder of that state vessel which goes down the wind of public

opinion without veering a point, let who will be at the helm.

She also cared very much who was the new Bishop. Religion — if not religion, theology — would be affected thereby.

She was enthusiastic about poets; imagined their verse to be some sort of clue to their characters, and so on.

She had other theories, which will be indicated by-and-by; at present, it is enough to say that her mind was young, [healthy, somewhat original, full of fire and faith, and empty of experience.

Lord Ipsden loved her! It was easy to love her.

First, there was not in the whole range of her mind and body one grain of affectation of any sort.

She was always, in point of fact, under the influence of some male mind or other, generally some writer. What young woman is not, more or less, a mirror? But she never imitated or affected; she was always herself, by whomsoever colored.

Then, she was beautiful and eloquent. Much too high-bred to put a restraint upon her natural manner, she was often more naïve, and even brusque, than your would-be aristocrats dare to