

AN UNWILLING WITNESS

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An Unwilling Witness by Annette Lyster

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ANNETTE LYSTER

**AN UNWILLING
WITNESS**



"Lean on me, Mamma."—Page 33.

Frontispiece.

AN
UNWILLING WITNESS.

BY

ANNETTE LYSTER,

AUTHOR OF "KARL KNAPP'S LITTLE MAIDENS," "HARRY'S PERPLEXITIES,"
"WHAT SHE COULD," "RALPH TRULOCK'S CHRISTMAS ROSES,"
"THE WHITE GIPSY," "ALONE IN CROWDS," ETC. ETC.

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CHAPTER I.

SIR RODNEY'S WILL.

IN a large, dimly lighted room, with her chair drawn close to the fire, and some delicate needle-work in her hand, though she was not working, sat a fair, delicate-looking young woman in deep mourning. It was widow's mourning, for she wore a cap with long white lappets and the peculiar border which only a widow wears, but her face was so extremely youthful that it was hard to believe that she was really a widow. The room, handsomely furnished with every appliance for comfort that the ingenuity of man has invented, was a bedroom, and as the fair young widow sat and mused, a pair of keen dark eyes was watching her from the half-curtained bed.

Presently a few tears ran down the pale cheeks, and the occupant of the bed grunted in a manner so odd and unexpected that the lady started, put her handkerchief hastily to her eyes, and turned softly in her chair to look at her patient.

“I am awake, child. Come here, I want to speak to you.”

She got up, laid down her work and went over to the side of the bed.

“Go and pull up the blinds, I want to see you as well as talk to you.”

A faint look of surprise crossed her face, but she went silently to the window and drew up the venetian blinds, admitting the brilliant rays of the setting sun. It was October, and the sun was bright, though not very hot.

“Stand at the other side of the bed, and let me look at you.”

Still in silence, and with the slow step which in one so young tells of either a sad heart or failing health—perhaps of both—the lady obeyed him. She stood quietly by the bedside, looking down. Hers was a sweet face, and needed only a little colour to be lovely. But colour there was none; the cheeks were white and the lips the faintest possible pink—only the dark-brown