

ZARAH, A ROMANT OF MODERN LIFE

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Zarah, a Romant of Modern Life by Troubadour

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TROUBADOUR

**ZARAH, A ROMANT
OF MODERN LIFE**

Z A R A H

A Romance of Modern Life

BY

TROUBADOUR.



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10, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND.

1879.

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280. o. 821.

"Behold, while thy servant is at thy side,
He will pour forth the treasures of his memory,
As the fountain sendeth her stream
Beside the pathway, for the refreshment
Of him that walketh thereon."

HASSAN, *Story-teller and Poet*, in "*The Talisman*."

"Even to this day we ourselves dream grotesque adventures."

DISRAELI, "*Amenities of Literature*," p. 28.

EPIGRAPH.

THE idea of the following *Metrical Romance*, (if it may be so styled,) was originated by the sad story of a young woman, a lady of birth, education, and position, who was heard by the Author, on a miserable night some years ago, singing in the streets round the Close of Exeter Cathedral. The outlines of her tragic history, as traced by herself, were sufficiently suggestive to furnish the framework of the "Winter's Tale"¹ now submitted to that benign being, the "Gentle Reader."



ERRATA.

- Page 5, line 18, for "ev'n" read *ev'r*.
Page 15, line 14, for "best" read *last*.
Page 28, line 15, for "cav-class" read *cavclass*.
Page 28, line 16, for "cowers" read *lowers*.
Page 51, line 20, for "chief" read *chiefs*.
Page 87, line 14, for "form" read *from*.
Page 95, line 8, for "pleasure's" read *pleasures*.
Page 165, last line, for "guillotine" read *gullotine*.
Page 190, line 18, for "detracton" read *detracton*.

footsteps hurrying near;
For hearts are beating faster with dread sense of
haunting ill.
The grim and ghastly lamps flicker faintly here and
there;
But the hell-lights of gin palaces pale no "uneffectual
fire,"
And the drunkard's brute-like howl startles e'en the
sullen air :

Hark! through all there trills weird, plaintive sounds,
as of Eolian lyre,
Yet of human voice—A woman's voice, that sing-
eth—strange! of love,
Of purity, and peace, and joy. How marvellous
such strain
From such a singer in such scene! like the murmur
of a dove
Where charnel ravens croak. Still is there torture's
pain,
Woe's agony and ruin's wail underheard, although
the words
Breathe out fond thoughts of "home, sweet
home." What mockery it seems!
Like Egypt's festal skeleton, or as quav'ring notes
of birds
In gilded cages prisoned. Fitter far the wildest screams
From the white lips of despair; for beneath the
foreign cloak
On that singer's fragile frame there ebbs a breaking
heart!
'Woman, woman, who art thou? Oh, if memory
doth not choke
All utterance of thy sorrow, speak; tell whence an
what thou art.'

The "still, small voice" of pity strikes a chord within
her breast,
And wakes remembrance from its trance. With
sharp and sudden cry
And shudd'ring start she falters,—' O my Saviour! to
Thy rest
Take the weary wand'rer home, where my loved, my
lost ones lie.'
' She is fainting! she is falling! help—support her—
bear her hence
To some refuge for the wretched ere the failing
spirit sinks '—
Mercy's arms outstretch to succour—kindness thrills
the torpid sense,
And from holy Love's elixir her soul revival drinks.

.

Weeks pass—physicians' skill and ministering care
Have wrought illusive change. Life's lamp relit
illumes
Those eyes once more, albeit, now unearthly light
is there,
Like the phosphor gleam that quiv'reth through
nocturnal glooms.
On the cheeks' transparent pearliness a hectic flush
Glow's fervidly, and the low voice, still lute like, strives

With painful energy to liberate the rush
Of crowding thoughts. And when the longed-for
hour arrives
That brings the faithful chaplain to her side, her
breath
Flutters more nervously, for he was one she met
In sunny youth-time, while no passing shade of death
Fell on her flow'ry pathway. Ah! in vain regret
Aches o'er the bygone. He with classic laurels
crowned
Was fresh from the academy's arena, when for rest
And strength, Antæus-like,³ he sought his native
ground,
And in his childhood's home was fost'ringly caressed.
It was a rectory in fair Devonshire—a nest
Of love and peace embower'd upon the outmost verge
Of a sweet sylvan village, under tufted crest
Of sunlit hills, whence oft would joyaunt streams
emerge
With songs of welcome. Near, the hamlet church
upraised
Its spire, that pointing heav'nward mutely taught
the soul
Whither to tend, ev'n to the Fane, where God is
praised