

**GÉLTA; OR, THE CZAR
AND THE SONGSTRESS.
A NOVEL**

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Gélta; or, The czar and the songstress. A novel by Nadage Dorée

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NADAGE DORÉE

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MISS NADAGE DORÉE.

GÈLTA;

OR,

THE CZAR AND THE SONGSTRESS.

A NOVEL.

UNION

CALIFORNIA

BY

NADAGE DORÉE.

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THIRD AND REVISED EDITION.



NEELY COMPANY,
NEW YORK. CHICAGO. LONDON.

EC1897D

to

MY DARLING MOTHER (Sélig):

whose unselfish, pure and high ideal of life, has been the beacon light which has safely guided me past the innumerable temptations, which beset a young girl in her lonely battle with the world.

In reverent memory, this humble effort

Is Dedicated,

by the Author.

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

GELTA,

OR,

The Czar and the Cantatrice.



CHAPTER I.

IT WAS a cold, rainy day towards the end of January, and Gelta Dechon was loitering through the spacious rooms of the British Museum with that listlessness, with which one is apt to saunter about a museum on a dull, rainy day. She sometimes lolled over the glass cases of coins, sometimes admiring an Etruscan vase, sometimes studying the sarcophagus of an Egyptian mummy, and sometimes trying to comprehend the allegorical paintings on the lofty ceilings.

Whilst she was gazing about in this idle way her attention was attracted to a distant door at the end of the room, which, though she had many times visited the room before, she had never observed. The door was closed, but every now and then would open and some solitary being would steal forth, when instantly it would close again. There was an air of mystery about this that piqued her languid curiosity, and she determined to attempt

the passage of that strait, and to explore the unknown regions beyond. She tried to open the door but found it locked; she knocked, but no response. Then a monotonous voice reached her, saying, "The bell to the right, Madam!"

She turned towards the Egyptian mummies, whence the sound seemed to come, thinking, "Can this be a remnant of Cleopatra's voice?" Then for the first time that afternoon she perceived the attendant who was drowsily sitting between two confined mummies; and who was now with half-awakened gestures trying to indicate the bell to the right.

Gelta saw it and thanked him. Upon pulling the bell the door yielded to her hand with that facility with which the portals of enchanted castles yield to the adventurous knight errant.

She found herself in a narrow, short passage, and was confronted by an attendant who, indicating a register to the left which was on a high desk, said, "Please sign your full name and address."

After conforming with the rule, she entered the only apartment leading from the passage. She found herself in a small, square room whose walls were surrounded with glass cases. About the room were placed long stands, which also upheld glass cases containing precious gems and some of the finest cut cameos. A hushed stillness reigned through this apartment, excepting, as the guard at the entrance, after having thoroughly

scrutinized the new-comer, shifted his position of drowsy watchfulness. While she was standing before the *famous Portland Vase*, drinking in its beauties, her attention was, for one brief moment, attracted to a person who had just entered the room, and who seemed to be gazing at her. He was about twenty-four years of age, medium height, and had a style of countenance between the Roman and the Greek—a head that would have pleased a painter—his gray-blue eyes, though cold in expression, had the gleam of a poetical soul. There was a dignity in his whole appearance that indicated a being of a different order from the bustling race around him; he was a scion of the Imperial Russian family, the Grand Duke Ivan Demetrius.

Gelta, after a hurried glance at the new-comer so as to assure herself it was not an acquaintance whose attention she had attracted, continued deeply interested in the different relics.

Amid the gloom and travail of existence, suddenly to behold a beautiful being, and as instantaneously to feel an overwhelming conviction that with that fair form forever our destiny must be entwined; that there is no more joy but in her joy; that in her sighs of love, in her smile of fondness, hereafter is all bliss; to be willing to violate in her favor every duty of society; this is to be a lover, and this is real love! Yes, it was this mighty passion that now raged for the first time in the heart of Demetrius, as pale and trem-