

**MONNA LISA; OR,
THE QUEST OF THE
WOMAN SOUL**

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Monna Lisa; Or, The Quest of the Woman Soul by Guglielmo Scala

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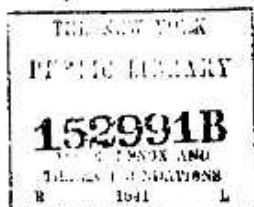
THE QUEST OF THE WOMAN SOUL

TRANSCRIBED BY

GUGLIELMO SCALA

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PREFACE

THE original of the following translation was a dilapidated manuscript discovered in a heap of rubbish in one of the old palaces of Florence which was undergoing alterations. This manuscript was undoubtedly one of the lost works of the great artist Leonardo da Vinci. The chirography was certainly his, written backward with the left hand, from right to left, and requiring the use of a mirror to decipher it. There was also his characteristic spelling, together with his peculiar fashion of often running two or three words into one to suit his convenience or the whim of the moment. Besides, many passages were of similar import to others which have been made known through the facsimile reproductions of Leonardo's writings, and from which it has been shown that it was a common habit of the artist to write out over and over in different phraseology those thoughts that seemed to have especially pleased him. Fi-

nally, on the inside of the cover—which was of gray cardboard and decorated by Da Vinci's favorite design of twisted cords and knots—was the following inscription, written in the delicate handwriting of the eighteenth century:—

“1753, 5 Marzo—This *codicetto* (little manuscript) of Leonardo da Vinci belonged formerly to the Signore Don Giambattista Salucci, *cavaliere* of Milan, but living in Florence, and I, Gaetano Caecia, of Novara, bought it from the said *cavaliere* for twenty *gigliati*.”

The task of deciphering and translating this manuscript was of varying difficulty; for, though the first part was in a state of excellent preservation, the middle of the book was considerably torn and gnawed, probably by mice, and much of the concluding pages rendered illegible by mould. Where only a few words were missing, which could be readily inferred from the context, these have been supplied; in defective passages which were paralleled by others in the facsimile publications, the work of such learned decipherers of the master's handwriting as Richter, Ravaisson-Molliou, and Uzielli was of great assist-

ance; still, there were many portions where it was thought best to make no attempt at restoration, but to leave the reader to supply from his own imagination what was wanting.

It should be stated, however, that in arranging the translation for publication, the solid matter of the original has been divided into paragraphs, chapters, and books; quotation marks have been supplied; and many a now superfluous *dissi* (said I) and *disse* (said he or she) have been omitted. Also, as the *codicetto* had neither title nor sub-titles, those which now appear have been inferred from the narrative.

Shortly after the translation was completed the original manuscript was unfortunately destroyed by an accident, so that the following pages contain all that survives of what was probably the last writing of the great master of the Renaissance.

GUGLIELMO SCALA.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

To avoid any misconception on the part of readers of this romance of "Monna Lisa," the publishers would explain that the work is one of pure fiction. "Guglielmo Scala" is the pen name adopted by an American literary worker who has devoted long study to Italian art and literature and who takes this method of sharing with the public the web of imagination woven for his own pleasure about Da Vinci and the subject of his famous portrait.