

THE WITNESS OF THE SUN

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The witness of the sun by Amélie Rives

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AMÉLIE RIVES

**THE WITNESS
OF THE SUN**



Amelia Ross

THE
WITNESS OF THE SUN.

BY

AMÉLIE RIVES,

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"On the earth the broken arcs; in heaven the perfect round."

ROBERT BROWNING.

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NO. 10
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ANNALS



TO
MY DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,
A THANK-OFFERING.

M11972

THE WITNESS OF THE SUN.

I.

WHAT was one to do with a young girl who sketched ideal heads on her slate underneath half-finished sums in decimal fractions, who altered the profiles of the Roman emperors in her Italian history, and who frankly declared that the unexplained draperies above the figures in the Sistine Madonna reminded her disagreeably of the parted curtains in a *coupé-lit*? Miss Matilda Herbert acknowledged herself at a loss. She even suggested, on occasions, the advisability of resigning her position as governess in the Demarini household. To this, however, the countess would never so much as give ear. Her good Herbert was as much a part of her daily life as her warm bath or her mandarin orange before breakfast. She had superintended the education of Ilva for ten years, why not for half as many more? Besides, one could easily prevent any tampering with the imperial outlines by purchasing an unillustrated history; and as for the presumptuous criticisms of Raphael, her good Herbert had only to close her ears and affect deafness.

When Ilva began the *Æneid*, however, it was even more painful. She openly ridiculed the famous hero, and not only laughed but drew him to scorn on that ever-to-be-dreaded slate,—yes, pictured him in ghastly white outlines, with tears twice the size of his noble head coursing down entirely to the wooden frame of her slate.

“He is always crying,” she said. “*Dio mio!* fancy trying to make a hero of a man who is always as damp as they say the climate of England is! He cries for everything,—absolutely. The fires of love? Pout! He could have put them out with a bucket of tears in less than twenty minutes. He a hero! He was an ass. See, here are his ears. Look, signorina, I make his ears!” And at this juncture she would hold up the slate with another libellous representation of the celebrated Greek.

Ilva was at ten a very tall child, with a figure which, though delicate, was supple and strong as steel. Her hair, of a pale silverish gold, suggestive of moonlight through amber, grew in five well-defined points above her noble, low brow. Her skin had the clear whiteness of almonds which have been soaked in water. Her eyes, large and lustrous, were the tint of a spring rain-cloud,—that indescribable bluish gray-violet which seems to make blue cold by contrast, gray harsh, and violet sentimental.

Her nose and mouth, while handsome, were too large for her face, at present. In a word, with some