

**LUNA: A MERE LOVE  
STORY, IN TWO  
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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Luna: A Mere Love Story, in Two Volumes, Vol. II by Margaret C. Helmore

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**MARGARET C. HELMORE**

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LUNA.

LUNA:  
A MERE LOVE STORY.

BY  
MARGARET C. HELMORE

"LORD, WHAT FOOLS THESE MORTALS BE!"  
—*Midsummer Night's Dream.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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# LUNA :

A MERE LOVE STORY.

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## CHAPTER I.

“ To-morrow we meet the same, then, dearest.  
May I take your hand in mine ?  
Mere friends are we—well, friends the merest  
Keep much that I resign :  
“ Yet I will but say what mere friends say,  
Or only a thought stronger ;  
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,  
Or so very little longer.”

THE sun shining gaily on the fair blue Thames, a west wind rustling through the branches of the trees, birds cheerily twittering, all looking bright and happy : so it seemed to one sad, desolate soul floating idly with the tide, self-abandoned to the fruitless indulgence of retrospection.



A hot, scorching sunshine, on the shadeless river, a burning sirocco wind, birds shrieking, fighting, in the parched and withering trees, and to the weary, disappointed man rowing energetically against the stream, only a great glaring blank, a hollow, unchanging future to anticipate.

Much of Diane's time was now spent alone on the river, whilst Harriette and her lover were occupied, and Gussie yawned and dawdled away the hours of the sultry summer days, over cigars and bad French novels.

Attracted towards a great mass of water-lilies growing near one of the frequent little aits near Teddington, Diane had secured her little boat to a low-growing willow bough, and stood, herself as pure and fair as the flowers she wished to gather, in the damp sedge of the island, lading the "Minnehaha" with her cargo of forget-me-nots and lilies.

Lancelot Chauncey, bronzed with his fortnight's sea-breezes, but tired and worn from a quick journey and a bad night's rest, passing Diane's island with his vigorous strokes, left the oars in the rowlocks, and, with his hot face resting in his hands, drifted backwards, and

was presently entangled in the floating garden of weeds and waterlilies.

"It is my Fate that brings me to you," he said, as, turning round, he perceived her standing within a yard of him. "May I land, and speak to you, for only a few moments?"

Her apparition had startled him, for it had been so sudden, and she looked so ill and shadowy, whilst with her the wild tremor of joy and surprise at recognizing him prevented all possibility of speech. He accepted her silence as permission, and she gave him her hand as he stood beside her.

"Where is Lord Lonville's yacht 'Stella'?" she asked, her native calm asserting itself.

"At present she is at Cowes, but to-morrow we go to Plymouth. Why are you here alone, Miss Deahon?"

She took no notice of the question, but exclaimed,

"Plymouth! That is where Mrs. Carewe has gone. Do you like it? is it a nice place?"

"I have never been there," he replied. "Lonville goes there every year; he is a Devonshire man. I wonder whether you are going to ask me why I am here, Luna!"

"Because you are a Will-o'-the-wisp—you love change, so you dash up to London and take a boat to come and give Minnie a pleasant surprise," she said smiling.

"What will you think of me when I confess that I had not the slightest thought of seeing Minnie; that I did not even hope to see you?"

"You are on your way to somewhere, then?" she said.

"Let me tell you; it may amuse you to know it, and you are too kind to be angry with me. I was so weary with our large, noisy party, and did so long for a little rest, that I made a futile excuse for going to Town, with a friend who was obliged to leave us yesterday; and as I need not return till to-night, impulse made me come down here, or rather to Richmond, and take a boat to row past your lawn. The utmost I expected was a glimpse of your white gown, among the trees in the garden."

He must love her, then, she thought; but would he wait for her to tell him she was all his own? He could not be capable of taking a revenge upon her for having slighted his love—revenge by humbling her into a volun-