

**LUNARIA SAXIFRAGE;  
OR, TEMPER  
AND TRIUMPH**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649356652

Lunaria Saxifrage; or, Temper and triumph by Lunaria Saxifrage

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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BY THE AUTHOR OF

"MADAME DE GASCOINE"

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LONDON:

WILLIAM TWEEDIE, 337, STRAND.

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1862.

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## CHAPTER I.

### BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF LUNARIA.

“WELL, Nurse,” said Squire Saxifrage, “what news? How’s your lady?”

“Very low, Sir; you have a little daughter, a beautiful little baby, but its mother is, we fear, sinking fast.”

The Squire, who loved his wife next to his day’s sport, hunters, and a good glass of old port wine, started up, and hurried to his wife’s bedroom, where the stillness felt to him insupportably painful, and as foreboding some calamity. “Ella, dear love, are you so very ill?” he said, tenderly stooping over her, and kissing her brow, clammy cold with the dew of death. She could not answer; she looked a look of recognition, but he had come too late! She died—she never saw her child. Her husband wept, looked sad, and for a couple of weeks stayed at home, sending for his baby every day after dinner, when he pleased Nurse by admiring her charge, and sighed, as he remembered

“Ella,” and how grieved she was when her first-born, her son Edward, died.

Dewsbury Castle, the home of our heroine, was all that could be desired, and as the little Lunaria was carried by Nurse in the splendid park, and laid on a warm rug, under the shelter of the noble oak trees, soothed to sleep by the cawing in the rookery behind the venerable and magnificent ivy-covered Castle, many ideas of grandeur and splendour for her nursling passed through the mind of the old woman.

The christening was attended by all the neighbouring gentry, and the child grew up, in every sense of the word, a spoiled heiress. Her father admired her, and spoke of her beauty and talents, before her. The servants idolized her, and she rode to admiration by the age of ten, and was a good shot by twelve. She had a clever tutor, with whom she learned from attachment, but, poor child! her will was a law, and woe be to any who contradicted her. Being much in the open air, she was healthy, so she was not cross-tempered; she had a bright, kind smile and soft word for all, but fits of passion, if thwarted in the merest trifles, destroyed the beauty, alike of body and mind. She was a lovely girl, and had she been judiciously reared, few could have equalled her in loveliness of disposition. Her father laughed, when her dark eye kindled with rage, and her proud pouting lips gave expression to words she had learned from himself. Poor



Lunaria! she was as wild and as untamed as the Arab colt; yet, as even it, when caught, subdued and domesticated, has a warm, loving, grateful heart; we hope, yet, something better for our heroine than to grow up like the wild heather of the moors. Once or twice she had suffered so acutely after her fits of rage, that even Nature taught her to subdue her temper a little. A pet bird would not drink when Lunaria held the crystal fount to its mouth; angry, she seized the little warbler, and too rudely making it immerse its head in the water, it gasped, and closing its bright eyes died in her hand. How she wept! how she hated herself! she could not be comforted; she would not eat, and refused to see even her tutor, but sat all the evening on a low seat, sobbing, and with her little favourite clasped to her breast, fell asleep, and softening tears bedewed her pillow. Again, a peasant child displeased her, and she struck the little offender; the child sickened and died, and, although her blow in no way injured the child, Lunaria could not forgive herself, and for months the sight of the dying child smote her heart continually. She could not own her fault, seek forgiveness, and enjoy sweet peace of mind; pride ruled over her, and yet daily she carried fruit, flowers, and every luxury to the peasant's child; but when the little invalid thanked her, Lunaria felt self-reproach, and she could not pardon her own sin. She knew little of what is

called religion ; she repeated her prayers and her catechism, all perfectly. She went to the parish church once every Sunday, and as she increased in beauty every year, she was not displeased at the gaze of admiration as she seated herself in the family pew, the sole representative of the ancient house of Dewsbury. She loved her father, but could not respect him, and yet she had a warm affection for her horses, dogs, and old favourite servants, and last, though not least, her tutor. She was as happy as her nature would allow her. She had no anxious fears, no hours of sickness, little sorrow ; she had no wish ungratified : naturally clever, she liked her lessons, and, as she was never allowed to study but when she wished, her books and tutor were alike a recreation and companionship. She rarely got angry with her teachers, as " Knowledge is power." She felt gratitude and respect for those who knew more than herself, and, as her young governess sang some plaintive airs, Lunaria, ashamed of such womanly weakness, would turn away to conceal the tears that would flow from these dark (but too often angry) eyes. Thus passed our heroine's childhood, but she attached herself to none. Her mind was too masculine, and yet her soft, sweet voice bespoke the flood of tenderness within—pent up by an invulnerable pride.

## CHAPTER II.

## EDUCATION AND BETROTHMENT.

HER father's associates were not of a character to influence his child—elderly men, sportsmen, like himself. She was admired by them in the hunting-field, as a first-rate huntress, a daughter worthy of such a father! Lunaria was no more gratified by their approbation than if they praised her horse or hounds; having no rival, she knew no vanity, and having been flattered from infancy, it all fell harmless. How different from the child of poverty and adoption, unloved and never admired; its childhood blighted by coldness and constant fault-finding; its eyes dimmed with unshed tears; its little heart withered in the bud! How the first voice of sympathy wins the heart, and the first word of love enchants, e'en enslaves the soul! Ah! that parents—above all, mothers or female guardians,—knew the misery that follows such coldness on their part. An unmeaning word of flattery, a kiss, given from self-gratification, wins the orphan maiden's heart, and unites her for life to one totally unworthy of her. In the same way, our heart bleeds for the young milliner, shop-girl, and domestic servant, placed to earn their bread in the