

**A TANTALUS CUP.
A NOVEL. IN THREE
VOLUMES. VOL. II**

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A Tantalus Cup. A Novel. In Three Volumes. Vol. II by Mrs. Harry Bennett - Edwards

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MRS. HARRY BENNETT - EDWARDS

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A TANTALUS CUP.

A Novel.

BY
MRS. HARRY BENNETT-EDWARDS.

" Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though strong and brave,
Still like muffled drums are beating
Funeral marches to the grave."
LONGFELLOW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



London:
SAMUEL TINSLEY & CO.,
10, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND.

1879.

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A TANTALUS CUP.



CHAPTER I.

A SOFT roseate light crept in through two tall painted windows, works of art by the same immortal hand which, in Nurnberg, glorified the frescoed St. Sibald's with the gift of those wondrous transparent pictures wherein the colours blend with such perfect harmony you question where one begins and where the other ends. Zaré Landrelle had bought these windows from an old convent in the suburbs of the city, a place so fallen

into decay, so poor, that it parted with its treasures for the golden staff of life. These windows were the pride of Zaré Landrelle's dwelling wherever she lived. Money was no object to her; she had carried them to all quarters of the globe, and had set them up in whatever city she chose to make her home. If they should be destroyed, why, she could get others equally perfect. 'What was the use of beautiful things if you could not make them the companions of your life?' she argued, 'or the use of money if you have to exist without beauty?'

It was necessary to her that her surroundings should accord with her tastes; she had married Leonardo Landrelle that it might be so. He was dead now, but she did not care; the treasures he had spent his life in collecting survived him, and would survive her too. Afterwards, what mattered? she would not know their fate; she did not

know her own; she lived in the present, and for the present.

The middle window of this room was turned into a green-house filled with rare ferns and exotics which breathed their perfumes over Ellis Lyndon in tender heart-touching sweetness. The ceiling was a mosque-shaped dome, a golden vault deep-set with jewels of cut glass, from whose hidden depths the many-coloured rays, absorbing each other, resulted in one indefinable tint of soft warm mellowness. It was in imitation of the Red Castle of the Moorish Kings of Granada, the *Kal at al hamra* of the old Arabic tongue, the Alhambra of our modern corruption.

The walls of this room were covered with frescoes, faithful copies from old masters. Zaré Landrelle had chosen her subjects, and they were reproduced by living artists—personal friends, who, for love of their

patron, strove to do justice to the great works they were sent to copy, and for the money she paid them, thought neither time nor trouble wasted in the endeavour. And they succeeded: the result was perfection, or Zaré Landrelle would have taken up a brush and blotted them out with her own hand. She would have known had one line or one tint been untrue to its original. The floor was inlaid in Mosaic design, with many coloured woods; there was no carpet, but costly rugs and skins were spread about over it. Each separate piece of furniture, each ornament, was a work of art, and everywhere the eye rested on costly gems in silver, gold, and bronze, gathered together out of all parts of the world.

There were statuettes from the hands of some of the most celebrated sculptors in Italy, France and Spain; they were chiefly of ancient workmanship, and all of untold value.

Delicate hued specimens of old Dresden china; richly painted vignettes from Sèvres, not a few of them bearing priceless copies of pictures by Raphael and Tintoretto, executed with wondrous skill. Rare Wedgwoods of the earliest manufacture, cups and jugs which she had herself brought from La Doccia and Capo di Monti, all forms of faultless grace, on which the eye rested with perfect satisfaction. In another part of the room was some Etruscan pottery with strange basrelief moulding, some wonderful Roman terracotta jugs, dating back to the five hundredth century before Christ, and ancient Greek vases in great variety.

Everywhere there lay about knick-knacks of wrought gold and silver from the East, glowing with jewels, and rich in wonderful colouring; and amidst them all the hand of nature, in the varied forms of growing flowers placed with lavish profusion in every suitable corner