

# Toxin

By OUIDA

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## CHAPTER II.

Veronica Laraniera was charmed to find her necklace; she was still more charmed to find an adventure through it.

This beautiful youth with his starry eyes, soft with admiration, who had brought her back the opals, looked like a knight out of fairyland. She was young; she was weary of the seclusion of her widowhood; she was kept in close constraint by those who had authority over her; she was ready to reënter life in its enjoyments, its amusements, its affections, its desires. The tragic end of her husband had impressed and saddened her, but she had recovered from his shock. The marriage had been arranged by their respective families, and the hearts of neither had been consulted. Laraniera, however, had become much in love with her, and had left her all which it was in his power to leave, and that had been much.

"How clever it was of you to see my opals under the grass and the sand!" she said, a few minutes later, as Andrei presented Damer in the long, dim room hung with tapestries and rich in bronzes, marbles, pictures and mosaics. She was like a picture of Caterina Cornaro as she stood on the balcony of her house; her gold hair was encased in a pearl-net, and her cloak of red satin lined with ermine, lay on her shoulders and fell to her feet like the robes of a Duxess; for her dead lord she had worn regret. The balcony was filled with spiraea, whose white blossoms were like snow about her in



They Sang Together.

the starlight and lamplight as the gondola which brought Andrei and his companion to her palace paused below at the water-stairs. She threw her cloak on a couch as she spoke; she was dressed in black, but the gauze sleeves of the gown showed her fair arms, and the bodice was slightly open on her bosom; her face was bright like a rose above the deep shadow of the gown; her hair had been a little ruffled by the wind of the evening, as she had stood on the balcony.

"Madam," said Damer, as he bowed to her with a strange and unwelcome sense of embarrassment, "Prince Andrei should not have told you that I had such good fortune. I am no fit squire of mine."

She did not catch his meaning. She turned from him a little impatiently, and pressed Andrei.

She spoke of music. Andrei was acquainted with that art; there was a beautiful thing on the grand piano; he took it up and sang to it a Sicilian love song; she took it from him and sang Venetian barcarolle and stornelli; then they sang together, and their clear, youthful voices blended harmoniously. People passing on the canal stopped their gondolas under the balcony to listen; some Venetian gondoliers, some French and English, some American, some Italian, some of the other; behind them was the open casement, the balcony with its white spiraea; the lighted frontage of a palace on the opposite side of the canal. As they ceased to sing the people below on the water applauded again, and cried: "Brava! brava! brava!"

"Prince Andrei is a poet," said Damer, with a harsh tone in his voice.

"Who never wrote a verse," said Andrei, as he handed a cup of coffee to his hostess.

Through the closed windows the sounds of a chorus sang by the strolling singers below came faintly and muffled into the room; the lamplight shone on the white spray of the spiraea, which looked like a crystal of snow.

"If I had found the opals I should have been inspired by them," he added. "As it is, I am dumb and unhappy."

Veronica Laraniera smiled.

"If you are dumb, you are Orpheus."

"And if you are unhappy," said Damer, "you are only so out of wantonness because the gods have given you too many gifts."

"Or because he has stolen a piece of spiraea," said Veronica.

"I may keep my theft," asked Andrei.

"Yes. For you brought back the opals, though you did not find them."

Soon after they took their leave of her and went down to the waiting gondola. The beautiful musicians had drifted up from the water, colored the colors of their paper lanterns glowing through the dark. There was no moon. They did not speak to each other in the few minutes which carried them to their hotel. When they reached it they parted with a brief good night. Neither asked the other what his impressions of the evening had been.

When the young Sicilian prince, Donello Andrei, head of an ancient Italian family, had met with a hunting accident and the tusks of an old bear had brought him near to death, an English surgeon, in name Frederic Damer, was then in Palermo, and for him what none of the Italian sur-

geons dared to do, and so far as the phrase can ever be correct of human action, saved his life. A year had passed since then; the splendid vitality of the Sicilian had returned to all its natural vigor; he was only 24 years of age and naturally strong as a young oak in the woods of Etna. But he had a mother who loved him, and was anxious; she begged the Englishman to remain awhile near him; the Sicilian laughed but submitted; he and Damer had traveled together during several months, and were about in another month to part company; the Sicilian to return to his own people, the Englishman to occupy a chair of physiology in a town of northern Europe. Their lives had been briefly united by accident and fitted him, that at every step his narrow means galled and fretted him, and he had been a demonstrator, an assistant, a professor in schools, when his vast ability and relentless will fitted him for the position of a Helmholtz or a Virchow in that new priesthood which had arisen to claim the rule of mankind, and sacrificed to itself all sentient races.

In Andrei he saw all the powers of youth and wealth concentrated in one who merely used them for a careless enjoyment and a thoughtless good nature which seemed to himself as senseless as the dance in the sun of an amorous negro. Andrei and the whole of his family had shown him the utmost gratitude, liberality and consideration, and the young prince had from childhood been passionately attached to a father who would not have suffered from an emperor; but Damer in his turn felt for the Sicilian and his people nothing but the contempt of the great intellect for the unutilized mind.

In the position of the scientist who sees a child early making a kite to divert itself out of the parchments of a treatise in an unknown tongue which, studied, might have yielded up to the student the secret of perished creeds and of lost nations. There is no pride so poignant, no supremacy so unobtainable as those of the intellect. It may stand, like Belshazzar, a beggar at the gate; but, like Belshazzar, it deems itself the superior of all the crowds who drop their heads to it, and while it stretches out its hand to them its lips curse them.

"I wish I had lived when this collar was new," Veronica Laraniera said, when her Jewellers returned to her the opals restored to their pristine brilliancy. "Life in Venice was one long festa then. I have read of it. It was all masque and serenade and courtship and magnificence. People were not philosophical about life then; they lived—Mina Laraniera was a beautiful woman. They have her portrait in the Belle Arte. It is by Leonardo. She holds a rose to her lips and laughs. She was killed by her husband for an amour. She had these opals on her throat when he drove the stiletto through it. At least so Carlo used to tell me. But perhaps it was not true."

"Do not wear them," said Andrei, to whom she was speaking. "Do not wear them if they are blood-stained. You know they are pierres de malheur."

She laughed.

"You Sicilians are superstitious. We northerners are not. I like to wear them for that very reason of their tragedy."

She took up the necklace and clasped it round her throat; some tendrils of her hair caught in the clasp; she gave

an involuntary little cry of pain; Andrei hastened to release her hair from the clasp. His hand trembled; their eyes met, and said much to each other. Damer, who was near, drew nearer. She was silent, looking at him with that mixture of curiosity, interest and vague apprehension which he always aroused in her. She was not very

intelligent, but she had quick susceptibility; there was a light which alarmed them and yet fascinated them. "He awes me," she said later in the day to Andrei. "So often one cannot follow his meaning, but one always feels his reserve of power."

It was a grave speech for a light-hearted lover of pleasure. But his heart, perhaps, has withered away, getting no nourishment. He would say I talk nonsense; but I think you will understand what I mean."

"I think I understand," said Veronica, thoughtfully.

She had thought very little in her careless youth life. She had begun to think more since these two men had come into it.

"Andrei merits more than you give him," said her duenna to her. "How long will you keep him in suspense? You ought to remember what hell it is in waiting to abide."

"A hell?" said Veronica, with the color in her face. "You mean a paradise."

"A fool's paradise, I fear," replied the older woman. "And what does that other man do here? He told me he was due at some university in Germany."

"How can I tell you why either of them stays?" said Veronica, disingenuously, as her conscience told her. "Voice attracts many people, especially in her spring season."

"So does a woman in her spring," said the older lady, dryly, with an impatient gesture.

"You are angry with me?"

"No, my dear. It is as useless to be angry with you as to be angry with a young cat because in its gambols it breaks a vase of which it knows nothing of the preciousness."

Veronica Laraniera did not resent or deny. She knew a vase was precious. She did not mean to lose it, but she wanted to be free awhile longer. Mutual love was sweet, but it was not freedom. And what she felt ashamed of was a certain reluctance which she felt to allow Damer to see or know that she loved him.

Veronica Laraniera did not want to decide in one way or another what to do with her future. And she was affected without being aware of it by the scarcely disguised contempt which his companion had for him. It was seldom outspoken, but it was visible in every word of the beautiful woman's glance.

"He is beautiful, yes," she said once to her. "So is an animal."

"Do you like animals?"

"I do not like or dislike them. The geologist does not like or dislike the stones he breaks up; the metallurgist does not like or dislike the metals he smelts. Why should they care what they call a physiologist?" she said once, suddenly.

"I am," replied Damer.

She looked at him under her long silky lashes as a child looks at what it fears in the dusk of a fading day. He attracted her and repelled her as when she had herself been a child she had been at once charmed and frightened by the great ghostly figures on the tapestries, and the white and gray busts of gods and sages on the grand winged staircase of her father's house in the Palazzo Ducale.

After all, how much better were the sea, the sunshine, the dog rose, the barcarolle, the laughter, the lute!

(To Be Continued.)

GOSSIP FOR WHEELMEN.

Germany has captured the "world" championship race this year. The meeting will be held in Cologne.

San Francisco to have a Chinese cycling race, but the prizes will not be silver mounted wheelbars.

Do Maurice's "Trilly" has at last worked itself into the cycling world. The latest wheel out is named after the great novel.

The bicycle track in St. Louis proved to be a great failure, as it has been on most grounds, and will probably be done away with this year.

Zimmerman and Wheeler deny that they intend asking for permission to enter class B. Having turned professionals, they are content with their lot.

Bikes may possibly be seen on the stage in a performance of the bicycle after the manner of the horse race in the "Country Fair" and other like shows.

In Austria the manufacture of cycles is making enormous progress. One Vienna factory alone produced in 1894 only 200 machines, turned out in 1895 nearly 600.

Arrangements are being made by the governing body of French cyclists to arrange a performance of the bicycle, the prize to be worth \$3,000. The event is to be run in the fall.

V. J. Kelley, the Philadelphia professional, who left the amateur ranks to ride in the cash prize league, has filed an application for reinstatement with the League of American Wheelmen racing board.

According to the report of Albert L. Mort, of the cycling board, the new racing board chairman is appointed, for their annual road race tournament, which, last year, was one of the most successful racing meetings.

The Mexican party of class B will return to northern climes much sooner than at first expected. The high altitude of Mexico is working havoc with the riders, and the outdoor track, near the trainer, is that the men will do much better to come home as soon as possible.

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

It takes a small express fourteen days and five hours to travel a mile.

At a Japanese banquet it is a compliment to ask to exchange cups with a friend.

The Swiss government made a profit of about \$1,000,000 last year on its monopoly in spirits.

There are 106 bureaus or branch post-offices in Paris, all of which, with one exception, are equipped with pneumatic tubes.

Actual, unthinkable, and unfeeling cold is made by physics and chemists, not by nature. In the laboratory 424 degrees below zero have been reached.

A surgeon on an Atlantic steamship line says that in his wide experience he has found women to be more courageous and more self-possessed than men in cases of disaster at sea.

Don't be persuaded to accept a substitute! Scott & Bown, N. Y. All Druggists. 50c and \$1.

## Architecture of the Olden Days

It is Again Coming Into Style in the Fashionable West.

ADOBE BUILDING IN FAVOR

Bricks Made of Mud and Straw by Secret Process of Mexicans Becoming Popular in the West—Advantages of the Material.

Colorado Springs, Col., March 24.—The adobe house is becoming fashionable in Colorado. This is an architectural fad of unusual suggestiveness and interest. Mysterious, indeed, are the tricks of fashion. Who could have foreseen that even here in Colorado, where the rugged cliffs stimulate the imagination to strange tricks and fancies, the immemorial mud house, bequeathed to us through the Pueblos and Mexicans by the pre-historic races of the canons, would be taken up to afford an outlet for the artistic craving for novelty and individuality that besets every American house builder? Yet so it is, and who knows but that if the adobe house spreads it may ultimately rest with Colorado to claim the honor of having originated a true national school of architecture.

Everybody who has ever seen a picture of a cliff dwellers' town or of a Pueblo village knows what an adobe house is. The adobe brick is made of a peculiar sticky mud and is always sun-dried. The brick varies in size, and are generally about 4 inches deep, 8 inches wide and 16 inches in length, while the outer walls of the adobe building proper vary from two to four feet in thickness. One old mission in New Mexico boasts an outer wall six feet in thickness.

Curiously enough, writes a correspondent of the Chicago Herald, the exact receipt for mixing this adobe mud is held as a secret by the Mexicans and half-breeds. Not even have they disclosed the necessary amount of straw to make up a perfect adobe brick. Mayhap the Egyptian told it to the Aztec and this wonderful secret to the ancestors of the present.

The building of an adobe house must necessarily be confined to the months between May and August, at least in Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico, for frost is death to the unbacked brick. The adobe is prepared in the old-fashioned way—that of treading—and when the mud is worked to a proper consistency the nervous feet of the Mexican are made of mud and straw, and the mud is dried quickly, and is as solid as modern cement.

Missions Built of Adobe.

All of the old California missions are built of adobe, and also the famous one of San Miguel, in Santa Fe, which is generally supposed to be the oldest building in the United States. All through New Mexico these adobe buildings are the only habitations known.

Just why the craze should have been caught and matured in that individual settlement, sarcastically but aptly termed by Governor Davis Waite "Little London," but known to the outside uninitiated world as Colorado Springs, is a mystery. But here the craze did come, and is now in full swing—to the tune of a score of "mud houses" planned and under construction. Fashion may be smiling in her sleeve, but the matter is, however, "style," has issued a proclamation.

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The greatest argument used in favor of adobe houses is that in summer nothing is cooler and in winter nothing is warmer. It is rather a clinching argument, and undoubtedly true.

In Santa Fe almost all of the dwellings are made of adobe, except the quarters where the United States troops are stationed. The old Spanish governor's palace, where General Lew Wallace wrote "Ben Hur," and in which he lived while territorial governor, is a single-story adobe of the most pronounced type. All the rear rooms open out into a court, in which grow vines and trees, and around the outer border of this court is a wide promenade. Another old adobe in Santa Fe is Jake Gold's shop, which covers on the remarkable Durango street. This place is almost as old as the governor's palace. But this is digression. Yet it illustrates the remarkable age of these buildings built of "bricks with straw."

Perhaps some enterprising easterner may anticipate the craze and find in Laramie county or in that picturesque section of Philadelphia long ago known as "The Neck" an adaptable place. Then a syndicate could easily be formed, which would pay a liberal sum for the secret to successful mudding, and then the east would have, after these long years, Spanish missions and adobe houses both "up to" and yet far out of date.

Feminine Politics.

"Have you been able to catch the speaker's eye?" asked the first lady legislator. "Have I?" replied the second legislator. "Well, rather. I wore my navy blue bengaline with the heliotrope sleeves and 'the Speaker couldn't keep his eyes off me.'"

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