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MOTHS BY OUIDA.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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M O T H S

A NOVEL

BY

O U I D A

“Like unto moths fretting a garment” (PSALM)

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ
1880.



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M O T H S.

CHAPTER I.

AGAIN in the month of November, exactly one year after her marriage, a tall slender figure clothed in white, with white furs, moved to and fro very wearily under the palms of the Villa Nelaguine on the Gulf of Villafranca, and her sister-in-law, looking wistfully at her, thought:

"I hope he is not cruel—I hope not. Perhaps it is only the death of the child that has saddened her."

Vere read her thoughts and looked her in the eyes.

"I am glad that the child died," she said simply.

The Princess Nelaguine shuddered a little.

"Oh, my dear," she murmured, "that cannot be. Do not say that; women find solace in their children when they are unhappy in all else. You have a tender fond heart, you would have——"

"I think my heart is a stone," said the girl in a low voice; then she added: "In the poem of 'Aurora

Leigh' the woman loves the child that is born of her ruin; I am not like that. Perhaps I am wicked; can you understand?"

"Yes, yes; I understand," said the Princess Nela-guine hurriedly, and, though she was accounted in her generation a false and heartless little woman of the world, her eyes became dim and her hands pressed Vere's with a genuine pity. Long, long years before Nadine Zouroff had herself been given to a loveless marriage, when all her life seemed to her to be lying dead in a soldier's unmarked grave in the mountains of Caucasus.

"That feeling will change, though, be assured," she said soothingly. "When we are very young all our sorrow is despair; but it does not kill us, and we live to be consoled. Once I felt like you—yes—but now I have many interests, many ties, many occupations, and my sons and daughters are dear to me, though they were not *his*; so will be yours, to you, in time."

Vere shuddered.

"People are different," she said simply; "to me it will always be the same."

She pulled a cluster of white roses, and ruffled them in her hands, and threw them down, almost cruelly.

"Will those roses bloom again?" she said. "What I did to them your brother has done to me. I cannot