

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Voltaire Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells Bunner Shakespeare Cooke
Richter Chekhov Chambers Irving
Doré Dante Shaw Wodehouse
Swift Pushkin Alcott
Newton



tredition was established in 2006 by Sandra Latusseck and Soenke Schulz. Based in Hamburg, Germany, tredition offers publishing solutions to authors and publishing houses, combined with worldwide distribution of printed and digital book content. tredition is uniquely positioned to enable authors and publishing houses to create books on their own terms and without conventional manufacturing risks.

For more information please visit: www.tredition.com

TREDITION CLASSICS

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series. The creators of this series are united by passion for literature and driven by the intention of making all public domain books available in printed format again - worldwide. Most TREDITION CLASSICS titles have been out of print and off the bookstore shelves for decades. At tredition we believe that a great book never goes out of style and that its value is eternal. Several mostly non-profit literature projects provide content to tredition. To support their good work, tredition donates a portion of the proceeds from each sold copy. As a reader of a TREDITION CLASSICS book, you support our mission to save many of the amazing works of world literature from oblivion. See all available books at www.tredition.com.



Project Gutenberg

The content for this book has been graciously provided by Project Gutenberg. Project Gutenberg is a non-profit organization founded by Michael Hart in 1971 at the University of Illinois. The mission of Project Gutenberg is simple: To encourage the creation and distribution of eBooks. Project Gutenberg is the first and largest collection of public domain eBooks.

The Unwilling Vestal

Edward Lucas White

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Edward Lucas White

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-6089-8

www.tredition.com

www.tredition.de

Copyright:

The content of this book is sourced from the public domain.

The intention of the TREDITION CLASSICS series is to make world literature in the public domain available in printed format. Literary enthusiasts and organizations, such as Project Gutenberg, worldwide have scanned and digitally edited the original texts. tredition has subsequently formatted and redesigned the content into a modern reading layout. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the exact reproduction of the original format of a particular historic edition. Please also note that no modifications have been made to the spelling, therefore it may differ from the orthography used today.

PREFACE

by author

The title of this romance is likely to prejudice any reader against it. There exists a popular delusion that fiction with a classical setting is bound to be dull and lumbering, that it is impossible for it to possess that quality of bravura slangily denominated "punch." Anybody will be disabused of that notion upon reading this story.

<<PG EDITOR'S NOTE: The slang is now, alas, over ninety years old. It now sounds even more stilted than the classical language does.>>

On the other hand, after having read it, almost any one will be likely to imagine that a novel with so startling a heroine and with incidents so bizarre cannot possibly be based on any sound and genuine knowledge of its background; that the author has conjured out of his fantasy not only his plot and chief characters, but also their world; that he has created out and out not merely his Vestal, but his Vestals, their circumstances and the life which they are represented as leading: that he has manufactured his local color to suit as he went along.

Nothing could be further from the actuality. The details of rule and ritual, of dress and duties, of privileges and punishments are set forth in accordance with a full first-hand and intimate acquaintance with all available evidence touching the Vestals; including all known inscriptions relating to them, every passage in Roman or Greek literature in any way concerning them, the inferences drawn from all existing or recorded sculptures and coins which add to our knowledge of them, and every treatise written since the revival of learning in Europe in which the Vestals are discussed. The story contains no preposterous anachronisms or fatuous absurdities. Throughout, it either embodies the known facts or is invented in conformity with the known facts.

Any one to whom chapter twenty-one seems incredible should consult an adequate encyclopedia article or an authoritative treatise on physics and read up on the surface tension of liquids.

End of Preface by Author

Contents

Book I

The Rage of Disappointment

I. Precocity

II. Sieves

III. Stutterings

IV. Pestilence

V. Escapades

VI. Notoriety

VII. Audience

Book II

The Revolt of Despondency

VIII. Scourging

IX. Alarms

X. Conference

XI. Farewell

XII. Observances

XIII. Perversity

XIV. Amazement

Book III

The Rebellion of Desperation

XV. Rehabilitation

XVI. Vagary

XVII. Recklessness

XVIII. Fury

XIX. Comfort

Book IV

The Revulsion of Delight

XX. Accusation

XXI. Ordeal

XXII Triumph

XXII. Salvage

Book I

The Rage of Disappointment

Chapter I - Precocity

"Brinnaria!" he said severely, "you will marry any man I designate."

"I never shall marry any man," she retorted positively, "except the man I want to marry."

She gazed unflinchingly into her father's imperious eyes, wide-set on either side of a formidable Roman nose. His return gaze was less incensed than puzzled. All his life he had been habituated to subserviency, had never met opposition, and to find it from his youngest daughter, and she a mere child, amazed him. As she faced him she appeared both resolute and tremulous. He looked her up and down from the bright blue velvety leather of her little shoes on which the gilt sole-edges and gilt laces glittered to the red flower in her brown hair. Inside her clinging red robe the soft outlines of her young shape swelled plump and healthy, yet altogether she seemed to him but a fragile creature. Resistance from her was incredible.

Perhaps this was one more of her countless whims. While he considered her meditatively he did not move his mighty arms or legs; the broad crimson stripe down his tunic rose and fell slowly above his ample paunch and vaster chest as his breath came evenly; on his short bull neck his great bullet head was as moveless as if he had been one of the painted statues that lined the walls all about. As the two regarded each other they could hear the faint splash of the fountain in the tank midway of the courtyard.

Her father, a true Roman to his marrow, with all a Roman's arbitrary instincts, reverted to the direct attack.

"You will marry Pulfennius Calvaster," he commanded.

"I will not!" she declared.

He temporized.

"Why not?" he queried.

The obstinacy faded from Brinnaria's handsome, regular face. She looked merely reflective

"In the first place," she said, "because I despise him and hate him worse than any young man I ever knew; I would not marry Calvaster if he were the only man left alive. In the second place, because, if all the men on earth were courting me at once, all rich and all fascinating and Caius were poor and anything and everything else that he isn't, I'd marry nobody ever except Caius. You hear me, Father. Caius Segontius Almo is the only, only man I'll ever marry. Nothing can shake my resolution, never."

She was breathing eagerly, her cheeks flushed a warm red through her olive complexion, her eyes shining till tiny specks sparkled green and yellow in the wide brown of her big irises.

Her father's jaw set.

"I've listened to you, daughter," he said. "Now you listen to me. I have no objections to Almo; I rather like him. I have thought of marrying you to him; if Segontius and I had not quarreled, we might have arranged it. There is no possibility of it now. And just now, for some reason or other, Pulfennius is keen on arranging a marriage between you and Calvaster. His offers are too tempting to

be rejected and the chance is too good to be missed. Our properties adjoin not only here and at Baiae, but also at Praeneste, at Grumentum and at Ceneta. With our estates so marvellously paired the marriage seems divinely ordained when one comes to think it over. Don't be a fool. Anyhow, if you insist on making trouble for yourself, it will do you no good. My mind is made up. You are to marry Calvester."

"I won't!" Brinnaria maintained

Her father smiled, a menacing smile

"Perhaps not," he said, "but there will be only one alternative. Unless you agree to obey me I shall go at once to the Pontifex and offer you for a Vestal."

Every trace of apprehension vanished from Brinnaria's expression. She grinned saucily, almost impudently, at her father, and snapped her fingers in his face.

"You can't scare me that way, Daddy!" she mocked him. "I know better than that. There can be only six Vestals. You can offer, if you like, but the Emperors themselves can't take me for a Vestal while the six are alive."

The laugh muffled in her throat; she was fairly daunted. Never had she seen her father's face so dark, so threatening. Not in all her life had he so much as spoken harshly to her; she had been his pet since she had begun to remember. But now, for one twinkling, she feared a blow from him. She almost shrank back from him.

He did not move and he spoke softly.

"Rabulla died this morning before dawn," was all he said.

Instantly Brinnaria was fluttering with panic.

"You aren't in earnest, Daddy!" she protested. "You can't be in earnest. You're only fooling; you're only trying to frighten me. You don't really mean it; oh, please, Daddy, say you don't really mean it!"

"I really mean it," her father answered heavily. "I never meant anything more genuinely in my life. You know my influence with the Emperors and with the Pontifex of Vesta. You know that if I made

the proposal they would disregard any rival petitioners, would override all unnecessary formalities, would have the matter despatched at once. Unless you obey me you will be a Vestal before sunset to-morrow."

Brinnaria was now fairly quivering with terror.

"Oh, Daddy!" she quivered, "you couldn't be so cruel. I'd rather die than have to be a Vestal. I couldn't imagine any life so terrible. Oh, Daddy, please say you are not in earnest."

He frowned.

"I swear," he said, "that I was never more in earnest. I say it solemnly, as sure as my name is Marcus Brinnarius Epulo, I'll have you made a Vestal unless you agree this moment to give up all thoughts of Almo, to obey me about marrying Calvaster, and to be properly polite to him and Pulfennius."

"Daddy!" Brinnaria cried. "Only don't have me made a Vestal and I'll do anything. I'll forget there ever was an Almo. I'll be sweet as honey to Pulfennius till he loves me better than Secunda, and I'll marry Calvaster; I'll marry anybody. Why, Daddy, I'd marry a boar pig rather than be a Vestal."

Her father smiled.

"I thought my little daughter would behave properly," he soothed her, "and you are just in time. That may be your future husband and father-in-law coming now."

In fact they were in a moment ushered in. Pulfennius was a tall man, lean and loose-jointed, with straggling, greenish-gray hair; a long, uneven head, broad at the skull and narrow at the chin; puffy, white bags of flabby flesh under his eyes; irregular yellow teeth and sagging cheeks that made his face look squarish. Calvaster was a mere boy, with a leaden complexion, shifty gray eyes, thin lips, and an expression at once sly and conceited.

"You come opportunely," said their host after the greetings had been exchanged, "for you happen to find me alone with the very daughter of whom you and I were talking. This is Brinnaria."

"This!" Pulfennius exclaimed. "This the girl we were talking about? Impossible! Incredible! There must be some mistake."

"There is no mistake," his host assured him. "This is the girl we were talking about, this is Brinnaria."

The visitor regarded her, respectfully standing now, her brown eyes down-cast, the flush faded from her olive-skinned cheeks, her arms hanging limply at her sides. She was tall for a girl and while slenderly built was well muscled, a fine handsome figure in her red robe.

"This!" he exclaimed again. "Indeed. So this is Brinnaria. I am very glad to have seen her. And now having seen her, do you not think that our business would be better transacted by us three males together?"

"Certainly, if you prefer," Brinnarius asserted.

He patted Brinnaria and kissed her.

"Run away now, little girl," he said, "and wait in the peristyle until I want you."

Brinnaria, once in the rear courtyard, instantly called:

"Guntello!"

Her call was answered by a great brute of a slave, bigger even than her father, a gigantic Goth, pink-skinned, blue-eyed and yellow-haired.

"Now listen to me, Guntello," his little mistress said, "for if you make any mistake about my errand you'll get me into no end of trouble."

The Goth, manifestly devoted to her, leaned his ear close and grinned amiably. She repeated her directions twice and made him repeat them after her in his broken Latin. When she was sure that he understood, she despatched him with a whispered injunction:

"Hurry! Hurry!"

Meanwhile, in the gorgeous atrium, the fathers' conference had continued. The moment she had gone Pulfennius said:

"I do not believe in discussing misunderstandings before females; evidently there is some misunderstanding here. I want for my son a bride younger than he is, even if he has to wait two or even four years to claim her. You assured me that your daughter Brinnaria was not yet ten years of age and you show me a grown woman and tell me that she is Brinnaria. What is the explanation?"

"A very simple explanation," he was answered. "Merely that Brinnaria is unusually well grown and well developed for her age. I have seen other cases of early ripening in children and so must you."

"I've seen girls grown beyond their years," Pulfennius admitted, "but no case comparable to this. Why, man, that girl who has just left us would be taken for over eighteen years old by any stranger at first sight of her, and no one on earth could look at her carefully and hazard the conjecture that she might possibly be under sixteen."

"Quite so," his host agreed, "and the better you know Brinnaria the more you wonder at her. She not only looks sixteen or eighteen and acts as if she were that age, but she talks as if she were that old and thinks as if she were even older, and she is actually three full months, more than three months, to be precise three months and twelve days, under ten years of age."

"Amazing!" spluttered Pulfennius, "astounding! inexplicable!"

"Don't you believe me?" Brinnarius queried sharply.

"Certainly I believe you," his guest disclaimed, "but I cannot realize that it can be true; I am bewildered; I am dazed."

"Perhaps," the other suggested, "you would realize it better if Quartilla added her assurances to mine."

"Oh," the other deprecated, "I do not require anybody's corroboration to your statement. But if her mother is at home, perhaps her presence would be as well for other reasons."

When summoned his host's wife appeared as a medium-sized woman, neither plump nor slender, with a complexion neither brown nor white, with yellow-brown hair, gray-brown eyes, and in

every outline, hue, and feature as neutral and inconspicuous a creature as could be conceived of.

"Yes," Quartilla said, "everybody is surprised at Brinnaria's growth. I was scared, when she first began to grow so fast, and had special prayers offered and sacrifices made at the temples of Youth and Health. Also I had a Babylonian seer consult the stars concerning her birth-signs. Everybody said she was born to long life, good health and great luck. But I can't fancy what ever made her grow so. She was fed like her brothers and sisters and she never seems to eat any heartier or any oftener. Till she was two and a half she was just like any other child. But she has grown more in seven years than any other child I ever knew of ever grew in fourteen and she's so old for her years too. Not but that she plays with dolls and toys and jacks; and she runs about just like any other child of her age, in spite of her size; but she says such grown-up things and she has such a womanly mind. She understands the family accounts better than I do, is keen on economy and could oversee the providing for the entire household. She astonishes me over and over. But there is no doubt about her age. Both my sisters were with me when she was born and Nemestronia too. Ask any of the three. Or I can tell you a dozen other ladies who know just as well. Brinnaria will not be ten years old until the Ides of September."

"Wonderful! marvellous!" Pulfennius exclaimed. "Madam, you amaze me. But if this is true so much the better. I had thought my boy must wait two years or more for a wife, as I am determined that no more of my sons shall marry wives of their own age, let alone older. If your daughter is so young, she will just suit me, and since she is already grown up we shall not have to wait for her to grow up. We can arrange for the wedding for this month."

They chattered a long time about the marriage settlement, Calvaster sitting silent, biting his lips, staring about him and fidgetting; Quartilla equally silent, but entirely placid, without the twitch of a muscle or any shift of gaze; the two men doing all the talking. Some of the talking was almost vehement, Pulfennius disclaiming promises which his host declared he had made. Once they came to a deadlock and then Brinnarius, his voice suddenly mild and soft, mentioned Rabulla's death and his notion of offering Brin-

naria for her successor. At once Pulfennius became manageable and supple and all eagerness for the happiness of the young couple.

When it seemed that they had reached an agreement on every point Quartilla had her say.

"I think you will find Brinnaria everything you could wish as a daughter-in-law. The most uncanny thing about her precocious habits of thought is her tenacity of any resolve and her grave and earnest attitude towards all questions of duty and propriety. She takes clan traditions very seriously and is determined to comport herself according to ancestral precedents. You will have no fault to find with her respectfulness towards you and Herrania or with her behavior as a wife. She will be circumspect in her deportment towards all men and is sure to turn out an excellent housewife. She has lofty inherited standards to live up to and she is deeply devoted to them.

"This is the more to be wondered at since she is strangely undignified in many ways. I trust this will wear off as she grows up. It is only in this respect that Brinnaria has ever given me any cause for concern. She is more like a boy than a girl in many ways. She not only plays with boys and plays boys' games and plays them as well as boys or better, not only climbs trees when she is in the country, and rides bareback and goes fishing and swimming in any stream or pool, and ranges the woods and cannot be restrained; but also she will indulge in the wildest pranks, the most unthinkable freaks, play rough practical jokes on anybody and everybody, laugh out loud, shout and yell, gesticulate and contort herself into undignified postures and act generally in an uproarious and uncurbed fashion. She keeps up that sort of thing even in town, and is boisterous and unexpected beyond anything I ever heard of in any young girl. She is most docile in all really important things, but in respect to her jokings and shriekings and carryings-on she is really beyond my control. She is never openly disobedient, yet she is most ingenious at devising methods for avoiding obedience. Sometimes I lose patience with Brinnaria. But, when I really think it all over, there is no harm in any of it. Strangers, however, would think her a very terrible girl; she belies herself so. Any one becoming cognizant of some

of her vagaries would form a very unfavorable judgment of her and most unjustly. In her heart she is anything but the wild creature she makes herself appear. Her squawks of merriment, her rude interruptions of her elders, her pert remarks, her sarcastic jokes, are all the manifestations of mere overflowing animal spirits, of warm-blooded youth and hearty health. She will tone down. She is the most startling and incalculable child I ever heard of. No one could anticipate her eccentricities. There is an originality of invention about her pranks which amazes me. But I am sure she will turn out all that I could wish."

"I trust so, indeed," said Pulfennius dryly. "I am grateful to you for warning me; I promise not to misjudge her because of any childish freakishness. And now it seems to me that we should make the young lady herself a party of this conference and bring the matter to a final settlement."

Brinnarius called a slave and bade him fetch Brinnaria.

Almost at once the fellow, a dark-skinned, obsequious Lydian, returned looking scared and yet on the verge of laughter. He could barely control his merriment, yet was plainly afraid to utter what he had to say. His master ordered him to speak.

"Instead of coming with me," he said, "the young lady sent a message. But I am afraid to give it to you. I am afraid of a thrashing if I give the message as she gave it to me."

"Another of her jokes," her father growled. "You shan't suffer for any of her impudence. Repeat her exact words; I'll hold you excused, Dastor."

Dastor, reassured, grinned with anticipated enjoyment and said:

"She says she is sitting down and very comfortable where she is, that she will not stand up till she feels inclined, and that if you want to see her you can come to her, for she will not come to you."

For a moment there was a tense silence.

Pulfennius spoke first.

"If this is a sample of the sort of deportment which my future daughter-in-law is expected to outgrow I might as well be shown

just what this kind of behavior is like. Let us acquiesce and go to the little witch, if you do not object."

"I don't object at all to going," his host replied, "but I object to her behavior; I'll make her smart for it. Come, let us have it over with; I'll show you a submissive Brinnaria or I'll know the reason why."

They stood up and from the open atrium passed into a narrow passage lighted only from the two ends and so into the larger courtyard with gleaming marble columns at each end and long rows of them down each side. The tank under the open sky was much larger than that in the atrium and had two fountains in it. Pigeons cooed on the tiles of the roofs, and two or three of them strutted on the mosaic pavement among the columns.

The party, dumbfounded and stunned, stood without voice or movement, gazing at the picture before them.

The pavement was a cool grayish white in effect, for its mosaic work was all of pale neutral tints. Above it the background was all white, — white marble walls, the white marble polished pillars of the peristyle, white marble entablature above them, the general whiteness emphasized by the mere streak of red tiled roof visible against the intense blue of the sky.

The only color in the picture was to the left of the tank and close to it, where there had been set a big armchair upholstered in blue tapestry. In it sat a tall, fair-haired, curly-headed lad, with merry blue eyes. He wore a robe of pale green, the green of young onion tops. Against that green the red of Brinnaria's gown showed strident and glary, for Brinnaria was sitting on his lap. His arms were round her waist, hers about his neck. She was slowly swinging her blue-shod feet rhythmically and was kissing the lad audibly and repeatedly. As her elders stood still, petrified, mute and motionless with amazement, she imprinted a loud smack on the lad's lips, laid her cheek roguishly to his and peered archly at them, saying:

"Glad to see you again, Pulfennius; what do you think of me for a daughter-in-law?"