Edward Peple's *Semiramis* belongs to the same order of romance as Margaret Potter's *Ishtar of Babylon*, in that it leaves upon the mind a blurred impression of flamboyant Oriental colouring, the din of clashing sword and dying groans, the struggles of ancient civilisations grappled in their death throes. The sense of swarming hordes is well conveyed; so also is the sense of relentless despotism and wanton cruelty, the inherent savagery of an age that had not learned the virtue of brotherly love. And yet, like the vast majority of the novels that would fain reincarnate a buried antiquity, the sense of actuality is ineffectual. You see men bleed and women suffer, yet the sense of poignancy is absent, because you do not feel that they are real; you know that their nervous system is lacking. Otherwise the plot would be grim to the point of repulsion. King Ninus is in an evil mood because of all the tribes and races from which his greed of power has successively won homage and tribute, one city alone has withstood him, the Bactrian city of

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Zariaspa. So sorely has the prolonged siege exhausted the strength of his army that he must perforce accept a temporary truce in order to recuperate. It is an unfortunate time for his favourite officer, Menon, Governor of Syria, to choose to defy him, and, refusing to accept his king's daughter as wife, secretly marry a Syrian maiden, Semiramis. When he learns the truth, King Ninus's wrath is blended with another and more dangerous emotion, because he, too, comes under the spell of Semiramis's beauty; and thinking that he is sending Menon to certain death, he issues a royal edict that Semiramis shall remain captive in the royal palace until the rebellious city of Zariaspa is taken, and then shall be given as a prize of war to whatever soldier first surmounts the city's ramparts. How Menon sets to work to accomplish the hopeless task, how Semiramis comes to her husband's aid, and how after victory he is treacherously robbed of his just reward rounds out a story that is sure to win favour, provided you are in sympathy with the type it represents.