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Migrations: A.D. 476, by Felix Dahn**

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FELICITAS

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A TALE OF THE GERMAN MIGRATIONS
A.D. 476

BY

FELIX DAHN

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN
BY
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FELICITAS.

INTRODUCTION.

Some years ago I was at work in Salzburg: in the library among the old records, and in the Museum of Roman antiquities.

My studies were principally concerned with the fifth century: the time when the Germanic tribes invaded these regions, the Roman garrisons retiring with or without resistance, while many settlers remained in the land. Peasants, trades-people, mechanics, would not forsake their homes, nor give up their lucrative occupations, would not quit their valued, long-cherished plots of ground, but stayed under the rule of the Barbarian; who, when the storm and battle of conquest were over, and the division of the country completed, did not molest them.

The work of the day over, I wandered in the beautiful, long-familiar country of the Salzach valley; the warm June evenings permitted long wanderings up to a late hour. Thought and fancy were filled with the pictures of the life and the changing fate of the latest Romans in these lands. My imagination was excited by the inscriptions, coins, and utensils, by the Roman monuments of every kind which are found in such rich abundance in and around Salzburg; for this town, with its prominent fortress, the "Capitolium," on the rocky hill dominating stream and valley, was for centuries, under the name of "Claudium Juvavum," a chief bulwark of the Roman rule and the seat of a flourishing and brilliant development of the Roman culture. The inscriptions testify to the official rank of many of the citizens, such as Duumvirs, Decurions, Ædiles of the markets and games; to the importance of the town as a place of trade, and to the encouragement given to the arts and manufactures.

That which had occupied me during the labours of the day was pictured by the play of fancy, when in the evening I wandered out through the gate of the town: stream and road, hill and valley, were then peopled for me with forms of the Roman life; and from the distant north-west, like the driving clouds that often arose from the Bavarian plain, approached menacingly the invading Germans.

Most frequently, I preferred to saunter along the banks of the stream in the direction of the great Roman road, which passed the Chiemsee, and crossing its effluent, the Alz, at Siebruck

(Bedaium), and the Inn (Oenus) at Pfünz (Pons Oeni), led towards the province of Vindelicum and its splendid capital, Augsburg (Augusta Vindelicorum). Many coins, fragments of pottery, urns, gravestones, and household utensils of every kind have been found in the level country which stretches on each side of the old highroad, and is now for the most part covered with forest and brushwood, and in some parts overgrown with thick ivy. It is evident that farms, and also stately villas of the rich citizens, were thickly scattered beyond the outer wall of the fortified town, thus filling and adorning the whole valley. I often wandered in the neighbourhood of this Roman road, the traces of which were still distinctly visible, watching the setting sun, and wondering what were the feelings of the inhabitants of these villas, when, instead of the proud Legions marching by on their way to the Roman town on the Lech, it was the first weak bands of the Germans from the conquered Vindelicum who galloped in, carefully reconnoitring; and soon to be followed by larger masses, more daring, or rather having the well-grounded confidence that they would find the country only weakly defended, and would be able to establish themselves as masters over the defenceless Romans who still remained.

In such fancies, not without the silent wish that I might myself glean some small memorial of Roman times from this land so rich in remembrances, I penetrated one evening deeper into the brushwood on the right of the Roman road, following upwards the course of a small stream, through a hollow often strewn with broken stones and potsherds, which moss and ivy had thickly overgrown, and which cracked not seldom, under my footsteps. I picked up many tiles and bits of pottery. Were they Roman? No certain evidence could be gathered from *these*.

I determined to-day to follow the rivulet till I should reach its source, which I imagined to be under the gentle slope of a moderately high hill; for I knew that the Romans liked to build their quiet villas as well as their military stations by running water.

It was very hot on that summer day, I was tired in body and mind, and it was only slowly, and with difficulty, that I could ascend the course of the brook, forcing my way through the thick and often nearly impassable bushes by the help of my alpenstock, which I carried with me, as I often climbed the mountains in my wanderings.

I could willingly have stretched myself drowsily on the soft inviting moss; but I resisted the inclination, and determined to press through and up to the goal I had set myself: the source of the stream.

In half an hour the slope was reached; the height is called by the people, "the Pagan mound." Along the latter part of the way I had noticed a striking increase in the number and size of the fragments of stone; among them also were red and gray marble, like that which had been quarried in the neighbourhood for unnumbered centuries; and it was, as I had imagined, close under the crown of the hill the stream trickled out of the ground.

It appeared to have been once surrounded by masonry; this was in part still perceptible, carefully polished clear gray marble enclosed it here and there in a handsome setting, and round about lay scattered numerous tiles. My heart beat quickly, not only in consequence of the arduous climb, but also, I confess it, in hopeful expectation, I was yet very young. Suppose if to-day and here, Mercury, the Roman, or Wotan, the German god of wishes and discovery, should give into my hand the long-desired memorial of the Romans of Juvavum; the name "Pagan mound" gave undoubted evidence of the Roman occupation--for the Roman road is here called the "Pagan road"--added to this, the source of the spring, the traces of the marble setting, the many tiles--then the sun's rays, just before setting, fell across the brushwood and shone directly on the tile-slab lying before me. Cement! I picked it up and tested it; it was without doubt that Roman cement which, becoming hard as stone during the lapse of centuries, so marks out the buildings of eternal Rome, I turned the piece over; there, O joy! was burnt in the undoubted motto of the Twenty-second Legion: *Primigenia pia fidelis!* And as I bend down, highly pleased, to try the next brick, a yet stronger sunbeam falls on a piece of peculiar light-gray stone. It is marble, I see now, and on the surface there are three Roman letters distinctly visible: "hic...." There the stone was broken; but close to it, the broken edge of a similar piece of gray stone projected from the moss and ivy. Does the continuation of the inscription lie here buried under a covering of moss and turf?

I pulled at the stone, but it was too heavy, either from the load of earth or from its own size.

After some useless efforts, I found that I must clear off the layers of turf and moss before the marble would entrust me with its secret.

Had it one to narrate? Certainly! I held the commencement in my hand: "Hic," "here"--*what* had here taken place, or was here attested?

After I had with my pocket-knife cleared the first piece from earth and root-fibres, I held its broken surface to that of the still covered slab; they fitted very well together. Then I set to work; it was not easy, not soon over; with hand, knife, and the point of my alpenstock, I had to scrape and tear away fully two feet of turf, earth, moss, and, toughest of all, the numerous little roots of the clasping ivy; although the sun was setting and the breeze was cool, the labour made me very hot; the perspiration fell from my brow on the old Roman stone, which now showed itself as a tolerably long slab. After the first few minutes my zeal was sharpened by perceiving more letters. It was at last so far laid bare that I could take hold of the edges with both hands, and with some

little jerks bring it fully to view. I then held the broken stone with the deciphered *hic* against it; this gave me the direction in which farther to search.

I hastily scraped away earth, stones, and moss from the cutting of the letters, for it was quickly getting darker, and I wished to make out at once the long-buried secret. I succeeded; without question, though certainly with difficulty, I read the inscription, in two lines under each other:

Hic habitat Felicit...
Nihil mali intret.

The two last letters of the third word alone were missing; the stone was here broken away, and its companion piece was not to be found; but it was self-evident that the missing letters were--as--the inscription meant:

Here dwells happiness;
May nothing evil enter in.

Clearly the gray marble slab had formed the threshold of the entrance to the garden or porch of the villa; and the adage expressed the wish that all evil might be kept far from the door.

I sought in vain for yet farther traces, for remains of household utensils.

Pleased and satisfied with the discovery of the pretty proverb, I then rested.

Wiping my heated brow, I sat down on the soft moss by my work, thinking again and again of the words; I supported my back against an old oak, which had grown up out of the rubbish of the house, or, perhaps, out of the good mould of the little garden.

A wondrous quiet reigned over the hill, which was quite separated from the world by trees and bushes.

Only very, very faintly one heard the trickling of the small, scanty vein of water which came out of the earth close by me, and only sometimes, when it found a quicker fall, rippled more strongly. Once, no doubt, when handsomely enclosed in the clear gray marble, it had spoken louder.

In the distance, on the summit of a high beech, the golden oriole sang its flute-like evening song, which told of still deeper forest loneliness, for the listener seldom hears the notes of the "Pirol," except in such a solitude. Bees hummed here and there over the mossy carpet, coming out of the dark thicket and seeking the warmer light, sleepy themselves and lulling to sleep with their humming.

I thought, whose "happiness" once dwelt here? And has the wish of the inscription been fulfilled? Was the proverb powerful enough to keep off all evil? The stone which bore it is broken--a bad sign. And what kind of happiness was this? But stay! At that time Felicitas occurs as a *woman's name*; perhaps the proverb, with a graceful double meaning, would say: "Here dwells happiness; that is to say, my Felicitas; may nothing evil come over her, over our threshold!"

But "Felicitas"--who was she? and who was he, whose happiness she had been, and what had become of them? And this villa, how---?

This was my last waking thought, for with the last question I fell asleep.

And long did I slumber; for when the song of the nightingale, loudly exultant, close to my ear, awoke me, it was dark night; a single star shone through the branches of the oak. I sprang up: "Felicitas! Fulvius!" I cried, "Liuthari! Felicitas! where are they?"

"Felicitas!" softly repeated the echo from the hill. All else was still and dark.

So was it a dream?

Now, *this* dream I will retain.

Felicitas, I hold thee!

Thou shalt not escape me.

Poetical fancy can immortalise thee.

And I hastened home, and the same night noted down the history which I had dreamt among the ruins of the old Roman villa.

CHAPTER I.

It was a beautiful evening in June, The sun threw its golden beams from the west, from Vindelicia, on the Mercurius Hill, and the modest villa which crowned it.

Here and there on the great street a two-wheeled cart, drawn by a yoke of Noric oxen, was returning home at the close of the market-day through the west gate of Juvavum, the *Porta Vindelica*. The colonists and peasants had been selling vegetables, fowls, and pigeons in the Forum of Hercules; but the bustle of the street reached the hill only as a murmur. Here it was still and quiet; one only heard outside the low stone wall which surrounded the garden the lively rippling of a little spring, which at its source was prettily enclosed in marble, and after it had fed the fountain in the middle, and had wandered through the garden in artificially winding rivulets, escaped through a gap in the wall and hurried down the hill in a stone channel. Close by was the gate entrance, surmounted by a statue of Mercury, but open, without door or lattice. In the direction of the town, towards the south-east, there lay at the foot of the hill carefully tended vegetable and fruit gardens, meadows with the most succulent verdure, and corn-fields with luxuriant grain, which products the Romans had brought into the land of the barbarians.

Behind the villa, towards the north, fine beech-woods towered and rustled, ascending the mountain slopes; and out of their depths sounded from afar the metallic note of the golden oriole.

It was so beautiful, so peaceful; but from the west--and no less from the south-east!--threatening storm-clouds were rising.

From the entrance a straight path, strewn with white sand, led through the wide-spreading garden, between tall ilices and yews, which according to the long ruling fashion had been cut into all kinds of geometrical figures--a taste, or rather want of taste, which the Rococo did not invent, but only newly borrowed from the gardens of the Emperors.

Statues were placed at regular intervals in the space between the garden gate and the entrance to the dwelling-house: nymphs, a Flora, a satyr, a Mercury--bad work in plaster; the stout Crispus made them by the dozen in his workshop on the Vulcan market-place in Juvavum; and he sold them cheap: for the times were not good for *men*, and were bad for gods and demi-gods; but these were all gifts, for Crispus was the father's brother of the young householder.

From the entrance of the garden, echoing from the stone wall of the enclosure, there sounded several strokes of a hammer, only lightly, for they were given carefully by an artist-hand; they seemed to be the last improving, finishing efforts of a master.

Now the hammerer sprang up; he had been kneeling just within the entrance, near to which, standing upright against each other, were some dozen yet unworked marble slabs, which pointed out the dwelling of a stone-mason. He stuck the little hammer into the leather belt which fastened the skin apron over his blue tunic, shook from a little oil-flask a few drops on a woollen cloth, rubbed therewith the marble till it was smooth as a mirror, turned his head aside, as a bird will that wishes to look closely at anything, and then, nodding well pleased, read from the slab at the entrance:

"Yes, yes! here dwells happiness; *my* happiness, *our* happiness: so long as my Felicitas dwells here--happy and making happy. May misfortune never step over this threshold: banished by the adage, may every bad spirit Halt! Now is the house beautifully finished by this inscription. But where is she, then? She must see it and praise me. Felicitas," cried he, turning towards the house, "come then!"

He wiped the sweat from his brow, and stood upright--a supple, youthful form, slender, not above the middle height, not unlike the Mercury of the garden, whose proportions Crispus had formed according to old tradition; dark-brown hair, in short curls, covered almost like a cap his round head; under large eyebrows, two dark eyes laughed pleasantly on the world; the naked feet and arms showed a fine shape, but little strength; only in the right arm powerful muscles raised themselves; the brown skin apron was sprinkled white with marble dust, he shook it off, and cried again louder, "Felicitas!"

Then appeared on the threshold of the house a white figure, who, drawing back the dark-yellow curtain, which was fastened to rings running on a bronze rod, was framed like a picture in the two pilasters of the entrance--a quite young girl--or was it a young wife? Yes, she must be already a wife, this child of hardly seventeen years, for she is without doubt the mother of the infant which, with her left arm, she nestles to her bosom: only the mother holds a child with such expression in the movements and countenance. Two fingers of the right hand, the inner surface turned outwards, the young mother laid on her lips: "Be quiet!" said she, "our child sleeps." And now the hardly full-ripe form glided down the four stone steps which led from the house into the garden, with the left arm carefully raising the child higher and pressing it closer, with the right gently lifting the hem of her plaited robe as high as her well-formed ankles. It was a spectacle of perfect grace: young and childlike, like Raphael's Madonna, but not humble and at the same time mystically glorious, as the mother of the Christ-child; there was nothing incomprehensible, nothing miraculous, only a noble simplicity and yet royal loftiness in her unconscious dignity and innocence. There floated, as it were, a sweet-sounding music round the figure of this Hebe, every movement being in perfect harmony; wife and yet maiden; entirely human, perfectly at rest and

contented in the love of her young husband and of the child at her breast. Lovely, touching, and dignified at the same time, in all the perfect beauty of her figure, her face and her complexion so modest, that in her presence, as before a beautiful statue, every wish was silent.

She wore no ornament; her light-brown hair, shining with a golden lustre when the sun kissed it, flowed back in natural waves from the open, well-formed temples, leaving the rather low forehead free, and was fastened at her neck in a loose knot. A milk-white robe of the finest wool, fastened on the left shoulder with a beautifully shaped, but simple silver brooch, hung in folds down to her ankles, showing the pretty red leather sandals; leaving bare the neck and arms, which were still childlike, but rather too long. The robe was fastened at the waist with a wide bronze girdle.

Thus she moved silently down the steps, and approached her husband. The long narrow face had that wonderful, almost bluish-white, complexion only possessed by the daughters of Ionia, and which no noon-tide sun of the south can embrown; the eye-brows, in a half-circle, regular as if drawn with compasses, might have given to the countenance a lifeless, statuesque appearance, but under the long, slightly curved, black eye-lashes, the dark-brown gazelle-like eyes, now directed towards her beloved, shone with a life full of feeling.

He flew towards her with an elastic step, lifted carefully, tenderly, the sleeping child from her arm, and taking the flat straw lid from his tool-basket, he placed the child on it, under the shade of a rose-bush. The evening breeze threw the scented leaves of a full-blown rose on the little one: he smiled in his sleep.

Then the master, winding his arm round the waist of his young wife, led her to the just completed entrance-slab, and said:

"Now is the proverb ready, which I have kept hidden from thee till I could finish it; now read, and know, and feel"--and he kissed her tenderly on the mouth: "Thou--thou thyself art the happiness; *Thou* dwellest here."

The young wife held her hand before her eyes to protect them from the sun, which now shone in almost horizontal beams through the open gateway; she read and blushed, the colour rose perceptibly in her delicate white cheeks, her bosom heaved, her heart beat quickly: "O Fulvius! thou art good. How thou dost love me! How happy we are!" And she laid her two hands and arms on his right shoulder, on the other her beautiful head.

He heartily pressed her to himself. "Yes, overflowing, without shadow is our happiness--without measure or end."

Quickly, with a slight trembling, as if shivering, she raised herself, and looked him anxiously in the face: "O, do not provoke the holy ones. It is whispered," said she, herself whispering, "they are envious." And she held her hand before his mouth.

But he pressed a loud kiss upon the small fingers, and cried: "I am not jealous, I, a *man*--why should the holy ones be envious? I do not believe that. I do not believe it of the holy ones--nor of the heathen gods, if indeed they still have life and power."

"Speak not of them! They certainly live!--but they are bad spirits, and he who names them, he calls them near; thus warns the Presbyter of the Basilica."

"I fear them not. They have protected our ancestors for many generations."

"Yes, but we have turned away from them! They defend us no longer. Only the saints are our defenders against the barbarians. Alas! if they came here, trampled down the flowers in the garden, and carried away our child."

And she knelt down and kissed the little sleeper.

But the young father laughed. "The Germans, dost thou mean? they steal no children! They have more than they can feed. But it is true----they may perhaps one day sound out their war-cry before the gates of Juvavum."

"Yes, that they may, very soon!" broke in an anxious voice, and the fat Crispus, breathing heavily after his hot walk, entered the garden.

"Ave, Phidias in plaster," cried Fulvius to him.

"Welcome, uncle," said Felicitas, giving him her hand.

The broad-brimmed felt hat which he had drawn over his brow to protect his red, fat, shining, good-humoured face, and his stump nose, from the sun, Crispus threw on his neck, so that it hung by the leather strap on his broad back. "May Hygeia never leave thee, my daughter; the Graces never forsake thee, their fourth sister. Yes, the Germans! A horseman came last night with secret information for the Tribune. But two hours after we knew it all, we, early guests at the Baths of Amphitrite. The rider is a Wascon; no Wascon keeps his mouth closed if you pour wine therein. A battle has been fought at the ford of the Isar: our troops have fled, the watch-

tower of Vada is burnt. The barbarians have crossed the river."

"Bah!" laughed Fulvius, "that is yet far away. Go, darling, prepare a cooling drink for our uncle--thou knowest what he likes: not too much water! And *if* they come, they will not eat us. They are fierce giants in battle--children after the victory. Have I not lived months among them as their prisoner? I fear nothing from them."

"Nothing for myself--but for this sweet wife?"

Felicitas did not hear this question; she had taken up the child and gone with it into the house.

Fulvius shook his curly locks. "No! They would do nothing to her, that is not their custom. Certainly, did I fall, she would not be long left a widow. But there are people not in the bearskins of the barbarians, who would willingly tear her from the arms of her husband."

And he seized angrily the hammer in his belt.

"She must not suspect anything of it, the pure heart!" continued he.

"Certainly not. But thou must be on the watch. I met the Tribune lately in the office of the old money-lender."

"The usurer! the blood-sucker!"

"I was able, fortunately, to pay him my little debt. The slave announced me. I waited behind the curtain: I then heard a deep voice mention thy name--and Felicitas. I entered. The Tribune stood with the money-dealer. They were quickly silent when they perceived me. And just now, on the way here, whom should I overtake on the highway? Leo the Tribune, and Zeno the money-dealer! The latter pointed with his staff to thy house, the flat roof of which, with its little statues, projected above the trees. I guessed their conversation, and the object of their journey. Unseen I sprang from the road into the ditch, and hastened by the shorter way, the steep meadow path, to warn thee. Take care--they will soon be here."

"Let him only come, the miser! I have earned and carefully put away the sum that I owe him for marble supplied from Aquileia, and for the town taxes. My other creditors I have asked to wait, or rather promised them higher interest, and have put all the money together for this destroyer. But what does the Tribune want with me? I owe him nothing, except a knife-thrust for the look with which he devoured my precious one."

"Be careful! *His* knife is more powerful: it is the sword; and behind him stand the wild Mauritanian cavalry, and the Isaurian hirelings, whom we must pay with precious gold to protect us from the barbarians."

"But who defends us from the defenders? The Emperor in distant Ravenna? He rejoices if the Germans do not cross the Alps; he troubles himself no more about this land, which has been so long Roman."

"Except in extortionate taxes, to squeeze out our last blood-drops."

"Bah! The State taxes! It is many years since they were collected. No Imperial functionary ventures now over the mountains. I stand indeed here on Imperial soil. But what is the name of the man who is now Emperor, and to whom this bit of land belongs, of which he has never heard? Every two years another Emperor is made known to us--but only through the coinage."

"And that becomes ever worse."

"It *cannot* get worse; that is a comfort."

"A friend tells me that the taxes get more and more intolerable in Mediolanum, where there are still bailiffs and soldiers to levy them by force."

"And it may be the same with us," laughed the young man. "Who knows how much I am already in debt for these two acres of land?"

"And the roads of the Legions are overgrown with grass and brushwood."

"And the troops receive no wages."

"But they pay themselves by plundering the burghers, whom they should defend."

"And the walls of Juvavum are falling, the moats are dry, the sluices destroyed; the rich people go away, there only remain poor wretches like ourselves, who cannot leave."

"I wonder that the money-lender has not long ago moved with his great gold-bag over the Alps."

"I would not go, uncle, if I could; and why, indeed, could I not? My art, my trade will be honoured everywhere, so long as the Romans dwell in stone, not wooden houses, like the

Germans. But I am firmly fixed to this soil. Many, many generations have my fathers dwelt here; they say since the founding of the colony by the Emperor Hadrian. They have cleared the forests, drained the marshes, made roads, raised fords, laid out house and garden, grafted the rich fruits on the wild apple and pear-trees; the climate itself has become milder. I know Italy, I have bought marble in Venetia, but I would rather live here on the old inheritance of my fathers."

"But if the barbarians come, wilt thou then also?"----

"Stay! I have my own thoughts about that. For us unimportant people it is better under the barbarians than"----

"Say not, than under the Emperor. Thou art a Roman!"

The stout Crispus said this very gravely, but the other laughed; the good uncle but little resembled a Roman hero. His neighbours declared that he modelled his statues of Bacchus from his own figure.

"Half-blood! My mother was a Noric Celt. Induciomara! That does not sound much of the Quirinal."

"And we do not stand under the Emperor, but under his hangman servants, Exchequer officials, and under the murderous fist of the Moorish and Isaurian troops. If I must serve barbarians, I prefer the Germans."

"But they are heathen."

"In part. A hundred and fifty years ago so were we all. My grandfather sacrificed secretly to Jupiter. And there are also Christians among them."

"Arians! heretics! worse than heathen, says the Holy Church."

"A few decades past our emperors were also heretics. And the Germans ask no one what he believes; but how heavily did our fathers suffer, if their faith did not exactly agree with that of the ruling emperor!"

"You take too lenient a view of the coming of the barbarians. They have set fire to many towns."

"Yes; but stone does not burn. The Romans quickly fit new timbers in the undestroyed walls. Then no German settles in a town. They pasture their herds on the land; it is the peasant in his farm who suffers from them. They take from him a third of his fields and pasturage. But the land profits thereby. It is now sadly dispeopled; nowhere is there a free peasant on a free soil. For the masters, whom they never see, who carouse in Naples or Byzantium, *slaves* cultivate the ground, or rather they do *not* cultivate it, they only work enough to keep them from starving. If they gained more the slave-master would take it from them. But it is different with plough and sickle, when hundreds of Germans press into the country, each with innumerable white-headed children. For so many children as *these* people have, I could not have imagined over the whole earth!--And in a few years the grown-up son builds his own wooden house in the cleared forest or the drained swamp. They swarm over the furrows like ants, and they soon throw away their old wooden plough-shares and copy the iron shares of the colonists, and in a few years the land bears so much more than formerly, that it richly feeds both conquerors and conquered."

"Yes, yes," nodded Crispus, "we have seen all that in the frontier lands, where they have settled. If the sons become too numerous they cast lots, and the third part, that draws the lot to migrate, wanders on wherever hawk or wolf directs; but never back, never towards the north!" sighed Crispus, "so they press ever nearer to us."----

"But they leave us our laws, our language, our God, our Basilica, and demand much, much less in tribute than the slave-master of the landlord or the tax-gatherer of the Emperor."

"It is well that Severus does not hear you, the old *armaturarum magister* in Juvavum; he would"----

"Yes, he thinks we have yet the old times, and there are still living the old Romans as in the days of that tamer of the Germans, the Emperor Probus, of whose race he counts himself. But by the saints he is mistaken. Why should I be over zealous for the Emperor? He, this Emperor, certainly shows no zeal for me; in strong Ravenna he sits and invents new taxes, and new punishments for those who pay no taxes, because they have nothing."

"The old Severus has long been drilling volunteers to lead against the barbarians, in case they should roam this way. I have been there a few days, painfully carrying spear and shield in this heat. I have never seen thee, so much younger and stronger, on our '*Campus Martius*,' as they call it."

Fulvius laughed. "I have no need, uncle; I have learnt to use arms long enough while a prisoner with the Germans, and if the town and one's own hearth must be defended I shall not be wanting--for honour's sake! not that I think we shall do much; for, believe me, if they seriously

intend to come, that is, if they *must* because they *need* our acres, then Severus will not keep them back with his old-fashioned generalship and his new-fashioned 'Legions of the Capitol of Juvavum,' under the golden eagle which he has presented to them. Nor the Tribune either with his cavalry from Africa and his mercenaries from Isauria. But look! Philemon, the slave, is beckoning; I see the drinking-cup shining on the seat in the little porch--the table is ready. Now drink of our rough Râter-wine; Augustus long ago knew how to value it, and it has been already a year in the cellar since the pack-mule brought it here from the Tyrol. Let us look at Felicitas and the child at her breast, and forget emperors and barbarians."

CHAPTER II.

Meanwhile, slowly walking up the high-road, the two men whom Crispus had announced were approaching the villa; they often stood still, interrupting their progress with an animated conversation.

"No, no," warned the money-dealer, shaking his bald head, which, in spite of the sun, was uncovered, and striking with his staff on the hard road, "such haste, such violence, such impetuosity, as thy passionate longing craves, will not answer, O friend Tribune. Only leave me alone! We are on the right, the safe way."

"Thy way is a crooked, weary, roundabout way, a snail-pace," cried the soldier impatiently, and he threw back his proud head so that the black plume of his helmet rustled on the links of his armour. "To what purpose are these ceremonies? They do not hasten the time when you shall add the little property to your vast possessions. And I-I cannot sleep since the sight of this young woman has inflamed my passions. My heart beats to breaking. All night I toss on my hot couch. By the ungirdled Astarte of Tripolis! I *will* have this slender Felicitas! And I *must* have her, or my veins will burst." And his fiery black eyes flashed.

"Thou shalt have her, only patience."

"No! no patience. A sword-thrust will make the milk-sop of a husband cold; in these arms will I lift the struggling one on Pluto, my black horse, and quick to the Capitol, even if all the market-women of Juvavum raise an outcry behind me."

"Murder and rape! Thou knowest the punishment."

"Bah! Would an accuser come forward? And the Emperor? The Emperor of *Juvavum*--is myself. Let us see who will climb the walls of my Capitolium."

"The Cross, my roaring Leo, the Cross and the Presbyter. No, no, it must not be an open sin crying to heaven. True, the Judge and his lictors are weak in this land, which is almost given up by Rome. But the Church is so much the stronger. If the haggard, white-bearded Johannes thrust thee out, thou art a lost man. No pound of meat, no cup of wine, will the people of Juvavum again sell to thee."

"I will take what I need with my lancers."

"But thy lancers are Mauritanians: pious Christians, baptised by the Presbyter. See if they will follow, if the old man have cursed thee."

"I will strike him dead after, or rather, before the curse," cried the officer, and he made a quick step forwards; his long dark-red mantle floated in the wind.

But the money-changer again stopped, adjusting with his bony fingers his yellow tunic.

"How useless! Dost thou not know that *they* are immortal? If thou strikest *one* dead, the Bishop sends another. And they are all alike--much more than thy soldiers resemble each other. And I-I would not look at thee across the street if thou wert thrust out from the Holy Church."

But now the soldier stopped and laughed aloud: "Thou! Zeno of Byzantium! Thou believest as little in the Holy Church as Leo himself. And it is my opinion, that thy soul-destroying usury is not regarded more favourably by the saints, than my trifle of pleasure in love and murder. What hast thou to do with the Church?"

"I will tell thee, thou rash son of Mars. I *fear* her! She is the only power now left in these lands. The Emperor is far away, his officers are all venal; the barbarians are like the storm, they bluster around us, we bend to them, and they again bluster away; but the Church is everywhere, even if only a single priest says mass in a half-ruined house of prayer. And the priest is not to be bought. The miserable creature dares not live like a man, so he needs nothing; and all who hope for heaven follow him, that is to say: all fools. But woe to the man who has the fools against him--he is lost. No, no! we must not rouse the Church against us."

"I need him yet, the sneak!" grated Leo through his teeth, with an angry look at his companion; and he impatiently pushed aside his short, broad sword in the finely-worked

scabbard.

"For that reason truly, I have to serve you," continued the merchant.

"For a good reward," interrupted Leo scornfully.

"But which, alas! I have yet only received in half."

"The other half when I have the gazelle-eyed beauty in my chamber."

"For that reason I have taken all this trouble, woven all these meshes, and gathered them in my hand; one jerk, and the net closes over the head of the stone-mason; he and the sweet nymph struggle therein, defenceless, powerless, and best of all, without a right. Emperor and Church can look on whilst thou seizest the bird, and I the land. Not that it is valuable; but it rounds off my fields here. I can then more easily sell the whole to a great lord in Italy."

"I also do not intend to keep the fragile creature long; only through the autumn and winter. When the slave-dealers come here in summer from Antioch, I shall sell her at a high price. This half-bluish white of the eyes is much sought for. Whence has she it?"

"From Hellas or Ionia. Her parents were slaves of a Greek trader in purple, who died here on the return journey from Pannonia. They declare that the old man set them free before his death; they then carried on a little trade in salt. When they also died, the child became the wife of their neighbour's son, the stone-mason, who had grown up with her. I am eager to know if they have preserved the letter of emancipation. If not, then good-night, Felicitas! We are now at our goal; the foot-path here turns down, from the main road towards the Mercurius Hill. Moderate, I beseech thee, the violence and the eagerness in thine eyes, or thou wilt spoil all."

"I have not been born or trained to wait."

Thereupon the Tribune approached the open entrance of the garden. Zeno followed slowly. The setting sun threw its beams fully on the threshold-stone and the newly-cut inscription.

"Hic habitat Felicitas!" read the Tribune. "For yet how long?" asked he, laughing.

"Nihil mali intret!" concluded the merchant. "It is well that wishes are not bolts."

"Or *we* should not come in!" said the other; and he trod scornfully with a quick step on the neat letters. These were rubbed smooth as a mirror with fresh oil. Leo's foot slipped, he staggered, tried to recover himself, stumbled again, and fell with a cry of pain on the stone slab, helmet and armour loudly rattling.

CHAPTER III.

Immediately, before his companion could stretch forth a hand to help him, the enraged man had tried to rise, but with a wild curse he sank again to the ground, and repelled vehemently the attempt of the other to assist him.

"Let me lie; the foot is broken or the ankle is sprained. No, it is the knee. I do not know. But I cannot stand--I must be carried."

"I will call the people of the house. The stone-mason is coming already."

"I will strike him dead if he touches me. I will have no help from him. On the other side of the road to the left I saw some of my people spear-throwing on the drill-ground. Call them to me, they shall carry me away."

And this was done.

While the money-changer had gone for the soldiers Fulvius came forward, but the Tribune turned away from him and would not speak; silent, suppressing any utterance of pain, he was carried by the strong Moors into the town, where they soon obtained a litter and took him to the Capitol.

In the meanwhile Fulvius had stopped the merchant at the entrance. "Not over the threshold, most excellent man!" said he, pushing him back. "I am superstitious; thou hast an evil look. As soon as I caught sight of thee and the Tribune I hastened to meet you, bringing the money which lies in that bag ready counted for thee. Here"----and he began to count out the silver money on the broad coping of the low wall. "Here, count then! It is reckoned correctly: fifty solidi principal, and at thirty per cent, interest, fifteen solidi more. And here--for I cannot transact business with thee without a receipt--on this wax tablet I have written the acquittance. Take the style, put thy name to it, and go thy way, never to return."

But with his lean hand Zeno pushed back disdainfully the silver pieces, so that they fell rattling on the stone slab and rolled round about.

"We do not separate so quickly, hospitable landlord and grateful debtor."

"Grateful! Thirty per cent, is, I think, thanks enough, and one is not hospitable to harpies and vampires. Take what belongs to thee and go!"

"When I have taken that which belongs to me," answered the Byzantiner fiercely, "then, not I, but *thou*, wilt go out of this house--out of this whole property."

"What does that mean?"

"That means, that my business is not merely with the fifty miserable solidi with interest. Thou art my debtor for more than twenty times that sum; mine is the house, mine the whole possession, most probably thyself also, at this moment, with every bone in thy body; mine also that slave daughter, who peeps anxiously there between the curtains, with the child at her breast. Mother-sheep and lamb are my own."

So maliciously were these words uttered, at first lightly whispered, then in rising anger, ever louder and more threatening, that Fulvius, alarmed, looked back to see if his young wife had perceived this disaster.

But Felicitas had again disappeared behind the curtain, satisfied that the wild officer, whom she feared, she knew not why, was no longer there. She knew well that the money was ready for the usurer.

Smiling, she bade farewell to her guest, who had emptied his beaker and now took his departure. Not a cloud overshadowed her white brow as she now sat down on the couch, and with a sweet smile on her maiden-like countenance raised the waking child, and proceeded to give it nourishment.

Zeno still delaying, Fulvius in fear and anger pushed him with his elbow a step farther from the entrance; the muscles of his naked arms tightened, his hands clenched; threatening but speechless, he stood before the man who had spoken such fearful words.

Crispus now came forward; he seized his young nephew firmly by the wrist of his right arm, which he was slowly raising for a blow.

"What means this?" cried the fat uncle, anxiously.

Fulvius spoke not a word.

But Zeno answered: "This means, that I have bought this property from the Imperial Exchequer, with all the old claims for State taxes, and seven times the rent due to the Emperor, for which, according to the accounts, this tenant and his father are many decades in arrear; this makes, together with the fines, a debt of seven thousand solidi."

Crispus calculated in an instant that if even he gave his whole possessions to save his nephew, they would not amount to a seventh part of this sum.

"That means," continued Zeno, "that as there is no doubt about the inability of the debtor to pay, I claim him as my slave for debt, and shall to-morrow be installed by the magistrate into the property."

"Oh, Felicitas!" groaned Fulvius.

"Be calm; I will take mother and child home with me till the suit is decided," comforted the good-natured uncle.

"Law-suit?" laughed Zeno. "A suit that begins with its accomplishment is quickly decided. My claim is indubitably shown by the Imperial tax-rolls; they give positive evidence, and that young creature"----

"Wilt thou also claim the wife for the debt of her husband? That is not Roman justice," cried Crispus.

"Stay with thy ridiculous statues, and do not teach me justice and its ways. The young wife is a slave-child, the property of the master of her parents. This man died without a will, without assignable heirs. His property fell to the Exchequer; to the Exchequer belonged the parents and belongs the child."

"The old Krates set the parents and the child free before his death."

"Where is the letter of emancipation?"

And when both were silent the usurer continued in a triumphant tone: "You are silent? It is, then, as I suspected: the papyrus was destroyed when her parents' house was burnt in the rising of the people against the tax-collectors. Her birth as a slave is undisputed, the letter of emancipation is not forthcoming, therefore she and her slave-brood are mine."

The young husband was overcome with passion and anguish, and a blow with his fist on the breast of the villain sent him staggering backwards. "Hast thou, then, thou old sinner, purchased my wife in advance from the Fiscus, as thou hast also me and my house?"

"No," said he, exasperated, "the beautiful Greek belongs to a handsome young lord, who suits her better. A lion will soon drag her to his den. Thou knowest well what kind of suitor the lion is."

"The Tribune!" cried Fulvius. "I will strangle him first with these fists; and thou, panderer, take"----

But Crispus slung both arms around him, holding him fast.

So Zeno gained time to make his escape. He quickly mounted the path which led to the main road; when he had gained the height he turned and looked through the bushes at the villa. He raised his fist menacingly, and cried to the two men, "Woe to the vanquished!"

CHAPTER IV.

Crispus then turned to go towards the house.

"What dost thou wish to do?? asked Fulvius.

"To ask Felicitas if there is no writing, no evidence of emancipation"----but the young husband stopped him.

"No, no! She must know nothing about it. The poor, tender, helpless, happy child! It would crush her--this horrid plot!"

"How wilt thou prevent her knowing it, when it will to-morrow be carried out? For I do not doubt it is all correct what the usurer says of the tax-dues and of his purchase of the property. And that is not the worst. Thou canst fly, as so many thousand debtors have already, to the mountains, to the forests, to the barbarians, for aught I care. Leave him here the heap of stones."

"The house of my parents! the place where we have been so happy!"

"You can be happy elsewhere, when you come together again. But Felicitas with the infant--she cannot yet share thy flight. She must stay, and *can* stay with me. And that, I hope, can be arranged; for I have no doubt about the emancipation. The old people did not fabricate it. It is only the evidence that we want--the evidence!"

"The letter of emancipation is burnt; that is certain; burnt with the few ornaments and savings of the parents. They often told us about it. They had put all their valuables in a little box of cedar-wood, under the cushions of the bed, in their own room. In the night that the despairing tax-debtors and the peasants, the beasts of burden of the great landlords, had broken out in riot, the old people had, with the child, hastened into the street to inquire the cause of the fearful noise. They ran forward to the corner of the Vulcan market. Another crowd of fighting peasants and soldiers then poured in from behind, cutting off their return. The wooden storehouses of the small tradesmen that lived there, were set on fire. It was two days before they could return to their house, and then it was almost entirely burnt out; under the half-carbonised cushions of the bed, they found two melted gold pieces and the iron mounting of the cedar-box, yet glowing, and round about ashes:--from the wood of the box and its contents."

"The writing was not to be found?"

"In the house of her parents, certainly not; we searched it thoroughly before we sold it, after the death of the old people."

"Among the records of the Curies?"

"The freedom was given by letter, not by will. Krates intended to leave a will, but was overtaken by death before he had carried out his intention."

"Witnesses?"

"There were none. I tell you the freedom was given by letter."

"There is, then, no evidence. It is fearful."

"It makes one despair."

"But what thoughtlessness to live long years without"----

"Long years? It is not yet one year that I have called her mine. Before that it was the care of the parents; but these good old people--strangers here--what could they do? They could not awake the dead master, that he might repeat the emancipation."

"Had no one else read the letter?"

"Possibly! But these could only witness that they had read it, not that it was genuine."

"I see no escape but in flight--hasty flight."

"Hasty flight with the infant, and the young mother hardly convalescent, is impossible. And to fly! it is not my custom. Rather resistance by force."

"Thou, and I, and the lame Philemon, the force against the lancers of the Tribune! For he stands behind."

"I believe it! I saw his passionate look rest on her--on her neck--I could throttle him!"

"You are a dead man before you raise a hand against him."

"It is dark, hopeless night around us. Oh, where shall we find counsel, where a beam of hope, of light?"

"In the Church," spoke softly, but decidedly, a sweet voice. Felicitas put her arm round the neck of her beloved.

"Thou!"

"Thou here?"

"Yes, as thou didst not come back, I sought for thee; it is always so between us. The boy sleeps; I laid him in my bed. I found you both so deep in conversation, that you did not hear my step on the soft garden sand."

"What hast thou heard?" cried Fulvius, full of fear.

But the radiant, cheerful face, the smooth brow, the happy smile of his young wife, soon quieted his anxiety.

"I only heard that you wanted light in the darkness, and there came into my mind, as always, the word 'Church,' the name 'Johannes.'"

Fulvius was satisfied, almost joyful, because she had heard nothing of the lurking misfortune. He stroked tenderly her beautifully arched head, and said:

"And yet thou art not one of those devotees whose piety, or rather hypocrisy, peeps through the knees of their garments, worn threadbare by the altar steps."

"No; I am, alas, not pious enough. But it does not help me if I do go often to confession. Johannes always smiles when I have finished, and says: 'Thou hast only *one* sin; that is, Falvius.' But when I hear of darkness and light, I always think of the Church and Johannes. It is an experience of my earliest childhood," said she slowly, reflectively.

"What experience?" asked Crispus, becoming attentive.

"I had been obliged for many weeks, on account of a disease in the eyes, to wear a bandage, to remain in darkness, I know not how long. I was hardly six years old. I then heard the voice of Krates, the master, who was skilful in medicine, and had himself treated me. 'Take her with you this evening into the Basilica,' said he, 'it will not hurt her eyes; and she must be there, so says the law.'"

"What sayest thou? For what purpose?" asked the two men in breathless eagerness.

"I know not. You forget I was a child. But this stands yet clear before me: In the evening father and mother took me between them, each holding one of my hands; the master was also there; and they led me with bandaged eyes--for the raw evening air of the late autumn might have hurt them--into the Basilica. Here they took off the bandage and"----

"And now?"

"What didst thou see? What happened?"

"For the first time for months without pain, did my eyes again see the bright but gentle light. Before the altar, which was lighted with many wax candles, stood Johannes in shining white garments; the master placed us all three at the lowest step of the altar, and then spoke a number of words that I did not understand: the priest blessed us; my parents wept--but I noticed it was from emotion, not from pain--and kissed their master's knees; they then again put the bandage on my eyes, and we went from the light of the church out into the darkness. Since then light and Church and Johannes are to me one."

Felicitas could not quite understand what now happened to her.

Her husband warmly kissed her brow and eyes, and her uncle almost crushed her hand.

"Go thou back to the house," cried at last her husband. "We must go immediately to the church; thou art right--as always. Thou--thou hast given to us the best, the saving counsel."

And he led her eagerly, with a last kiss, back into the garden.

"It is quite certain," said Crispus, when Fulvius again appeared, "that it was not only by letter that they were set free; for greater safety there was the ceremony in the church, before the priest, according to all the forms of the law. And the child has all unsuspectingly revealed it to us in our greatest need!"

"And the priest"----

"Was Johannes himself!"

"He yet lives. Thanks be to the holy ones! He can testify to it."

"And he shall: before this night! Before witnesses, before the Curies shall he verify it! To the church!"

"To Johannes!"

And the two men hastened as fast as feet could carry them, down the high-road to the town, towards the Porta Vindelica.

In the meanwhile Felicitas went slowly back to the house, often stopping to look back at her husband until he had disappeared from view.

"What may they be doing?" said she quietly, bending her beautiful head. "Well, they are good: the holy ones are with them. The sun is now set behind Vindelicia. But in the forest the sweet bird still sings his evening song: how peaceful! how quiet! I will go to the bed of my little one. I can wait there most calmly; Fulvius will come back before night. For he loves us--yes, he loves us much, my little son!"

She then entered the house.

CHAPTER V.

But Fulvius did not come back that night.

When he and Crispus had passed through the Porta Vindelica, and had turned into the Via Augustana, in which stood the church of Saint Peter and the little house of the priest, they noticed Zeno, who was knocking at the door of a magnificent building at the other end of the street. It was the house of the Judge.

"He is using despatch," said Crispus. "It is well that we are already here." And he touched the knocker, which in shape like a cross hung on the small door of the priest's house.

"He will manage all through the Judge, who is his son-in-law," said Fulvius, anxiously.

"And deeply indebted to the usurer. That holds everything together, like sticky mud."

The door was opened, and a slave led them through a long, narrow passage, dimly lighted by an oil lamp in a little niche in the wall, to the room of the priest; drew back the curtain, and ushered in the two guests.

The half-dark room was almost void of furniture: the lid of a large chest served as a table, on it stood writing materials; on the walls one saw a lamb, a fish, a dove, very roughly sketched and painted a red colour.

Johannes, although in conversation with two priests, immediately turned towards them; a meagre form, upright, in spite of his seventy years, by the force of a strong, enthusiastic will; a gray Capuchin dress, tied round the loins with a cord, was all his attire; a silver ring of white hair, which shone like a nimbus, encircled his head. A long white beard fell low on his breast.

"A moment's patience, dear friends," said he. "The business of my brothers here is urgent; you see, they have the traveller's hat and staff--but it will soon be concluded. Thou, Timotheus, wilt return to-night to thy post. It is well that thou hast given the warning; but only the hireling forsakes his flock, the good shepherd remains constant to it."

"I go," said the one addressed, a young subdeacon, blushing quite abashed: "I certainly did not wish to run away from the barbarians--I only wished"----

"To give a warning, certainly. And then, perhaps, the spirit of cowardice suggested this to thee--that Johannes would keep thee here within the safe walls of this fortress. But I say to thee: 'Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.' And if the troubles of war come

over the poor people out there, thy consolations will be needed. Go with God, my son, back to thy cell at Isunisca."

"Are the barbarians already so near?" cried Crispus, alarmed.

"Apparently; at least, brother Timotheus heard, three nights ago, horsemen ride by his cell with unshod steeds. Those were not Romans."

"They were the night-riders, the gods of the heathen, led by Wotan, the devil chief, whom our fathers named Teutates, but the Romans Mercurius," said Bojorix, the deacon, an older man, and he trembled for fear.

"Hardly," said Johannes, with a quiet smile, "for afterwards in clear day, one of these night-phantoms, with a long flowing gray beard, and clad in a wolf's skin, dashed into a company of armed merchants at the bridge across the Inn, seized the largest wine-skin from the waggon, threw it on his horse, and rode away. Spectres do not drink this year's Räter wine. This news from the *west* disturbs me less than the absence of news from the *east*--from Ovilava and Lentia! There certainly came from there, through the Porta Latina, a few peasants into the market; but I did not know them: I was suspicious of them. Well, we stand in the protection of the Lord, in the rising as in the setting of the sun! But thou, Stephen"----

But he who was addressed heard not.

Gently rebuking him, the Presbyter took hold of his garment: "Stephen, Stephen, dost thou still understand only the barbarian name Bojorix? Thou, my Stephen, say to the children of the widow at Foutes: I will pledge the silver vessels of the church, keeping back only one for use, and with the proceeds satisfy the money-lender, and save her from slavery. I will bring the money to-morrow, or the day following."

"O, sir, they are so anxious. Why not tonight?"

"To-night I must bind afresh the wounds of the poor leprous Jew, whom the doctors will no more touch, and watch by him. Go now, both of you, my brethren: and may the Angel of the Lord who led Tobias hover around your traveller's staff. Fear not, although it is night: you walk in light."

Reverently saluting, they departed; Johannes refused the kiss that they wished to press on his hand.

"And now to you, my friends," said he; "what can I do for you?"

With haste and excitement, each supplementing the other, they laid their anxieties before the priest; he listened gravely, attentively.

"It is," said he then, "as my dear penitent has said. Krates, the master, set free the parents and the child: before me, in this Basilica."

"Oh, then we are safe from that base man!" rejoiced Fulvius.

"So long as I live: but I am an old man; this night the Lord may call me. Haste is necessary against this profligate. Yon knew Galla, the child of Gaudentius, who lives near to the tax-office. She was eighteen years old. It was only a few days ago. The villain saw her at mid-day:--before night she had disappeared:--next morning she lay shattered at the foot of the rock of the Capitol;--it was said she had met with an accident while gathering berries--but a fisherman, who was drawing his nets at daybreak, confided to me that he saw her throw herself from the tower-window."

"The Tribune lives there!" cried Crispus.

Fulvius, speechless, grasped at the hammer in his tunic.

"Come! The Judge, the Curies will not take any declaration so late. They are feasting and carousing. We will seek out the elders of the congregation: I will swear before them my knowledge of the emancipation. And I will to-night consider with thee if we cannot protect thy wife's innocence, and also thyself and thy inheritance, brave stone-mason, against this usurer. Follow me."

They hastened all three into the street. It was still tolerably light; the twilight of the long Jane evening only very gradually deepened. As they reached the house of the Judge, the outer door opened: the master came out escorting the money-dealer.

"I will," said he, "send there early to-morrow. Thy right is undoubted; and as the flight of the debtor is probable, I will issue the warrant--but there he stands before us."

Zeno turned towards the street and saw the three men approaching; it displeased him to see his victim in company with the priest, whom the burghers loved, whom he feared and hated. He greeted him coldly; there were other people in the street, it would have injured himself to refuse one so honoured a greeting, but he wished to pass by him quickly.

"Halt, Zeno of Byzantium!" cried the priest aloud--and one would not have credited the old man with this strength of voice--"I have to warn thee, thee and that voluptuous Tribune. I know too well of your sins: the measure is full. If you do not repent, I cannot longer suffer you in the fellowship of the saints." The merchant grew pale. "A usurer thou art; and he--he is a murderer of body and soul. You will not carry it out. Know that, if the letter is burnt, the pure wife shall not be given up to you. She is free--set free before me in the church."

"Thou canst easily say that," said Zeno, with a crafty look.

"I go to swear it before witnesses."

"Then no one knows it except the old man," thought the other.

"But thou who takest thirty and more per cent., I will bring thee to account before the congregation. And not for that alone. Think of thy poor Syrian slave! I will also accuse thee, on her account, before the secular tribunal." The Byzantian trembled. "And thou and that commander-in-chief of lust and power, if you cannot clear yourselves from the blood of Galla, I will expel you next Sunday from the Church."

Before Zeno could answer there was a clang of weapons and the sound of heavy steps, and a company of the Tribune's Isaurians turned the corner. The centurion hastened to the merchant:

"I seek thee! I was directed from thy house here, to the Judge. Read! From the Tribune!"

Zeno took the small wax tablet, "Open?" asked he suspiciously.

"Sealed for us," laughed the soldier; "we do not read; we only fight."

Zeno read: "It was only the knee. My Greek slave has by friction reduced the swelling. I shall to-morrow again mount my horse. Threefold, if thou gettest the woman to-morrow!"

The Greek exchanged a quick look with the Judge; he then, with the reverse end of the style, rubbed the tablet smooth, effacing the writing, turned the style and wrote:

"The priest alone knows that she was set free. On Sunday he denounces thee publicly. Dead dogs do not bark."

"Take that to thy Tribune," said he to the centurion.

"I cannot. I go on guard at the Vindelician gate. But here, Arsakes, go back to the Capitol."

He gave the tablet to one of the soldiers, who saluted and disappeared.

"At the Vindelician gate? Wait, then!" And Zeno whispered a word to the Judge.

"Halt, centurion!" cried the latter, "My Carcerarii are not within call; in case of necessity I can exercise authority over you warriors, according to the law of the Emperor Diocletian. Seize that debtor of the state, whose escape is suspected, and take him to the prison for tax-debtors; it stands by the Vindelician gate."

Fulvius was in a moment surrounded; the centurion laid hold of his shoulder, four men seized his arms.

"Oh, Felicitas!" sighed he, utterly helpless.

"I will save her! I will go to her immediately!" cried Crispus, and he hastened away.

He was about to turn the corner, when there sounded suddenly the hoof-strokes of a horseman riding along in mad haste, followed by a tumultuous crowd: soldiers, burghers, women, children--all pell-mell.

"One of our Moorish horsemen!" cried the centurion, as he caught the horse's bridle. "Jarbas! Comrade in arms! What is the matter?"

The rider, who was dripping with water, raised himself high in the saddle; he had lost helmet and shield, he held a broken spear in his right hand, blood streamed over his naked left arm.

"Tell the Tribune," cried he in a hoarse voice, as if making a last effort. "I can do no more--the arrow in my neck--they are there--close the gates--the Germans stand before the town!" And dropping the bridle, he fell backwards from his horse.

He was dead!

CHAPTER VI.

Was it actually so? Did the Germans stand indeed before the gates of Juvavum?

The burghers racked their brains in tormenting uncertainty. They could learn nothing more at present of what had happened without the walls; the mouth that might have given farther information was silent for ever.

The gates were kept carefully shut. When the news first reached the Capitol, Leo, the Tribune, had sprung from his couch, "To horse!" cried he; "out, before the walls!" But with a cry of pain he had sunk back in the arms of his slave; and he did not wish to entrust to another the dangerous enterprise of a nightly reconnaissance outside the gates, against an enemy certainly far superior in numbers. Severus, the commander of the volunteers in the town, had only infantry at his disposal. With these alone, he could not and would not advance against the barbarians in the night. He contented himself with occupying the towers and gates. The strengthened guard on the ramparts watched and listened attentively in the mild night air; but there was nothing unusual to be observed, no light in the neighbourhood, no camp-fires in the distance, which the advancing Germans, with wives and children, men-servants and maidens, with herds, carts and waggons, certainly could not dispense with, and which it was not their custom to extinguish either from prudence or fear. No noise was heard, neither the clang of arms, nor the hoof-strokes of horses; only the regular, gentle murmuring of the stream, which hastened through the valley from south to north, struck on the ears of the watchers. A burgher once thought he heard a noise in the direction of the river, like the gentle neighing of a horse, and a splash of the waves, as if a heavy body had fallen or sprung into the stream; but he convinced himself that he had been deceived, for everything remained still as before.

The nightingales sang in the bushes around the villas; their undisturbed song testified, as one rightly judged, that neither waggons, horses, nor warriors were in movement there.

So to gain information they turned again to the corpse of the horseman, and to his steed, yet trembling in every limb.

They saw that the horse had swum the stream, man and horse were running with water. Why had not the fugitive made use of the bridge below the town? Because he did not know if it were occupied? or because he did not wish to do so? Because he had striven to bring his news the most direct road? He had no other wound than that in the neck, caused by the deadly arrow, from which the blood had flowed over his shoulder and shieldless left arm. It was undoubtedly a missile like those the Germans carried; the three-barbed point had entered very deeply, the shot was given at a close range; the long shaft of alder-wood was winged with the feathers of the gray heron; the blade of his long cavalry sword was missing, the leather sheath hung empty at the right side of his girth; the spear, which the closed right hand still grasped, was broken at the first iron clasp by which the point was attached, by a powerful blow from a battle-axe, not from a sword; so that the rider had lost in close combat, helmet, shield, sword, and spear, and in flight had received the arrow shot by his pursuer. The dead man could be questioned no more.

But what had become of his comrades in arms?

Leo, the Tribune, had the day before sent out five of the Moorish cavalry to take possession of a hill, two hours' journey north-west of the town, which commanded a view of the country as far as the thick forest to the north. A half-fallen watch-tower stood there, which had last been repaired and occupied in the time of the Emperor Valentinian I., now a hundred years ago.

What had become of the other four Moors?

Nobody knew.

The citizens passed an anxious night. The watch went their rounds on the ramparts with torches, and small fires burnt at the spots where broad flagstones covered the surface of the earth and turf.

The fires were extinguished at dawn of the early June morning; the sentinels looked carefully out into the country in the full morning light; there was nowhere a trace of the enemy.

Peasants came as usual from all parts into the town to sell or to buy. They were astonished to find the gates closed. They were allowed to pass in singly, all being carefully examined to see if they were trustworthy people or spies, perhaps even barbarians in disguise.

But the inoffensive peasants were terrified at this unusual sharpness of the gate-watch; to question them was without rhyme or reason. They evidently knew nothing, and were much more zealous and anxious to inquire in the town what had taken place.

From the north-west, in the direction of Vindelicia, from which the approach of the barbarians was expected, the country people had come in, as usual, in numbers; they had observed nothing suspicious. But from the south-east hardly anyone came. It excited no remark, few villas and houses lay that way, and it was only seldom that a frequenter of the market came from thence. One might have considered the fright of the previous evening as a dream, only the dead horseman was a silent witness to its actuality.

The first hours of the day passed away without any threatening indications; there was no

enemy visible even in the far distance; the bridge over the Ivarus below the town (a second joined the two banks within the walls) was seen to be unoccupied.

As the Tribune was still kept a prisoner in the Capitol by the accident to his knee, Severus ordered the Vindelician gate to be opened; he went with a company to the bridge, caused the end on the left, western bank to be barricaded with pieces of rock and timber, left there thirty spearmen and slingers, and then returned to the town quite satisfied that there was no trace of the enemy. But the old soldier did not relax his watchfulness; he ordered the gates to be kept closed and the towers garrisoned, and any occurrence was to be notified immediately to him in the Bath of Amphitrite, whither he now went, to wash away the cares of the night and the heat and dust of the march.

After having fully enjoyed the bath, he sat comfortably on the soft woollen rug covering the marble seat, which formed a semicircle around the porphyry bath, rubbing now arms, and now legs, from the hip to the knee.

This man of about fifty-five years was a model of healthy and vigorous strength; his limbs showed that the practice of the hunt and gymnastics had developed the power of his strongly-formed body.

He now ceased his movements, and sank gradually into deep thought. His head fell deeper and deeper on his breast; at last he extended his right arm and began to draw figures in the clean white sand, which covered the space between the marble seat and the edge of the bath.

"Must rank our men still deeper against the German wedge," murmured he to himself. "Ten men--twelve men deep. No, they don't waver yet. And yet--it must be just a question of arithmetic to defeat these Germans. It is only a problem of stroke and counter-stroke. Who may solve it? It would be best"----

"It would be best," broke in gently a melancholy voice, "that we lay in our last long sleep, where there is no longer either stroke or counterstroke."

Severus turned; the white woollen curtain of the inner bath was moved aside; a handsome man in the strength of youth, and fully armed, stood behind it.

"Thou, Cornelius! What meanest thou?"

"Thou knowest my meaning. The best for man is not to have been born."

"Shame on thee! thirty years old, and already so tired of life."

"Shame on *thee*! Nearly sixty years, and still so foolishly fond of life."

"What dost thou bring?"

"Advice: evacuate the town, all the citizens to the Capitol. An express messenger over the Alps for help."

"Thou seest spectres!"

"Ah! If I saw only *them*! But I see the Germans!"

"There is no trace of them far and wide."

"It is exactly that which is mysterious. They must be near, quite near; and no one knows where they are."

"*Why* must they be quite near?"

"Because the gray heron does not go southwards in the month of June; and because he never flies so low."

"What has that to say to it?"

"I will tell you. I was making the midnight round to relieve the guard at the Porta Latina. From the battlements of the tower I looked out sharply into the night. Nothing was to be seen, and nothing to be heard, except the song of the nightingale. Then suddenly I heard the cry of the gray heron."

"They are not numerous here," said Severus; "but they do appear in the stagnant waters and in the marshes of the Ivarus."

"Certainly; but the cry did not come from the river; it sounded on this side of the stream, out of the mountain forest."

"Making an eyrie there, perhaps."

"It was the *migratory call*. And they migrate in August. And after the first call there was a second, a third, a fourth answer, till the sounds died away in the distance."

"The echo from the hills!"

"That is conceivable. But the cry did not come from high in the air; it came from below, from the ground, up to me on the battlements of the tower. The heron does not fish at night."

The old man smiled pleasantly. "Do, my Cornelius, believe the old huntsman. It fishes at night when it has a brood to feed. I have myself caught one in the morning in the fishing-net which I had set the evening before."

"But that arrow was winged with the feathers of the--gray heron. And as often as the heron called, there answered still deeper out of the eastern forest the shrill cry of the black eagle."

"Accident! And how could the Germans come here from the east? From the west, from Vindelicia only, could the Alemanni come, who are the nearest Germans to us. How could they have crossed the river unnoticed, unless they have wings, like the gray heron himself? Foresight is very praiseworthy, my young friend, and thou seest I am not wanting in vigilance. But thou art too anxious; youth and age have exchanged their *rôle*, I know," hastened Severus to add, as an angry look flashed across the handsome face of the young man, "I know Cornelius Ambiorix is only anxious for Rome, not for himself."

"Why should I be anxious about a life that has no charm and no value?" asked the other, again composed, and sitting down by the old man. "The philosophy of the sceptics has destroyed the old gods for us; and I cannot believe in the Jew of Nazareth. A blind fate guides the world. Rome--my pride, my dream--sinks, sinks irretrievably."

"Thou errest there," answered the other, quite composed. "I would to-day throw myself on this sword"--he grasped the weapon which lay near him on a cushion--"if I shared thy belief. But this sword--it is inherited from my imperial ancestor, Probus--gives me always fresh encouragement. Nine German kings knelt before that hero's tent, when he drew this sword out of the scabbard, and commanded the trembling ones, according to their own custom, to swear allegiance by the sword. And they swore it."

"That is long ago."

"And with this sword is also bequeathed in our family the oracular promise: 'This sword is conqueror in every battle.' It has been proved in many generations of our house. I myself, while I was allowed to serve, had defeated the Germans in twenty battles and fights, with this sword." And the old man pressed the weapon tenderly to his breast.

"Pardon, if I correct thee," said the young man, smiling sadly; "not with this sword, but with Isaurians, Moors, Illyrians, and, most of all, with Germans, hast thou other Germans conquered. Rome, Latium, Italy has no more men. There are no more Romans. Celtic blood flows in my veins, Dacian in thine. And why canst thou no longer serve? Because thou hast often conquered, the mistrustful Emperor has taken the general's staff from thy hand, and in gratitude for thy services sent thee here in honourable banishment."

"It was very--undeserved," said Severus, rising; "but no matter! I can be of use to the Roman state here also."

"Too late!" sighed the other. "*Fuimus Troes!* It is over with us. Asia to the Parthians, Europe to the Germans, and to us--destruction. It seems to me that each people, as each man, lives out its life. Twelve centuries have gone by since Romulus was suckled by the she-wolf. We must allow that she had good milk--the venerable beast--and the wolf's blood in our veins has lasted long. But now it is diseased, and the baptismal water has utterly ruined it. How can the government of the world be maintained, when hardly any Roman marries, and the few children that are born are not suckled by the mothers, while these broad-hipped German women are filling the land with their numerous progeny. They literally eat us up, these forest people; they dispossess us from the earth more through their chaste fruitfulness than by their deadly courage. Three hundred and forty thousand Goths did the Emperor Claudius destroy; in four years after there stood four hundred thousand in the field. They grow like the heads of the Hydra. And we have no Hercules. I have had enough of it. I shall bring it to an end in the next battle. One does not suffer long after a blow from a German battle-axe."

Severus seized the hand of the young man who had spoken so bitterly. "I honour thy sorrow, Cornelius, but thou shouldest act according to thy own words: thy Thalamos stands empty; thou must again make Hymen sound forth under the gray pillars."

"Ha!" laughed the young man fiercely, "that a second Emperor may entice away from me a second spouse, as a bishop the first bride, an Emperor the first wife led astray? No! truly there are no more Romans; but still fewer Roman women. Pleasure, love of ornament, and love of power, are the three Graces whom they invoke. Have you ever heard that the priests among these barbarians befool the young girls? or their kings entice wives from the hearths of their free husbands? I have not. But a people without gods, without native warriors, without true wives, without children--such a people can no longer live. A people that has every reason to tremble before its own slaves, ten times more numerous than itself! If thou hadst only seen the murderous dark looks with which the slaves of Zeno, the usurer, threatened their lord and the

slave-master, as they were just now driven in chains through the street! But I myself? How stands it with me? I have been everywhere, and held many different offices in Rome, in Ravenna, in Byzantium: soldier, magistrate, writer--all with success; and yet I found it all--vain, hollow. I have tried everything, it is all naught. Now, returned home to the town of my fathers, I find it ruled by a usurer from Byzantium and a sensualist and brawler from Mauritania; and the only one who still makes any opposition to this alliance, is not *thou*, and not *I*; we are only two honourable Romans! no: a Christian priest, whose fatherland, as he boasts, is not the Roman Empire, but heaven!--I have had enough of it!--I say it again: a people without gods, without wives, without mothers, without children--a people whose battles are fought by levied barbarians--such a people can no longer live! It must die; and that soon. Come, then, come, ye Alemanni! I cannot swallow hemlock. I will fall with the clang of the tuba, and imagine that I am falling under Camillus or Scipio."

Cornelius was wildly excited. Severus seized him by both shoulders:

"Promise me not to seek death until you see the next battle lost, and that you will be willing to live if we conquer."

Cornelius nodded, sadly smiling, "I think I can boldly promise that. Thou and thy conquering sword--you will no longer keep back the quickly approaching ruin."

At this moment a shrill blast from the tuba struck on their ear. The curtain of the inner bath was torn aside; an armed burgher rushed in and cried: "Hasten, Severus; now they are coming. German horsemen are galloping hither out of the western forest on the other side of the river!"

CHAPTER VII.

With the help of the messenger and the bath attendants, Severus was quickly armed. Accompanied by Cornelius he hastened to the Vindelician gate, there to mount the high wall, which afforded a prospect far and wide. The exertion made him very hot, for it was now mid-day; the burning rays of the sun fell vertically on his heavy helmet.

At the gate he was met by a centurion of the Tribune; Leo had already seen from the Capitol the horsemen swarming out of the western forest. He sent word there were only about a hundred Germans: he would himself immediately lead his cavalry to the gates, for he was able again to mount his horse.

Severus ordered the soldier to follow him for the moment on to the walls. With Cornelius he looked intently over the plain, which stretched from the left farther bank of the river as far as the western forest.

After long observation he turned. He was about to speak to Cornelius; but his eyes fell on two country people who were anxiously looking in the same direction.

"Now," said he, "Geta, how could you be so foolish? You swore by all the saints that you had seen no trace of the enemy. Your cottages lie on the other side of the western forest. And now the barbarians lie hidden between you and the town! Were you blind and deaf?"

"Or did you *wish* to be so?" interposed Cornelius mistrustfully. "Consider," warned he, "they have every reason to support the barbarians; rough and passionate these may be, but they do not press the last marrow out of the bones of their bondmen, like the imperial fiscal."

But the elder of the two peasants answered: "No, sir, I am no traitor. I do not support the barbarians. Have I not served under the great Aëtius and received an honourable discharge and this little property? Believe an old legionary; and if you do not believe me, keep me here as a hostage till it is decided. Only yesterday I and my nephew were boiling pitch in the west forest--the traders from Ravenna give a high price for it. The whole forest is not five miles in breadth; if there had been many barbarians hiding themselves there, we must have seen them; it cannot be a migrating horde, an army of people; it can only be adventurers, a few horsemen who are reconnoitring to see how the country is protected."

"We will show them how it is protected," cried Severus, and he raised his right hand menacingly. "The veteran is right, Cornelius. I believe him. It is only that handful of riders over by the river that is capering towards us. We will drench them for their insolence. Himilco, back to the Tribune. I decline the help of his Moors--hearest thou? I decline it altogether; it is a case of honour, to show these robbers that the burghers of Juvavum alone are men enough to chastise them."

"I fully agree with you," said Cornelius. "It can only be a party of scouts."

"I shall, notwithstanding, be cautious, and make the attack with an overpowering force; this time I *must* conquer--on account of thy vow, my Cornelius."

He struck him on the shoulder with fatherly kindness, and descended the narrow flight of

steps from the walls. Having reached the gate, he commanded the tuba-blower to hasten through all the quarters of the town, and summon the burghers to the Vindelician gate: in a quarter of an hour would the attack be made. Loud sounded the imperative tones in all parts of the town, and from every street the armed volunteers streamed forth to the north-western gate. One of the first was the fat Crispus, who came panting from his workshop hard by. He toiled along under an immense spear and shield. It was hot, and Crispus was old and corpulent. On his head, instead of a helmet, he carried a cooking utensil, in which, in peaceful times, the old Ancilla was accustomed to bake the--only too greasy--festival cakes! It was certainly now scoured quite bright, but it was somewhat too large, and at each step rattled about his ears. He did not present a very warlike appearance.

Severus observed him with a shake of the head. "Now the will is good"----

"And the flesh is not weak!" mocked Cornelius.

"But," continued Severus, "I would rather see thy slim nephew, the stone-mason. Why does he deny his arm to the Fatherland? Always with his young wife? Where is he?"

"Here he is!" cried an entreating voice high above their heads.

Crispus had not had time to answer--had only pointed towards the tower at the gate; and behind the barred window of the second story, Fulvius was to be seen eagerly stretching forth both hands.

"Let me out, O general! Help me down, and with the spear I will thank thee!"

"Severus," said Crispus eagerly to the astonished general, "order the gaoler--there he stands, in the doorway--to release him; Zeno the usurer has caused him to be imprisoned."

"Bring the man out, Carcerarius!" commanded Severus. "I need such a strong youthful arm. Let him pay first his debt to the Fatherland. Should he fall, he will be free from every debt; should he survive, he will return to the tower."

The gaoler hesitated; but a blow in the ribs which Cornelius impatiently dealt him altered his opinion.

"I yield to force!" cried he, rubbing the assaulted spot.

"What an iron, strictly obedient Roman soul!" exclaimed Cornelius.

Immediately afterwards Fulvius sprang over the threshold, seized the shield and spear which were brought to him from the store of arms on the ramparts, and cried:

"Out! out before the gate!"

Well pleased, the eye of the general rested on him.

"I praise such zeal! Thou longest for the battle?"

"Ah, no, sir," answered the young man ingenuously, "only for Felicitas."

While Severus turned away vexed, Crispus comforted his nephew.

"I have been watching thy house from the wall. Compose thyself, no barbarian has yet crossed the river."

"And the Tribune?" whispered the young husband.

"Has not yet left the Capitol"

"And Zeno?"

"Is fully occupied in bringing his treasures into the town and hiding them."

Then the tuba-blowers returned from their rounds the last citizens from the most distant houses arrived.

Severus and Cornelius drew them up in two companies, each of about three hundred men. Then the old hero stood before them and said:

"Romans! Men of Juvavum! Follow me! Out before the gate, and woe to the barbarians!"

He expected loud applause, but all were silent.

One man alone stepped from the ranks, and said anxiously:

"May I ask a question?"

"Ask!" answered Severus, displeased.

"How many barbarians may there be out there?"

"Hardly one hundred."

"And we are six hundred!" said this bold one, smiling comfortably and turning to his fellow-citizens. "To the gate!" cried he suddenly, striking his sword on the shield. "To the gate! And woe to the barbarians!"

"Woe to the barbarians!" cried now the whole troop.

The gate was drawn up, and over the drawbridge, which at the same time fell across the moat, the men hastened out of the town.

Very few guards were left on the walls. Women and children now hurried from their houses, mounted the ramparts, and looked after their dear ones, who at a quick march were advancing towards the bridge below the town, the west end of which, as we have seen, had been in the morning barricaded and occupied by a small troop.

CHAPTER VIII.

At mid-day, when the Alemannian horsemen had first become visible, Leo the Tribune was lying in his richly-furnished chamber in the high tower of the Capitol, on a soft couch over which was spread a lion's skin. He felt in his best mood.

His knee pained and hindered him no longer.

He comfortably stroked the rich black beard which encircled a face--bronze-brown, small, originally nobly formed, but long since become terrible by passions.

Before him, on a table of citron-wood, there stood, half-emptied, a large jug of fiery Siculer wine, and a silver drinking-cup.

Two Greek slaves, father and son, were in attendance on him.

The elder slave, raising his finger in warning, brought the mixing-cup. But, laughing, his master put it aside. "North of the Alps," said he, "nature herself mixes too much coldness in our blood; we do not need to dilute the wine. Is it not so, my demure Antinoüs? There, drink!" And he offered the cup to a third servant, a handsome boy of some fifteen years, who was crouching on the ground in the extreme corner of the room, as far as possible from Leo, and turning his back to his master. He wore only a purple petticoat round his loins. His other garments the Tribune had stripped off, that he might gaze on his splendid limbs. Without turning his beautiful, sad face, the prisoner shook his head, round which flowed long golden hair.

Defiantly, threateningly, he then spoke: "My name is not Antinoüs; my name is Hortari. Set me free! let me go back to my own people in the rustling forests of the Danube! or else kill me! For know this, shameful man, never will I comply with thy orders."

Leo angrily threw at him the heavy fortress-key, which lay on an ottoman near. "Depart hence, stubborn dog! Davus!" cried he to the younger slave, who was engaged in putting ready the armour of the Tribune, "drag him to the stable, and hang him there in chains! If the brat will not be his master's plaything, away with him to the beasts!"

The boy sprang up and threw his woollen mantle around him.

Davus dragged him away. The look, full of deadly hate, which the young German threw back, quickly turning as he passed out of the room, Leo did not observe. He soon recovered his good-humour.

"To-morrow I shall have better company here in the Thalamos," said he, again stroking his dark beard, "than an untamable young bear. Felicitas! I drink to our first embrace!" And he emptied the cup.

Then he stood up. "I need a support no longer!" He thereupon motioned away the elder slave, stepped to the window of the tower, and looked out.

"There is not a hundred of them, these daring barbarians! What insolence! Only a few wear defensive armour; and their weapons of attack are pitiable. How many of their arrows, spears, battle-axes have already splintered harmlessly on my helmet and armour! They are coming straight towards me. I long for battle and victory! There is life down there in the streets of the town. Severus is gathering his cobblers and tinkers. But they will not get the better of the impetuous enemy. When the old man, who is playing the general, is in the greatest distress--I will let him struggle a good while as a punishment--then will I ride out with my cavalry like the storm of the desert, and sweep them before me. But first to the priest. No one in the town is now thinking of anything but the barbarians outside the gates. So I can accomplish it unnoticed. The danger from that priest must be very threatening, when the cowardly gold-sack himself counsels

bloody means. He has ever menaced me, the psalm-whiner. First security and revenge, then the pleasure of victory, and for a reward--Felicitas. Let Pluto be saddled," commanded he the old slave, "and help me to arm."

The old man took the order to the court below, and then returned to the tower. Leo had already put on the tall helmet with its flowing plume, and the splendid greaves, and the slave now helped his master to clasp and buckle over the dark-red tunic the magnificent breast-armour, which was adorned with many orders and distinctions. When Leo had girded on the sword, and was going to take the bronze shield, with the long, sharp spike in the centre, the old man took carefully from a small ivory box, which stood in the corner near the couch, a narrow leather strap with two diminutive appendages, and with an entreating, silent, impressively eloquent look, offered the charm to his master. It was a small, ugly idol in amber, and a tiny silver case.

"Take it, my lord!" entreated the Greek, as Leo contemptuously pushed it away.

"What shall I do with that? What sort of"----

"Do not revile them," implored the old man; "or they will be malicious and protect no longer. Dost thou not know them, the guarding jewels? The one is the Egyptian god, Phtha, and the capsule encloses a hair of the beard of the Apostle Paul. If the first does not help, the second will. Wear to-day both. I had last night a bad dream."

"*Thou* wear them, then!"

"The dream did not concern me, but thee, my lord. I saw thee celebrating a marriage!"

"Oh, that thou seest often! This time with Felicitas?"

"No, with Persephone, the queen of shades."

"She is no doubt very beautiful," laughed the Tribune, spreading out his powerful arms; "let her only approach, she is welcome!"

"May the omen be far distant!" cried the slave.

"Thou art very anxious about me! Does my life concern thee? Why? Say, for what reason?"

"Oh, sir, thou wast never so angry with Chrysos as"----

"With all the others, wilt thou say?" laughed the Moor. "Only self-interest, old man; I need thee; that is, thy healing knowledge and fingers."

"If thou wouldst only pray! And some one creature on the earth, love--some one name honour! It would be better for thee!"

But the soldier gave a shrill laugh: "Love? Do I not every month love another woman?"

"Thou destroyest what thou lovest!"

"And pray? To which god shall I pray? With the same fervour and with the same results, have I seen prayer offered to Astarte and Artemis, to Osiris and Jupiter, to Christ and Jehovah. But honour? What can be sacred to me? Hardly so old as that German youth, I was stolen by Vandal horsemen. Then lost I home, parents for ever! Sold as a slave to the Romans, I suffered and enjoyed, even as a boy, things unspeakable--pampered, kissed, fed, whipped. I slew my last master, escaped into the forests of Calabria, became robber, robber-chief; was taken, condemned to the sports in the circus, pardoned by the Emperor when even my blood reddened the arena, placed among the mercenaries, soon by wild courage centurion and Tribune. To which god shall I pray? They all forsook me when I believed in them. But since I scorn them all, Fortune serves me like a beloved maid. And what shall I love and honour? My palm-rustling home? That is occupied by Vandalic barbarians! Rome? Rome at first ill-treated me like a captive beast of prey, and now hunts me like a tamed lion against her enemies. Very well; the nature as well as the name of this my terrible countryman have I chosen;" and he patted the proudly-maned head of the desert-king on his couch. "Booty, enjoyment, battle! Wine, war, women! And at last--no awakening--eternal night in the silent waste of death!" With that he seized both amulets, threw them from the tower window, grasped his spear, which was resting against the wall, and went clanging down the steep tower staircase.

The Greek followed sadly.

Having reached the wide court-yard, the Tribune commanded his troops to mount; he ordered the squadron to follow him into the town, and station themselves in the Forum of Hercules, there to wait till, he should lead them to the attack. The centurion Himilco, in command of the Isaurian foot-soldiers, was placed at the look-out post at the entrance of the Capitol, to watch the progress of the battle and any possible events in the town; and if his presence was required in the town or outside the walls, he must first close the strong gate of the citadel, and leave two guards there. The Tribune quietly ordered his two slaves, the old Greek and his son, to the foot of the Capitol with a closed litter: "under any circumstances," added he. "To drag on horseback a struggling

woman up the steep path--that might oblige me seriously to hurt her--as in Galla's case," said he to himself. And now, having given all his commands, he placed his foot in the stirrup, to swing himself on Pluto, his magnificent black Spanish steed, which had, with the front hoof, been impatiently striking sparks from the granite pavement. He was hardly in the saddle when, through the open stable-door, his eye fell on the boy Hortari, who, with outstretched arms, was chained to the wall between two iron horse-racks. In a corner of the stable lay a round blue German shield, a spear, and a battle-axe, the weapons that had been taken from the boy at his seizure.

"Ha! the future Antinoüs!" laughed he, fixing his spear at his side. "Unchain him! He shall go on the walls, and see the destruction of his German heroes. At night we will chain him with a whole pack of such bears."

And he gave his steed the spurs, so that he started loudly neighing. "Beware of the bears of the forest," cried Hortari, now unchained, and stepping to the door of the stable with flashing eyes; "their claws will tear you in pieces."

But the Tribune, with a laugh, shouted: "Up! to the gate! and woe to the barbarians!"

And, following their powerful leader, the glittering cavalcade galloped off, rushing and clashing down the valley.

CHAPTER IX.

With less cheerfulness than the Tribune, had his confederate Zeno received the news of the appearance of the Germans before the town.

He owned many estates outside the gates, managed by slaves and slave-women, who might take this opportunity, as the oppressed often do in such cases, to run away to the barbarians, and with them make good their escape.

Although he was no patron of art, and was too prudent to leave treasures outside the fortress, yet his villas contained much valuable furniture and other household goods. There were also herds of cattle, sheep, and swine, which he would very unwillingly have bestowed on the robbers.

Therefore, in the early hours of the morning, when Severus went out to reconnoitre and to take possession of the bridge over the Ivarus, Zeno sent out, under the protection of this troop, his slave-master, himself an emancipated slave, with a gang of armed men, to bring in from the houses which lay, at all events, on this side of the river, the most valuable effects. The slaves especially belonging to those properties were to be led into the town--if necessary by force. These peasants and herdsmen, always rougher, wilder, more insubordinate than the town servants, had only obeyed with reluctance; on two estates the unhappy creatures had resisted, but were overpowered by superior numbers and bound with chains to each other. The slave-master swung incessantly over them the many-lashed leather scourge, urging them to haste, and to burden themselves with still heavier loads, which they balanced on their heads.

In a long train, those that were chained in the centre, cattle and sheep forward, armed slaves at each side, the overseers at the head and end of the line, they now came back through the Vindelician gate, which was immediately closed behind them.

"Forward, Thrax, thou old dog!" cried Calvus, the overseer--he was considered Zeno's son by a slave-woman--to a white-haired old man who staggered under a load of bronze vessels; and as from feebleness he could not hasten his steps, Calvus struck him a severe blow on the back with the flat of his sword-blade.

The old man cried aloud and stumbled to the ground.

A gigantic neatherd, who was very heavily chained--he had resisted furiously, and still bled from several wounds--then halted; he thereby stopped the progress of all who were chained to him.

"I pray thee, Calvus, spare my father! Give his basket to me."

"Wait, Këix, thou cursed Thracian, I will give thee that which is thy due," cried Calvus, and struck him with the edge of the sword over head and shoulder, so that the blood spouted out. He was silent; not a cry of pain escaped his tightly-pressed lips. But Calvus continued: "Thou hast risen in open rebellion; we might have thee quartered for it. But it would be losing too much capital to kill such a beast, that we have fed for thirty years. Patience, my little son! I shall try on thee the new torture instrument which the master has procured from Byzantium. That shall be my refreshing evening's amusement."

The strong Thracian grew pale; but with anger, not fear. He only cast a look at his persecutor, and again strode forwards.

While some of the servants distributed the herds in the town stabling, the chained slaves were taken by Calvus to the court of the master's house in the Via Augustana, to receive their punishment.

"Do with them as thou wilt," said Zeno in his writing-chamber, reading through the list of the rescued property, "only take care that the life and value, that means the power to work of these wretches, does not suffer thereby. Previous to mutilation, we must, according to the law of the pious Constantine, obtain the sentence of the Judge. I will ask my son-in-law. Mucius," and he smiled; "but, with a slight modification of the law, *afterwards*. Now I shall go to the Bath of Amphitrite to inquire the news."

While he, accompanied by Calvus, was passing through the court, his eyes fell on old Thrax, who lay in the corner on some straw; quite exhausted, he had sunk into a deep sleep; by him, leaning against the wall, was his giant son, heavily chained; blood still trickled from his wounds. Zeno thrust at the sleeper with his staff; the old man opened his tired eyes:

"Ah, am I still alive? I dreamt that the Lord had called me! I walked in Paradise! But on the earth also I belong to the Lord Christ!"

"Then thy Lord Christ shall feed thee," mocked Zeno. "Calvus, that old man is good for nothing. Withdraw from him the wine and bacon. It is useless to feed him." His look then met the eye of the son, who grasped his chains in rage.

Zeno was alarmed.

"Listen, Calvus," whispered he; "that one there, after he has been tortured, let him be sold. He makes me uneasy. He has the look of our black bull immediately before it went mad. Away with him to the mines of the Fiscus! They need there such strong scoundrels, and the lead soon poisons. Now to the bath!"

With that he went out of the court. He had hardly crossed the threshold of his house, when a lame slave hobbled in, who very much resembled the powerful-limbed Këix; it was his elder brother. But he did not seem to notice either the old father or the brother streaming with blood; he limped towards Calvus, and said, deeply bending:

"My master, Mucius the Judge, sends you this writing. Zeno and thou, you are accused before him, by Johannes the priest, of having scourged the Syrian woman, so that the unborn child died. He says he can this time only with difficulty acquit you."

The writing was long; while Calvus read it with a knitted brow, the lame man glided silently to his brother and pressed a file into his hand; it was wrapped in a strip of papyrus. Këix read: "After the mid-day meal." With his chained hand he lifted the small strip to his mouth and swallowed it.

The lame man stood again behind Calvus. "What answer, sir?"

Highly displeased, Calvus gave him back the indictment. "May Orkus swallow up this priest! He knows everything that does not concern him. I must myself speak with thy master. Go on! Thou limpest horribly, Kottys," laughed he. "But the expedient has been successful. We sold thee to the Judge as incorrigible. But since thy new master has cut thy sinews for thee, thou hast not again attempted to escape, and art become tame, quite tame." They then both left the court.

In an hour Zeno returned from the bath. As he crossed the courtyard, all the slaves, chained and unchained, were sitting at their scanty meal, consisting of small pieces of coarse barley-bread, onions, and bad wine, sour as vinegar. He went into his writing-room to his accounts.

There, as was well known, no one dared disturb him.

This room--alone in the house--had instead of curtains a strong wooden door, which could be locked.

The low window looked on a narrow lane, not on the principal street.

He soon noticed an unusual noise, as of the screaming and running of many men in the distance. The door then opened gently. Astonished, displeased at the intrusion, Zeno turned.

He was still more astonished to see old Thrax standing upon the threshold, who shut the door carefully, turned the key, and laid his finger on his lips, warning silence, for his master had angrily given a cry of displeasure.

"Flee, master! Quick! Through the window! Thou art a dead man if they seize thee."

"Who? Are the barbarians in the town?"

"Thy slaves; they are in revolt; all, in the whole town. They will be here immediately."

Horror seized the Byzantian. He was well aware what vengeance he had heaped up against himself. From the courtyard the wild cry already rang in his ears. He seized a large bag of gold pieces, and a little purse full of precious stones which lay before him on the counter of slate; he had been in the act of counting them. The old man pushed a stool to the window to help him to mount. Zeno started; it was with astonishment that he saw the old man actively engaged about his escape. "Why doest thou this for me?"

The slave answered solemnly: "I do it for the sake of the Saviour; Johannes has taught me that my Lord Christ has said: 'Reward evil with good.'"

"But whither, whither shall I flee?"

"To the church! There is safety. Johannes will protect thee."

"Johannes!"

Zeno wondered if the Tribune had already carried out his bloody counsel. His knees shook. He was not able to climb the low breastwork of the window.

Nearer and nearer sounded the uproar.

He heard the voice of Calvus. "Mercy! mercy!" he cried.

Immediately afterwards was heard a heavy fall.

"Alas!" groaned Zeno, now at last lifted up by the slave to the window. "If they guess my hiding-place!"

"Master, no one knows it but myself, and I"----

"Thou shalt never betray me!" cried the Byzantian, and he seized the dagger in his tunic, thrust it to the haft in the neck of the old man, and swung himself into the street.

CHAPTER X.

Meanwhile the straggle outside the gates was being decided.

The barbarians some eighty horsemen, had several times approached the river, but never within bow-shot; they had also trotted towards the blockaded bridge, but had made no attack on that strong position. The eyes of the people on the ramparts and of the attacking party were directed intently towards this enemy in the *west*.

When the bridge was reached Severus ordered a small opening to be made in the barricade, through which only two men at a time could gain the left bank, and now, as the two last of the long train of burghers passed through--the bridge was still occupied by its original garrison--there sounded from the hills of the eastern forest, from the *right* bank, the piercing cry of the black eagle.

Cornelius quickly turned and looked towards the east. "Heardest thou the cry of the eagle?"

Severus nodded. "A good omen for Roman warriors! Seest thou how our golden eagle on the standard seems to raise its wings?"

But Cornelius did not look at the standard-bearer; he looked only towards the eastern forest. "A column of smoke rises up from the chamois rock."

"A charcoal-burner! Turn thy face! In the *west* stands the enemy. Lower the spears! Forward!"

In two extended lines near each other, each three men deep, they now advanced towards the agile horsemen, who had quickly ridden back from the river as this mass of footmen passed over; they had halted half-way between the stream and the western forest, and had formed in two parallel lines. Only a spear's throw separated the enemies.

Then as Severus and Cornelius, slowly advancing their columns, were just going to raise their spears, two Germans rode slowly towards them, ceremoniously turning the points of their lances downwards.

"Halt!" cried Severus to his troops. "They wish to parley. Let us listen to them!"

The two horsemen came now quite close to Severus and Cornelius. The combatants on each side stood back in anxious expectation.

One of the two Germans, a youthful, towering, splendid figure, on a milk-white steed, was by the ornaments and splendour of his arms characterised as a leader; he might be more than ten years younger than Cornelius, who noticed with envy the muscular strength of the naked right arm of the young barbarian, adorned and at the same time strengthened by broad golden

armlets; the left arm was covered by a small round shield, painted red, embellished in the centre with a spokeless wheel, a Rune or a picture of the sun. His breast was protected by splendidly-worked armour--ah! with feelings of anger Severus recognised, by the badges of honour appended thereto, that it had been the panoply of a distinguished Roman officer, a legate or *magister militum*;--he wore short leather breeches; from the ankle upwards the calf of the leg was bound round with neat leather straps; the left only of the two closely-fitting wooden shoes bore a spur; the rider scorned saddle and stirrups; a short double axe was stuck in his girdle, a white woollen mantle, fastened together so that it hindered no movement, hung at his back; it was the hand of the mother--for this youth was certainly yet unwedded--who had worked the handsome, broad, bright red stripe on its border; splendid light golden hair floated on his shoulders in natural curls, and surrounded the dazzlingly beautiful, maidenlike white face; and on the proudly arched Roman helmet, also obtained by plunder, towered, instead of the Latin black horse-tail, the pinion of the gray heron.

The second horseman, a gigantic, gray-haired man of about sixty years, with a gray beard falling low on his breast and waving in the wind, seemed to be the leader of the retinue of his chief. He was simply dressed and armed; the mane and tail of his powerful war-horse, a brown stallion, were prettily interwoven with red and yellow ribbons; on his shoulders he wore the skin of a wolf, whose open jaws yawned at the enemy from the top of his helmet; his shield was painted in red and yellow circles; at his unarmed breast he carried a mighty horn of the bison of the primeval forest.

The commander now raised his lowered spear, threw it into the bridle-hand, and offered the right to Severus, who took it with hesitation, and immediately let it fall.

"First a grasp of the hand," cried the German, with a soft, richly-toned voice, in very good Vulgate Latin--"first a grasp of the hand, then, if you so wish it, a stroke with the sword. I know thee; thou art the brave Severus, formerly the *Magister Militum*. Thou art gallantly continuing the struggle at a lost post, for a lost cause. I pride myself in being the son of the hero Liutbert, king of the Alemanni. My name is Liuthari, and no man has yet conquered me."

Severus frowned darkly. "I have heard of thy father's name, and of thine, you have stormed Augusta Vindelicorum."

"But not retained possession of it," cried the king's son; and his clear gray eyes shone pleasantly. "Who would wish to live in walled graves? Also in your Juvavum we shall not settle."

"That is provided against," muttered Severus.

But Liuthari threw back his locks, laughing.

"Wait a little! But say first, for whom leadest thou these burghers into the field? In whose name dost thou defend Juvavum?"

"For the Emperor of Ravenna, who, as a good omen, unites the names of the first king and the first emperor; for Romulus Augustulus, the lord of the whole earth."

Then the German drew a papyrus roll from his girdle, and threw it to Cornelius.

"I thought so," said he. "You know less than we barbarians what is happening in your own Italy--in your own imperial chief city. Read what is written to me by one who knows it well. There is no longer an Emperor of the West! Romulus Augustulus--the boy's name is certainly a good omen *for us!*--is deposed. He lives henceforth on an island, and feeds peacocks; and on his throne sits my brother-in-law, the husband of my beautiful sister--Odoacer the brave. He has himself written it to us."

Cornelius had glanced through the composition. He tamed pale and silently gave it to Severus, who read it trembling.

"There is no doubt!" said he, almost voiceless. "I know the man; he has served under me. Odoacer does not lie."

"And we do not lie!" cried the gray-bearded companion of Liuthari. He urged on his horse and took the letter from the hand of Severus. "To split shields, not to falsify Runes, have I taught King Liutbert's son."

One could well believe that of the old man. Before he put the roll into his girdle he looked into it with an important air; it did not disturb him that the letters were upside down.

Severus supported himself on his spear. Cornelius looked darkly before him. "I knew it," he then said. "I had almost wished for it when I saw it was unavoidable; and now it is come it crushes me."

"No longer an Emperor in Rome!" groaned Severus.

"Italy in the hands of the barbarians!" sighed Cornelius.

"You awake my deepest pity, gallant heroes," said the king's son, in a grave tone. "But now you

see well: the battle must come to an end before it begins. For whom, for what will you yet fight?"

"For the future!" cried Severus.

"For the past--for honour!" cried Cornelius.

"For immortal Rome!" said both.

"Byzantium yet rules--soon will Byzantium send another Emperor," threatened Severus.

"Perhaps!" said Liuthari, shrugging his shoulders. "But in the meantime we want a settling-place, fields, and pasturage, we Germans. And therefore I bring you a message in my father's name: 'So speaks Liutbert, the King of the Alemanni, in his own name and in that of his allies'----"

"Who are these allies?" interrupted Cornelius.

"You will find out quicker than you will like," answered gruffly Liuthari's companion.

Liuthari continued: "'Let him stay in the land who will do so peaceably; he who will not stay let him peaceably retire. The fortresses to be vacated; they must be destroyed. Two-thirds of the land remain to you; one-third is for us.' That is a reasonable division."

But Severus started up angrily, raising his spear. "Bold barbarian! Darest thou thus to speak, with eighty barbarians against the host of Juvavum's burghers? Thou hast learnt to speak as a Latin, but not to think as a Roman!"

"I should think," interposed Cornelius, "that your country was large enough for you, ye Alemanni, when you can only send eighty horsemen to conquer Juvavum. Do you think I can yield to *you*?"

A peculiar smile played around the young German's handsome mouth, about which the first downy beard charmingly curled. "Take care, Roman! Are we too few for thee? Soon may we seem too many. Out of a few the wonder-working Wotan wakes many! For the last time--evacuate the fortress; divide peaceably the country!"

"Never! Back, barbarian!" cried the two Romans at once.

Liuthari turned his horse suddenly round. "It is your wish. You are, then, lost. Wotan has you all!"

The two horsemen then galloped back to their men.

"Haduwalt, sound the horn!"

The old master-in-arms put the horn to his mouth, and a loud roaring tone struck on the ear of the Romans; and before they could obey the command of their leaders and advance against the enemy, there sounded behind them, *in the east*, from the river, from the town, now quite near, the loud cry of the black eagle; and immediately afterwards such a fearful noise of whoops, cries of anguish, and the clashing of weapons, that all the six hundred men, and both commanders, turned in dismay. Horror and despair seized them. Germans--Germans innumerable, as it appeared to the alarmed Romans rushed forth from the eastern forest, and from all the slopes of the mountains and brushwood of the hills. A strong detachment hurried towards the bridge; others, on horse and on foot, threw themselves into the river above and below the bridge; but the greater part, laden with ladders and trunks of trees on which the horizontal branches had been left, approached the town; and with fierce rage the shut-out citizens saw how whole masses of the stormers, crowding together like ants, helped to raise each other, supported themselves on the ladders, beams, and trees, climbed up, and, in many places almost without resistance from the few sentinels, at once gained the crown of the ramparts.

Juvavum, the town, was conquered before its defenders had been able to strike a blow.

The garrison had been enticed out, with the exception of the soldiers of the Tribune. Were *they* still in the Capitol? The leaders looked anxiously towards the tower: the imperial *Vexillum* was still fluttering at its summit.

But the cry of joy with which the Alemannian horsemen greeted the success of their heroic confederates recalled the Romans to the threatening danger from this near enemy. Severus ordered Cornelius, with about a hundred men, to engage the Alemannian troopers, while he himself, with the greater part of the deeply discouraged burghers, turned back to the bridge, to assist its garrison, which was now being attacked from the unprotected open east side.

He again heard the sound of Haduwalt's horn. Severus turned.

"Yield!" cried the king's son. "You are lost!"

"Never!" cried Cornelius, and threw his spear as Liuthari was galloping towards him.

Liuthari turned the stroke aside with his shield arm: the next instant Cornelius fell backwards,

pierced to the heart through shield and armour by the lance of the German hurled while at full speed.

"I will avenge thee!" cried Severus, and was turning towards the king's son; but at the same moment a cry of distress again called him eastwards.

The enemy had overpowered the garrison of the bridge; already many of the swimmers, horsemen and footmen intermixed, had reached the troops of Severus. Active youths, whose yellow hair floated in the wind from their uncovered heads, ran, holding on to the manes of the horses; and thus attacked at once by horse and foot, the citizens of Juvavum, knowing their town, their relatives, were already in the power of the conqueror, threw away their arms, and fled on all sides. At the same time the Alemanni from the west rode down the hundred men of Cornelius.

Severus stood alone: his spear fell from his hand.

The leader of the enemy that had come so suddenly from the east then approached him. He had galloped in advance of his followers on to the bridge, where his horse was pierced and fell. He then advanced on foot, a giant in stature. The mighty pinion of the black eagle bristled menacingly on his helm; his red hair, combed towards the crown, and drawn together behind, fell below his helmet; an enormous bear-skin hung on his shoulders: he raised his stone battle-axe.

"Throw down thy sword, old man, and live," cried this giant, in Latin.

"Throw down this sword?" said Severus. "I will not live!"

"Then die!" cried the other, and hurled his stone axe.

Severus fell: his breast-plate was rent in twain, it fell in two pieces from his body.

He supported himself painfully on his left arm: the conquering sword he had not yet let fall.

The victor bent over him, picking up his axe.

"Tell me, before I die," said Severus, with a weak voice, "in whose hands is Juvavum fallen? Of what race are you? Are you Alemanni?"

"No, Roman; we have been summoned by the Alemanni. We do not come from the west. We come from the east, up the Danube. We have taken all the Roman towns from Carnuntum hither; the last legion this side of the Alps have we defeated at Vindobona. We share the land with our comrades the Alemanni--the Licus is the boundary. Look here; already from the mountains of the east our people stream down into the country--women and children, waggons and herds--that is the advanced guard; tomorrow will come the great horde."

"And what is your name?"

"We were called formerly Marcomanni; but now, 'the men of Bajuhemum,' the Bajuvaren, all this land is ours for ever, as far as one can see to the north from the Alpine ridge. Yield, then, gray-head! there yet remains to thee"----

"This sword," said Severus, and he thrust into his heart the conquering sword of the Emperor Probus.

The giant drew it out and a stream of blood rushed forth.

"Ah!" said the Bajuvaren. "The old man is dead. It would be a pity," continued he slowly, looking at the sword, "if this good blade were lost. Come, brave weapon; serve henceforth the new lord of the land. But now must I thank Liuthari; everything hit together admirably. Yes; these Alemanni! They are almost wiser than we! Hojo, Sigo, Heilo!" cried he, holding his two hands hollowed before his mouth. "Liuthari! beloved, where tarriest thou? Garibrand calls, the Bajuvaren duke. Hojoho! Sigo! Heiloho! Now let us share the booty and the land!"

Liuthari galloped forward and offered his hand to the duke. "Welcome in our new home! Welcome in victory!" cried he, with a joyous voice.

But then sounded from the town fresh noise of arms and tumult of battle.

"The victory is not yet complete," said Garibrand, pointing with his axe to the Capitol.

There was now heard, through the battle-cries of the Bajuvaren in the town, the clear warlike call of the tuba. "That is the Roman general and his host!" cried the duke. "He is coming from the fortress down into the town on my men! Quick! bring me another horse! Into the town! To the help of my heroes!"

CHAPTER XI.

With the exception of the two leaders, very few Romans had fallen in the short hand-to-hand combat; for the Bajuvaren duke had before the attack given the order: "To-day--prisoners! No slain! Consider, ye men; every man slain is a loss, every prisoner a servant gained for the new masters of the land!"

Fulvius and Crispus had been among the troops turned by Severus against the Bajuvaren. When their ranks were broken, the nephew cried to the uncle: "To Felicitas! Through the ford!" and as they had stood together, so they now ran together towards the river below the bridge, for that was held by the enemy.

But the stout Crispus, although he had quickly thrown away spear and shield, was soon left far behind the agile stone-mason.

An Alemannian horseman, with a youth running at his side, followed both.

Crispus was soon overtaken.

His ridiculous appearance challenged the rider to give him a blow on the casserole covering his head in the place of a helmet, it fell over his eyes and nose, from which poured a stream of blood, he gave a loud cry and fell to the ground; he thought he was dead.

But he soon came back to the agreeable certainty of life, when the foot-soldier, who had remained by him, roughly tore the casserole from his head. Crispus sprang up, gasping for breath, the German laughed in his big, fat, highly-astonished face.

"Ha! this Roman hero has had good provender. And this nose is not red with its own blood or with water either. Ho, friend, I will set thee free, if thou wilt reveal to me where in Juvavum the best wine can be got. It seems to me thou art the man to know it."

Crispus, so pleasantly spoken to, recovered himself quickly, now that he was quite convinced that he was not dead, and would not have to die for the fatherland.

He drew a deep breath and spoke, raising his hand as an oath:

"I swear as a Roman burgher, Jaffa, the good Jew, near the Basilica, has the sweetest. He is not baptized--but neither is his Falernian.

"Excellent!" cried the Alemannian. "Come, ye friends!"--a whole crowd of Alemanni and Bajuvaren were shaking hands close about him--"to Jaffa the Jew, to drink our gratitude to the god Ziu for our pleasant victory! Thou, fat fellow, lead on, and if, contrary to thine oath, it is sour, this Jew's wine, we will drown thee therein."

But Crispus was not alarmed; he rejoiced, on the contrary, that he would now be able to drink gratis, as much as he wished, of the choicest long-stored Cyprus wine, which hitherto had been quite beyond his means. That it was to be drunk to the honour of the god Ziu did not make the wine worse. "And," said he to himself, "it is at all events better pleasing to God that we empty the Jew's wine-skins than those of a good Christian."

He did not trouble about his house. "They will not interfere with my old Ancilla; her wrinkles will protect her better than many shields. The bit of money is buried; they will not carry away the plaster statues, they will only cut off their noses with great zeal and an incomprehensible liking for the business: it does not matter, one can stick them on again," But he was anxious about Fulvius, about Felicitas.

He looked about for the fugitive, but could not see him either lying dead, or brought in a prisoner; he seemed to be swallowed up by the earth: the rider who had pursued him had turned his horse in another direction, and was pursuing other flying Romans. Crispus hoped that the young husband had escaped. He (Crispus) was quite unable to help Felicitas, for his conqueror held him firmly by the shoulder and pushed him towards the bridge.

"Forward! Thou canst not imagine, Roman, how Alemannian thirst burns. And near the Basilica, sayest thou? That is right! There we shall find, besides, gold and silver cups for the liquor."

And in front of the whole noisy, laughing, shouting swarm, the fat Crispus, an involuntary pot-companion, stumped along as fast as his short legs could carry him, towards the gate through which he had shortly before marched, a proud helmeted legionary. He had left the casserole where it fell, but he was still reminded of it by the smarting of his nose.

In the meantime Fulvius had actually disappeared. He had not thrown away shield and spear, like his corpulent companion; he was young, strong, he had no fear, and he thought of the promise which he had given at his release to the gallant Severus. He had now reached the river and stood firmly on the marshy bank. He heard the hoof-strokes of the galloping horse coming nearer and nearer, and he resolutely turned, looked at the enemy fiercely, raised his spear, took good aim and threw it with all the strength of his arm against the face of the German.

"Well aimed!" cried he, as he dropped the reins, and with his left hand caught the whizzing

spear.

The shield of Fulvius would now have availed him little, for the galloping horseman aimed at the same time with both spears, his own and the one he had caught, at the Roman's head and abdomen. But before the deadly lances reached him, Fulvius had suddenly disappeared; in stepping backwards from the snorting horse, that must the next instant have prostrated him, he lost his balance, slipped on the smooth grass, and fell backwards into the stream, the waters of which, dashing up, closed over him. The Alemannian bent down from his steed and looked after him laughing as he was carried away.

"Greet the Danube for me" cried he, "when thou hast reached it;" then turned his horse and galloped across the fields.

CHAPTER XII.

Zeno hastily pursuing his way, had reached the corner of the narrow street.

Loud cries sounded behind him; he looked round; the flames broke crackling through the roof of a house close by; it was that of the Judge, his son-in-law. Full of fresh anxiety he hurried forwards.

After a few steps he came to the door of the priest's small house, which stood open.

He sprang across the threshold, flew along the narrow, imperfectly-lighted passage. No Ostiarius, no sub-deacon showed himself. He hurried into the priest's room, the same into which we have already been.

It was empty.

The door which led into the adjoining church was ajar.

The fugitive entered and hastened across the dimly-lighted space to the altar, which, dividing apse and nave, furnished the most sacred asylum in the church. Here on the steps lay Johannes, stretched out motionless, with both arms clasping the relic-shrine on the altar.

In his anguish new horror seized the hard Byzantian.

Was he murdered?--He, who might perhaps have been able to protect him?

"Woe is me!" groaned he.

His horror increased when he, who lay as dead, slowly raised himself and silently turned his pale, venerable face.

"Ha! do the dead rise again?" cried Zeno, shrinking back.

"Why dost thou think me dead?" asked Johannes, regarding his disturbed countenance with a soul-piercing look.

"Not I--not I--but the Tribune wished"----

"I imagined so! What seekest thou here?"

"Safety! safety!" stammered the usurer; he again thought only of the danger that was following his steps. "My slaves! All the slaves have revolted. The Judge's house is in flames."

Then a bright light as of fire shone through the open windows of the church, and arms clashed in the distance.

"Hearest thou? They are seeking me! They come! Save me! Cover me with thy body. Here, all this gold"--he threw the heavy bag on the altar, it burst and single gold pieces ran clinking over the steps on to the marble pavement. "Alas! it escapes from me faithlessly! All this gold--or the half--no--all, the whole will I give thee--no, not to *thee*. I know thou wilt devote it to St. Peter, to thy church, to the poor--only save me!"

And he threw himself at the priest's feet, carefully concealing the little purse of jewels in his bosom.

Johannes raised him.

"I *will* save thee!--for Christ's sake, not for the sake of the gold."

"Thou wilt stay with me," cried Zeno with rising hope.

"That I cannot do. My place at this hour is on the battle-field, to attend on the wounded. My brethren I have already sent out. I was only deriving strength from a last prayer."

"No, no, I will not let thee go!" cried Zeno, clinging to him.

But, with unlooked-for strength, Johannes freed himself.

"I must, I tell thee. The Lord calls me. Perhaps I may even check the slaughter. But thou--thy cruelty has so enraged the unhappy creatures, that some of them would not be restrained by the altar--by my intercession"----

"Yes, yes!" agreed Zeno.

He thought of Këix, the mad bull.

"Thou shalt be hidden where no one but God the Lord can find thee. See here!"

With these words he stooped down and raised a slab of the marble flooring near the altar; a short ladder was visible, which led into a dark, tolerably spacious vault.

"Go down there. No one but myself knows of this old cave. Wait till I fetch thee out; I will come as soon as the danger is over."

"But if--and if"----

"Thou meanest if I lose my life? See, thus can the roof-stone be lifted from below. Hasten!"

"It horrifies me--to be buried alive! Are the bones of the dead--skeletons----Pardon; are there relics in the vault?"

"Fear thou henceforth the living God, not dead men. Here, take the oil-lamp; and now away! Hearest thou? The tumult presses nearer."

Then Zeno sprang down, lamp in hand. Johannes seized the money-bag, and threw it in after him; the miser noticed with agony that the priest had first taken out a handful of solidi. He replaced the stone, and then strewed the gold pieces from the principal door, of the church (which he bolted on the inside) up to the altar, and from there as far as, and over, the threshold of the door which led from the church into his own house. He then hastened through this door, and out of his house into the open air.

After a few minutes, Zeno heard, with a despairing heart, furious axe-blows thundering on the great door of the church.

It burst open and a great crowd of men--to judge from the voices and footsteps--crushed in. Zeno held his breath in an agony of fear; he pressed his ear to the slab, in order to hear better. He perceived first the voice of a woman.

"Do not kill him in the church!--in the sanctuary of the saints! He scourged me almost to death, and killed my child. But do not kill him in the church. Honour the house of the eternal God!"

"Rather in the house of God than in the house of the good Johannes!" said another voice.

"It is sanctuary only on the altar, not in the whole church!" cried a third. But then Zeno heard the terrible Këix scream out:

"At the feet of the Father in heaven would I strangle him! He has at the last murdered my old father, who had entreated me to spare the monster. When I would not yield, he stole from my side. I found him again when we had broken open the villain's door, and his dagger was in my father's neck. I could murder him seven times."

"Once is enough," said Kottys, "if we murder him as slowly as we have killed my master. Mucius the Judge we have burnt alive in the flames of his own house."

"Halt! Look here, brother Kottys; this is the track of the fugitive. The wounded hyena sweats blood; the fleeing miser sweats gold. See here! at the portal it begins: then he is inside--has drawn the bolt behind him--here, past the altar has he run; and there--through that door into the priest's house! There he must be hidden. After him!"

"After him! Down with him!" roared the whole mob, and ran with rambling steps across the slab over Zeno's head, away into the adjoining house.

The miser, senseless with fright, had crept back into the farthest corner; long cowered he there; cold sweat ran from his brow.

But all remained quiet, the last sound died away; the pursuers had, after searching the priest's house, poured out into the street.

He said to himself: "The Tribune will soon observe the conflagration, and the uproar in the town. He has already repeatedly subdued such riots. With his lancers he will in a few hours re-establish order." Thus presence of mind and a certain courage slowly returned to him.

By the light of the oil-lamp, he now looked around him in the cellar-like vault.

He stumbled against a chest. A strange curiosity, mixed with dread, impelled him irresistibly to open it; perhaps here the sly old fellow hid the treasures of his church! He lifted up the lid; the chest contained nothing but papyrus rolls and parchments; spread over them was a white, priestly garment with a hood, exactly like that which Johannes had worn.

An idea struck the fugitive. He hastily drew the wide robe over his own garments.

"I shall not stay long in this place, and I am now safely disguised--better than in armour."

After a time, as all remained still, he became uncomfortable in the damp air of the vault; he carefully half-raised the slab, mounted the ladder and looked into the empty church.

His eye fell on the glittering gold pieces, which shone in the light of the altar-lamp.

A few had been picked up by his pursuers, but they thirsted more for blood than gold. Already the miser repented having promised the priest so much.

"He, moreover, rejected the gold; so I am no longer bound to give it. And these scattered pieces--they shall not fall to the scoundrels."

He now lifted the slab quite up, and listened again anxiously. All was silent.

Then he deliberately placed money-bag and purse of jewels in the chest, closed the lid, climbed quickly out and picked up the solidi--at first those that lay nearest, then those by the altar; he then saw to the right of the altar a whole heap lying together, as they had fallen out of the burst bag.

He went now from the left of the altar towards the right, stooped down--oh, horror! he heard steps approaching from the priest's house! Only one man, certainly, but that was not Johannes--there was the clang of metal!

He quickly attempted to regain his hiding-place, but before he could pass the altar, a black shadow fell across his path. Zeno could not, unnoticed, spring into the vault.

His knees failed him; so, drawing the hood quickly over his head, he threw himself into the position in which he had found Johannes, with his arms encircling the relic shrine on the altar. At the same moment cold steel penetrated his neck. He was dead before he had heard the words, "Die, priest!"

CHAPTER XIII.

But the murderer now thought it was not the high-towering form of the Presbyter. He bent down so that the black horse-tail of his high helmet fell forwards, and drew back the hood, and with it the head of the murdered man.

With a short scream he let it again fall.

"Irony of fate! The usurer! How comes he here? How in this disguise? Where is the priest?"

But before the Tribune could think about these questions, his whole attention was drawn towards the chief entrance of the church, by a noise of the most startling kind.

Leo had stationed his troops in the Forum of Hercules; had left them with the command there to await his return. He had dismounted, and put his horse in charge of one of the troopers. He wished to reach the priest's house on foot, by a circuitous route through narrow streets, where he would be less observed.

He had been startled when half-way by seeing the flames rise, and hearing in the distance the tumult of the revolted slaves. He stood still.

A fleeing woman then hurried towards him, with covered head, he stopped her.

"It is thou, Tribune!" cried the fugitive.

"What? Thou, Zoë! The Judge's wife! What has happened?"

"The slaves! Our house is burning! Save! help!"

"My troops are standing in the Forum of Hercules. I will return myself immediately. Then will I help."

He had then hurried into the empty house of the priest, rushing through it with sword drawn, he reached the Basilica, and instead of him he sought, had struck dead his own confederate. He had hardly discovered this, when there sounded in the direction of the portal the bugles and

trumpets of his horsemen, calling to the attack.

"They are in conflict with the rioters," thought the Tribune, and he was going out through the doorway. "Rascals of slaves! while the barbarians stand before the gates!"

But on the threshold he suddenly stopped: for quite a different sound struck on his terrified ear--not the raging howl of frantic slaves; no, a cry well known to him--the watch-cry, the war-cry, the cry of victory of the Germans, and--it was close at hand.

"Germans in the town? Impossible!"

But, stepping carefully out from the door of the Basilica, he saw at the corner of the great square whole swarms, yes, hundreds of Germans, on foot--not the few horsemen whom they had so long observed--and they were advancing straight towards the church.

"To fight one's way through! Impossible! Back! through the priest's house!"

He fled through the nave of the church, past the still raised stone slab into the house of Johannes. But the noise came towards him in that direction also, loud laughing and shouting, and he saw approaching a crowd of Germans with a stout Roman at their head, whom they had heavily laden with wine-skins.

As quickly as his heavy armour would allow him, he turned back into the Basilica, sprang--this seemed the only possible place of safety--into the open vault, pulled down the stone slab, and immediately heard the Germans pouring into the church through both entrances. Shouting and exulting the conquerors greeted each other over the head of the imprisoned commandant of Juvavum.

CHAPTER XIV.

We will join the drinking Germans above, rather than the Tribune raging in impotent wrath below the marble floor.

"Welcome in victory, ye brave Bajuvaren!"

"For that we thank you, ye clever Alemanni!"

"Did we not entice them out well?" said another comrade in arms. "First of all we--that is, Liuthari, our famous king's famous son, and two of his followers--surprised a post of five Moorish horsemen, whom the Tribune of the Capitol had sent out against us as spies. But we know the forests better than those brown Africans. Four were dead, or prisoners, before they were aware of it. One escaped--alas! But it seems he was not able to tell much. Then a little company of us slipped across the river--an Alemannian horse can swim like a swan--and galloped to you Bajuvaren in the eastern mountains, in order that at the right time the call of the heron should be answered by the cry of the eagle."

"And this time you also, ye heavy-stepping Bajuvaren, contrary to your manner and custom, actually came at the right time," teased Suomar, another Alemannian.

Fiercely the Bajuvaren put his hand to the battle-axe in his girdle. "What does that mean, thou Suevian blockhead? It is my opinion we have come early enough to cut you down--you as well as all others who wait long enough! Although you are so quick in thought and hasty in words, many times already you have not had limbs quick enough for flight, to escape from us, if we are slow."

Provoked thus, the other was going to answer angrily, but Vestralp, the first Alemannian, interposed soothingly: "Never mind, both of you; thou, my Suomar! and thou, brave Marcoman! Once there, the Bajuvaren fight so splendidly that they make up for lost time."

"They have often shown that!" cried Rando, a third Alemannian.

"The last time," continued Suomar, "just now, in the market-place, and on the steep path up to the citadel, against the cavalry of the Tribune."

"Listen! What was that?"

"Yes! did not a groan come out of the ground?"

"There!--at the left by the altar."

"Look! behind the altar! Perhaps some one wounded."

Two warriors hastened to the spot and looked behind the altar, but they found nothing.

"But what lies there in front--on the steps?"

"A dead man."

"A Roman?"

"A priest, as it seems."

"The slaves must have done that; the rioters who joined themselves to us when we had climbed the walls," said Helmbert, an aged leader of the Bajuvaren. "They are now the guides to the richest booty."

"Take the corpse away! On the stone steps is the best place to sit and drink," said Helmdag, his son.

"Dare to do it, thou blasphemer! That is the table of the most exalted Lord of Heaven," threatened Rando.

"It is not true," cried Helmdag. "Thou art a Catholic. This is a heretic church, more harmful than any abominations of heathenism. So my Gothic godfather, the Bishop of Novi, teaches me."

"Thou stinking Arian!" answered Rando. "Thou denier of Christ! I will teach thee to give to the Lord Christ equal honour with the Father. I will fill thy mouth with my fist, and with thine own teeth as well!"

"With us the son always stands behind the father," growled Helmdag.

"Peace! both of you," commanded Vestralp, "fill your mouths with Roman wine. Bring the skin, Crispus, thou Roman hero! Do not untie it! A stroke with the sword. So! It spouts like red blood out of wounds! Now the helmets and hollow shields, until the noble Roman in the buck's skin is exhausted. And as concerns the strife about the two stone steps, I think that a good man honours everything that is sacred to another. Therefore, brothers, we will all draw back from those steps."

"But the gold and silver on the walls, on the pillars and stone coffer?" said Helmdag, the Arian.

"Perhaps that is to stay for the plundering slaves?" said Rando the Catholic.

"No!" cried the enlightened pagan, who had spoken for peace--it was Vestralp, the vanquisher of the helmeted Crispus--"that would be a pity. We will divide it amongst us all: for the God Ziu, for the Romish Bishops, and for the followers of Arius."

And they immediately set to work with the bronze helmet, or deer-skin cap, full of red wine in the left hand, the battle-axe in the right. Drinking heartily during their work, they broke away from the sarcophagi, holy shrines, and even from the columns, all that was valuable of the metal ornaments and jewels, and also the stones that pleased the eye by their variegated colours.

Garizo, a young, slim, tall Bajuvaren, lifted from the neck of a Saint Anne her necklace of heavy gold and sapphires, giving at the same time a deep bow, and saying:

"With thy permission, holy goddess, or whatever else thou mayest be; but thou art horribly ugly, and of dead stone. What one sees of thy bosom is yellow; but my bride Albrun is alive and young, and wonderfully beautiful; and very pretty will these stones look on her white neck."

"Yes, but where are they then, your women and children, and unarmed folk?" asked Vestralp of the busy bridegroom.

"They will come to-morrow down the eastern mountains," answered Garizo. "For this we have at last found out, 'slow-moving' as we are, as thy hasty-tongued comrade just now said--this we have now learnt: to send the men forwards into the battle, and let the unarmed come afterwards when the victory and land is won."

"There must be something in it," laughed Vestralp, "in this name 'slow-moving,' because it vexes you so. If one called you a coward, you would only laugh and strike him down. You are a strange people! No other race so calm, and at the same time so terrible in anger."

"I will tell thee," spoke thoughtfully Helmbert, the white-bearded. "We are like the mountains; they stand quiet, whatever goes on round about them. But if the tumult within gets too vexatious, they overturn in rocks and fire."

"You have shown this time that you also can be cunning and crafty," cried Suomar. "With what artful care did you prevent the enemy getting scent of your approach! So sharply did you watch all the roads, and even the mule-tracks and the paths of the chamois-hunters, that no intelligence from the east could reach Juvavum."

"And not to make the Romans suspicious at the absence of all news," added Helmbert, "we sent our own Roman settlers disguised like peasants and workmen, as if they were the people from Ovilava and Laureacum, into the town, there to buy and sell."

"And if these had revealed all?" asked Suomar.

"Their relatives left behind would have been put to death. That was said plainly enough to

them. But besides this, the poor people would rather support us than their Roman tormentors."

"The burghers of the town soon gave up the contest; they find themselves under a new rule; as they see, we do not eat them," said Helmdag, laughing.

"Yes; *only* the cavalry and foot-soldiers of the Tribune fought bravely, and with exasperation," said Rando.

"Tell us about it," urged Vestralp. "We, who fought on the other side of the river, do not know yet exactly what happened within the walls, or how the citadel fell so quickly."

"By the sword of Ziu, it was wonderful!" began Rando. "There, on the great square, where the Christian saint stands with lion's skin and club"----

"*That* a saint! That is a heathen god!"

"No; a demi-god."

"All the same to me," continued Rando; "he did not help the Romans, whether saint, or god, or demi-god. But we were surprised on that market-place. After we, some twenty Alemanni, with the Bajuwaren--they can climb like cats, these mountain huntsmen of Bajuhemum--had clambered over the walls, we thought all was over. But when we came to the open market, there came galloping towards us, in close order, with the crashing sounds of the tuba, the cavalry of the Tribune. He himself was not to be seen; it was said, he lay ill in the citadel; but he was not taken prisoner there. We were at first very few, and it was only with difficulty that we could stand against them. But we gradually pressed them back; step by step they were forced upwards towards the Capitol. But then came the Isaurian infantry to their help, and it was now a fearful struggle--man against man. Ah! I have again seen them fight with their Wotan's fury, these Bajuwaren."

"Say, rather, lion's courage," interposed proud Helmdag the Bajuwaren, "for we carry the lion on our standard, and lion's courage in our hearts."

"How come you with the southern beast? I think the bear stands nearer, and more resembles you."

"Thou thinkest that, forsooth, thou sharp-witted Suevian!" said old Helmbert, coming to his son's help, "because you know so much more than we; but you do not know everything. Three hundred years ago one had not heard the name of the Alemanni; but our ancestors, the Marcomanni, had already long fiercely fought with the Romans. And at that time victory cradled itself on the wings of the golden eagle. There was, in the golden house of Nero on the Tiber, a great, wise Emperor skilled in magic. He had found out, by his magical arts, that if he made two lions swim across the Danube, the bravest people on the earth would conquer in the impending battle. But our fathers, the Marcomanni, said: 'What yellow dogs are these?'--killed the lions with clubs, and afterwards slew the army of the Emperor and his general: twenty thousand Romans lay dead on their shields. The clever Emperor in Rome knew then which was the bravest people on the earth. And since then we carry two lions on our colours. So sing and tell our bards. Now, continue, Suevian."

"That I will, to your glory! Like cats--or if thou, Helmdag, wouldst rather hear it, like lions--sprang the Bajuwaren on to the necks of the Moorish horses, and allowed themselves to be dragged along rather than let go. 'Give to Loge his due,' says a proverb that I have heard among the Anglo-Saxons: the Moors and Isaurians fought desperately, man by man covering the narrow, steep path which only offered space for two horses. At last the Duke came to our help; he brought fresh troops, and now in a sudden attack with levelled spears, pushing our way between the horses, we scattered the whole entangled mass. The Bajuwaren now used their short knives in a hand-to-hand conflict. They ran under the long lances of the Isaurians, sprang on to the saddle of the fully armed Moorish horsemen, and in face and throat--the only vulnerable part--thrust the blade of their daggers; on both sides, now right, now left, fell the enemy, horse and man, over the low breastwork of the Roman wall on to the jagged rocks in the depths below. Nevertheless the battle might have lasted long around the citadel; indeed, hunger alone would have subdued those rock walls if the rest of the enemy, who now at last fled, had gained the gate. But they did *not* succeed in getting within it. A great deed was done by the hand of a Bajuvarian boy; I saw it plainly: having been overtaken by the Bajuwaren, I was, at last, no longer fighting, but was watching the gate of the fortress, which, high above me, was distinctly visible. I then saw that one of the two Isaurians who there stood on guard, ran towards his fleeing comrades; his movements plainly indicated that he was urging them to still hastier flight into the fortress, before the barbarians should press in with them. The other Isaurian stood on the threshold, holding the iron bolt in his hand, ready to close the half-door from the inside and draw the bolt as soon as the fugitives had poured in. Then, suddenly, as if struck by lightning, the man fell forward on his face: he stood up no more. Immediately afterwards appeared a boy with fair hair on the tower above the gateway; he cut down with a battle-axe the imperial purple standard, and in place of the fallen banner planted, on a tall spear, which shone afar, a blue shield.

"'My Hortari,' then cried Garibrand, the Duke, 'my brother's son, stolen many weeks ago, and thought dead! *His* shield, the victorious blue shield of our house, of our family. Forward, ye

Bajuvaren! Now to cut our way to Hortari!

"But there was nothing more through which to cut our way; the Tribune was not there; the slaves of the Tribune were also not to be found in the fortress: the brave child was the only human being inside the Capitol. The fight before the gate was over immediately; the enemy shut out, powerless, one man springing on the back of another trying to climb the high walls, pressed still harder by us, soon threw down their arms and yielded. A few certainly, despairing of grace, or despising it, spurred their horses from the steep path into the abyss below. The gate of the citadel of Juvavum flew open from the inside, and young Hortari sprang into his uncle's arms; this youth of the Bajuvaren had won for his people the Capitol of Juvavum."

"Hail to the youth Hortari! The minstrels will have him in remembrance!"

"Hail to the youth Hortari!" sounded loud through the wide halls of the Basilica.

When the joyous cry had died away, quarrelling words were heard at the farther end of the building.

In the apse behind the altar, two, flushed with wine, were in loud strife.

In a chest containing Roman memorials, which the zealous Johannes had taken away from his flock, in order to wean them from their pagan superstitions, the two men had found a small, beautifully-carved marble relief, representing the three Graces tenderly clasping each other. They had seized the piece of sculpture; and screaming and shouting, now dragged and pulled each other through the church till they stood before Vestralp and Helmbert.

Then one of the disputants let fall the marble and flashed his short knife against his opponent, who immediately dropped the plunder and seized the hand-axe in his girdle.

"Halt, Agilo!" cried Vestralp, seizing the arm of his fellow tribesman.

"Stab *Romans*, if thou wilt, not Alemanni," shouted Helmbert, and struck down the knife of his countryman.

"Well! You shall decide," cried both disputants with one breath.

"I saw it first," cried the Alemannian. "I wished to hang it on my favourite horse as a breast-plate."

"But I took it first," retorted the other. "They are the three fate-spinning sisters. I should hang it up over my child's cradle."

"The strife is easily settled," said Vestralp, picked up the three Graces from the floor, took the axe from the hand of the Alemannian, aimed well, and cut the relief exactly through the middle.

Helmbert seized the two pieces and said:

"Forasitzo, Wotan's son, who is the judge in Heligoland, could not have divided it more evenly; there, each of you has a goddess and a half. Now go and drink reconciliation."

"We thank you very much," said the combatants, again unanimous and highly satisfied.

"But there is no more wine," complained the Alemannian.

"Or I should have drunk it long ago," sighed the Bajuvaren.

"Heigh, Crispe, son of Mars and Bellona," cried Vestralp, "where is there wine--more wine?"

Crispus came panting. "Oh, sir, it is incredible! But they have actually drunk it all! The prudent Jaffa," whispered he, "has still a very small skin of the very best; but that is for thee alone, because thou hast saved my life." He continued aloud: "There is a large stone jug full of water; if we mix that with the last dregs in the wine-skins there will still be abundance of drink."

But Vestralp raised his spear-shaft and shattered the great jug so that the water ran in a stream. "Let the man be cut off from the race of the Alemanni," cried he, "who at any time mixes water with his wine! That special wine," continued he quietly to Crispus, "the poor Jew himself shall keep. Let him drink it himself, after all his fright."

Then there sounded from outside the call of the great ox-horn. And immediately afterwards the door of the church was thrown open. A gigantic Bajuvaren stood on the threshold, and cried with a loud voice: "You are sitting there and drinking in blissful indolence, as if all was over; and yet the battle is again raging in the streets. The slaves of the Romans! They are burning and destroying, while the town is *ours*! Protect your Juvavum, men of Bajuhemum! So commands Garibrand, the Duke."

In an instant all the Germans had seized their arms, and with the loud cry, "Defend the Juvavum of the Bajuvaren!" they rushed out of the church.

When the last footstep had long died away, the marble slab was carefully raised; the Tribune climbed out. The man so brave, so fond of war, had suffered the bitterest torments of humiliation during this long time. Was he not a Roman, and did he not know his duty? It stung his honour as a soldier that he, blindly following his own passions, pursuing only his *own* object, had made the victory so easy for the barbarians. His looks were sullen; he bit his lips. "My cavalry! the Capitol! Juvavum! vengeance on the priest! victory! all is lost--except Felicitas! I will fetch her; and away, away with her over the Alps!--Where may my Pluto be?"

Leo crept through the priest's house into the narrow street, and carefully sought the shadow of the houses. It was beginning to get dark, so long had the drinking bout above his head detained him a prisoner. Like a slinking beast of prey, stooping at every corner, and with a spring quickly gaining the side of the opposite street, he avoided the large open squares and crowded streets. He then heard, in the distance, the roaring noise of confused voices. He looked back; flames were rising into the heavens, already darkened with smoke.

The Tribune hastened to gain the north side of the ramparts; to find the Porta Vindelica unoccupied he could not hope, even from German recklessness; but he knew the secret mechanism by which, without key, a small sortie-gate could be opened which led into the high road to Vindelicia. This doorway he now endeavoured to reach. Unchallenged, unseen, he mounted the wall, avoiding the steps; opened the door; closed it again carefully; slid down the steep slope, and gained the moat, which, formerly filled with water, had now--the sluices were all destroyed--lain dry for tens of years. Weeds and bushes above a man's height grew therein.

He had hardly reached the bottom of the moat when a loud neighing greeted him out of a willow-plot; his faithful horse trotted towards him, nodding its head.

Two other horses answered out of the bushes.

Immediately afterwards two men crept out of the thicket, crawling along the ground on all-fours. It was Himilco the centurion, and another Moor.

They beckoned to him silently to follow them into the hiding-place. They had escaped into the moat after the dispersion of their troops by the Bajuvaren. The black steed had followed the two other horses, the man in charge of him having fallen.

Since then they had remained hidden among the thick bushes of the moat.

"The first gleam of light on this black day," said the Tribune. "We three will fly! Come! There to the left the river approaches the moat. The horses can easily reach it with a leap, and then swim across. I must go to the Mercurius hill, down the Vindelician road; then--over the mountains!"

"Sir," implored Himilco, "wait till night. Twice already have we tried to escape by that way. Each time we were observed by the Alemannian horsemen, who incessantly march before the gates to seize fugitives; each time it was only with the greatest difficulty that we regained our shelter. Only in the darkness of the night can we venture."

The Tribune was reluctantly obliged to acknowledge this counsel as well-grounded. "At night," said he to himself, "I shall be better able to carry off Felicitas." So, impatient enough, he determined to await the darkness in this hiding-place.

CHAPTER XV.

Far away from the hidden fugitives, in the south-east side of the town, strife and tumult were meanwhile raging.

Many of the revolted slaves, after revenging themselves on their masters, had thrown down their arms; but the *wildest* spirits, restrained by the Germans from further incendiarism, murder, and robbery, and driven by them from street to street, had now crowded together for a last resistance.

Here lay the large imperial magazines for the building of boats and rafts for the traffic of the Ivarus, especially the salt-trade: also immense stores of well-dried wood, sail-cloth, pitch, and tar. These favourites of the fire-god the mad creatures wished to set on fire. They hoped, in their blind destructive fury, that the conflagration would from there spread its red and black wings over the whole city.

But the magazines were covered with slates on the flat roofs, were protected by high stone walls, and shut in with strong oak doors; the few guards round about had, certainly, long since fled, but, even undefended, stone and iron-bound wood would for some time resist the fury of the assailants.

But now came Këix, the leader of the host, from the bath of Amphitrite, close by, which was in flames, swinging in one hand a blue and in the other a green pitch torch, such as were used in the illumination of the ornamental gardens.

"Ha!" cried he; "now see! We will have to-day the richest fire-works! The Christian emperors have indeed forbidden the Saturnalia, but we will introduce them again, but this time to the honour of Vulcan and Chaos!"

And he propped both torches against the oak panels of the door, which immediately began to smoulder. But now the pursuing Bajuvaren had reached the spot.

The barricades in the streets they had, after a short, wild conflict with their defenders, thrown down; and they now rushed forward in a close wedge with Duke Garibrand at their head.

"We have you, incendiaries! Down with your arms! Extinguish those flames instantly; or, by the spear of Wotan, no man among you shall remain alive."

Instead of answering, Kottys lifted up the heavy iron rod--the long bolt which he had torn from his own slave prison--and screamed:

"Dost thou think we wish to change our masters? We will be free, and masters ourselves. And all shall be destroyed on this whole earthly ball that reminds us of the time of our slavery. Come on, ye barbarians, if you want to fight with desperate men."

And now a furious rage threatened to break forth.

Suddenly a loud, powerful voice cried: "Stop. Peace be with you all!" Between the combatants stepped the venerable form of Johannes; behind him appeared his ecclesiastical brethren; they, assisted by some of the burghers of Juvavum, were carrying on barrows and litters, wounded slaves, Moors, Isaurians, and also some Germans.

"Make way for us! Let us take these wounded--they belong to you all who are here fighting--to my church."

The words, the look, had immediately a silencing, an appeasing effect. At the sign of their Duke, the Bajuvaren lowered their lifted weapons; most of the slaves did the same. Fearlessly Johannes walked into the thickest part of the crowd; all reverently shrunk back. The women--for there were many women amongst the mob--knelt down and kissed the hem of his garment. He stepped straight towards the door which had now caught fire.

Kottys alone tried to turn him away.

"Back, priest!" he cried, and threw the iron bar; and as Johannes quietly walked on, the iron struck him on the shoulder. He sank--his blood flowed on the ground.

"Woe to thee, brother!" cried Këix. "Thou hast murdered the only protector of the poor and miserable--our father's best friend!"

And the wild man knelt by the priest, holding him in his arms.

To do this he was obliged to throw away his weapon, an iron trident, which he had torn from the hand of a Neptune at the fountain. Nearly all his comrades followed this example. Kottys threw the rod on the ground, and entreated:

"Pardon me, Father Johannes!"

The priest raised himself. "Thou hast repented, therefore God has forgiven thee. Who am I--a sinner--that I should forgive?"

He now stepped unhindered to the door, threw down the torches, picked up one of the broad shields, pressed it with the right hand against the burning door, raised imploringly the left towards heaven, and said:

"Fire! thou also art a creature and a servant of God the Lord! I command thee--I adjure thee, thou hellish demon of flame, retire hence into hell."

The fire was then extinguished. Johannes let the shield fall, and turned again to the crowd; his face was radiant with the glory of the deepest conviction.

"A wonder! A miracle of the Lord by the hand of the devout Johannes!" sounded out from the whole host of slaves. The most defiant now threw away their weapons and sank on their knees, crossing themselves. Among the Germans many also made the sign of the cross and bent the knee; but Këix and Kottys raised their hands towards Johannes as if in worship. Duke Garibrand then advanced to the Presbyter, and spoke slowly:

"Thou hast well done, old man. Here, my hand. But say," continued he, and a sly smile flashed across his lips, "if thou hadst full confidence in the magic of the Runic words that thou didst utter to the fire, why didst thou also use the shield?"

The priest so addressed stood erect and said: "Because we should not tempt God. Not that the Lord needed my arm or the shield to extinguish the fire."

"It has never yet happened," said the Duke, thoughtfully nodding his head, "that one of you Christian priests was at a loss for an answer. You have--and thou especially hast--power over souls, more than my sword over the conquered, use it ever as at this time. I know well how powerful you are, ye men of the cross, on the Danube there rules one, Severinus by name; he has more authority by his word than Rome and the barbarians. We shall be good friends; I shall respect thee. But hear this. I shall allow you to worship Christ as you will; take thou care not to hinder my people from sacrificing as they will. No, no, old man, do not shake thy head; I suffer no contradiction!" And he lifted his finger threateningly.

But undaunted, Johannes said:

"If the Lord will call the wanderers to Himself through my mouth, fear of thee will not close it. Thy duchess is already won to the Lord. Verily, I tell thee--thou, and thy people--you will not escape Him. But you, rise," said he, turning to the slaves. "I will entreat for you with the victors, who are now the rulers of this land. I will teach them, that ye also, created in the image of God, are also their brethren, and that your immortal souls are redeemed by the death of Christ. I will teach them, that he who sets his slaves free wins the warmest place in the heart of the Father of heaven."

"But he who has still to remain in servitude," interrupted the Duke, "let him know, that we Germans are noble-minded masters; we do not burden and punish the slave according to the caprice and temper of the master; as our free people are judged by the free, so the bond people are judged by their fellows--in the court of justice, according to the law. You stand henceforth under the protection of the strongest judicial fortress--the law, and the tribunal of your own comrades! So be comforted: you serve noble masters."

CHAPTER XVI.

Soon after the slave insurrection had been quelled in the manner above described, two Germans walked through the Porta Vindelica on to the great military road, in the direction of the Mercurius Hill.

"See, the evening twilight is fading and the stars are already appearing," said the one, and, balancing his spear on his shoulder, he raised both hands to heaven. "I greet you, ye watchers of Asgard, ye all-seeing eyes. Send me happiness! I divine that *you* know," added he in low tones, "what happiness my heart desires. It aches, this heart--I think because it is empty."

He then again seized his spear and stepped forwards, his eyes directed into the mist-veiled distance, as if searching and longing: his white mantle floating in the wind. He was very handsome, the young son of the king; and this dreaming manner gave to his noble, serious features a heart-winning charm.

"If the stars wish to show *me* what is most pleasing," grumbled his companion, throwing back his wolf's skin, "let them show me quickly a wine-shop. It is long, long since I had what I wanted. My throat smarts, because it is empty, I think. Vestralp and his men, they hit it off well. Some Christians were in their troop, and, I suppose as a reward for their faith, the brave Christian Baldur took them into his church; there, or close by, they found and drank a whole flood of wine, as if they had been in the halls of Thor. But I have only swallowed a few drops in a deserted house, where the meal had just been served as the Bajuvaren forced their way into the town. Listen, their Duke is right: it is too strict, the way thou dost carry out thy vow."

"Can one interpret a vow, a duty, too strictly, old man? Thou thyself hast taught me better."

"Truly, thy father made thee swear never to sleep a night in a Roman town, snaring-pits spread over with nets for noble game the king calls them--but Juvavum, as Garibrand justly said, is now a town of the Bajuvaren."

"King Liutbert himself can alone permit me so to interpret the vow. But be comforted: thou shalt soon drink wine, as much as thou wilt."

"Where?"

"In the house where we will now seek hospitality."

"But in which?"

"For my sake in the nearest, in order to quench thy thirst. Look there, on the right of the road stands a hill with a house upon it; one can see the white statues of the gods on the roof, gleaming through the bushes."

"But down there, to the left of the road, lies another; it seems larger, more stately, more

promising."

"It is all one to me."

"Then we will choose the larger--that on the left."

"But look, there shot a star from heaven! and it fell immediately on the roof of the house to the right, on the hill. That is a hint from the gods. I will gladly follow the star. We will go to the house on the right."

He thereupon sprang from the high road on to the little foot-path that led to the stonemason's house.

"We shall also come short at the division of the booty, because of thy foolish strictness," grumbled the old man, following him.

"No," cried Liuthari, "Duke Garibrand will summon me thereto early in the morning; he promised me that, when he bade us farewell at the Vindelician gate. Besides, the chief gain of this victory to us is not a few gold vessels or a tract of land, but that henceforth we have for our trusty frontier neighbours on the east, instead of the Romans, the faithful Bajuvaren. It has become too narrow and shut in for them in Bajuhemum and along the Danube, since the East-Goths increased so powerfully, so they have spread out towards the north and west. Agilolf, another of their dukes, related to Garibrand, set out, when the latter started for Juvavum, through the Bojer forest against Regina Castra, the strong Roman fortress on the Danube, where it reaches the most northern point of its course. I wonder if he has yet taken it?"

"The news of victory cannot be delayed much longer; and with this message comes also another, which closely concerns thee, Liuthari." The young man blushed, and silently drooped his head. "Duke Agilolf's daughter Adalagardis is the most beautiful young woman I have ever seen," continued the old man eagerly. "Her father and King Liutbert have long thought to unite you; but it seems that the proud Bajuvaren will not ally himself by marriage with a king's house till he can do so as an equal. Therefore he sent me home from my wooing journey with the words: 'From the conquered Roman fortress I will send an answer.' And I think it is time for thee, my boy! Thou standest in the fulness of thy youth, and thou hast blood, not water, in thy veins."

"I often think fire burns therein," said the young man quietly, as if ashamed.

"Dost thou think that I did not see, in the conquered Juvavum, with what eyes thou didst gaze at every Roman maiden who looked at thee? Many of them, I think, would not have struggled much in thy arms."

"What, Haduwalt! Force! Force towards a woman!"

"Eh! by Berahta and Holda! it would not need *much* force. But these black-haired, yellow-skinned, lean cats are nothing to my king's son; they would ruin the whole race. But, Adalagardis! prosperity to thee and to us if she becomes thy wife. I should imagine the shield-maidens of Wotan to be like her! Hardly a finger's breadth shorter than thou, fair hair floating around her to the ankles, like a king's golden mantle, arms round, full and white as Alpine snow, joyful, sparkling eyes, clear as the sky in spring, and a proudly-arched, heaving bosom. By Fulla, the exuberantly strong and beautiful! that is the right king's wife for the Alemanni! Why didst thou not go long ere this and woo her?"

"Thou forgettest; I have never seen her. Her father said: 'I will invite thee when I hold my court at Regina Castra.' Yet she may be the happiness, uncertain and yet ardently longed for, the Sælde that I seek. Stop! Here we are at our goal. This is the entrance.--But what is this? This house seems inhospitable. The entrance is barricaded with slabs of stone."

"Ha, now," laughed the old man. "I cannot blame them, the house-folk, for shutting out such guests as Haduwalt and his thirst. But they are not to be kept back so easily. Not Haduwalt, Hadumar's son--and still less his thirst. Down with the stones!"

And he had already seized with a strong hand one of the piled-up marble slabs, to throw them inwards.

"Stay!" cried Liuthari, "look!--on the topmost slab of the barricade there is something written; perhaps the name of the house. I think I can yet see to read it."

"I could not read it," laughed the other, "even if the sun stood high at noon. What do the Runes say?"

And Liuthari read--slowly, laboriously, deciphering letter by letter:

"Hic--habitat--felicitas--nihil--mali intret."

Struck with surprise, motionless, the young man was silent for a while. His heart beat--the blood rose throbbing in his temples.

"How strange!" said he then to himself. "Here dwells happiness--the happiness that I am

seeking? And the shooting star--did it on that account guide here my steps?"

"Now, by the wondering Wotan," said Haduwalt, "have the Runes enchanted thee?"

"Why, yes; this may indeed have been engraved to direct me to a blessing, protecting enchantment."

The old man hastily seized the king's son by the shoulder and wished to draw him away.

"Then let us retire," whispered he anxiously. "I would rather force my way through two lines of Romans than through a magic spell. See, already thou seemest spell-bound before the entrance. What is the meaning of the Runes?"

"How can I explain it to thee? Now, something like this: 'The wishing-god and Sälde herself live here. May malicious beings never approach!' This Lady Sälde who lives here, I will see," said Liuthari with decision; and, with the help of shield and knee, he pushed the middle slabs inwards, so that the whole erection of stone fell with a loud crash into the garden.

The young man stepped quickly across the threshold.

"This is no spell that scares away; it invites and entices in. Here dwells happiness. The god of wishes himself has led me here. And *we dare* to approach--for we certainly are not malicious creatures."

"Who knows whether the master of the house may not think us so?" said the old man thoughtfully, shouldering his spear, and following his young friend, who impetuously, as if driven by a god, stepped towards the inner door of the house, behind which--it was only closed by a dark yellow curtain which fluttered in the wind--a faint glimmer of red light seemed to beckon one in. Yet, in spite of all his haste, Liuthari noticed a rose-bush, which, loosened from its support, lay helpless on the sanded path. He carefully put it back in its place, remarking, "it would be a pity if it were trodden down."

CHAPTER XVII.

Liuthari sprang up the four steps in one bound and pushed back the curtain. But farther went he not: he stood as if spell-bound, as if rooted to the ground at the sight which presented itself to him.

He indeed drew back a step as if alarmed; in his astonishment, his spear struck the ground and threatened to escape from his right hand. For towards the king's son, with a noble step, as an alabaster Hebe might have stepped down from her marble pedestal, advanced Felicitas.

She carried her slumbering child tenderly on the left arm, pressing it to her bosom; her wondrously beautiful face was yet paler in the agitation of the moment; in the right hand she carried a flat silver vessel, filled with red wine.

"I bid you welcome, O strangers, as our guests, at the hearth of my husband. He is absent. I am quite alone in the house. Protect me and my child."

Liuthari found no words; with wide-opened eyes and a beating heart he looked at the beautiful woman before him.

But old Haduwalt, stepping to his side, saw with anxiety this look of his young master. He spoke with great seriousness:

"Be of good cheer and rest assured, Roman matron. I swear to thee by the renown of the honour of King Liutbert and of his son Liuthari, who stands here and is strangely silent, I will protect thee as if thou wert my own daughter, and he shall honour thee as if thou wert his sister. Now drink, Liuthari, what is so hospitably offered thee," cried he, turning and taking the spear from Liuthari's hand, who still stood as if entranced.

The young man took the bowl, put it to his mouth, sipped the wine and gave it back, without moving his eyes from her face.

"What is thy name?" asked he with a faint, trembling voice.

"Felicitas."

He quickly stepped forward.

"Happiness! Sälde! that is thy *name*: that *art* thou."

"I do not understand thee."

"It is not necessary," muttered Haduwalt. "Give me also something to drink."

He took the bowl from her and emptied it at a draught.

"Truly," continued he, "the wonderful wishing-god seems to live here; how else couldst thou have come directly towards us, towards my thirst, with a bowl of wine?"

"I saw you coming, startled by the crashing of the stone slabs; Philemon, our old gray-headed slave, built them up. How could he protect me, the lame, half-blind old man?"

"And didst thou imagine thyself protected by a heap of stones, without defenders?"

"No, indeed! I know that I am protected by the good God in heaven, and by my protecting angel. But, when I sent out the old man (the second time) to look for my husband,--he did not wish to leave me alone, and I was obliged repeatedly to bid him go:--he thought I should be in some measure hidden if he blocked up the entrance."

Following the example of the hostess, Liuthari sat down. "Thy husband!" said he, with knitted brows. "He has forsaken thee?--in this danger?"

"Oh, no," answered the young wife, "Yesterday evening, before, there was any appearance of danger, he went into the town, since then he has not returned, a few hours ago he was still living and active. Philemon saw him in the street as he was going with spear and shield towards the bridge across the Ivarus."

"Comfort thyself," interposed the old soldier cheerfully; "very few on thy side fell in the battle down there."

"I know certainly that he is alive. If otherwise, do you think you would see me so calm? The gracious God in heaven cannot allow that the best, the most excellent man on this earth, should meet, with undeserved suffering. I trust firmly in God and am comforted."

Haduwalt thought to himself: "I have already seen many an innocent brave man fall;" but he reserved this wisdom of experience and answered: "Certainly! he is at most taken prisoner. And, if so, be of good cheer. The powerful son of our king here," continued he, with a significant look at Liuthari, "will beg for this prisoner and release him as a reward for thy hospitality."

Liuthari drew a deep breath.

"How long have you been married?"

"It is now eleven months."

"Eleven months--of perfect happiness!" said Liuthari slowly.

"Yes: of unspeakable happiness! Since thou understandest it--art thou also married?"

"I! No! But I--I can imagine it."

Frankly and peacefully Felicitas returned the wondering look that rested reverentially upon her. She felt that he marvelled at her beauty; but it did not disturb her--his look was pure. The contrast made her involuntarily think of the disquieting flame in the black eyes of the Tribune, which had so often alarmed her. But she could look with pleasure on this noble, serious countenance, into these deeply-penetrating gray eyes.

She now rose slowly.

"I have always," said she, with a smile which made her look still more charming, "been very much alarmed at--at--at you, whom we call 'Barbarians.' And how terrified I was at hearing the stones falling one over the other! I anxiously looked out. But when I saw how carefully you came up the narrow way, did not trample down the flowers, when even he in the white mantle carefully raised a rose-bush that had fallen on the gravel path, then I said to my little son on my arm: 'Fear not, thou apple of mine eye, *they* will do us no harm.' And I fearlessly filled the wine-cup. And now that I have looked into your kind eyes, now I feel myself perfectly safe just because you are both here. And I know certainly you will bring me my husband to-morrow morning. I will go and place the child there in our sleeping-room."

She pointed with the finger to a small doorway in the centre, before which hung a red woollen curtain. "Then I will bring the provisions I have in the house."

"Do not forget the wine," called out Haduwalt.

As she glided away like a softly rustling wave, Liuthari sprang up impetuously.

"Stay, oh, stay!" cried he hastily, following her a step or two.

But Haduwalt held him firmly by the mantle.

"She did not hear it; thanks be to the gods."

Liuthari violently set himself free.

"She *must* hear that I"----Then he calmed himself, and pressed his right hand to his brow.

"Now--now--now--*now!*" said the old man slowly, with long pauses. "Has young Liuthari now for the first time seen the thing called woman, who, instead of a man's breastplate, carries a child at her breast? I truly feared that the Runic spell had quite bewitched thee; for in the wine there was no magic. *I* feel nothing peculiar in *me*. The witchcraft began as soon as thou didst see that white face. What? thou wilt follow her? Halt there! How vexed I am that I have forgotten all the furious, loud-sounding, bad names with which Hadumar, my father, scolded me when he caught me as I was climbing into the neighbour's garden to steal the sweet pears that the Romans had grafted on to the wild pears of the Illara forest. He thrashed me soundly; but the caressing words have escaped me--it is so long ago. 'Thou pilferer! thou pear-stealer! thou sluggard! thou sneak!' These were some of the most tender. And now I could use them all admirably. Why starest thou thus speechless, senseless, after another man's wife? Is it such behaviour that the Lady Lindgardis, thy glorious mother, has taught thee? Dost thou not remember Adalagardis, thy bride?"

"Old giant! blustering, growling bear! that is enough of thine abuse; I have had quite enough of it. Adalagardis my bride? She is but a name--a wish of my father. Can I embrace, and clasp, and kiss a name? But this woman is living flesh and blood. I felt the sweet warmth of her arm as I touched it. Heat flashed through me. She is so beautiful--so wonderfully, enchantingly beautiful! It is an elfin beauty. No, no; words cannot express it. The goddesses of Walhalla are not so beautiful as she. Where have I seen her equal?" continued he dreamily. "It was, I think, under a warmer, fairer sky! Ah, yes; now I see it clearly. In the service of the Emperor, I was sailing from Byzantium through the blue Grecian seas. There, on an island covered with myrtle and laurel, stood the white form of a Grecian goddess. I was affected then almost as much as now by this woman." He was silent and laid his hand on his beating heart.

"I have nothing to say against it, Liuthari, if thou admirest her as thou wouldst a stone statue; even if thy taste does go so far astray. Mine seeks something different. Commend me to Adalagardis, I will be silent! But this small-waisted little one, straight as an arrow, and not much taller, with her thin child's arms, she looks so fragile that she would certainly be crushed the first time thou didst heartily touch her."

"What can the bear know about touching the harp-strings?" said Liuthari roughly.

"It may well be, O son of my king, that I do not understand much about dolls made in white Grecian stone-work, for the amusement of boys. But this I know, it is much more like the son of the lady Lindgardis, to put other men's wives out of his burning thoughts. If thou hadst known each other *before*, and thou now didst find her in the power of another, and she still cared for thee secretly in her heart, then I might say, Use the superior strength with which Wotan has gifted thee. But thus----Here she comes again, innocent, unsuspecting, trustful! She builds on *thy* protection, the dear child. I cannot feel vexed with her, because she is so harmless and innocent. I say to thee, if thou, either by look or word, dost disturb her peace, I shall take care that father and mother give thee a very bad reception when thou dost return home after this expedition, and dost wish to sit at the honourable hearth of the lady thy mother."

But Liuthari was now quite angry.

"Very much I shall fear thy chattering! And the lady Lindgardis's rod does not any longer reach to *my* back. What art thou chattering about there, thou senseless being? As a conqueror I stand in this house; it is all mine; all that I wish for; the house and the mistress. Her husband is dead, or an imprisoned thrall; she herself widow, or my servant as soon as I call her so."

"Thy thoughts are very nicely occupied with thy Grecian goddess! Wert thou now *my* boy, instead of my king's, very quickly, but not quietly, wouldst thou flee from this house. But I will watch--I, Haduwalt, heir of Hadamar--that a son of the king of the Alemanni does not trespass like a honey-stealing boy."

The hostess then appeared, placed on the table a prettily-woven basket, full of white, fragrant bread, then butter, fresh goat's cheese, and a ham.

"Directly, directly!" answered she to the silent question of Haduwalt's thirsty eyes, and appeared again immediately, bearing on her head an immense amphora full of wine.

Demeanour and movements were full of grace: the left arm resting on her hip, the right raised to the handle of the pitcher, perfectly upright, advancing slowly because of the heavy burden, thus she stepped across the threshold.

Liuthari sprang up hastily to take the burden from her. But Haduwalt held his arm. "Let her alone, my son! *Alone* she certainly will not spill the wine; what might happen if thou didst help, I should not like to see."

Liuthari drew a deep breath; he unbuckled the heavy armour and laid it aside, as also the large Roman helmet from his burning head. He mechanically took the food; but he ate very little, and did not take his eyes from her beautiful face.

But soon Felicitas rose from the repast. "I am very tired," said she. "Since Fulvius left I have not slept, I must now go to our child; if I hear his gentle breathing I am quite composed. I will bring you pillows and coverlets; you must be contented here; we have no other room worthy of such guests."

"Never mind, as far as I am concerned," cried Liuthari, springing up. "I cannot sleep; or I can sleep in the garden, on the soft turf, my head resting on my shield. Come with me, old man."

"No, I should rather sleep *here*, exactly here," replied he, slyly smiling to himself. "But my wolf's skin is sufficient, friendly hostess. Thou hast shut the back-door, which, as thou saidst, led from the garden into thy sleeping-room?"

"Yes; Philemon will not return from the town before morning."

"Certainly not earlier. The gates will be shut at night-fall. I shall lie here quite comfortably, seest thou, here on the threshold, before the curtain which closes thy room. Sleep well and be quite at rest," cried he to her through the curtain, as she was putting away the provisions. "Not even a little mouse could reach thee without waking me. Seest thou, I fill the whole width of the entrance, thus! Now the wine-pitcher near me. Hurrah! it is again quite full! And very excellent the old wine tastes. Thy husband is a connoisseur therein. I shall drink it all. I shall not sleep. Oh no!"

"Rest well, ye guests," said she, and disappeared.

Liuthari threw a peculiar, scornful look on the old soldier cowering in the doorway, and on the immense pitcher of wine at his side. Then he sprang laughing down the steps into the garden.

"What?" said he to himself, half-pleased and half-defiant, "the growling bear thinks to keep me back if I am determined to step across that threshold? *He* keep guard! Before he has drunk half the heavy wine he will snore like Thor in the hall of the giants. I might, perhaps, have given it up; but now that he presumes to coerce me--well! what I will do when I stand before the glorious sleeper--I know not yet; but to her couch I will go, in spite of his upbraidings."

The ardent emotion of the youth relieved itself in his defiant anger against his old friend, who looked after him with blinking eyes.

When the quick steps sounded in the far distance, he called gently:

"Young woman!"

"What wilt thou, then?"

"Hast thou not a ball of thread in the house?"

"Certainly; here is one."

"Very well. Give me the end through the curtain. So! Dost thou see? I will fasten the thread here at my sword-belt. And thou--thou take the ball in thy hand and hold it firmly during sleep. Dost thou understand? And if thou shouldst have any bad dreams, pull quickly."

"Why so? I can call thee."

"You had better not trust to that," said the old man, rubbing his tired eyes. "They say if I once get into a wine sleep, the battle-cry of all the Alemanni would not wake me; but if pulled by the girdle I notice it directly. Then I shall awake, if by chance I might have gone to sleep, and will spring to thy help."

"As thou wilt, but it is unnecessary; thy companion keeps watch there in the garden."

"Oh, do not believe that! he is as sleepy as a marmot, on him there is no reliance, therefore, hold the ball fast, and now goodnight, sweet creature. I am pleased with her myself," muttered he. "Very much she pleases me. But I must speak against her to the boy. He has never yet caressed the cheek of any woman but his mother, and he is overflowing with passion and strength, like a noble young stag; and now he meets this tender white doe! Shame! if her unsuspecting soul suffered even a little fright. I must protect *her*--and *him*. One more draught, and then: Haduwalt, fasting and watchful."

Dimly shone the little lamp in the sleeping-room, only a faint gleam penetrated the red curtain.

In the front room the lamp went out.

Stillness reigned over the whole house, one heard only from the garden the lulling murmur of the spring.

From the inner room the old man soon heard the deep, regular respirations of the sleeping young wife. Haduwalt counted them. He counted bravely up to a hundred. He then laid his hand, groping uncertainly, on the thread at his girdle. "All right," thought he; "and I shall not sleep."

Certainly not! Hundred and one!"

Then he counted no more.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Over the silent garden lay the enchantment of a warm, glorious summer night.

The innumerable stars shone magnificently in the cloudless heavens. And now in the east, above the walls of Juvavum, which had till now hidden her from view, rose the full moon, pouring forth a flood of glory, showing in her fantastic light, so bright and yet so different from day, the white house, the dark bushes, and the tall trees.

Numerous night-loving flowers in the gardens of the villas, and in the meadows around, whose cups were closed by day, now opened and exhaled their scent into the soft air.

The young German traversed the garden with agitated steps.

In the rose-bushes of the neighbouring gardens sang the nightingale, so loud, so quavering, so ardent, so impassioned, Liuthari would rather not have heard it; and yet he could not help listening to the fervid tones.

The night wind played in his flowing locks, for, besides the breast-plate, he had also left his helmet in the room, only taking with him his spear, which served as a staff, and the round shield, on which to lay his head, if he wished to rest.

But he found no rest.

With strong determination he went away from the house, which so powerfully attracted him, towards the entrance where the stone slabs lay about in confusion. As the store of stones had not been sufficient to fill up the entrance, the old slave had with the pick-axe taken up two slabs from the threshold, one of which bore the inscription. On this heap of stones Liuthari now sat in a deep reverie, just within the entrance, and looked at the stars and the soft light of the moon. He forced himself to think of his parents at home, of the past day and its victory, of the daughter of Agilolf with the fine-sounding name--what might she be like?

All! it was of no use; he only deceived himself: through all the pictures of his thoughts, pushing them aside, so that they melted away as mist, appeared that noble, pale face, the rhythmic symmetry of that figure.

"Felicitas!" breathed he lightly to himself.

Long, long sat he thus.

Suddenly the nightingale was silent.

Liuthari was quickly awakened out of his thoughts and dreams: in hot haste, their iron hoofs resounding on the hard pavement of the road, several horses came galloping from Juvavum; the practised ear of the German clearly distinguished two, perhaps three horses.

The young man sprang up, and seized the spear which was lying near him.

"Those are not Alemannian horsemen," said he. "Who else can it be?--Fugitive Romans? or even--her husband?"

He stepped behind the pier of the entrance to the right, where his form and also his shadow was hidden, while the moonlight revealed clearly to him the road and the footpath which led to the villa.

The hoof-strokes were now silent.

The watcher plainly saw how, at the turn of the footpath, three riders sprang from their horses, and fastened them to a milestone.

The one, the tallest, wore a Roman helm, with a dark flowing plume, the two others the close-fitting headgear of the Moorish cavalry; their white mantles floated in the night wind.

"That is scarcely her husband, and those are not slaves of this villa. And yet they are coming here. What may they be seeking? Shall I call Haduwalt? Bah! King Liutbert's son has often already stood against three enemies at once."

At this moment the one in the helmet reached the entrance.

"Wait here," he commanded, raising his short spear, "I alone will fetch the woman; if I need you, I will call. But I think"----

"Halt! stand, Roman!" cried Liuthari, with levelled spear, springing into the gateway in the full moonlight. "What seek you here?"

"A German! Down with him!" cried the three voices at once. But at the same moment the leader stumbled two steps backwards, struck on the breast by the spear of Liuthari.

If the armour-factory of Lorch had not supplied such excellent work, the point would have gone through and through the man. But it rebounded and--broke.

The German angrily dropped the now useless shaft.

"By Tartarus, that was a murderous blow!" cried Leo fiercely. "Prudence is necessary. Raise the spears; we will throw together."

The three lances flew at once--all three the Alemannian stopped with his shield. One, hurled with especial momentum and fury, penetrated the threefold ox-hide and ash-wood of the shield, and wounded his arm near the shoulder.

The young man, full of strength, hardly felt the slight wound; but the shield, encumbered with three spear-shafts, he could no longer dexterously use.

"Haduwalt!" cried he now with a loud voice, "Waffen! Feind! Help!"

At the same time he seized one of the lances in his shield, tore it out, and threw. The Moor at the right of the Tribune cried out and fell dead to the ground.

"I will throw him down; thou, sir, stab him!" cried the other. It was Himilco, the centurion.

"With the leap of the panther of his native deserts, he now sprang at the throat of the German; but, quick as lightning, Liuthari had drawn the short knife from his shoulder-belt. He thrust it into the brow between the eyes of his assailant. The brown, muscular arms which had seized the German's two shoulders as with the claws of a beast of prey, loosened; without a sound the African fell backwards. But Liuthari had not time to draw out the deeply imbedded dagger-blade.

"Haduwalt! Help!" cried he loudly.

For already the third enemy, a most formidable opponent, had rushed upon him.

With a powerful sword-stroke he cleaved Liuthari's shield so that it split into two halves, and, with the clinging spears, fell right and left from his arm.

And the Roman had, at the same time, stuck the sharp iron spike in the centre of his convex shield, deep into the naked right arm of the king's son: the blood spurted out. He recoiled several steps from the weight of the blow, nearly stumbling over the stone slabs.

The furious enemy, well armed both for defence and offence, now stepped victoriously into the entrance, pushing aside with his foot the two halves of the shield, that his adversary should not draw out the spears.

With a keen look the Roman measured his adversary, who now drew his last weapon, the short-handled battle-axe, from his girdle, and raised it to strike. The towering stature of the young German must have seemed fearful to the Roman, in spite of the superiority of his arms.

"Why should we tear each other to pieces, barbarian? Why dost thou protect this house so grimly? I will not contest it with thee; I will leave it to thee as soon as I have taken out one single thing."

"What thing? something belonging to thee? Thou art not the master of the house."

"I will leave thee the house. I come only for--a woman."

"*Thy* wife? Felicitas? No! she is not thine"

Furiously the other cried: "What? Thou art already so intimate in the house! But neither is Felicitas *thy* wife; and shall not become so. Felicitas shall be *mine!*"

"Never!" cried Liuthari, and he sprang forward and dashed his stone battle-axe against the magnificent bronze helmet, so that it split asunder where the plume was attached, and fell in pieces from the head of the wearer.

But alas! that head remained uninjured, while the axe, descending with such force on the metal, broke off at the handle. For a moment the Tribune stood as if stupefied by the blow. But he saw immediately how his opponent, now quite defenceless, did not turn his face for flight, but still stood before him.

With a wild, yelling, tiger-like shriek, in which thirst for blood and joy of revenge sounded harshly together, he let his shield slip down, raised the short, broad Roman sword for a blow, and with the cry, "Felicitas is mine!" sprang on the German.

At that first outcry, Liuthari quickly bent forward, slightly raising the heel of his left foot, and seized one of the marble slabs lying before him; and now, first swinging it high above his head, with the cry "Felicitas!" he hurled it with a good aim against the helmetless forehead of the Tribune, as he sprang towards him.

Hoarsely groaning, clashing in his armour, the assailant fell backwards; the sword escaped from his hand.

Already Liuthari knelt on his breast, seized the blade, and raised it to force it into his throat.

But he breathed no more--he was dead. Liuthari rising, threw the sword aside, and looked proudly on the three slain enemies.

"For Felicitas!" said he. "Now to her. I think--I have deserved it."

He knelt down by the running stream, washed the smarting, still bleeding wound of his right arm, tore some broad strips from the linen mantle of the dead centurion, bound them firmly around the wound, and then trod with a light, elastic step the long path through the garden, back to the house.

CHAPTER XIX.

Having reached it he pushed carefully aside the yellow curtain of the outer door, letting the moonlight fall into the dark room.

At the entrance to the sleeping-room, before its red curtain, lay Haduwalt, snoring; by him, lying on its side, empty, was the amphora. Lightly, on tip-toe and with a beating heart, the young man advanced and cautiously divided the two halves of the red curtain. He then perceived, with a smile, the cunning arrangement of the thread; it was still fastened to the leathern belt of the guard; but the hand of the sleeper had opened; the ball lay on a stool by her couch. With a wide stride Liuthari stepped across the old man into the sleeping-room.

Above the head of the bed, in a niche in the wall, stood the little earthen lamp; it threw its mild light over the pillow. By its red glimmer, he perceived the infant near the bed of the mother in a wicker cradle.

The beautiful sleeper had loosened her abundant light-brown hair; it flowed over her naked shoulders and splendidly curved, though delicate bosom, from which the woollen covering had half slipped.

The dazzlingly white left arm she had placed behind her head and neck; the right hand covered, as if protecting, the left breast. The intruder stepped quite close. So ravishingly beautiful he had not seen her, when awake; and the serious eyes now closed no longer maintained a strict watch.

The full lips were half opened; he inhaled the sweet breath of her mouth. The young man trembled from head to foot.

"Only one kiss," thought he, "and it shall not awake her."

He was already bending softly over her face. The beautiful lips then moved, and in her sleep she said tenderly:

"Come, O my Fulvius; kiss me!"

With the speed of lightning, Liuthari turned, sprang lightly across Haduwalt on the threshold, then down the steps into the garden, clasped his two hands before his eyes, and murmured:

"Oh, what wickedness might I not have done!"

He fell on his knees, and hid his feverish head in the dewy grass. Repentance, pain, unstillied longing, surged together within him, and were at length dissolved in a salutary stream of tears. Long lay he thus. At last the youth of the exhausted, wounded man asserted itself beneficially; he sank into a deep, dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER XX.

When the next morning the summer sun rose magnificently over Juvavum, and the golden oriole began its flute-like song, young Liuthari sprang up, a healed and a wiser man.

The wound in his arm no longer pained, and his imagination, which had been much more excited than his heart, was stilled.

No longer dissatisfied with himself, joyful and composed, he first cooled his face in the spring, and then, carefully hiding the wounded arm under his mantle, he walked up the steps into the outer room. Haduwalt, yawning and stretching up both his arms, received him with the words:

"But thou hast long slept. And I--I think I have not closed my eyes the whole night."

"But perhaps the ears!" laughed Liuthari. "Where is the mistress? I am hungry."

"Here am I," cried Felicitas. "I will bring you directly fresh-laid eggs, and milk, and honey. Philemon is now milking the cow in the meadow behind the house."

"Only think," said she, now stepping from behind the curtain and offering a hand to each guest: "very early, as soon as the gates were again opened, the old slave came back from the town by the meadow-path, and awoke me knocking at the outer door. I had slept so firmly."

"And very sweetly dreamt?" said Liuthari, smiling.

"Yes--as always, *if* I dream: of Fulvius. Certainly Philemon has not found his master; but still I am of good cheer. The good Johannes had caused the dead and the wounded to be brought together--the former in front of, and the latter into the church. Philemon carefully inspected them. Thanks to the God of heaven, the saints and the good Genii, my Fulvius is not among them." And she sat down with her guests.

Philemon brought an immense jug full of foaming warm milk. He threw a wondering look on the two Germans, whom his mistress had represented to him as protectors, not enemies, and he went again to the back of the house. Felicitas followed him to fetch the child, which seemed to be waking.

"Tell me now, grim teacher and armour-master," began Liuthari, "wilt thou in thine old age learn woman's handiwork, and the art of using thread? What hast thou there trailing at thy girdle?"

Quite taken aback the old giant looked down at his portly person, and at the long, long thread which was entangled about his clumsy feet.

"That? Oh, that is only something between the mistress and myself. She has become so fond of me--much more so than of thee--and that I should not escape her, she bound me fast to her couch."

"Thou wouldest complain of me to my mother----!"

"Yes; if I had not kept watch, who knows----!"

"Now I will accuse *thee* to thy wife, the strict Grimmtrud, that thou didst bind thyself to the couch of a young beauty."

The young man stooped down, picked up the ball, and put it in his vest.

"I shall keep the thread," continued he gravely, "as a remembrance of the hour when Haduwalt slept, the thread lay loose on the ground, but Liuthari watched--for three."

Felicitas after a while again came in, the child on her arm.

"The day advances," sighed she, "and I begin to be very anxious. My Fulvius, where mayest thou be?"

"Here I am," cried a joyous, clear voice, and the longed-for husband rushed in through the open doorway.

With a cry of happiness Felicitas sprang up. He folded mother and child tenderly in his arms.

Liuthari rose. He looked at them without pain, and regarded the husband with a frank, happy look, who, however, astonished, drew back a step, and measured the handsome young man with his eyes. Hot fear flashed through him in an instant; but the alarm disappeared, fleeing like a cloud-shadow, when he looked into His wife's face, so peaceful, so radiantly happy.

"What has happened to me, my darling? The day before yesterday shut up in the debtor's tower, early yesterday set free by Severus, taken by him to the battle--we were defeated--I fled, was pursued, fell into the river, was carried away by the stream--half stupefied I at last reached the bank--was taken prisoner by other horsemen, led into the town, and this morning--saved by a miracle of the Lord or the holy Saint Peter, I know not which."

"A miracle! Oh, thank the mercy of the God of heaven! He heard my prayer! But what miracle?"

"Johannes, who never wearies in the care of his people, had already yesterday evening besought the barbarian Duke to release all the citizens of Juvavum who were prisoners of war. The powerful prince answered that he would willingly set free all that fell to his share of the

booty, but those that fell to his warriors he had not the power to release, only to redeem--quite a different law prevails with the Germans than with us--and he could not exhaust his treasure to do that. So last night many of us were set at liberty, but the larger proportion, and amongst them myself, remained in bondage. Then in the early morning Johannes appeared again in the Capitol, where the Duke had fixed his abode, and--redeemed us all! Thou art astonished. Thou mayest well ask whence the man, who possesses nothing but his robe and staff, procured so much money! Yes, that is the miracle! When, sad at the fate of the prisoners, he returned to his Basilica, he found, in an old vault under the church-floor, a bag full of gold pieces, and also a little purse of precious stones, abundantly sufficient to ransom us all. But whence came this treasure? Nobody knows. The angel of the Lord manifestly heard the prayer of Johannes, and brought the treasure. The whole of Juvavum is amazed at the miracle. And I vow to thee, thou godly one, I will henceforth listen more devoutly to the words of Johannes. But thee, my beloved! what alarm has threatened thee!"

"But has not reached me, thanks be to God, and also to our guests; and perhaps," added she smiling, "to the inscription on the entrance-slab, that kept back misfortune."

"Dost thou know *who* wished to step across it?"

"How should I? I have not left the house."

"Then thou hast no idea how truly thou didst speak! Listen and breathe again. As I just now was hastening here from the town, on approaching the hill, I saw fastened to the milestone three horses, and among them--I know him too well--the black steed of the Tribune! Full of alarm, I sprang to our gate; there lay--oh, horrible!--two slain Moors, and, directly across the threshold, stretched on his back, the terrible Tribune, with a shattered skull! His face was half covered with the inscription-slab, and the corner-piece, broken off, was deeply embedded in his skull. *This* stone has felled him who was never conquered. But what arm hurled it?"

The old Haduwalt, who at the first mention of conflict had instinctively looked into the averted face of his young master, now drew the white mantle from his shoulder, showed the bloody bandage, and said: "This arm--And I!--Oh, Liuthari, my darling!--I meanwhile lay and slept!"

"Tolerably firmly," said the young man smiling, and continued, turning to the master of the house: "Yes, I slew him, that very bold man; he wished to force his way in, and"----

"Steal Felicitas!" cried the husband, pressing his wife, now terribly alarmed, to his breast. "Oh, sir, how can we thank thee?" he exclaimed.

But Felicitas could not utter a word; she could only direct her eyes, swimming in tears, towards her preserver. She had not appeared so beautiful even in the night.

"Thanks!" laughed Liuthari, "I fought for my life. But listen! who comes here?"

The steps of armed men were heard in the garden, and there entered, accompanied by five followers, Garibrand the Duke.

"A good piece of work have you two done out there before the entrance. The Tribune, whom we have sought everywhere, he fell certainly by thy hand. I have found thee at last, young hero! Welcome news I bring thee. A messenger from thy father is seeking thee. The Roman fortress on the Regan stream has fallen. My cousin, Duke Agilolf, and thy father, have settled the betrothal: Agilolf invites thee to his halls. Adalagardis, the most beautiful princely daughter of the Germans, is awaiting thee."

"Hail to thee, thou son of my king! this is thy reward for this night," cried Haduwalt.

"Betrothal! I have never seen her!" cried Liuthari, hesitating.

"Betrothal! yes, if you please each other," said the Duke.

"*He* will certainly please *her*," said Haduwalt, clapping the blushing youth on the shoulder; "and I hope," whispered he quietly in his ear, "that *she*, the beauty whom thou *mayest* love, will right well please *thee*."

"Choose now," continued the Duke, "what thou wilt of the booty. To you Alemanni, to thee above all, do we owe the victory."

"I will follow thee," said Liuthari, rising hastily. "Help me, old friend!"

The armour-master helped him to buckle on his breastplate; the young man raised the beautifully-shaped Roman helmet with the towering heron's plume to his head. Magnificent stood the king's son, his joyful countenance radiant with the noblest sentiments.

"Oh, now all is well," rejoiced Fulvius. "The Tribune is slain; Zeno the usurer is dead, murdered by an unknown hand, without doubt by his slaves, so Johannes tells me. There is no longer an Emperor in Ravenna; we were assured of this yesterday morning by this young hero. Now am I free from all debts to the Fiscus."

"And no less do I assure thee," laughed Liuthari, "that this powerful Duke here has stepped into the Emperor's place--*his* debtor art thou now."

Fulvius anxiously put his hand to his right ear, and looked dismayed at the mighty man.

"Fear not," continued Liuthari. "I ask, Duke Garibrand, as a part of my share of the booty, this villa and the land belonging to it. And free from all debt."

"It shall be as thou hast said," answered the Bajuvaren.

"And to you both, Fulvius and Felicitas, I give this free property, before these seven free men as witnesses. Their oath will be of service to you if anyone should contest your right and warrant."

"Thanks, sir; thanks."

"Thou art, then, Fulvius the stone-mason?" interposed the Duke. "The priest Johannes commended thee to me as faithful and brave; if thou dost prove thyself so, I will place thee as steward over my lands outside this gate."

Felicitas, after a short whispering with her husband, now stepped towards Liuthari, with the child on her arm. She blushed faintly, and said:

"Sir, he who gives so much as thou--must give still more. Our little son has not yet a name. Next Sunday I shall take him to Johannes, to the font. How shall the boy be named?"

"Felix Fulvius," said the king's son, deeply moved, laying his hand on the tiny head, "and--*Liuthari*, in order that my name may yet strike many times on your ear. But he who gives a name, gives also a present--that is German custom. Here, young housewife, take this ring. I stripped it from the finger of a patrician some years ago, whom I slew in battle. In Augusta Vindelicorum the dealers say it is worth as much as half their town. That is a bit of treasure in case of need. And now, both of you, farewell!"

"Stop!" here cried Haduwalt; "we do not thus bid farewell--farewell for life! Thou didst ask, stone-mason, how thou couldst thank the hero. Let thy young wife give him one kiss; believe me, he has deserved it--he is a gallant youth!"

Fulvius led his blushing wife towards him.

Liuthari pressed a kiss on the white brow, and cried: "Farewell, thou lovely one, for ever!"

And already he was gone: the curtain rustled behind him. The other Germans followed; at the garden entrance they mounted their horses and galloped quickly back towards the Porta Vindelica.

The first thing that Fulvius did, after he had with Philemon removed the dead bodies, was carefully to reset the stone with the inscription, into the pavement of the entrance; the broken-off corner he left unset.

"It shall," said he, "for ever be to us a proof how effectual the adage has been."

And the adage, it proved itself true to the wedded pair through their whole life.

No misfortune crossed that threshold while they dwelt there. Blooming sons and daughters grew up after Felix Fulvius Liuthari. Sickness never befell them, parents or children, although the pestilence might be raging in Juvavum and in the villas round about.

The Ivarus often overflowed, spreading its waves and destruction over men, animals, horses, and grain. Before this gate, before the Mercurius Hill, it each time stopped.

A landslip overwhelmed the neighbours' gardens right and left. An immense piece of rock rebounded from the inscription stone, and was shattered into a thousand fragments. Fulvius became "Villicus" of all the ducal property in Juvavum, and stood, on account of his prudence and fidelity, high in the favour of Duke Garibrand.

When he and Felicitas had become quite old people, fully eighty years of age, but active and vigorous, they were sitting one June evening hand in hand in the garden. They had had a seat made just within the entrance, so that their feet rested on the adage-stone.

Thus they sat, and thought of past times. Sweetly sang the golden oriole in the neighbouring beech forest. But it gradually became silent, for the air had become very sultry; a storm was approaching.

There was a vivid flash of lightning, and a tremendous peal of thunder. The children hastened to bring their old parents into the house.

But when Felix Fulvius Liuthari, hurrying in advance of the others, reached them, he found them both dead.

A flash of lightning had killed them both.

They still held each other hand in hand, and smiled, as if to say: "Death, which comes thus, is no misfortune, but a blessing."

THE END.

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