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Title: Quintus Claudius: A Romance of Imperial Rome. Volume 1

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Translator: Clara Bell

Release date: October 29, 2014 [EBook #47221]

Language: English

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Errors and inconsistencies in punctuation have been attributed to printer's errors, and corrected.

The Greek circumflex, which appears in the text as an inverted breve (^), is rendered here using a tilde (~).

Please note the publisher's decision to place footnotes at the bottom of each page, as well as the author's note on this topic in the Preface. In keeping with his intent, footnotes have been moved to the end of this file.

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QUINTUS CLAUDIUS

A ROMANCE OF IMPERIAL ROME

BY

ERNST ECKSTEIN

FROM THE GERMAN BY CLARA BELL

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. I.

REVISED AND CORRECTED IN THE UNITED STATES

NEW YORK

GEO. GOTTSBERGER PECK, PUBLISHER

117 CHAMBERS STREET

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THIS TRANSLATION WAS MADE EXPRESSLY FOR THE PUBLISHER

PREFACE TO THE FIRST GERMAN EDITION.

It was in Rome itself, in the sublime solemnity of the Colosseum, among the ruins of the palaces of the Caesars and crumbling pillars of the temples of the gods, that the first dreamy outlines rose before my fancy of the figures here offered to the reader's contemplation. Each visit added strength to the mysterious impulse, to conjure up from their tombs these shadows of a mighty past, and afterwards, at home, where the throng of impressions sorted and grouped themselves at leisure, my impulse ripened to fulfilment.

I will not pause here to dwell on the fact, that the period of Imperial rule in Rome bears, in its whole aspect, a stronger resemblance to the XIXth century than perhaps any other epoch before the Reformation; for, without reference to this internal affinity, we should be justified in using it for the purpose of Romance simply by the fact, that hardly another period has ever been equally full of the stirring conflict of purely human interest, and of dramatic contrasts in thought, feeling and purpose.

I must be permitted to add a word as to the notes.^[A]

I purposely avoided disturbing the reader of the story by references in the text, and indeed the narrative is perfectly intelligible without any explanation. The notes, in short, are not intended as explanatory, but merely to instruct the reader, and complete the picture; they also supply the sources, and give the evidence on which I have drawn. From this point of view they may have some interest for the general public, unfamiliar with the authorities.

LEIPZIG, June 15, 1881.

ERNST ECKSTEIN.

[A] The publisher of this translation has, for the reader's convenience, placed all the notes at the foot of the pages containing the corresponding text.

QUINTUS CLAUDIUS.

CHAPTER I.

It was the morning of the 12th of September in the Year of Our Lord 95; the first cold gleam of dawn was shining on the steel-grey surface of the Tyrrhenian sea. To the east, over the gently undulating coast of Campania, the sky was tinged with that tender dewy-green which follows on the paling of the stars; to the west the waters still lay in impenetrable darkness. Their almost unruffled face was swiftly parted by a large trireme,[1] just now making its way from the south and opposite to Salernum, between the Posidium[2] promontory and the Island of Capreae.[3] The oars of the crew, who sat in rows on three ranks of benches, rose and fell in rhythm to a melancholy chant; the steersman yawned as he looked into the distance, hoping for the moment of release.

A small hatchway—fitted with silver ornaments—now opened on to the deck from the cabin between decks; a fat round head with short hair showed itself in the opening, and a pair of blinking eyes looked curiously round in every direction. Presently the head was followed by a body, of which the squat rotundity matched the odd head.

“Well, Chrysostomus, is Puteoli[4] in sight yet?” asked the stout man, stepping on to the deck and looking across to the blue-black rocks of Capreae.

“Ask again in three hours time,” replied the steersman. “Unless you can succeed in looking round the corner, like the magician of Tyana,[5] you must need wait till we have the island yonder behind us.”

“What!” exclaimed the other, drawing a little ivory map[6] from his tunic.[7] “Are those rocks only Capreae?”

“Thou sayest, O Herodianus! Out there on the heights to the right, hardly visible yet, stands the palace of the glorified Caesar Tiberius.[8] Do you see that steep cliff, straight down to the sea? That was where such useless fellows as you were dropped over into the water by Caesar’s slaves.”

“Chrysostomus, do not be impudent! How dare you, a common ship’s-mate, make so bold as to scoff at me, the companion and confidential friend of the illustrious Caius Aurelius? By the gods! [9] but it is beneath me to hold conversation with you, an ignorant seaman—a man who carries no wax-tablets[10] about him, who only knows how to handle the tiller and not the stylus—a common Gaul who is ignorant of all history of the gods—such a man ought not even to exist, so far as the friend of Aurelius is concerned.”

“Oho! you are dreaming! you are not his friend, but his freedman.”[11]

Herodianus bit his lip; as he stood there, his face flushed with anger and turned to the growing day, he might have been taken for an ill-natured and vindictive man. But good temper and a genial nature soon reasserted themselves.

“You are an insolent fellow,” he said laughing, “but I know you mean no harm. You sea-folks are a rough race. I will burn a thank-offering to all the gods when this accursed sea-saw on the waves is over at last. Was there ever such a voyage! from Trajectum[12] to Gades[13] without landing once! And at Gades hardly had we set foot on shore, when we were ordered on board again! And if Aurelius, our noble master, had not had business to settle in Panormus[14] with his deceased father’s host, I believe we should have made the whole voyage from Hispania to Rome without a break. I will dance like the Corybantes,[15] when I am once more allowed to feel like a man among men! How long will it be yet before we reach Ostia?”[16]

“Two days, not more,” replied Chrysostomus.

“Aphrodite Euploia be most fervently thanked!”

“What are you talking about? Who is that you are blessing?”

“To be sure, my good Chrysostomus,” replied the other with a triumphant smile, “I was forgetting that a seaman from the land of the Gauls is not likely to understand Greek. Euploia, being interpreted, means the goddess who grants us a good voyage. Do not take my observation ill, but surely you might have picked up so much Greek as that in the course of your many voyages with the lamented father of our lord Aurelius.”

“Silly stuff!” retorted Chrysostomus. “Besides, I never sailed in the Greek seas. Ten times to Ostia, eight times to Massilia,[17] twelve times to Panormus and a score of times northwards to the seas of the Goths up by the land of the Rugii[18]—that is the sum total of my annals. But Latin is spoken everywhere; even the Frisii[19] can make themselves understood more or less in the language of Rome; among the Rugii, to be sure, we talked in Gothic.”

“A poor excuse!” said Herodianus pathetically. “However I have talked till I am thirsty! I will be on the spot again when the master appears.”

He carefully replaced his little ivory map in the bosom of his under-garment, and was about to withdraw, when a tall youth, followed by two or three slaves, appeared on the steps from below. The ship’s crew hailed their master with a loud shout, and Caius Aurelius, thanking them for their

greeting, went forward while the slaves prepared breakfast[20] under an awning over the cabin roof; only one of them followed him.

It was by this time broad daylight; the whole eastern sky glowed with flame behind the blue Campanian hills, a light breeze curled the no less glowing sea into a thousand waves and ripples, and the prow of the galley, which was decorated with a colossal ram's-head[21] in brass, threw up the water in sparks of liquid gold. The palace of Tiberius on the top of the rocky isle seemed caught in sudden fire, at every instant the glory spread lower, kindling fresh peaks and towers, and up rose the sun in all the majesty and splendor of his southern might from behind the heights of Salernum.

Herodianus, who had taken his place officiously close to his master, appeared to promise himself immense satisfaction in interpreting the young man's mood of devout admiration by a long quotation of Greek poetry. He had already thrown himself into a pathetic attitude and laid his finger meditatively on his cheek, when Aurelius signed to him that he wished to be left undisturbed. The freedman, somewhat offended, drew back a step or two while Aurelius, standing by the side of his favorite slave Magus,[22] who preserved a discreet silence, leaned over the bulwark for a long space lost in thought, letting his eye wander over the open sea and linger for a while on the fantastic shapes of the rocks and mountains, which constantly shifted in form and grouping as the swift galley flew onwards.

Capreae was already on their right hand, and the broad bay of Parthenope,[23] with its endless perspective of towns and villas, opened before them like a huge pearly shell; the dark ashy cone of Vesuvius[24] stood up defiantly over the plain where, a short time since, it had engulfed the blooming towns of Herculaneum, Pompeii and Stabiae. Now there rose from its summit only a filmy cloud of smoke, ruddy in the light of the mounting sun. Farther on, the quays of Puteoli were discernible, the stately buildings of Baiae[25] and the islands of Aenaria and Prochyta.[26] On the left hand the distance was unlimited; vessels laden with provisions from Alexandria[27] and merchant-ships from Massilia slowly crossed the horizon like visions; others, with every sail set, flew across the bay to disembark their precious freight in the emporium of Puteoli, whence it would be carried to lay at the feet of Rome, the all-absorbing and insatiable mistress of the world.

Meanwhile the slaves had laid the table under the awning with fine cloths, had arranged couches and seats and strewn the spot with a few flowers, and were now standing ready to serve the morning meal at a sign from their young master. The weary night-rowers had half an hour ago been relieved by a fresh crew, and the fine boat flew on with double rapidity, for a fresh breeze had risen and filled the sails. In an instant the whole face of the waters had changed, and as far as the eye could reach danced crest on crest of foam.

Aurelius wrapped himself more closely in his Tarentine travelling-cloak[28] and involuntarily glanced at Magus, the Gothic slave who stood by his side; but Magus did not seem to see his master's look, he was gazing motionless and with knitted brows in the direction of Baiae. Then he shaded his eyes from the glare with his right hand.

"*Hva gasaihvis*.[29] What do you see?" asked Aurelius, who sometimes spoke in Gothic to the man.

"*Gasaihva leitul skipkúβιον*," answered the Goth. "A little boat out there not far from the point. If it is the same in your southern seas, as in our northern ones, these good folks would be wise to get their cockleshell to shore as fast as may be. When the sea is covered with eider-down in such a short time, it generally means mischief."

"You have eyes like a northern sea-eagle. It is indeed, a small boat, hardly visible among the tossing waves, it cannot have more than eight oarsmen at most."

"There are but four, my lord," said the Goth. "And with them three ladies."

The wind was rising every instant; the trireme parted the water like an arrow, and the prow, now rising and now sinking on the billows, dipped in them far above the large metal ornaments.

"It may indeed be a serious matter," said Aurelius; "not for us—it must be something worse than this that puts the proud 'Batavia'[30] in peril—but for the ladies in that little bark...."

He turned round. "Amsivarius," he cried to the head oarsman. "Tell your men to give way with a will; and you, Magus, go and desire Chrysostomus to alter our course."

In a few seconds the vessel's head was turned round a quarter of a circle and was making her way straight into the bay. The accelerated thud of the time-keeper's hammer sounded a dull accompaniment to the piping wind; the sea surged and tossed, and the deep-blue sky, where there still was not a cloud to be seen, beamed incongruously bright over the stormy main. They were now within a hundred yards of the small boat, which was one of the elegant pleasure-barks used by the gay visitors to Baiae for short excursions in the bay. As the trireme came up with them, the rowers gave up their futile struggle with the raging elements and only tried to avoid being capsized. The ladies, it could be seen were much agitated; two of them, a richly-dressed woman of about forty and a young and blooming girl sat clinging to each other, while the third, tumbled into a heap at the bottom of the boat, held an amulet[31] in her hand, which she again and again pressed fervently to her lips.

Aurelius gave a shout from the trireme, which the boatmen eagerly answered, and a sailor on board the Batavia flung a rope with a practised hand to the fore[Pg 15]most of the men in the

smaller vessel—the slave hastily tied it fast and cried out “ready,” the sailor pulled firmly and steadily, the rope stretched taut, the little boat came on and in a few minutes lay under the lee of the galley like a fish judiciously hooked and landed. In two minutes more it was fast to the side of the trireme, and the ladies and the crew were placed in safety.

Aurelius, leaning against the stern-bulwark, had watched the proceedings with anxious interest and now, as the ladies, exhausted by the tossing they had had, sank on to the couches under the canopy, he politely went forward and invited his unexpected visitors to go down into the more sheltered cabin rooms of the trireme. The younger lady rose at once, and with a dignified eagerness expressed their thanks. Nor was it long before the elder had quite recovered herself; only the old woman who held the amulet hid her pale face in the pillows as if she were stunned, while she trembled and quaked in every limb.

“Come, stand up, Baucis,” said the young girl kindly. “The danger is over.”

“Merciful Isis^[32] save and defend us!” groaned the old woman, turning the amulet in her fingers. “Preserve us from sudden death and deliver us in danger! I will offer thee a waxen ship,^[33] and sacrifice lambs and fruits as much as thou canst desire!”

“Oh, you superstitious simpleton!” said the girl in her ear. “How am I to bring you to your senses? Pray rather to the almighty Jupiter, that he may enlighten your ignorance! But come now—the noble stranger who has taken us on board his ship is growing impatient.” 11

A shrill cry was the only answer, for the vessel had given a sudden lurch and the old woman, who was sitting with her legs under her on the couch, was thrown off somewhat roughly.

“Oh, Isis of a thousand names!” she whimpered piteously. “That has cost me two or three ribs at least and a score of weeks on a sick-bed! Barbillus—you false priest—is that all the good your amulet is? Was it for this that I had my forehead sprinkled with water out of the sacred Nile,^[34] and paid fifty sesterces^[35] for each sprinkling? Was it for this that I laid fresh bread on the altars? Oh woe is me, what pain I am in!”

While she was thus besieging heaven with complaints, Magus the Goth had with a strong hand picked up the little woman and set her on her feet.

“There, leave off crying, mother,” said he good-humoredly. “Roman bones are not so easily broken! But make haste and get below; the storm is increasing fast. See, my master is leading your ladies down now.” And as Baucis gave no sign of acting on the slave’s advice, she suddenly found herself lifted up like a feather in his strong and sinewy arms and carried to the hatchway, to the great amusement of the bystanders.

“Madam,” said Aurelius to the elder lady, when his guests were snugly under shelter in the eating-room, “I am a Roman knight^[36] from the town of Trajectum in Batavia, far north of this, not far from the frontier of the Belgae. My name is Caius Aurelius Menapius, and I am on my way to Rome as being the centre of the inhabited world, in order to improve and extend my knowledge and perhaps to serve my mother-country. May I venture now to ask you and your fair companion, to tell me who you are that kind fortune has thus thrown in my way?” 12

“My lord,”^[37] said the matron, with a gravity that was almost solemn, “we can boast of senatorial rank. I am Octavia, the wife of Titus Claudius Mucianus,^[38] the priest of Jupiter, and this is our daughter. We have been staying at Baiae since the end of April for the sake of my health. The sea-air, the aromatic breath of the woods and the delightful quiet of our country-house, which is somewhat secluded, soon restored my strength, and I take a particular pleasure in morning excursions on the bay. We started to-day in lovely weather to sail as far as Prochyta; then the storm overtook us, as you know, at some distance from the shore, and we owe it to you and to your good ship, that we are so well out of the danger. Accept once more our warmest thanks, and pray give us the opportunity of returning in our villa at Baiae the hospitality you have shown us on board your galley.” 13

“With the greatest pleasure,” said Aurelius eagerly, “and all the more so, as I purposed remaining to rest at Baiae—” but he colored as he spoke, for this was not the truth—he looked round in some embarrassment at Magus, who was standing humbly in a corner of the room and preparing to serve some refreshment. The eyes of the master and the slave met, and the master colored more deeply, while the slave laughed to himself with a certain satisfaction. Two other servants placed seats round the table in the old Roman fashion, for the custom of lying on a couch at meals was by no means universal in the provinces, and Aurelius knew that even in Rome women of high rank and strict conduct contemned this luxurious habit. 14

The rocking of the vessel had ceased, for it had been steered into a sheltered cove of the bay, and before long a tempting breakfast was spread on the embroidered cloth; fish, milk, honey, eggs, fruit and a dish of boiled cray-fish, of which the scarlet mail contrasted picturesquely with the artistically-embossed silver-platter on which they were served.

Aurelius begged his guests to be seated and led Octavia to the seat of honor at the upper end of the table. On her left hand her daughter, the fair Claudia, took her seat; Aurelius sat on the other hand and at the side of the table. Herodianus and Baucis, who was still very much discomposed, took their places at the other end of the table and at a respectful distance.

“You must take what little I can offer you, ladies,” said the Batavian. “We Northmen are plain folks....” 15

"You are joking!" interrupted Octavia. "Do you imagine, that all the inhabitants of the imperial city are gourmands after the fashion of Gavius Apicius?"[39]

"Well," said Aurelius in some confusion, "we know at any rate that Rome is the acknowledged mistress of all the arts of refined enjoyment, and above all of the most extravagant luxury in food..."

"Not half so much so as you believe," said Octavia. "You gentlemen from the provinces fall, without exception, into that strange mistake. A Roman lady in the same way is to you the type of all that is atrocious, because a few reckless women have made themselves talked about. You forget that it is in the very nature of virtue to remain concealed and ignored. But tell me, my lord, whence do you procure this delicious honey?"

"It comes from Hymettus,"[40] replied Aurelius, who was somewhat disconcerted by the lady's airs and manners. "My friend here, the worthy Herodianus, procured it at Panormus."

"Ah!" said Octavia, raising a polished emerald[41] mounted in gold to her eye, for she was short-sighted: "Your friend understands the subject, that I must confess—do you not think so, Claudia my love?"

The young lady answered with vague abstraction, for some minutes she had sat lost in thought. She had hardly touched the delicacies that had been set before her, and she now silently waved a refusal to the slave who offered the much-praised honey. Even the vigorous struggle in which Herodianus was engaged with an enormous lobster[42] failed to bring a smile to her lips, and yet her expression had never been brighter or more radiant. Once and again her eyes rested on the face of the young Batavian, who was engaged in such eager conversation with her mother, and then they returned to the loop-hole in the cabin roof, where the pane of crystal[43] shone like a diamond in the sunshine.

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Octavia was talking of Rome, while Herodianus entertained Baucis with an account of Menander's[44] comedies; thus Claudia could pursue her day-dream at her pleasure. She was in fancy again living through the events of the last hour—she pictured herself in the small open boat tossed on the angry waves; far away across the seething waters she saw the tall trireme—saw it tack to enter the bay. It was all vividly before her. And then the moment when the slave flung the rescuing rope! who was the man who stood, calm and proud, leaning over the bulwarks, undisturbed by the wrath of Nature? She remembered exactly how he had looked—how at the sight of that noble figure, which seemed as though it could rule the storm, a sudden sense of safety had come over her, like a magical spell. Then, when she found herself on board! At first she had felt ready to sob and cry like Baucis; but the sound of his voice, the wonderful look of gentle strength that shone in his face, controlled her to composure. Only once in her life had she ever felt like this before; it was two or three years since, when she was out on an excursion to Tibur[45] with her illustrious father. Their Cappadocian horses[46] had shied, reared, and then galloped off like the whirlwind. The driver was flung from his seat—the chariot was being torn along close to the edge of a towering cliff—her father had seized the floating reins just in time, and quietly saying: "Do not be frightened, my child," in five seconds the horses were standing still as if rooted to the spot. The feeling she had had then, had to-day been vividly revived—and yet, how dissimilar were the two men in age, appearance and position!—It was strange. And once more she glanced at the face of their host, which was glowing with animation as he talked.

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Suddenly the head oarsman's time-marking hammer ceased; the bright spot of light cast by the sun through the glass skylight on to the panelled wall, described a brief orbit and then vanished; the vessel had swung round and was at anchor.

"Madam," said Aurelius to Octavia, "allow me to offer you my services. We Northmen rarely use litters,[47] still—on the principle that a wise man should be ready for all emergencies—Herodianus has provided my galley with that convenience."

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"And the litters are already awaiting your commands on deck," added the freedman.

"You have surpassed yourself, Herodianus! Well, then, whenever it is your pleasure...."

"Then it is settled," said Octavia, going to the door. "For a few days you will be my guest."

"For as long as you will allow," Aurelius would have said; but he thought better of it and only bowed in answer.

CHAPTER II.

The squall had completely died away; the waves were still tossing and tumbling in the bay, but the streamers of the crowd of barks, which lay under the shore, hardly fluttered in the breeze, and the fishing-boats were putting out to sea in little fleets.

Gay and busy was the scene on the quays of Baiae; distinguished visitors from every part of the vast empire were driving, riding or walking on the lava-paved^[48] sea-wall, and the long roads round the harbor. Elegantly-dressed ladies in magnificent litters were borne by Sicambri^[49] in red livery,^[50] or by woolly-headed Ethiopians.^[51] Lower down a crowd of sailors shouted and struggled, and weather-beaten porters in Phrygian caps urgently offered their services, while vendors of cakes and fruit shrilly advertised the quality of their fragrant goods. Behind this bustling foreground of unresting and eager activity rose the amphitheatre of buildings that composed the town. Aurelius had been charmed with Panormus and Gades, but he now had to confess that they both must yield the palm in comparison with this, the finest pleasure-resort and bathing-place in the world. Palace was ranged above palace, villa beyond villa, temple above temple. Amid an ocean of greenery stood statues, halls, theatres and baths;^[52] as far round as the promontory of Misenum the shores of the bay were one long town of villas, gorgeous with the combined splendors of wealth, and of natural beauty.

The two ladies and their cortège proceeded for some distance along the shore of the harbor, and then turned up-hill in the direction of Cumae.^[53] In front walked eight or ten slaves^[54] who cleared the way; then came Octavia, her litter borne by six bronze-hued Lusitanians.^[55] Claudia shared her litter with Baucis, while Herodianus, Magus, Octavia's rowers, and a few servants with various bundles followed on foot. Aurelius had mounted his Hispanian horse and rode by the side of the little caravan, sometimes in front, sometimes behind, and enquiring the way, now of Octavia and now of Claudia and Baucis.

"Our villa is quite at the top of the ridge," said Claudia. "There, where the holm oaks come down to the fig gardens."

"What?" cried Aurelius in surprise. "That great pillared building, half buried in the woods to the left?"

"No, no," said the girl laughing; "the gods have not housed us so magnificently. To the right—that little villa in the knoll."

"Ah!" cried the Batavian; the disappointment was evidently a very pleasant one. "And whose is that vast palace?"

"It belongs to Domitia, Caesar's wife. Since she has lived separate from her imperial lord, she always spends the summer here."

The road grew steeper as they mounted.

"Oh merciful power!" sighed the worthy Baucis, "to think that these fine young men should be made to toil thus for an old woman! By Osiris! I am ashamed of myself. To carry you, sweet Claudia, is indeed a pleasure—but me, wrinkled old Baucis! If I had not sprained my ribs—as sure as I live...! But I will reward them for it; each man shall have a little jar of Nile-water."

"Do not be uneasy on their account," said Herodianus, wiping his brow. "Our Northmen are used to heavier burdens!" Then, turning to Magus, he went on: "By all the gods, I entreat you—a draught of Caecubum!^[56] I am bound to carry this weary load," and he slapped his round paunch, "this Erymanthian boar,^[57] like a second Hercules, to the top of the hill on my own unaided legs! and I am dropping with exhaustion."

The Goth smiled and signed to one of the slaves, who was carrying wine and other refreshments.

"The wine of Caecubus," said Herodianus, "is especially good against fatigue. Dionysus,^[58] gracious giver, I sacrifice to thee!" and as he spoke he shed a few drops as a libation^[59] on the earth and then emptied the cup with the promptitude of a practised drinker.

In about twenty minutes more they reached Octavia's house; in the vestibule^[60] a young girl came running out to meet them.

"Mother, dear, sweet mother!" she cried excitedly, "and Claudia, my darling! Here you are at last. Oh! we have been so dreadfully frightened, Quintus and I; that awful storm! the whole bay was churned up, as white as milk. But oh! I am glad to have you safe again! Quintus! Quintus!..."

And she flew back into the house, where they heard her fresh, happy voice still calling: "Quintus!"

"My adopted daughter,"^[61] said Octavia, in answer to an enquiring glance from Aurelius.

"Lucilia," added Claudia, "whom I love as if she were my own real sister."

Aurelius, who had sprung from his horse, throwing the bridle to his faithful Magus, was on the point of conducting Octavia into the atrium,^[62] when a youth of remarkable beauty appeared in the door-way and silently clasped this lady in his arms. Then he pressed a long and loving kiss on

Claudia's lips, and it was not till after he had thus welcomed the mother and daughter, that he turned hesitatingly to Aurelius, who stood on one side blushing deeply; a sign from Octavia postponed all explanation. The whole party entered the house, and it was not till they were standing in the pillared hall, where marble seats piled with cushions invited them to repose, that Octavia said to the astonished youth with a certain solemnity of mien:

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"Quintus, my son, it is to this stranger—the noble and illustrious Caius Aurelius Menapius, of Trajectum, in the land of the Batavi—that you owe it that you see us here now. He took us on board his trireme, for our boat was sinking. I declare myself his debtor henceforth forever. Do you, on your part, show him all the hospitality and regard that he deserves." Quintus came forward and embraced Aurelius.

"I hope, my lord," he said with an engaging smile, "that you will for some time give us the honor of your company and so give us, your debtors, the opportunity we desire of becoming your friends."

"He has already promised to do so," said Octavia.

Lucilia now joined them, having put on a handsomer dress in honor of the stranger, and stuck a rose into her chestnut hair; she sat down by Claudia and took her hand, leaning her head against her shoulder.

"But tell us the whole story!" cried Quintus. "I am burning to hear a full and exact account of your adventure."

Octavia told her tale; one thing gave rise to another, and before they thought it possible, it was the hour for dinner—the first serious meal of the day, at about noon—and they adjourned to the triclinium.^[63]

Under no circumstances do people so soon wax intimate as at meals. Aurelius, who until now had listened more than he had spoken, soon became talkative under the cool and comfortable vaulted roof of the eating-room, and he grew quite eager and vivacious as he told of his long and dangerous voyage, of the towns he had visited, and particularly of his distant home in the north. He spoke of his distinguished father, who, as a merchant, had travelled eastwards to the remote lands east of the peninsula of the Cimbri^[64] and to the fog-veiled shores of the Guttoni,^[65] the Aestui^[66] and the Scandii;^[67] indeed Aurelius himself knew much of the wonders and peculiarities of these little-visited lands, for he had three times accompanied his father. Many a time on these expeditions had they passed the night in lonely settlements or hamlets, where not a soul among the natives understood the Roman tongue, where the bear and the aurochs fought in the neighboring woods, or eternal terrors brooded over the boundless plain.

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These pictures of inhospitable and desert regions, which Aurelius so vividly brought before their fancy, were those which best pleased his hearers. Here, close to the luxurious town, and surrounded by everything that could add comfort and enjoyment to life, the idea of perils so remote seemed to double their appreciation.^[68] When they rose from table the ladies withdrew, to indulge in that private repose which was customary of an afternoon. Lucilia could not forbear whispering to her companion, that she would far rather have remained with the young men—that Aurelius was a quite delightful creature, modest and frank, and at the same time upright and steady—a rock in the sea on which the Pharos of a life's happiness might be securely founded.

25

"You know," she added earnestly, while her eyes sparkled with excitement from under her thick curls, "Quintus is far handsomer—he is exactly like the Apollo in the Golden House^[69] by the Esquiline. But he is also like the gods, in that he is apt to vanish suddenly behind a cloud, and is gone. Now Aurelius, or my soul deceives me, would be constant to those he loved. It is a pity that his rank is no higher than that of knight, and that he is so unlucky as to be a native of Trajectum."

"Oh! you thorough Roman!" laughed Claudia. "No one is good for anything in your eyes, that was not born within sight of the Seven Hills."^[70]

She put her arm round her gay companion, and carried her off half-resisting to their quiet sleeping-room.

Neither Quintus nor Aurelius cared to follow the example of the ladies—not the Roman, for he had slept on late into the day—nor the stranger, for the excitement of this eventful morning had fevered his blood. Besides, there was the temptation of an atmosphere as of Paradise, uniting the glory and plenitude of summer with the fresh transparency of autumn. During dinner Aurelius had turned again and again to look through the wide door-way at the beautiful scene without, and now he crossed the threshold and filled his spirit with the loveliness before him. Here was not—as in the formal gardens of Rome^[71]—a parterre where everything was planned by line and square; here were no trained trees and hedges, circular beds or clipped shrubs. All was free and wholesome Nature, lavish and thriving vitality. The paths alone, leading from the villa in three directions into the wood, betrayed the care of man. The whole vegetation of the happy land of Campania seemed to have been brought together on the slope below. Huge plane-trees, on which vines hung their garlands, lifted their heads above the holm-oaks and gnarled quinces. The broad-leaved fig glistened by the side of the grey-green olive; here stood a clump of stalwart pines, there wide-spreading walnuts and slender poplars. Below them was a wild confusion of brush-wood and creepers; ivy, periwinkle and acanthus entangled the giants of the wood with an inextricable network. Maiden-hair hung in luxuriant tufts above the myrtles and bays, and

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sombre evergreens contrasted with the brilliant centifolia. In short the whole plant-world of southern Italy here held an intoxicating orgy. Quintus seemed to divine the thoughts of the young Northman, and put his hand confidently through his guest's arm, and so they walked on, taking the middle path of the three before them, and gently mounting the hill.

"I can see," said Quintus, "that you are a lover of Nature; I quite understand that a garden at Baiae must seem enchanting to you, who came hither from the region of Boreas himself, where the birch and the beech can scarcely thrive. But you can only form a complete idea of it from the top of the hill; we have built a sort of temple there and the view is unequalled...."

"You are greatly to be envied," said Aurelius. "And how is it that Titus Claudius, your illustrious father, does not enjoy himself on this lovely estate, instead of living in Rome as I hear he does?"

"As priest to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus^[72] he is tied to the capital. The rules forbid his ever quitting it for more than a night at a time. Dignity, you see, brings its own burdens, and not even the greatest can have everything their own way. Many a time has my father longed to be away from the turbulent metropolis—but no god has broken his chains. Unfulfilled desires are the lot of all men."

28

He spoke with such emphasis, that the stranger glanced at him.

"What desire of yours can be unfulfilled?"

A meaning smile parted the Roman's lips.

"If you are thinking of things which gold and silver will purchase, certainly I lack little. Everything may be had in Rome for money; everything—excepting one thing; the stilling of our craving for happiness."

"What do you understand by that?"

"Can you ask me? I, here and as you see me, am a favorite of fortune, rich and independent by my grandfather's will, which left me possessed of several millions at an early age—as free and healthy as a bird—strong and well-grown and expert in all that is expected of a young fellow in my position. I had hardly to do more than put out my hand, to acquire the most influential position and the highest offices and honors—to become Praetor or Consul.^[73] I am well received at court, and look boldly in the face of Caesar, before whom so many tremble. I am betrothed to a maiden as fair as Aphrodite herself, and a hundred others, no less fair, would give years of their lives to call me their lover for a week—and yet—have you ever felt what it is to loathe your existence?"

"No!" said Aurelius.

"Then you are divine, among mortals. You see, weeks and months go by in the turmoil of enjoyment; the bewildered brain is incapable of following it all—then life is endurable. My cup wreathed with roses, a fiery-eyed dancer from Gades^[74] by my side, floating on the giddy whirl of luxury, as mad and thoughtless as a thyrsus-bearer^[75] at the feast of Dionysus—under such conditions I can bear it for a while. But here, where my unoccupied mind is thrown back upon itself...."

29

"But what you say," interrupted Aurelius, "proves not that you are satiated with the joys of life, so much as—you will forgive my plainness—that you are satiated with excess. You are betrothed, you say, and yet you can feel a flame for a fiery-eyed Gaditanian. In my country a man keeps away from all other girls, when he has chosen his bride."

"Oh yes! I know that morality has taken refuge in the provinces," said Quintus ironically. "But the youth of Rome go to work somewhat differently, and no one thinks the worse of us for it. Of course we avoid public comment, which otherwise is anxiously courted—but we live nevertheless just as the humor takes us."

Aurelius shook his head doubtfully.

"Well, well," said Quintus. "You good folks in the north have a stricter code—Tacitus describes the savage Germanic tribes as almost equally severe. But Rome is Roman.—No prayers can alter that; and after all you get used to it! I believe Cornelia herself would hardly scold if she heard.... Besides, it is in the air. Old Cato has long, long been forgotten, and the new Babylon by the Tiber wants pleasure—will have pleasure, for in pleasure alone can she find her vocation and the justification of her existence."

30

"And does your bride live in the capital?" asked Aurelius after a pause.

"At Tibur," replied Quintus. "Her uncle, Cornelius Cinna, avoids the neighborhood of the court on principle. The fact that Domitia resides here is quite enough to make him hate Baiae—although, as you know, Domitia has long ceased to belong to Caesar's court."

Aurelius was silent. Often had his worldly-wise father warned him never to speak of affairs of state or even of the throne, excepting in the narrowest circle of his most trusted friends; under the reign of terror of Domitian, the most trivial remark might prove fateful to the speaker. The numerous spies, known as delators, who had found their way everywhere, scenting their prey, had undermined all mutual confidence and trust to such an extent that friends feared each other; the patron trembled before his client, and the master before his slave. Although the manner and

address of his host invited confidence, caution was always on the safe side, all the more so as the young Roman was evidently an ally of the court party. So the Northman checked the utterance of that fierce patriotism, which the hated name of Domitian had so painfully stirred in his soul. "Unhappy Rome!" thought he: "What can and must become of you, if men like this Quintus have no feeling for your disgrace and needs?"

The next turn in the path brought them within sight of the little temple; marble steps, half covered with creepers, led through a Corinthian portico into the airy hall within. The panorama from this spot was indeed magnificent; far below lay the blue waters of the bay, with the stupendous bridge of Nero;^[76] farther away lay Baiae with its thousand palaces and the forest of masts by Puteoli; beyond these, Parthenope, beautiful Surrentum,^[77] and the shining islands bathed by the boundless sea; the vaporous cloud from Vesuvius hung like a cone of snow in the still blue atmosphere. To the north the horizon was bounded by the bay of Caieta^[78] the Lucrine lake and the wooded slopes of Cumae. The foreground was no less enchanting; all round the pavilion lay a verdurous and luxuriant wilderness, and hardly a hundred paces from the spot rose the colossal palace of the Empress, shaded by venerable trees. The mysterious silence of noon brooded over the whole landscape; only a faint hum of life came up from the seaport. All else was still, not a living creature seemed to breathe within ear-shot....

31

Suddenly a sound came through the air, like a suppressed groan; Aurelius looked round—out there, there where the branches parted in an arch to form a vista down into the valley—there was a white object, something like a human form. The young foreigner involuntarily pointed that way.

"Look there, Quintus!" he whispered to his companion.

"That is part of the Empress's grounds," replied the Roman.

"But do you see nothing there by the trunk of that plane-tree? About six—eight paces on the other side of the laurel-hedge? Hark! there is that groan again."

"Pah! Some slave or another who has been flogged. Stephanus, Domitia's steward, is one of those who know how to make themselves obeyed."

32

"But it was such a deep, heartrending sigh!"

"No doubt," laughed Quintus; "Stephanus is no trifler. Where his lash falls the skin comes off; then he is apt to tie up the men he has flogged in the wood here, where the gnats...."

"Hideous!" cried Aurelius interrupting him. "Let us run down and set the poor wretch free!"

"I will take good care to do nothing of the kind. We have no right in the world to do such a thing."

"Well, at any rate, I will find out what he has done wrong. His torturer's brutality makes me hot with indignation!"

So speaking he walked straight down the hill through the brushwood. Quintus followed, not over-pleased at the incident; and he was very near giving vent to his annoyance when a swaying branch hit him sharply on the forehead. But the native courtesy, the urbanity^[79] or town breeding, which distinguished every Roman, prevailed, and in a few minutes they had reached the laurel-hedge. Quintus was surprised to find himself in front of a tolerably wide gap, which could not have been made by accident; but there the young men paused, for Quintus hesitated to trespass on the Empress's grounds.

The sight which met his eyes was a common one enough to the blunted nerves of the Roman, but Aurelius was deeply moved. A pale, bearded man,^[80] young, but with a singularly resolute expression, stood fettered to a wooden post, his back dreadfully lacerated by a stick or lash, while swarms of insects buzzed round his bleeding body.

33

"Hapless wretch!" cried Aurelius. "What have you done, that you should atone for it so cruelly?"

The slave groaned, glanced up to heaven and said in a choked voice:

"I did my duty."

"And are men punished in your country for doing their duty?" asked the Batavian frowning, and, unable any longer to control himself, he went straight up to the victim and prepared to release him. The slave's face lighted up with pleasure.

"I thank you, stranger," he said with emotion, "but if you were to release me, it would be doing me an ill-turn. Fresh torture would be all that would come of it. Let me be; I have borne the like before now; I have only another hour to hold out. If you feel kindly towards me, go away, leave me! Woe is me if any one sees you here!"

Quintus now came up to him; this really heroic resignation excited his astonishment, nay, his admiration.

"Man," said he, waving away the swarm of gnats with his hand, "are you a disciple of the Stoa,^[81] or yourself a demi-god? Who in the world has taught you thus to contemn pain?"

"My lord," replied the slave, "many better than I have endured greater suffering." "Greater suffering—yes, but to greater ends. A Regulus, a Scaevola have suffered for their country; but you—a wretched slave, a grain of sand among millions—you, whose sufferings are of no more

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account than the death of a trapped jackal—where do you find this indomitable courage? What god has endowed you with such superhuman strength?”

A beatific smile stole over the man’s drawn features.

“The one true God,” he replied with fervent emphasis, “who has pity on the feeble; the all-merciful God, who loves the poor and abject.”

A step was heard approaching.

“Leave me here alone!” the slave implored them. “It is the overseer.”

Quintus and Aurelius withdrew silently, but from the top of the copse they could see a hump-backed figure that came muttering and grumbling up to where the slave was bound, released him presently from the stake and led him away into the gardens. For a minute or two longer the young men lingered under the pavilion and then, lost in thought, returned to the house. Their conversation could not be revived.

CHAPTER III.

The second serious meal of the day, the coena^[82] or supper had begun; the party had betaken themselves to the cavaedium,^[83] where it was now beginning to grow dusk. This airy colonnade—the handsomest portion perhaps, of an old Roman house—was here very pleasingly decorated with flowers and plants of ornamental foliage. The arcades, which surrounded the open space in the middle, were green with ivy, while an emerald grass-plot, with cypresses and laurels, magnolias in full bloom, pomegranates and roses, filled up half the quadrangle. Twelve statues of bronze gilt served to hold lamps, and a fountain tossed its sparkling jet as high as the tallest trees.

35

For some time the party sat chatting in the dusk; then two slaves came in with torches and lighted the lamps of the twelve statues; two others lighted up the arcades so that the painted walls and their purplish backgrounds were visible far across the court-yard. A flute-player from Cumae now played to them in a tender mode; she stood in the entrance, dressed in the Greek fashion, with her abundant hair gathered into a knot and her slender fingers gliding up and down the stops of the instrument. Her features were sweet and pleasing, her manner soft and harmonious; only from time to time a strange expression of weariness and absence of mind passed over her face. When she had done playing, she was conducted by Baucis to the back gate. She took the piece of silver which she received in payment with an air of indifference, and then bent her way down the hill towards Cumae, which already lay in darkness.

“Allow me to ask,” said Herodianus to Quintus, “what is the name of this tunefully-gifted damsel?”

36

“She is called Euterpe, after the muse who presides over her art.”

“Her name is Arachne,” added Lucilia, “but Euterpe sounds more poetical.”

“Euterpe!” breathed the worthy Herodianus. “Heavenly consonance! Is she a Greek?”

“She is from Etruria, and was formerly the slave of Marcus Cocceius Nerva, who freed her. She married in Cumae not long since.”

“As strictly historical as the annals of Tacitus,” laughed Claudia.

“I heard it all from Baucis.”

“Wretched old magpie!” exclaimed Quintus, intentionally raising his voice. “If she could not gossip, she would lose the breath of life.”

“By all the gods, my lord!” exclaimed Baucis, laying her hands on her heart, “you are calumniating me greatly—do you grudge me a little harmless chat? All-merciful Isis! am I to close my lips with wax? No, by Typhon^[84] the cruel! Besides, I must instruct the daughters of the house; it is for that that I eat the bitter crust of dependence in my old age. Oh! Baucis knows her duties; have I not taught Claudia to sing and play the cithara? Have I not taught Lucilia more than a dozen Egyptian formulas and charms? and now I add to this a little sprinkling of knowledge of the world and of men—and you call it gossip! You young men of the present day are polite, I must say!”

“Then you sing to the cithara?”^[85] said Aurelius, turning to Claudia. “Oh, let me, I beg of you, hear one of your songs!”

37

“With pleasure,” said the girl coloring slightly. “With your permission, dear mother...?”

“You know my weakness,” replied Octavia. “I am always only too glad to hear you sing. If our noble guest’s request is not merely politeness....”

“It is a most heartfelt wish,” cried Aurelius. “Your daughter’s voice is music when she only speaks—in singing it must be enchanting.”

“I think so too, indeed,” added Herodianus. “Oh, we Northmen are connoisseurs in music. The Camenae visit other spots than Helicon and the seven hills of Rome; they have taken Trajectum too under their protection. Had I but been born in Hellas, where Zeus so lavishly decked the cornucopia of the arts with such pure and ideal perfection....”

“Herodianus, you are talking nonsense!” interrupted the young Batavian. “I am afraid that the old Falernian we drank at dinner, was too strong for your brain.”

“I beg your pardon! that would be very unlike me. Since Apollo first laid me in my cradle, temperance has been my most conspicuous virtue....”

A slave girl had meanwhile brought in the nine-stringed cithara and the ivory plectrum; Claudia took them from her with some eagerness, put the ribbon of the lute round her neck and sat upright on her easy-chair. She turned the pegs here and there to put the instrument in tune, struck a few chords and runs as a prelude, and began a Greek song—the delightful Spring-greeting of Ibycus the Sicilian:^[86]

38

"Spring returns, and the gnarled quince^[87]
Fed by purling and playful brooks
Decks its boughs with its rosy flowers
Where, beneath in the twilight gloom,
Nymph-like circles of maidens dance;
While the sprays of the budding grape
Hide 'mid shadowy vine leaves.

Ruthless Eros doth disregard
Spring's sweet tokens and hints of peace.
Down he rushes like winter blasts—
Thracian storms with their searing flash—
Aphrodite's resistless son
Falls on me in his fury and fire—
Racks my heart with his torments."

Claudia ceased; the accompaniment on the cithara died away in soft full chords. Caius Aurelius sat spellbound. Never had he dreamed of the daughters of the fever-tossed metropolis as so simple, so natural, so genuine and genial. The strain almost resembled, in coy tenderness, those northern love-songs which he had been wont to hear from the lips of Gothic and Ampsivaric maidens. In those, to be sure, a vein of rebellion and melancholy ran through the melody and pierced through the charm, while in this all was perfect harmony, exquisite contentment—an intoxicating concord of joy, youth and love. In this he heard the echo of the smiling waves below, of the glistening leaves, and of heart-stirring spring airs.

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"A second Sappho!" exclaimed Herodianus, as his master sat speechless. "I can but compare the sweetness of that voice with the luscious Falernian we drank at dinner. That was a nectar worthy of the gods! Besides, indeed—the Hispanian wine—out there, what do you call the place—you know, my lord—what is the name of it—that was delicious too—and seen against the light.... What was I saying? I had an aunt, she sang too to the cithara—yes she did, why not?—She was free to do that, of course, quite free to do it—and a very good woman too was old Pris—Pris—Priscilla. Only she could not endure, that any one should talk when she blew the cithara...."

Octavia was frowning; Aurelius had turned crimson and nodded to his Gothic slave, who was standing aside under the arcade. Magus quietly came up to Herodianus and whispered a few words in his ear.

"That shows a profound, a remarkably profound power of observation!" cried the freedman excitedly. "In fact, what does music prove after all? I play the water-organ,^[88] and—hold me up, Magus. This floor is remarkably slippery for a respectable cavaedium. It might be paved with eels or polished mirrors!"

"You are a very good fellow," muttered the Goth as he led him slowly away, "but you carry it a little too far...."

"What? Ah! you have no sense of the sublime? You are not a philosopher, but only a—a—a—a man. But, by Pluto! you need not break my arm. I—take care of that, that.... Will you let go, you misbegotten villain!"

40

But the Goth was not to be got rid of; he held the drunken man like an iron vice and so guided him in a tolerably straight course. When they disappeared in the corridor leading to the atrium, Aurelius was anxious to apologize for him, but Octavia laughed it off.

"We are at Baiae,"^[89] she said, "and Baiae is famous for its worship of Bacchus."

"It is impossible to be vexed with him," added Lucilia; "he is so exceedingly funny, and has such a confiding twinkle in his eyes."

"I am only annoyed," said Aurelius, "that he should have disturbed us at so delicious a moment. Indeed madam, your voice is enchantment; and what a heavenly melody! who is the musician who composed it?"

"You make me blush," said Claudia: "I myself put the words to music, and I am delighted that you should like it. Quintus thought it detestable."

"Nay, nay—" murmured Quintus.

"Yes indeed!" said the saucy Lucilia. "It was too soft and womanly for your taste."

"You are misrepresenting me; I only said, that the air did not suit the words. It is a man who is here complaining of the torments of love, while what Claudia sings does not sound like a Thracian winter storm, but like the lamentations of a love-lorn maiden."

"Nonsense!" laughed Lucilia. "Love is love, just as air is air! whether you breathe it or I, it is all the same."

41

"But with this difference, that rather more of it is needed to fill my lungs than yours. However, for aught I care the song is perfect."

"You are most kind, to be sure! And you may thank the gods that you have nothing to do but to listen to it. I have no doubt, that at the drinking-bouts of some of your boon companions the

songs have a more Titanic ring and roar.”

“You little hypocrite! Do you want to play the part now of a female Cato? Why, how often have you confessed to me, that you would give your eyes to be one of such a party if only it were permissible!”

“Mother,” said Lucilia, “do not allow him to make a laughing stock of me in this heartless way. ‘If only I were a man,’ you mean, not ‘if it were permissible.’”

“Very good!” replied Quintus.

Caius Aurelius now expressed a wish to hear Claudia sing a Latin song, and she selected one of which the words were by the much-admired poet Statius,^[90] who at that time was, with Martial,^[91] the reigning favorite in the taste of the highest circles. With this the stranger seemed equally delighted.

When Claudia had ended, he himself seized the instrument and plectrum, and with eager enthusiasm in a full, strong voice sang a battle-song. The powerful tones rang through the evening silence like the rush of a mountain torrent. His hearers saw in fancy the swaying struggle—the captain of the legion is in the thick of the fray—“Comrades,” cries one of the combatants, “our chief is in danger! Help! help for our chief!—One last furious onslaught, and the battle is won!”

The two girls shrank closer to each other.

As the notes slowly died away, a figure appeared high above them in the moonlight, leaning over the parapet of the upper story.

“By the gods! my lord!” cried Herodianus, “I am coming!—If only I knew where Magus has hidden my sword! Hold your own, stand steady, and we will beat them yet!”

The party burst out laughing.

“Go to bed, Herodianus!” shouted his master. “You are talking in your dreams!”

“Apollo be praised then!” stuttered the other, “but I heard you with my own ears, shouting desperately for help.” And with these words he withdrew from the parapet, still muttering and fighting the air with his arms; and Lucilia declared that she should positively die of laughing if this extraordinary sleep-walker went through any farther adventures. The moon was already high in the sky, when the party separated. Quintus led his visitor to the strangers’ rooms, wished him goodnight, and went to his own cubiculum^[92] where his slaves stood yawning as they waited for him. For a time, however, he paced his room in meditation; then pausing in his walk, he looked undecidedly through the open doorway and asked: “What is the hour?”

“It wants half an hour of midnight,” replied Blepyrus, his body-servant.

“Very good—I do not want to sleep yet. Open the window; the air here is suffocating. Blepyrus, give me my dagger.”

“The Syrian dagger?”

“A useless question—when do I ever use any other?”

“Here, my lord,” said Blepyrus, taking the dagger out of a closet in the wall.

“It is only as a precaution. Lately all sorts of wild rabble have haunted Baiae and the neighborhood. I am going to take a walk for an hour or so,” and he went to the door. “But mind,” he added, “this late expedition is a secret.”

The slaves bowed.

“You know us, my lord!” they said with one accord.

Quintus went out again into the arcades. The colonnaded court lay white and dream-like in the moonshine, the shadows of the statues fell blackly sharp on the dewy grass-plot and the chequered outlines of the mosaic pavement. Quintus hastened noiselessly to the postern-gate, which led from the peristyle into the park; he pushed back the bolt and was out on the terrace. Complete silence reigned around; only the very tops of the trees bent to the soft night-breeze. Quintus looked down upon Baiae. Here and there a light twinkled in the harbor; otherwise it was like a city of the dead. Then he looked down the black darkness of the shrubby paths into the wilderness and seemed to waver, but he drew a little letter out of the belt of his tunic and studied it, meditating.

“In fact,” said he to himself, “the whole affair wears the aspect of a mad adventure; it would not be the first time that malice had assumed such a disguise! But no! Such a scheme would be too clumsy; what warranty would the traitor have, that I should come alone? Besides, if I have any knowledge of love-intrigue, these lines were undoubtedly written by a woman’s hand.”

He opened the note,^[93] which was written on pale yellow Alexandrian paper with the finest ink. The red silk that tied it was sealed with yellow wax, and bore the impression of a finely-cut intaglio. The handwriting betrayed practice, and the whole thing looked as if it had come from the hands of a cultivated and distinguished fine lady. The contents answered to this supposition; the style was marked by aristocratic affectations and rhetorical grace, while it revealed that vein

of eager, jealous passion, which stamps the Roman woman to this day.

"There is no doubt about it," muttered Quintus, when he had once more carefully examined every detail. "This is in hot earnest, and she commands me to meet her with the assurance of a goddess. And with all her domineering confidence, what sweet coaxing—what inviting tenderness! It would be treason to the divine influences of Venus to hesitate. Nay, fair unknown!—for you must surely be fair—beautiful as the goddess whose inspiration fires your blood! Nothing but beauty can give a woman courage to write such words as these!"

He replaced the note in his bosom and took the same path that he had trodden a few hours since with Aurelius; listening sharply on each side as he got farther into the thicket, and keeping his hand on his dagger, he slowly mounted the hill. All nature seemed to be sleeping, and the distant cry of a night-bird sounded as if in a dream. Before long he had reached the spot where the path turned off to the pavilion. The little temple stood out in the moonlight as sharply as by day against the dark-blue sky, like an erection of gleaming silver and snow; the light seemed to ripple on the marble like living, translucent dew—and, in the middle, the goddess sat enthroned!—a tall form robed in white, her face veiled, motionless as though indeed a statue. Quintus paused for an instant; then he mounted to the top and said bowing low:

45

"Unknown one, I greet thee!"

"And I thee, Quintus Claudius!" answered a voice that was tremulous with agitation.

"You, madam, have commanded, and I, Quintus Claudius, have obeyed. Now, will you not reveal the secret I am burning to discover?"

The veiled lady took the young man gently by the hand and drew him tenderly to a seat.

"My secret!" she repeated with a sigh. "Can you not guess it? Quintus, divinest, most adorable Quintus—I love you!"

"Your favors confound me!" said Quintus in the tone of a man to whom such phrases were familiar. His unknown companion threw her arms round him, leaned her head on his shoulder, and burst into tears.

"Oh, happy, intoxicating hour!" she breathed in a rapturous undertone. "You, the noblest of men, my idol, whom I have thought of so long, watched with such eager eyes—*you*, Quintus, mine—mine at last! It is too much happiness!"

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Quintus, under the stormy fervor of this declaration, felt an uneasy mistrust which he tried in vain to repress. This despotic "mine—mine" gave him a sensation as of the grip of a siren. He involuntarily rose.

"My good fortune takes my breath away!" he said in flattering accents; doubly flattering to atone for the hasty impulse by which he had stood up. "But now grant my bold desire, and let me see your face. Let me know who it is, that vouchsafes me such unparalleled favors."

"You cannot guess?" she whispered reproachfully. "And yet it is said, that the eyes of love are keen. Quintus, my beloved, Fate denies us all open and unchecked happiness; it is in secret only that your lips may ever meet mine. But you know that true love mocks at obstacles—nay more, the flowers that blossom in the very valley of death are those that smell sweetest."

Quintus drew back a step.

"Once more," he insisted, "tell me who you are?"

The tall figure raised a beautiful arm, that shone like Parian marble in the moonlight, and slowly lifted her veil.

"The Empress!"^[94] cried Quintus dismayed.

"Not 'the Empress' to you, my Quintus—to you Domitia, hapless, devoted Domitia, who could die of love at your feet."

Quintus stood immovable.

"Fear nothing," she said smiling. "No listener is near to desecrate the perfect bliss of this moonlit night."

47

"Fear?" retorted Quintus. "I am not a girl, to go into fits in a thunder-storm. What I resolve on I carry out to the end, though the end be death! Besides, I know full well, that your favors bloom in secret places—as silent and as harmless as the roses in a private garden."

Domitia turned pale.

"And what do you mean by that?" she asked shuddering.

"You live far away from Caesar, your husband; you are served by spies; your palace is a labyrinth with a hundred impenetrable chambers...."

"Indeed!" said Domitia, controlling her excitement. "But still, I saw you start. What dismayed you so much, if it was not the suspicion of danger?"

"You know," answered the young man hesitating, "that I am one of those who are ranked as

Caesar's friends.^[95] A friend—though merely an official friend—cannot betray the man he is bound to defend.”

Domitia laughed loudly.

“Fine speeches, on my word!” she exclaimed scornfully. “Friendship, for the executioner who cuts your head off! Fidelity to a bloodthirsty ruffian! No, Quintus—I know better. You are staunch, but not from fidelity—from prudence!”

48

Quintus struck his breast proudly with his hand.

“You force me,” he said, “to speak the truth, in spite of my desire to spare you. You must know then, that Quintus Claudius thinks better of himself than to stoop to be the successor of an actor!”

“Mad fool! what are you saying....”

“What I was bound to say. You thought I was afraid; I am only proud. No, and if you were Cypris^[96] in person I should disdain you no less, in spite of every charm. Never will I touch the lips, that have been kissed by a buffoon—a slave.”^[97]

Domitia did not stir; she seemed paralyzed by the fury of this attack.—At last, however, she rose.

“You are very right, Quintus,” she said. “It was too much to expect. Go and sleep, and dream of your wedding. But the gods, you know, are envious. They often grant us joys in our dreams and deny the reality. But now, before you go, kneel to the Empress!” and as she spoke a stiletto flashed ominously in her hand. Quintus, however, had with equal swiftness drawn his dagger.

“Fair and gently!” he said drawing back. “The honor of being stabbed by the fair hand of Domitia is a temptation no doubt....” She colored and dropped the weapon.

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“Leave me!” she said, going to lean against the balustrade. “I do not know what I am doing; my brain is reeling. Forgive me—forgive me!” Quintus made no reply, and casting a glance of furious hatred at him she hurried down the steps, glided through the gap in the brushwood into the deserted park, and vanished among the shrubs.

Quintus stood looking after her.

“One foe the more!” said he to himself. “Well, what does it matter? Either to be made an end of by the knife of an assassin—or to live on, my very soul sickened with it all.... Pah!”

And he made his way homewards, singing a Greek drinking-song as he went.

CHAPTER IV.

Next morning Quintus was up long before the sun, while in the atrium the slaves were still busy cleaning the walls and the mosaic pavement, so he lingered for a while in the peristyle. His eye dreamily watched the soft swaying of the trees in melancholy relief against the blue-green sky; light fleecy clouds floated in the transparent air, and here and there above his head a star still twinkled fitfully. Quintus sat on a bench with his head thrown back, for he was tired and over-excited; an unwonted restlessness had brought him out of bed. How calm and pure was this early gloaming! In Rome, so thought Quintus, there was something uncanny and dreary in the early morning—the grey of dawn came as the closing effect of a wild night of revelry. Here, on the hills of Baiae, the stars winked like kindly eyes and the twilight soothed the spirit! And yet, no; for here too was the great capital; here too were storms and unrest. Rome, that monstrous polypus, stretched its greedy arms out to the uttermost ends of the world, and even into the calmest and most peaceful solitudes. Even here, by the sea, wantonness had spread its glittering snares; here too duty and truth were forsworn, and intrigue and inhumanity held their orgies. Quintus thought of the tortured slave.... That pale and pain-stricken face had sunk deep into his soul; strangely enough! for his eye had long been accustomed to such sights of anguish and horror. The bloody contests of gladiators had never roused him to any other interest than that in a public entertainment. But this particular picture forced itself on his memory, though—from the point of view of any Roman of distinction—it had no interesting features whatever, for of what account in the Roman Empire was a slave? And especially in the sight of Quintus, rich, handsome and brilliant? It was in short most strange—but that white, bearded face, with its lofty, unflinching expression never faded from his memory, and his inward eye found it impossible not to gaze upon it. Then, suddenly another figure stood side by side with it: The white-armed Cypris Domitia, the passion-stirred Empress. Here were pain, misery, silent abnegation—there were feverish desires and passions, reckless, greedy, all-absorbing selfishness.... By the gods—there they stood before him—the slave and the imperial woman—both so distinct that he could have touched them as it seemed.—The slave had broken his bonds and put out his hand with a smile of beatitude, while the woman shrank away and her white arms writhed like snakes of marble. She threw herself on the earth, and her fair gold hair fell loose over the bleeding feet of the slave....

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51

Quintus started up, the murmur of the fountain had lulled him to sleep, and now, as he rubbed his hand across his eyes, a woman's figure was in fact before him, not so stately and tall as the moonlighted Domitia, but as fresh and sweet as a rose.

"Lucilia! Up so early?"

"I could not sleep and stole away softly from Claudia's side. She is still asleep, for she came to bed very late. But you, my respected friend—what has brought you out before daybreak? You, the latest sleeper of all the sons of Rome?"

"I was just like you. I think the strong liquor we drank at supper last night...."

"A vain excuse," said Lucilia. "When ever did good wine rob you of a night's rest? Sooner could I believe that you were thinking of Cornelia!"

"What should make you think that?"

"Well, it is a natural inference. For what else are you her betrothed? To be sure you do not play the part with much zeal."

"How so?"

"Well, do you not go to see Lycoris just as much now as ever you did?"

"Pah!"

"'Pah!' What need have you to say 'Pah!' in that way? Is that right? Is that horrid, shameless creature, who seems to turn all the men's heads, a fit companion for a man who is betrothed? I know you *love* Cornelia—but this is a spiteful world, and supposing Cornelia were to learn...."

52

"Well, and if she did?" said Quintus smiling. "Is it a crime to frequent gay society, to see a few leaps and turns of Gades dancers and to eat stewed muraenae?^[98] Is there anything atrocious in fireworks or flute-playing?"

"How eloquent you can be! You might almost make black seem white. But I abide by my words; it is most unbecoming, and if you would but hear reason you would give this woman up."

"But pray believe me, there never was a pretty girl for whom I cared less than for Lycoris."

"Indeed! and that is why you are as constantly in her house as a client in that of his patron."^[99]

"The comparison is not flattering."

"But exact. Why should you frequent her house so constantly, if you are so indifferent to her?"

"Child, you do not understand such matters. Her house is the centre of all the wit and talent in Rome. Everything that is interesting or remarkable meets there; it is in her rooms that Martial^[100] utters his most pregnant jests, and Statius reads his finest verses. Everyone who lays

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any claim to talent or wit, whether statesmen or courtiers, knights or senators, uses the atrium of Lycoris as a rendezvous. Last autumn I even met Asprenas^[101] the consul there. Where such men as these are to be seen, Quintus Claudius, at three and twenty, may certainly be allowed to go."

"Quite the contrary," cried Lucilia. "If you had grey hair, like Nonius Asprenas, I would not waste words on the matter. But as it is, the Gaulish Circe will end by falling in love with you, and then you will be past praying for." Quintus looked gaily at the girl's smiling, mocking face.

"You mean just the reverse," he said. "For I know you regard me as far from dangerous. Well! I can bear even that blow."

"That is your new mood! There is no touching you in any way. If you had only half as much constancy of mind as Aurelius!"

"Ah! you like him then?"

"Particularly. Do you know it would be delightful if he could remain here a little longer—I mean for six or eight days. Then he could travel with us to Rome."

"Indeed?" said Quintus significantly.

"Now, what are you thinking of?"

"I? of nothing at all."

"Go, there is no doing anything with you. Do not you see that I only meant, the long days of travelling all by ourselves—Claudia turns over a book, and you, you old lazy-bones, lie on a couch like an invalid—I find it desperately dull. A travelling companion seems to me to be the most desirable thing in the world—or do you dislike Caius Aurelius?"

54

"Oh no. If only his trireme had wheels and could travel over land."

"His ship will take care of itself. He can come with us in the travelling chariot, and then he will be able to see part of the Appian way.^[102] It is a thousand times more interesting than a sea-voyage.—Now, do it to please me and turn the conversation on the subject at dinner to-day."

"If you like," said Quintus.

A slave now appeared on the threshold of the passage, which led from the peristyle to the atrium.

"My lord," he said: "Letters have arrived from Rome—and for you too, Madam...."

"Then bring them out here."

They were three very dissimilar letters, that Blepyrus handed to the two young people. Lucilia's was from the high-priest of Jupiter; Titus Claudius Mucianus wrote as follows to his adopted daughter:

"Health and Blessings!^[103] I promised you lately, through Octavia, your excellent mother, that my next letter should be addressed to you, my dear daughter. I know that you value such proofs of my fatherly remembrance, and I am glad that it should be so. However, what I have to write does not concern you alone, my sweet Lucilia, but all of you. The preparations for the magnificent Centennial Festival,^[104] which the Emperor Domitian—as you know—proposes to hold in the course of next year, have so completely taken up my time during the last few weeks, that I am sorely in need of the rest and comfort of regular family life. In addition to this, political disturbances of all kinds have occurred. Caesar has sent for me six times to Albanum,^[105] and I assure you it has been incessant travelling to and fro. The matter is an open secret; all Rome is discussing the decrees from the Palatine^[106] against the Nazarenes. ^[107] You may remember that superstitious sect of whom Baucis spoke to you—a revolutionary faction, who, a score or so of years since, stirred up the whole city and gave occasion for the stern enactments of the divine Nero? Now again they are stirring up revolt as if they were mad; they are shaking the very foundations of society, and threaten to overturn all that we have till now held most sacred. I must be silent as to personal affairs; enough to say that I am weary and overwrought, and that my heart longs to see you all again. I beg you therefore to make ready to start and return as soon as possible to the City of the Seven Hills. Your mother is now tolerably well again—thanks to all-merciful Jupiter—and Quintus will not be vexed to learn that Cornelia is now staying in Rome again. People are quitting their country homes somewhat early this year; it is long since I have passed the month of September so enduringly. I shall expect you then, at latest, by Tuesday in next week. Allowing three days for the journey, I thus give you two days to prepare for it.

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"Pray greet your mother and your sister lovingly from me. This letter will, I hope, find you all in perfect health. I, for my part, am quite well.

"Written at Rome, on the 11th September, in the year 848 after the building of the city."

The second letter was from Cornelia, Quintus' betrothed, and ran as follows:

"Cornelia embraces her dear Quintus a thousand times. Here I am in Rome again, my beloved! My term of banishment to that odious desert at Tibur is ended. But, woe is me! Rome is dead and deserted too since you, my treasure, my idol, linger still far from the Seven Hills! Oh! how glad I am to hear from your father, that he is recalling you from Baiae sooner

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than was intended. Oh! Quintus, if you felt only one thousandth part of what I feel, you would fly on the wings of the storm to the arms of your love-sick Cornelia. The days at Tibur were more dreary than ever. My uncle seemed to me so depressed and tormented by gloomy thoughts. To crown my misery, old Cocceius Nerva^[108] must come and pay us a visit of eight mortal days. I shall never forget that week as long as I live! You know that when those two old men sit together, the house is as silent as a tomb; every one goes about on tiptoe. This Cocceius Nerva has the worst effect on my uncle. Only fancy what happened on the day when he left. My uncle had accompanied him to his chariot, and when he came back into the house he happened to pass my room, where Chloe was just putting some fresh roses into my hair. When he saw this, he fell into an indescribable fit of rage. 'You old fool!' he exclaimed pushing my good Chloe aside: 'Have you women nothing to think of but finery? Do you deck yourselves out like beasts for sacrifice? Away with your rubbish! the house of Cornelius Cinna is no place for roses!' And then he turned upon me in a tone which expressed volumes—'Wait a while!' he said. 'You will soon be able to do whatever pleases your fancy!' You understand Quintus, he meant to refer to you. His words cut me to the heart, for I have known a long time that my uncle is not pleased at our connection. If my blessed mother had not made him swear, on her deathbed, that he would leave my choice perfectly free, who knows what might not have happened. Nevertheless, it is always a fresh pang to me when I see how he cherishes a bitter feeling against you—for, in spite of everything, I respect and love him.

58

"Take good care of yourself, dearest Quintus, till we meet again, soon, on the shores of the Tiber. Greet your circle from me, and particularly lively Lucilia. I remember her fresh, frank nature with special affection."

The third letter, also addressed to Quintus, was from Lucius Norbanus,^[109] the captain of the praetorian guard.^[110]

"Have you taken root in your horrid country villa"—so wrote the officer in his rough fun—"or have you drowned, in Vesuvian wine, all remembrance that there is such a place as the Roman Forum? How I envy you your unbridled wild-horse-like liberty! You live like the swallows, while I—it is pitiable! Day after day at my post, and for the last few weeks leading a perfect dog's life! Almost a third of the legion are new recruits, for again every hole and corner seems haunted. Today, I breathe again for the first time, but alas! my best friends are still absent. Above all Clodianus,^[111] who lately has never been allowed to leave Caesar's side. I am commissioned by our charmer Lycoris, to inform you that Martial's recitation^[112] on the sixteenth of October is proceeding to admiration. A hundred epigrams, and half Rome lashed by them! The banquet, which is to close the recitation, is to be magnificent. I can take her word for it; we know our fair Gaul. Farewell!"

59

"That is capital!" said Quintus, folding up the letter. Lucilia retired with her adopted father's letter to the sleeping-rooms, where Claudia and Octavia must by this time be up. Quintus went into the atrium and sat down by the fountain, to wait till Caius Aurelius should appear.

CHAPTER V.

The day of their departure came. Aurelius had hailed the idea of travelling with his new friends with an eagerness, that had brought a saucy smile to the lips of the shrewd Lucilia. But he had nevertheless preferred the more comfortable sea-voyage to a journey by land, and he had urged it so pressingly and yet so modestly that Octavia, after some hesitation, had yielded.

The second hour after sunrise^[113] had been fixed for their start, and before daybreak the slaves were already busied in packing the baggage mules and preparing the litters in the forecourt. The noise and bustle aroused Quintus, and being unable to get to sleep again he rose, dressed for the journey, and went out to the pillared court, where Lucilia was overlooking the slaves at their work and urging the dilatory to haste in cheerful tones.

60

“Restless being!” said Quintus in Greek: “Are you pursued by the gadfly of Juno,^[114] that you set all the house in an uproar in the darkness of dawn? You must be afraid lest Aurelius’ vessel should row of without us.”

“And do you complain of my carefulness?” retorted Lucilia. “Punctuality is the first virtue of a house mistress.”

“Aha! and since Lucilia’s ambitions aim at that high dignity....”

“Laugh away! A well-ordered home is very desirable for you; and it will be a real mercy when you get married. Since you have lived alone, you have got into all sorts of mischief. But what is it that you want here, you ugly Satyr? Do you not see that you are dreadfully in the way? There, now you are treading on the travelling-cloaks! I entreat you leave the room to the household gods!”

“What! I am in your way? That is your view of the matter; but it is you who are really the spoil-peace, the eternally restless storm who have so often come sweeping down on our idyllic calm. Of all the things, which remind us here of Rome, you are the most Roman. You have nothing but your little snub-nose to redeem you a little. But, by Hercules! when I see you bustling around here, I can picture to myself all the fevered turmoil of the great city^[115] with its two million inhabitants. Well, I will taste the sea-breezes once more—once more, for a brief space, enjoy peace and quietness.”

61

“How?”

“I will wait for sunrise at the top of the hill, where the road turns down to Cumae. In Rome it rises through smoke and mist; while here—oh! how grandly and gloriously it mounts from behind the cone of Vesuvius....”

“And rises there through smoke and mist!” laughed Lucilia. “Well, make haste and come back again, or we shall set off without you.”

She turned once more to the slaves. Quintus wrapped himself in his ample lacerna,^[116] waved his hand to her, and went out.

The high-road was absolutely deserted; he drew a deep breath. It was a delicious morning. His wish to bid farewell, as it were, to the sun and air of Baiae was not affected; like all Romans he raved about the sea.^[117] Its shore was to him the one real *Museion*—as Pliny the younger^[118] had once expressed it—the true abode of the Muses, where the celestial powers seemed nearest to him; here, if anywhere, while watching the waves, he found time and opportunity for self-study and reflection. He had now been living with his family in their quiet villa ever since the end of April, and had spent many hours in serious meditation, in congenial literary pleasures and diligent study. He had once more learned the real value of retirement, which in Rome was so unattainable. A long winter of dissipation had left him satiated, and Baiae’s aromatic air, a simple existence in the bosom of his family, and the spirit of Greek poetry had combined to restore his palled senses and overexcited nerves. And now, as the moment of return approached, he was seized more and more with the old spirit of unrest. He felt that the omnipotent sway of that demon called Rome would drag him back again into the vortex of aimless tragi-comedy, and now a last glance at the smiling and slumbering sea was a positive craving of his heart.

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He slowly climbed the hill. At about a hundred paces up, there was a spot whence he could see over the roofs of the tallest villas and down into the valley. His eye, though his purpose was to look far away and across the sea, was irresistibly riveted by an object that was quite close at hand. To his right a by-path led down towards the palace of the Empress, and the huge portico, with its Corinthian columns, gleamed pale and visionary in the doubtful light. But what attracted the young man’s attention was a little side-door, which slowly turned on its pivot^[119] with a slight noise, letting a female figure in Greek dress pass out into the road. Quintus recognized Euterpe, the flute-player. Limp and weary she climbed the steep slope, her eyes fixed on the ground, and as she came closer, Quintus could see that she had been weeping bitterly.

63

“Good morning, all hail!” he cried, when the young woman was within a few steps of him. Euterpe gave a little cry.

“It is you, my lord!” she said with a faint smile. “Returning so late from Cumae?”

“No, my good Euterpe. I am up not late, but early. But what in the world have you been doing at

this hour in Domitia's palace? Has she been giving a feast? You do not look as if you had gathered a harvest of gold or flowers."

"Indeed, my lord, no!" replied Euterpe, again melting into tears. "I have been to visit a friend, who is suffering terribly. Down in Baiae, where I was playing at night in the house of the wealthy Timotheus, Agathon the seer gave me herbs and salves—they cost me a heavy sum—and since then I have been in there.... Oh! his wounds are horrible.... But what am I talking about! He is only a slave, my lord; what can Quintus Claudius care...?"

64

"Do you think so?" said Quintus, interrupting the agitated speaker. "But I am not made of stone; I know full well, that though among slaves there is many a scamp, there are also worthy and excellent men. And if, to crown all, he is the friend[120] of so charming a creature...."

"Nay, my lord, you will have your jest—but if you could only see him, poor Eurymachus! If you could know how faithful he is, and how noble!"

"Well, I call that being desperately in love!"

Euterpe colored. "No," she said modestly. "I can accuse myself of many sins, but Eurymachus—no evil thought ever entered his mind."

"Is love a sin then?"

"I am married."

"Here—you were not wont to be so strict!"

"And the greater pity! If I had always known Eurymachus, as I know him now...."

"Indeed! and how do you know him now?"

"He has opened my eyes; I know now how deeply I have sinned...."

"He is a philosopher then, who converts fair sinners from their evil ways?"

"He is a hero!" exclaimed Euterpe with enthusiasm.

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"You do not stint your praise. Does he belong to the Empress?"

"To her steward, Stephanus. Ah! my lord, he is a tyrant...."

"So they say."

"How he treated the poor fellow! It beats all description. For one single word he had him flogged till he was raw, and then tied him up in the park in the noontide sun. The gnats and flies...." But at the woman's last words Quintus had gone nearer to her.

"Listen," he said hurriedly: "I believe I know your Eurymachus—a pale face with a dark beard—quiet, contemning pain—standing by the stake like a martyr...."

"You saw him?" cried Euterpe, smiling through her tears. "Yes, it was he indeed. No one else has that extraordinary power of defying every torment. Now he is lying half-dead on his bed; his whole back is one dreadful wound, and yet not a complaint, not a word of reproach! Fortunately the gate-keeper is my very good friend. He sent me a message; otherwise very likely Eurymachus might have died in his misery, without my knowing it. But I hope, I hope the charm may save him."

"Listen, child," said Quintus after a pause: "You shall see, that I know how to value courage, even in the person of a slave. Here, take this gold and spend it for the benefit of the sufferer, and by and bye, when he is well again, write to me in Rome; then we will see what can be done next."

"Oh, my lord!" cried the flute-player vehemently, "you are like the gods for graciousness and kindness. Do I understand rightly, that we may hope from your goodness...."

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"Understand all you please," interrupted the youth kindly. "The chief point is, that you should remind me of it at the right moment. In Rome a man forgets his nearest relations."

"I will remind you," said Euterpe, radiant. "Sooner should I forget to eat and drink. About the middle of next month I am going to the capital with Diphilus, my husband. He is a master-carpenter, and will have work to do on the grand erections for the Centenary Festival. If you will allow me, I will myself remind you in person."

"Do so, Euterpe."

"Oh, my lord! I thank you from the bottom of my heart. The man who is protected by Quintus Claudius, is as safe as a child in its cradle."

Joy lent so sweet an expression to the young creature's face, that Quintus was irresistibly moved to stroke her cheek, and in the excess of her delight she submitted to the caress, though, as we know, she had vowed henceforth to give Diphilus no cause for complaint.

At this moment a magnificent litter, borne by eight gigantic negroes, appeared on the highest level of the road. It was escorted by four men-at-arms, and in it, leaning on the purple cushions and only half-veiled, reclined Domitia. The seething fever of her passion and anger had driven her to seek the air soon after midnight, and for hours the slaves had to carry her about the wooded

ravines of the landward side of the hills, or along the deserted roads, until, wearied out at last, she was fain to turn homewards. Quintus, somewhat abashed, withdrew to one side; not so quickly, however, but that Domitia had observed his light caress of Euterpe. She turned pale and looked away. The young man, who made ready to bow to the Empress, remained unnoticed, and Euterpe stood as if turned to stone.

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Quintus looked coolly after her as she was borne away, and shrugged his shoulders; then he took Euterpe by the hand.

"It is a bargain then," he said in distinct tones. "You will find me in Rome! Now, farewell—till we meet again."

He turned towards home; sea and sunrise were alike forgotten. Euterpe hurried down to Cumae, and disappeared behind the ridge at the same instant as the Empress within the Corinthian portico of the palace.

In a few minutes the Claudia family were sitting in the triclinium to take a slight breakfast before starting. Octavia was thoughtful; her husband's letter had made her anxious. She knew how stern a view Titus Claudius took of his duties, and how much would devolve upon him in these agitated times. Claudia too was graver than usual. Only Aurelius and Lucilia looked bright and contented.—Lucilia, warm and rosy from her busy exertions in the court-yard and atrium—and in her excitement she would not give herself time to do more than drink a cup of milk and swallow a morsel of sesame-cake.^[121]

The respectable Herodianus too, against his custom, was silent. What could be so absorbing to that simple and garrulous nature? From time to time he frowned and stared at the ceiling, moving his lips in silent speech like a priest of the Pythian oracle. The honey, generally his favorite dainty—he left untouched; the egg he was about to empty with a spoon^[122] broke under his fingers. Aurelius was on the point of taking the matter seriously, when the mystery found a natural solution. When, presently, Bleyrus appeared to announce that it was time to start, the ponderous ponderer rose, went to the door, and began to exclaim with terrible pathos a valedictory poem of his own composition. It was based on the model of the world-renowned Hymenaeus^[123] of Catullus;^[124] and its climax was the most extravagant refrain, that the Muse of occasional verse ever hatched in mortal brain.

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For a few minutes the party listened in respectful silence to the cadences of this solemn effusion; but as it went on and on, apparently endless, Lucilia, who from the first had had great difficulty in keeping countenance, broke into a fit of laughter, and Aurelius good-naturedly put a stop to the freedman's recitation.

"I mean no offence, my excellent Herodianus; but though poetry is said to be the mirror of reality, it must not interfere too much with the progress of real events. Twelve times already have you resolutely asserted: 'Far must we wander, far from hence!' but our feet are still rooted to the spot. You may give us the rest of your poem on board the vessel, but for the present make way and take this ring as the prize for your effusion."

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Herodianus, who had at first been half inclined to take the interruption in ill-part, felt himself fully indemnified by his master's gift, but his gaze lingered for a while in silent protest on Lucilia. However, he presently joined the rest of the party, who were mounting their horses or settling themselves in litters, and soon they were all fairly in motion.

They went down the hill in a long file. Baiae, now in full sunshine, seemed to nestle in a golden shell; the sea was as smooth as a mirror, and the clear atmosphere promised a prosperous voyage. They soon reached the stone quay, where the motley crowd of the harbor was already at high tide of noise and bustle. There lay the proud trireme before their surprised eyes, gaily dressed out like a bride waiting for the bridegroom. Long garlands of flowers floated from the spars, tied with purple knots and blue streamers; magnificent carpets from Alexandria and Massilia hung from the poop, and the crew were all dressed in holiday garments. When they had got into the boats and were fast approaching the vessel, strains of music were heard greeting the visitors. Claudia colored deeply; she recognized her own song—that impassioned address to the Spring, which she had sung the first evening in the peristyle.

In ten minutes the Batavia had weighed anchor and was being rowed in majestic style past the quays and mole. Quintus, Claudia and Lucilia leaned silently over the side, while Aurelius sat under the awning with Octavia, talking of Rome. Beautiful Baiae sank farther and farther into the background with all its palaces and temples. Still, above the trees, a corner of the snug villa they had left was visible, and to the left Domitia's palace. Then the vessel shifted its course, and the shining speck grew smaller and smaller till it was lost to sight.

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Claudia wiped away a stealing tear, while Lucilia in a clear, ringing voice shouted across the waters:

"Farewell, lovely Baiae!"

CHAPTER VI.

The house of Titus Claudius Mucianus, the high-priest of Jupiter, stood at no great distance from the precipitous Capitoline Hill,^[125] looking over the Forum Romanum^[126] and the Sacred Way.^[127] Simple and yet magnificent, it showed in every detail the stamp of that quiet, self-sufficing and confident wealth, that ease of distinction, which is so unattainable to the *parvenu*.

It was now October. The sun was just appearing above the horizon. There was a motley turmoil in the house of the Flamen; the vast atrium positively swarmed with men. Most of these were professional morning visitors—waiters in the ante-chamber—known also from the gala dress in which they were expected to appear, as “Toga-wearers;” the poor relations of the house, clients and protégés.^[128] Still, there were among them not a few persons of distinction, members of the senate and upper-class, court officials and magistrates. It was a scene of indescribable variety and bustle. The world of Rome in miniature. Petitioners from every point of the compass eagerly watched the slaves, on whom their admission depended. Rich farmers, who desired to bring a private offering to Jupiter Capitolinus, sat open-mouthed on the cushioned marble seats, gaping at the handsomely-dressed servants or the splendid wall-paintings and statues. Young knights from the provinces, whose ambition it was to be Tribune of a legion,^[129] or to obtain some other honorable appointment, and who hoped for the high-priest’s protection, gazed with deep admiration at the endless series of ancestral images^[130] in wax, which adorned the hall in shrines of ebony.

And in fact these portraits were well worthy of study, for they were an epitome of a portion of the history of the world. Those stern, inexorable features were those of Appius Claudius Sabinus, who, as consul, wreaked such fearful justice on his troops. Beside him stood his brother, the haughty patrician, Caius Claudius, knitting his thick brows—an embodiment of the protest of the nobles against the rights contended for by the popular party. There was the keen, eagle face of the infamous Decemvir, the persecutor of Virginia—a villain, but a daring and imperious villain.—Claudius Crassus, the cruel, resolute foe of the plebeians—Appius Claudius Caecus, who made the Appian Way—Claudius Pulcher, the witty sceptic, who flung the sacred fowls into the sea because they warned him of evil—Claudius Cento, the conqueror of Chalcis—Claudius Caesar, and a hundred other world-renowned names of old and modern times.... What an endless chain! And just as they now looked down, head beyond head from their frames, they had been, all without exception, stiff-necked contemners of the people, and staunch defenders of their senatorial privileges. A splendid, defiant and famous race! Even the tattooed native of Britain,^[131] who came to offer fine amber chains^[132] and broken rings of gold,^[133] was sensible of an atmosphere of historic greatness.

One after another—the humbler folks in parties together—the visitors were led from the atrium into the carpeted reception-room, where the master of the house stood to welcome them in robes of dazzling whiteness^[134] and wearing his priestly head-gear.^[135] He had already dismissed a considerable number of important personages, when a tall officer, stout almost to clumsiness, was announced and at once admitted, interrupting as he did the strict order of succession. This was no less a person than Clodianus, the adjutant of Caesar himself. He came in noisily, embraced and kissed the priest and then, glancing round at the slaves, asked if he might be allowed a few words with Titus Claudius in private. The priest gave a sign; the slaves withdrew into a side room.

“There is no end to it all!” cried Clodianus, throwing himself into a large arm-chair. “Every day brings some fresh annoyance!”

“What am I to hear now?” sighed the high-priest.

“Oh! this time it has nothing to do with the outbreak among the Nazarenes and all the troubles of these last weeks. We can detect here and there extraordinary symptoms, and fabulous rumors ... for instance ... but, your word of honor that you will be silent...!”

“Can you doubt it?”

“Well, for instance, it sounds incredible ... but Parthenius^[136] brought it all from Lycoris the fair Gaul.... It is said that this Nazarene craze has seized the very highest personages.... They even name....”

He stopped and looked round the room, as if he feared to be overheard.

“Well?” said the high-priest.

“They name Titus Flavius Clemens,^[137] the Consul....”

“Folly! a relation of Caesar’s. The man who spreads such a report should be found out and brought to condign punishment....”

“Folly! that is what I said too! Infernal nonsense. Still the story is characteristic, and proves what the people conceive of as possible....”

“Patience, patience, noble Clodianus! Things will alter as winter approaches. The wildest torrent may be dammed up. But we are digressing—what new annoyance?”

"Ah! to be sure," interrupted Clodianus. "Then nothing of it has reached your ears?"

"No one has mentioned anything to me."

"They dare not."

"And why?"

"Because your views are well known. They know that you hate the populace—and the populace yesterday achieved a triumph."

"And in what way?" asked Claudius frowning.

"In the circus.[138] I can tell you, my respected friend, it was a frightful scandal, a real storm in miniature! Caesar turned pale—nay he trembled."

"Trembled!" cried Claudius indignantly.

"With rage of course," said Clodianus in palliation. "The thing occurred thus. One of the charioteers[139] of the new party—those that wear purple—drove so magnificently, that Caesar was almost beside himself with delight. By Epona, the tutelary goddess of horses![140] but the fellow drove four horses that cannot be matched in the whole world. Incitatus,[141] old Caligula's charger, was an ass in comparison, and the names of those splendid steeds are in every one's mouth to-day like a proverb: Andraemon, Adsertor, Vastator and Passerinus[142]—you hear them in every market and alley; our poets might almost be envious. And the charioteer too, a free Greek in the service of Parthenius the head chamberlain, is a splendid fellow. He stood in his quadriga[143] like Ares rushing into battle. In short it was a stupendous sight, and then he was so far ahead of the rest—I tell you, no one has won by so great a length since Rome was a city. Scorpis[144] is the rascal's name. Every one was fairly carried away. Caesar, the senators, the knights—all clapped till their hands were sore. Even strangers, the watery-eyed Sarmatians[145] and Hyperboreans[146] shouted with delight."

"Well?" asked Titus Claudius, as the narrator paused.

"To be sure—the chief point. Well, it was known that Caesar would himself grant the winner some personal favor, and every one gazed at the imperial tribune in the greatest excitement. Caesar ordered the herald to command silence. 'Scorpis,' said he, when the uproar was lulled, 'you have covered yourself with glory. Ask a favor of me,' and Scorpis bowed his head and demanded in a firm voice, that Domitian should be reconciled to his wife."

"Audacious!" cried Titus Claudius wrathfully.

"There is better still to come. Hardly had the charioteer spoken, when a thousand voices shouted from every bench: 'Dost thou hear, oh Caesar? Leave thy intrigue with Julia![147] We want Domitia!' There was quite a tumult,[148] a scandalous scene that defies description."

"But what do the people mean? What has so suddenly brought them to make this demand?"

"Oh!" said Clodianus, "I see through the farce. The whole thing is merely a trick on the part of Stephanus, Domitia's steward. That sly fox wants to regain for his mistress her lost influence. Of course he bribed Scorpis, and the gods alone know how many hundred thousand sesterces the game must have cost him. The spectators' seats were filled on all sides with bribed wretches, and even among the better classes I saw some who looked to me suspicious."

"This is bad news," interrupted the high-priest. "And what answer did Domitian give the people?"

"I am almost afraid to tell you of his decision."

"His decision could not be doubtful, I should suppose. By giving Scorpis leave to ask what he would, he pledged himself to grant his prayer. But how did he punish the howling mob that stormed around him? I too regret our sovereign's connection with his niece, but what gives the populace the right to interfere in such matters?"

"You know," replied the other, "how tenderly these theatre and circus demonstrations have always been dealt with. Domitian, too, thought it prudent to smother his just anger and to show clemency. When the herald had once more restored order, Caesar said in a loud voice: 'Granted,' and left his seat. But he was deeply vexed, noble Claudius."

"Well and then?" asked the Flamen in anxious suspense.

"Well, the matter is so far carried out, that in the secretary's[149] room to-day an imperial decree was drawn up, calling upon Domitia[150] to return to her rooms on the Palatine, and granting her pardon for all past offences."

"And Julia?"

"By Hercules!" laughed Clodianus. "With regard to Julia, Caesar made no promises." [151]

"Then I greatly fear, that this reconciliation will only prove the germ of farther complications."

"Very possibly. It has been the source of annoyance enough to me personally. Caesar is in the worst of humors. Do what you can to soothe him, noble Claudius. We all suffer under it..."

"I will do all I can," said the priest with a sigh. Clodianus noisily pushed back his chair. "Domitian

is waiting for me," he said as he jumped up. "Farewell, my illustrious friend. What times we live in now! How different things were only three or four years ago!"

Claudius escorted him to the door with cool formality. The slaves and freedmen now came back again into the room, and ranged themselves silently in the background, and the "*nomenclator*," the "namer," whose duty it was to introduce unknown visitors, came at once to Claudius and said hesitatingly:

"My lord, your son Quintus is waiting in the atrium and craves to be admitted."

A shade of vexation clouded the high-priest's brow.

"My son must wait," he said decisively; "Quintus knows full well, that these morning hours belong neither to myself nor to my family."

And Quintus, the proud, spoilt and wilful Quintus, was forced to have patience. The Flamen went on calmly receiving his numerous friends, clients and petitioners, who retired from his presence cheerful or hanging their heads, according as they had met with a favorable or an unfavorable reception. Not till the last had vanished was his son admitted to see him.

Quintus had meanwhile conquered his annoyance at the delay he had been compelled to brook, and offered his father his hand with an affectionate gesture; but Titus Claudius took no notice of his son's advances.

"You are unusually early," he observed in icy tones, "or perhaps you are but just returning from some cheerful entertainment—so-called."

"That is the case," replied Quintus coolly. "I have been at the house of Lucius Norbanus, the prefect of the body-guard. The noble Aurelius was also there," he added with an ironical smile. "Our excellent friend Aurelius."

"Do you think to excuse yourself by casting reflections on another? If Aurelius shares your dissipation once or twice a month, I have no objections to raise—I have no wish to deny the right of youth to its pleasures. But you, my son, have made a rule of what ought to be the exception. Since your return from Baiae, you have led a life which is a disgrace alike to yourself and to me."

Quintus looked at the floor. His respect and his defiant temper were evidently fighting a hard battle.

"You paint it too black, father," he said at last, in a trembling voice. "I enjoy my life—perhaps too wildly; but I do nothing that can disgrace you or myself. Your words are too hard, father."

"Well then, I will allow that much; but you, on your part, must allow that the son of the high-priest is to be measured by another standard than the other youths of your own rank."

"It might be so, if I lived under the same roof with you. But since I am independent and master of my own fortune...."

"Aye, and that is your misfortune," the priest interrupted. "Enough, you know my opinion. However, that which caused me to require your presence here to-day, was not your course of life in general. A particular instance of incredible folly has come to my ears; you are playing a wicked and dangerous game, and I sent for you to warn you."

"Indeed, father, you excite my curiosity."

"Your curiosity shall at once be satisfied. Is it true that you have been so rash, so audacious, as to address love-songs to Polyhymnia, the Vestal maiden?"^[152]

Quintus bit his lip.

"Yes," he said, "and no. Yes, if you consider the superscription of the verses. No, if you imagine that the poem ever reached her hands."

The priest paced the room with wide strides.

"Quintus," he said suddenly: "Do you know what punishment is inflicted on the wretch, who tempts a Vestal virgin to break her vows?"

"I do."

"You know it!" said the priest with a groan.

"But father," said Quintus eagerly: "You are branding a jest as a crime. In a merry mood, inspired by wine, I composed a poem in the style of Catullus, and to complete the audacity of it, instead of the name of Lycoris, I placed at the beginning that of our highly-revered Polyhymnia. And now report says—Pah! it is ridiculous! I grant you it was impudent, unbecoming, in the very worst taste if you will, but not calumny itself can say worse of it than that."

"Well, it certainly sounds less scandalous from that point of view. Quintus, I warn you. Now, if at any time, be on your guard against any deed, any expression, which may be construed as an insult to the religion of the state! Do not trust too much to the influence of my position or of my individuality. The law is mightier than the will of any one man. When what we are now planning takes form and life, severity, inexorable as iron, will decide in all such questions. That reckless

jest sprang from a mind, which no longer holds dear the eternal truths of religion. Beware, Quintus, and conceal this indifference; do not come forward as a contemner of the gods. Once more I warn you."

"Father...."

"Go now, my son, and ponder on what I have said."

Quintus bowed and kissed the stern man's hand. Then he left the room with a quick, firm step, and a look of devoted love, of passionate paternal pride followed him as he crossed the room, so tall, lovely and handsome.

CHAPTER VII.

Lycoris, the fair Gaul, was giving a splendid entertainment. Valerius Martialis, the greatest wit of the city of the Seven Hills, had recited his newest and most poignant epigrams with loud applause, and the company—more than a hundred persons—were reclining at supper on cushioned divans in the lavishly-decorated eating-room. The young Massilian lady presided. With her neck and shoulders half-veiled in transparent gauze^[153] from Cos, her magnificent golden-yellow hair knotted up at the back of her head and wreathed simply with ivy, she smiled radiantly from the head of the table, the object of silent worship to many, and of eager admiration to all. A number of slaves, in handsome Alexandrian dresses, moved quickly and silently about the handsome hall, while across the supper table the conversation each instant grew more lively.

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Among the guests was Caius Aurelius, the young Batavian. He had yielded to the pressure of curiosity or of fashion—particularly when the name of the famous epigrammatist had weighed down the scale.

"Really," he was saying to his neighbor Norbanus—the commandant of the Praetorian guard—"really, Norbanus, till this hour I had esteemed myself rich, but here I feel by comparison a beggar. What splendor, what lavish outlay! Pillars of alabaster, enormous gold plates,^[154] carpets worth an estate—my senses reel. Everything which elsewhere would appear rare and choice is here in every day use. By Hermes! but the father of Lycoris must have been a favorite of fortune."

"Not so loud!" interrupted Lucius Norbanus. "See, Stephanus is looking this way with a meaning glance."

"Stephanus!^[155] The Empress's steward? What has he to do with Lycoris?"

"Ha! well, I will tell you that another time," said the officer filling his mouth with a fine oyster,^[156] "between ourselves, you know. Meanwhile, I strongly advise you to taste those delicious mollusks. If you are like me, laughing has made you ferociously hungry."

"You certainly laughed most heartily," replied Aurelius accepting some of the praised dish from a slave; "but I, for my part, cannot get up any taste for this kind of verse. Martial is full of wit and humor, but this perpetual mockery, this making a business of holding up all society to ridicule and contempt—no, my dear Norbanus, I cannot like it. More particularly does the way in which he speaks of women displease and vex me. If he is to be believed, there is not in all Rome one faithful wife, or one innocent girl."^[157]

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"Pah!" said Norbanus, with his mouth well filled: "There are some of course, but they are scarce, my dear Aurelius, remarkably scarce."

"What is amusing you so much, Norbanus?" asked Quintus from his place opposite.

"The old theme—women! Aurelius thinks, that our laurel-wreathed poet has sinned basely against the ladies of Rome, by hinting in his epigrams his doubts of their virtue."

"Who? What?" cried the poet himself, hastily looking round. "What Ravidus^[158] is here, to take up the cudgels against my iambics?"

86

This quotation from Catullus, the favorite poet and model of the epigrammatist, did not fail of its point, for every one, with the single exception of the blushing Aurelius, was reminded by it that Ravidus was, in that passage, called a "crazed and witless wretch."

"It was I," said Aurelius coolly. "But it was not your verse that I criticised, but ... however, you heard. If a woman is no more to you than the beetle, the snake that wriggles in the dust, I can but pity your experience."

"Yours then has been more fortunate?" laughed Martial.

"I should hope so, indeed!"

Lycoris, who, though at some distance, must have heard every word, was chatting vehemently with Stephanus, her neighbor on her left, who kept his gaze alert, though with an air of reserve and dignity. Two of her companions, pretty but by no means maidenly personages, stared contemptuously at Aurelius as if to say: "Well, what a booby!"

"Here is to your health, worthy Cato of the North!" cried Martial mockingly. "Reveal his name to me, O Muse! and I will dedicate to you five and twenty epigrams on his virtue."

"He has a sharp muzzle," muttered Norbanus to Aurelius. "You will get the worst of it."

"No doubt of that," said Aurelius. "Fencing with words was never my strong ground."

"Just my case; and I cannot stand his accursed ribaldry. These fellows are like eels, it is impossible to hold them. It is the city tone, my dear friend! Our Stephanus now—only see how the man is made up—now, full in the light. By Castor! he is touched up and painted like a wench—Stephanus again, is a master in the war of words. But he gives you a pebble for a gem; everything about him is false, even his hair. But beware of him; he will try to make mince-meat of you."

87

"I say, Martial," said a harsh voice: "Who is going to publish the epigrams you gave us to-day?"

"I do not yet know. Possibly Tryphon."^[159]

"And when, my friend?"

"Well, in the course of the month."

"So soon? Listen, when the book comes out, may I send to you to borrow a copy?"

"You are too kind, my dear Lupercus; but why should you give yourself and a slave so much trouble? I live quite high up on the Quirinal.^[160] You can get what you want much nearer to you. You pass every day by the Argiletum. There you will find a very interesting shop, exactly opposite the Forum of Caesar. Atrectus, the bookseller, will feel himself honored in selecting a beautiful copy for you—almost given away too, as I may say, for with purple letters and smoothly pumiced it costs but five or six denarii."^[161]

"Six denarii!" exclaimed Lupercus. "That is too dear for me. I have to be saving with my money."

"And I must be saving with my books."

"It is not every one, who knows how to be obliging!"

"Nay, do not give up all hope," retorted the epigrammatist scornfully. "Make your wants known at all the street-corners,^[162] and perhaps some costermonger^[163] will lend you a copy."

"Why is Martial so hard upon him?" asked Aurelius of the praetorian guardsman. "This Lupercus seems to be in narrow circumstances."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Norbanus. "With an income of two hundred thousand sesterces...."

"Impossible! how can a man be at once so rich and so mean?"

"You are in Rome, Aurelius—do not forget that you are in Rome. Here extremes meet; here everything is possible, even the impossible."

It was now growing dusk, and in a few minutes hundreds of costly bronze lamps were lighted, some hanging in candelabra from the ceiling, some elegantly arranged round the pilasters and columns. Indeed it was not till this moment, that the banquet really assumed the aspect intended by the artistic and extravagant imagination of the hostess. The beaten silver of the massive bowls^[164] and platters gleamed brightly under the wreaths of flowers and garlands of foliage, while the huge wine-jars and costly Murrhine vases,^[165] the jovial and purpled faces of the guests, the splendid dresses, the pearls and gems—all were doubly effective under the artificial light.

One costly delicacy was followed by another; all the productions of the remotest ends of the earth met at the banquet of Lycoris. Fish from the Atlantic ocean, Muraenae from Lake Lucrinus, Guinea-fowls from Numidia,^[166] young kids from the province of Thesprotis^[167] in Epirus, pheasants from the Caspian Sea,^[168] Egyptian dates,^[169] dainty cakes^[170] from Picenum, figs from Chios,^[171] pistachio nuts^[172] from Palestine—were all here of the choicest quality and elaborately prepared. Euphemus,^[173] Caesar's own head-cook, could have done no more. Nor could anything be more perfect, than the grace with which the handsomely-dressed slaves offered each dainty on long slices of bread. After each dish had gone round, little boys with wings brought in magnificent onyx jars filled with perfumed water, which they poured over the hands of the guests. The long flowing hair of a female slave^[174] served to dry them, in the place of the more usual linen or asbestos napkin. In such trifles as these Lycoris loved to be original.

During the meal an intermezzo had now and then interrupted the eager conversation. Black-haired girls from Gades and Hispalis^[175] had come in, dancing to the cadence of castanets^[176] and cymbals; flute-players, singers and reciters had given highly-applauded evidence of their talents. But now, when the business of eating was over and the *commissatio*, as it was called, the drinking in short, was about to begin, as was hinted by the distribution to the guests of fresh wreaths and of perfumed oils, a buffoon or jester^[177] made his appearance, and soon filled the hall with Homeric laughter. His small and muscular form was clothed in gaily-colored scraps of raiment, and his face was painted in strong colors. Entering the room with a hop, skip and jump, he performed a series of somersaults with great skill; then leaping high over the guests' heads, actually on to the table, he placed himself in front of Lycoris and began thus in a high, shrill voice:

"Highly-esteemed friends of this illustrious house, now that your empty stomachs are duly replenished your minds too are to be no less delightfully satisfied. I offer you the feast of self-knowledge; to each one of you here I will shortly and plainly tell your fortune. If I appear to you over-bold, attribute it to the functions of my office; for audacity is my vocation, as it is that of the most honored Martial."

A storm of applause rang through the banqueting-hall, and Martial himself even laughed heartily.

"Capital, capital!" he exclaimed to the little man. "Your beginning is admirable and promises much," and he stroked his grizzled beard with much complacency; the jester bowed and went on with his privileged impertinences. He flung some epigrammatic and pointed remark at one and another of the company, and was each time rewarded by more or less eager applause. When he came round to the young provincial, he grinned with vicious impudence.

"Oh, noble vestal virgin!" he exclaimed, holding his hand before his face in affected coyness. "How much a hundred weight does propriety cost in Trajectum?"

His former jests had been happier and more pointed, but not one had been so readily taken; the company laughed so immoderately, that the buffoon had some difficulty in making himself heard again. Aurelius, though he was disgusted with the fellow, had discretion and tact enough not to draw attention to himself; he laughed and applauded as heartily as any one. Not so, however, Herodianus, his freedman, who reclined at the lower end of the table and had given himself up to silent and unlimited enjoyment of the Caecubum.

"What, you foul-mouthed scoundrel!" he exclaimed in a voice of thunder. "Who are you scoffing at? My dear friend Aurelius compared to a woman! Go home, and let your mother teach you manners."

The company were in so jovial a mood, that they at once turned this interference into account. When the Batavian was about to reprove Herodianus, he was talked down, while the indignant freedman was spurred on by half-ironical appeals and challenges.

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"Let him alone," said the captain of the guard: "He will serve the jester's turn well enough."

"Aye, that he will!" exclaimed another. "Only look at him knitting his brows. Is not he just like the Silenus in Stephanus' dining-hall?"

"Just be so good as to hold your tongues," cried Quintus, who had been excessively amused by Herodianus' pugnacity. "The little man on the table is going to answer him."

"Silence for the jester!" shouted a chorus.

The buffoon stood still with his hand up to his ear.

"Did I not hear a pug-dog barking?" he said with inimitable comic gravity. "Yes, there he lies, a Maltese pug! Come, Lailaps, come! Here are Lucanian sausages!"

Looking impartially at the freedman's face, it was impossible to deny that the resemblance was well hit, but Herodianus could hardly be expected to take this unprejudiced view of the matter. Forgetting where and with whom he was, he sprang from his couch, struck his fist on the table, and shouted out, crimson with rage:

"Come on, you braggart, if you dare! I will teach you, I will show you that ... that.... By Hercules! if you do not jump down this minute, you are the most cowardly, contemptible toad under the sun."

The little man sprang like lightning over Stephanus' head on to the floor, turned up the sleeves of his particolored shirt and shouted in mockery:

"Come on, Lailaps, come on! I will give you a thrashing."

For a moment Herodianus seemed to hesitate; then he suddenly flew at the jester like the storm of wind suggested by his Greek dog-name. The jester, however, slipped on one side as quick as lightning, and Herodianus, who, indeed, was not very steady on his feet, fell at full-length on the floor. In an instant the buffoon was sitting astride on his back.

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"Pug, you are snappish!" he exclaimed in a triumphant tone, and he began vigorously to belabor every part of the hapless freedman, that he could reach with his powerful fists.

"The dog must be broken!" he exclaimed at each blow. "Quiet, Lailaps, down, my noble cur!"

Herodianus, who, besides, had in falling damaged his knees and elbows, roared like one possessed; in vain did he try to throw off his tormentor. The dwarf clung to him tightly with his legs. The whole scene was as irresistibly comical as though it had been planned for the delectation of a blasé and overwrought party of drinkers. But Aurelius could no longer contain himself; he rose and went up to the combatants with well-assumed coolness.

"You are going too far," he said. "Be off with you, you little rascal."

The jester paying no heed to these orders, found himself suddenly picked up by the girdle and with one effort lifted high into the air. His struggles and yells were of no avail; Aurelius carried him like a feather to the table, and there set him down among the cups and wine-jars. The strength and promptness of the proceeding diverted it of any vexatious interference; the dwarf, completely quelled, stood on the table like a stork that has had its wings cut, looking round half-frightened and half-angry. The young Northman's grip had fairly taken his breath away, and a sign from Lycoris that he might withdraw was evidently welcome to him. He vanished between the crowd of slaves like a startled deer.

95

Aurelius had hastened to the rescue of Herodianus, who now, having been helped on his feet by some of the servants, found the greatest difficulty in keeping on them.

"Poor fellow!" he said kindly. "But you are really quite incorrigible."

"Oh, my lord!" groaned Herodianus, "it was only on account of the Vestal virgin! I should not have cared about being called a pug! Oh ye gods! my knees."

"I will take you in my litter. My own head aches, till it might split."

"What! are you going?" said Quintus Claudius, coming up to him. "Do you not know that Lycoris has planned a magnificent surprise for her guests?"

"I know it, but I must beg to be excused. These sports are not to my taste. Farewell till we meet again."

So speaking, he beckoned his Gothic slave, who took the limping freedman round the body and held him up with his usual strength of arm. The pair went first, and Aurelius followed them. All the company had by this time left their places, so his disappearance was almost unremarked; but the fair hostess kept her eye fixed on him, till she lost sight of her ungracious guest in the throng. Then, with an insidious smile, she turned to Quintus, laid her hand on his shoulder, and whispered maliciously: "What sort of foolish philosopher is that who comes here, of all places, to plead the cause of women and take up the cudgels for a freedman?"

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"Your foolish philosopher," replied Quintus, "is one of the noblest souls I ever knew, and beyond a doubt, the very noblest of the men who cross your threshold."

"Indeed!" said Lycoris, somewhat abashed. "Well, we shall have time by and bye to discuss this paragon of merit!" And with a coquettish toss of her head she turned from Quintus and mingled with the crowd of guests, who were now streaming out into the illuminated gardens.

CHAPTER VIII.

Outside, under the branches of the elm and sycamore-trees, which stretched in long avenues up the Viminal and down again on the farthest side, an ingenious intendant had devised much such an entertainment as in our days would be given under corresponding circumstances. Thousands of colored lamps hung in long festoons from tree to tree. The quaintly-clipped laurel and yew bushes, that stood between the six great avenues, were starred with semicircular lights, and the bronze and marble statues held torches and braziers of flame. The open space between the two centre avenues was screened by an immense curtain of purple stuff, which was fastened to two tall masts and waved mysteriously in the night air, casting strange reflections; to the right and left also a space was enclosed and screened from prying eyes by boards hung with tapestry.

"This promises something delightful," said Clodianus, addressing Quintus for the first time during the evening. "She is a splendid creature, this Lycoris! Always ready to spend millions for the pleasure of her guests. Did you ever see handsomer hangings? Nero's enormous velarium^[178] was not more costly."

97

"Oh! gold is all-powerful!" Quintus said absently. "Listen," he went on, taking the officer on one side, "quite in confidence.—Is what I heard to-day at the baths of Titus^[179] true?—that you had really been to Domitia?"

"As you say."

"It is true then?"

"And why not? You know what happened in the Circus?"

"Of course; but I thought...."

"No, there was no help for it this time. I solemnly and formally offered her the hand of reconciliation in Caesar's name."

"And Domitia?"

"To-morrow she will return an answer to her husband's message; but, of course, she is only too ready."

At this moment the fair Massilian came up to them.

"Quintus, one word with you," she begged with an engaging smile. "You will excuse him, Clodianus?"

The officer bowed.

"Listen," said Lycoris, as she drew Quintus away, "you must tell me all you can about your provincial friend. The man is unbearable with his strictness and sobriety, and yet there is something in him—how can I explain it?—something that is wanting in every one of you others without exception; a balance of mind, a steadfast certainty—one may as well give in as soon as he opens his mouth."

98

And as she spoke she laid her hand familiarly in the young man's arm.

"Very true," he said coldly. "Aurelius is not much like those oiled and perfumed gallants, who think themselves happy to kiss the dust on your sandals. But that boy is waiting to speak to you."

Lycoris looked round; a young slave, who had slowly followed her, glanced at her significantly.

"Madam," he said, "everything is ready."

"Ah?" said the lady. "The actors are ready? Very good; then let the music begin."

The slave bowed and vanished. Lycoris imperceptibly guided her companion into a thickly overgrown sidewalk.

"We have time to spare," she said, "and the music sounds much better from here than up there from the terrace. What were we talking about?... oh! the Batavian.... Why did you not bring your strange specimen to my house sooner?"

"Because he has not long been in Rome."

"In Rome...." repeated Lycoris vaguely. Her eyes were searching the shrubbery. Then, recollecting herself, she went on talking vivaciously. Thus the couple lost themselves farther and farther in the recesses of the garden; their conversation ceased, and they listened involuntarily to the Dionysiac hymn which reached them in softened tones from the distance. Out here even, in this remote alley, everything was festally illuminated; every leaf, every pebble in the path, shone in many-colored hues. And yet, how deserted, how lonely it was, in spite of the lights! there was something uncanny and ghostly in their doubtful flicker and sparkle. Suddenly Lycoris stood still.

99

"By the Styx!" she exclaimed. "I have lost my most valuable ring. Not two seconds since I saw it on my finger! Wait, you must have trodden on it; it cannot be twenty paces off and must be lying on the ground." Before Quintus fairly understood what had happened, she had vanished down a

side path. The young man waited. "Lycoris!" he called out presently.

No answer.

He went back to the turning—of Lycoris, not a sign.

"This is strange!" thought he. "What can it mean?"

Suddenly he stood stock-still, for in the middle of the path stood a girlish form, small, but well made and of the sweetest grace. She pressed her finger mysteriously to her rosebud lips, and then made unmistakable signs to the youth that he was to follow her.

"What do you want?" asked Quintus, going up to her.

"Above all things silence," said the girl. "My errand is to you alone."

"Speak on then."

"Nay, not here, noble Quintus; consider a moment—with impenetrable hedges on each side of us! If any one came upon us, how could we escape?"

"And who are you?" asked Quintus with a meaning smile.

"Only a slave—named Polycharma. Will you come with me?"

"Certainly, Polycharma, I follow you."

About a hundred yards farther on a small circular clearing opened to their right; the entrance to it was decorated with gold-colored festoons. Just before reaching this spot the path became so narrow, that a stout man could hardly pass along it; the wall of yew on each side had overgrown three-quarters of its width. Polycharma drew the folds of her dress more closely round her slim limbs, while the young man pushed aside the branches to the right and left. He looked round once more to see if he could discover Lycoris, but behind him all was silent and deserted. Even the sound of the music was only heard faintly and as if in a dream. Having reached the round plot, the slave girl took a letter out of her bosom. "My lord," she said, "I must exact a solemn oath from you...."

"What about?"

"That you will keep my errand an absolute secret, and return me this letter when you have read it."

"Good, I swear it by Jupiter!"

Polycharma handed him the note; the mere sight of it filled him with a suspicion of its origin. He hastily broke the seal and the silk thread, and by the light of the colored lamps which lighted the place, he read as follows:

"She who is wont only to command, humbles herself to the dust—so terrible is the power of love to change us. The cruel wretch who scorns me—he is the god of my aspirations! Have pity, O Quintus! have pity on the miserable woman, who is dying of love for you. Caesar, my husband, holds out his hand to me in reconciliation. It costs me but one word, and I shall be again, as I have been, the mistress of Rome and sovereign of the world. But behold, beloved Quintus, all this might and all this splendor I will cast from me and go into the remotest banishment without a tear, if you will give me, for one second only, the happy certainty of your love. Crush me, kill me, but ere you kill me say you are mine! Quintus, I await my sentence. At a sign, a glance, from you I reject all reconciliation."

The young man was stunned; he stared speechless at the letter, which declared in such plain terms a consuming passion. And yet, in spite of the answering emotion which any love—even though it be rejected—must rouse in the recipient, he could not shake off the feeling which he had already experienced at Baiae. A dull, unutterable loathing remained paramount in his soul, and the foppish figure of Paris, the actor, rose clearly before his fancy. Had not the ear of that slave drunk in the same flattering words, as were now intended to intoxicate and ravish him? Miserable, contemptible woman—ah! how differently and how truly beat the proud heart of his Cornelia!

Cornelia!—The thought of her turned the balance finally; Quintus drew a wax tablet out of his bosom and wrote on it:

"I feel and acknowledge the greatness of the sacrifice, which your Highness proposes to make; but, as a true patriot, I must prefer the advantages which will ensue to the state from the reunion of the sovereign couple, even to the duties imposed by gratitude."

He folded the tablet in the letter, tied it up again and gave it to Polycharma, who swiftly vanished. When her steps were no longer audible, Quintus pressed his hand over his eyes and sat down on a marble bench to reflect. Oh! that sly, intriguing Lycoris! She too, then, was paid by the Empress as well as by Stephanus! Subsidized by both, and a traitress to both—for so much at any rate was certain: Stephanus knew nothing of this nocturnal meeting. He, the real instigator of the scene in the circus, could evidently have no part in an intrigue, of which the issue would be diametrically opposed to his own efforts.

Sunk in gloomy reflections on these unpleasing details, Quintus sat staring at the ground.

Suddenly he heard footsteps, and confused cries were audible in the distance, mingled with the clatter of swords and arms. The next minute two dark figures ran across the entrance to the rotunda, and up the narrow path towards the top of the hill. They were followed by two others, who came less rapidly than the first.

"Leave me, for Christ's sake, I can go no farther!" groaned a piteous voice, which touched the young man strangely, and at the same time the light of the lamps fell on a pale and suffering face. Quintus recognized the victim he had seen at Baiae tied to the stake.

"Courage, Eurymachus," whispered his companion, a square, thick-set man who held him stoutly up. "Hang on to my shoulders; a hundred steps farther, and you are safe." And they disappeared among the shrubbery.

Quintus was not a little bewildered.

"What is going on here?" thought he, rising and quitting the open plot for one of the side paths. "Is this park peopled with demons?"

Again he heard steps and voices, more numerous and wrathful than before. "This way, men! There, up the path between the hedges!"

103

"Do not let them get away. Ten thousand sesterces to the man, who brings the villains back alive!"

And shouting thus in loud confusion, a party of armed men came in sight, running in breathless haste through the narrow paths. The foremost of them was now standing in front of Quintus.

"Make way, my lord!" he exclaimed in eager hurry: "We are seeking a criminal," and he tried to push past Quintus.

Strange! but Quintus, the proud and high-born Quintus, suddenly felt an unaccountable impulse to protect and shield the wretched and contemned slave.

"Insolent knave!" he exclaimed in well-feigned indignation: "Would you dare to touch Quintus Claudius?" And seizing the astonished man by the wrist he flung him violently from him. Meanwhile the others had come up. Quintus still barred the way simply by standing there. The band of men looked doubtfully now at the young nobleman, and then at their comrade, who got up, grumbling, from the stones. Thus a precious moment was gained. At last Quintus thought it as well to understand the situation.

"Idiots!" he exclaimed. "Why did you not explain at once what you wanted?—instead of that, you storm and rave like madmen...." And he stood aside.

The pursuers rushed by him in breathless fury.

"On with you!" he said to himself, as he looked after the armed men. "But unless I have reckoned very badly, the game has this time escaped the hunters."

Quintus found the company in the greatest excitement; they were standing in agitated knots vehemently discussing something; uncertainty, alarm, and consternation were visible in all. The only man who appeared altogether calm and indifferent was Stephanus, haggard and diplomatically reserved. He was sitting apart, not far from the spot where the avenue by which Quintus returned, opened on to the terrace. A man of athletic build was lying on the ground, bleeding from numerous wounds; in his right hand he held the hilt of a broken sword and his left was pressed in speechless anguish to his breast, where the enemy's blade had pierced him. Five or six slaves, who had carried him hither, were standing round him with expressive gestures, while Stephanus was making a pitiable abortive attempt to cross-examine the dying man. At about forty paces farther away four slaves, fearfully injured, were lying in their blood. One had had his skull cleft to the neck, and the others were covered with hideous and gaping wounds. All four were dead.

104

On the spot too, where just now the curtain of gold-tissue had waved, there was the greatest confusion. The curtain^[180] had been lowered—the fanciful decorations of one side had been overthrown and nearly half-burnt, while hammers, nails, ropes, fragments of dresses, and rubbish of every kind strewed the stage. In the midst of this hideous disorder a tall cross^[181] stood upright.

It was some time before Quintus could get any connected account of what had happened; at first ten voices were raised at once to their highest pitch of explanation. Lycoris was sulky and peevish, because the best effect of her whole programme had been spoilt. Her friend Leaina, on the contrary, swore by Hercules that Quintus had lost the finest sight in the world. His wily acquaintance Clodianus, who took every opportunity of assuming airs of frank bluntness, railed in threatening bass tones at the audacity of the rascals, and others wandered off into questions, so that Quintus at last lost patience. He went to the captain of the Praetorian guard, took him by the arm, and asked almost angrily:

105

"Norbanus, will you tell me in plain words? I was absent, in the remotest part of the wood, and on my return I find a perfect chaos. What does it all mean?"

"It means one more sign of the times. Rome is become a perfect Vesuvius; there are rumblings and mutterings on every side and in every corner. What do you think? We were sitting here very

contentedly on the garden seats, enjoying the pleasures of digestion. Well, I was just wondering to myself what this Massilian bay mare could still have in reserve, and somewhat excited with curiosity, when the curtain was lowered. A grand burst of music! and a fellow dressed in scarlet came to the front and informed us in well-turned trimeters,^[182] that a devilish funny piece was about to be performed, the capital punishment of a criminal slave^[183] named Eurymachus....”

“What?” cried Quintus horrified.

106

“As I tell you—the execution of the slave Eurymachus, who had sinned gravely against his illustrious master Stephanus, and so had forfeited his life.”

“An execution as a garden comedy? This is something new, by Jupiter!”

“New indeed! hardly heard of since the days of the divine Nero.”

“Well, and what next?”

“The speaker announced that Lycoris had obtained leave from Parthenius, the head chamberlain, to have the execution carried out in the semblance of a jest before the eyes of her illustrious and noble guests; he begged our indulgence for the performers, bowed, and the entertainment began. —You know me, Quintus, and that I am no lover of such horrible buffoonery. I fought for many years against the Daci^[184] and Germanii, and the gods know that the sight of death turns me cold. Merely to see an unarmed wretch butchered—do you know, Quintus, it always reminds me of slaughtering swine. When I sit there at my ease, looking on, a lump rises in my throat, even in the amphitheatre. It may be outrageously simple and quite out of fashion, but for the life of me I cannot help it.”

107

“Go on, go on!” cried Quintus in growing excitement.

“Well then; the performance began. They dragged the man in, half-naked and crowned with roses. I cannot say he looked to me like a dangerous character; quite the contrary—even at that moment, when his life was at stake, he was quite quiet; only his paleness betrayed that the proceedings were not altogether pleasant to him. Then all sorts of mocking and games began at his expense; men scourged him or kicked him—all with consummate grace—and half-naked girls danced and leaped round him like mad things, nipped and pinched him, boxed his ears, and played all kinds of stupid tricks. This went on for about ten minutes. Then the executioners set a ladder by the cross there, flung a rope round him under the arms, hauled him up, and the first blow of the hammer was on the point of hitting the nail in, when a part of the side scene fell in with a tremendous crash. Four men, with their faces blackened with soot, rushed in like a thunder-storm, seized Eurymachus—who was as pale as death—by the arms, and were gone before the pack of slaves had recovered their senses. The spectators thought at first that this was part of the entertainment, till they were enlightened by the angry shouts of Stephanus and Lycoris. Then it occurred to the half-stunned executioners, that they might pursue the men. But then they perceived, that in the breach made by the fallen scenery a tall giant of a man was standing. He received the pursuers with a perfect storm of sword-strokes. Rhodius, the gardener’s son, fell without a cry, and the second man fared no better; the uproar was general, and the scenery broke out in flames. The whole gang of them fell back before the one with a howl, like dogs before a wolf at bay. The tall fellow, however, retired through fire and smoke till he was safe outside it all, and then he planted himself up above at the entrance of the avenue of elms, sword in hand. Eight men rushed upon him at once, but for fully five minutes not one could get at him. Three of the assailants bit the dust, before a well-aimed thrust pierced the Hercules through the breast. He started, once more gathered himself together, and a fourth man fell in front of him, cleft through the skull. That was the last of it.”

108

“A noble ending truly to a friendly festival!” said Quintus glancing at Lycoris, who still was fuming over the disaster. “And the rash defender is dead?”

“Not yet,” said Clodianus joining them. “Stephanus is questioning him. But as the fellow refuses to give any information, they propose to torture him to make him speak.”

“Impossible!” cried Quintus furious. “His wound is mortal, he fought like a hero. At any rate leave him to die in peace!” Clodianus shrugged his shoulders.

“Settle that with Stephanus! If the villain will not confess, it is certainly permissible to egg on his loquacity.”

Quintus frowned. After a few minutes of reflection he went up to Stephanus, at the very instant when two slaves came on to the terrace with a steaming cauldron of water.

109

“A very painful incident!” said Claudius coolly.

“Most painful!” replied Stephanus in the same tone. “I mean to try, whether the error may not be remedied.” And as he spoke he gave a highly-significant nod to the slaves, who had set the cauldron down on the ground close to him. Quintus involuntarily stepped forward and put out his hand in remonstrance.

“I hope, my good friend,” he said, still perfectly coolly, “that you only intended to frighten this villain—good taste alone must prohibit....”

Stephanus changed color slightly, and the slaves looked terrified into his face. The tension of the situation was interrupted by the return of the armed men, who had been sent after the fugitives

and now came back breathless and streaming with sweat.

"My lord," the foremost began, "we return as jaded as a pack of hounds, but with empty hands."

"So I see," said Stephanus in chill tones. "And what tavern did you stop at, and what wenches did you stop to kiss?"

"Forgive us, my lord!" groaned another sinking on to his knees, partly from exhaustion, and partly from terror. "We rushed up the hill like blood-hounds,^[185] but they had too much the start of us."

Stephanus looked down.

"Was the gate on to the Patrician Way^[186] locked?" he asked frowning.

"Fast locked."

"It is well. I will speak to your mistress. Woe to you, if you are in fault!"

"My lord," the first speaker began again. "Grant me to say one word of explanation. In spite of the start the fugitives had gained, we might have caught them if an accident...."

He broke off and glanced at Quintus, who smiled and told him to go on. "Speak fearlessly," he said kindly. "Accuse me, if you think well to do so—in fact, you have every right."

The slave went on to relate how Quintus had delayed him and his comrades in the narrow hedge-grown passage. At each word Stephanus grew paler, and Quintus became more and more scornful in air and demeanor.

"Are this man's assertions founded on fact?" asked Stephanus as the slave ceased speaking.

"How am I to interpret such a question?"

"Exactly as I ask it. I am interested to know whether a son of the noble Claudia gens can so far—condescend, as to abet the flight of a criminal?"

"That I did not say!" cried the slave, shocked.

"Never mind!" said Quintus reassuringly, to the excited narrator. "You have spoken the truth, and I will vouch for it at any moment. When I was loitering in the gardens of our fair hostess, how should I guess that certain persons, who came upon me quite suddenly, were chasing a runaway slave? And even if I had guessed it, what is there to compel me to step among the thorns and briars, in order to make way for your thief-catchers?"

"Politeness and a due regard for the interests of the commonwealth," replied Stephanus drily. "However, what is done cannot be undone. It is all the more necessary to act promptly, in what yet remains to be done."

As he spoke he went close up to the blood-stained Hun, who, with his last remaining strength, lifted himself up and cast a wild glance round him.

"You hardened hound," he said in a rough, hoarse voice, "I will soften you! Do you see that cauldron? I ask you once more: Who are you? Who are your fellow-conspirators?" The gasping man's breast heaved more rapidly.

"Will you speak?" repeated Stephanus furiously. And now, for the first time the victim spoke; till now he had not uttered a sound.

"No!" he cried with his last remnant of strength, and he sank back groaning.

"Very well; then abide by your destiny." At this moment Quintus Claudius stepped up to the slaves who held the cauldron, his arms crossed on his breast.

"Enough of this horse-play!" he said curtly and vehemently. "Begone indoors, you parcel of idiots! I, Quintus Claudius, command you to go."

"And I, Stephanus, command you in the name of your mistress: remain and obey! Rufus, Daedalus, lay hold!"

"We will solve this dilemma, as Alexander did in Gordium," said Quintus scornfully, and with these words he pushed the slaves aside and gave the cauldron a mighty kick, so that the contents poured steaming out all over the terrace.

"This is violence!"^[187] exclaimed Stephanus, involuntarily raising his hands.

"The violence of reason against bad taste and coarse feeling!" said Quintus with a scowling look. "I should advise you, freedman,^[188] to keep your hand hidden away in the folds of your robe, or in the depths of your coffers and money-boxes, or Quintus Claudius might happen to squeeze that hand rather more tightly than you would like!"

At the word "freedman" Stephanus had turned as pale as a corpse. He closed his eyes and staggered. His lean fingers trembled and twitched, as if he were feeling for a dagger. Then, mastering his agitation with an almost superhuman effort, he said faintly:

"I do not altogether understand what it is that you mean, so I will not trouble myself to answer ...

you. Meanwhile you have only given the slaves some unnecessary extra labor.—To work, men!—refill the cauldron.”

“Too late,” said Quintus. “Your victim has escaped you.”

“He is dead!” cried the slaves.

Stephanus muttered something unintelligible between his teeth; then he ordered that the body should be removed.

“Antinous,” said he to one of the slaves, a remarkably beautiful young fellow: “I look to you to report all that has happened here, fully and exactly to the authorities. If Eurymachus is delivered up to me alive, I promise you a hundred thousand sesterces.—Here comes Lycoris with the soldiers of the town-watch.^[189] Speak to them; tell them all you know, and offer them gold; that will inspire the most dilatory.”

113

“I hear and obey, my lord.”

“I am tired and shall withdraw. In ten minutes I shall expect to see you.”

“I shall be with you in five.”

The file of men at arms—a division of a military body, who performed the duties of a town-watch, combining the functions of our modern firemen and police—came up just at the right moment to verify the death of the unknown victim, to take the statements of the assistants and spend an hour very comfortably in the atrium. The guests of the fair Lycoris had soon recovered from the unpleasant impression produced by the untoward incident. Amusements and sports of every kind effaced the last traces of its remembrance, and for a long time after the tones of luxurious music sounded through the starry night.

CHAPTER IX.

The morning was already grey over the distant Sabine hills[190] when Quintus, followed by his clients and slaves,[191] left the scene of festivity. With him came Clodianus and the poet Martial; the former accompanied, like himself, by a number of dependents and satellites, the latter by a single slave, whose smoky little lamp looked absurd enough by the side of the handsome lanterns and torches of the rest of the escort.

114

"A mad night!" sighed Martial, looking up. "The stars are already twinkling like eyes dim at leave-taking. Illustrious Clodianus, you will make my excuses to my patron, the chamberlain Parthenius, if I should fail to offer my morning greeting. Getting up early is my greatest torment, [192] even when I have crept between the coverlets at betimes, and to-day, after this unpardonable dissipation...."

Clodianus laughed.

"I will explain it to him," he roared out in the fresh morning air. "However—I shall hardly see him before noon. I am as tired myself, as if I had been sawing stone all night."

"Yes, it is frightful to be so tired! I would give ten years of my life, if I might only sleep half the day. But on the contrary, before cock-crow, I must be out of bed, fling my toga over my shoulders, and be bowing to noblemen! By Castor! if I were not an ass, I should long since have fled to the peace and quietness of my native town!"

"Well, sleep to-day till sundown! Just now Parthenius will be most willing to excuse you, for his head is so full of business, and Caesar makes such incessant claims upon his time, that he is glad when his best friends leave him in peace."

115

"I heard the same thing from my father," added Quintus. "Some great stroke seems to be in hand. Is nothing known of the facts?"

"Pah! it is the talk of the town. Plots dangerous to the state, treason to religion and society, conspiracies against Caesar...."

"But the facts—the details...?"

"You know," said Clodianus laughing, "that in affairs of state, silence is as important, as valor is in battle!"

"Well said!" cried the poet.[193] "With a little suitable embellishment, that may be turned into a brilliant epigram. Now, noble friends, I will bid you farewell. Our roads are no longer the same. I must climb up here to the temple on the Quirinal, while you go down into the valley. In life it is just the reverse. Apollo preserve you!" He hastily turned up the street, while Clodianus and Quintus went on along the 'Long Way.'

"Aye!" said the crafty Clodianus. "I have constantly to remind myself of the duty of silence; more than once has my rash tongue run away with me. I come of an easy-tempered race, which are apt to talk without stopping to think. It is wrong, by Hercules!—it is wrong!"

They had now reached the Subura.[194] The height of the five, six, or more-storied houses,[195] and the narrowness of the way here, only allowed the day to dawn slowly and late, and deep gloom still prevailed in the numerous taverns[196] and entries. At the same time busy life was already stirring on all sides; itinerant bakers[197] were wandering from door to door crying their fresh bread. Pedagogues,[198] with their writing implements and clay lamps, were leading files of boys to school. Here and there, from a side alley, might be heard the croaking chant of a teacher, and the babble of spelling children.[199] Groups of worshippers, on their way to perform their morning devotions in the neighboring temple of Isis, hurried across the loudly-echoing pavement.

116

"Day is coming upon us apace," said Quintus, as he stopped in front of the entrance to the "Cyprius street"[200] and held out his hand to the adjutant.

"Our roads part here, and we must make haste if we mean to reach home before sunrise."

"Will you be at the Baths at about noon?"

"Possibly.—If I get up in time."

"Well then—let us hope that the wine-cup of Lycoris may leave you free of headache."

117

"The same to you! Farewell." And with these words Quintus went on his way, while Clodianus turned off to the right.

"Cyprius street" grew at every step more select and consequently more deserted; to the left the Baths of Titus stood up, a sharply-defined mass, against the rose-tinted sky. Each time that Quintus Claudius walked up the street, this vast pile seemed to have a fresh spell for him. The contrast between the ponderous mass, and the tender flush of Autumn dawn behind him, filled him with pleasurable admiration, and his eye followed a flock of pigeons, which for some few minutes soared to and fro above the great building and then, with sudden swiftness, flew across the road.

"They came from the left," said he to one of his companions. "Now, if I believed in augury from the flight of birds, I should be forced to suppose that some evil was hanging over me."

He was still speaking, when from the same side, where a narrow path came down from the great Baths, a muffled figure rushed upon him and hit him a blow with a bare poniard. Happily the ruffian at the same instant slipped on the sloping pavement—which was rendered even more slippery by the early morning dew—so that the dagger missed its aim, and instead of piercing the young man's throat, passed across his left shoulder and through the folds of his toga, which it cut through as sharply as a razor. And before Quintus quite understood what had happened, the assassin had glided away between the slaves with the suppleness of a panther, and vanished in the direction of the Subura. The young man gazed at his arm, where the toga and under-garment hung in long strips; the wound was but skin-deep, a spot of blood had here and there oozed out.

118

"Let it be!" said Quintus to the slaves, who had crowded round him when their first stupefied astonishment was over. "I know very well where that blade was sharpened, and for the future I will be more cautious. But one thing I must say to you; my good people, each and all, be silent as to this attack. You too, my excellent friends and clients—you know how easily my noble father is alarmed. If he knew that there was in all Rome a villain, who had threatened my life, he would never know another moment's peace."

"My lord, you know us!" exclaimed the slaves and freedmen, and the clients too professed their devotion.

"His revenge is prompt!" thought Quintus, as he went onwards. "I always knew him to be an example of audacity and ruthlessness—still, such impatience as this is somewhat a surprise to me."

Then suddenly he stood still, as a new and almost impossible idea flashed across his mind.—"If it were ... supposing.... Could Domitia...?"

He pressed his hands over his eyes, and that which had at first seemed so plain, intelligible and obvious, now sank back into the mists of doubt and conjecture.

The slaves had by this time extinguished their torches and lanterns.—Broad daylight shone in cloudless beauty over the widely-spread city of the Seven Hills. The great temple of Isis lay flooded with gold; a procession of priests,^[201] bearing the image of the goddess, came marching down the street.

"Get on!" cried Quintus. "I am tired to death. It was a folly, Blepyrus, to dismiss the litters."

119

"It was wisdom, my lord!" said the slave. "If I still am honored with your confidence, I would again repeat...."

"Ah well!" Quintus interrupted. "Very likely you are right—you leeches are always right.^[202] If only you attain a proportionate result! But if exercise were everything, I should be the lightest-hearted man in Europe. Nay, my good Blepyrus, this dissatisfaction, this intolerable sense of ill lies deeper...."

In a few minutes they had reached home. The ostiarius^[203] was standing at the door, as if the master of the house were impatiently expected. Quintus was about to cross the threshold, when he heard himself loudly called by name.

"What do I see? Euterpe! All hail to you—so soon returned to Rome?"

"Yes, my lord, since yesterday," answered the flute-player hastily. "And ever since I came, I have been incessantly trying to find you. Do you still remember," she went on in a low voice, "what you promised me at Baiae?"

"Certainly, my pretty one. Quintus Claudius sticks to his bargain ... besides.... But who is the grey-headed old man with you there? Your husband or your father?"

"My husband is young, and my father is dead.—This is Thrax Barbatus, Glauce's father."

120

"And who is Glauce?"

"What—did I never tell you about Glauce—out there, on the hills by Baiae? I must have forgotten in the midst of all my trouble. Glauce is to be married to our Eurymachus...."

"Ah! the heroic sufferer, that Stephanus had flogged?"

"The very same, my lord! And you promised me to remember...."

"True, true—come to me in the course of the afternoon...."

"Ah! my lord, but that will be too late. Eurymachus is in danger of his life...."

"What, again!"

"Oh! be merciful, most noble Quintus! Give us only five minutes audience! You alone can save him."

"Come in, then!"

He led the way through the atrium into his private room.

"My lord," the flute-player began again, "I will tell my story shortly. Eurymachus rebelled against the Empress' steward, who wanted to persuade him to all sorts of disgraceful conduct. Stephanus flogged him first, and then obtained permission to crucify him at the next festival. This I heard from the gate-keeper. But there was no festival fixed for yesterday, so there is still some hope, and we entreat you...."

"Be calm—for the present your friend is in safety."

"Impossible—he is lying in chains...."

"He *was* lying in chains. His execution was fixed for yesterday, but at the last moment he was snatched from the jaws of peril." 121

"What?" cried Thrax Barbatus, speaking for the first time. "Did I hear you rightly, snatched from his fetters! Then Glauce was able to carry out what she proposed."

"Free?" said Euterpe, looking up at Quintus in bewilderment.

"As I tell you."

"Oh, now I see it all!" cried Thrax Barbatus. "This pretended journey to Ostia—what had your husband to do in Ostia? And Philippus, my son, who has hardly been in Rome a week—why should he want to accompany Diphilus...." Then, seized with terror, he sank on the ground before Quintus and threw his arms round his knees.

"Oh, my lord! do not take advantage of the rash words of a miserable father!" he exclaimed vehemently. "Do not betray, what my tongue let slip in my fear and anxiety."

"Be easy, old man!" said Quintus benevolently. "I am not one of the spies of the city-guard. Your friend is a hero, and courage always commands my sympathy."

"Thanks, thanks!" sobbed the old man, covering the young noble's hands with kisses. "But tell me, pray, how it all happened; how is it possible that, in the midst of such a crowd of servants...."

"All is possible to those who dare all. What I heard—and the merest accident prevented my being an eye witness—aroused as much astonishment in me, as in you. All the bystanders seemed to have been paralyzed. It was like an eagle in the Hyrcanian mountains,^[204] swooping down on a lamb. One man particularly, a stalwart, broad-shouldered fellow, did wonders of valor...." 122

Thrax Barbatus drew himself up with the elasticity of youth. Happy pride sparkled in his eyes, and an expression—a radiance, as it were, of beatific affection illuminated his rugged and strongly-wrinkled features.

"That was Philippus, my son!" he said with a trembling voice. "Oh! it was not for nothing, that he fought for years against the Dacians, not in vain that he endured frost and heat. There is not a man in all the legion that is his match in skill and strength; not one that can beat him in running or in lance-throwing. But speak, my lord; you look so grave, so sad! What is it? Oh, for God's sake, in Christ's name—it is impossible! My son, my Philippus!—but he could stand against twenty—speak, my lord, or you will kill me...."

"Poor old man," said Quintus much moved, "what good will it do to conceal the truth from you? Your son is dead. Scorning to fly, he exposed himself too long to his foes. He died like a hero."

Thrax Barbatus uttered a soul-piercing cry, and fell backwards to the ground; Euterpe flung herself upon him and clasped his head to her heart, weeping bitterly.

"Thrax—dear, good friend," she sobbed out: "Control yourself, collect yourself! Show yourself strong in this terrible trouble! Consider, you will have Glauce, and Eurymachus, who loves you like a son."

The old man slowly pulled himself up; he pushed Euterpe violently aside, and then sinking on to his knees, raised his hands in passionate appeal to Heaven. His lips moved in prayer, but no sound was heard. Quintus, lost in astonishment, stood leaning against a pillar, while Euterpe wept silently, her face buried in her arm. A terrible storm seemed to be raging in the old man's soul; his breast rose and fell like a wind-tossed sea, and a wild fire glowed in his eyes. But by degrees he grew calmer, and his features assumed an expression of sorrowing and silent resignation. It was as though a tender and beatific ray of forgiveness lighted them up, growing clearer each moment. After a time he rose. 123

"Pardon me, my lord," he said slowly. "I was stricken down by the vastness of my grief. He fell like a hero, you said? And Eurymachus is safe?"

"He escaped," replied Quintus, "which, alas! is not quite the same thing. Every effort will be made to recover possession of the fugitive. Well, we must see what can be done. Accident has enlisted me on your side, and I will play the part out to the end. For the present leave me; I am tired out, and a tired man is of no use as an adviser; but this evening, about the second vigil,^[205] I will find my way to your dwelling, unaccompanied."

"Father in Heaven, I thank Thee!" cried Thrax Barbatus vehemently. "Blessings, oh! blessings on the head of this noble and generous youth! Farewell, my lord! Never, never will I forget your gracious kindness to us helpless wretches."

With these words he left the room, and Euterpe followed him. Quintus went at once to his curtained cubiculum,[\[206\]](#) undressed with the help of the faithful Blepyrus and soon fell asleep.

CHAPTER X.

"Really, Baucis, you are very clumsy again today!" cried Lucilia, half-vexed and half-saucily. "Do you want to pull that fine, luxuriant hair, that the greatest poet might rave about, all out by the roots. I have shown you a hundred times how the arrow is to be put through, and you always towzle my hair as old Orbilius^[207] does the schoolboys!"

"Ingratitude for thanks, all the world over!" muttered the old slave, casting a last glance at Lucilia's curls, her successful handiwork. "I suppose you would like to stick a pin into me.^[208] Really, the young people of the present day are like babies or dolls. And if the gold pin slips and the plaits come down, then it is the old woman who is to blame and there is no end of the fuss. Ah! you naughty girl,^[209] how do you expect to get on when you are married, you impatient little thing! Many a time will you have to sigh, when your husband is out of temper! Many a time will you say to yourself: 'Ah! if only I had learned a little patience when I was younger!'"

125

"You are greatly mistaken," said Lucilia in a declamatory tone. "The days are over, when the husband was master over everything in the house. What woman now-a-days will submit to a wedding with offerings of corn?^[210] We have grown wiser, and know what such offerings are meant to symbolize—we are to surrender our liberty to the very last grain! So I should think! If ever I marry.... But what are you about? Will you ever have done fidgetting with that tiresome necklace? Do look, Claudia, how she is tormenting me!"

126

Claudia was sitting in holiday attire in front of a handsome citrus-wood^[211] table, holding in her hands the ivory roller of an elegantly-written book. When Lucilia spoke to her she absently raised her soft, fawn-like eyes, laid the roll aside and stood up.

"You look like Melpomene," cried Lucilia enthusiastically, while Baucis draped her *stola*.^[212] "If I were Aurelius, I should have my head turned by the sight of you. How well the folds of your dress fall, and how admirably the border lies on the ground, oh! and your hair! Do you know I am quite in love myself with that hair; it goes so beautifully with the soft brown of your eyes. That dark fair hair, with a kind of dim lustre, is too lovely; my stupid, every-day brown looks no better by the side of it than a cabbage next a rose. Of course, too, Baucis takes three times as much pains with you as with me. Tell me yourself, is not this arrow all askew again?"

So speaking she took a polished metal mirror^[213] from the table, and studied her coiffure first from the right and then from the left, while one of the young slave-girls, who stood round Baucis, came to her assistance with a second mirror.

127

"It is quite horrid!" she said crossly. "In short every single thing is wanting in me to-day, that could please the fancy of any human being. Never was my fatal snub-nose so short and broad, never was my mouth so wide and vulgar. And listen, Claudia, in spite of all its beauty, I can do without going to Baiae for the future. I gained twenty pounds in weight there, and brought home three dozen freckles. It is a lucky thing, that I have a philosophic soul! If I were in love now with some son of the gods, by Socrates' cup of hemlock I should be desperate with rage!"

"You are only fishing for praise," said Claudia, stroking her sister's cheek. "But you know I am but ill-skilled in the art of paying compliments."

"Silly girl!" said Lucilia. "As if praise could mend an evil. Do you suppose I want to do as the young law students do, who hire flatterers to praise them?^[214] Nay, no bribery is possible, when we stand before the Centumvirate^[215] who judge of beauty.—And, my good Baucis, what are you staring at now, like a country cousin at a circus. Make haste and get dressed, you old sinner, or Cinna's cook will have burnt the pasty."

"I shall be ready in an instant," replied Baucis. "At my time of life dressing need not take long. Who looks at the hawthorn, I wonder, when roses are in bloom?" and she hurried away.

128

Lucilia and Claudia went out into the colonnade where, arm in arm, they slowly paced the gleaming marble pavement. As they turned the farther corner of the quadrangle, they saw their mother coming towards them at a leisurely pace.

"Quintus is ready and waiting," she said pleasantly.

"And you, dear mother?" asked Lucilia. "Do you really mean to stay at home?"

"It is such a pity," added Claudia. "We are accustomed, alas! to my father's never accompanying us to see Cornelia, but you—what need you care about the debates in the senate? Besides, Cornelius Cinna is related to your family. Your views as to what contributes to the prosperity of the Roman people differ no doubt...."

"In Jupiter's name, child!" cried Octavia horrified. "Claudia, what are you saying? If your father were to hear you...."

"But, my dear mother," answered the girl, "I am only speaking the truth. There are many very estimable men...."

"Be silent—when and where did you pick up such notions? Attend to your music and your poets, give your mind to the flowers you twist into your hair, but never meddle with the mysteries of

state-craft.”

The young girl looked down in some confusion.

“Do not pay any heed to it, mother dear!” said Lucilia. “She chatters without thinking. But, once more—do come with us. Cornelius Cinna will very likely not be visible; you know how strangely the old man behaves. Come, mother—and remember, dear little mother, it is Cornelia’s birthday. She will certainly feel hurt, if the mother of her future husband lets the day pass without going to embrace her.”

129

“It is of no use; your father’s wishes have always been my law. Believe me, my sweet child, the utmost I can do is to allow you to visit at that house....”

“Come, that would be too bad, mother! I really believe, that if he had not formally released Quintus from his filial bondage, he would have been capable of forbidding the marriage.”

“It is quite possible,” replied Octavia. “That noble soul places the commonwealth above every other consideration. You can hardly imagine, how unswervingly he goes on the road he believes to be the right one.”

“Oh yes! I know his resolute nature,” said Claudia, “and I honor and admire it. Say no more, Lucilia; mother is right. A man must never yield even a hand-breadth, and silent obedience is a wife’s first duty.”

“You are my dear good child,” said Octavia much touched. “And believe me when I say, that the fulfilment of this duty, hard as it seems, is a heartfelt joy when such a man as your father is the husband. He is strict and firm, but not a tyrant; he is always ready to listen to reason, and to take council with the chosen companion of his life. Nay, he is not above learning from the humblest. On one point only he stands like a rock against which the surf beats in vain, and that point is Duty.”

“Here comes Baucis!” cried Lucilia with a laugh of saucy amusement. “Hail, oh fairest of brides, clad in the garb of rejoicing! Baucis in sky-blue! If this does not procure her a Philemon, I must despair of the fate of humanity.”

130

“You hear, mistress, how shamefully she mocks your waiting-woman,” said Baucis in lamentable tones. “I can never do anything right. If I wear grey, she hints at an ass; if I put on a handsome dress, she laughs at me to my face. However, what I had to say is, that the litters are at the door and the young master has asked three times if his sisters were coming.”

“We are quite ready,” said Claudia.

A dense crowd had gathered outside the vestibule. Quintus, with only three of his slaves, was waiting impatiently in the entrance. The twelve litter-bearers in their red livery stood by the poles, and eight negroes—the van and rear-guard of the procession—were staring vacantly into the air. A number of idlers had collected round these—the inquisitive gapers who always swarmed wherever there was anything to be seen, however trivial. These were the class who, not choosing to work, lived on the corn given away by the state;^[216] the uproarious mob who filled the upper rows of seats in the theatres and circus; the populace whose suffrages no Caesar was too proud to court, since it was among these that arbitrary despotism had its most staunch adherents, in the struggle against the last remnants of a free and freedom-loving aristocracy.

“Oh! how handsome she is!” ran from mouth to mouth among the loiterers, as Claudia stepped into the foremost litter; Lucilia took her place by her adopted sister’s side. The second litter was to carry Baucis and a young slave girl.

131

“Make way!” cried the principal runner, stepping among the crowd, who fell back, and the procession set out. Quintus followed on foot at a short distance.

Their way led them through the Forum and past the venerable temple of Saturn, where the Roman state-treasure was kept. To the right on the Palatine, spread the enormous palaces of the Caesars, and among them the capitol and the splendid but scarcely-finished residence of Domitian. Proceeding but slowly, they reached the Arch of Titus^[217] and then, leaving the fountain of the Meta Sudans^[218] and the vast Flavian amphitheatre^[219] to the right, they turned into the street leading to the Caelimontana Gate.^[220] The throng of humanity, which in the neighborhood of the Forum defied all description, here became somewhat thinner; and the litter-bearers mended their pace. In about ten minutes they stopped at a house, which in point of magnificence was hardly inferior to that of the Flamen Titus Claudius Mucianus. In the vestibule, beside the door-keeper, there stood a stout little woman, who hailed the visitors from afar with a broad grin, and was most eager to be of use to the young ladies as they alighted. This little woman was Chloe, Cornelia’s maid; her mistress now appeared on the scene, a tall and finely-made young girl, with hair as black as night, dressed entirely in white and wearing no ornament but a string of large, softly-gleaming pearls. The girls embraced each other warmly.

132

Quintus had by this time joined them; with a tender light in his eyes he went straight up to his betrothed and kissed her gravely on the forehead. “All health, happiness and blessing on you, on your birthday,^[221] my sweet Cornelia!” he said affectionately; then taking her hand he led her into the atrium. This was festally decorated with flowers; in the middle stood a hearth^[222] after the old fashion, but there were no images of the Lares and Penates. Cornelius Cinna held the opinions and views of the world at large, which had been taught by Lucretius^[223] and Pliny the

Elder;^[224] he thought it folly to enquire curiously as to the form and aspect of the Divinity, or even of any particular god or goddess; since, if there be indeed a Power beyond and behind Nature, that Power must be Force and Wisdom pure and simple. Hence he contemned all the ordinary household gods.

Eight or ten guests were already assembled in the atrium, among them Caius Aurelius and his faithful follower Herodianus.

The young Batavian did not at first seem to observe the new arrivals. He was standing in grave conversation with the master of the house, whose gloomy and almost sinister countenance by no means harmonized with the gay decorations of the hearth and the Corinthian columns.

"I thank you," said Cinna offering the young man his hand. "Your words have done me good. But now, ask no farther...."

"As you desire...."

"One thing more, my dear Caius—Quintus Claudius too must know how strongly I feel on this point. After dinner bring him, as if by chance, into my study...."

"Trust to me."

"Very good; and now for a few hours I will try to banish these memories from my soul. As you see me, Caius, you may think it a miracle that I am not choked by the insult! And not a soul that could sympathize with me! Nerva, my old friend, was absent. Even Trajan was so far off as Antium^[225]...."

"And Caius Aurelius was too young and too much a stranger?" said the Batavian laughing.

"Yes, I must confess that it was so. From the first, it is true, I saw you to be an admirable youth, and I thank my friend at Gades, who sent you with letters of introduction to me; but I could not guess how early ripe and truly noble your whole nature was, how fervent your patriotism and how unconquerable your pride.—But in all truth, Aurelius, from this day forth—here comes Quintus and his sisters; we part for the present, but do not forget!"

His face, which had brightened somewhat as he spoke, fell again to the expression of grave, almost sinister determination, which characterized his strongly-marked features. He crossed the atrium to the entrance where the young people, surrounded by their guests, were chatting gaily. Cinna pressed the hand of his niece's lover—kindly, but yet with a certain reserve—and addressed a few half-jesting words to the girls; but when Claudia attempted to offer such apology as best she might for her mother's absence, he turned away as if he did not hear.

At this moment the noble figure of an old man appeared in the doorway; with a gleaming white toga over his shoulders and flowing snowy locks, his towering height gave him a majestic presence.

"Cocceius Nerva," whispered the Batavian to Herodianus, who came up to him to ask.

"By Castor!" said the freedman, "but if I had met this man on arriving here, I should have said that he and no other must be the ruler of the world."

"Remember, we are in Rome, and you will do well to keep such ideas to yourself."

Cornelius Cinna led the illustrious senator to a handsome marble seat covered with carpets, and a circle of reverent friends formed round him at once.

"By all the gods," muttered Herodianus, "may I perish if that marble seat does not look for all the world like a throne; and they stand round him like the guard round Caesar.—And now, as he raises his right hand! If he were but thirty years younger, he would be like that image of Zeus we bought a while since in Gades; he only lacks the thunderbolt."

"Silence!" repeated Aurelius angrily. "You have had no wine yet to-day—what will you not say when you have played your part at dinner, if you are as thirsty as usual?"

"I will not say another word," replied the freedman.

Claudia, who till this instant had been talking eagerly with Ulpius Trajanus, a Hispanian friend of Cinna's, of Cocceius Nerva's—too eagerly, Aurelius thought—now went off with Cornelia under the colonnade to see the birthday gifts which, in accordance with an old Roman custom, had been sent to Cornelia early in the day. They were tastefully laid out in the arcade on brazen tables; gold brooches and necklaces among exquisite flowers; tissues mixed with silk;^[226] handsome books with purple edges, rolled on cylinders of amber and ebony; little slippers worked with pearls; beaten silver vessels from the hand of Mentor,^[227] the esteemed silversmith; Arabian and Indian perfumes from the stores of Niceros,^[228] the famous druggist; ribbons and trimmings of amethyst-purple;^[229] stuffed birds, fruits from Asia Minor, and a hundred other costly trifles from every quarter of the world made up the tribute sent to this spoilt daughter of a senatorial house.

Aurelius took advantage of the opportunity, and went to join the young girls. Claudia affected great surprise at seeing him, but immediately after gave the young man her hand with frank warmth, as though ashamed in truth of any disingenuous coquetry towards such a man as Aurelius. Still, the conversation they began was not particularly lively; they stood in front of the

tables and made the usual remarks—this present was charming, that offering was splendid. Cornelia declared, that prettiest of all were the exquisite roses^[230] that Quintus had given her—and Claudia sighed, very softly, still she sighed.

137

At this moment a grinning head appeared in the frame of a door close by. This was Chloe, Cornelia's maid.

"I beg your pardon," she said with comical importance. "But if I disturb you, it is from sheer necessity. The steward of the tables^[231] cannot arrange the places for the company."

"Indeed, how is that?" asked Cornelia severely. "Did I not give him full and exact instructions? He seems to have a short memory."

"Excuse us, dear mistress—but he had not counted on Cocceius Nerva. Come and help us, pray."

Cornelia frowned, but did as she was requested; her pallid face colored scarlet; such a question seemed to her vulgar and trivial, and she felt that shock to her taste which jars on a superior nature, when the details of daily life intrude on a moment of exalted feeling. Those roses from Paestum,^[232] that thought of Quintus! what a delicious flood of happy feeling they symbolized! And Chloe's appearance, in the very midst of this beauty and happiness, wounded her like the empty farcicality of an Atellanian buffoon.^[233]

Aurelius and Claudia were left to gaze at the display of birthday gifts with redoubled attention; you might have fancied they had never before seen such things as flowers or bracelets.

138

"How delicious!" said Claudia breathing the perfume of a splendid rose-bush.

"Delicious!" echoed Aurelius, putting his face close to the flowers. "And look at this strange bird! How naturally it sits with its wings spread out—exactly as if it were alive."

"It is a parrot from the banks of the Indus."

"Or a phoenix^[234]...."

"A phoenix? I thought that story of Tacitus' was a mere fable."

"Nay, not altogether. The marvellous bird, which burns its father or itself and then rises from its ashes in renewed youth, is no doubt a myth. But does not Pliny tell us of a real phoenix, which builds its nest at the sources of the Nile and shines like pure gold?"

"What, seriously?" and she gently stroked the neck of the stuffed bird with her finger.

"How soft it feels!" she said.

"Like crape from Cos,"^[235] said Aurelius, doing the same. His hand touched hers, and Claudia colored. She hastily stooped over a book lying close by—the "Thebais" of Statius—and read the title, written in gold on the outside of the roll.

139

"A capital work," said the Batavian, "I read it some time since in Trajectum."

"And to me, a Roman, it remains unknown."

"If you only desire it, I will go to-morrow morning to the bookseller in the Argiletum and bring you the best copy I can find."

"Oh! you are too kind!" replied Claudia.

Then there was a pause, while Aurelius examined with the greatest interest the quality of some flaxen cloth from Cordova. At last he began hesitatingly:

"If you will not think it too bold, allow me to propose...."

"Speak on," said Claudia, again bending over the "Thebais."

"I should be only too happy, if I might be allowed to read this masterpiece of Statius aloud to you. Without wishing to boast, I have had a good deal of practice in reading and declamation, and,—as you know, epic^[236] poetry was originally intended for recitation."

"Of course; it is for that very reason called epic. I may own too, that there is nothing I like better than to hear good reading. Quintus reads very well, but he rarely has time or is in the humor."

"You will allow me then?"

"I beg you to be so good."

"And when?"

"That we will settle presently; just now, I see, they are going to table."

"Where have you hidden yourselves?" cried Lucilia flying into the hall as lightly as a deer. "I have been seeking you everywhere. Come, make haste; I am desperately hungry."

140

"She is hungry!" thought Claudia with a glance up to heaven. "I hardly know whether to envy her or to pity her!"

CHAPTER XI.

The meal was ended; Cocceius Nerva had proposed the health of Cornelia as the heroine of the day. After offering a libation, according to the ancient custom, he invoked the favor and mercy of the Immortals on the young girl; then he rose and left the triclinium. The whole company followed him, to listen to the sweet tones of soft music in the fresher air of the peristyle, and to walk up and down on the inlaid marble floor, chatting in low tones. Bronze lamps shed their light from between the Corinthian pillars, and the stars shone down from the cloudless skies; in the court itself a confidential twilight prevailed.

"Now, my sweet Claudia, tell me, how do you like Trajan?"[237] whispered Lucilia in her sister's ear as she stood meditatively by the fountain.

"I have only seen him to-day for the third time—how can I judge?"

"To me he is quite too delightful. What a pity that he is already married.—To be sure, even then he would be too old...."

"Do you think so?" said Claudia absently.

"Why, you seem to have forgotten that he was consul a long time ago."

"Was he?"

"Yes, of course, with Glabrio. How often your father has spoken of him."

"I do not happen to remember it."

"To be sure, we were still in the nursery, and stories of Cupid and Psyche[238] interested us more than the virtues of a statesman."

Claudia sighed: "Happy childhood!" she said sadly.

"Nerva even—old Nerva—thinks great things of him," Lucilia went on, without observing this diversion. "He calls him his son, and is always ready to listen to his counsels—and in fact it is well worth while to listen to what Trajan has to say. You cannot think how cleverly, how wisely and judiciously he can talk. And at the same time he is so honest, so simple, so unpretentious! No one would imagine from his appearance, that he once was the commander-in-chief of all the forces in Germany, with unlimited authority, and won a glorious victory."

"Where in the world did you acquire all this information as to his merits?—Whenever I looked across at you, you were chatting with Caius Afranius."

"Cneius, not Caius."

"I thought it was Caius. Considering it was your first meeting, your conversation with this Afranius was somewhat eager."

"Oh! I had met him before—a week or more ago; do you not remember? The day you had a headache. He is intimate with Cornelius. He has been in Rome since the beginning of March, and is already beginning to play an important part in the Forum."[239]

"Is he a jurist?" asked Claudia.

"A defender of the oppressed and accuser of the criminal!" answered Lucilia warmly. "He has even gained a cause, quite lately, against Clodianus, Caesar's adjutant. His eloquence and powerful argument won him the victory, in spite of all his adversary's art, and the impression he made was so tremendous, that for the moment every one forgot how dangerous it is to have Clodianus for an enemy. The whole Basilica[240] shook with the applause."

"Did he himself tell you this?"

"Certainly not! I heard it from Ulpian Trajanus."

"And that no doubt is what makes you think Trajan so amiable?"

"Silly child! Do you suppose...? You know, my dear, that when folks are in love, they see the whole world from one point of view."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I mean that you would say with Theognis[241] of Megara, that amiable poet:

"Temper the pangs of love and assuage the torments, O Goddess,
That gnaw my heart! Oh! restore my joy and contentment."

"You are incorrigible!" said Claudia.

But Lucilia, with a merry twinkle in her eye, laid her hand on her companion's shoulder, saying softly: "Ah! fluttering heart, it is vain to try concealment! Your Lucilia's experience and knowledge of mankind can see through every disguise. 'Restore my joy, bring Aurelius to my side.' It is the wolf in the fable—he comes softly down on his prey with a tender, elegiac grace!

Sigh again—with Sappho this time—:

‘Woe is me! my tremulous heart beats faintly—
Thou art near! My faltering voice refuses utterance even!’”

And she glided off, while Claudia stood gazing fixedly at the sparkling water in the basin. In her somewhat hasty retreat, Lucilia ran up against the broad back of Herodianus, who was clinging convulsively to the back of a chair with both hands, and leaning over it gazed up, as if spellbound, in silent contemplation at the star-spangled sky.

“I beg your pardon, old sinner!”[242] said the girl saucily, as she passed on; but a deep sigh from the freedman made her pause.

“What is the matter, oh! boon companion from the North? Are you suffering from apoplexy? or do you wish to become a mathematician?”[243] Why are you staring so dolefully up at the Pleiades?”

144

“Ah! sweet mistress—what is it the Greek sage says? ‘All things flow away!’[244] I too am flowing away. I do not know how I feel.”

“The wine-cup could answer that perhaps,” suggested Lucilia.

“No indeed—my feeble constitution to be sure—and that Caecubum was excellent. Perhaps it has flowed through all my limbs—but with all respect be it said, I am used to that.—And a sense of propriety—but you see, mistress, I cannot stir from the spot, and at the same time—oh no! it is not the wine, for I feel full of lofty ideas; my head is clear—uplifted, I might say, to Olympian heights—like Pelion piled on Ossa. Oh fair lady! you who are kindness itself, allow me to ask you one question...!”

“Speak, you shameless toper; but first sit down, for I foresee the moment when, if you do not, the chair will slide away on the polished pavement and you will fall on the top of it.”

“You are right, mistress—and it is all in my knees! my miserable legs—you are very right, the pavement is slippery. Why are pavements so polished, I wonder? Very well, then I will sit down. Excuse me if I seem to have some difficulty in doing so.—The gods have doomed the fat to labor and sweat.—There, now I am seated.”

145

“By Lyaeus,[245] but you are a scandal! Here, even here, in the house of Cinna, where temperance reigns supreme....”

“Temperance is good—I knew that long ago, fair Lucilia.—But now, lend me your ear. Who—who—was that magnificent creature—that splendidly-developed woman who sat at the end, quite at the bottom of the table, not far from your worthy—your—what is her name—Baucis. She wore a brown dress—an elegant bracelet clasped her arm....”

“Who can you mean?” asked Lucilia, looking round her; Herodianus also looked about.

“There, there she is,” he whispered rapturously: “She is talking to Ulpius Trajanus. Ye gods! what a form! what grace and dignity!”

Lucilia made a desperate effort and swallowed her laughter.

“That?” she said, irresistibly tempted to carry on the jest: “That short, stout woman by the pillar?”

“Just going into the hall.”

“That is Chloe, who brought up our sweet friend Cornelia. She is a native of Antium, the daughter of a freedman, six and thirty years of age, unmarried, and possessor of a little fortune—what more can heart desire? In truth, Herodianus, I admire your distinguished taste: that round face, that short fat throat, that wide mouth—wider even than mine—are these not heaven-sent gifts from Cypris herself?”

“To me she is divine. Past the first bud of youth, mature in body and mind; Chloe stirs my soul to feelings, which till this hour I had never appreciated. Fifty years old—and even now unblest with the joys of family life! Oh Chloe! Chloe! If only you had crossed my path earlier!... I ... I might not have drunk so much Caecubum and Falernian! When Hymen opens his bosom to receive us, the rock of offence fades away.... Alas mistress, if the spring-tide of life could but blossom for me once more! If I could again rest my head on the bosom of a loving woman...! Trajectum, city of my heart, home of my youth! I remember to this day how my mother—for the last time—cut my hair. It was up in the little corner room. How long, long ago! Oh! if only I were away, far away from here! What have I left to live for in this world? A cup of wine! Oh! woe is me!”

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And he began to cry copiously, but noiselessly.

Lucilia thought it advisable to leave the man’s strange mood to run its course. “Is it in earnest or a mere craze?” she thought, as she shook her head. Then she danced off to join Cornelia, who was sitting under the arcade, listening with half indifferent attention to the muttered counsels of Baucis.

“What Pythian wisdom are you uttering now, O blue-robed Baucis?” asked Lucilia, patting the slave-woman lightly on the shoulder.

“Wisdom that you would do well to profit by,” retorted Baucis. “A new veil or an amusing book is,

I know, dearer to you far than the most sacred oracles."

"Indeed? Who told you that? Chatter away in all confidence!—on the contrary—if what you told me the other day about Barbillus,[246] the priest of Isis, is true...."

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"I was just speaking of that very thing. Our noble Cornelia is astounded at the extraordinary miracle. Exactly at the very moment, that Barbillus had foretold, I fell in a swoon, as he had said, and saw the mysterious vision. I saw the goddess floating above me in shining white. O, ye immortals! I knew of course that it was not she herself, only her image in a dream; for how should Isis, the all powerful, condescend to come down to me, a humble slave, and to speak with me—and in Greek too! Still, I could almost have sworn that it was she, I saw her so plainly—the folds of her silvery robe, and her noble and gentle face, so lovely, oh, so lovely! as beautiful as you are, noble Cornelia. No, I maintain it; I will never apply to any other priest than Barbillus, the favorite of the gods. He will reveal my whole future life to me—only think, noble Cornelia, for the ridiculously small price of two hundred sesterces—but I did not happen to have so much about me just then. Besides—what can I expect should happen to me at my time of life? My dear Quintus has his sweet Cornelia; our darling Claudia sooner or later—well, well, I meant nothing—and you, bright Lucilia—I cannot be anxious about you. You bear your own happiness in yourself. Well, so I said very humbly: 'Oh! my lord,' said I, 'no future lies before me. But I will tell the fair Cornelia, betrothed to our Quintus, that you are a true prophet—our Cornelia, who is so full of melancholy fancies, and who prays so fervently and humbly to the beneficent goddess.' Then Barbillus gave me this precious amulet.—It is only made of horn, but the power that resides in it makes it precious."

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Cornelia had listened to her in silence, and her face was as pale as death.

"Listen," she began after a pause: "You are advanced in age and rich in experience, and for many a year you have had to do with the chosen servants of the goddess. What do you advise me? Last night I had a dream[247]—a mysterious dream. I was standing alone on a vast untilled plain; everything was deserted and silent. There was not a tree, not a shrub, not a herb—rotting bones and nothing else lay hideous on the ground, but far away on the horizon shone the walls and towers of a splendid town."

"That is full of meaning," observed Baucis.

"Listen to the end. As I gazed at the distant and radiant city, I felt my heart swell with fervent and unspeakable longing. I struggled breathlessly to get forwards, but my feet seemed rooted to the ground. I was seized with terror, and trembling with fear I looked upwards; there I saw Quintus, high above me, but coming across the waste like Helios in the sun-chariot, and beckoning to me lovingly. I struggled, I groaned, I screamed. In vain! I held up my hands and cried out with the fervor of anguish: 'Isis, mother of the universe! Isis, save me!'—But the goddess was deaf. At last, after a long agony, I heard Chloe's voice; the good soul was standing by my bed. I awoke groaning...."

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"A hideous dream," said Baucis.

"And when I question my heart, it seems to me that it bodes evil."

"Folly!" laughed Lucilia. "I have dreamed worse things than that a hundred times, and no great event has ever happened to me. What does it mean? Why, that you were lying uncomfortably, or had read something the day before...."

Cornelia rose gravely.

"My dearest, you are not cross with me?" cried Lucilia following her.

"Not at all," said Cornelia with a polite smile. "No, indeed, certainly not," she added less coldly, as her eyes met Lucilia's affectionate glance. "Come, let us be moving. Such discourse ill-beseems a festival, and to-day is to be a festival, my birthday."

Meanwhile Caius Aurelius had found a pretext—in agreement with his promise to Cinna—for taking Quintus Claudius into his host's study, and a minute later Cinna himself came in, accompanied by Marcus Cocceius Nerva.

"At last!" cried Cinna when all were seated. "It has been sticking in my throat like a mouthful of poison. Quintus, you too must hear what I have to say. The facts are perhaps known to you, for the house of Titus Claudius is intimately allied with the palace...."

"I know nothing, I can assure you," interrupted Quintus, somewhat coldly.

"Well then, hear them now. I know you to be a young man of proved courage and of excellent understanding.—Until now you have taken the darkness for light and bitter for sweet, as not discerning them; your father's strong spirit has influenced you, and his errors of judgment have descended to you. But now, my friend, use your own judgment, and ask yourself on your honor: Is Rome still Rome?"

150

"You really excite my curiosity," said the young man, with more reserve than ever.

Cornelius Cinna shut the doors; then he went on in a mysterious and trembling voice:

"It was last night. Happily for you, Nerva, your ailing health had taken you into the country, and so saved you from the worst. I was lying in bed, but I could not sleep; I was tormented by a

ceaseless whirl of confused thoughts, and was on the point of calling to Charicles, that he might read to me. Suddenly I heard heavy blows on the house door.... 'Porter, wake up, make haste, a message from Caesar!'"

Cocceius Nerva leaned forward eagerly in his chair; his breath came quicker and deeper as he listened. Cornelius Cinna went on.

"My bedroom door was opened, so I heard every word. I heard the porter refuse admittance. 'Caesar requires your master's presence at the palace,' said a voice outside. I sprang up and ordered him to open the door. I had hardly time to throw on my toga, when Caesar's messengers came into the atrium—men at arms belonging to the praetorian guard. 'Our god and master Domitian[248] requires you to attend immediately,' said the officer. 'Is the state in danger?' I asked angrily. The soldier shrugged his shoulders; 'I do not know,' he said; 'our orders are to fetch you; no reasons were given. Do not delay, noble Cinna, the litter is at the door.'" 151

"Unheard-of!—" murmured Nerva, passing his fingers through his grey hair.

"I wanted to refuse; my own chair and bearers were ready—'That will not do,' said the soldier: 'You are to come alone, with no followers.' Cinna without followers! I considered a moment, but only for a moment—then I had decided.—The situation was serious, I looked on the whole thing as a plot. 'Caesar,' said I to myself, 'counts on your defying him, and hopes thus to find a pretext for your destruction—long since determined on. He will avail himself of that. He shrinks from dealing you an arbitrary blow for no reason at all, for he knows that the Romans love you, and he dreads the public resentment. Hence, if you refuse to obey, you will supply him with an excuse...!' Well—I obeyed.... Cornelius Cinna obeyed! And after all it might concern the weal or woe of the state.—As a precaution, however, I hid a phial of poison in my dress and then I told the men at arms that I was ready."

"You acted very wisely," said Cocceius Nerva.

"It was the wisdom of necessity. Now, listen to what seems incredible. When I reached the palace, I was received by slaves dressed all in black; they led me into a hall hung with black, where I found all the leading men of the senate and of the knightly order assembled and waiting in agonized expectation. They all, like me, had been abruptly fetched from their beds and brought thither in litters sent by Caesar. Presently we were desired to sit down, and a black column was placed in front of each man, with his name engraved upon it. Two sepulchral lamps were then lighted and youths, dressed in black, performed a solemn dance, and a funeral banquet,[249] served on black dishes, closed the hideous farce. Caesar himself, calm and haughty, took the head of the table. Every one seemed paralyzed; each one expected to meet his death the next instant. Sextus, who sat by my side, was sobbing like a woman. I whispered to him to be calm—that the whole thing was a mere brutal jest, but he was not to be convinced and broke into tears."

"He is but a coward—I know him well!" said Nerva.

"A stammering child! As for me, I really do not know myself, what gave me a conviction from the very first, that we were in no danger. Caesar would talk of nothing but things which referred to death and murder and yet, in spite of that, my confidence grew each moment. But I was burning with rage, with revengeful fury, that I could scarcely control or conceal."

"I wonder indeed that you could bear it," cried Nerva, drawing a deep breath. "Knowing you as I do, it is nothing less than a miracle."

"A miracle indeed! But the Fates would not have it that Cornelius Cinna should fall into so stupid a trap.—I mastered myself. At last Caesar rose from the table and dismissed us, and the guard escorted us home again.—I was choking with shame and wrath. What am I, my friend Nerva, that I am to submit to such treatment? Am I a Roman or no? Am I Cornelius Cinna—or a slave, a dog? Was such base buffoonery ever heard of even under a Nero, or Caligula? Nay, my endurance is at an end! Sooner would I be a street porter in the meanest suburb,[250] than remain senator under the burden of this intolerable yoke!" 153

He sank back in his chair with a groan, and covered his face. There was a long pause, which Quintus was the first to break.

"What!" he said with a scowl. "Did Caesar dare to do such things? I have long known, that he was liable to fits of extravagant whims and fancies, but—as I understood—only in his treatment of the foes of the throne. I believed in the wisdom of my venerable and learned father, when he assured me that some injustice, both apparent and real, was inevitable in the conduct of so vast an empire; that the good of the commonwealth was paramount over the fate of individuals.—But now, by the gods, Cinna! but if your indignation has not painted the picture too darkly..."

"Too darkly!" exclaimed Cinna starting up. "To be sure, you are the son of Titus Claudius. But hear me to the end. Hardly had Charicles once more put out the lamp, when I again heard a knocking at the door. Would you believe it? another message from Caesar. His gracious majesty this time sent me the fellow who had led the dance in black as a present, and begged to know how I had liked the midnight supper. By the great name of Brutus! A tipsy reveller never spurned a beggar with more utter contempt;[251] in the first burst of anger I could have flung the boy on the ground. But I recollected myself. Cornelius Cinna will never let the weapon atone for the arm that wields it..." 154

Nerva rose and clasped his excited and angry friend in his arms.

"Be calm," he said in a deep voice. Then, going up to Quintus he said loftily:

"And you, noble youth, give me your right hand in pledge of silence! Not that Cornelius Cinna has said anything that need shun the light of day—but you know the danger to which freedom of speech is exposed. His indignation and bitter feeling must remain a secret...."

"A secret? and why? To-morrow I propose seeing Caesar at his great reception. I will hear from his own lips the meaning of this mysterious midnight banquet. I will insist on satisfaction for Cinna...."

"Madman, what are you thinking of?" cried Nerva horrified.

"Of my duty—rely on my discretion. Caesar owes something to me...."

"Domitian owes you something!" laughed Cinna scornfully. "Do you not know, that he hates those most who have rendered him a service? Do not I know it by my own experience?"

"It is worth trying, at any rate," said Quintus. "But now allow me to breathe the fresh air; I am suffocating in here." And as he spoke he unbarred the door and quitted the room.

"You must dissuade him!" said Nerva, as the door closed upon him.

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"He is mad," said Cinna. Then, turning to Aurelius, he went on: "You, my friend, go now and mingle with the guests. Amuse yourself, refresh and rest yourself. You are young, and youth claims its dues. To-morrow—you know—at the house of Afranius...."

"Yes, I know," answered Aurelius, drawing a deep breath, "and I thank you, noble friends, for honoring me by admitting me to your society and confidence."

He went slowly out into the atrium, where the darkness was but dimly broken by a few lamps hanging under the colonnade. A cold chill fell on his heart, for, from the peristyle, he heard a girl's voice singing a graceful melody to the chords of a cithara. It was the same air that had charmed his heart before now, at Baiae—the Spring song of Ibycus; it was the same voice—the voice of his beautiful, adored and peerless Claudia. These few weeks had wrought an entire change in him. He had been unresistingly drawn into the vortex of two engulfing passions. On one hand was the noble girl whom he worshipped and perhaps might never win, on the other were the proud nobles—men inspired with the most fervid patriotism, who had taken him spellbound as by some sacred magic; the champions of liberty, of manly dignity, of proud Roman virtue, among a degenerate rabble of slaves. What a storm and whirl of feeling in the present, and what a struggle to be fought in the future!

He stood still to listen; a faint murmur coming up through the peaceful night, was all that could be heard of the tumult of the busy city that surrounded them, and the sweet girlish voice rose clear and strong—as pure and holy as though in all the earth there was no such thing as sorrow, as remorse and crime. The song, as it soared up fresh and strong from the innocent soul, seemed to rise to heaven in atonement for the infinite wickedness of the two million souls in the city, and for the foul and bloody deeds of its tyrants. Aurelius quivered in every nerve, and tears sprang to his eyes; but he instantly struck his breast resolutely and defiantly, and dashing his hand across his wet lashes, went through the corridor into the peristyle.

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CHAPTER XII.

It was the middle of the second vigil—between ten and eleven o'clock at night by our reckoning of time—and the house of Cornelius Cinna was sunk in silent repose. The lamp in the peristyle was extinguished, and the last guests—Claudia, Lucilia and Quintus—had left about half an hour since....

There was a sound of steps in the colonnade—soft, cautious, and mysterious. Two women wrapped in large cloaks went to the back door,[252] followed by a sturdy slave.

"Oh! my sweet mistress," whispered Chloe, as she opened the little gate, "you may believe it or not, but my knees shake beneath me. If your uncle were to discover us....! It would be the death of me!"

"Silence!" replied Cornelia. "My uncle is sound asleep. And even if he were to find out...."

"Oh yes! I know very well, you are not afraid of his anger. And in fact what could he do to you? But I—ye merciful gods!—Are you quite certain that the priest expects us?"

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"Perfectly certain. Aspasia brought me a quite distinct message."

"Well then—I wash my hands in innocence. It is fearfully dark out here—I shall be truly thankful, if nothing dreadful happens to us."

"Silly thing! The Temple of Isis is quite near at hand, and Parmenio is with us."

Chloe closed the door behind her and sighed deeply; still she made one more attempt to stop her mistress. "Must it be to-day?" she said plaintively.

"Yes, this very hour. When the day is done in which the dream was seen, the seer's power is gone. You heard Baucis say so."

"Baucis!" said Chloe contemptuously.

"She only repeated the priest's words. Make haste; minutes are precious. Go in front, my good Parmenio."

They went down the street and turned to the right along a narrow alley, which zigzagged between high walls and led them to the back of the temple of Isis. They presently reached the vestibule of Barbillus, where a slave was waiting behind the door with a gilt lantern; he bowed low and led them, without speaking a word, to an upper room.

Barbillus—a man of marked eastern type, handsome and tall, with waving locks, like an oriental Zeus—received his guests with an admirable combination of affability and dignified reserve. He desired Chloe and the astonished slave to wait in an outer room, while he opened a side door and led the way into another. Cornelia followed him with a beating heart, through a perfect labyrinth of dimly-lighted rooms and corridors, till at length they came into a hall mysteriously fitted up as a sanctuary, and well calculated to impress the senses with a magical spell. Dark curtains, embroidered with dead silver, hung over the walls on every side, and in a niche, on a silver pedestal, sat a statue of the goddess closely wrapped in veils, while, to the right and left of the figure, magnificent censers stood on brazen tripods. A lamp hanging from the star-spangled ceiling cast a ghostly blue light on the scene.

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"Pray here, my daughter," said Barbillus in a deep voice; "beseech the all-merciful mother of the universe to enlighten our spirits; mine, that I may see and speak, thine, that thou mayest hear and learn. I will leave thee to meditate alone, fair Cornelia." And he quitted the room, slowly closing the tapestried door.

Hardly had he left her, when Cornelia sank on her knees in fervent devotion. The mystical surroundings, the dim blue light, the perfume of incense,[253] which loaded the air with stupifying sweetness, and the veiled and silent presence of the divinity—all combined to impress her profoundly. Her heart was full to bursting.

Suddenly the air was filled with a sound as of the music of the spheres. A delicious harmony seemed to proceed from the walls, the floor beneath her, and the statue itself, and to cradle her soul in lulling witchery; while, at the same instant, pale tongues of flame broke out over the two censers and danced fitfully, but, as it seemed, lovingly up to the shrouded goddess.

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"Isis! O Isis!" sobbed the girl, raising her snowy arms to the divinity. "First-born of the ages![254] Highest among the Immortals! Sovereign lady of departed souls! One and perfect revelation of all the gods and goddesses! Almighty Queen, whose nod the heavens and earth obey! Eternal Power, who art blest under a thousand forms and by a thousand names, by the sages of every land! Hear, O hear me! I have all thou canst bestow of earthly joys; I am young, fair and rich, and have the love of the noblest and best heart that beats among the youth of Rome! And yet, one thing is lacking to me, O Goddess! One thing, which I crave of thy mercy with floods of tears: Peace, inward, all-sufficient peace of heart. Isis! mother of heaven, hear me! Over my head there lowers a forecast of evil; my spirit wanders groping in darkness. Thou hast sent me a dream, a warning; but alas! thine ignorant child strives in vain to read it.—Teach me thyself to know thy will; reveal

thyself to me! Give me peace and the calm beatitude, the grace of heaven! Save, oh! save me! All that I dare call mine must ere long fade.—The storms of time must sweep it away! Give me salvation, the true love which is eternal! Isis, all-loving Isis, have pity on me!”

The goddess’s veil was lifted a little from her face; half-appalled, half-fascinated, Cornelia gazed up at it. A tender radiance like moonlight fell upon the pale, marble features, and a benevolent smile parted the lips. But before the tremulous worshipper was fully aware of what was happening, the light vanished, the veil was softly dropped—it was all gone like a dream, and the music as suddenly ceased. Cornelia was aware of a violent shock as of an earthquake. Hardly mistress of herself, she closed her eyes and pressed her forehead against the pedestal of the statue. When she looked up again, Barbillus was standing by her side in a white robe^[255] made of byssus tissue, and he smiled as he held out his hand to her.

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“The goddess has heard your prayer,” he said in an agitated voice. “Tell me now what the vision was, and listen to the words of her servant.”

As he spoke he drew the curtain aside from a studded door, and led Cornelia up a narrow stair to an attic room, where he carefully closed the shutters and desired Cornelia to be seated on a couch. No sooner had she obeyed, than the tapers on a small altar were lighted—as the censers before had been—without any visible agency.

Barbillus knelt down, bowing his face over a sacred book which lay unrolled between the tapers, and he remained in this position, while Cornelia related her dream. Then, after putting up a silent prayer, he suddenly went up to the girl, bending down over her in such a way that she could perceive the small tonsure^[256] on the crown of his head in the middle of his dark curls.

“Daughter!” he said, as he drew himself up again, “your dream betokens no good. A fatality is hovering over you and yours, which can only be averted by the direct intervention of the goddess. To this end it is needful that you should, for the next four weeks, bring an offering daily at the same hour as to-night. Gold, incense and roses are pleasing in the eyes of the divinity.”

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“I knew it, oh! I knew it,” groaned Cornelia. “Not for nothing has my heart been held in a cold and deathlike grasp! But, tell me, what is the meaning of the desert place, of the shining city, and of my lover’s appearance?”

“All this I will tell you, when the month is out. Trust me, daughter, and do that which you are enjoined.”

“Oh! I will do it!” cried Cornelia ecstatically, and she pressed the priest’s hand to her lips. “My pearls, my jewels—everything will I sacrifice joyfully, if only I may appease Fate. Ah! my lord, you could never, never guess how sad my soul is! Tell me only one thing, I entreat you, does the danger threaten me through my beloved Quintus?”

The priest closed his eyes.

“I dare not answer you,” he said with an effort. “My part is only to announce inevitable doom; when I am still permitted to hope that the favor of the all-gracious mother may yet prevail, silence is the first duty of my office.”

“Well then, I must submit. Meanwhile—as a proof of my infinite gratitude—accept this trifling offering. Pray for me, Barbillus, intercede for me with the almighty goddess.”

She gave him a costly brooch set with rubies, emeralds and chrysolites,^[257] and as she stood—her eyes cast down in maidenly shyness—she did not see the flash of greed that sparkled under the Asiatic’s long fine lashes, giving place immediately to the lofty and dignified expression, that usually characterized him.

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“Thanks, my daughter,” he said graciously. “I will offer the gifts on the shrine of the goddess. And you too, my child, do not fail to entreat the immortals that all may yet be well.”

He gave her his hand, and led her by a circuitous route back again to the anteroom, where Parmenio stood in a corner, as upright as a soldier on guard, while Chloe had gone to sleep in her comfortable seat. “Come,” said Cornelia, shaking her by the shoulder.

Chloe started up.

“You have been a long time,” she exclaimed. “It cannot be far short of midnight.”

Just as the three were about to step out into the street again, a female form flew past them, and close behind, puffing and panting, ran a man, while farther away, where the streets crossed, they heard loud laughter.

“Give it up, the roe is too fleet!” cried a coarse bass voice, and the pursuer turned on his heel, while two other men slowly came to meet him. All three were wrapped in thick cloaks,^[258] with the hoods pulled down in spite of the heat. For a second Cornelia hesitated; then she boldly went forth and walked past the strange trio. They were talking together in an undertone, and yet not so softly but that Cornelia could hear a few words.

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“By Pluto!” said one. “There goes a beauty! I saw her face, as the boy’s lantern lighted it up.”

“Aphrodite is gracious,” said the second, “to give us a substitute for the one who has escaped. I am just in the mood for an adventure. Let us follow the fair one.”

Cornelia hastened her step, but before she had reached the main road she was surrounded.

"Well, pretty pigeon," a harsh voice croaked in her ear. "Out and about so late! And where are you flying, if I am allowed to ask?"

Cornelia was at once aware, that these were not highway plunderers, but idle adventurers, and evidently men of rank and position. This at once restored her presence of mind, and she walked on faster than ever. But in vain. The man who had addressed her, a stout figure of medium height, with an extraordinarily confident and swaggering address, came close up to her and laid his left hand on her shoulder to detain her. Furious indignation boiled in her soul; she shook herself free and stood still.

"Parmenio," she said resolutely, "as you love your life, do as I bid you—I, the niece of the illustrious Cornelius Cinna. The first man who dares to lay a finger on the hem of this robe—strike him dead."

"That can be done in no time!" cried Parmenio, taking the bold intruder by the throat. The other two started back as if struck by lightning.

"Mad fool, you shall die on the cross!" shrieked the man he had seized, directing a well-aimed blow with his fist. The slave dropped his arm in terror. There was a ring of such wild and tiger-like ferocity in the harsh tones, that the sturdy nature of the man was for the moment paralyzed. Cornelia and Chloe meanwhile had reached the high-road; Parmenio caught them up in a few strides, and they reached home safely under cover of the darkness.

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"You helpless idiots!" exclaimed the worsted victim, feeling at his throat. "What do you mean by staring as if it were a good joke, when a villain throttles me? You, Clodianus, have I loaded you with every honor and heaps of gold, that you should leave me in the lurch in this fashion? Take that for your loutish cowardice!"

And Domitian flew at him with the fury of a panther, and struck him a tremendous blow in the face. Clodianus shrank back.

"Forgive me!" he stammered, groaning with pain and rage. "I was so confounded at the man's daring...."

"Away! traitor.—Never let me set eyes on you again."

"Nay, pardon, my lord!" entreated the other, forgetting all else in his dread of losing his place. "Pardon and grace, my lord and god, I beseech thee. Do not withdraw thy favors from the most faithful of thy servants."

"Yes, my lord and god," added Parthenius, the chamberlain. "Forgive us, for nothing but reverence and consternation could have betrayed us into such a crime. Do not let it spoil a jovial night. It is the first time for long, that we have wandered through the streets in disguise, and shall a spiteful accident...."

"You are right," interrupted the Emperor. "I was in the best of humors...."

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"Then bid it return. Even his moods must surely obey the sovereign, whose sway extends over the whole world...."

"Curse it all! To think that of all women in the world.... Cinna's niece?... I did not even know, that the old fool had a niece. Whose house had she come out of?"

"That of Barbillus, the priest of Isis."

"Ah ha! One of the praying ninnies, that the juggler knows how to beguile so well! Capital! The girl pleases me. I should like—if it were only to spite the old curmudgeon—I hate Cinna like poison. He wants a lesson—he always carries his head as high as a conqueror in a triumph. As if it were not in my power to see those haughty iron features flung in the dust at my feet—Parthenius, we will talk of that, again. But now, away with all gloomy reflections, and long live folly!"

"Thanks, all thanks!" cried Clodianus, kissing the sovereign's hand.

"Pull the hood over my face, so—now my cloak over my chin—and we will go back into the streets. I should like to see the man, who can discover Caesar in such a guise. We must find an adventure yet, Parthenius—[259] some mad and absurd diversion, if it were only that the lips, which pronounce the fate of nations, should kiss some swarthy negress." [260]

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He led the way, and the others followed. Domitian did not see how his companions clenched their fists under their cloaks, nor hear the bitter curses, hardly uttered by their quivering lips.

CHAPTER XIII.

At the hour when Cornelia was setting out on her expedition to the temple of Isis, Lucilia and Claudia, escorted by their brother, reached home. The Flamen was still at work in his study; his grave and anxious face could be seen through the half-open door, bowed over his table. Even the sound of steps, which rang through the silence of the atrium, did not interrupt his busy labors.

Quintus hesitated; he would gladly have gone in to embrace his father, but after brief reflection he decided not to interrupt his late studies. He bid his sisters good-night, waved his hand affectionately towards the motionless figure that leaned over the desk, and left the house. His slaves and freedmen were waiting for him outside.

"All go home!" he said shortly.

His people were accustomed to his moods, and no one was surprised. But Blepyrus reminded him, with a shudder, of the attack in the Cyprius street.

"Fear nothing," replied Quintus; "I am armed. Besides, who could expect to meet me to-night in the streets."

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So his followers went on their way through the *Forum Romanum*, which was still crowded with people, while Quintus turned northwards across the *Circus Flaminius*^[261] and the Field of Mars. He soon found himself in the heart of that city of marble, which Caesar Augustus had created here as if by magic. A sombre blue overarched the labyrinth of pillars and domes, of friezes and statues, of groves and glades, where by day such motley crowds were busy. No light but the pale glimmer of the stars—whose mist-veiled brightness gave warning of the autumn rains—fell on the chaos of ill-defined forms; the moon had not yet risen. Utter solitude, utter silence prevailed. The listener could almost fancy he heard the rush of the river Tiber past the piers of the Aelian Bridge^[262]—or was it only the splash of water in one of the many aqueducts^[263] which, at that time, were so splendid a feature of the city?—A mysterious dreamy whisper!

Possessed by the sense of this stilly solitude, Quintus Claudius went on till nearly on the shore of the river. Under the avenues of trees it was blackly dark, and the air came up chill and damp from the stream; Quintus shivered slightly. Then he turned off in the direction of the *Via Lata*—the Broad Way, now the Corso. He did not know what mysterious influence had driven him out into the darkness and silence. He had felt as though he must fly from the vast mass of Rome, from its numberless market-places, its proud temples and basilicas—and now he was seized with homesickness for the familiar, beloved and hated hive of two million human souls. He shook himself. All that was most dissatisfied and contradictory in his nature rose clearly before his conscience. It was exactly in this way, that he had worked through all the systems of philosophy in turn—now flying from what at first he had eagerly run after, and now craving for what he had but just cast from him; one day an enthusiastic disciple of Epicurus, and the next a follower of the Stoics. But in neither of these views of the world could he find rest and refreshment for his truth-seeking soul. Zeno's contempt for all the joys of life seemed artificial to his ardent and poetic fancy, while the method and practice of Epicurus, ingeniously wreathing the mouth of the pit with roses to cover the depths below, stirred in him an irresistible impulse to sound those depths. That old Sphinx we call Life offered him a fresh riddle at every step, while forever denying all possibility of answering them. Thus, by degrees, he had wandered into that moral *Via Lata*—that broad way along which almost every educated Roman of that day walked, for better or for worse; that path of sceptical indifference, which made short work of every metaphysical belief, and lived so literally from day to day. Only a few men, like Titus Claudius the Flamen, clung to the old Latin religion and fulfilled its precepts in their highest sense, and so had effected a compromise with the needs of the times; most men looked down with contempt on the myths of popular belief without, however, being able to replace them by anything better. Nay, even the women of the educated class found no satisfaction in the worship they had inherited; they turned in crowds to the mystical rites of the old Egyptian goddess Isis, to whom a number of magnificent temples had been erected so early as at the time of the first Caesars. Quintus himself had drank of that shallow stream, but had found no comfort in it.

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The shortest way to the house of Thrax Barbatus would have been across the *Alta Semita*^[264] and past the temple on the Quirinal. But Quintus made a *détour*; after his late experiences he was anxious to avoid the less deserted streets; and not merely because fate had made him the accomplice in a deed, which by the laws of Rome was punished with the utmost severity; he could now no longer doubt that Eurymachus, Thrax Barbatus and Euterpe were attached to the sect of Nazarenes, and just at this very time the most stringent measures were in contemplation to suppress the disciples of the Nazarene. Indeed, if his father's views met with approbation in the Senate, nothing short of a regular persecution must ensue. In that case his share in the escape and rescue of a Christian slave might very likely be construed as treason against the safety of the state; and though Quintus felt no fears as to what might be the issue for himself, the thought of his father's grief filled him with anxiety.

He wrapped himself more closely in his ample cloak, and looked cautiously about him as he hastened along the northwestern declivity of the Quirinal hill. A company of the city-guard marched past him with an echoing tread, the smoke of their torches^[265] blew hot in his face, but no one noticed or recognized him. The streets grew narrower and more tortuous, the houses

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more squalid, the whole neighborhood was visibly plebeian. At last he reached the old wall,[266] built—so tradition said—by Servius Tullius; this quarter, in the time of the emperors, was of the worst repute in all Rome. Quintus stole cautiously along under the wall, for a few drinking-shops were still open and busy. Wretched girls from Syria and Gades here plied their shameful trade by the light of flickering clay lamps, while wrinkled and watery-eyed old hags poured the muddy wine of Veii[267] out of red jugs. Drunken men lay snoring under the tables, and coarse songs were roared out from hoarse throats, half-drowned, however, by the uproarious shouts of two fellows who were playing the favorite game of odd and even[268] with copper coins.

Suddenly the noise became three times louder than ever; there was a wild uproar, and piercing shrieks. The gamblers had fallen out over their petty stakes. After a short squabble one had drawn his knife on the other and stabbed him in the side. The wounded man fell, howling, on the ground and the assassin took to his heels. But the dancing girls, heedless of the catastrophe, began at once to rattle their castanets once more, and sway and whirl in their disgraceful pantomime.

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Quintus hurried on, filled with loathing. Never had the heartless turmoil of the great capital seemed so hideous as at this moment, in this obscure lair of humanity. Was not this squalid tragedy a reflection of all Rome—of the vast and mighty metropolis, with all its crimes, its contempt for the suffering of others, its mad lust of pleasure? It was but a short while since he had witnessed the very same scene, with more splendid surroundings and distinguished actors. For, had the events in Lycoris's garden been at all less horrible? Had not a man lain there too, bleeding and dying, while a prostitute—aye! for the brilliant and elegant Gaul was nothing else—had bewitched a heartless crowd by her fascinations? There, no doubt, were all the splendor and luxury of wealth—here the foul brutality of misery; but, at the bottom, they were the self-same thing, at the bottom each was a sign, easy to read, of degeneracy, decrepitude and decay.

And suddenly Quintus felt transported, as it were, from the life which surrounded him, into a new and unfamiliar atmosphere and light; and, strangest thing of all, that light seemed to shine forth from a pale face that he had seen but twice in his life; from the face of the humble and despised slave, who had so loftily smiled down on his persecutors and executioners. Could it be that such a thing existed as some supernatural magic? Or was it only admiration for the fortitude of a heroic nature?

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It was about midnight, when Quintus reached the house the flute-player had described to him. It was one of those tall, ill-constructed houses,[269] built by speculators to let in floors, and which abounded in the poorer parts of the city to the great risk of the public. Fairly substantial as to the ground floor, story towered over story till the topmost floor consisted of a single room, hardly better than a booth built of boards at a fair. The walls were cracked and sprung in many places, and here and there, where the wretched structure threatened to fall, the inhabitants had tried to prop them with beams, thus adding to their unsafe appearance.

The musician met the young man at the entrance; ninety steps—which, but for Euterpe's little lamp, he could never have mounted without mishap—led him to her habitation.

"Stop here!" said Euterpe, as Quintus was about to go up to the topmost floor. "Thrax Barbatus does not live quite under the tiles;"[270] and as she spoke she knocked at a door. Thrax Barbatus opened it, looking calm, almost cheerful.

Quintus entered a room, of which the neat and comfortable aspect quite delighted him. A three-branched lamp hung from the low ceiling; the walls were neatly colored of a reddish brown; small, but beautifully-executed paintings of flowers and fruit, showed brightly and prettily against this background. The floor was covered by a carpet, somewhat worn, but so handsome as to tell of better days in the past. A table, a chair, a few low seats and a small chest of dark oak composed the furniture—humble, no doubt, in the eyes of a Roman of rank, but still much better than Quintus had expected after climbing to such a height.

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"You are welcome to your servant's house," said the old man, to whom Quintus gave his hand. "We have looked for you with longing. I was almost afraid you might have repented...."

"You had my word that I should come," said Quintus.

He sat down on a wooden bench, and Thrax Barbatus went to a door at the other end of the room, which he opened and called out: "Glauce."

In a few minutes a young girl came into the room. Her face was sweet and pleasing, but bore traces of weeping; her brown hair fell loosely over her shoulders, and her tunic was ungirdled. Worn out with the anxiety and grief of the last few days, she had sunk on her bed and fallen asleep, and now, standing in the door-way, dazzled by the light and confused by the presence of the noble stranger, she was a pretty picture of maidenly bashfulness and timidity.

"Come, my sweet child, and welcome the protector of Eurymachus," Thrax began in caressing tones; "this noble youth is Quintus Claudius, the friend of the helpless. He will save the persecuted victim, and obtain his freedom from Stephanus, and procure him Caesar's pardon."

Glauce stood motionless for a moment; a faint flush tinged her cheeks. Then, weeping loudly, she flung herself into her father's arms and hid her face on his shoulder. Euterpe, meanwhile, had set a wine-jar and a dish of fruit on the table.

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"It is but little, but heartily offered," she said smiling, "and after your late walk you will not

refuse such slight refreshment.”

Then, taking a pine-log from the hearth-place, she struck the floor three times at short intervals.

She listened—all was still.

“He is asleep,” she said to Thrax, who had soothed his daughter’s sobs, and now took a seat by the brightly-lighted table.

“He has earned it!” said Glauce.

Euterpe repeated the knocking, and this time with better success. Some one could be heard moving below. In two minutes the stairs creaked, and a weather-tanned figure of middle height cautiously entered the room. Euterpe met him and respectfully introduced him to Quintus. “This, my lord, is my husband,” she said modestly. “He too had a share in the bold attempt in the park, for he has the greatest reverence for Eurymachus.”

“To be sure—I recognize you! It was you, who offered the fugitive your arm to help him up the narrow path to the top of the ridge.”

Diphilus gazed astonished into the young man’s face.

“It is true, my lord,” he said hesitatingly. “But how should you know that?”

“Oh! I was nigh at hand. If I had come forward, I could easily have stopped the way.”

Diphilus sank on to the seat by the side of Thrax with an expression of unconcealed astonishment, fixing his eyes on the young man’s face, as if to stamp the features of this mysterious ally indelibly on his memory. 175

Thrax Barbatus now solemnly extended his bony hand over the table, like a speaker beginning his discourse. Then he said in a low voice:

“Above all, my friends, remember that in Rome every stone has eyes and ears,^[271] and the thin walls of a lodging-house are as good as a spider’s web to the spy.”

The flute-player drew closer to her husband’s side.

“It is only too true,” she said with a sigh, “I could almost have sworn....”

“What?” asked Diphilus.

“That our pursuers are on our traces already.”^[272]

“How?”

“Nay, it is only my feeling about it. I am always in a state of mortal terror.”

Thrax Barbatus shook his head doubtfully. “Your fears are unfounded,” he said emphatically. “Not a man in Rome knows of our intimate relations with Eurymachus. My poor son, who left his home when he was hardly more than a boy and did not return for twenty years, when his own rather scarcely recognized him—no, Euterpe, the still face of the dead will betray nothing.” He passed his hand over his eyes. 176

“I know,” replied the flute-player. “And yet....”

“What is it?” asked the old man glancing hurriedly round.

“Alas!” said Euterpe, “I am afraid I was rash. Scold me, but I could not help it; when I heard that Philippus had been buried in the ground set apart for criminals and outcasts,^[273] my heart was fairly broken, and I vowed that his grave should not be left bare of some pious offering. So this evening, at the end of the first vigil, I stole out to the Esquiline hill, carrying a consecrated palm-branch hidden in my dress to lay on his grave. I found it after a short search, laid the palm upon it, said a short prayer, and came away. Suddenly I heard steps and voices; I hurried on, but they followed me, and as chance would have it I met a litter with torch-bearers. The light fell full on my face, though I turned away. At the same moment I heard one of the men, who followed me, begin to run. Then I was seized with mortal terror; by the temple of Isis in the *Via Moneta*^[274] I turned off to the left, and ran so fast into the next street, that I could hardly get out of the way of two women, who were at that instant coming out. The darkness protected me; I escaped and got home by a roundabout way. If the men who followed me were the city-watch, it does not matter. But supposing they were some of Stephanus’ people; they all knew me at Baiae, where I often played before their master. Oh! tell me, most illustrious patron, what shall we do if my fears are realized?” 177

These words were addressed to Quintus, for she saw that Thrax Barbatus was deeply touched by her loving attention to the dead, and she wished to escape being thanked.

Quintus Claudius, notwithstanding his strong sympathy with Thrax and Eurymachus, could not feel quite at his ease in his new and strange position. The idea that he—the member of a senatorial family, the son of one of the noblest houses in the empire—should make common cause with artizans, freedmen and slaves, was so preposterous in the state of society then existing, that even a lofty and magnanimous nature required time to enable it to subdue the sense of strangeness and even of repulsion. After some hesitation he addressed himself to Thrax, asking

him—as though half conscious of a wish to justify himself in his own eyes:

“And will you answer for the perfect innocence of Eurymachus, on your solemn oath and pledge?”

“My lord,” said Barbatius, “he is as innocent and pure as the sun in the sky. I will swear it by the soul of my dead son! Ah, you do not know his persecutor, the ruthless Stephanus—if you did, you would have no doubts in the matter. The crimes that man has committed during the last ten years, cry to God for vengeance like the blood of the massacred lamb of Bethlehem! I, as you see me, have been the victim of that wretch!”

“You too? How did that happen?”

“In the way which might be called ‘the way of Stephanus.’^[275] I had inherited a little fortune from my father, and had laid it out at interest; I intended to save it and add a little to it for Glauce, for I could earn my living as a smith. You know, my lord, how badly free labor is paid in Rome; however, no pressure of want had ever made me touch that little dowry. I only spent the interest even during five or six years, to make a comfortable home for Glauce and give her some education. Well, one day Stephanus produced a forged will, by which the money was left to him under some trivial pretext. He was a beginner in those days and tried his hand on small game, but since then he has grown greedy and gorges the fortunes of men of higher rank. However, everything turned out as was to be feared—false witnesses, cunning lawyers and bribed judges—I lost everything I possessed.”

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“Atrocious!” exclaimed the young noble. “And did no one come forward to stand up for you? Did no young advocate defend the truth for truth’s sake?”

“No one. Oh! Stephanus went to work more craftily than you fancy. He bribed those, who might have opposed him, with imaginary legacies from the testator—some he frightened with mysterious threats—but in short, he has grown rich, a perfect Croesus, and all by forged wills. Hundreds of his victims have perished in despair and misery. He shuns neither violence nor treachery; and he sins unpunished, for he has powerful supporters. It is said that Parthenius, the chamberlain....”

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“Enough!” interrupted Quintus. “His hour too will come; it would be well for your safety, no doubt, that it should strike soon.”

“We are not idle,” said Glauce. “My father has now found what he long hoped for in vain; a just and learned patron, whose liberality shrinks from no sacrifice. You must have heard of Cneius Afranius?”

“Cneius Afranius? I know him very well, and have met him repeatedly in the house of Cornelius Cinna. He is making himself talked about....”

“He has spoken in the Forum five or six times,” interrupted Thrax with eager warmth. “His success was splendid.—Ah! and what a feeling soul! What a heart overflowing with noble unselfishness. Merely for the sake of right and enthusiasm for the truth, he is indefatigable in his attacks on Stephanus, often as that cunning fox has succeeded in parrying the stroke. Twice, when Afranius was on the very point of opening his case in due form, some inscrutable power has intervened to stop him.—However, if it is true, that dropping water wears away a stone, even Stephanus must some day come to grief.”

Quintus sat silent for some time; he seemed to wish to reflect at leisure on all he had heard, and no one disturbed him.

“My friend,” he said at last: “I too am ready to help you in my way, as honestly as Cneius Afranius—but first tell me one thing. Is Eurymachus still in Rome?”

“In the neighborhood.”

“And you will not send him farther off as speedily as possible?”

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“It is impossible, my lord,” said the old man sadly. “Stephanus has set every means to work. Hundreds of watchmen and slave-catchers are on the alert; notices on the walls offer large sums for the apprehension of the fugitive; even appeals have been made to the Vestal virgins^[276] to pronounce their ban, so that he may be spellbound within Rome. In short, discovery would be certain....”

“It is so indeed, my lord,” added Diphilus. “And do you know why Stephanus is making this mighty stir? Eurymachus knows some secret of his life, some hideous crime, worse than all the rest he has ever committed. And it was for that reason, that even on the scene of his execution Eurymachus was gagged.”

“And moreover,” added the old man, “in his flight that night he wounded his foot badly. He could not leave his hiding-place at present, even if he wished it.”

“And what can I possibly do for you in these circumstances?”

“Procure his pardon, my lord!” cried Glauce, lifting her hands imploringly.

“Or a mild punishment,” added Diphilus.

“Perhaps,” Thrax went on, “you might even be able to help Afranius, by removing some of the

obstacles which hinder the course of justice. Your illustrious father—cannot he do anything he chooses in such matters? And will not his generosity pardon Eurymachus for escaping, if you are his advocate? I know, of course, that Titus Claudius is the foe of the common herd; often, indeed, he has exercised the sternest severity towards guilty slaves; still, he is wise and far-seeing—at fitting times he can be merciful too....”

“I will see what can be done.”

“God’s blessing rest on your head!”

Quintus looked keenly at the speaker.

“Listen,” he said after a short pause; “am I mistaken, or do you belong—as appearances would indicate—to the sect of Nazarenes?”

“My lord,” said Barbatus, “in speaking to the generous preserver of our Eurymachus, I may surely forget that prudence compels us to keep our religion a secret. Yes—I will freely confess it, I am one of those highly-favored ones, whom the people designate as Nazarenes. We are Christians—I and mine—for so we call ourselves after the founder of our sacred religion, who suffered death under Pontius Pilate. Diphilus and Euterpe too have received baptism, the act of dedication which seals our reception under the covenant of faith. We are Christians, my lord, and no power on earth will ever lead us back to the altars of your idolatrous worship. Caesar may revive the times of Nero, he may stigmatize as criminals humble and innocent beings, whose only ambition is righteousness; he can never stay the spread of the Kingdom of Heaven. Nay, indeed, most noble youth, but I tell you that every drop of blood that is spilt, raises up new witnesses to the eternal and divine truth of our belief.”

The old man ceased. His withered cheek was flushed.

“Well,” said Quintus, looking down. “But tell me one thing; does not your creed contain the dangerous doctrine of equality? Does it not remove the ancient landmarks between the high-born and the lowly, between the freeman and the slave? Does it not aim at the subversion of society and the destruction of the existing state of things?”

“Yes, my lord; we do aim at the destruction of all that must inevitably fall, if the Kingdom of the Lord is to come. We teach the equality, freedom and brotherhood of all men born of woman. But what is this but a return to primitive truth, to undisguised nature? Nothing can oppose us, but the power of custom or of self-interest; God himself, and all that is best in man, is for us. Where and when did a higher power ever give you chosen ones a right to cast your brethren into fetters? Where is it written: ‘You are the master, and this other man, who feels joy and pain as you yourself do, is your slave and shall bow down to you?’ It sounds bold, I know, O Quintus; but I ask you: What essential difference is there between the son of the Claudia family and the hapless Eurymachus? That which sets you above him is purely fortuitous; that which constitutes your equality, is the divine will and act of God. Or do you really believe, that a slave can never be wiser, cleverer, more virtuous, courageous, and generous than the offspring of a senatorial house? Supposing you had been changed in the cradle, do you imagine that all the world would have read the slave’s humble birth stamped on his brow? Nay, noble youth! The distance between you, that looks like a gulf, is merely an artificial division, an illusory effect of fancy, which must vanish before the light of the new revelation. We, even we, the sons of the people—even those who are bondsmen and slaves, who toil and suffer in your factories and prisons^[277]—all, all are alike called to be the sons of God. ‘Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,’ saith the Saviour, ‘and I will give you rest.’ Yea, and his call shall not be in vain. Thousands and thousands answer to it^[278]—In remotest Asia, in Egypt, in Greece, nay, even in Hispania and Lusitania, whole armies of martyrs are suffering for the cross—our symbol and token, to you Romans an ignominious instrument of death, but to us the emblem of hope and promise!

“And you too—the rich, the noble, the sovereigns of the world—do you need no comfort, no healing, no saving light? Are you indeed so happy in your splendor? Have you no secret craving for something, that shall be eternal? The time will come, when you too shall bow the head before the tree of disgrace and martyrdom, when you too shall know how gloriously the carpenter’s son of Nazareth has solved, for us, the dark riddle of human existence. You will soar above the dim confusion of the fleeting present, to the realms of hope and faith and divine grace.”

It was with a strange feeling of spellbound astonishment, that Quintus gazed into the speaker’s face, which was radiant with solemn but triumphant peace. Glauce had gently leaned her head on her father’s shoulder, as though it was in him that she sought and found her mainstay in the struggle with life; and in spite of the mournful feeling which still left its traces round her lips, silent contentment lay on the pure young brow. She sat with downcast eyes, her hands folded in gentle exhaustion. Euterpe and Diphilus hung in rapt reverence on the lips of the old man, who, to them, seemed to stand in the light of a radiance from heaven.

Quintus was unutterably impressed by the individuality of this strong, resolute and triumphantly happy believer. His aversion to this new doctrine of the universe began to melt like snow on Soracte in a spring breeze. Vigorously as self-love rebelled, conviction proved the stronger. In his hours of solitude the same reflections had often occurred to him, and commended themselves to his feelings, but the denunciation of the existing state of things had never before been so boldly presented to him. It must be a stout heart and a powerful mind, that could deny the intrinsic justification of a social order so complete as that of the Roman empire, and cry to a nation of nobles and slaves: “All men are brothers!” It would be worth while to see and hear more of this

Nazarene Gracchus,^[279] and to sound the depths of the mysterious power, which gave such staunch vitality to the new doctrine, even after the fearful persecutions of Nero.

All these reflections rushed in a tumultuous torrent through the young patrician's soul. He could no longer bear the confinement of the low, hot room. He rose, trying to conceal under a smile of careless politeness how deeply he had been interested and absorbed; he paced up and down the little room once or twice, and then said with a certain condescension:

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"I should be grateful to you if, at an early opportunity, you would tell me more concerning your doctrine; I am always glad to gain information at the fountainhead. For the present I bid you farewell. Early to-morrow morning I shall do my utmost for Eurymachus; pray to your God, that He may crown our efforts with success."

Euterpe conducted the visitor down stairs again, and then flew back to the little room where Glauce and Diphilus had already moved the table and arranged a little altar for an offering for the dead, on behalf of the luckless Philippus.

While these good souls were kneeling in silent sorrow before the cross, Quintus walked homewards through the darkness with a throbbing heart; his head ached and a mighty struggle, such as he had never before experienced, seemed to rend his heart. At the top of the Esquiline he came to a stand-still, and as he leaned against the basin of a fountain graced with spouting tritons, he gazed westwards over the night-wrapped city, which lay spread abroad at his feet, like a colossus prone in rest. He could scarcely distinguish the huge buildings—the Flavian Amphitheatre, the palaces and the capitol. Mons Janiculus^[280] stood out like a darker storm-cloud against the blue-black sky, and a dull moan and murmur rose upon the air like the breathing of the sleeping giant. A sense of infinite desertedness, of unspeakable longing and inexplicable dread fell upon him. "Yes, ye noble souls!" he groaned, covering his face with his hands. "I will return—I will soon rejoin your peaceful and blissful circle! By all the anguish I ever suffered, by all the torment that gnaws at my heart, I swear I will return!"

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And with a sigh of relief like that of a man, who finds himself well again after long sickness, he went down into the valley.

CHAPTER XIV.

On a purple couch, her right hand supporting her handsome head, while her left played mechanically with the folds of her robe, lay the Empress Domitia; Polycharma, her favorite slave, sat in silence on the floor, holding in her lap a red and blue bird, which now and then flapped its wings and gave a loud, strange cry. All else was silent, oppressed by sultry gloom and the steamy stillness of the air. In spite of its nearness, the noise of the Forum was dulled to a murmur like that of wind-rocked trees. The marble statue of Venus^[281] by the door-way looked sleepily down under her drooping lids; even the little Eros with his lightly-tilted jar, seemed touched with melancholy. Outside, in the corridors and antechambers, there was scarcely a sound. The slaves glided cautiously about on tiptoe, and spoke in whispers or expressed themselves by signs. Their imperial mistress's melancholy mood seemed to fill the very atmosphere with a subtle *malaise* and anxious forebodings.

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A few hours since, the first meeting had taken place between the reconciled couple. They had met with dignity and a calm semblance of friendly regard on both sides; but between them lay the unspoken but bitter certainty that, after all that had passed, no real reconciliation could ever be possible. Caesar's suspicious nature recoiled from Domitia's superiority of intellect and vehement temper—which flashed ominously in her eyes in spite of conventional smiles and smoothness—and from the scathing irony of her proud and revengeful spirit. She, on the other hand, knew the Emperor's hatred and implacable malice; she knew that, once aggrieved, Domitian had the tenacity of a tiger in ambush, never weary of watching for an opportunity for the fatal spring. Added to this there was the remembrance of her own humiliations—her banishment from the palace, the execution of Paris, and the emperor's passion for his niece Julia. And now, to be forgiven by him whom she so thoroughly despised—to accept the clemency of Domitian—this was the worst and deepest humiliation of all...

So, listless and silent, she lay on her pillows, reviewing in imagination the events of the last few hours in pictures that seemed to mock her as they passed. The Apollo-like figure of the young patrician, who had fired her fancy at Baiae, seemed to smile at her contemptuously; she sighed and closed her eyes, as though to escape the vision. Till a few hours ago, she had believed that she had conquered that madness. Her spirit had found strength in resolving on revenge, and she had felt like a goddess bent on punishing the presumption of a mortal. But now—in this new mood—she was conscious of a subtle change, the desire for revenge remained, but now there was nothing lofty, no sense of superiority in the feeling—the goddess had given place to a vain, lovesick woman, full of annoyance and petty spite. This change was a result of her altered circumstances; the sight of her husband had reminded her of the fact which she had striven to the utmost to ignore; that one word from that adored youth would have sufficed to make this reconciliation an impossibility. Shame and hatred, rage and passion, seethed in her soul, and her self-tormenting fancy painted alternately the most enchanting and the most horrible pictures. As in some hideous dream, the form and features of Quintus were mixed up with those of her former lover, the executed actor. She saw herself in tears, kneeling wildly at his feet—he raised her, kissed her, her senses reeled. Then he scornfully flung her from him—she shuddered from head to foot, and stabbed him desperately with her poniard...

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Then again she recalled the occasion, when Polycharma had returned to her with the little tablet that Quintus had given to the slave-girl in the park, the answer to her last passionate letter—that tablet had been her death-warrant—but no, not hers—his! "He must die!"—she seemed to see the words traced between those fatal lines.

Then everything faded from her vision like a landscape shrouded in mist. Instead of the slave-girl, it was the flute-player, who stood before her with a triumphant sparkle in her eyes, as her cheek flushed under the traitor's touch—as she had seen her stand, the bold hussy, on the hill at Cumae—happy, no doubt, in the love that she, the Empress, pined for.

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The thought was intolerable; the miserable woman writhed under the clutch of the demon of jealousy. She groaned and struggled for breath. Polycharma started to her feet.

"Lady, mistress—what is the matter?" she asked, gazing helplessly at Domitia's distorted features. But the sound of a voice broke the spell; Domitia controlled herself. Not a soul on earth, not even this trusted slave, should ever know how low she could be brought. She would hold herself proudly and defiantly—aye, though she should suffocate in the effort. Polycharma should suppose that the adventure in the gardens of Lycoris was a mere whim, a comedy; never would she betray the anguish of her unrequited passion and deep humiliation.

She raised herself on the pillows and sighed deeply again, as if to prove that the groan which had escaped her had not been involuntary.

"I am afraid," she said in a low voice, "that I am too much accustomed to liberty, ever to make myself happy again within the bars of this golden cage. I have too long been a free and unfettered woman, to have retained any talent for being Empress. The marble walls of a palace weigh upon me like lead. Ah! Polycharma! I am longing already for my quiet retreat on the Quirinal, or for Baiae and its delicious wilderness."

"Oh! I understand that," exclaimed the girl. "Particularly for Baiae—is there a more heavenly spot on earth? The bench under the hedge of bay, with that lovely view over the blue sea! And

when the full moon rises over the hill—it is beyond words. And do you remember the young knight from Mediolanum,[282] who recited to us the woes of Queen Dido,[283] and whom you permitted to kiss this white hand as his reward? He trembled like an aspen in the evening breeze. Ah! and Xanthios, the beautiful young Greek from Cumae! How desperately the boy was in love with me!”

Domitia tried to smile.

“Poor child,” she said sadly. “And you too will find out what it is to live at Caesar’s court.”

“Ah well!” said Polycharma airily, “by the grace of the gods, we will be able to retain some fragment of our lost freedom. Your steward is a very shrewd and clever man, and he will see what can be managed. And for your sake, Sovereign Mistress, he would be ready to burn down Rome.”

“Indeed? What makes you think so?”

“Well—of course we all have our own ideas.—Stephanus lives and toils for nothing but your Highness, and for the glory of your name. It was he, who conquered Caesar’s obstinacy and made your return possible. And confess, gracious mistress—Baiae may be lovely, and the evening hours in the park there were indeed delightful, but to share the throne of Caesar, the ruler of the world—that is yet more lovely and delightful!”

“Who can tell....” said Domitia.

“Stephanus, at any rate, thought so.”

“I do not understand you.”

“Well, I mean that he has always done his best....”

“But it seems to me, that it is no more than his duty.”

“Certainly. Still, there is a way of doing one’s duty—a devotedness....”

“What are you aiming at?” asked the Empress. “First you speak as if you wanted to keep silence, and then you break off as if you wished to speak....”

“I only thought....”

“Speak out boldly, Polycharma, and have done with this mysterious behavior, which is like the incoherence of a sibyl.”[284]

“By the gods! but I dare not. Besides I only guess at it; he could never be so bold....”

“You are talking in riddles. Speak out; I command you!”

“Oh!” cried the girl contritely. “How am I to say it? Stephanus is consumed by a hopeless passion. He is dying of silent love for the charms of his imperial mistress.”

Domitia’s features did not show a shade of feeling, and Polycharma glanced in terror at the expressionless face, for not the twinkle of an eyelash, not a twitch of the lips, betrayed what emotion might have been roused by this explanation.

“You are mistaken,” replied the Empress after a long pause. “My steward is a faithful servant, and his zeal and devotion are seen by your youthful fancy in a too poetical light.—Go, have done with your foolish imaginings; take your lute, and sing me one of your gayest songs.”

The girl retired a little distance, and an arch smile lighted up her shrewd little face. She fetched the cithara out of its carved case and returned, lightly tuning the strings.

“Some one is knocking,” she said pausing, and she went to the door. “What is it? You know, Strato, that our mistress does not choose to be disturbed.”

A short whispered colloquy was carried on outside the curtain, that hung before the entrance; then Polycharma came to announce that Stephanus begged an audience on a matter of great importance.

Domitia did not at once reply. Then she suddenly looked up, as if struck by some new idea.

“Desire him to come in,” she said eagerly. “Polycharma, leave us together.”

The same meaning smile again parted the girl’s lips. She quietly leaned the lute against the wall and hastened to the door, where she lifted the curtain with mock exaggeration of respect and let the steward pass in front of her. Then she slipped out, shut and fastened the door and joined two other slave-girls, who were sitting in the anteroom on red leather cushions, and carrying on a laughing flirtation with a flaxen-haired Sicambrian belonging to the praetorian guard.

Stephanus stood just within the door and bowed low. It was difficult to recognize in him the cool and unblenching man, never at a loss in his perfect knowledge of court manners and gossip, and accomplished in the arts of intrigue. In Domitia’s presence the freedman was a slave again; all his presence of mind, all the easy demeanor he had acquired in the school of life, he had left outside that door. The man, who went forward in obedience to a nod from the Empress, was a servile, creeping slave, a pitiable wretch, who tried in vain to find utterance.

"What ails you?" asked the Empress with a fascinating smile. "You look as pale as if you had lain awake all night. I fear your zeal prompts you to work too hard."

"Gracious mistress," replied Stephanus, "I am distressed indeed if I intrude...."

"I am always ready to listen to the faithful servant, who toils for me so devotedly. What brings you here, Stephanus?"

The freedman was startled; if he had read aright Polycharma's cunning glance, this reception promised him such happiness, that the mere thought of it turned him giddy.

"You hesitate," the Empress went on. "I understand—you fear lest there should be listeners in the anteroom. Your errand is serious and important."

She rose and led the way to a side chamber. Stephanus followed. The fairy-like fittings of the beautiful room had exercised an intoxicating charm over the senses even of a spoilt courtier like Stephanus. The whole boudoir was like a luxurious bouquet—walls, floor, ceiling were all hung and covered with diaphanous rose-colored stuff, on which sparkling stones were sprinkled like dew-drops. A tender twilight and the heady scent of roses completed the irresistible witchery of the scene.

The beautiful creature, who stood in the midst of all this dazzling splendor, with her white arms faintly tinged with the rosy reflection, and her flowing drapery clinging closely to the grand forms of her limbs, might, without any great effort of fancy, have been taken for Aphrodite, the goddess of love, incarnate in this adorable person.

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Stephanus breathed hard; the empress sank on to a rose-colored couch, and beckoned him to approach.

"Now," she said graciously, "we are alone, proceed."

"Sovereign lady," said Stephanus, hardly possessed of all his senses, "my duty.... An hour ago your humble servant was with Lycoris. She ... I know not how ... but lately we have met with some obstacle ... it was only with the greatest difficulty that I succeeded.... The chamberlain is this evening to be her guest.... She promised me ... but she made conditions...."

"It matters not," said Domitia. "You will strain every nerve to engage Parthenius on our side, I know, and that is enough for me. The details I trust to your acumen. If you do not succeed the first time, you will try again. A failure, even a blunder, needs no excuses. You have my unlimited confidence."

"I am overwhelmed by the greatness of your favors."

He bowed to the ground and humbly kissed the hem of her robe, which fell in ample folds, leaving a small part of her sandal and snowy foot bare. A strange mixture of pain and triumph lurked in her eyes, as the thought flashed through her mind: Ah, why, hapless, adoring wretch, are you not Quintus? But then a terrible satisfaction gained the upperhand; her lips moved as she swore to herself an unspoken vow—she clenched her fist as though she held a dagger—a dagger for hatred and revenge. Stephanus could not know, that at that moment she had formed a sinister resolve.

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"Nay—not that!" she whispered insinuatingly, as Stephanus rose again. "That is service to the gods. Among friends a frank and honest hand-shake...."

As she spoke she offered the astonished steward the tips of her fingers. He looked into her eyes like one dazed. What a change! This unapproachable woman, this divinity—till this hour so cold and repellent, was now all melting softness, dreamy and tender graciousness.

"Adored lady!" he groaned, pressing her hand to his pale lips. "Kill me, but I can no longer conceal it! Death would be bliss as compared with the torment of silence. Glorious Domitia—more beautiful than Cypris herself—I love you!"

He fell at the feet of the haughty sovereign, as though stunned by his own audacity, and leaned his forehead on her footstool. His brow by chance touched her foot, which she hastily withdrew with an involuntary gesture of aversion. But again a gleam of triumphant delight passed over her features.

"Stand up," she said, dissimulating her excitement. "Your confession has taken away my breath. I hardly know whether I should be angry, or whether this heart—too tender, alas!—should forgive your boldness. You love me! It sounds sweetly simple, like the greeting of a friend—but think out the whole meaning of that short and simple word, and tell me then, if you do not tremble like a pine tree before the gale. Love craves for a return—answer me, Stephanus, do you esteem yourself so favored by the gods, as to dare to hope for Domitia's favors?"

The freedman had slowly risen to his feet. His thin hair, artificially darkened, hung loosely over his throbbing temples; his eyes were fixed and glazed.

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"I know," he said in hollow tones, "that I am unworthy of your grace. But the gods themselves choose blindly, without any regard for merit and worth. Their mercies are dispensed blindfold—not only Ares the slayer, but the humble Anchises[285]...."

"Enough!" said Domitia, who fancied she could still feel the hot, bald forehead against her foot.

"If the gods have chosen, you need entreat no more. Listen to me, Stephanus. I too will be gracious—Call it a whim or sympathetic tenderness, as you please;—it is all the same.—You shall clasp the Empress in your arms and be happy, Stephanus—on one single condition you shall realize your dream. But it will require the utmost exertion of your talents...."

Stephanus heard no more; overpowered by this dazzling vision of happiness, he had fallen back on one of the rose-colored seats. His head thrown back, his eyes closed, he lay a pitiable image of human passion and weakness. The haze of unconsciousness veiled the strange and erratic brain, that was so unceasingly tossed and torn by cruelty, ambition, avarice, and sensual greed. The corpse-like figure, in its long Tarentine *toga*, was an object of unutterable horror in the beauty-loving eyes of Domitia—the sharp chin, the eagle nose, the hard, fleshless brow, now no longer vivified by the sparkle of the fiery eyes, all filled her excited senses with the horror, that blooming and joyous youth feels for the bony hand of a skeleton. She almost repented of her decision. Still, the recollection of Quintus, gave her strength to deny herself the craving of her inmost nature, and to persist in the road she had set out on. Perhaps, too, she had a lurking hope that she might cheat the tool of her vengeance, of the promised reward.

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The steward did not remain unconscious more than a minute; when he opened his eyes, Domitia was mistress of herself and the situation. With her right hand she commanded silence.

"You need rest," she said kindly. "And what I have to say can be said in a very few words. Quintus Claudius, the son of the Flamen, has insulted me mortally. How, where, and when, must remain my secret. Help me to triumph over this hated and unpardonable foe, and Domitia shall be yours. Throw your toils round him, watch him wherever he goes, miss no opportunity of ruining him.—How you will be able to accomplish this I cannot even guess, but you, I know, can do anything. Will you fulfil this commission?"

"I will, sovereign mistress!" cried Stephanus in a choking voice. "Your hatred is one with mine, for I too loathe this man as if he were plague-stricken. He shall die under the dagger of my meanest slave, and when he lies gasping in the dust, I will cry to him: Remember Domitia!"

The Empress started to her feet, and put out her hands with a gesture of horror.

"No, oh no!" she cried vehemently. "Death by the hand of an assassin, the mean fate of a merchant waylaid and flung from his cart by robbers near the Three Taverns—that would be a satisfaction too mean for this aching heart! I must feast my soul on his misery, set my feet upon his neck. A dagger-thrust—what is that to him? Do you know the man and his proud contempt of life? Look but once in his face, and ask yourself whether I am to be avenged by a stab. He would die, as another man would get up and take his leave at a banquet; he would die, and then it would be no worse for him, than if he had never breathed. No, Stephanus; go and devise some better plan than that! wound him, crush him in that which he loves best; overwhelm him with disgrace; break his towering pride—then you will have done all I can ask of your skill and devotion!"

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"I will try. As yet I have not the faintest idea of the way to do it, but I have no doubt I can find it And when I have fulfilled the task you have set me...."

"In conquering my enemy, you will conquer my heart," said Domitia smiling graciously.

"I will conquer or perish."

He flung his *toga* over his shoulder with an air, and went to the door. The Empress watched him with a fixed, almost a vacant stare. No sooner had the curtain fallen and the door closed upon him, than she dropped into the nearest seat, sobbing convulsively, and set her teeth deep into the cushion in which she hid her face, while a torrent of scalding tears rushed from her half-closed eyelids.

Before Stephanus went through to the anteroom, where Polycharma was waiting with the other slaves, he paused a moment to recover his breath. He drew himself up, and his face resumed its usual expression of supercilious indifference. He now could measure with calmer blood the extent of his success; that which, a few minutes since, had deprived him of his senses, now filled his spirit with elasticity, and he told himself that he had selected, with infinite psychological insight, the moment for realizing his long-cherished purpose—the moment in fact, when her first meeting with her husband had shaken the proud woman's nature to the foundations. He believed, that the happy result was obviously to be ascribed to this fortunate coincidence, and this doubled his good opinion of his own judgment. His glance lingered with supreme satisfaction on the magnificent room, the statue of Venus, the little Eros and the purple pillows on the divans. The inarticulate language of the smile, that played upon his thin lips, was easy to interpret—it told of his hope ere long to rule as master in this apartment, as the declared favorite of its lovely mistress—lovelier and grander than the marble goddess there, and oh! a thousand times warmer and more gracious.

He dropped his right arm, letting his white robe sweep the ground like the mantle of an eastern prince, and went on to the anteroom. He favored the wily Polycharma with a gracious nod, marching past the other girls with the strut of a promoted peacock. The Sicambrian stared at him open-mouthed.

The steward's apartments were on the farther side of the peristyle, on the side towards the Circus Maximus. His offices were lower down still, on the Quirinal, where the Empress had been living since her separation from her husband, excepting when she went every summer to her villa at Baiae. The elaborate paraphernalia of official papers made a prompt removal impossible, and only certain small branches of the steward's business had as yet been reinstated in the palace.

Stephanus went into his private room, laid aside his toga, and stretched himself at full-length on a comfortable couch. His restless brain was already seething with a thousand plans, which chased each other like a flight of crows. Numbers of impressions and motives, which hitherto had lurked unheeded, started up in his memory as possible starting points for future operations; but foremost of all the figure of Eurymachus, as yet irretrievably lost, occupied his thoughts. To judge from the reports of the slaves, who had followed the fugitive, the behavior of Quintus Claudius had been strange enough to suggest its connection with the slave's successful escape, even if no direct connection existed. Stephanus dimly felt, that here lay the fulcrum for his lever—but how could he use it? Well, he had solved harder problems than this in his time. The son of so influential a man as the Flamen was, no doubt, a more difficult subject to deal with than Thrax Barbatus, whose cries had easily been drowned; still—the higher the obstacle, the greater the triumph.

He lay gazing thoughtfully at the tips of his fingers. Wholly possessed by the idea of avenging Domitia, he had forgotten for the moment, that the escape of Eurymachus was of importance to him on far graver grounds, than the use he could make of it to injure Quintus; now, this consciousness pressed with double weight on his soul. He would have given half his fortune, to learn that Eurymachus was silent forever. By some accident, which to Stephanus remained an unsolved mystery, Eurymachus had learned a momentous secret.—Supposing that now, when he was no longer gagged, he should make himself heard—supposing he should shout it out in the ears of the world. A hundred times did the steward curse the fatal idea, of making the execution of his slave an entertainment for Lycoris' guests. Quietly strangled, or thrown into a tank to feed the lampreys—that would have been the rational thing, and more like his usual good sense. To be sure, hatred and rage had spoken loudly, and Lycoris had entreated him so earnestly.—Still it was folly, madness. Who could tell what Fate might bring out of it, if such precious material should happen to fall into the hands of Cneius Afranius—that cruel vampire who, for more than six months, had had his clutches on the steward's neck. His eyes were fixed vacantly on the ceiling, as the long train of his crimes passed before him. Each separate deed appeared clothed in flesh and blood, incarnate in the form of Cneius Afranius, who seized him by the hair and dragged him before the Senate; till, at last, the direst deed of all came forth and cried to Heaven, till the great city shook to its foundations, and Domitian himself, the blood-stained tyrant, hid his face in horror.

Stephanus started up.

"Be still, mad brain!" he exclaimed, striking his forehead with his fist. "I have been too easy; a prudent man should strike and hold; till now I only kept out of the way of the arrows of Afranius, now—let him see to it, that he hides himself from mine. Quintus and he! The same stroke may by good hap fall on both at once."

He paced his room uneasily; suddenly he stood still—before him stood a lad with soft and girlish features.

"Antinous!" cried the freedman. "You glide about like a weasel."

"Forgive me, my lord, but I had asked three times to be admitted. I heard you speaking to yourself...."

"You heard?"

"Not a word, my lord. You muttered through your teeth—only disconnected words—I thought you were vexed and angry with the slaves...."

"And you came to comfort me?" asked Stephanus smiling. "It is well that I have you; for the next few weeks you will have heavy work on hand. Shut the door and sit down on the couch there."

"Heavy work?" asked the boy disconsolately. "What, am I to carry water; or till the fields? Am I to be as miserable as the others are?"

Stephanus laughed, and patted the lad's beardless cheek.

"Not yet, my boy. I have chosen you for something better than that. What I have for you to do is serious and very difficult, but amusing and interesting; and if you accomplish the task, you shall be—well, you shall be free. Do you hear, Antinous, free? And rich besides, for I will give you an estate...."

"My lord, you know that my devotion is boundless. Only a few hours since I risked my life for two thousand miserable sesterces...."

"Not too rashly, I imagine. You thought that discretion was the better part of valor!"

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"Pardon me, but you are mistaken. I rushed down upon him, when he was surrounded by his clients and slaves; and if I had not slipped away at the very instant...."

The boy shuddered.

"What is the matter?" asked Stephanus.

"I do not know, but I shiver whenever I think of it. As I struck him, I met his eye—so cool and contemptuous.—If at that moment he had seized me, I should have been lost...."

"You are childish, Antinous. I am afraid, that if you are so excitable you will not earn your freedom in a hurry."

"What, again must I...?"

"No, his life is spared. You must do more than that."

"More?" said the lad in astonishment.

"Aye, more, boy. Why any bandit from the Appian Way could stab him; what I want you to do requires not only zeal, skill and courage, but intelligence, readiness, and the craftiness of Ulysses^[286]. Greek blood flows in your veins^[287]—you are at once panther and fox. You shall hear the details in the course of the day; I shall expect you to dinner with me here in the study. Enough for the present. Now tell me where you have been so long? You had no sooner told me that your blow had missed, than, you rushed away again. I waited in vain ... you really abuse my kindness...."

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"Oh! my lord, are you angry?" said the boy coaxingly. "Indeed, if I sinned, it was not from insolence, but from fear. I felt irresistibly driven to his house; I mixed with the people, that I might learn whether information had reached the prefects of the attack upon him...."

"Well?"

"Up to the present hour no one knows of it. Quintus Claudius seems inclined to keep it a secret. Even the gate-keeper, whom I began to talk to...."

"Are you mad?" interrupted Stephanus. "Do you want to find yourself imprisoned and crucified?"

"Nay, my lord. Antinous does not go to work so clumsily. When I stopped to talk to the gate-keeper, I was in girl's clothes."

"It is all the same; the whole thing was aimless."

"Not altogether, an accident rewarded my daring. Only think, as I was standing there talking over the weather—he took me, as sure as I am alive, for some street hussy—a woman came towards us through the ostium, with an old man with a snow-white beard. As soon as I saw her, I knew her to be that saucy Euterpe, who so often played the flute for us at Baiae; do you not remember? The pretty girl from Cumae, who always looked so shy and stupid, when you praised her shape...."

"Well, and what does she matter to me?"

"Euterpe? nothing whatever; but the old man.—As they came past us, a vague remembrance crossed my mind. I said to myself: I must surely know that man. Then he used some little gesture, and at once I had found the trace. It was none other than Thrax Barbatas, that obstinate fool who wanted, a little while since, to force his way in to see you...."

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"Thrax! with Quintus Claudius?" cried the steward horrified. "Ah! I understand now! Claudius and Afranius are plotting together, to restore the old idiot to his rights. The Flamen's son has long honored me with his hatred. A reason the more, for disarming and disabling him...." Then he suddenly checked himself, pushed his fingers through his hair, and scowled.

"Listen," he began eagerly. "I have an idea. Was it not Euterpe, who troubled herself so much about Eurymachus, when I had him flogged?"

"To be sure, Euterpe, the pretty Cumaean! He was supposed to be her lover, and while he was laid up she brought him herbs and salves; and she cried...."

Stephanus drew a deep breath.

"What more do you know of all this?"

"Very little," said Antinous. "In Baiae I had something better to do, than to trouble myself about anything so commonplace as the love affairs of a flute-playing hussy. At any rate, the noble Eurymachus does not seem to have been very eager. Astraeus heard him once scolding her soundly."

"Why?"

"It had something to do with her salves and ointments. She had bought the stuff of some Egyptian magician, and that vexed her lover...."

Stephanus nodded, and a gleam of malicious satisfaction lighted up his vulture face.

"Ah! I was not mistaken," he muttered between his teeth; then, turning to the slave, he added: "And is that all you learnt from Astraeus?"

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"All."

"Very good, then I will question him myself; I foresee great results. Go now, Antinous; my head whirls with a multiplicity of wonderful possibilities. Claudius, Afranius, Thrax, Euterpe—you must watch them all with the eye of an Argus."

"My lord, your confidence in me makes me vain. You have only to command, and I will obey. I will climb the Capitol like the invading Gauls^[288]; I will dive to the depths of the sea and bring you a message from Thetis.^[289] But then, do not forget your promise."

"I will keep it," replied Stephanus, stroking the lad's cheek. "Freedom and gold are the charms, that give wings to your services."

"You are the kindest master^[290] in the whole Roman Empire! Farewell."

He nodded to Stephanus with saucy familiarity, danced across the room with a graceful step, leaped lightly over one of the broad couches, and slipped out of the door like an eel.

"Hail, all hail to thee, Quintus!" Stephanus muttered mockingly. "This is a better beginning, than I dared to hope for. And if Fortune continues to favor me, I will raise on this foundation such a structure as you need not disdain to take your pleasure in."

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CHAPTER XVI.

Quintus rose very early the morning after his visit to Thrax Barbatus, and the stars were still sparkling brightly, when he got into his litter and in a weary voice bid the slaves carry him to the palace. He almost fell asleep again within the curtains, so coolly and indifferently could he look forward to his interview with the awe-inspiring Caesar, who was always treated with a degree of cautious respect, even by his intimates and favorites—somewhat as a tame tiger is treated by its keepers. This coolness he derived from a sense of the justice of his cause; he was still young enough to have preserved that noble simplicity of a lofty nature, which attributes irresistible power to Truth, and which cannot use the specious defences, with which vulgar humanity is content to arm itself.

In the outer court of the palace a tumultuous crowd had already assembled—of magistrates, senators, and foreign ambassadors. Quintus gave one of the chamberlains on duty^[291] a note from the Flamen Titus Claudius Mucianus, to deliver to Caesar in his audience chamber, and so powerful was the effect of this venerated name, that Domitian granted an immediate interview to the young patrician, in the midst of the terrific pressure of official receptions.

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Quintus entered the presence chamber with a fearless and independent mien, but with the calm dignity and winning courtliness of the Roman aristocrat.

"My lord," he said, as a sign from the emperor bid him speak, "it is as the son of Titus Claudius, that you have so readily granted me a hearing, but it is as the future husband of Cornelia, the niece of Cinna, that I craved an audience. I stand before you as a petitioner. Cornelius Cinna, the illustrious senator—whose intrinsic value you must certainly have discerned, even under the husk of some singularities—is suffering under the sense of an insult, as he deems it. That midnight banquet, of which all Rome is talking, was of course, no more than a harmless prelude to the Saturnalia^[292]—the overflow of festive whimsicality. But Cinna, who is rigid and impervious to all joviality, regards the jest as a humiliation and dishonor. It lies in your power, my lord, to efface this painful feeling from the noble senator's mind. One gracious word of explanation...."

Domitian did not let the bold youth finish his sentence. The mere mention of the name of Cinna had been enough to set his blood boiling. And now, what was this audacious, seditious, rebellious suggestion?—If he still kept some check on his anger, it was that the grave, steadfast figure of the Flamen floated, unbidden, before his eyes, and compelled his respect for all who bore his name. Still, the glance he threw at Quintus out of his cunning green eyes gave grounds for reflection.

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"My dear Quintus," he said with forced composure, "our time is too precious for such follies. It is not Caesar's business, either to console Cinna or to offer him explanations. Remember that. And now leave us, lest the welfare of the commonwealth should suffer." With these words he turned his back on Quintus.

Quintus was speechless; he angrily quitted the audience chamber, feeling as if every slave must read in his face how insultingly the emperor had treated him. Incapable from indignation, to judge accurately and fairly, he felt as a bitter disgrace, what was, in fact, the inevitable result of a false assumption. Standing apart as he did from the life of the court, and strongly influenced by his father's views, he had always regarded Caesar in too favorable a light; still, he might have been shrewd and judicious enough, to have understood the folly and impossibility of his preposterous suggestion; he might have told himself that, even under the most favorable conditions, only those, who have sinned unintentionally, ever make advances towards reconciliation.

From the palace Quintus hastened on foot to his father's residence, which lay at no great distance. He desired his clients and slaves to wait in the vestibule, and went first to the women's large sitting-room, where he found his mother and the two girls, with Caius Aurelius in attendance. The Batavian was holding a book in his left hand, and with an awkward blush on his face was standing near the window, while the ladies leaned expectantly on their couches.

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A shade of annoyance flitted across Claudia's brow as her brother entered the room; the young Northman flushed a shade deeper, and dropped the hand which held the roll as he, not too warmly, returned his friend's greeting.

"I am disturbing a recitation," said Quintus apologetically.

"Oh! the day is before us!" cried Lucilia, and Octavia asked her son what had brought him so early to the house.

"Nothing of much importance," said Quintus vaguely; "a request to my father. I am only waiting, till the atrium is perfectly clear. Pray go on reading, Aurelius. I will sit quite still in this corner and listen for a time. Meanwhile, will Lucilia fetch me a cup of mead^[293]; my tongue is literally parched."

"He spoke, and the dark-browed Kronion nodded assent!^[294]" quoted Lucilia, going to a side door. "Baucis," she called out, and gave her orders in a lower voice. Caius Aurelius, obeying Octavia's glance of request, had already unrolled the book again, and he now began to read in a full and pleasant voice. In truth, the much-lauded Papius Statius might have been satisfied. He

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himself, a master in the art, could not have read his own poem better or more effectively. Quintus was astonished beyond words. What delightful tones, what various modulation, and above all what supreme intelligence of interpretation! and though Lucilia now and then struggled with a yawn, it was evidently from sheer physical fatigue, for it had been past midnight before she had gone to sleep.

When Aurelius had got to the end of the second *canto* of the poem, Quintus drank the remainder of his draught of mead and desired old Baucis to enquire in the atrium, whether Titus Claudius had not yet received the last of his morning visitors and, hearing that his father was alone, he took leave and hastened to the priest's study. He found his father deep in work, even at his son's greeting he only just raised his head.

"Welcome," said he without interrupting himself: "One moment, Quintus—" and his reed^[295] went gliding on over the yellow paper. Then he laid it across a little metal rest and rose.

"You find me dreadfully busy, my dear Quintus," he said affectionately. "Hardly am I left apparently in peace, when I am overwhelmed with a mass of work, that will bear no delay. I must take advantage of every minute, for a decision on the great question of the day is now imminent."

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"I am sorry for that, father, for I came to you as a petitioner."

"Speak on," said the Flamen smiling. "I must find time for my son."

"Thank you very much, but I fear that my petition may be too trivial, to engage your interest at this moment."

"Nay, so much the better. Small matters need few words. Speak plainly and at once."

"You know," Quintus began, going a step nearer, "that the Empress's steward Stephanus is in pursuit of a slave...."

"Yes, I know," said the priest frowning: "A criminal, who was forcibly set free by some unknown hand. All Rome is horrified at such unheard-of atrocity."

"It is certainly unheard of, that such an attempt should succeed. To escape in the midst of such a crowd—the cowardly crew of Lycoris' slaves seemed thunderstruck."

"Pah! who can say, if they were not concerned in the abominable conspiracy? My word for it, Quintus, all these villains have a secret understanding; they wait only for a watchword to rise and strike as one man, and to overthrow everything we hold sacred. If the state does not ere long exercise its authority in earnest, we shall have a Spartacus^[296] on the throne of Rome."

"You are jesting, father. Shall the Roman empire, borne by the eagles of her legions to the uttermost ends of the earth, the unconquerable daughter of Ares,^[297] tremble before her own slaves?"

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"She has trembled before now," replied Titus Claudius. "Read the chronicles of the historians. The gladiator, who escaped with a handful of rabble from the school at Capua, collected an army, before the Senate had realized the fact. He beat the praetors, he defeated the quaestor Thoranius, he overran almost a third of the peninsula...."

"Then, and now; think of the difference," exclaimed Quintus, to whom the unexpected turn taken by the conversation was most painful. "That was possible in the time of the Republic, but the strong hand of Caesar will be able to protect us. Besides, the slaves of our day lack the one thing needful—the irresistible Spartacus."

"He will be forthcoming, when the time is ripe. Indeed, from all I hear, I fancy a candidate for the honor has already been discovered. He is called Eurymachus."

"Really?" cried Quintus, who was fast losing all his presence of mind. "Do you really think....?"

"Yes, my son, I do think.... Does not the very mode of his rescue show how great and dangerous his personal influence must be? And I hear on all sides of this man's defiant tenacity, contempt of suffering, strength and endurance. It is out of such rough wood as this, that a Spartacus is hewn. And a Spartacus to-day is more dangerous than his prototype; he can command a more mischievous force, against which sword and spear are wielded in vain: that of superstition. I cannot fail to see this plainly; for years I have watched the tendencies of the commonalty with all the keenness of suspicion. The creed of the Nazarenes ferments and spreads—the next Spartacus will be a Christian."

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"Father," Quintus began after a pause, "I know that in this instance you are mistaken. This slave—I happen to know certainly—never conceived such a scheme. Besides, it seems to me, that the acumen of our statesmen is somewhat at fault, when it makes that sect responsible for everything that shocks or shakes society...."

"You do not know them," interrupted his father, "and I do. Enough—we have digressed. What connection has all this with your request? Speak, for my time is precious."

Quintus stood undecided. What could he hope for in this state of things? Well—he could but try.

"Father," he began hesitatingly, "I came to speak in behalf of the very man, whom you are making every effort to brand as a Spartacus. I saw him two or three times in Baiae; he pleased

me greatly, and I then determined to buy him of Stephanus. Then this most unlucky business occurred, and I lost the slave whom I had already begun to think of as my own. When I tell you, that Stephanus deliberately and maliciously tortured and punished him; when I swear to you solemnly, that the sentence of death....”

“What do you want?” asked his father coldly; “speak and have done.”

“Well, father; I want to become possessed of that slave at any price, and I ask you whether, in the event of his being captured, it would not be possible to mitigate the rigor of the law....”

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“You astound me! For a mere whim you would endanger the state, cut a trench in the dyke which alone is able to protect us against the flood of rebellion? And you ask me—ME—to be your accomplice in such a proceeding? I admit, that Stephanus is brutal and tyrannical, nay—from my point of view—criminal. But then, are there not laws to protect slaves against such barbarities?”

“Laws, yes—” cried Quintus bitterly, “but they do not exist as against the rich and powerful.”

“Every earthly thing is of its nature imperfect. If Stephanus defies the law, that does not justify us in leaving the crime of Eurymachus unpunished. I lament deeply, that my own son should so utterly misunderstand the first and highest principles of my views of life. Go, my dear Quintus, and for the future consider twice, before you trouble your father with such follies. Eurymachus must die by the hand of the executioner, though you should pledge half your estates to buy him. Go, my son, and do not altogether forget that you are a Roman.”

Thus speaking, Titus Claudius sat down again to his desk. Quintus stood for a moment as if in absence of mind; then he slowly went towards the door.

“Farewell, father,” he said, as he left the room. His voice was sad, almost gloomy, as though they were parting for a long, sad interval. Titus Claudius, struck by the strangeness of his tone, raised his head in astonishment and gazed, like a man waking from a painful dream, at the door through which Quintus had departed; a vague presentiment fell on his spirit.

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“I was too hard,” he said to himself. “His error springs from a noble source—from pity. I ought to have said a kind word to him before he went away,” and he hastily rose from his seat.

“Quintus, Quintus!” he called out into the hall. “Skopas, Athanasius, did you see my son?”

The slaves flew into the vestibule, but Quintus had long since disappeared in the bustle of the street. The Flamen returned to his sitting-room, oppressed with melancholy foreboding.

“I will tell him the very next time I see him.—He has the best and truest heart that ever beat, and the noblest souls are easiest wounded.—However, away with such thoughts now, and to work once more.”

Titus Claudius sat down again and bent over his table and, as he sat there, he might have been taken for a poet in the act of composition, for his fine face glowed with eager inspiration. But the words he wrote were not those which enchant the populace, but the eloquent flow of a mighty impeachment; what he was forging were not lines and verses, but terrific weapons against what he believed to be the most threatening foe of the Roman Empire; against Christianity.[298]

CHAPTER XVII.

217

When Caius Aurelius had finished the fourth canto of the Thebais, Octavia put an end to the reading; breakfast was waiting in the little dining-room. The young man was invited to join them, and they passed a pleasant hour over the meal. They were all accustomed to their father's absence, for business had lately so completely absorbed him, that he would hardly give himself time to drink a glass of Falernian, as he sat at work, or to snatch a morsel of food. Octavia lamented it, but, on the other hand, she was proud of it as well; she rejoiced too in the confident anticipation of a long period of rest and enjoyment to succeed this last great effort. Lucilia found dinner without him very dull, as she took an opportunity of whispering very pointedly to her sister. This was, in fact, rather strange, for Aurelius, whose tongue seemed to have been loosed by the reading of the heroic poem, displayed the greatest aptitude for all the accomplishments of social life. The triclinium positively sparkled with good humor, even Lucilia belied herself, for more than once she broke out into a merry laugh, the very reverse of dull. Herodianus, who had come to escort his master home, and who had the honor of being invited to share the meal, was astonished at the brilliancy of the young man, who was usually so silent and glanced suspiciously at the crystal cup, as if that might be accountable for so strange a phenomenon. And Baucis swore by the great Isis, that never in her life had she known a Roman knight with such delightful qualities as Aurelius, who had a kind word even for her, a stupid old woman, and who read poetry so divinely.

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The Batavian took his leave about mid-day; he sent his respectful greetings through Octavia to the master of the house, fearing to disturb so busy a personage at this hour of the day.

"And what next?" cried Lucilia, as the door closed upon Aurelius. "Shall we lie down to sleep, sweet Claudia, or order the litter to go to the Campus Martius?"^[299]

"Just which you please. The day is fine, and we might walk for an hour under the colonnade of Agrippa."^[300]

"Will you come with us, dear mother?" asked Lucilia.

"How can I," said Octavia smiling. "I must be on the spot, when your father leaves his work. If you are not content to go alone, Baucis may...."

"Oh no, no!" interrupted Claudia. "The worthy Baucis may remain at home. When we get into the laurel groves^[301] we shall walk, and Baucis is so slow that she would be a hindrance."

The litter was soon ready. Four Numidians, with waving feathers in their heads, marched in front, and they proceeded northwards, by the same way which Quintus had taken two days since, in the moonless night.

"I am glad that we left Baucis at home," said Claudia in Greek. "We can talk undisturbed for once. You are so dreadfully sleepy, when we go to bed...."

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"And with good reason," replied Lucilia, also in Greek. "I am tired out and over-excited. The amusements of the last few days are telling on my nerves. First, there was the evening at Cornelia's; then a recitation for two hours from the charming Claudia on the merits of Caius Aurelius...."

"I beg your pardon, but you are reversing the position. It was mistress Lucilia, who went on talking about Caius Afranius."

"Indeed! and why? Simply and solely as a counterpoise, an antidote to Aurelius. Besides, with your kind permission, his name is not Caius, but Cneius Afranius. Of course, you have nothing but Caius running in your head."

"That is just like you now," said Claudia with a sigh. "Lately there has been no speaking a rational word to you."

"I am over-tired," Lucilia repeated. "Two cantos of Statius yesterday morning, two more again this morning; to-morrow, two cantos of Statius, that involves a fourth! It is a mercy, that the Thebais consists only of twelve altogether, so it must come to an end at last! Certainly, when we have done Statius, he might read us Virgil^[302] and afterwards the Battle of the Frogs and Mice."^[303]

"Go, Lucilia—you are quite odious—and I wanted to confess something to you."

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"A confession? my darling Claudia, a confession?" cried Lucilia, seizing her sister's hand. "Will you own at last that you love him? That you are a perfect fool about him? Oh! silly child! did you not perceive, that I only wanted to punish you for trying to deceive me?"

Claudia colored deeply, and involuntarily drew the embroidered curtain, as if she feared that the litter-bearers might read her secret in her face.

"Not so loud!" she whispered, and then she softly kissed her cheek.

"You confess?" asked Lucilia. But the only answer was a closer caress and a fervent kiss on her lips.

"That is enough," said Lucilia. "Your kiss says everything. No girl gives such a kiss as that, who is not desperately in love. It was meant for Caius Aurelius."

"Hush!" Claudia entreated, laying her hand on the audacious girl's mouth. "Promise me...."

"Not to mount the rostra^[304] and proclaim in the Forum: Claudia is in love with Aurelius!...? You little fool! Just the reverse; I will keep it a dead secret, and do all I can to clear the road for you. For things will not run so smoothly as you think. A mere provincial knight, and Claudia, the daughter of the first senatorial house in Rome! You cannot take it ill in your father if he maintains the rights of his position, and intends his daughter to marry a consul."^[305]

"But if his daughter objects?"

"Then Titus Claudius must give way, or the gentle Claudia is not incapable of running away with Caius Aurelius."

"What are you saying!" exclaimed Claudia horrified. Then she sat looking thoughtfully into her lap.

"Do you suppose," she said presently, "that his allusion, yesterday, to Sextus Furius was meant seriously?"

"What else could it mean? The worthy man is three times too old for you, to be sure, but the names of his ancestors have been splendid for centuries. Only think of Furius Camillus, the glorious conqueror of the Volscians and Aequians. Sextus Furius, to be sure, has conquered no insurgent nations, but the consulate undoubtedly lies before him, and his wealth is enormous."

"Ah!" sighed Claudia. "We Roman girls have a bad time of it. How rarely do we have a free choice in the tie which lasts one's life-long! A stern father or guardian brings a husband on the scene, before our hearts have a chance of deciding. Such a betrothal as that of Quintus and Cornelia is as rare as a white raven. How beautiful, how honest by comparison is the custom in the North, where the lover first wins the affection of a girl, and then seeks the approval of her parents. Aurelius has told me wonderful stories of the fidelity of the tawny-haired Rugian to the wife of his choice, and of how the treasure is often won in fights to the death, after years of constancy. It must be glorious to be loved and wooed in that northern fashion! Do you know that Aurelius has some Germanic blood in his veins...?"

"Indeed?" said Lucilia surprised.

"Yes, really. His grandmother was a Frisian, from the shores of the Baltic, where the Weser falls into the sea. There are large and wealthy families among them, valiant warriors and chiefs, who will bow their necks to no Roman consul. If only they were of one mind, Aurelius says, Rome herself might tremble before these tribes. But, strangely enough, though in their family life they are so loving and constant, their feuds are perennial, tribe against tribe and prince against prince. It is only under stress of imminent peril, that they league themselves under one banner, and woe then to the foe they turn upon! You have read of Varus^[306] and how his legions were cut to pieces in the Saltus Teutoburgiensis, while he fell on his own sword?"

"Yes, Baucis has told us the story. But after all—who cares what goes on in Germania!—our legions are constantly engaged in fighting on the frontier, now against the Dacians and now against the Parthians^[307]—I do not trouble myself about the where and the why. Moral struggles, the battles we must fight at home, interest me far more...."

"Particularly the law pleadings in the Senate, and before the court of the Centumvirate!" said Claudia smiling.

"Certainly! out there, brute force decides the matter, but in the Forum it is superior intellect that wins the day."

"And one of the boldest champions is Cneius Afranius."

"It is quite true; his whole individuality, his undaunted honesty, his unflinching energy...."

"Hey day! what eloquence. Before long we shall see you in the Basilica among the candidates for applause."

"Laugh away, by all means! I assert my right and liberty to admire all that is noble. If I were better looking, I should very likely exert myself to achieve a conquest, for I frankly confess that I regard the future wife of Afranius as a woman to be envied."

"You are frank indeed."

"I always am. And I find it all the easier, since I do not allow my consciousness of my defects to destroy my peace of mind. The Gods are unjust? For aught I care! You have a mouth like a rosebud, I have a muzzle like a Cantabrian bear!^[308] Fate we call that, or Ananke!^[309]—Well, it is a lovely day for us both alike! Just see what a crowd and bustle there are out here; I think we had better walk. There is the portico with its hundred columns."

Claudia stopped the bearers, and the two girls walked on to the magnificent hall of Agrippa, followed at a short distance by the Numidian slaves. Arm in arm they walked along the arcades, by the famous mural paintings,^[310] representing in the highest style of art, scenes from the stories of the Greek divinities—the rape of Europa, Cheiron the Centaur, and the voyage of the

Argonauts. To the right they saw the marble enclosures—Septa[311] they were called—in the midst of which the Roman people assembled when the centuria[312] were called upon to vote. Lucilia hoped she might one day be present at some stormy debate here. Claudia found it more interesting, to linger over the gay booths[313] and bazaar for luxurious trifles at the northern end of the portico, where the precious produce of the remotest provinces of the empire was displayed.

Thus, chatting and laughing, they reached the shady avenues of plane and laurel, which extended almost to the shores of the river and, with their temples, columns, terraces and works of art, were the scene of enjoyment for a numerous throng of citizens. Here hundreds of handsome chariots—most of them with two wheels—rushed to and fro on a broad causeway; graceful horsemen dashed along the gravelled way, while the motley crowd of pedestrians slowly loitered along the side alleys. Here a following of young men pressed round the litter of some woman of rank; there a grave and morose-looking pedagogue led his flock to a grass-plot, where boys were exercising themselves in wrestling or throwing the discus.[314] Pairs of lovers strolled away hand in hand to remoter bowers; slaves—male and female—with their owners' children, crowded round a juggler's booth, applauding the skill with which Masthion[315] balanced a heavy pole on his bare forehead, or the strength Ninus[316] displayed in supporting half a dozen boys upon his shoulders. Among the mob a legion of fruit and cake sellers wriggled and squeezed themselves; fortune-tellers twitched at the robe of the passer-by, urgently pressing their services on them; shipwrecked sailors sat begging by the wayside, with tablets on their knees[317] relating the history of their woes; flute-players piped their latest tunes from Gades; dark Egyptians exhibited tame snakes, which twined round the body, neck and arms of the owner to the measure of a dismal tom-tom.

Lucilia and Claudia followed the shady alley, that ran parallel to the main road, greatly amused at the dazzling, noisy and ever-new scenes that met them at every turn.

"Supposing we should meet your Aurelius—" said Lucilia.

"My Aurelius! My sweet child, pray do not get into the habit of saying such things."

"Well, then—Caius Aurelius."

"It is not likely. He rarely comes now to the plain of Mars."

"Indeed. What has he to attend to of so much importance."

"He is studying hard; and for the last few days he has been a good deal with Cornelius Cinna, who generally admits him at this hour. Cinna thinks very highly of him."

"Well, for my part, I must confess I should prefer a ride here under the green trees, to all the harangues of that perverse old man."

"Aurelius finds him most interesting; he considers him quite a genius."

"What next?—A genius in the art of seeing the whole world black!"

"Nay, quite seriously. Cinna is initiating Caius into the mysteries of state-craft, teaching him philosophy and history. Caius said, that in the few hours he had been permitted to converse with Cinna, he had learnt more than in many years of solitary study."

"Well; then our Caius—you yourself called him simply Caius—will soon begin to wrinkle his brows and to scent ruin and misery in everything. Do you know, child, this Cinna...."

She broke off suddenly, for some one called her by name; she looked round and saw Quintus, who came out from among the trees.

"Well? Are you often to be met out here? And always close to the highway! You must take an extraordinary interest in fine horses...."

"We do indeed!" said Lucilia pertly. "For instance, look at that noble grey just now turning into the avenue. What a head! what a mane!"

Claudia squeezed her saucy sister's arm, for the rider, who came galloping towards them, was none other than Caius Aurelius. By his side rode Herodianus, rather roughly exercised on a tall, high-stepping steed; his empurpled face betrayed but little liking for the performance. Aurelius, by contrast, looked all the more radiant, guiding his noble horse as if it were child's-play among the throng of vehicles, and enjoying to the utmost the sense of power and security.

He now caught sight of Claudia, and the blood mounted to his brow. He was so much occupied in looking at the two girls, to whom he bowed in agitated confusion, that he did not notice, that one of the very small horses, called by the Romans "mannie,"[318] was rushing towards him like an arrow. Its rider, a boy of about twelve, tried to turn the pony's head, but not soon enough to avoid the grey, which tossed its head aside. So the pony's mane just tickled the horse's lower jaw, and the boy only escaped a violent collision by ducking widely on one side. The Batavian's horse, at all times an irritable beast, gave an ominous snort, and reared straight up, trembling in every muscle, and in the next instant would inevitably have fallen backwards if Quintus had not made a bold leap over the brushwood, seized the horse by the bridle, and after a short struggle brought him to a stand-still on all fours again. Herodianus, meanwhile, who was frightened out of his senses, was thrown up from his saddle by a sudden spring of his steed, and reseated in front of it;

he threw his arms round the beast's neck, and remained a comical picture of woe. After Quintus had quieted the Batavian's excited grey, he came to the freedman's help.

"By Jove the avenger!" cried Herodianus, shuffling back into his saddle with much difficulty, "this wild horse of the Sun^[319] was within a hair's breadth of trampling me under his hoofs. Thanks, earnest and warmest thanks, heroic Quintus Claudius! I will drink a dozen bowls to your health this evening."

"I have to thank you too," said Aurelius with feeling. "If it is ever in my power to render you such a service...."

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"By all the gods!" said Quintus. "It might be supposed...."

"Nay, but I saw how close my horse's hoofs were to your head."

"Really? However, do you know who the little dare-devil was who shot by you at such a pace? That was Burrhus, the son of Parthenius;^[320] a scatter-brained little rascal. He inherits it from his mother."

"Burrhus?—the boy that Martial praises so extravagantly?"

"The very same. He flatters the son, and so touches the father."

"Well, if he hears that Burrhus nearly rode me down, it may perhaps afford him materials for fresh adulation. I, at any rate, have reason to be glad that his heroic attempt was not altogether successful; that I owe to you, my valiant and fearless friend! As I say, if ever you are in a position...."

"Say no more about such a trifle, I beg of you," said Quintus. "Though indeed," he added smiling, "it is not impossible, that I may claim your kind offices sooner than you expect, though not as a return for my performances as a horse-tamer."

"I am happy to hear it. Come when you will, I am entirely at your disposal."

"Very well then," said Quintus with emphasis; "expect me this evening by the end of the second vigil."

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"Unfortunately I am engaged at that hour."

"Later then, an hour before midnight?"

"That will do; I will expect you," said Aurelius.

The two girls had stood quite still during this short dialogue. Claudia was still struggling with the remains of her agitation, even Lucilia had turned pale. Aurelius now stammered out a confused apology, bid them farewell, and set spurs to his horse, while the freedman dragged with all his might at the wolf's-tooth bit^[321] of his hard-mouthed jade. They vanished in the crowd, Aurelius as straight and free as a young centaur, and his companion like a clumsy bale of goods incessantly tossed and jolted.

"You are a fine fellow!" cried Claudia, clasping her brother's hand with eager emotion. "What strength, what courage, what promptitude! Oh! my heart nearly stood still with terror, when the rearing brute's hoofs hung just above your head—I shall never forget it!"

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you, my dear little sister. It is a long time, since I last heard you speak to me in such an enthusiastic key. Confess, Claudia—the fact that the rider's name happened to be Caius Aurelius, does not diminish your ardent appreciation of the feat?"

"You may laugh at me, if you will. I respect and admire you, and forgive all your former sins."

"Are you coming with us?" asked Lucilia.

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"For ten minutes; then I must turn back again. Clodianus expects me at the Baths."

"And where do you dine to-day?" asked Claudia.

"With Cinna."

"It is a long time since you dined with us."

"I will to-morrow, if it is convenient. I will see whether he will allow me to bring Cornelia with me...."

"Hardly," said Lucilia. "Since the day before yesterday he has been in a desperately bad humor. This morning early I had a note from Cornelia, begging me to go and rescue her from the depths of melancholy."

"What does Cornelia wish for?" said Quintus. "In my presence she is always cheerfulness itself."

"That is the magic of love," replied Lucilia. "Its charms conquer all griefs."

"You seem highly experienced!"

"Theory—pure theory."

They walked on towards the river. There they stood for a few minutes, watching the boats and

gondolas, which gently drifted down to the Aelian bridge or struggled up stream under the stout strokes of the oarsmen. Beyond the opposite shore the beautiful hills, strewn with gardens and villas, smiled invitingly down on them, and farther off still rose the five peaks of Soracte.[\[322\]](#)

"They will soon be crowned with snow," sighed Claudia.

"Yes, it is wearing into autumn," said Quintus. "But now, my children, you must amuse yourselves without me. Till we meet to-morrow."

232

"You fellows," said Claudia, turning to the Numidians, when Quintus was lost in the crowd. "Do you know what? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, down to the very ground. If it had not been for Quintus, Aurelius would have been under the horse's hoofs. Cowards! By the gods, but I am minded to have you punished, that you may remember this hour!"

The Africans opened their wide thick mouths, and stared at their mistress as if some marvel had happened. None of her slaves had ever heard such words before from Claudia's lips.

"That comes of her being betrothed to that rich Furius," whispered one of them. "I always told you, that the gentlest turn haughty when there is a husband in sight."

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was dark. In the dining-room of Cneius Afranius a small party had just risen from table. Six guests had shared the modest meal—men differing in age and position, but agreed in feeling, unanimous in their hatred of the imperial reign of terror, and alike in courage and strength of character. During the meal none but commonplace topics were discussed, convinced as Afranius was of the fidelity of his slaves; under Domitian's rule, suspiciousness had risen to the dignity of a virtue. Even the *commissatio*—the friendly cup which, in accordance with time-honored custom, closed the meal—lent no impetus to the conversation. Each one was thinking of the discussion, that was now to follow.

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They all went into the colonnade, if the small and unpretending court-yard deserved the name. Cneius Afranius, the son of a poor family of knightly rank of Gallia Lugdunensis,[323] would probably have been obliged to start on his career in Rome as a mere lodger in hired rooms, but that a childless friend of his father's had bequeathed to him a small legacy,[324] which enabled him to purchase a little house, which had formerly belonged to a seaman, on the right bank of the Tiber, and in the midst of a very humble quarter.[325] The situation was crowded and almost squalid, and the little villa was only rendered rather less unattractive, by the visible care bestowed on its arrangement by its new owner, and yet more by the pretty little garden in its peristyle. Afranius was very conscious of its defects, but they did not distress him. That painful sensitiveness, which torments many men in narrow circumstances, when intercourse with other men of greater wealth reminds them of their poverty, was unknown to him. And as his dress was always in the best style, though of plain materials, those who met him elsewhere than in his own house supposed him to be well-to-do; this impression was partly the result of his general appearance and demeanor. Aurelius, who had crossed his threshold today for the first time, thought as he entered the vestibule, that he must have made a mistake; it seemed impossible that the self-possessed, easy-mannered Afranius could live in so humble a dwelling.

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The six men went slowly and in order from the dining room to the study. First came the tall figure of the grey-haired Marcus Cocceius Nerva, leaning on the arm of Ulpius Trajanus; Publius Cornelius Cinna followed with Caius Aurelius, and last came the host with an old centurion, who had long served in the wars in Germania and Dacia, and had lost his left arm in the service. Now, robbed by Domitian of a pension which had formerly been granted to him, he had for years earned his living wearily as a teacher in an elementary school kept by a retired physician, until Ulpius Trajanus had granted the veteran free quarters in his own house.

The slaves were now strictly enjoined to admit no one to disturb the party, and Momus, the confidential servant of Afranius, posted himself at the door of the room, that no eavesdropping intruder might come too near.

"My friends," began Marcus Cocceius Nerva, when they were all seated, "we have met expressly to hold pregnant and momentous council. Our aim is to find the ways and means of at last carrying into effect the steps, which we have been deliberating on for many months. The reign of terror of Domitian has from the first been well-nigh unendurable, and now his outrages, his unblushing insolence, have reached a pitch at which our very blood curdles in our veins. Two days since, we all heard from Cinna of the incredible insults offered by Caesar to the most illustrious members of the Senate and of the knightly order; since then other outrages have come to our ears. If Titus[326] once declared that he regarded a day as lost, in which he had done no good action, this, his degenerate brother,[327] accounts each day as misspent, in which he has not trampled justice under-foot, and crowned tyranny with boastful insolence. You all knew Junius Rusticus;[328] he was an excellent man, experienced in every branch of learning, generous, and of the loftiest morality. This illustrious philosopher was, yesterday, crucified. And why, my friends, why? Because he dared to assert that Paetus Thrasea, Nero's noble victim, was a man of blameless character. For this, and this alone, Junius Rusticus died the death of the basest assassin."

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A gloomy murmur rose from the audience. All, with the exception of Aurelius, already knew the facts, but they sounded with renewed horror from the lips of the venerable man.

"Nor is this all," Cocceius went on. "A second crime almost throws the murder of Rusticus into the shade. Not long since a man of fortune named Caepio,[329] of the order of Equites, died here. His heiress was his niece, a young girl of about fourteen. However, a man was found, who would declare openly that in Caepio's lifetime he had frequently heard him say, that Caesar was to inherit his fortune.[330] On the strength of this lie, the property was unhesitatingly appropriated. The hapless girl, alone and inexperienced, fell into infamy. Sunk in wickedness, crushed by shame and sickness, a few days since she placed herself in the way, as Caesar was being borne to the Forum. She lifted up her hands to the throne on which he was carried, and cried in desperate accents for justice. She was seized by the body-guard, and flogged to death this morning."

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"Death to her murderer!" cried Cinna, shaking his fists in the direction of the palace. "The fate of this poor child may fall on you, O Nerva! on you, Ulpius Trajanus, on you, Cneius Afranius. In the empire of this tyrant there is but one law: the mad whim of a blood-hound.—To-day his Falernian has gone to his head—a beck, a nod, and the daughters of our noblest families are stolen[331] for his pleasure. To-morrow he has eaten and is full—he must be amused, and Rome breaks out in flames. Ah! hideous, bottomless pit of disgrace! Decide as you will, my resolution is taken. In the

Senate, in the Forum, in the theatre—meet him where I may—I will kill him.”

“Be easy, my dear friend,” said Cocceius. “You are the last man, who would ever be allowed to get near enough. The suspicious tyrant, who has the walls of his sleeping-room lined with mirrors,^[332] so that he may see what is going on behind him—he will know how to protect himself from Cinna. Besides, never let us stain our just cause with unnecessary bloodshed! The goal, that glimmers before us, can be reached without the murder of Caesar. If the revolted nation brings him presently before the judgment-seat of the Senate, he will be legally condemned to death, and then he may meet the fate he has merited a thousand times over. But we, whose purpose it is to open an era of freedom and justice, must, whenever it is in any way possible, keep our hands clean. We are conspirators against his throne, but not his executioners.”

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Muttered words of approbation assured the orator, that he spoke the feelings of his friends. Even Cinna agreed.

“You are right,” he said frowning. “You are always clear and logical, when my heart seethes with rage. It is well, my worthy colleagues, that you did not put me at your head. I am good in action, or where energetic decision is needed; but in the history of the world well-meditated plans and calm resolve weigh heavier in the scale.”

“And their union will suffice to break our bonds,” added Afranius. “But I must confess I am burning to know how Ulpius has solved the problem.—I know how I should solve it....”

“Well?” asked Ulpius Trajanus. “You have always been the silent member at our meetings. Perhaps I may be able to avail myself of what you have to suggest, to strengthen my own web.”

“What I have to say is very little, but it seems to me all the clearer and more simple for that very reason. Rage, hatred, and desperation are fermenting in every soul. The fuel is piled, nothing is needed but the spark. Let us fling the spark in among the masses. Let us boldly and unreservedly call the people of Rome to open rebellion.”

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“Moderation!” exclaimed Cocceius Nerva. “Wildly as our hearts may throb, let us take no step which calm wisdom cannot approve! We must not act from sentiment! You are in error, Afranius, if you think that the populace, which clamors for bread and the Circus, will ever feel any enthusiasm for liberty. What has this rabble of idlers, this self-interested mob, that lives on the *largesse* of the State, to fear from Caesar? Lightning blasts oak-trees, but not the brushwood that cumbers the ground. Whether Titus or Domitian rules, whether the Senate is respected or insulted—it is all the same to the herd, so long as there are wrestling, running, and fighting to be seen. They would sell themselves bodily to the first Barbarian, who would buy them, so long as they had bread and amphitheatres, and a Sicambrian is just as good in their eyes as the direct descendants of Romulus. Alas! my friends, when I look out on the scene of confusion I am seized with sudden terror, and the outlook on the future waxes dim before my eyes. This indifference and want of patriotism is spreading on all sides; it has even tainted the army.—If some change for the better does not soon appear, it may well happen that this haughty city may ere long crumble into ruins—aye, my friends, into ruins—destroyed and sacked by the insolent rout of Germanic tribes, who are already thundering at our gates. They will overcome the small remains of our virtue with the sword, and the vast host of our crimes with their gold.”

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He ceased; an expression of deep grief clouded his handsome features. Then, turning to Afranius, he said: “And so what I meant to say was, that the mob of the capital must, come what may, be kept out of the game.”

“You say the mob,” said Afranius, “but there is a class closely allied with the mob which, though small in number, is all the greater in force, high-mindedness, and dignity. Believe me, even among the third estate—among the fishermen and dealers, the artisans and handicraftsmen, there still are Romans to be found.”

“Very possibly. But large schemes cannot take account of so small a factor. The very way in which the State has developed, has thrown the chief power into the hands of the troops, and he who is master of the soldiery, is master of Rome and the Empire. You know how completely the legions in the provinces are dependent on the impression of an accomplished fact. It can scarcely be expected, that any single division of the army outside the walls of Rome will take up arms for Domitian, if once we have the metropolis in our power. We can gain over the Praetorian guard with a word. Ulpius, my beloved son, make known to us now, what you have attempted and achieved in this direction.”

Ulpius Trajanus leaned back in his chair, and crossed his arms over his breast. His noble and frank countenance, stamped in every feature with generous honesty, suddenly grew anxious and grave. Lucilia had been right when she said incidentally, that Ulpius Trajanus reminded her of Caius Aurelius. Although considerably older and of a dark southern type, the Hispanian, like the young Northman, had that look of genuine human benevolence, which lends a bright and harmonious expression to any features.

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“My friends,” began Ulpius Trajanus, coloring a little; “I can as yet, to my great regret, report nothing decisive. I came hither not to announce a success, but to hear what you had to say. Within the last few months many new recruits have joined the ranks of the Praetorians; magnificent gifts of money are distributed every week to the officers and men. Norbanus, the officer in command, is loaded with favors, so it would be difficult to find an opening—! Indeed, I am firmly convinced that Norbanus, who is an honest man, places the welfare of the country far

above any other consideration; however, up to this moment, all my efforts to fathom him have been in vain. He speaks out more frankly than many others, it is true, but his openness always bears upon trifling matters. He instinctively knows the limits of discretion. It would be waste of words to tell you of every detail. I have given myself no rest from labor or vigilance, and it is not my fault if the rock repeatedly rolls back into the gulf.”

“Promise him the consulate,” muttered Cinna frowning; “trip him up, trample on him, hold the dagger to his breast....”

“The dagger’s point might only too easily be turned upon us,” said Trajanus smiling.

“He is right, Cinna,” Nerva threw in. “It is precisely his self-command and coolness, that fit him for the part assigned to him, and he must play it to the end in the spirit of those who have trusted him.”

“But self-command must come to an end and issue at last,” said Afranius, leaning his round chin on his hand. “I have no thought of even hinting a reproach to our worthy Ulpus; I only mean, that if Lucius Norbanus persists in the part of the mysterious oracle, and Trajanus waits for the spirit to move him, without giving it a helping hand, our work of redemption will remain in the clouds. Besides, nothing is more dangerous than a long-planned conspiracy. Before you can turn round the palace will have caught wind of it, and by the day after to-morrow, the splendid museum of Domitian’s victims will be increased by a few valuable specimens.”

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Cornelius Cinna nodded assent.

“Excess is mischievous in anything, even excess of caution,” he said eagerly. “We must strike now, if not with the aid of the body-guard, why, then without it—or, if need be, against it. There are troops enough in Gallia Lugdunensis,^[333] to defeat the few cohorts of Norbanus. Cinna is thought highly of by the legions, and I myself have many devoted allies among the officers; while not a few of the soldiers will remember, that I have always been a friend and supporter of the third estate.”

“I can answer for that,” said the old centurion, who had till this moment sat silent in his easy-chair. “Nor am I altogether devoid of adherents, though I cannot compete with Cinna. I should think it would not be difficult....”

“Enough!” interrupted Cocceius Nerva with a friendly wave of his hand. “I see that your opinions are divided. Allow me to make a suggestion. The danger of discovery does not seem so imminent, as to compel us to forego all attempt to rely on the support of Rome. Let us separate in the firm determination, to prepare and meditate everything that can help us towards our goal. I am chiefly thinking of Caius Aurelius, who made friends so rapidly with Norbanus, and who is regarded with less suspicion at the palace than Ulpus Trajanus. We will meet again fourteen days hence, here, in the house of Afranius, and at the same hour. If in the meanwhile our plan has made no progress, we will give up the City of the Seven Hills, and set to work in Gallia Lugdunensis.”

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This proposal was unanimously agreed to.

“Yet one thing more. It is quite possible, that in the course of these fourteen days events might occur, on which it is impossible to reckon beforehand. I am perfectly convinced, that not a soul in the palace suspects anything as yet; but spies are innumerable, and an accident, a heedless word, a glance, a gesture, might betray us. Just at this time fresh suspicions have been roused in Caesar’s court. Let us be ready to fly at a moment’s notice.”

“To fly!” exclaimed Cinna. “Is that the road to victory?”

“I only say in the worst extremity....”

“That would indeed be the worst! Do you already know of any mischief? Do you know, that a spy has already betrayed us?”

“No, my dear Cinna, I know nothing; I was only considering possibilities.”

“But that possibility is exactly what is not to be borne! I feel now, twice as strongly as before, that our only safety is in action.”

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“But can you act?” asked Cocceius. “Is Norbanus our ally? Are the legions under your command? If so, act, and at once, Cinna! Stand up on the platform in the Forum, and proclaim that Domitian is deposed.”

“You are very right,” snarled Cinna. “Right as usual! but what is to happen if the possibility becomes a fact? When flight has dispersed us to all the four winds...?”

“Then, my friend, the essential point is to agree on a spot, where we may all quietly meet again. Let that spot be Rodumna,^[334] the native town of Afranius. It is in every respect favorable—at only a short distance from Lugdunensis, and yet so small as to be out of the turmoil of the world. There will we meet, rouse the legions to our support, and march upon Rome!”

“Good, good!” cried Cornelius Cinna.

“Rodumna!” echoed the rest.

Nerva rose.

“One word!” implored Caius Aurelius.

Nerva, who had already grasped their host’s hand in leave-taking, turned enquiringly to the young man.

“Worthy friends,” the Batavian went on. “Allow me to say, that down at Ostia lies my trireme. The captain and the crew are all men, whom we may blindly trust. If anything should occur to drive us hence, we could not do better than meet on board my bark and reach Gallia by sea.”

“That is a good idea,” said Nerva. “But still one question arises. Does any one in Rome know of the existence of this trireme?”

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“Hardly a soul. The high-priest’s family, it is true, were on board with me, when I came from Baiae. But here, in Rome, where there is so much to distract the attention, so trivial a circumstance would scarcely dwell in their minds.”

“But the slaves!” cried Cinna. “If you are suspected at the palace, they have been cross-examined ere now....”

“I do not honestly believe, that I have been considered worthy of so much attention at the palace.”

“And even if it were so,” Nerva added, “there is a way of escape. To-morrow morning, spread a report among your friends and acquaintances, that your vessel is on the point of starting to return to Trajectum. Go to Ostia yourself, and let her set sail with all ceremony; then, at night, when she is well out at sea, order the captain, instead of steering southwards, to make a detour to the left and sail past the islands of Pontia^[335] and back to Antium, as if he had come direct from Messana.^[336] There he may wait till we need him. By the Appian Way and Aricia^[337] and Lanuvium,^[338] it is not more than twice the distance to Antium, that it is to Ostia. Give your captain the name of Rodumna as a password; whoever goes on board with that token is to be received unquestioned. What do you think of my plan?”

“Nothing could be better arranged, it seems to me,” exclaimed Cinna. “In this way we need neither fit out a vessel for ourselves, nor yet travel by land. The one would excite suspicion, and the other would be both dangerous and expensive. So let it stand: if the situation should seem in any way perilous, we meet on board the trireme in the harbor of Antium.”

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The conspirators rose and slowly dispersed.

CHAPTER XIX.

On the second day after the incidents just related dark clouds had risen over the Tyrrhenian sea and spread in long, heavy banks across the sky, which a short while since had been so deeply blue. A stiff south-westerly breeze blew up the stream of the Tiber, and tossed the little boats and flat-bottomed barges, which lay at anchor at the foot of the Aventine,^[339] till they jostled and bumped each other. Sudden squalls of rain swept down at short intervals, and obliged the people to throw on their leather cowls or their long-haired woollen cloaks.^[340] All the life of the streets took refuge in the arcades and pillared halls; the atria, with their slippery marble pavements, were deserted, and the water from the guttered roofs dripped dolefully into the overflowing impluvia.^[341] A strange atmosphere of discomfort and oppression lay over the whole city. Some great races, which were to have been run in the Circus Maximus, were postponed at the last moment. The flow and ebb through the palace gates was less persistent than usual. The Senate even, notwithstanding the importance of the matters awaiting their debate, came in fewer numbers than usual to the sitting. In short, the air was full of that dull uneasiness, which infallibly accompanies the first symptoms of the decay of the year.

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The storm increased as evening fell. Quintus, who had dined with no other company than two of his clients, stood, as it grew dusk, at the door of the dining-room, looking out at the dreary prospect. The clouds chased each other wildly, and the wind groaned and howled through the colonnade like the wailing of suffering humanity.

“Good!” said Quintus, turning back into the room. “And very good! The wilder the night, the better for our undertaking.”

He signed to the shrewd slave, Blepyrus, who at this moment passed along the passage with a brazier full of burning charcoal.^[342]

“Where are you going?” he asked doubtfully; and when the slave answered: “To your study, my lord,” he said:

“Very good, I am coming—but take care that we are alone.”

Blepyrus went on through the arcade, and when he had reached his master’s private room, he carefully set the brazier on the floor. Two lads, who were standing idle, he promptly dismissed as Quintus came into the room.

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“Listen, Blepyrus,” he began. “Just fancy for a moment, that to-day is the feast of Saturn.^[343] Tell me your honest opinion, frankly and without reserve, just as if you were sitting at table after the old-fashioned custom, while I, your master, waited upon you?”

The slave looked up at him in bewilderment.

“You do not seem to understand me,” Quintus continued. “I want to hear from you, how far you are satisfied with your master. If I have been unjust, if I have hurt your feelings, or wronged you without cause—speak! I entreat you—nay, I command you.”

“My lord,” Blepyrus stammered out, “if I am to speak the truth, you have said many a hard word to your other slaves, but to me you have never been anything but a kind and just—indeed a considerate master. I could only say the same, even if the feast of Saturn really licensed me to complain.”

“I am glad to hear you say so, my good friend. I mean well by you all, and if I ever... Ah! I remember now what you have in your mind. You are thinking of the evening, when I struck Allobrogus in the face^[344] for breaking that precious vase.—You are right; the poor fellow’s teeth were more precious than the broken jar. It was my first angry impulse. Believe me, Blepyrus, I have never hurt or injured any one of you out of ill-will; and you, especially, have always been a friend rather than a slave. You shared my earliest sports—do you remember by the Pons Milvius^[345] how I sprang to your assistance, when your arm was suddenly cramped in swimming? And then again, on the wrestling-ground in the Field of Mars, where we enacted the fight of Varus against the Germans? You snatched me up and rescued me from my foes, like a young god of war, when the game suddenly became earnest....”

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“I remember, my lord,” said the slave with a gratified smile.

“Well,” continued Quintus, “then tell me one thing. Are you still ready to stand in the breach for your master? Understand me, Blepyrus—this time it is not a question of fisticuffs or even thrashed ribs. It is for life and death, old fellow. To be sure, your reward now should not be, as it was then, a saucerfull of Pontian cherries, but the best of all you can ask....”

“My lord,” said the slave, trembling with agitation, “I will do whatever you desire.”

“Can you hold your tongue, Blepyrus? Be silent, not merely with your tongue, but with your eyes—your very breath? You have done me good service before now, I well remember, which required secrecy—but only in trifling matters. This time it is not a tender note to the fair Camilla, not even an assignation with Lesbia or Lycoris. Swear by the spirit of your father, by all you hold sacred and dear, to be silent to the very death.”

"I swear it."

"Then be ready; at the second vigil we must set out on an expedition—out into the storm and darkness. You can tell your comrades, that I am going by stealth to Lycoris. The rest you shall hear later."

Three hours after this the little gate creaked open, which led from the cavaedium to the street, and Quintus and the slave, both wrapped in thick cloaks, slowly mounted the Caelian Hill,^[346] and then took a side road into the valley. Here, on the southern slope, the storm attacked them with redoubled fury; the blast howled up the Clivus Martis and the Appian Way. The streets were almost deserted; only a solitary travelling-chariot now and then rolled thundering and clattering over the stones.

"We must mend our pace," whispered Quintus, as the slave paused a moment, fairly brought to a standstill at the corner of the Via Latina^[347] by a sudden squall of rain. "We have still far to go, Blepyrus; and we shall have it worse still out there in the open."

The road gradually trended off to the right; that dark mass, that now lay to the left, was the tomb of the Scipios,^[348] and there, in front of them, hardly visible in the darkness of night, rose the arch of Drusus,^[349] through which the road led them. They were now outside the limits of the city itself—the fourteen regions, as they were called, of Augustus Caesar. But Rome, the illimitable metropolis, flung out her arms far beyond these prescribed boundaries. That undulating plain, which we now know as the Campagna, was then dotted over with villas and pleasure-gardens. The main artery of this straggling suburb was the magnificent Via Appia—the noble work of a Claudius—leading to the south. The greater number of these villas were at this time abandoned, and the tombs that stood by the road-side^[350] on either hand were hardly more silent, than the dwelling places of the living, before whom these stone witnesses were set to remind them, that life is fleeting and must be enjoyed to the full while it lasts.

Quintus and his companion went onwards, still to the southwards. The country-houses became more and more scattered; they might now have walked about two Roman miles beyond the arch of Drusus. A heavily-laden wagon, with an escort of riders, had just driven past them, and the gleam of the lanterns was dwindling in the distance. Quintus stopped in front of a high-vaulted family tomb, of which the façade was decorated with a semicircular niche containing a marble seat.

"If I am not mistaken in this Cimmerian blackness," he muttered, "this is the spot...."

And at the same moment they heard, approaching from the opposite tomb, the sound of cautious steps.

A broad beam of light fell on the young man's face.

"God be praised!" cried a woman's voice; and in an instant Euterpe, darkening her lantern again, stood by the side of the two men. The young woman was trembling with wet and cold; her clothes clung to her limbs, and her hair hung in dark locks over her forehead and cheeks.

"Are you alone?" asked Quintus.

"With Thrax Barbatus. Here he comes."

"In such weather!"

"God bless you!" said the old man, coming up to Quintus. "Who is this with you?"

"Blepyrus, my trusted friend. He will not betray us."

"My lord, what return can I ever make...."

"Go on, push on!" was the young man's answer. "Only look how the black clouds are driving over the hills; it gets worse every minute. Have we far to go?"

"About three thousand paces," said Barbatus.

"Then lead the way, my good Euterpe. Come, old friend, lean on me. Blepyrus, support him on the left."

"You are too careful of me, my lord," said the old man, flinging his wet cloak over his shoulder. "A merciful Providence still grants me strength, that my white hairs belie, and I am used to rougher roads than you suppose. It is you, the son of a noble house, accustomed to tread only on polished marble or soft carpets...."

"Nonsense—why, even this storm is nothing to speak of."

They turned eastwards, and leaving the high-road, soon reached a wooden bridge across the waters of the Almo,^[351] a rivulet now swollen by the storm. From hence the path led them across the Via Latina and through a dense wood. The pine-tops sighed weirdly under the lashing wind that rocked and bowed them, while now and again, as one bough crashed against another, there was a sound as of distant axe-strokes. They first followed a foot-path, which crossed the wood in a south-easterly direction, but presently—about half way through the pine forest—their guide pushed aside the boughs of a sturdy laurel, that stood on the right side of the alley, and they plunged into the brushwood. Here another path was presently discernible, though overgrown by

a seemingly impenetrable tangle of shrubs, and this presently brought them out close to a grass-grown mass of rocks. By walking round one of the huge boulders, they reached an opening into an old and long-disused stone-quarry. A low passage was visible, sloping down underground.

"Here we are," said Euterpe. A gleam from her lantern revealed a high-piled mass of dèbris. "I will go in first."

She placed her lantern, half open, on a shelf in the tufa rock, at such an angle as to light up the passage; then, stooping down, she disappeared in the doubtful shadow cast by a natural buttress on the rocky wall. Thrax, Quintus, and Bleepyrus followed, the slave bringing the lantern in his hand. At the spot, where the flute-player had disappeared, the passage was cut in steps, which led abruptly downwards about thirty feet underground; then a broad and fairly lofty gallery ran about fifty paces on a level, opening into a cross gallery.

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Quintus signed to his slave to remain where these cross-roads met, while he followed Thrax Barbatus to the right, where a dim light was visible at some considerable distance. Approaching nearer, he perceived that the source of this light lay somewhat on one side, where a large hall opened out, strangely decorated and lighted up by a few tapers. At the farther side, opposite the entrance, stood an altar hung with black, and over it was a wooden image of the crucified Christ. To the left was a brick-walled hearth, where a bright fire was blazing. The smoke rose in a tall column to a square opening in the roof. On the floor, in a niche on one side, Eurymachus—the slave who had escaped from Stephanus—lay on a straw mat, his pale face resting on his hand. Glauce, his betrothed, was occupied in mixing the juice of some fruit with water, to make a drink for the fevered sufferer, while Diphilus, kneeling in front of a rough-hewn wooden stool, was folding a broad strip of stuff to make a bandage. He rose as the new-comers entered.

"The Lord is merciful!" said Thrax to Eurymachus. "Greet our deliverer. All will be well. The night is stormy and dark; we can rest for a short while and dry our cloaks by the fire; then, by God's help, we will set forth with a good courage.—By mid-day you will be in safety."

The sick man's features brightened; joyful surprise and eager gratitude sparkled in the dark eyes, which as suddenly closed again, as though dimmed by weakness. Euterpe had meanwhile taken the soaked and dripping cloaks from the shoulders of the two men, and had hung them over two seats in front of the fire. Then she fetched a little table and spread it with bread, fruit, and wine, while Glauce brought platters and cups from a cave in the wall.

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"Do us the favor of accepting a little refreshment," she said, pulling forward a bench.

Quintus, whose walk through the stormy night, and still more his anxious excitement, had made very thirsty, emptied his cup at a draught, and then turned sympathetically to Eurymachus.

"Do you know me again?" he asked smiling.

The slave drew a deep breath, and said in a weak voice:

"Yes, my lord, I know you. In such a moment of torture a man's memory is sharpened. It was you, who on that awful day poured balm into my wounds, you and the fair youth with a grave, kind face...."

"My word for it, but you put me to shame! It was not I, but my companion, who first made his way through the hedge—it was not I, but my companion, who gave you that human consolation."

"Not so," replied Eurymachus solemnly. "Proud and haughty as you looked, in your heart there was some stirring of the sense of common humanity, which is our inheritance from our Heavenly Father. It was but a small matter, that betrayed this impulse, but—I know not why—it sank deeper into my soul, than even the brave words of your companion. In truth, noble Quintus, the touch of your hand, as you tried to drive away my greedy tormentors, fell like balm upon my heart; it fanned the dying spark of courage in my soul—aye, and I remembered it when, in Lycoris' garden, they were preparing to nail me to the cross. You smile, my lord, and think me a raving enthusiast—but so it is. When you came towards me through the gap in the hedge, you appeared to me as the type of the illustrious Roman—handsome, haughty, absorbed in the natural desire for enjoyment, and with no heart to pity the sufferings of the baser millions. But when you turned to go, you left me with a revived belief, that the gulf, which severs the classes of men, may be bridged over. Often have I discussed it with Thrax Barbatus.—He declares, that the doctrine of Nazareth is destined to be the belief of all mankind; I, on the contrary, maintain that it will never be the creed of any but the wretched and oppressed. For the noble and wealthy—so I argue—will naturally cling to their luxury-loving idols, to whom they attribute their power, dominion, and riches. But since that hour, when Quintus Claudius came up to me filled with pity, a divine revelation lives and shines in my soul. And has not the current of my own fate justified this presentiment? The wealthiest and haughtiest youth of the City of the Seven Hills, the son of the all-powerful Flamen, is the deliverer of the wretched slave! Verily, Quintus, I say unto thee: Thou art, though thou knowest it not, a follower of the crucified Jesus."

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"I?" said Quintus startled and bewildered.

"Yea, my lord. 'Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, is my disciple,' saith Jesus of Nazareth, 'but he that doeth the will of my Father in Heaven.'"

"I do not altogether understand what you mean; the mysteries of your religion are as yet unknown to me."

"The doctrine of Jesus is simple and clear. The Master himself has summed it up in two laws: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God above all things,' and the second is like unto it: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'"

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Quintus looked down in silence.

"You speak of God," he said at last. "Which God do you mean, Eurymachus? Jupiter, whom our forefathers worshipped, is to you a mere idol. What name then do you give to the Divinity, who commands your love? And what proof have you, that he too is not a false God?"

"My lord," said Eurymachus, "our God has no name by which he is known. A name is used for distinction, and to mark a difference from others of the same, kind; but He is one alone and eternal from the beginning. He reveals himself to us through the myriad marvels of the universe, which would never cease to rouse our awe-struck admiration, but that custom has dulled our sense. He is manifest in the impulses and emotions of our own nature, in the ardent yearning for immortality—that home-sickness of the soul which, in the midst of all the joys and blessings of this life, makes us aware of an infinite void, a gulf which nothing else can fill. It is He, whom we apprehend in the joy, that thrills us like a tender mother's kiss, when we lift up our hearts to contemplate Him by faith. We know Him by the strength, the constancy, the scorn of death, that He can inspire, when every nerve of our frail body is quivering with pain. Think of our fellow-believers, who were butchered by Nero—the bloody slaughter in the Arena, the men burnt alive, buried alive! What upheld these martyrs through their unspeakable torments? The grace of God, the Almighty and All-merciful, whom Jesus Christ hath taught us to know."

"Amen!" whispered Glauce, with an admiring glance at her lover, whose face glowed with enthusiasm.

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Barbatus went anxiously up to him, and laid a hand on his brow.

"Do not agitate yourself," he said with tender sympathy. "You have still much to go through."

"Nay, it is well," replied Eurymachus. "I feel strengthened since I have set eyes on my preserver. —Aye, noble Quintus, this is the God, whom the disciples of the Nazarene worship—this is the faith, which your empire brands as a crime. Conspirators, they call us, and traitors. We conspire, it is true, but not against Caesar, to whom we freely render the things that are Caesar's, as our Master taught us; only against sin, against crime and evil-doing. We swear to each other by the memory of the Crucified,^[352] not to betray each other, nor to lie, nor steal, nor bear false witness, nor commit adultery. We hate no man for his faith's sake, for we know that grace is a gift of omnipotent God, and that, even in the shadow of the false god Jupiter, a gleam of divine truth may be seen. We are quiet, peaceful folk, who ask nothing more than to be allowed to live undisturbed in our faith and hope."

"You forget one thing," exclaimed Barbatus, as Eurymachus paused. "Christ teaches us, that we are all the children of God. In his sight all differences of high and low, rich and poor, lofty and humble are as nothing; and we, as true disciples of the Redeemer, must strive to work out this principle. We must try to found a state of human society, in which all the distinctions which have hitherto existed are utterly dissolved."

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"Nay, you are in error," replied Eurymachus. "Those differences are not to be done away with. If you levelled them all to-day, they would originate again of their own accord to-morrow. Their form and aspect will be modified, but their existence is inevitable. Jesus of Nazareth never conceived of such changes. He only sought to revive in those, who have lost it in the varying chances and turmoil of life, some consciousness of the intrinsic worth of all that is truly human. As soon as the great ones of the earth learn to see, that even slaves are their brothers, that even the base-born are the children of the Almighty, all the most violent contrasts of class will be smoothed away, and things that now weigh upon us as a yoke, will be turned into a bond of union. 'My Kingdom is not of this world,' said Jesus of Nazareth. He will indeed regenerate man, but through his heart and spirit, and not with force or violent upheaval."

"Then you insist on being miserable, come what may?" cried Barbatus vehemently.

"By no means. I only dispute the idea, that the teaching of Christ leads to such issues. Whether rich or poor, master or slave, matters not in the balance of our salvation. Many a one, who holds his head high and free, bears heavier fetters, than the convict in the mines of Sardinia."

Quintus Claudius once more emptied the cup, which Glauce had filled. His brain was in a whirl, and his throat parched. The sight of this slave, lying on a straw mat, and weighing the future destinies of man, and the mystery of existence, with such calm decision, troubled and excited him to an extraordinary degree. At this moment he was in a wilder fever than Eurymachus. He looked down with admiration—almost with envy—at the pale face, which looked so radiant in the midst of suffering, so sublimely happy in spite of wretchedness. And he himself? Did not the saying about the convict in the mines apply to him? Was he not in fact more fettered and bound, than this fugitive slave? What was the liberty that Rome—that the whole world was ready to offer to him? Had he ever been able really to purchase release from that dark melancholy, which oppressed him like an ever-present incubus? What a God must He be, who uplifted the slave to such serene heights!

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"It is time to start," he said at last, waking from a deep reverie. "The roads are bad; I fear we can proceed but slowly; besides, we must not keep Caius Aurelius waiting too long. He shares our

danger, and is watching in anxious uncertainty."

"Noble Sir!" exclaimed the slave, deeply moved, "are you really prepared again to risk your life? You know, Father, how strongly I set my face against this project; and even now, at the eleventh hour, I entreat you: Consider well what you are doing."

"It has all been considered," said Thrax impatiently. "If you were to perish in this cavern, would not our fate also be sealed? Do you think, that Glauce would survive your death? Look at her; see how the mere thought frightens her."

"But who talks of my dying? You should have waited eight or ten days, till the first fury of our persecutors had cooled." 260

"And meanwhile you would have cooled, never to be warm again. Your wound, at first scarcely worth speaking of, has become so much worse in the unwholesome air of this vault...."

"And your fever increases every day," interrupted Euterpe.

"Waste no more words!" cried Thrax angrily. "Help him, Diphilus. You see he can hardly drag himself up."

Diphilus, zealously seconded by Euterpe, lifted the wounded man from his wretched couch, and they carried him carefully out into the gallery, where Blepyrus was wearily leaning against the rough-hewn wall. A litter was standing there with some thick woollen coverlets, and Eurymachus was laid upon it as comfortably as possible. Glauce, who had followed with a clay lamp, pressed a long kiss on his forehead, and then hurried away, crying bitterly. Quintus had also accompanied them, and as soon as he saw that all was ready for the start, ran back to fetch his hardly-dried cloak. But he involuntarily paused at the entrance of the cavern; the sight that met his eyes was as pathetic as it was fair to look upon. The young girl had fallen on her knees before the altar, her slender hands uplifted in prayer; she gazed up at the cross in a transport of devotion, smiling ecstatically, though tears rolled down her pale cheeks. Her lips moved, at first inaudibly, but presently in a low murmur.

"Saviour of the world," she prayed, "Thou who hast died for us on the cross.—If Thou requirest a victim, take me, and let me suffer a thousand deaths, but spare, oh spare my Eurymachus!" 261

"Where are you, my lord?" called Blepyrus.

"I am coming," answered Quintus in an agitated voice. "Forgive me, gentle worshipper, for interrupting your prayer. Your God will hear and grant it none the less."

And as he spoke he went up to the fire-place, threw the cloak over his shoulders, and followed the litter which, borne by Blepyrus and Diphilus, had already reached the entrance of the quarry. Euterpe also was with the wounded fugitive. Only Thrax Barbatus remained behind in the underground cavern, to help Glauce, who had now recovered her cheerful composure, to deck the altar and throw wood on the fire. It was nearly midnight, the hour at which a little knot of believers in the Nazarene were wont to meet and keep the Feast of Love in memory of their Redeemer.

CHAPTER XX.

The little procession slowly made its way through the brushwood; Euterpe, indefatigable, led the way. In her left hand she carried the dark lantern, with which now and again she lighted up some especially perilous spot, while with her right hand she held aside the boughs of the shrubs. The gale was still blowing through the dripping trees, and squalls of rain swept over them with a rush and roar. After a short but difficult walk they reached the foot-bridge, and turned off to the east, leaving the brook Almo behind them, and then by degrees the forest grew thinner.

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When at last they reached the open, they saw before them the arches of the Claudian aqueduct, [353] stretching black and ponderous across the plains. The wind had parted the clouds here and there over the eastern horizon, and a few stars shone fitfully through the rifts, but this made the darkness, which brooded over the whole creation, all the more sensible.

Again they went over a wooden bridge—then under an arch of the aqueduct, and a few minutes after through that of another, the Aqua Marcia.[354] So far they had kept to the road. Now, however, they quitted it, and for a time cut across fields and meadows, over wide pools and ditches, and through brushwood. A quarter of an hour, half an hour, a whole hour of this toil, and they had not yet reached the Labicanian Way,[355] towards which they were marching.

Diphilus held out bravely, but Blepyrus, who was not of the strongest, and who was accustomed only to the lightest toil, panted so painfully, that Quintus could not bear to see it.

“Give me hold,” he said with rough good nature. “Why, you are groaning like a mule dragging blocks of stone.”

“My lord!” said Blepyrus out of breath. “You see I can hold out a little longer.”

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“I see just the reverse. Stop a minute, Diphilus—there! now get your breath again, Blepyrus, and fill your lungs. In ten minutes we will change again.”

“But, my lord, what are you thinking of?”

“Do not talk, but save your wind.”

Euterpe, always thoughtful, offered the exhausted man a draught of mead. Blepyrus drank it eagerly, and the strange convoy went on its way again through the silent night.

They were indeed a strange party for any one who could have seen them! A youth of senatorial rank serving as litter-bearer to one slave, while another walked idle by his side! Quintus thought of his friends and equals, and could not help smiling; but with his next breath he sighed, for he thought of his father. He knew indeed, that Titus Claudius would not have hesitated to lend a hand if needed for the rescue of the meanest of his dependents; Titus Claudius, no less, would have bent his shoulder to the strap of a slave’s litter in case of need. And yet, what bitter grief, what implacable resentment would that generous man feel, if only he could see—could guess...!

Quintus gazed vaguely up at the driving clouds, that scudded wildly along like a host of uneasy spirits. They packed and tumbled together, hiding the few stars which had peeped forth in the dark sky.

“I cannot help it,” thought Quintus, tightening his lips. “I have no choice in the matter. If the whole world round me crumbles into eternal night—I cannot help it!”

The wounded man, exhausted by his too eager talk with Thrax, lay meanwhile silent and motionless on his couch. Even when Quintus slipped the straps on to his own shoulders he seemed indifferent to the fact; only a faint cry of surprise betrayed, that he had not swooned or fallen asleep.

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They had gained the Via Labicana at last, and were toiling up the slippery way. Blepyrus was just going to take his master’s share of the burden again, when he suddenly became aware of a shade at a few paces distance, which at first stole stooping down close to the hedge, and then suddenly made for the open country, bounding across the road with long steps.

“What was that?” asked Quintus, who had also observed the noise and running figure.

“Some wild creature perhaps,” said Euterpe.

“It was a man,” said Eurymachus.

Quintus stopped and gazed out into the darkness; then, turning to Eurymachus, he asked with evident anxiety:

“When did you first see him?”

“This minute, as we came upon the road.”

“I saw him before,” said Blepyrus in a whisper, as though a similar shade might at any moment start forth in the gloom. “Out there, by that bush in the middle of the field something moved and scudded past. I thought it was some night-bird.”

"They are sitting snugly in their nests," said Diphilus. Blepyrus did not answer; he was considering.

"It seems to me," he said at length, "that I have seen that peculiar skulking walk and sudden disappearance before. He vanished like lightning."

"And he meant no good," added the flute-player. "In short, it was a spy sent out by the slave-catchers, and before we can reach the gate the town-watch will be upon us."

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"Then we must be doubly careful," said Quintus, forcing his pulses to beat more calmly. "We must toil across country again as far as the Via Praenestina.^[356] It will be heavy walking, almost up to our knees in the soil.—But listen! is not that the tramp of horses? Coming from the city—not a thousand paces away."

"Lord and Saviour!" groaned Euterpe. "The man must have flown like the wind."

"He must indeed, if these horsemen have come at his call. No, the swiftest cannot be so swift as that. It is all the same; forewarned is forearmed. What is that to the right of the road?"

"A fountain, or something of the kind," replied Blepyrus.

"We will hide behind the wall, till the horsemen have passed."

In a few seconds they had reached the fountain, of which the basin was raised about three feet above the ground. By day it would have been a perfectly unavailing shelter, but in the darkness it was a sufficient cover. If the horsemen should have lanterns, to be sure—and this could not yet be seen for a rise in the ground—they might easily detect the track of the fugitives across the weeds and grass, and then....

For the first time in his life Quintus was aware of the presence of a great danger. Although he felt certain, that the unknown runner could not possibly have fetched the horsemen, who were now close upon them, there was an infinity of possibilities, of which the mere thought seized his heart with a cold grip. Even accident might here have played an important part. If the riders were really agents of the slave-takers, or even soldiers of the town-watch, the next few minutes were fateful indeed. The sinister vision that had passed them had made him anxious and undecided, and gloomy forebodings weighed on his mind. The thought flashed through his brain: How if you were now at home, standing by your own triclinium? Would you now appeal as you did to Blepyrus, or would you not rather seek some excuse for evading the work of rescue? But the question left him clear of all doubt; he did not regret the step he had taken, and let what might await him, he would persist now in the road on which he had started. This short meditation restored his peace of mind; he still was anxious, but it was not on his own account; it was for the task he had undertaken, the fugitive who lay in silence on the drenched couch, the faithful and brave souls who crouched with him for shelter. Suddenly he felt a trembling hand clasp his own, and press it with passionate fervor to quivering lips. It was Eurymachus, whose heart, in spite of every dread, was overflowing with exalted feeling. The slave's grateful kiss fired a sacred glow through the young man's veins, and it was with a sense of supreme indifference to all the sports of fate, that he heard the trample of hoofs coming nearer and nearer.

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Blepyrus and the stalwart Diphilus held themselves in readiness to meet a possible onslaught. Euterpe sat on a low stone, half paralyzed; her heart beat audibly, her hands trembled convulsively.

The horses were now close upon them. Quintus leaned forward, and saw five or six dark forms mounted on small, nimble beasts. They were riding cautiously, at a short trot. Now they were passing the spot where the fugitives had turned aside from the high-road—Quintus fancied he saw them check their pace, and hastily felt for the weapon in his bosom. But it was a mistake. The riders trotted on, and did not diminish their pace till at some distance to the south-east, where the road mounted a hill. The hated sound of hoofs gradually died away in the distance.

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"God be praised!" sighed Euterpe.

Diphilus hastened to reload himself.

"We might have spared ourselves the fright," he said to Eurymachus. "In this darkness...."

"It was only on account of your fugitive," said Blepyrus. "It may be, that the riders were only merchants or other harmless folk...."

"It is all the same," interrupted Quintus. "Any man is to be regarded as suspicious. Do not lose another minute! Off! towards the Praenestian Way."

And once more the little procession set forth across bog and briar. Thus they reached a foot-path, which led them past vineyards and at length down to the high-road. The Via Praenestina was little frequented at night, even in fine weather; the main traffic led past the towns of Toleria and Aricia. So they went on, relieved in mind, towards the town, which was still at about an hour's distance. By degrees the south-westerly gale spent itself and lulled, no longer rushing in wild blasts across the plain, but blowing softly and steadily, like a long-drawn sigh of respite. The black clouds rolled away to the east and north, and the waning moon showed a haze-veiled sickle on the horizon.

Eurymachus as before lay in total silence; and neither Quintus, whose spirit was tossed by a

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thousand new and strange feelings, nor Blepyrus, who was straining every nerve to conceal his utter exhaustion, uttered a word as they walked on. Only Diphilus and Euterpe exchanged a few words in low tones. The flute-player described her terror; never in her life had she quaked so as on the stone by that fountain. After passing through such perils, she seemed to feel the need of showing all her love and good feeling to her worthy mate, and she even wished to relieve him of the litter straps, as Quintus had relieved Blepyrus, and harness her own shoulders. But Diphilus laughed shortly, and scorned the idea.

"Yes," he growled good humoredly, "that is a good notion! You want to score your white shoulders with the marks of the strap. Think of business, child! Why, to-morrow you are to play at the house of the captain of the body-guard; you need not spoil your beauty to-night. It was mad enough, that you would not stay at home such a night as this."

They were now close to the limits of the suburbs of Rome. The buildings on the Esquiline, dimly lighted by the moon, stood out sharper as they approached them against the western sky. Passing by the field, where Philippus, the son of Thrax Barbatus, lay buried, they made their way through the empty streets to the Caelian Hill, and at last reached the back entrance of the house inhabited by Caius Aurelius. The narrow path, which led to it across the hill, was entirely deserted; the houses stood detached, each in the midst of its garden, and shut off from the road by high walls.

Quintus went forward and knocked three times at the postern gate. The bolt was instantly drawn, and Magus, the Gothic slave, came joyfully to meet the strangers. 269

"Welcome, my lord," he said in a whisper. "Your arrival relieves us of the greatest anxiety. I have been listening here at the gate these two hours."

"Yes, yes—" said Quintus equally softly, "we are very late; but it could not be helped. Come, good people, make no noise—go in front, Magus."

They all went into the garden, and the Goth barred the door again. Then they crossed the xystus^[357] to the peristyle, and went along a carpeted corridor to the atrium. Here they were met by Herodianus, who with difficulty suppressed an exclamation of joy.

"At last!" he said, bustling to and fro with delight, like a busy mistress receiving guests. "We had begun to think, that you must have met with some misfortune. Aurelius, my illustrious friend, is in the greatest anxiety. But softly, for pity's sake softly! everyone is sound asleep, and foresight is the mother of prudence."

A light was shining in one of the rooms that surrounded the court-yard; before they could reach it, Aurelius appeared in the doorway and hurried out to embrace Quintus.

"What a fearful night!" he said with a sigh of relief. "How anxious I have been for you, my dear Quintus! A hundred possibilities, each more terrible than the last, have racked my brain. Be quick, Magus, lift the wounded man from his litter! Come, you must be quite tired out.—Such torrents of rain! Your cloak is as heavy as lead And here is our sweet little musician, as tender as a baby.—Come, warm yourselves, refresh yourselves!" 270

Herodianus had meanwhile hastened to open a cubiculum farther on in the corridor, while Magus took the place of Blepyrus, who was utterly exhausted. Eurymachus was laid in bed and soon fell asleep, after Euterpe and Diphilus had applied a fresh bandage and given him a cup of refreshing drink. Blepyrus, incapable of standing even a moment longer, threw off his cloak and sank at full-length on to one of the cushioned benches in the colonnade; he begged Herodianus, as he passed, to throw a coverlet over him. "I am more dead than alive," he said. "When my master goes home, wake me."

The freedman tried to persuade him to go into one of the rooms and lie on a bed; but Blepyrus heard no more. Deep, blank sleep had overpowered him at once. So Herodianus fetched a couple of warm rugs, in which he carefully wrapped the weary slave and then he joined Aurelius and Quintus.

The Gothic slave stayed to watch Eurymachus. Leaning back in a chair, resting his feet on a stuffed footstool, he sat gazing in the sleeper's face which, faintly lighted by the glimmer of a small bronze lamp, was the picture of worn-out nature, but at the same time, of contentment and peaceful rest. Magus knew all the history of the hapless slave. He knew how Domitia's steward had for years made life a burthen to him, and had at last condemned him to a martyr's death. The immutable steadfastness of the sufferer had excited the enthusiastic admiration even of the simple Goth, and strange thoughts were surging in his soul.

"How still he lies there with his eyes tight shut," thought the Goth, "quite shut, and yet I could fancy he saw through the lids. Veleda,^[358] the prophetess, had just such eyes! When I was carrying him across the hall he looked up, and it was like a flash of fire, and yet soft and mild like the blue sea when the sun shines. If he were fair, he would be just like the priest in the grove of Nerthus.^[359] He indeed was a favorite of the gods; he knew everything on earth and above the earth. I feel as if this man too must know all secrets, which make such men wise above all others. It is written on his forehead.—If only he were not so pale and feeble—if he had limbs as strong as mine, and hale northern blood in his veins! Odin should melt us down to make one man.—There would be a hero!" 271

So thought the worthy Gothic slave, while his eyes remained fixed on the features of the sleeper;

but before long his own eyes also closed, and the ideas that had roused him to unwonted excitement remained in his mind in the realm of dreams. He saw Odin, with his wolves and raven, rushing down through the woods on the shores of the distant Baltic. He himself, Magus, was standing in the shadow of a sacred beech-tree, hand-in-hand with the wounded slave, who had dragged himself painfully through the underwood. As the god rushed past them, he lightly touched them with his sword; and they flowed and melted, as it were, into one, each feeling as though this had been their destiny from the beginning of things. And now, as the newly-created two-in-one looked up, behold! the mighty sword of the god hung to a branch of the beech-tree. He put out his hand, took it down, and with a giant's strength, whirled it round his head. A flash of light shone through the grove, and the newly-formed being felt that he was stronger and mightier than all mortals, from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof.

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"A foolish dream!" Magus whispered to himself, as he suddenly started wide awake. He gave his charge, who had begun to stir, a draught of water, and then fell asleep again.

Euterpe and Diphilus had meanwhile gone away, though the Batavian had begged them to take a change of clothes and rest under a comfortable roof for the rest of the night. After Quintus had changed his dress and refreshed himself with food and drink, he also wished to return home. But Aurelius detained him.

"Listen," he said, in a tone of strange timidity: "With regard to our journey to-morrow to Ostia, I have a proposal to make to you. It is very true, that the mere fact that I am sending my ship off on her return to Trajectum is a sufficient reason—still—people might.... To be plain with you, my intimacy with Nerva and Cinna has attracted notice in certain quarters—I fear I may be watched, and therefore it would perhaps be better to give the whole affair the aspect of a pleasure excursion—if you only could persuade your sister, and perhaps your betrothed to accompany us. I have such a perfect disguise for Eurymachus, that neither of the young ladies can have the faintest suspicion. Besides—who troubles himself about a slave? It seems to me the plan is as admirable as it is simple."

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"It is masterly!" exclaimed Quintus. "Cornelia is crazy about the sea, and Claudia and Lucilia will have no objections. If only the weather improves..."

"Oh! the day will be splendid," said Aurelius, going into the hall. "The wind has quite gone down, and the clouds are parting. I asked Magus just now."

"The idea is delightful. The more openly and boldly we go to work, the better. About what hour should we start?"

"I thought about three hours after sunrise."

"Very good. I will let Cornelia and my sisters know; the rest I leave entirely to you, my dear Caius."

"You shall not be disappointed," said Aurelius, radiant with satisfaction.

"And where shall we meet? Out beyond the tomb of Cestius?"

"It will perhaps be better that you should come here, and we will proceed all together to the place where vehicles wait; that will look least suspicious and most natural."

"So be it: we will go to the gates in a little party. Now farewell—I am very tired, and wish I had my litter."

"Shall I...?" Aurelius began.

"I should think so indeed! What! risk all that our exertions have so far accomplished for the sake of my selfish limbs! Nay, nay. I shall live through it, never fear. Farewell again, my dear Aurelius."

The friends embraced. Bleepyrus, awakened by Herodianus, who lent him a dry cloak, came dizzy with sleep, down the corridor and followed his master with a faint groan. Quintus, in spite of all he had gone through, walked on fresh and eager, and in five minutes they were at home.

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CHAPTER XXI.

In the house of Cornelius Cinna a slave had just announced that it was two hours after sunrise. [360] Cinna, though he had slept but badly, had long been out of bed, he would not, however, receive any of the numerous visitors, who were enquiring for him in the atrium, but was pacing the peristyle to and fro with his head sunk on his breast. Cornelia, who was taking breakfast in the dining-room with Chloe and one or two slave-girls, sent repeatedly to call her uncle.

"Directly—in a minute," was all the answer, and Cinna began to walk up and down the colonnade.

His mind was principally occupied with an incident, which certainly seemed significant. Shortly before midnight his slave Charicles had brought him a mysterious note, which had been left with the door-keeper by a man concealed in a cloak. The paper, which was doubly tied round for safety, contained but a few words: "You are surrounded by spies; be on your guard."

There was no signature, nor did the large thick writing—a feigned hand no doubt—afford any clew. "Surrounded by spies!" This idea, stated with such uncompromising plainness, haunted his excited fancy with urgent persistency. He had long known, that under Domitian's rule espionage and underhand reporting everywhere spread their treacherous snares. And yet it came upon him now, as something impossible and shocking. In vain he racked his brain to guess who could be the sender of this mysterious warning, and at last he came to the conclusion, that the whole thing was perhaps the spiteful jest of some enemy—or a trap laid by Caesar himself.

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While her uncle thus paced the arcade in gloomy displeasure, Cornelia eat her breakfast in the best of humors. The early day shone so gaily and invitingly into the room, the air, purified by the night's rain, was so sweet! Besides, had not Cornelia, as she thought, the most particular reasons for seeing the whole world rose-colored to-day? The soft light in her eyes showed that she had recovered a peace of mind, a happy confidence, which for some time she had lost entirely.

"Chloe," she said at last, when the girls had left the room: "Did you not notice anything yesterday? I mean when I came back into the sitting-room, after offering sacrifice?"

"Chloe raised her round head on her fat, short neck, and grinned like a simpleton. Cornelia, who was usually excessively annoyed by this behavior, seemed on the present occasion to be superior to all petty vexation. She went on pleasantly enough:

"The faith in the universal Mother has its mysteries. At our third visit you yourself saw how Barbillus can work by means of his divine mission. You fell to earth in awe-stricken terror, but the goddess smiled on you as she did on me, the first time I knelt before her in the holy of holies. So I venture to tell you, that my heart is full of unutterable peace and joy. Did you not see yesterday, that I was quite uplifted with happiness?"

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Chloe grinned wider than ever.

"No," she said with incredible stupidity.

"Then you must be stricken blind. I was almost beside myself; for Isis, the all-merciful, has bestowed on me the most precious of her gifts. She promises me protection against every danger, and in proof of her grace will send her divine brother Osiris to me with a message. He will lay his hands on my head, and so inspire into me a spark of his eternal light. Do you comprehend the immensity, the infinitude, of this celestial mercy? The divine miracle is to be accomplished at the next new moon, and then no farther penance or sacrifice will be needed. I shall henceforth be the sealed and adopted daughter of the goddess for ever."

Chloe stared blankly in her face. "Yes," she said, after a few minutes silence. "Barbillus is a great man! At first there were many things I thought impossible; but now that I have seen them with my own eyes, I believe in everything.—Everything, everything! If he were to tell me he could cut the moon in halves, or bring Berenice's hair [361] down from heaven—I should not doubt, I should bow before the magician."

"Oh! I am so happy!" said Cornelia, while the bright color mounted to her cheeks. "Only yesterday how sad I was; my heart was darker than the midnight sky, and the wailing of the storm found an echo in my soul. Now, to-day, all nature hardly smiles so brightly and happily as my refreshed and joyful spirit. This excursion to Ostia comes exactly at the right moment, as if I had planned it myself—it is as if Quintus had read my inmost soul. I want to be out in the open country by the everlasting sea, away, far away from this crush of houses.... Ah! and with him!"

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"It is lucky then, that our stern master, your uncle, makes no difficulties. He is usually averse to all expeditions, which may extend till nightfall. I almost think he was inclined to say: 'No.' It was not till he heard that Caius Aurelius was to be of the party...."

"It is true," said Cornelia. "And I myself was surprised to find how he was silent at once at the name of the Batavian." She blushed scarlet. "It almost looks, as if he thought I needed some one to watch my behavior."

"It is only that he is anxious," said Chloe. "And he has a high opinion of Aurelius."

"Oh! I know—he has told me often enough. It would be a heaven-sent boon to him, if I would

throw over Quintus and condescend to marry Aurelius."

"That would be a bad exchange!" cried Chloe. "The senatorial purple[362] for the ring of a provincial knight."

A slave now announced, that Quintus Claudius was waiting in the atrium, that he sent his greetings, and wished to know whether Cornelia was ready to start, or whether Claudia and Lucilia should quit their litters and come into the house. Cornelia started up from her couch and flew to meet her lover.

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"My uncle is in a very bad humor," she said. "It will be best not to disturb him. Let us start without any leave-taking."

"And Chloe?"

"We will leave her at home."

Quintus smiled; as they stood there in the narrow passage, lighted only by one small window, he threw his arm round the tall, fine figure and, unseen by the ostiarius, pressed a burning kiss on her lips—but Chloe appeared with travelling-cloaks and Tyrian rugs, and the little caravan set forth at once.

There were four litters, one for each person, followed by a small escort of slaves. The Numidian guard of the Claudian household, and the Batavian's Sicambrians, who were to accompany them into the country, were awaiting them, mounted on good horses, by the pyramid of Cestius, where the carriages also were standing.

They first stopped at the house of Aurelius, but here there was no delay. Hardly had they knocked at the door, when Aurelius came out to meet his friends, ready to start. He was followed by a litter, in which lay a fair-haired, weather-beaten, somewhat haggard-looking man.

"This is a seaman, who has brought me news from my native land," said Aurelius to the ladies. "In all the wind and rain last night, he came up from Ostia, and as his ship sails to-day for Parthenope and Greece, he wants to return to the port as quickly as possible."

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"A fellow-countryman!" exclaimed Quintus. "You Batavians are not too numerous in Rome, and I can imagine that the meeting must have given you keen pleasure."

"Great pleasure!" said Aurelius, as he got into another litter, "though the worthy Chamavus has found but ill-luck under my roof. Only think, as he came into the court-yard he slipped on the wet marble flags and injured his ankle. I begged him to remain and rest, but he assures me his voyage to Hellas admits of no delay...."

"Poor fellow!" said Lucilia glancing back at the litter. "He does certainly look very suffering."

The flaxen-haired German bowed silently to the ladies, and then turned to Aurelius with a resigned shrug, as though to say, what could not be cured must be borne.

Meanwhile a crowd of idlers had, as usual, collected round the litters, and Aurelius felt his anxiety rising at every instant; he spoke almost angrily to one of the bearers, who could not settle the fastenings of his scarlet tunic to his satisfaction.

However, they were now fairly off. Past the temple of the Bona Dea[363] they turned into the Delphian Way,[364] as it was called, and on the farther side of the Aventine reached the huge monument—then already a century and a half old—which has survived the storms of so many historical cataclysms to the present day. At that time the pyramid of Cestius, cased from top to bottom in white marble, did not present the dismal aspect it now wears—a pile of weather-stained basalt—standing in silent dignity on the cemetery-like desert of the Campagna. A busy population stirred at its foot, and the morning sun shone brightly on the gilt inscription, which recorded that the deceased had been Praetor, Tribune, and member of the body of High Priests.

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On the eastern side was a second inscription, less monumental and imposing than that on the north, but to Quintus and Aurelius of the most pressing interest. There was there an "*album*," as it was called, one of the large square stones on which public announcements or notices were written, and here, in tall, red letters, the following advertisement might be read:

"Stephanus, the Empress' steward, advertises for his escaped slave, Eurymachus. Whoever brings back the fugitive, dead or alive, will receive a reward of five hundred thousand sesterces. Eurymachus is tall and slight, lean and pale, with dark eyes and black hair. His back bears the scars of many floggings. In escaping, he is reported to have injured his foot."

The statement of the reward stood out bright and fresh, while the rest was somewhat washed out; the sum was increased every day, and had been doubled since the previous evening. Magus and Blepyrus made every conceivable effort to clear a way through the mass of people[365] that crowded round this notice, and almost blocked the whole width of the road, shouting and gesticulating. In vain; the mob were so possessed by the one idea, that they had neither eyes nor ears for anything else.

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"Five hundred thousand sesterces!"

"More than a knight's portion!"[366]

"And how long ago did it happen?"

"Four days."

"Impossible!"

"He must be above ground."

"Bah—he has some patron who hides him."

Pros and *cons* were discussed in loud confusion; the cries of the two slaves were lost in the storm of voices, and the procession came to a stand-still in the midst of the chaos.

"Use your elbows," said Aurelius in Gothic. Magus faced about with a shrug, as much as to say there was indeed nothing else to be done. Then, with a contemptuous glance at the mob, above which he towered, with slow but irresistible force he elbowed his way.

"He works like a flail!" cried one, and "Oh! my ribs!" wailed another.

"They are the daughters of Titus Claudius."

"What do I care? the road is for every one."

"Certainly—for all alike. Let those who want to go on, get out and walk if the crowd is too great; it is only a hundred steps to the chariots."

"Aye, get out!" cried a chorus. "We have as good a right to be here as our betters. Get out! Get out!"

The mob closed upon them threateningly from both sides; Quintus Claudius turned pale. If he could not succeed in scaring off the people, and if this irresponsible populace insisted on having their own way, all must be lost. The lame foot of the pretended seaman must inevitably attract the attention and rouse the suspicion of a rabble, whose heads were full of the notice and description before them—discovery was inevitable.

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With a leap Quintus Claudius was standing on his feet, and went forward with calm dignity to face the tumult.

"What do you want?" he asked sternly. "Why do you dare to stop the public way?"

His cool self-possession worked wonders—their noisy audacity was quelled.

"Make way," continued Claudius, while a faint flush rose to his brow. "I, Quintus Claudius, the friend of Caesar, command you."

"Not Caesar himself would let our ribs be battered," shrieked a croaking voice.

But the excuse came too late. Whether it was Caesar's name, or the imposing and attractive presence of the young patrician, who stood unapproachable as an avenging Apollo, looking calmly on the tumult of his antagonists—the crowd parted with a dull murmur, and the road was free. Quintus and Aurelius had some difficulty in dissembling their joy.

"Stupid creatures!" said Lucilia. "What queer fancies men take."

Cornelia smiled with an expression of supreme contempt. Nothing should have induced her to walk, she said, and she would have liked to see any one try to make her.

They safely reached the spot on the road to Ostia, where the chariots awaited them. Here again they found an excited crowd. Driving inside the city walls was prohibited by day, and they here found not only the carriages of the wealthier citizens, but vehicles for hire in numbers, from the lightest chariots to the heaviest conveyances for travelling or pleasure parties. The drivers noisily and vehemently offered their services to the passers-by, while sellers of eatables and cooling drinks carried their baskets round with monotonous cries, and eating and drinking went on in the arbors by the roadside. Laughter and song, scolding and cursing were audible in a variety of tones.

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The party of excursionists got into a large four-wheeled chariot^[367] belonging to Caius Aurelius. The fugitive was helped by Blepyrus and Magus into a two-wheeled vehicle, known as a *cisium*,^[368] which stood somewhat apart loaded with provisions,^[369] but which had room on its back-seat not only for Eurymachus, but for his two faithful assistants.

"He insisted on it," said the Batavian to Lucilia; "the worthy man was anxious not to intrude on our party."

"That was very wise of him," replied Lucilia. "He is better off in a provision wagon with Magus and Blepyrus, than in the most splendid chariot—and really, here with us there is scarcely room for him.—Besides, it would seem he brought no slaves with him from Ostia?"

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"All the crew were indispensable on board," replied Aurelius coloring slightly.

Quintus felt that Aurelius could not carry on the deception any farther, without involving himself in inextricable discrepancies. He tried to divert the conversation into a less dangerous channel, and soon succeeded in so completely engaging the gay Lucilia's talent for repartee, that the second vehicle and the traveller in it seemed entirely forgotten.

With eight Numidians as outriders, the little party made their way smoothly and unhindered along the fine high-road. The Sicambrians followed as a rear-guard. That valiant equestrian, Herodianus, who had been quite upset by his deeds of prowess the night before, remained at home against his usual custom.

Now again Quintus glanced back at Eurymachus, who had maintained a quite marvellous composure during the scene at the pyramid of Cestius. His disguise was, in fact, most successful. None but the most practised eye, or the scrutiny of the most suspicious, could have detected the pale, enfeebled fugitive under the fair, curling hair and tanned, weather-beaten face of the mariner.

The Cappadocian horses made a good pace. In an hour and a quarter they had reached the little town of Ficana,^[370] and as soon as they had passed it they saw the marshes, which here border the coast of Latium and the distant houses of the seaport.

During their rapid drive they had overtaken several carriages and horsemen, and now the Numidian vanguard galloped past a man, whose light travelling-cloak hung carelessly over his shoulders, while a broad Thessalian hat^[371] shaded his face from the sun, and who sat his horse comfortably rather than rigidly. Two slaves trotted by his side on mules. As the carriage gained upon him he turned his head, and Lucilia exclaimed:

"See, Quintus! there is Cneius Afranius!"

Quintus was unpleasantly startled, for he knew how keen the eye of the lawyer was, and how great his skill in solving the riddle of the most involved mystery. But a glance at Caius Aurelius reassured him.

"You know," said Aurelius, "that his mother lives at Ostia. Besides," he added in a whisper, "even if he were to notice ... I pledge my word, that Afranius will not betray us."

The carriage had now overtaken the rider. Afranius, surprised and delighted, waved a well-shaped, though rather large hand, and set spurs in his horse in order to keep up with the carriage. His horse jibbed and resisted a little, but then fell into a steady canter.

"What an unexpected meeting!" cried Afranius. "Are you going to Ostia?"

"As you see," replied Quintus.

"My trireme sails to-night," said the Batavian gaily. "I am staying longer in Rome than I had intended, so I am sending it back—home to Trajectum. Our friends here have come with me for the sake of the delightful expedition. What a splendid day it is!"

Afranius nodded the Thessalian hat.

"Quite delightful!" said Lucilia.

"And you, my worthy friend Cneius," continued the Batavian, "what brings you here to Ostia? Do you suffer from your old longing to embrace your mother? Are you—escaping the noise of the city? Or have you business to attend to."

"Something of all three. I am riding out as much from duty as for pleasure. You know of my proceedings against Stephanus, Domitia's steward. All I have hitherto been able to do has been in vain; but now, at last, a person whose name I will for the present keep to myself, has revealed to me certain facts which very probably—well, I will say no more. But at any rate I propose this very day to hear what certain citizens of Ostia have to say. If only I could get at all the witnesses equally easily, then indeed—or at any rate one, the most important of all. Unfortunately I see no hope for it."

"Why!" asked Quintus.

"Because he has vanished and left no trace."

"Then have him hunted up," said Lucilia.

"Others are doing that already. Perhaps there were never before so many persons in search of one escaped slave, as there are after this wretched Eurymachus."

Quintus turned pale, and even Aurelius felt a certain embarrassment at the sound of that name.

"But how is it," asked Quintus, "that Eurymachus did not long since deliver his testimony? What can have induced him to spare his prosecutor?"

"Eurymachus did not learn the facts he now knows, till within a few days of his flight, and it was his highly inconvenient knowledge which gave cause for his sentence of death."

"But he might have spoken some days before his escape."

"Nay, but he could not; he lay in chains with a gag in his mouth, that might have smothered the voice of Stentor."

"And are you certain," persisted Aurelius, "that your informant did not deceive you?"

"Perfectly certain. So certain, that I would pay down five hundred thousand sesterces on the spot in hard cash—only unfortunately I do not own so much—if only I could have that daring rascal

under my hand for five minutes. It is humiliating! Bah! Why need I lose my temper for nothing? He is safe on shore, by this time, at Utica^[372] or Nicopolis^[373] and I am heartily glad to think so. I only hope, that at the critical moment Stephanus may not follow his example. I am afraid, that model of all the civic virtues knows his way too, to foreign shores!”

And he set spurs into his horse, as if suddenly pressed by some urgent business. His thoughts had involuntarily reverted to that greater Stephanus, whose misdeeds had filled an empire with horror. He reflected on the boldly-planned conspiracy, of which the failure would clear the way for Domitia’s minion, since it must inevitably lead to the death, or at least the banishment, of his accuser. All the more prompt and resolute then must their immediate action be against the steward. Perhaps some combination might be devised which, come what might, would be fatal to that criminal, whatever the issue might be as regarded Domitian, and such a plot and attack on Stephanus would have this additional advantage: that his foes would appear politically guiltless. Every one must confess, that a man who could fight so vigorously for distinction in the forum, could not at the same time be forging plots, which might risk his whole career.

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The lawyer’s last words had greatly disturbed and agitated Aurelius, and he appeared to be on the point of whispering something to Quintus. He thought better of it, however, and asked Cneius Afranius how it happened that Fabulla, his respected mother, still remained in Ostia in spite of the advanced season.

“It is strange, is it not?” answered Afranius. “With the metropolis of the world so near, to be so indifferent to it! Quite like Diogenes!”

“Has she never been to Rome?”

“Never once. She is accustomed to the quiet of Rodumna, and devoted to a country life, and she holds the City of the Seven Hills in invincible aversion. Ostia appeared to offer a suitable suburban residence; a cousin of hers, who has been staying in Egypt since March, has a small estate there, which she is taking care of in his absence, and is as happy doing it as Diana on the hill-tops; all the more so, as she fancies she would be a hindrance to my advancement, if she lived with me in Rome. However, when I am fairly launched and settled, I shall insist on her coming.”

“I understand,” said Aurelius; and he thought to himself: “You are waiting till our plot succeeds—or fails.”

Quintus, who was still very anxious lest Afranius might ride too near to the disguised slave, and ask him unpleasant questions—though there was nothing to fear from the advocate—did his best to engage his friend’s attention. He alluded to the last speech he had delivered before the centumvirate, paying him many polite compliments, which the other laughingly disclaimed; then the cause itself was discussed, and their debate became eager and almost business-like.

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Cornelia had been unusually talkative; not long before Afranius had joined them she had, with considerable humor, given an account of an excursion to Pandataria,^[374] that she had made not long since from Sinuessa,^[375] with her uncle and the Senator Sextus Furius. Claudia and Lucilia too had chatted and laughed; only the two young men had been silent. Now the parts had suddenly changed, and Lucilia was almost cross, particularly as the lawyer, on his bony grey steed, would persist in talking to Quintus and Aurelius, instead of addressing Cornelia and Claudia as politeness required—not to mention herself; though even she, as it seemed to her, did not look so very badly to-day; for Baucis had coiled her hair with unprecedented skill and precision, and her new gold pin, with a handsome ruby head, suited her dark hair to admiration. To be sure, it was a pity that the careful folds in which she had arranged her stola to fall over her ankles could not be appreciated, while she sat in the carriage half covered by Cornelia’s fuller draperies...!

“Listen, Quintus,” she began, as her brother was again on the point of addressing Afranius: “You are frightfully uninteresting to-day. For the whole way you have hardly spoken a hundred words, and now, when Afranius has at last roused you from your drowsy dulness, you can talk of nothing but lawsuits.”

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“You cannot imagine,” said Claudia with a sly glance at Lucilia, “what a sworn foe she is to all that concerns lawsuits. The mere name of the Centumvirate cuts her to the heart, and if she hears of a speech being made which lasts more than two, or at the outside three hours by the water-clock,^[376] she faints outright.”

Lucilia had colored scarlet.

“You are quite mistaken,” she cried eagerly. “But everything at the proper time! On the contrary, I am devoted to the pursuit of law and justice, but not under this glorious sun and within sight of the sea. The sins and strife of men belong to the Forum, to the Basilica, to the Senate-house. Here, where all is bright and beautiful, I expect gay conversation and happy laughter.”

“She is right,” said Cornelia.

Afranius drew himself up to a rigid and military bearing.

“I crave your forgiveness, stern judge!” he said with mock gravity. “I am greatly grieved to have offended against so wise a clause in your code of social morals. I have justly merited your lecture, and could do no less than take myself off, if I were not humbly resolved to earn your forgiveness by proving my sincere penitence—how sincere you will see by my entertaining and amiable

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behavior for the future. I only crave that you will grant me the opportunity of showing my repentance.... Do me the favor then of allowing me to invite you, one and all, to pay a visit to my mother's little country-house. I can promise you, that you will be charmed, enchanted, inspired! It is a tiny villa, but in the loveliest garden—quiet, rural, idyllic. The muraena and Lucrine oyster are unknown there, to be sure, but as for salads—lettuces as big as....” and with a flourish of his hand he described a vast circle in the air—“true Cappadocians, though grown at Ostia; and fresh eggs, pears as yellow as wax, and mighty loaves of country bread. A few pigeons or chickens are soon cooked.... You spoilt town's-folk will positively revel in this rural simplicity! Then there are the alleys, where vines hang in wreaths from the trellis...!”

“It is heavenly!” cried Claudia, again glancing knowingly at Lucilia. “Quintus, we must really accept so tempting an invitation.”

“With pleasure; but first....”

“I understand,” interrupted Afranius. “I too must first attend to business here. But listen to what I propose. I will first conduct these ladies to my mother's house, and then I will fly on the wings of the wind to speak to the good citizens of Ostia. You meanwhile....”

“Nay, that will not do,” interrupted Aurelius. “Before my trireme weighs anchor, I have a communication to make to you.”

“To me?”

“Yes, to you. A communication of the greatest importance, in connection with your action against Stephanus. Allow me, therefore, to amend your proposal. Write a few words of explanation to your mother on your wax tablets, and give it to your slave to deliver; he may then conduct the ladies. The men on horseback can escort them to her house, and then put up at the nearest tavern. You, meanwhile, accompany us to the ship. And,” he added after a pause for reflection as to what fiction he might put forward to the three girls, “we will, at the same time, see my fellow-countryman, the seaman from Trajectum, on board his own vessel, which is to sail to-day for the East.”

“Which seaman?” asked the lawyer looking round.

“That I will explain presently.”

“Well, whatever is agreeable to the ladies, is agreeable to me....”

“Oh! we are in the country here,” said Cornelia, “and may dispense with ceremony. Only your mother will be startled....”

“Delighted, you mean. She can wish for no more agreeable surprise.”

“So be it then!” cried Aurelius; “and when all is settled, we will join the festivities.”

The first houses of Ostia were now visible on either hand, and the bustle and stir in the road grew busier. Seamen of every nation, fishermen with red worsted caps, porters, and barrowmen, pushed and crowded each other. In five minutes they had reached the quay; at the farther end of the mole lay the trireme, gaily dressed with flags, and towering majestically above the fishing vessels and barges. The young men got out, and the carriage rolled away, escorted by the Sicambrians and Numidians, as far as the embowered villa, which it reached in a few minutes.

"Do not be uneasy, Quintus," Aurelius whispered, as Cneius Afranius dismounted and threw the bridle to his slave. "By all the gods, this man is as trustworthy as you and I are! It would be perfect madness, not to give him an opportunity for an interview with Eurymachus. His fight with Stephanus is in the interest of common humanity, and particularly in that of our protégé."

"It is all the same; I do not like the business at all."

"Then, so far as you personally are concerned, you can keep altogether aloof."

Quintus looked enquiringly at him.

"Why are you so surprised?" Aurelius continued. "It seems to me a very simple matter. I will put myself forward as his protector, and you can play the part of entire innocence. You need not frown, as if I had suggested some cowardly action; if the whole matter ever comes to be known, it will make wonderfully little difference, whether Afranius is in possession of the whole or only of half the truth. You will save yourself nothing but immediate embarrassment. I, for my part, am so perfectly intimate with Afranius, so completely his friend...."

"If you suppose...."

"Only explain the case to your slave, Blepyrus. He must not be implicated. Your best way to avoid difficulties will be not to come on board. I could not even have invited you to come on with me, if I had not felt it a duty to inform you of my intentions."

Quintus nodded.

"Very good," he said thoughtfully. "Then tell our friend, Eurymachus, not to mention my name. I, meanwhile, will part from Afranius as though I had business to attend to, and I will wait for you on shore. How long will you remain on board?"

"Twenty minutes. Afranius must get through his examination as quickly as possible."

This brief dialogue had been carried on in haste and in a whisper. Afranius had been giving instructions to his slave, as to how to treat his hired nag, which was somewhat overtired, and he now joined Quintus, while Aurelius hurried off to the two slaves, who carried, rather than led, Eurymachus. Three words sufficed to explain the situation. The wounded man cast a look of mournful gratitude at his preserver, Quintus, who bowed to him with feigned indifference; then he released Blepyrus, and rested his arm on the Batavian's shoulder. Blepyrus turned to follow his master, who went off with long strides landwards along the high-street.

By every human calculation the perilous work was now happily finished; all the rest might be considered and carried out at leisure. If Stephanus could be really unmasked in all his villany, they might yet succeed in bending the severity of the law in procuring the fugitive's return, and in securing him the happiness of a free and independent existence. Quintus drew a deep breath; that would be a worthy end to his bold beginning. He felt that Eurymachus, now that he had seen him again, was far more to him than a high-souled slave. He felt a spiritual sympathy, a sort of ideal friendship for him, like that of a disciple for his master. His last struggle to resist the overpowering urgency of this sentiment had died effete.

After walking about ten minutes, Quintus turned back again, and just as he reached the strand the boat came to shore with Afranius, Aurelius, and the Goth. Eurymachus, then, was safe on board, and if the lawyer's radiant expression did not belie him, his interview with the fugitive had yielded a rich harvest. As the men stepped on land, he turned eagerly to Aurelius and asked him when the trireme was to start.

"Everything was made ready yesterday," replied Aurelius. "In five minutes they will be off with all the oars plied."

He looked across the waters, and raised his right hand to wave a farewell.

"Good-luck go with you!" he said in a low voice, but loud enough for Quintus to hear him. "Greet Trajectum fondly from me."

In a few minutes the trireme began to move. Slowly at first she made her way through the crowd of merchant and fishing-vessels, which lay at anchor. But the captain's hammer-strokes beat faster and faster, and the oars dipped deeper and more strongly in the dashing waves. Now, gliding past the jetty at the end of the quay, the trireme was afloat on the open sea, and rode the broad blue waters like a swan. The men still stood gazing after the proud and beautiful vessel—Aurelius, for his part, not altogether without a vague and melancholy homesick feeling. Although he knew, that within a few hours the trireme would turn aside from her course and steer for the roads of Antium, still, the dear north-country and the image of the mother he had left behind him, suddenly seemed brought nearer to him. He had but spoken the name of his home—but it had filled his soul with yearning. He thought of the immediate future.—Ere long he too might be a fugitive, weary and persecuted like Eurymachus, escaping on board that very ship, and thanking the gods if he might only flee unrecognized. And then Rome, and all that it contained of dear and fair, would be closed against him forever. All—Claudia? the thought sank down on his soul like

lead. Claudia in Rome, and he hundreds of miles away, with the fearful certainty of never seeing her again! But if she loved him—then indeed...! If she would follow him, as Peponilla^[377] had followed her banished husband, amid the ice-hills of Scandia, or on the barren shores of Thule, ^[378] spring would blossom for him more exquisite than the rose-gardens of Paestum! But what was there to justify his hopes of such immeasurable happiness? She had given him proofs of her friendship, no doubt, and when he was reading the Thebais, or when he spoke to her of his northern home, she had a way of listening—it had often brought light and warmth to his soul like a ray of promise—but then the revulsion had been all the more violent; her greeting would sound distant and measured, her smile would seem cold and haughty. Oh! if only he might have time to conquer this indifference.

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But a voice was now calling him to the scene of action, and if that action were to result in failure!—He almost regretted having so unresistingly yielded to the eloquence of Cinna and to his own passionate patriotism—though indeed, as he told himself, his eager passion for Claudia was not the least of the motives that urged him to action, nay, but for that passion he might still have been hesitating. As it was, it had dragged him with the force of a possession into the whirlpool of conspiracy. He longed to stand before her—his chosen love—as a victor over tyranny, as a liberator of the empire, and say to her: “Now, noble heart, I may sue for thy love, for I have a grand advocate in the gratitude of my country.”

All this swept through his mind like a waking dream, as he gazed in silence at the immeasurable sea. Then, coming to himself, and turning round, his eyes met those of Quintus. They were the very eyes—those dear, beautiful, unforgettable eyes—of his loved Claudia, only less sweetly thoughtful, less tenderly dreamy. Suddenly his resolve was taken. As soon as it should be possible, this very day if it might be, he would learn his fate from the woman he loved, and make an end of this miserable uncertainty.

“Was all prepared?” asked Quintus, as Cneius Afranius withdrew to one side and wrote some notes on his tablets.

“All quite ready,” replied Aurelius. “He will be cared for, as if he were my own brother.”

“And what did he tell Afranius?”

“I do not know; they were alone together. Afranius begged to keep it secret, until he had everything ready to complete his case against Stephanus.”

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Afranius seemed to be entirely absorbed in thinking over what he had learnt on board the trireme, and Aurelius had to call him twice by name, before he roused him from his reverie.

They were now walking along the quay in the direction previously taken by the chariot. The two-wheeled cisium, which had been waiting on the opposite side of the market-place in front of a tavern, followed them with Magus and Bleepyrus, while Afranius’ slave led the grey hack and his own mule.

“What a tremendous crowd and bustle!” exclaimed the lawyer. “Not such an emporium as Puteoli, to be sure, but busy enough and not less noisy! Look at that barge with those gigantic blocks of marble—each big enough to fill an average store-room! And there—that is really stupendous!”

He pointed to a spot on the quay, where the crowd was thickest. A crane there stood up, from which a gigantic rhinoceros was hanging in mid-air, supported by broad bands and girths.

“A cargo of beasts for the centennial games,”^[379] said Quintus. “There, to the left, are a dozen of iron cages ready to receive them. Half Asia and Africa have been plundered for the amphitheatres.”

They went nearer, for an interest in wild beasts was a natural instinct, in all who had ever breathed the air of Rome. The hum and clatter of the seaport were dully drowned now and again by a hoarse roar—the growl of one of the lions from Gaetulia, restlessly pacing up and down behind the bars of their prison, which had just been landed.

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“That is something like a cageful!” said the Batavian.

“The freight of two vessels,” remarked Quintus, glancing at the two large ships, one of which had already unloaded and gone to its moorings. “Our gladiators may pray for good-luck.”

Another deep roar, as wild and hungry as ever resounded through the midnight desert, drowned his voice. They were now within a few paces of the landing-place, and from hence they could command a complete view of the enormous array of cages, loaded on low trucks, which were waiting to be transported to their destination by road. Hyrcanian tigers pressed their glossy striped coats against the iron bars; Cantabrian bears, standing on their hind legs, poked their sharp muzzles between the railings; leopards from Mauritania, hyænas, panthers and lynxes gnashed their blood-thirsty jaws; aurochs and buffaloes whetted their sheathless horns, or stared in lazy indifference on the strange surroundings. There were a few rhinoceroses too, a great rarity at Rome; and some enormous crocodiles, which excited the astonishment and curiosity of the maritime populace. Farther off, fastened together in long rows, were numbers of wild asses from the hills of Numidia, wild horses, giraffes and zebras; for even such beasts as these had their part in the mighty fights in the Flavian amphitheatre.

Quintus and Aurelius lounged idly towards the cages, while Afranius studied the movements of the crane, which was now beginning to lower the grotesque monster. The two young men came to a stand in front of a lion of unusual size, which was snorting at the bars of its cage, and standing in a haughty and threatening attitude, its head and tangled mane held high in the air. It was, in fact, the same beast as had just now sent out that terrific roar. His keeper, leaning against the corner of the cage at a respectful distance, had tried to coax and pacify the brute, and as the two gentlemen approached the cage he respectfully withdrew to one side. The lion watched him as he moved, and then, as he turned his head and perceived the two strangers so close to the bars, he drew back a pace as if startled, bellowed out for the third time his thundering and appalling roar; and blind with fury, rushed at the iron railing.

Quintus and Aurelius smiled and looked at each other—but they had both turned pale at the brute's unexpected onslaught.

"He seems to have some personal objection to me," said Quintus. "His fiery glare is steadily fixed on me. My word! but it increases my respect for our gladiators; to stand face to face with such a beast in the arena, must have an unpleasant effect on the nerves. Here we see nature in all its unmitigated ferocity."

The lion was, in fact, standing with a burning eye fixed on Quintus, as though in him he recognized an old enemy.

"Let us go," said the young man, frowning. "It is only a dumb, unconscious brute, and I am ashamed to have been so shaken by his mere roar. Aye, blink away, you hairy old villain. Thirty inches of steel between your ribs will reduce even you to silence, and that must be your fate at last, however wildly you may rage and foam over bleeding men first."

"That is a thorough bad one," said the negro keeper, who spoke Latin with difficulty. "I have tamed more than fifty; but all trouble is thrown away on this one. He is one of the mountain lions, and his father was a magician. I saw that at once, when the hunters brought him, that black tuft on his forehead shows it plainly."

And, in fact, a tangled lock of black hair hung from the brute's mane between his eyes.

"Is it your business to tame lions?" asked Quintus.

"I tame the mildest, and the fierce ones are kept for the fights. I have brought up three tame ones for the centennial games—as high as this—and they do the most wonderful things that have ever been shown in Rome. They take live hares^[380] in their jaws and carry them three times round the arena, without even squeezing them."

But Quintus was not listening; he had turned away. The brute's scowl, as he kept his glaring eyes fixed on him, filled him with an uneasy feeling. Cneius Afranius appealed to him, too—with a pressing reminder, that a welcome was awaiting him—not to forget the young ladies and his mother in favor of rhinoceroses and giraffes; so they got away from the crowd and back to the high-road, where the chariot was waiting with the slaves.

The venerable Fabulla had received her guests at the garden gate, and had conducted them with repeated effusions of delight and gratitude to her pretty little house, almost hidden among olives and holm oaks, and bowered in ivy and vines. Here the young girls were seated under an autumn-tinted arbor-porch, and helped themselves to the grapes which hung within reach overhead. In front of them, on a round-table of pine-wood, stood a wicker basket of sweet-smelling wheat-bread, a half-emptied bowl of milk, and a dish of apples and pears. Near them lay a distaff, tied round with scarlet ribbons, and a spindle, for Fabulla was never for an instant idle, and spun her yarn even in the presence of such illustrious strangers.

"Children," said Cneius Afranius, "this is the true Elysium.... The shade, the dull green of the olives, the vine-garlands, the delicious air, the fresh milk—it is superb! But to feel fully equipped for the enjoyment of it all, I must first get rid of all my business; for the present, then, I leave you to your fate. I must drink a cup of this milk—and then farewell. We shall live to meet again! Within an hour I shall be here again." And with the tragic air of an actor playing the dying Socrates, he took up one of the red clay cups and solemnly lifted it to his lips.

"Stop, stop!" cried the good mistress. "You are taking mistress Lucilia's cup."

"Ah!" cried Afranius, replacing the cup he had drained on the table with mock penitence. "Mistress Lucilia will not be too severe, I hope, to forgive the mistake on the ground of my thirst and absence of mind.... Mother, your cows are improving, decidedly improving. Never did this nectar taste so truly Olympian as to-day. Great Pan himself must bless them."^[381]

And with these words he quitted them.

When Quintus and Aurelius had also refreshed themselves, they all rose to wander through the garden under Fabulla's guidance. Quintus and Cornelia led the way, followed by Aurelius and Claudia. The mistress of the house came last with Lucilia, who was in the highest spirits, and never tired of praising the beautiful curly kale and the splendid heads of lettuce, or of singing fantastical rhapsodies in praise of the autumn pears and late figs. She had at once detected the happy pride, with which Fabulla regarded the pretty little estate, a pride which found an unmistakable echo in Afranius' jesting praises. A strange impulse prompted her to humor this natural vanity, and give the worthy lady, whom she found particularly attractive, a simple and

genuine pleasure. At the bottom of her heart agriculture and horticulture were as absolutely indifferent to her as any other form of human industry; but she had a happy gift of throwing herself into sympathy with every sphere of feeling. She spoke with delight of the charms of a country-life, and declared quite seriously, that the noise of the city was irritating and exhausting—an assertion to which her blooming appearance emphatically gave the lie.

Fabulla was perfectly enchanted with the girl's ways and manners; she had never thought it possible, that so fresh, sweet, and unpretending a creature could come out of Rome—that den of wickedness and perversion—still less out of the house of a Senator, and under the very thunderbolts, so to speak, of the Capitoline Jupiter. She took the bright, young creature to her heart with all the fervor of a convert; all the more eagerly because Claudia, though beautiful, was somewhat taciturn, and Cornelia, with all her graciousness, was still the unapproachable great lady, mysteriously shut up within an invisible wall against the advances of strangers.

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Lucilia was, in fact, absolutely overflowing with amiability and graciousness. When, after a quarter of an hour of wandering, Fabulla explained that she must now go indoors to make some arrangements for their mid-day meal, Lucilia begged to be allowed to make herself of use, and to take the opportunity for seeing the kitchen, the store-rooms, and the slaves' apartments. Fabulla was enchanted; she pressed a kiss on her new friend's brow, and said in a tone of melancholy:

"You are just like-my sweet Erotion!^[382] She was not so pretty as you are, to be sure, nor so elegant, but her eyes were like yours, and she was just as bright, and had the same love for the garden and for house-keeping.—Ah! and such a good heart! How often have I dreamed of future happiness for her when she has come, tired out with play, and sat on my lap and laid her head on my breast. Then she would go to sleep, and I would sing some old song, and sit dreaming and hoping till darkness fell. But the gods would not have it so! A handful of ashes in a marble urn is all that is left me of my sweet little girl."

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She ceased speaking, and wiped her kind, honest eyes with the back of her hand. Lucilia gazed thoughtfully at the ground.

"It is a long time since," Fabulla added presently. "Twenty-two years next March; but every now and then a feeling comes over me, as if I had lost the dear child only yesterday."

"Poor mother!" sighed Lucilia.

Fabulla affectionately stroked her thick, waving hair.

"Do not mind me!" she said; "such dismal reflections do not suit well with the gaiety of youth."

"Mirth and sadness dwell side by side," replied Lucilia, "and to enjoy what is pleasant and endure what is sorrowful is the only sensible way."

Then they went on between the box-hedged garden-beds.

The two couples meanwhile had wandered apart. Quintus and Cornelia were sitting at the farthest side of the orchard, on a rough stone bench in the deepest shade of the fruit trees, while Aurelius and Claudia remained meditatively pacing up and down the main walk.

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"How happy I feel!" said Cornelia. "Quintus, my dear love, what more has the world to offer us? If it will only leave us undisturbed, so that we may enjoy the gifts of the gods in peace! But you are very silent, my dearest; must I wake you from your dreams with a kiss? Has happiness struck you dumb? Only think—before the year is out I shall be your wife! Yes, your wife; and I may call you my own forever. I need never give you up again, as I must now, when every hour of happiness ends in a parting."

She clung fondly to him, and looked into his face with radiant devotion. Her eyes glowed with feeling, and the fair marble of her throat and arms gleamed so softly bright, that Quintus, overcome by the inspiration of the moment, clasped her passionately in his arms, and their lips met in a long and eager kiss.

"Cornelia—fairest and dearest of mortal creatures!" he whispered tenderly, as she released herself, "you draw the very soul out of my body with your perfect, heaven-sent love! Oh! my sweetheart, I too can picture no purer or more noble delight, than that of living one in spirit and hope with you. Aye, Cornelia, I am weary of the bustle of this fevered world, of the vacuous comedy of ambition, of dominion, of all this parcel-gilt vulgarity. I long for rest and solitude in a peaceful home. I ask no splendor, no pomp of triumphs, nor lictors with their fasces. I only want to be at peace with myself—I only seek that glorious harmony, which reconciles all the discords of life. And that peace, that respite and rest, I hope to find with you, my sweetest Cornelia."

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"My whole being, body and soul, are yours," replied Cornelia. "Do what you will with me. If love can bring peace, your hopes must certainly be fulfilled. But tell me, my dearest, do you really so utterly contemn fame and glory? Will you never make any effort to attain what, merely as a Claudian, you must desire: the triumph of an immortal name? Are peace and the joys of love so absolutely antagonistic to the winning of laurels? Do not yet abandon the post, where the gods have placed you. Be all they have created you to be: a son of that glorious race, which, not so long ago, gave us an Emperor! You know me well, my dearest; you know I would worship you still, even if the Fates deprived you of all—everything; if you were a fugitive, a beggar, scorned, hated, I am still and forever yours. But, as it is, you are rich and noble, and why should I deny, that fame and pomp and splendor have a charm for me? Even the outward gifts of fortune are

bestowed by the gods, and the best thanks we can offer is to enjoy.”

“Nay, do not misunderstand me, sweet soul! I do not wish to retire into the desert like an eastern penitent, nor to fling away the last drinking-cup like the philosopher of Sinope.^[383] It is only empty and fruitless activity that I long to escape, the mad whirl of a life which swallows men up to the very last fibre, and leaves them not a second for reflection. It is only from afar, that you know that heart and brain-consuming turmoil. Cinna is one of those who condemn it, and you have grown up under his roof. But I see it close, and I shudder at the sight. Is it worth while to have lived at all, when our last hour only cuts the thread of a tissue of follies? To what end this hollow, noisy and bewildering drama? There would be more consolation and refreshment in studying the inside of an ant-hill.”

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“You are so serious,” said Cornelia. “What can be the matter with you? You used to say things like this, but only as a man out of conceit with his surroundings. And now you look so strange, so mysterious....”

“You are right, dear heart; I am too grave for so sweet an-hour. Forgive me, my darling. In time you will know better what it is, that I ... I cannot explain to you at present.”

And he drew her once more to his breast, and kissed her passionately.

Aurelius and Claudia had behaved with far greater coolness and propriety. Behind this moderation, it is true, lurked an unrest which now and again betrayed itself in small details. As the Batavian, by way of opening the conversation, tried to paint the particular beauties of the autumn season, a faint flush mounted to his brow, and Claudia made some observations on the noble dimensions of three pumpkins in a voice that trembled, as though she were craving some favor from Caesar. Both were in that mood of self-conscious confusion, which is peculiar to lovers in anticipation of an important explanation. And Claudia was still more obviously embarrassed, when Caius Aurelius observed that such gourds grew at Trajectum too.

“It might happen,” he went on after a pause, “that circumstances might require me to return home sooner, than I at first intended....”

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Claudia pulled the leaves off an olive-branch.

“That would be a pity,” she said in a constrained tone. Then she colored, and went on eagerly: “For, in fact, many interesting features of our metropolis are still unknown to you.”

“Oh,” replied Aurelius, “I am not particularly devoted to seeing features of interest. What I far more regret, is taking leave of so many excellent friends, so many hospitable houses where I have passed hours of delightful intercourse, and heard so many noble ideas....”

“Ah, yes, of course,” said Claudia, breaking the olive-twigs into little pieces. The Batavian sighed.

“Above all,” he went on, “I can never forget how kindly your illustrious father received me....”

“Oh!” exclaimed Claudia.

“And your mother.... You cannot imagine how deeply I reverence that noble matron, how grateful I am to her for allowing me daily admission and intimacy in her house. Ah! sweet mistress, how happy I have been in that family circle! Your brother, I may venture to believe, has become my best and truest friend; even Lucilia, who generally is so severely critical, has not been unkind to me.... You may laugh at me, but I swear to you, that when I am forced to leave I shall leave a piece of my heart behind!”

Claudia looked down and walked on in silence, her hand shook.

“Madam,” the young man went on, and his voice trembled with agitation, “when I am gone—forever, when miles of land and sea divide us—will you sometimes think with kindness of the stranger....? Will you recall the hour in which we met, our happy days at Baiae, and this blissful time in Rome...?”

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“Indeed I shall,” Claudia murmured almost inaudibly.

They had now reached the southern end of the broad walk, where a brick wall was visible through a screen of shrubs; the patches of light, which the sun cast on the gravel through the leaves, were visibly aslant to the left, and the observation struck Aurelius to the heart; from the register afforded by this natural time-keeper, he perceived that the best of the day had slipped by unused. He was suddenly seized with a kind of panic: these rays of light symbolized his happiness. It was escaping him, vanishing fast—he must lose it, if he did not then and there find some spell to command and keep it.

He stood still.

“Listen!” he said with an effort. “I cannot help it.... Before I go, I must ask you a question. I almost feel as though I could foresee the answer.—It is all the same, I must speak. Only one thing I would beg beforehand: Do not laugh at my blind self-deceit. You know me—I am neither highly gifted nor of noble birth, but I have a faithful nature and a heart full of never-failing devotion—and you are the object of that devotion. Therefore I must ask: could you bear to make up your mind to be my wife? I ask no promise, Claudia, no binding vows—only a word to give me hope, a single word of comfort and encouragement. If you can, oh Claudia, speak it! If you cannot, at any rate I shall be free from the anguish of uncertainty.”

Claudia had listened to him in rigid silence, but as he ended, she gave him her hand—looked up in his face—and smiled through her tears. Aurelius stood in speechless surprise; he tried to speak, but in vain. This transcendent happiness seemed to have paralyzed his powers.

“You dear, foolish man,” said Claudia with glowing cheeks. “What have I done, that you should put a poor girl like me to the blush? I, who have looked up to you in all humility....”

“Claudia!” cried the Batavian, trembling with rapture. “Am I not cheated by a dream? You—mine? I am delirious—raving.”

“Nay, it is the truth. I am yours now and till death.”

“Quintus, Claudia, Cornelia,” shouted a clear, girlish voice, “are you playing at hide-and-seek? or has some tricky god turned you all into trees? Come forth, Fauns[384] and Dryads![385] The couches are ready in the triclinium, and a banquet is prepared, that is worthy of Olympus.”

Aurelius did not seem particularly interested in the information. How gladly would he have dreamed away the remainder of the day out here under the verdurous shade! But society asserts its rights, and love, particularly when it is a secret, must early learn to take patience.

“Let us be prudent and say nothing of this,” said Claudia as they went in. “My father has certain schemes in his head, as perhaps you know—he has not spoken out about them as yet, but Lucilia told me she was sure of it, and Lucilia has eyes like a Pannonian lynx.[386] Sextus Furius, the senator—you know him—wants, they say, to make me his wife, and my father is not averse to it. We shall have a fight for it, dear Caius....”

“And you say it as calmly....”

“Shall I worry beforehand over things I cannot prevent? But I will do my utmost to win my father over. He is stern, but he loves me, and for his daughter’s happiness he would make a sacrifice—a sacrifice I say advisedly, for you know how strictly he adheres to his principles, and one of his principles is a prejudice against the class of knights....”

“And if your hopes deceive you—if all is in vain?”

“Then I remember that the old saying: ‘Where you, Caius, are, there will I, Caia, be’[387] is a pledge no less sacred than obedience to parents; and I too am of the race of Claudius!”

They had reached the open plot in front of the house, where Cneius Afranius was standing with Lucilia and his mother, cutting ripe grapes into a basket with a sharp knife. Dressed in a flowered tunic, the city lawyer was humming the air of a Gaulish popular song; every now and then he interrupted himself with a cry of surprise at the huge size of the grapes, or a jesting word to the young girl, and all the time his jolly pleasant face, ruddy with the exertion and with the October sun, shone like a living tribute to Bacchus.

“There!” he exclaimed, as Quintus and Cornelia also appeared upon the scene, “now, a few leaves, and men Zeuxis[388] himself could not paint a prettier picture! Aha! here are our peripatetic[389] philosophers! Come along, our country dining-room is quite ready! Come, Quintus, and see if Fabulla’s spelt porridge and cabbage sprouts[390] are to your liking; I am credibly informed too, that there is a fish salad with chopped eggs and leeks. Such a cybium[391] as my mother makes, you have never tasted. Even the great Euphemus, with all his art, must yield to that triumph of culinary skill. Walk in, most worshipful company, walk in, for here too the gods abide!”

FOOTNOTES:

- [1] TRIREME. “Three-oared;” a vessel with three ranks of rowers, one above another. The time was given by the beats of a hammer or by word of command; not unfrequently by an air played on a flute or a sailor’s chant (*cantus nauticus*).
- [2] POSIDIUM, now called the Punta della Licosa, south of the Gulf of Salerno.
- [3] CAPRAE, (Isle of goats) now Capri.
- [4] PUTEOLI. An important port in Campania, now Pozzuoli. Concerning Puteoli’s commerce, see Stat. *Silv.* III, 5, 75.
- [5] APOLLONIUS OF TYANA in Cappadocia. An ascetic and ecstatic philosopher and miracle-worker (A.D. 50) often compared with Christ by heathen writers. (Philostratus wrote his life.)
- [6] IVORY MAP. Sketch-maps of various routes were common in ancient times, and were often engraved on wine-jars, cups, etc.
- [7] TUNIC. The short-sleeved under-garment worn by both sexes, the house costume, over which men, when they went out, threw the toga, women the stola or palla. During the period of the empire a second garment, the *tunica interior*, corresponding to the shirt of modern times, was worn under the tunic.
- [8] THE PALACE OF TIBERIUS. For an account of the cruel and extravagant proceedings of Tiberius at Capri, see Tacitus *Ann.* I, 67, Suet. *Tib.* 40, Juv. *Sat.* X, 72 and 93. Insignificant remains of this palace are visible at the present day: *Villa di Timberio*; the perpendicular cliff 700 feet high is called *il salto* (the leap.)

- [9] CASTOR AND POLLUX. Leda's twins, the Dioscuri, were the patrons of sea-faring men.
- [10] WAX-TABLET (*tabula cerata*). A little tablet covered with wax, on which memoranda were written with the stylus. In the schools the wax-tablet supplied the place of the slate, and in daily life was a substitute for our note-book.
- [11] FREEDMAN. The institution of slavery (*servitium*) which existed from ancient times, was an extremely important factor in the organization of Roman society. The slaves (*servi*) were the absolute property of their masters, who had unlimited control over their destinies and lives. (This right was not withdrawn until A.D. 61, when the law of Petronius prohibited the arbitrary condemnation of slaves to combats with wild beasts, etc.) The slave could then be released by the so-called *manumissio*, and was styled *libertus* or *libertinus*. His position depended upon the greater or less degree of formality with which the *manumissio* was granted. The most solemn manner bestowed all the rights of the free-born citizen, but even in this case he was socially burdened with the same stigma that rests upon the emancipated slaves in the United States. If a freedman attained power and influence—which under the emperors was very common—the haughty representatives of the ancient noble families paid him external respect, it is true, but the man's origin was never forgotten.
- [12] TRAJECTUM. A Batavian city in the Roman province Germania, now Utrecht.
- [13] GADES. A city in southern Spain, the modern Cadiz.
- [14] PANORMUS. A city on the north coast of Sicily, the modern Palermo.
- [15] CORYBAS. In the plural *Corybantes*; priests of Cybele. Their worship was a wild orgy with war-dances and noisy music. (Horace, *Od.* I, 16, 8: *non acuta si geminant Corybantes aera, etc.*)
- [16] OSTIA. The port of Rome, situated at the mouth of the Tiber.
- [17] MASSILIA. An important city founded by the Greeks on the southern coast of Gaul, now called Marseilles.
- [18] RUGII. A German race occupying a considerable part of the coast of the Baltic—the present Pomerania and island of Rügen.
- [19] FRISII. A German race settled in the northern part of what is now Holland and farther east beyond Ems (*Amisia*).
- [20] BREAKFAST. The first meal after rising was called *jentaculum*. In the time of the republic (and still later among the poorer classes) it consisted principally of pulse. Among the wealthy luxury intruded even here; but in comparison with the second breakfast (*prandium*) and especially with the principal repast (*coena*) the *jentaculum* always remained frugal.
- [21] RAM'S-HEAD AT THE PROW. These ornaments were usually carved in wood on the prow. They must not be confounded with the ship's beaks (*rostra*, ἔμβολα). These beaks—two strong iron-cased beams—were on the fore-part of the ships of war and also on vessels intended for long voyages, where they would be exposed to danger from pirates. They were beneath the surface of the water, and were destined to bore holes in the enemy's ships. See vol. 2, [Chap IX](#).
- [22] MAGUS. A Gothic word—(not the Latin *Magus*, Greek μάγος—magician, sorcerer,)—means a boy, or knave in the old sense of servant.
- [23] PARTHENOPE. The ancient name of Naples, from the siren Parthenope, who is said to be buried there.
- [24] VESUVIUS. The famous eruption, which buried the three cities mentioned, took place A.D. 79, that is, sixteen years before the commencement of this story.
- [25] BAIÆ, now Baja, the most famous watering-place of ancient times. See Horace, *Ep.* I, 1, 83.
- [26] AENARIA AND PROCHYTA, now Ischia and Procida.
- [27] ALEXANDRIA in Egypt was, in point of commerce, the London of ancient times.
- [28] TARENTINE TRAVELLING-CLOAK. The woollen stuffs from Tarentum, now called Taranto, were famous.
- [29] "HVA GASAIHVIS?"—"GASAIHVA LEITIL SKIP." Literally: What do you see? (I) see (a) little ship. The earliest existing specimens of Gothic date from several centuries later than the time of this story, namely the period when the Goths left their original settlements on the lower Vistula and settled farther to the southeast on the Black Sea. I thought it permissible, however, to make a Goth of the first century speak the language of Ulfilas, since there is nothing against it in the general analogies of language, and Gothic, in the form in which it remains to us, is so concrete and logical in its structure, that it is hardly credible that it should have varied to any great extent within a period of two or three centuries.
- [30] BATAVIA. It was the custom at a very early date to name vessels after towns, persons, or countries, etc.
- [31] AMULET. A faith in the protecting power of charms and amulets was universal among Roman women, and children were always provided with amulets against the evil eye.
- [32] ISIS. The Egyptian goddess Isis was originally a personification of the Nile country, and as such was the wife of Osiris, the god of the Nile, who is slain by Typhon and longingly sought by the deserted goddess. She was afterwards confounded with every conceivable

form of Greek (See Appuleius. *Met.* XI, 5.) and Roman Mythology and thus in the first century after Christ became the principal goddess. Her worship was chiefly by women.

- [33] WAXEN SHIP. Such votive offerings are commonly mentioned. They were generally painted pictures, but models in wax or metal were also given.
- [34] NILE-WATER. The worshippers of Isis ascribed a special power to the waters of the Nile.
- [35] SESTERCES. A Roman silver coin worth about 4 or 5 cents.
- [36] ROMAN KNIGHT. During the reign of the emperors the free population of Rome was divided into three orders: senators, knights, and people (third order). The order of senators was limited to Rome, and in its hands lay the real political power, which in the time of the republic had been exercised by the assembled populace. To the senate belonged the right of conferring and recalling sovereign power, that is, by appointing and deposing the emperors, a right rarely exercised, it is true, but which the emperors formally recognized by allowing themselves to be confirmed by the senate. In their relation to this body, the emperors were only first among their peers, the members of this order being really their equals; a relation which, with the exception of Caligula, Nero, Domitian, and Commodus, the emperors during the first two centuries, more or less earnestly endeavored to maintain. (Friedlander. *Rom. Sittengesch.* I, 3.) The number of the old senatorial families was comparatively small.

The second order, the knights (*equites*), was scattered over the whole empire. A class specially designated for military service, it became in the time of the Gracchi, a body of rich men, each of whom possessed a fortune of 400,000 sesterces, and also fulfilled the conditions of being of free birth and descent, blameless reputation, and refraining from dishonorable or indecorous methods of making money. Loss of this fortune, whether by their own fault or otherwise, entailed loss of rank. In consequence of the confusion and dissolution of all legal regulations through the civil war, these conditions were largely abrogated. While many who had formerly been entitled to belong to the order of knights, lost their rank through loss of fortune, others, who though possessing the needful property, had none of the other requisites, assumed without opposition the external distinctions of the knights, especially the gold ring and the seat of honor in the theatre. (Friedlander.) There were various degrees of rank in the order of knights, and also great diversity of fortune. Besides the poor titular knights, there were bankers, wholesale merchants, and the directors and members of great commercial companies and societies for mercantile enterprises of every kind.

The third order comprised mechanics, small tradesmen, tavern-keepers, learned men, artists, etc., etc.,—except in cases where those who followed these pursuits were slaves, —and also the immense body of proletarians, who subsisted almost exclusively on public alms.

- [37] MY LORD SAID THE MATRON. Concerning the address "lord" (*domine*), see the minute discussions in Friedlander's *Sittengeschichte*, I, appendix. It was not so common as the modern "sir," but was used as an expression of special courtesy in the most varied relations of life. The emperors themselves used it in intercourse with persons to whom they wished to show attention. Thus Marcus Antoninus writes to Fronto: "*Have, mi domine magister.*" According to Seneca (Ep. III, 1.) it was already customary under Nero to greet persons, whose names could not be instantly remembered, by this title, in order not to appear uncourteous under any circumstances. The Fronto just mentioned calls a son-in-law "*domine*," and when Nero once played the cithara in public, he addressed the spectators as "*mei domini*."

Nay, the association of *domine* with the name, which to our ears has a very modern sound, is often found. Thus in Appuleius (*Met.* II,) we read: "*Luci domine*,"—"Lord Lucius." In this story, however, this association is avoided, as it might have produced the semblance of an anachronism. In accosting women *domina* (lady) corresponds with *domine*. The French, when referring to subjects connected with ancient Rome, reproduce the sound as well as the meaning of the word correctly by their madame (*meam dominam*).

- [38] TITUS CLAUDIUS MUCIANUS. The Romans usually had three names. Titus is here the first name (*praenomen*) which was given sons on the ninth day after their birth. Claudius is the name of the gens, the family in the wider sense of the word (*nomen gentilicium*). Mucianus is the cognomen, the surname, the name of the immediate family (*stirps or familia*). Thus several stirpes belonged to a single gens. Daughters bore only the name of the gens; for instance the daughter of Titus Claudius Mucianus was called Claudia. If there were two of them, they were distinguished by the words major (the elder) and minor (the younger); if there were several, by numbers. The *Claudia Gens* was a very ancient and famous one. The principal characters of the story, belonging to the *stirps Muciana*, are purely imaginary.
- [39] GAVIUS APICIUS, the famous Roman gourmand (*Tac. Ann.* IV, 1) who finding that he had only two million and a half denari left in the world (about 400,000 dollars) killed himself, thinking it impossible to live on so little.
- [40] HYMETTUS. A mountain in Attica, famed for its delicious honey. (*Horace, Od.* II, 6, 14).
- [41] POLISHED EMERALD. (*Plin. Hist. Nat.* XXXVII, 64) where it is stated that the emperor Nero used such an eye-glass at the public games.
- [42] THE LOBSTER, (*cammarus*), was less highly esteemed by the Romans than among ourselves. See *Plin. Ep.* II, 17. "The sea, it is true, has no superabundance of delicious fish; yet it gives us excellent soles and lobsters"—a passage in which lobsters are contrasted with delicious fish.

- [43] CUT CRYSTAL. Window panes of glass (*vitrum*) mica plates (*lapis specularis*) and similar materials were by no means rare in ancient times.
- [44] MENANDER, SON OF THE GENERAL Diopieithes, B.C. 342. The most distinguished poet of the New Comedy; fragments of his comedies have come down to us.
- [45] TIBUR. A favorite summer resort of the Roman aristocracy, now Tivoli.
- [46] CAPPADOCIAN HORSES. The province of Cappadocia in Asia Minor was famed for its horses.
- [47] LITTERS (*lectica*). The usual conveyance, somewhat resembling the Oriental palanquin, were supplied with rich curtains (*vela*) and in other respects became the object of luxurious decorations. The number of litter-bearers (*lecticarii, calones*) varied from two to eight. In the city of Rome itself, where riding in carriages was not allowed during the day-time, the *lecticae* took the place of our carriages and hacks, for they could also be hired by the hour, and there were stands of them (*castra lecticariorum*) in several frequented quarters.
- [48] LAVA BLOCKS. The usual material for pavements in central and southern Italy.
- [49] SICAMBRI. A powerful German tribe, occupying in the time of Caesar the eastern bank of the Rhine, and extending from the Sieg to the Lippe.
- [50] RED LIVERY. The usual costume of the litter-bearers in the time of the emperors.
- [51] WOOLLY-HEADED ETHIOPIANS. The name Ethiopian Αἰθίοπες in its more restricted sense, applies to the inhabitants of Upper Egypt; in a more general meaning to the whole population of North-eastern Africa, and South-western Asia. According to Herodotus (VII, 70) the Ethiopians dwelling in the East had smooth, those in the West woolly hair.
- [52] BATHS (*thermae, θέρμαι*, that is "warm baths") were public bathing-establishments on the grandest scale, modelled after the Greek wrestling-schools. See Becker, *Gallus* III, p. 68 and following.
- [53] CUMAE (Κύμη) now Cuma, the oldest of the Greek colonies in Italy, beyond the mountain range that bounds the bay of Baja on the west; it is only a few thousand paces from Baja.
- [54] IN FRONT WALKED EIGHT OR TEN SLAVES. Such a vanguard was customary among people of distinction, even when they went on foot.
- [55] LUSITANIANS. A people living in the region now known as Portugal, between the Tagus (*Tajo, Tejo*) and Durius, (*Duero, Douro*.)
- [56] CAECUBUM. A district on the shores of the bay of Gaeta, famous for its wine. See (Horace *Od.* I, 20, 9 and I, 37, 5) where it is said, that it would be positively sinful to bring Caecubian wine from the cellar with other kinds on ordinary occasions (*antehac nefas depromere Caecubum cellis avitis, etc.*).
- [57] ERYMANTHIAN BOAR. So called from Mt. Erymanthus in Arcadia, where the animal lived until slain by Hercules.
- [58] DIONYSUS. A surname of Bacchus.
- [59] LIBATION. Wine poured as an offering to the gods.
- [60] VESTIBULUM. The space in front of the house-door (*fores*) which in the time of the imperial government was frequently covered with a portico.
- [61] ADOPTED DAUGHTER. The adoption of a child in ancient Rome was regulated by very strict laws. Adoption in its narrower sense (*adoptio*) extended to persons who were still under paternal authority; with self-dependent persons the so-called *arrogatio* took place. With women this last form was entirely excluded.
- [62] ATRIUM. From the door of the house a narrow passage (*ostium*) led to the first inner court, the atrium, so-called because this space, where the hearth originally was, was *blackened* by the smoke (*ater*). The atrium, which in the more ancient Roman houses possessed the character of a room with a comparatively small opening in the roof, and afterwards resembled a court-yard, was at first the central point of family life, the sitting-room, where the industrious house-keeper sat enthroned among her slaves. When republican simplicity gave way to luxury, the atrium became the hall devoted to the reception of guests, and domestic life was confined to the more retired apartments.
- [63] TRICLINIUM, (triple couch) really the sofa on which three, and sometimes even more persons reclined at table; the name was also given to the dining-room itself, which comprised the second inner court-yard, the so-called peristyle or cavaedium.
- [64] CIMBRIAN PENINSULA, now called Jutland.
- [65] GUTTONI. A German race on the lower Vistula.
- [66] AESTUI. A German race living on the coast of Revel.
- [67] SCANDII. Inhabitants of southern Sweden.
- [68] THE SENSE OF CONTRAST was a conspicuous trait in Roman character. They were wont to heighten their appreciation of the joys of life by images of death, and the dining-room was intentionally placed so as to afford a view of tombs.
- [69] THE GOLDEN HOUSE (*domus aurea*). The name given to the magnificent palace of Nero, which extended from the Palatine Hill across the valley and up again as far as the gardens of Macaenas on the Esquiline. It contained an enormous number of the choicest works in statuary. Vespasian had a large part of this building pulled down.

- [70] THE SEVEN HILLS. Contempt for all who lived in the provinces was peculiar to all Romans, even the lowest classes of the populace. Thus Cicero says: "*Cum infimo cive romano quisquam amplissimus Galliae comparandus est?*" (Can even the most distinguished Gaul be compared with the humblest Roman citizen?) This prejudice extended to later centuries, though under the first emperors numerous inhabitants of the provinces attained the rank of senator and reached the highest offices. It is very comical, when Juvenal, a freedman's son, treats the "knights from Asia Minor," (*Equites Asiani*) condescendingly, as if they were intruders, unworthy to unfasten the straps of his sandals. Inhabitants of the other provinces were held in higher esteem than the Greeks and Orientals. But even Tacitus (*Ann. IV, 3.*) regards it as an aggravation of the crime committed by the wife of Drusus, that Sejanus, for whom she broke her marriage-vow, was not a full-blooded Roman, but merely a knight from Volsinii.
- [71] THE FORMAL GARDENS OF ROME. The taste of the Romans in regard to the art of gardening resembled that shown at Versailles. The eloquence with which individual authors urge a return to nature (Hor. *Epist. I, 10*, Prop. *I, 2*, Juv. *Sat. III*, etc.) only proves that the opposite course was universal. Clipping bushes and trees into artificial forms was considered specially fashionable. Thus Pliny the younger, in his description of the Tuscan villa (*Ep. V, 6.*) writes: "Before the colonnade is an open terrace, surrounded with box, the trees clipped into various shapes; below it a steep slope of lawn, at whose foot, on both sides of the path, stand bushes of box, shaped into the forms of various animals. On the level ground the acanthus grows delicately, I might almost say transparently. Around it is a hedge of thick closely-clipped bushes, and around this hedge runs an avenue of circular form, adorned with box clipped into various shapes, and small trees artistically trimmed. The whole is surrounded by a wall, concealed by box." Then towards the end of the letter: "The box is clipped into a thousand shapes, sometimes into letters, that form the name of the owner or gardener."
- [72] JUPITER CAPITOLINUS. The priests of certain divinities were called *Flamines* and the chief of these was the *Flamen Dialis* or priest of Jupiter—called Capitolinus from the hill on which the temple stood. Tacitus (*Ann. III, 71.*) tells us of the prohibition here spoken of.
- [73] THE PRAETORSHIP AND CONSULSHIP were still, under the emperors, an object of ardent desire, in spite of the fact that these offices had been stripped of all power.
- [74] GADES, now Cadiz, was famous for its dancers of easy morality. (See Juv. *Sat. XI, 162.*)
- [75] THYRSUS, (θύρσος) a pole or wand wreathed with vine and ivy leaves, and borne by Bacchus and by Bacchantes.
- [76] BRIDGE OF NERO. One of this emperor's mad undertakings was the construction, at an enormous expense, of a perfectly useless bridge aslant across the bay of Baiae.
- [77] SURRENTUM, now Sorrento.
- [78] CAIETA, now Gaëta.
- [79] URBANITAS. Literally: city training.
- [80] A PALE, BEARDED MAN. Wearing beards first became general under the Emperor Hadrian. At the time of this story it was still the custom among the higher classes (but not among the lower ones and the slaves) to shave off the beard after the twenty-first year.
- [81] STOA. The school of the stoics; so named from the pillared hall (ποικίλη στοά) at Athens, where Zeno, the founder, taught. The doctrine inculcated was the subjugation of physical and moral evil by individual heroism.
- [82] COENA. The second and last principal meal after the day's work was over. Under the emperors the coena began about half-past two o'clock in the afternoon, in winter probably somewhat later. It corresponded in its relation to the other hours of the day, to the "dîner" of the French, for the Romans were early risers, and even among the aristocratic classes day began at sunrise.
- [83] CAVAEDIUM or peristyle was the name given to the second court-yard of the Roman house, which was connected with the first or atrium by one or two corridors. The dining-room, as well as the study of the master of the house, were in the cavaedium. The space between the latter and the atrium, called the tablinum, contained the family papers; it was the business office.
- [84] TYPHON. The evil genius who killed Osiris. (See [note 32](#), vol. 1.) The Greeks regarded him as a monster of original evil, the personification of the Simoom and other destructive hot winds, or of the primeval force of volcanoes.
- [85] CITHARA (κιθάρα). A favorite musical instrument. The strings, usually of gut, were sounded by means of a *plectrum* (πλήκτρον) of wood, ivory, or metal. Music was as common an accomplishment among ladies of rank then as now, and they often composed both the words and airs of their songs. Statius tells us that his step-daughter did so, and Pliny the younger says the same of his third wife.
- [86] IBYCUS OF RHEGION in Lower Italy (B.C. 528). A distinguished lyric poet, who is the hero of a well-known poem by Schiller. Few of his numerous lyric compositions remain to us. We here give a translation of Emanuel Geibel's admirable German version of his Spring-greeting. (*Classisches Liederbuch*, p. 44.)
- [87] QUINCE. Cydonia is the modern botanical name of the quince, called by the Greeks and Romans the Cydonian apple, after Cydonia, in the island of Crete.
- [88] WATER-ORGAN (*Hydraulus*, ὕδραυλος). A musical instrument mentioned by Cicero, Seneca and others. Ammianus observes: "Water-organs and lyres are made so large, that they might be mistaken for coaches."

- [89] BAIAE was considered from ancient times friendly to Bacchus. (Sen. *Ep.* 51).
- [90] STATIUS.—P. Papinius Statius, born in Naples, A.D. 45, and died A.D. 96, was a lyric and epic poet, often artificial in style, but possessed of a brilliant imagination. His principal works are the epic poem "Thebais," in which he treats of the battle of the sons of Oedipus before Thebes, and the *Silvae* (woods), a collection of short poems. He also commenced an epic poem "Achilleis."
- [91] MARTIAL. (See note 100, vol. 1.)
- [92] CUBICULUM. A sleeping-room. The *cubicula* were located in the atrium, peristyle, and upper stories.
- [93] NOTE. The Romans wrote their letters either on wax-tablets, (See note 10, vol. 1.) or on paper (*papyrus, carta*), using in the former case the stylus, in the latter a reed-pen and Indian ink. When the letter was finished, the wax-tablets were laid one above the other, and the papyrus folded several times. A string was then wound around the whole and the ends sealed.
- [94] THE EMPRESS DOMITIA. The emperor's wife was Domitia Longina, the daughter of Corbulo, and formerly the wife of Aelius Lamia, (Suet. *Dom.* 1).
- [95] CAESAR'S FRIENDS. Among the "friends (*amici*) of the emperor," were included those persons, who not only regularly shared the social pleasures of the sovereign, but were invited to consult with him on all important government business. Within this group of friends there were of course inner, outer, and outermost circles. Quintus, who had little intercourse with the court, can only be included in the outermost circle of all, and even there more on account of his father, who was one of the emperor's most intimate "friends," than by virtue of his own relations with the palace. He of course had a right to appear at court, like all persons of his rank, even without a special "relation of friendship" to the emperor. When inner and outer *circles* of friends are mentioned, this must not be confounded with the different *classes* of friends. Belonging to the first or second class implied a distinction of *rank*. Of course, in this sense, Quintus could only be numbered among the first class (*primi amici*).
- [96] CYPRIUS. A name given to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, from the island of Cyprus, the principal seat of her worship.
- [97] A SLAVE. Domitia had been the mistress of Paris, a slave and actor. When Domitian discovered it, he wished to sentence the empress to death, but at the intercession of Ursus, changed the decree to exile. Paris was massacred in the open street. (See Dio Cass. LXVII 3; Suet. *Dom.* 3.) Quintus calls Paris a buffoon out of contempt, for the profession of "player" was regarded by the ancient Romans as degrading.
- [98] MURAENAE (μύραϊνα). Lampreys were esteemed a delicacy (Cic., Plin., *Hist. Nat. etc.*) The best came from the Lucrine lake, near Cumae.
- [99] A CLIENT IN HIS PATRON'S HOUSE. The clients were originally protégées, faithful followers of their lords (*patroni*) who on their part were obliged to aid them by word and deed. They represented in a certain degree an enlargement of the family circle. Afterwards this relation degenerated into a mercenary connection of the most pitiful kind. Under the emperors the clients usually became only poor parasites, in comparison with their rich masters. They formed their court, paid them the usual morning-visit at a very early hour, accompanied them wherever they went in public, and received in return a ridiculously small compensation in money or goods.
- [100] MARTIAL. M. Valerius Martialis, born at Bilbilis in Spain, about 43 A.D. was famous for his witty and clever epigrams. The 1,200 which have been preserved are the principal source of the history of manners and customs of the period in which the scene of this story is laid. He died about the year 102.
- [101] L. NONIUS ASPRENAS held the office of consul with M. Arricinius Clemens in the 14th year of Domitian's reign, (94 A.D.) and therefore was still in office "last autumn."
- [102] APPIAN WAY. The *Via Appia*, built by one of the Claudia gens (the Censor Appius Claudius Caecus, 312 B.C.) led from Rome across Capua to Brundisium (the modern Brindisi). Statius (*Silv.* II, 12), calls it the queen of roads (*regina viarum*). A large portion of its admirable pavement, as well as the ruins of the tombs on its sides, exist at the present day.
- [103] HEALTH AND BLESSINGS! The Romans always began their letters by mentioning the writer's name, who wishes health and blessings to the person addressed. Thus the commencement of the letter given here, literally interpreted, should have run as follows: TITUS CLAUDIUS MUCIANUS WISHES HIS LUCILIA, Health and Blessings. *T. Claudius Mucianus Luciliae suae, S.P. D.*
- [104] CENTENNIAL FESTIVAL. A brilliant spectacle in the arena, the amphitheatre, etc., which, as its name implies, was celebrated every hundred years. Domitian, however, disregarded the necessity of an interval of a hundred years, by reckoning, as Suetonius (*Dom.* 4) relates, from the one before the last, which took place under Augustus, instead of from the very last, that was celebrated in the reign of Claudius. In this romance the time of the Domitian centennial festivities is placed somewhat *later* than they really occurred.
- [105] ALBANUM. Domitian (Suet. *Dom.* 4) had an estate at the foot of the Albanian Hills, and many rich Romans had summer villas near, forming at last the town now called Albano.
- [106] PALATINE. Palatium, the imperial palace on the Palatine Hill. The word "palace" is derived from "Palatium," as "Kaiser" comes from "Caesar."
- [107] NAZARENES. The name usually given to Christians, who, for a long time were regarded by

the Romans as a Jewish sect. See the words of Dio Cassius (LXVII, 16): "who inclined to Judaism," where he refers to the Christians, who were persecuted under Domitian.

- [108] M. COCCEIUS NERVA from Narnia in Umbria, born 32 A.D., a senator.
- [109] LUCIUS NORBANUS. See Dio Cass., LXVII, 15.
- [110] PRAETORIAN GUARD. The commander-in-chief's tent in the Roman camp, was called the praetorium; and from this the general's body-guard received the name of *cohors praetoria*. Augustus transferred this title to the imperial guard, and established nine Praetorian cohorts, (each consisting of a thousand men) which were stationed, some in Rome and some in the rest of Italy. The cohorts in Rome were at first quartered among the citizens; afterwards they had barracks of their own (*castra praetoria*) on the opposite side of the Quirinal Hill. They, with the Praetorian cavalry, formed the imperial guard and body-guard. Compared with the other soldiers, they had many privileges, for instance a shorter time of service, higher pay, higher rank, etc.
- [111] CLODIANUS. See Suet, *Dom.* 17.
- [112] RECITATION. The custom universally prevailed of poets reciting their verses to a select circle, before they were published.
- [113] THE SECOND HOUR AFTER SUNRISE. The Romans divided the day, from sunrise to sunset, into twelve hours. These were of course shorter in winter than in summer. The events spoken of in this chapter are supposed to have taken place about the time of the equinox, so 'the second hour' would be between seven and eight. The night, between sunset and sunrise, was likewise divided into four vigils or watches of three hours each.
- [114] THE GADFLY OF JUNO. The jealous queen of heaven, Hera, (called by the Romans Juno) transformed the beautiful daughter of Inachus, Io, who was beloved by Jupiter, into a cow, and ordered her to be persecuted by a gadfly.
- [115] THE GREAT CITY. The population of Rome, under the emperors, was a little less than two millions, but largely exceeded one million. There are no exact statements; but calculations have been made from different standpoints, which give about the same result. The most important points to be considered here, are first the extent of surface occupied by imperial Rome, and secondly the estimates of ancient writers concerning the consumption of grain, which in the time of Josephus amounted to 60,000,000 bushels yearly. Here too, may be mentioned the somewhat hyperbolic passage, Arist. *Encom. Rom.* p. 199, where it is asserted that Rome would fill the whole width of Italy to the Adriatic Sea, if the stories of the houses, instead of being piled one above another, had been built on the ground.
- [116] LACERNA. A light woollen cloak, worn either in place of the toga or tunic, or, which was more customary, as an outside wrap over the toga. White lacernae were the most elegant.
- [117] HE RAVED ABOUT THE SEA. The Romans' love for the sea is proved by many passages in their literature, but still more by the ruins of their villas and palaces, which bordered its most beautiful shores, and were praised by contemporaries for their views, (Friedlander, *Sittenges.*, II, p. 129).
- [118] PLINY THE YOUNGER. C. Plinius Caecilius Secundus, a nephew and adopted son of the older Pliny, was born A.D. 62, at Novum Comum, now Como, on the Lake Larius, Lake of Como, on the banks of which he had several villas. (*Ep.* IX. 7.) He died about the year 114. A clever writer, a skilful statesman, an enthusiast for everything good and beautiful, he possessed an amiable character, but cannot be wholly absolved from the reproach of self-sufficiency. His writings, especially his letters, are an important source of information concerning the social conditions of that period. The passage in Pliny to which allusion is here made, runs: "Oh, sea! Oh, strand! Thou beloved Museion! How much ye compose and create for me!"
- [119] ON ITS PIVOT. Doors were not usually hung on hinges, as with us, but had on their upper and lower edges wedge-shaped pivots (*cardines*) which fitted into corresponding depressions in the threshold and upper part of the frame.
- [120] FRIEND. Quintus would speak of Eurymachus as the 'friend' of Euterpe with intentional double meaning, half in the usual honest sense, but partly too in the sense which the feminine form, *amica*, had acquired in the course of time; a signification so ambiguous, that the bluntest frankness was better.
- [121] SESAME CAKE. *Sesamum* σήσαμον was a plant with pods, from whose fruit was obtained a savory meal or oil.
- [122] THE USE OF SPOONS was not so general in Rome as with us, but was certainly customary for eating eggs in good society.
- [123] HYMENAEUS. A well-known poem by Catullus; the burden is: "*O Hymen, Hymenae!*" (Carmen 61, *Collis o Heliconis.*)
- [124] CAIUS (OR QUINTUS) VALERIUS CATULLUS was a native of Verona (B.C. 77) and died at the age of thirty. His works were most popular at the period of our story. Martial frequently compares himself with Catullus as a recognized classic, and in one passage hopes that he may one day be esteemed as second only to Catullus. Herodianus takes one of Catullus's poems as a model, just as a worthy citizen of Germany, who wished to essay lyric poetry, might copy Schiller.
- [125] THE CAPITOLINE HILL. *Mons Capitolinus*, north of the Palatine and southwest of the Quirinal. Tarquinius Priscus erected on its summit the Capitolium, that is the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno and Minerva.

- [126] FORUM ROMANUM. The Roman forum par excellence, at the foot of the Capitoline and Palatine Hills, was the centre of public life even in the days of the republic.
- [127] THE SACRED WAY (*Sacra Via*) divided the real *Sacra Via*, which led from the Capitol to the Arch of Titus, and the *Summa Sacra Via* (the upper sacred street) that extended from the Arch of Titus to the Flavian Amphitheatre. Hor. *Sat.* I, 9 (*Ibam forte Via Sacra, sicut meus est mos.*) It was the most frequented street in Rome. The ancient pavement exists at the present day. "Via" was the name of the large principal streets, as it still is at the present time in Italy.
- [128] CLIENTS AND PROTÉGÉS. These were the clients mentioned in note 99. Juvenal (*Sat.* 5) and especially Martial, in various passages, speak of their pitiable situation, the contempt in which they were held and the ill-treatment they had to endure even from their patrons' slaves. (See Friedlander I, 247 to 252.) The usual visiting-hour was just after sunrise.
- [129] TRIBUNE OF A LEGION. Augustus appointed the so-called *legati* or *praefecti legionum* commanders of the legions. The *legatus* thus corresponded with our colonel. The next in rank to the *legati* were the tribunes (corresponding to our majors) who, however, with special qualifications, might undertake the command of a legion. Usually the tribunes did not have the reputation of possessing remarkable military ability, as the sons of the knights and senators began their military career with this dignity. According to their age and experience, the tribunes were second lieutenants. The men next in rank to the tribunes were the centurions, the really experienced officers, who were held in high esteem on account of their superior knowledge. At the time of our story the pressure of the young men for tribuneships was so extraordinary, that the places actually at disposal were not nearly sufficient to supply the demand. The Emperor Claudius had therefore created supernumerary tribuneships (*supra numerum, imaginariae militiae genus*. Suet. *Claud.* 25) a brevet-rank, which without claiming the performance of any duty, flattered the vanity.
- [130] ANCESTRAL IMAGES. Statues of ancestors, modelled in wax (*imagines majorum*) formed one of the principal ornaments of the atrium in the houses of aristocratic Romans. The ancestors here mentioned of our (imaginary) Titus Claudius Mucianus are all historical characters.
- [131] TATTOOED NATIVE OF BRITAIN. The original Celtic inhabitants of England. For the impression made by Roman magnificence on the British chieftain Caractacus, see Dio Cass. LX, 33.
- [132] AMBER CHAINS. Amber (*Electrum*) was greatly admired by the Romans for necklaces, rings and bracelets, until its value decreased by over-importation. It was chiefly brought from the shores of the Baltic.
- [133] BROKEN RINGS OF GOLD. The priest of Jupiter was only permitted to wear broken rings of gold, as closed ones were the symbols of captivity.
- [134] ROBES OF DAZZLING WHITENESS. The white toga was the invariable gala dress worn at all ceremonious receptions, even by the emperors. Great indignation was felt against Nero, because once, when the senate paid him a visit, he wore only a flowered toga.
- [135] PRIESTLY HEAD-GEAR. The Flamines were forbidden to go bare-headed. They always wore a hat (*apex*) or a sort of fillet.
- [136] PARTHENIUS. This historical personage was a man of conspicuous importance at the court of Domitian, and mentioned by many authors, particularly in Martial's epigrams. He was *cubiculo praepositus*, (*πρόκεντος* in Dio Cass.) groom of the bed-chamber or high chamberlain, and a particular favorite with Caesar. His companion in office Sigerus or Sigerius, his inferior in rank, power and influence, will not be again mentioned in this story.
- [137] TITUS FLAVIUS CLEMENS. A cousin of the emperor, was consul A.D. 95 with Domitian, (who conferred this dignity upon him seventeen times). Concerning his conversion to Christianity see Dio Cass. LXVII, 14, as well as Suet. *Dom.* 15.
- [138] IN THE CIRCUS. The Circus Maximus, between the Aventine and Palatine Hills, was the principal place for the horse and chariot races, and in Domitian's time accommodated about a quarter of a million spectators.
- [139] CHARIOTEERS. As the givers of entertainments could rarely furnish men and horses enough of their own for the games in the circus, companies of capitalists and owners of larger families of slaves and studs, undertook to supply them. As there were usually four chariots in each race, there were four such companies, each of which furnished a chariot for each race, and as the chariots and drivers had colors to distinguish them, each adopted one of these colors, hence they were called factions or parties. (Friedlander, II, 192.) The colors of these four parties were white, red, green and blue. Domitian added two new ones, gold and purple. Like so many of Domitian's institutions, this circus innovation passed without leaving any trace, but the original parties, especially the green and the blue, lasted for centuries. The whole population of Rome, and afterwards that of Constantinople, divided into different parties, each of which sided with one of these circus factions. The eager, even passionate interest with which this was done, finds a feeble analogy at the present day in some phases of English and American popular life.
- [140] BY EPONA, THE TUTELARY GODDESS OF HORSES! Epona (from *epus-equus*, the horse) was the protecting deity of the horse, mule and donkey. (Juv. *Sat.* VIII, 157.) Stables, etc., were adorned with her statue. Roman sportsmen swore by the goddess of horses. (See Juv. *Sat.* VIII, 156: *jurat solam Eponam.*)
- [141] INCITATUS, the swift—*equo incitato*—in a stretching gallop—a famous favorite horse of the emperor Caligula. (Suet. *Cal.* 55.) The emperor built this animal a palace, gave orders

that it should feed from an ivory manger, and be attended by slaves clad in rich garments. When it was to appear in the circus, all noise in its neighborhood was prohibited during the whole of the preceding day, that the noble creature's rest should not be disturbed. Caligula is said to have intended to make his Incitatus consul.

[142] ANDRAEMON, ADSERTOR, VASTATOR AND PASSERINUS. Names of horses frequently mentioned during the reign of the Roman emperors. Andraemon often won the race in Domitian's time. Monuments with the portrait of this racer have come down to us.

[143] QUADRIGA. A carriage in front of which four horses were fastened abreast. The racing quadrigae were exactly like the old Homeric chariot—being provided with a breast-work in front while open in the rear.

[144] SCORPUS. A famous chariot-driver in Domitian's time, see the epitaph Martial composed for him. (Martial *Ep.* X, 53.)

"I am that Scorpus, glory of the race
Rome's admired joy, but joy for a short space,
Among the dead Fates early me enroll'd,
Numb'ring my conquests, they did think me old."
ANON, 1695.

That the name of Scorpus was on every lip appears from another passage in Martial *Ep.* XI, 1, which runs as follows:

"Nor will your follies by those few
Be told; but when their stories flag
Of some new bet or running nag."
HAY.

where the Incitatus to whom reference is made is not Caligula's horse, already mentioned, but a racer named for it.

[145] SARMATIANS. A people in what is now Poland and Tartary. (See Mart. *Spect.* 3.)

[146] HYPERBOREANS. People who lived above Boreas, fabulous folk dwelling in the extreme north; also Northmen in general. For instance Martial includes among the Hyperboreans, the Chatti (Hessen) and Dacians, inhabitants of eastern Hungary.

[147] JULIA. The daughter of the Emperor Titus, with whom Domitian for a long time had unlawful relations. Dio Cass. LXVII, 3. Suet *Dom.* 22.

[148] A TUMULT. Many things are related about such tumults. They were partly impromptu, partly carefully prepared. A striking instance of the latter style is told by Dio Cassius (LXXII, 13) where a cunningly-planned circus-riot causes the fall of the hated lord high-chamberlain Cleander. This omnipotent favorite of the Emperor Commodus had enraged the people by a series of the boldest frauds, during a period of great scarcity. Just as the horses were starting for the seventh race a throng of boys, led by a tall, formidable looking woman, rushed into the arena. The children loaded Cleander with the fiercest curses, the people joined them, all rose and rushed furiously towards the emperor's Quintilian villa. Commodus, a very cowardly man, was so terrified, that after a short struggle he commanded Cleander and his little son to be slain. The mob dragged the corpse of the chamberlain about in triumph, mutilated it, and stuck the head on a pole as a sign of victory.

[149] SECRETARY. The modern equivalent for the office of "*ab epistulis*," held under Domitian by the freedman Abascantus. (Stat. *Silv.* V, 1.) At a later period—under Hadrian and afterwards—such offices were held only by men of knightly rank.

[150] CALLING UPON DOMITIA. We here follow a passage (somewhat doubtful, it is true) of Dio Cassius (LXVII, 3) which states that the emperor "*at the entreaties of the people*," became reconciled to his wife. Suetonius (*Dom.* 3) says, he only *alleged* such a desire on the part of the people, but really received the empress again "because the separation from her became unendurable." For special reasons our story fixes the time of this reconciliation in the year 95, while it actually occurred some time earlier.

[151] WITH REGARD TO JULIA, CAESAR MADE NO PROMISES. See Dio Cass. LXVII 3. He became reconciled, "but without giving up Julia."

[152] VESTAL MAIDEN. Priestess of Vesta, the goddess of the hearth. At first they were four, afterwards six. They were chosen between the ages of six and ten, and were obliged to remain in the service of the goddess thirty years, ten as novices, ten as acting priestesses, and ten to instruct novices. Their principal task was to keep the sacred fire alive. They were vowed to chastity, and if they broke their vows were buried alive in the *campus sceleratus*, while the seducer was publicly flogged to death.

[153] TRANSPARENT GAUZE. The island of Cos (Κῶς) belonging to the Sporades, furnished garments made from a half-transparent silk gauze called *coa*. (See Hor. *Sat.* I. 2, 101.)

[154] GOLD PLATES. A room has been discovered on the Aventine, whose walls were concealed by gilded bronze plates encrusted with medals; on the Palatine there was an apartment lined with plates of silver, set with precious stones. The halls and chambers in Nero's *domus aurea* were covered with golden plates.

[155] STEPHANUS. I have taken considerable liberties in dealing with this personage in his relation to the Empress Domitia. He is, however, historical.

[156] THE OYSTER, (*ostrea* or *ostreum*) was considered a great dainty in ancient times. (See note, 42, Vol. 1, "lobster.")

[157] THERE IS NOT IN ALL ROME ONE FAITHFUL WIFE, OR ONE INNOCENT GIRL. See Martial *Ep.* IV, 71.

“Long have I search’d, my Soph, the town,
 To find a damsel that would frown,
 But not a damsel will deny,
 As if a shame ’t were to be shy;
 As if a sin, will no one dare:
 I see not one denying fair.
 ‘Then of the fair is no one chaste?’
 A thousand, Soph, you urge in haste.
 ‘What does the chaste? Enlarge my views.’
 She does not grant, nor yet refuse.”

ELPHINSTON.

In contrast to the hyperbolic expressions of the satirical writers, we are made acquainted in the letters of the younger Pliny, with a number of women of noble character; the historians too, especially Tacitus, as well as inscriptions on the monuments prove—if proof were required—that even in this corrupt age feminine virtue and loftiness of character were not rare. It is natural, that a satirical author should have special keenness of vision for errors and weaknesses.

[158] WHAT RAVIDUS?. The poem to which Martial here alludes is found Cat. *Carm.* XL.

“Quaenam te mala mens, miselle Ravide
 Agit praecipitem in meos iambos?”

[159] TRYPHON, (LUPERCUS). The episode described here, which seems almost like a satirical allusion to the present time, is only one of Martial’s epigrams transposed into action. (Mart. *Ep.* I, 117.)

“As oft, Sir Tradewell, as we meet,
 You’re sure to ask me in the street,
 When you shall send your boy to me,
 To fetch my book of poetry? etc.”

OLDHAM.

The bookseller Atrectus, who had a shop on the Argiletum, a public square not far from the Forum Caesaris, is also mentioned.—Traces of a well-organized book-trade are found towards the end of the republic. The first publisher on a larger scale is Pomponius Atticus, a friend of Cicero, who formally issued a series of Cicero’s works, for instance the *Orator*, *Quaestiones Academicæ*, etc., and not only distributed them to the different bookstores in Rome, but supplied the numerous shops in Greece and Asia Minor. (See Cic. *ad. Att.* XII, 6, XV, 13, XVI, 5.) Yet Atticus was a patron of literature and an aesthetic, rather than a business man. The best-known booksellers and publishers under the emperors were: the Brothers Sosii, who issued the works of Horatius Flaccus (Hor. *Ep.* I, 20, 2, *Ars. poet.* 345); Dorus, the Phillip Reclam junior of ancient times, who in the reign of Nero introduced cheap popular editions of Livy and Cicero, (Sen. *Benef.* VII, 61) and Martial’s publisher, the Tryphon mentioned in this story. (Mart. *Ep.* IV, 72, XIII, 13.) The editions were provided by slaves, who wrote from dictation. The books were delivered in covers, the backs, glued together, being fastened in the hollow of a cylinder, through which ran a revolving stick. The volumes were cut, the edges were dyed sometimes black and sometimes purple. (See Göll: “*Book-trade of the Greeks and Romans*,” Schleiz., 1865.) Pollio Valerianus published Martial’s early poems. (Mart. *Ep.* I, 113, 5.)

[160] QUIRINAL. Martial’s house was near the temple on the Quirinal. (Mart. *Ep.* X, 58.)

[161] DENARI. At the time of Domitian, the denarius (10 *as.*) was worth about 15 cents.

[162] STREET-CORNERS. Large square tablets, whitened, for the display of public notices, stood at the corners of the streets. A tablet of this description was called *album*, (*albus*-white).

[163] COSTERMONGER. Boiled chick-peas were publicly carried about for sale. (Martial *Ep.* I, 41, I, 103.)

[164] MASSIVE BOWLS. The crater (*crater* or *cratera*) was a large vase or bowl, in which strong wine was mixed with water. A ladle was used to fill the drinking-cups.

[165] MURRHINE VASES, (*murrhina vasa*). Vases made of *murrha*, a material with a pale sheen in it, highly valued by the ancients; probably fluor-spar.

[166] GUINEA-FOWLS FROM NUMIDIA, (*aves Numidicae* or merely *Numidicae*) were a favorite dish. (Plin., *Hist. Nat.* Mart. etc.)

[167] THE PROVINCE OF THESPROTIS in Epirus, extended from Chaonia to the Ambracian Gulf. The goats raised there were considered exceptionally good.

[168] PHEASANTS FROM THE CASPIAN SEA. At the time of our story, these birds were a newly-introduced delicacy. Phasis was the name of the boundary river between Asia-Minor and Colchis; hence their name *phasianus*; (*avis Phasiana*, or merely *Phasiana*, or *Phasianus*—the pheasant.) Martial also calls them *volucres Phasides*.

[169] DATES. The best quality were imported into Rome from Egypt.

[170] DAINY CAKES. Bread from Picenum is mentioned in the *menu* of a banquet given in the latter half of the century B. C., (Marquardt *Handbuch*, IV, 1.)

[171] FIGS FROM CHIOS. Varro, (*R. Rust.* I, 41) speaks of Chian, Lydian, Chalcedonian and African figs.

[172] PISTACHIO NUTS. The best pistachio nuts came from Palestine and Syria, whence Lucius Vitellius introduced them into his garden at Albanum.

- [173] EUPHEMUS. Caesar's head-cook or butler. (See Martial *Ep.* IV. 8.)
- "The tenth hour's proper for my book and me,
And Euphem, thou who dost the board o'ersee."
ANON, 1695.
- [174] THE LONG FLOWING HAIR OF A FEMALE SLAVE. This fancy was not at all unusual. (See *Petron.*, 27.)
- [175] HISPALIS. A city in southern Spain, now Seville.
- [176] CASTANETS. Castanet dances are often represented in pictures. (See O. Jahn, Fresco-paintings on the walls of the columbarium, in the Villa Pamfili.)
- [177] JESTER. Jesters, especially dwarfs, were very popular in ancient Rome. The scene that follows here is based upon various incidents in a description by Lucian, which has come down to modern times: "The Banquet, or The Lapithae" 18, 19. In this a hideous little fellow, who gives utterance to all sorts of jests and witticisms, appears at Aristaenetus' banquet. "Finally he addressed each person with some mischievous joke—and each laughed as his turn came. But when he accosted Alcidas, calling him a Maltese puppy, the latter, especially as he had long been jealous of the applause and attention bestowed on the jester by the whole company, grew angry, threw off his cloak and challenged the dwarf to a boxing-match. What could the poor jester do? It was infinitely comical to see a philosopher fight with a clown. Many of the spectators were ashamed of the scene, but others laughed merrily, until Alcidas was at last beaten black and blue."
- [178] VELARIUM. The cloth hung across the amphitheatre, to screen it from the sun.
- [179] THE BATHS OF TITUS were located near the Cyprius Street, on the site of Nero's *domus aurea*, which had been destroyed after its builder's death.
- [180] CURTAIN. The drop-scene (as we should call it) raised between the acts of a play. The curtain, properly so-called, was the *aulaeum*. These were not drawn up, as in modern theatres, but lowered.
- [181] A TALL CROSS. Crucifixion was the common punishment of great crimes.
- [182] TRIMETER. A verse of three double feet—the usual metre in dramatic verse.
- [183] THE CAPITAL PUNISHMENT OF A CRIMINAL SLAVE. Such executions in theatrical form, especially pantomimic representations of them, were no rarity in the arena. Condemned criminals were specially trained for such performances. "They entered, clad in costly, gold-broidered tunics and purple mantles, and adorned with golden wreaths; suddenly, like the death-dealing robes of Medea, flames burst from these magnificent garments, in which the miserable creatures died a cruel death. There was scarcely a torture or terrible end known in history or literature, with whose representation the populace had not been entertained in the amphitheatre. Hercules was seen burning to death on Mt. Oeta, Mucius Scaevola holding his hand over the brazier of coals till it was consumed, the robber, Laureolus, the hero of a well-known farce, fastened to a cross and torn by wild beasts. At the same spectacle, another condemned criminal, in the character of Orpheus, ascended from the ground as if returning from the nether-world. Nature seemed enchanted by his playing, the rocks and trees moved towards him, birds hovered over him, countless animals surrounded him; when the scene had lasted long enough, he was torn to pieces by a bear." (Friedlaender II, 268, etc.) It can scarcely be termed an unwarrantable license, that Lycoris presents a similar spectacle for the amusement of her guests. The masters' right to dispose of the lives and persons of their slaves had been restricted in the first century, it is true; but the omnipotent Parthenius was doubtless superior to such legal edicts.
- [184] DACI. A people living in the region now called Hungary, east of the Danube.
- [185] BLOOD-HOUNDS. (*Molossi*.) The dogs from Molossis in eastern Epirus were famous sleuth-hounds. (Hor. Virg. etc.)
- [186] PATRICIAN WAY. (*vicus Patricius*) ran between the Esquiline and Viminal hills.
- [187] THIS IS VIOLENCE! Julius Caesar's famous exclamation just before his murder, when Cimber Tullius, having approached him with a petition, after a refusal, seized him by the toga. (Suet. *Jul. Caes.* 82.)
- [188] I SHOULD ADVISE YOU, FREEDMAN. Their former condition of slavery affixed an ineffaceable stigma upon all freedmen, especially in the eyes of the old senatorial nobility. Even the vast power attained by some of the emperor's freedmen, for instance the high chamberlain Parthenius, was of no avail in this respect; they too were at heart despised by all free-born citizens, much as they strove, from motives of prudence, to conceal this contempt beneath protestations of sycophantic devotion. Quintus addressing Stephanus as "freedman," could not fail to be taken by the latter as a mortal insult.
- [189] TOWN-WATCH, (*cohortes urbanae*). Besides the imperial body-guard, specially devoted to the Caesar's service, there was a city-guard, which provided for the maintenance of public safety.
- [190] SABINE HILLS. The Sabines, an old Italian people, were the neighbors of the Latins. Their country extended northward to the domains of the Umbrians, southward to the Anio river.
- [191] FOLLOWED BY HIS CLIENTS AND SLAVES. Aristocratic people rarely appeared in public without a train of followers.
- [192] "GETTING UP EARLY IS MY GREATEST TORMENT." See Martial, *Ep.* X 74, where the poet, as the sole reward for his verses, begs to be permitted to sleep as long as he likes in the

morning.

- [193] "WELL SAID!" CRIED THE POET. Martial often flattered his superiors, even to servility. See Mart. *Ep.* XII, 11, where he praises the poetic gifts of Parthenius.
- [194] SUBURA. A densely-populated district between the Forum Romanum and the Vicus Patricius, occupied by the poorer classes.
- [195] HOUSES. For the height of the houses in ancient Rome see Friedlander I, 5 etc.
- [196] TAVERNS. All sorts of booths, stands, work-shops, taverns and barbers' shops stood in front of the houses in the smaller streets, greatly impeding the passers-by. The confusion at last increased to such an extent, that Domitian found himself compelled to have the most obtrusive structures removed in certain quarters of the city. One of Martial's epigrams (VII, 61) is founded on this incident.
- [197] ITINERANT BAKERS. Mart. XIV, 223:

"Arise; the baker is selling the boys their breakfast."

The breakfast probably consisted of *adipata*, i.e. pastry or cakes made with fat. Bread was baked at home till the last years of the Republic; afterwards there were public bakehouses for the poorer classes.

- [198] THE PEDAGOGUE was a slave, whose duty it was to take children to school.
- [199] THE BABBLE OF SPELLING CHILDREN. The Romans attached great importance to a distinct and accurate pronunciation; reading was taught twice a day, and children began to learn before the age of seven.
- [200] THE CYPRIUS STREET (*vioua Cyprius*) led from the Subura to the Flavian amphitheatre.
- [201] A PROCESSION OF PRIESTS. Solemn processions of priests through the city formed one of the principal features in the worship of Isis.
- [202] YOU LEECHES ARE ALWAYS RIGHT. Bleepyrus, as his master's constant companion, would watch over his health, if not as a qualified physician, at any rate, as an empirical adviser. The household leech in noble families was almost always a slave or freedman, and those who practised independently were often in the same position.
- [203] OSTIARIUS. The porter, who sat in a niche of the entrance-corridor (*ostium*).
- [204] HYRCANIAN MOUNTAINS. Hyrcania was the name of a rough mountainous region near the Caspian Sea.
- [205] THE SECOND VIGIL. The Romans divided the time from sunrise to sunset into four vigils (night-watches) of three hours each.
- [206] CUBICULUM. Sleeping-room.
- [207] ORBILIUS. The well-known schoolmaster, nicknamed by his pupils *plagosus*, (delighting in blows) to whom Horace went. (Suet. *Gramm.* 9.)
- [208] I SUPPOSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO STICK A PIN INTO ME. Roman ladies often avenged mistakes committed by their slaves, during the process of making their toilettes, by such abuse. Nay, it sometimes happened that a slave thus stabbed was killed. See Mart. *Ep.* II, 66, where Lalage knocks down the female slave Plecusa on account of a single curl escaping from her hair.
- [209] AH! YOU NAUGHTY GIRL. With the sovereign contempt with which so many Romans treated their slaves, this tone, addressed to the daughter of the house, might seem strange, but even under the emperors the relation between masters and slaves was in many respects a patriarchal one. The older slaves, especially, were permitted many familiarities in their intercourse with the children of the family, who often called them "little father," "little mother," allowed them to reprove them, and according to their personality, frequently permitted them to exercise no little authority. A beautiful example of cordial relations existing between the master, and his slaves and freedmen, is shown us in a letter from the younger Pliny to Paullinus (*Ep.* V. 19) where he says: "I see how mildly you treat your people, and therefore acknowledge the more frankly how indulgent I am to mine; I always remember the words of Homer:

"And was kind as a father...."

and our own 'father of a family' (*pater familias*). But even were I harsher and sterner by nature, I should be moved by the illness of my freedman Zosimus, to whom I must show the greater kindness, now that he needs it more.... My long-standing affection for him, which is only increased by anxiety, affords a guarantee for that. Surely it is natural, that nothing so fans and increases love as the fear of loss, which I have already endured more than once on his account. Some years ago, after reciting a long time with much effort, he raised blood; so I sent him to Egypt, from whence he returned a short time since greatly strengthened by the long journey. But on straining his voice too much for several days, a slight cough served to remind us of the old difficulty, and he again raised blood. Therefore I intend to send him to your estate at Foro-Julium, having often heard you say that the air there was healthful, and the milk very beneficial in such diseases."

- [210] WEDDING WITH OFFERING OF CORN. The oldest form of the marriage ceremony was the *Confarreatio*, so-called from the offerings of grain (*far*). By this form the wife entirely lost her independence. Her property passed into her husband's possession, and she could neither acquire anything for herself, nor transact any legal business. The desire for emancipation, here jestingly uttered by Lucilia, was in reality very widely diffused throughout Rome at the time of our story, and the form of the *Confarreatio* was

therefore constantly becoming rarer.

- [211] CITRUS-WOOD. The citrus (*tuja cupressoides*) a beautiful tree growing on the sides of the Atlas, furnished costly tops for tables, for which the most extravagant prices were paid, as the trunks rarely attained the requisite degree of thickness. Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* XIII, 15) mentions slabs almost four feet in diameter, and six inches thick. Cicero gave a million sesterces for a citrus-wood table. Seneca is said to have owned five hundred of them. The slab rested on a single base of skilfully-carved ivory, from which they received the name of *monopodia* (a single foot).
- [212] STOLA. The over-garment worn by women (*stola*) was trimmed around the bottom with a border (*instita*) that often lengthened into a train.
- [213] METAL MIRROR. At the time of our story mirrors made of a mixture of gold, silver and copper were preferred.
- [214] WHO HIRE FLATTERERS TO PRAISE THEM. See *Quintillian*, XI, 3, 131; *Juv. Sat.* XIII, 29-31, *Plin. Ep.* II, 14, 4.
- [215] THE CENTUMVIRATE. A body of judges whose function it was to decide in civil cases, more particularly in suits concerning inheritance. The Decemvirate presided over them.
- [216] LIVED ON THE CORN GIVEN AWAY BY THE STATE. The number of Roman paupers, who lived almost exclusively by this means, far surpassed those who need support in civilized countries at the present time.
- [217] THE ARCH OF TITUS. The triumphal arch of Titus, at the southeastern corner of the Forum Romanum, designed for the commemoration of the victory over the Jews, A.D. 81, is still standing at the present day. It bears the inscription: "*Senatus populusque Romanus divo Tito divi Vespasiani filio Vespasiano Augusto.*" Some of its bas-reliefs are admirably preserved.
- [218] META SUDANS. One of the Metae (the obelisks at the upper and lower ends of the circus) resembling a fountain, not far from the Flavian amphitheatre. Part of the sub-structure still remains.
- [219] THE FLAVIAN AMPHITHEATRE, now the Coliseum. This edifice, commenced by the emperor Vespasian at the close of the Jewish war, finished under Titus, and dedicated A.D. 80, contained seats for 87,000 spectators, and room for 20,000 more in the open gallery. Even at the present time, no similar structure in the world has equalled, far less surpassed it in extent and magnificence.
- [220] CAELIMONTANA GATE.. (*Porta Caelimontana*) near the Lateran. The street here entered by Claudia and Lucilia still exists; it now bears the name of Via di San Giovanni in Laterano.
- [221] THE BIRTHDAY (*dies natalis, sacra natalicia*) was celebrated in ancient times.
- [222] IN THE MIDDLE STOOD A HEARTH. The real hearth, originally in the atrium, had long since vanished from the atria of the wealthy and aristocratic. Here a festal hearth erected for the occasion is meant.
- [223] LUCRETIUS. Titus Lucretius Carus, who was born in the year 98, and died in 55 B.C., composed a philosophical didactic poem "on the nature of things." (*De Rerum Natura*.) The view of the world taken in it is a thoroughly material one. The poet constructs the universe out of an infinite multitude of atoms, which exist singly and imperishably in infinite space.
- [224] PLINY THE ELDER. Caius Plinius Secundus, called to distinguish him from his nephew, so often quoted here, the elder (major) a warrior, statesman, and famous naturalist, was born at Novum Comum, A.D. 23. He met his death, a victim to his thirst for scientific knowledge, at the great eruption of Vesuvius, A.D. 79. (See the famous description in his nephew's letter to Tacitus, *Plin. Ep.* VI, 16.) Of his numerous works, nothing has come down to us except the *Historia Naturalis*, a vast encyclopedia, the material for which was obtained from more than 2,000 volumes. He was an absolute denier of the gods, nay, of transcendentalism altogether. The opinions attributed to Cinna are in part literally copied from the *Historia Naturalis*.
- [225] ANTIUM. The modern Porto d'Anzio, an ancient city south of Rome. Many Roman aristocrats owned country-seats there.
- [226] TISSUES MIXED WITH SILK. Fabrics made entirely of silk were rare in Rome.
- [227] MENTOR was a famous sculptor, especially celebrated for his cups and goblets in metal (*repoussé*). *Pliny. Hist. Nat.* VII, 38, and XIII, 11, 12, also *Martial, Ep.* III, 41:
- The lizard wrought by Mentor's hand so rare,
Was fear'd i' the cup, as though it living were.
WRIGHT.
- that is, the silver lizard, wrought on the cup, is so true to life, that people might fear it. See *Mart. Ep.* IV, 39, IX, 59 (cups that Mentor's hand ennobled), etc.
- [228] NICEROS. See *Mart. Ep.* VI, 55 ("because you smelt Niceros's leaden vials ...") *Mart. Ep.* X, 38, ("the lamps that exhaled Niceros's sweet perfumes ...") and *Mart. Ep.* XII, 65, ("a pound of ointment from Cosmus or Niceros.")
- [229] RIBBONS AND TRIMMINGS OF AMETHYST-PURPLE. Garments of amethystine-purple, woollen material (*amethystina* or *vestes amethystinae*) were among the most magnificent and costly clothes. See *Mart. Ep.* I, 97, 7, and *Juv. Sat.* VII, 136. The color was so-called because it glittered in the amethyst, a violet-blue gem.

- [230] EXQUISITE ROSES. Roses and violets were the favorite flowers of the ancients. The use of these blossoms was enormous. For the rose-culture in Rome, see Varro, *R. Rust.* I, 16, 3.
- [231] THE STEWARD OF THE TABLES. The chief slave in the dining-room, the butler, was called *Tricliniarcha*. (Petr. XXII, 6, *Inscr. Orell.* No. 794.)
- [232] PAESTUM (Παίστου) in the most ancient times Posidonia, a city on the western coast of Lucania, south of the mouth of the Silarus, (now Sele) was famous for its magnificent roses.
- [233] ATELLANIAN BUFFOON. Atellanae (*Atellanae fabulae, ludi Atellani*) was the name given to a species of dramatic performance, somewhat coarsely comical in character. The material for these plays was taken from the lives of the humble citizens and country people. The language used was that of every-day life, and they were often written in the Oscan dialect. The name comes from the Campanian city Atella, where this style of play first originated. Certain fundamental characteristics of the Atellanae representations are still visible in Italian popular farces.
- [234] PHOENIX. See Tac. *Ann.* VI, 28, Plin. *Hist. Nat.* X, 2, *Ov. Met.* XV, 392.
- [235] LIKE CRAPE FROM COS. Corduba, now Cordova, on the Baetis, now the Guadalquivir, was one of the most important commercial cities in Spain, the principal place in Hispania Baetica, the seat of the imperial governor. See Strabo III, 141. Materials woven from Spanish flax (*carbasus*) were considered specially delicate for clothing.
- [236] EPIC from Epos (ἔπος)—word, speech, tale. Afterwards the Greeks distinguished epic poetry from lyric by the ἔπη.
- [237] M. ULPIDIUS TRAJANUS, born September 18th, A.D. 53, at Italica in Spain, obtained the consulship in the year 91.
- [238] CUPID AND PSYCHE. The story of Cupid and Psyche was the primeval prototype of Cinderella and a thousand other gems of primitive poetry, and was familiar in nurseries of every rank long before Appuleius cast it into shape, availing himself no doubt of several traditional versions. "Once upon a time there were a king and queen, who had three beautiful daughters," (*Erant in quadam civitate rex et regina; hi tres numero filias forma conspicuas habuere,*) was no doubt as favorite a legend with the children of that age as with ours.
- [239] IN THE FORUM, that is in the basilica situated in the forum.
- [240] BASILICA, (βασιλική *scil. domus* or *porticus*—royal house) a magnificent public building, used for holding courts of law, or transacting commercial business, and thus at the same time a court-house and exchange. Above were seats for the spectators. The basilicas consisted of a central nave and two side ones, divided from the former by columns. After Constantine the Great had transformed numerous basilicas into churches, the name and style of architecture became associated with the latter.
- [241] THEOGNIS. An elegiac poet from Attic Megara, who lived B.C. 520. The lines here quoted by Lucilia may be found *Eleg.* 1323, and in the original text run:
- Κυπρογένη, παῦσόν με πόνων, σκέδασον δὲ μερίμνας
Θυμοβόρους, στρέφου δ' ἄυθις ἐς εὐφροσύνας.
- [242] OLD SINNER! Lucilia here speaks in the tone of the old Latin comedies (*Plautus, Terence*).
- [243] MATHEMATICIAN. The usual name of the (principally Chaldean) astrologers.
- [244] ALL THINGS FLOW AWAY! (πάντα ῥεῖ) asserted the philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus, (460 B.C.) called on account of his obscurity, "the dark."
- [245] LYAEUS (Λυαῖος), the deliverer, the care-dispeller, a name given Bacchus.
- [246] BARBILLUS. An astrologer of this name is mentioned. Dio Cass, LXVI, 9.
- [247] LAST NIGHT I HAD A DREAM. Faith in the prophetic character of dreams was universal in Rome; their interpretation was a regular profession. A surprising example of the seriousness with which the representatives of this "profession" regarded their calling, is furnished in the dream-book of the (undoubtedly sincere) Artemidorus, (Daldianus.) If Lucilia laughs at Cornelia's fears, it is a piece of free-thinking which did not often happen, and springs rather from a merry, saucy mood, than the deeper source of a philosophical conviction.
- [248] OUR GOD AND MASTER DOMITIAN. The emperor Domitian ordered himself to be called, "God and Master." Suet, *Dom.* 13.
- [249] FUNERAL BANQUET. The story of the nocturnal summons to the senators and knights is related by Dio Cassius (LXVII, 9.)
- [250] THE MEANEST SUBURB. Butuntum, a little city in Apulia, now Bitonto, is used by Martial (*Ep.* II, 48 and IV, 55) as a synonym for "quiet provincial town," as the inhabitants of Berlin say: "Treuenbrietzen" or "Perleberg."
- [251] UTTER CONTEMPT. One of the principal amusements of gay young men was to play pranks in the streets at night, usually on the proletarii. A special favorite was the *Sagatio*, which consisted in putting some unfortunate wight in a cloak, and tossing him up and down like Sancho Panza.
- [252] THE BACK DOOR. (*Posticum*) was the name given to the little door, leading from the back of the cavaedium or peristyle to the street.
- [253] PERFUME OF INCENSE. Incense (*thus*) was generally used not only in the temple of Isis, but

at the ceremonies attending the offering of sacrifices in the Roman national worship. It was the resin from an Arabian tree, and the so-called liquid incense was considered the best.

- [254] FIRST-BORN OF THE AGES. The invocation to the goddess Isis is partly borrowed from the metamorphoses of Appuleius (XI, 5) where the goddess calls herself: "first-born of all the centuries, highest of the gods, queen of the Manes, princess of the heavenly powers," etc., repeating the names under which she is revered throughout the world.
- [255] WHITE ROBE. The priests of Isis wore light robes, usually of linen (*linum*) from which the goddess is called in Ovid: "Isis in linen garments," (*Isis linigera*). Byssus is a kind of cotton.
- [256] SMALL TONSURE. The ancient Oriental custom of shaving the crown of the head was enjoined upon the priests of Isis. Herodotus, II, 37.
- [257] RUBIES, EMERALDS AND CHRYSOLITES. In ancient times the chrysolite ranked next to the diamond among precious stones. The finest came from Scythia. Next to the emerald, the beryl and opal were highly esteemed. (Plin. *Hist. Nat.* XXXVII, 85.)
- [258] ALL THREE WERE WRAPPED IN THICK CLOAKS. The *lacerna*, the outer garment worn over the toga, not infrequently had a hood (*cucullus*).
- [259] WE MUST FIND AN ADVENTURE YET, PARTHENIUS. Such nocturnal rambles incognito were not at all unusual among aristocratic gentlemen. The incident is not expressly related of Domitian, but is told of Nero, Suet. *Ner.* 26, where the author says: "As soon as night came, he put on a hat or cap, went to the taverns and roamed about the streets, only in jest, it is true, but not without working mischief." Domitian's encounter with the slave Parmenio has its counterpart in an adventure of Nero, who once, assailing a noble lady, was almost beaten to death by her husband. (Suet.)
- [260] SWARTHY NEGRESS. See Suet. *Dom.* 22, where it is stated that the emperor now and then associated with the lowest wenches.
- [261] THE CIRCUS FLAMINIUS. Located in the ninth district, of the same name, built 221 B.C.
- [262] AELIAN BRIDGE. (*Pons Aelius*), now the Angel Bridge.
- [263] AQUEDUCTS. The magnificent water-works formed one of the principal ornaments of ancient Rome. "The mountain springs, conveyed for miles in subterranean pipes or over huge arches to the city, poured plashing from artificial grottos, spread out into vast, richly adorned reservoirs, or mounted in the jets of superb fountains, whose cool breath refreshed and purified the summer air." (Friedländer, I, 14.)
- [264] ALTA SEMITA corresponds with tolerable accuracy to the modern *Via di Porta Pia*.
- [265] TORCHES. Street lamps were unknown in ancient times, as well as throughout nearly the whole of the middle ages.
- [266] THE OLD WALL. (*Agger Servii Tullii*) extended from the Porta Collina to the Porta Esquilina. The neighboring region was considered the most corrupt in all Rome. The "wenches of the city wall" were often mentioned. (See for instance, Mart. *Ep.* III, 82, 2.)
- [267] THE MUDDY WINE OF VEII. The wine made in the neighborhood of the little city of Veii, (northwest of Rome) was little prized. (See Mart. I, 103, 9, where the red Veian is called thick and full of lees.)
- [268] GAME OF ODD AND EVEN. This game of chance, which is still very common, was extremely popular under the name *ludere par impar*. The opponent had to guess whether an odd or even number of gold pieces or other objects was held in the closed hand.
- [269] ILL-CONSTRUCTED HOUSES. Every well-to-do citizen of ancient Rome had his own house. The great mass of poor people lived in rented dwellings, built by unprincipled speculators with unprecedented carelessness, on the principle "cheap and bad," yet nevertheless leased at high prices. The fall of such houses was therefore no rare occurrence, as is proved by the constant association of the words "fire and fall" (*incendia acruinae*)—catastrophes which Strabo (V, 3, 7) characterizes as constant. (See also Senec. *Ep.* XC, 43, Cat. XXIII, 9; Juv. *Sat.* III, 7.)
- [270] UNDER THE TILES, (*sub tegulis*), was a common phrase for the upper story. (See Suet. *Gramm.* 9, where it is said of the poor schoolmaster Orbilius, that in his old age he lived "under the tiles.")
- [271] REMEMBER THAT IN ROME EVERY STONE HAS EYES AND EARS. See Tacit. *Ann.*, XI, 27, where Rome is called a "city that hears everything, and keeps silence about nothing." Seneca too (*De tranq. an.* XII) is scandalized at the eaves-dropping which is common in Rome. Juvenal says an aristocratic Roman can have no secrets at all, for: "*Servi ut taceant, jumenta loquentur, et canis et postes et marmora.*" "Even if the slaves are discreet, the horses talk, and the house-dog, and the posts and marble walls. Close the windows and cover every chink with hangings, yet the next day the people in every tavern will be discussing the master's doings." (Juv. *Sat.* IX, 102-109.)
- [272] OUR PURSUERS ARE ON OUR TRACES ALREADY. There were persons in Rome, who made a business of catching runaway slaves.
- [273] GROUND SET APART FOR CRIMINALS AND OUTCASTS. The usual mode of conducting a funeral under the emperors was to burn the corpse on a pyre (*rogus*); the original custom of interment had become more rare. Slaves and criminals were buried on the Esquiline Hill.
- [274] THE VIA MONETA led from the Flavian amphitheatre to the Porta Querquetulana.

- [275] THE WAY OF STEPHANUS. See (Suet *Dom.* 17,) where it is related of Stephanus, that he was accused of embezzling money. That such incredible forgeries of wills really occurred, is frequently explicitly stated by the ancient authors. Pliny (*Ep.* II, 11,) gives an amazing example of the insolence with which influential persons conducted their bribery.
- [276] THE VESTAL VIRGINS. It was believed, that the vestal virgins possessed the power of detaining runaway slaves, by certain spells, within the city limits.
- [277] FACTORIES AND PRISONS. Ergastulum was the name given to a kind of prison where slaves, who had been guilty of any fault were kept at specially hard labor. The arrangement, of these ergastula in many respects resembled our modern prisons.
- [278] THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS ANSWER TO IT. See the passages in the letter of Pliny, who as the Christians' foe, reports to the emperor: "This superstition has not only spread over the city, but through the villages and surrounding country." (Pliny, *Ep.* X, 98.)
- [279] NAZARENE GRACCHUS. Quintus here perceives, like Thrax Barbatus, in the carpenter's son of Nazareth a real representative of the people's rights, and therefore a companion of Tiberius and Caius Sempronius Gracchus, the two tribunes of the people (about the middle of the second century B.C.)
- [280] MONS JANICULUS. Now Monte Gianicolo, on the right bank of the Tiber.
- [281] STATUE OF VENUS. A statue of the Venus Genitrix (Generator, mother, so called as the ancestress of the race of Julius Caesar, who erected a temple to her under this name) has been found among the ruins of the imperial palace on the Palatine, also an Eros, swinging a jar.
- [282] MEDIOLANUM, now Milan.
- [283] THE WOES OF QUEEN DIDO, even at that time a famous episode in Virgil's Aeneid. That the sorrows of Dido were specially popular is shown in Juv. *Sat.* VI, 434, which runs:
- "Illa tamen gravior, quae, quum discumbere coepit,
Laudat Virgilium, periturae ignoscit Elissae..."*
- The question whether Dido did right in choosing death, seems to have been discussed by would-be beaux esprits, as in our own day, people argue about the comparative merits of Goethe and Schiller.
- [284] SIBYL. (Σίβυλλα, from Σιὸς βουλή literally "counsellor of God") the name given to the prophesying priestesses of Apollo. Their predictions were vague and mysterious.
- [285] NOT ONLY ARES THE SLAYER, BUT THE HUMBLE ANCHISES. Stephanus alludes to the love affair of Aphrodite, who according to the Hellenic myth, bestowed her favors not only on the gods, as the homicidal Ares, but also upon mortals. She showed her love for the young Trojan prince Anchises, as is well known, among the groves of Ida.
- [286] THE CRAFTINESS OF ULYSSES. Ulysses, Ulixes, (Odysseus,) the hero of the Homeric Odyssey, was considered in tradition, after Homer's day, as the type of craft and cunning, while Homer presents him in a more ideal light.
- [287] GREEK BLOOD FLOWS IN YOUR VEINS. Among the Romans, the Greeks had the reputation of resembling in character the Ulysses described after Homer's day. Next to the Orientals, they were the most hated of all the dwellers in the provinces.
- [288] I WILL CLIMB THE CAPITOL LIKE THE INVADING GAULS. The (unsuccessful) attempt to take the beleaguered Capitol by storm, made by the Gauls, as is well known, in the year 389 B.C. after they had defeated the Roman army at the little river Allia.
- [289] THETIS, daughter of Nereus, lived with her sisters, the Nereids, in the depths of the ocean. She personified the friendly character of the sea, as Poseidon did its destructive and terrible one.
- [290] YOU ARE THE KINDEST MASTER. The epithet "kind" (*dulcis*) is often used in this application to superiors and those in higher position. Thus Horace in the well-known first ode of the first book addresses Maecenas: *O et praesidium et dulce decus meum...*
- [291] THE CHAMBERLAINS ON DUTY. At the emperor's formal morning reception a large number of court officials was present, to maintain order, announce those who were awaiting admission and accompany them into the hall of audience. These persons were called *admissionales* (admitters) or people *ab admissione, ex officio admissionis* etc. (See Suet, *Vesp.* 14, etc.)
- [292] SATURNALIA. A name given to a festival held for several days in the latter part of the month of December, in honor of the old Italian god of the harvest, Saturnus. It resembled in some respects our Christmas festivities, in others the carnival gayeties. The Saturnalia commemorated the happy age of Saturnus. All work ceased. Our "Happy New Year!" or the cry: "Fool, let the fool out!" had their counterpart in the shouts echoing on all sides: "*Io saturnalia! Io bona saturnalia!*" People caroused, feasted and gambled; pleased each other with gifts and surprises. The slaves were admitted to table, in token, that under the rule of Saturnus there had been no distinction of rank; all sorts of jests and amusements were practised, and a certain liberty of word and deed everywhere prevailed.
- [293] MEAD (Mulsum, *scil.* vinum) prepared from cider and honey, a favorite drink, especially at the prandium.
- [294] HE SPOKE, AND THE DARK-BROWED KRONION NODDED ASSENT. In these words Lucilia quotes a well-known line of the Iliad (II. I. 528.)

How customary such quotations were—not only in Latin translations, but in the original language—appears in Pliny's letters, for instance, I, 24, where in two different passages lines from the Iliad are quoted, among them the one mentioned here, also in I, 18, (farther below in the same letter) I, 20, (several times;) IV, 28; V. 19; V, 96. Elsewhere in Pliny numerous Greek words and phrases are found in the Latin text (see *Ep.* I, 13, 19, 20; II, 2, 3, 12, 13, 14, 20; IV, 10; VI, 32, etc.) as in our own times a French, English, or Latin phrase occurs in a German letter. Every cultivated person understood Greek; nay, the preference for this language had become a fashionable mania, just as in the last century there was a craze for French in Germany. (See *Juv. Sat.*, VI, 185: *omnia Graece*. Everything is Greek!)

- [295] REED. A pen made from a reed, cut in the same manner as our goose quills, was often used for writing.
- [296] SPARTACUS. The terrible insurrection of the slaves under Spartacus failed only on account of the want of harmony among the rebels. This insurrection, 71 B.C. was conquered with the utmost difficulty. Spartacus, after a famous battle, fell with his ablest comrades.
- [297] DAUGHTER OF ARES. A name given to Rome in consequence of the well-known legend, that Romulus and Remus were sons of the war-god Mars and the vestal virgin Rhea Silvia. Quintus here uses the Hellenic name Ares, as the words Ῥώμη θυγάτηρ Ἄρεος which occur in the first verse of a celebrated ode by the Greek poetess Melinno (600 B.C.) flitted before his mind.
- [298] AGAINST CHRISTIANITY. Concerning the persecutions of the Christians under Domitian, see Dio Cass. XLVII, 16.
- [299] CAMPUS MARTIUS. The name given to the public pleasure grounds in the north-western part of Rome. Strabo describes them minutely. (V, 3.)
- [300] COLONNADE OF AGRIPPA. The most renowned object in the Campus Martius was the hundred-columned portico of Vipsanius Agrippa.
- [301] LAUREL GROVES. Within Agrippa's colonnade were laurel and plane-groves. (Mart. *Ep.* I, 108, etc.)
- [302] VIRGIL. The author of the Aeneid had always been one of the most popular writers. He was even studied in the schools, as Schiller is in Germany at the present day.
- [303] BATTLE OF THE FROGS AND MICE. (βατραχομυομαχία) The Battle of the Frogs, a parody upon the Iliad; falsely attributed to Homer, and probably composed by Pigres of Halicarnassus.
- [304] ROSTRA. The name of the orator's platform, adorned with a ship's beak (rostrum, the ship's beak) in the Forum Romanum.
- [305] INTENDS HIS DAUGHTER TO MARRY A CONSUL. Roman women married at a very early age, therefore in the nature of things, parents made the choice for the inexperienced girls. Thus Junius Mauricus requested the younger Pliny, to propose a husband for the daughter of his brother Junius Rusticus Arulenus. (See Book II, p. 55.) Pliny (*Ep.* I, 14) recommends his friend Minucius Acilianus, and in a quiet, business-like manner enumerates his excellent qualities, among which he does not forget to mention a considerable fortune. To be sure, the daughter's formal consent was necessary. The young girls of our story, by the way, out of respect for our modern ideas, are described as young girls at an age, when Romans were usually married women. For the ordinary marriageable age, see Friedländer's detailed description in the appendix to the first part of his "*Sittengeschichte*," where he gives a number of inscriptions taken from the tombs, where the age of the girl at the time of her marriage is either directly stated, or may be ascertained by deducting the years of marriage from those of life. Twelve of the wives mentioned, married before they were fourteen, four at fourteen, three at sixteen, one at nineteen, and one at twenty-five. We are, however, expressly told that marriages of girls under twelve were by no means rare.
- [306] VARUS. The famous victory of the Germans over Quintilius Varus occurred in the year 9, A.D.
- [307] PARTHIANS. A people who lived south of the Caspian sea. Their territory afterwards extended to the Euphrates. The Romans had numerous feuds with this nation.
- [308] CANTABRIAN BEAR. Cantabria, the mountainous region in the north of Spain, supplied most of the bears for the Roman wild-beast combats.
- [309] ANANKE (Ἀνάγκη) personifies, like the Latin Fatum, the idea, that in every event which happens, there is an unalterable necessity, to which not only human beings, but even the gods are subject.
- [310] BY THE FAMOUS MURAL PAINTINGS. See Mart. *Ep.* II, 14. Ill, 20, etc.
- [311] SEPTA. See Mart. *Ep.* II, 14; IX, 59.
- [312] THE CENTURIA. Even under the kings, the Romans were divided into five different classes, since the part taken by each individual in government affairs, especially concerning taxes and military service, depended on the amount of his property. Each of these classes consisted of a certain number of centurias, for instance, the first class contained eighty, the fifth thirty, etc. Centuria was the name originally given to a military division of 100 men, then to a certain number of citizens, from whose midst such a military organization could be formed. These centuries—in a civil sense—voted on public affairs in the *comita centuriata* (assembly of the centuries) each century having one vote.

[313] GAY BOOTHS. See Mart, *Ep.* IX, 59, v. I:

“Mamurra many hours does vagrant tell,
I’ th’ shops, where Rome her richest ware does sell.”

The same epigram describes the goods to be purchased in these booths; slaves, table-covers, ivory for table legs, semicircular dinner-couches (called *Sigma* from their shape resembling the old Greek C) Corinthian brass (a mixture of gold, silver, and copper, very popular in those days) crystal goblets, *vasa murrhina*, chased silver dishes, gems, jewels, etc., etc.

[314] WRESTLING OR THROWING THE DISCUS. Physical exercises of all kinds were highly esteemed by the Romans. Racing, wrestling, and throwing the discus (a flat, circular piece of stone or iron) were specially popular. See Hor. *Od.* I. 8 (*saepe disco, saepe trans finem jaculo nobilis expedito*) where the exercises in the Campus Martius are mentioned.

[315] MASTHLION’S SKILL. See Mart *Ep.* V, 12:

“That the haughty Masthlion now,
Wields such weights on perched brow.”

[316] NINUS’S STRENGTH. See Mart *Ep.* V, 12:

“Or that Ninus finds his praise,
With each hand eight boys to raise.”

Giants, as well as dwarfs, and monstrosities of every kind were extremely popular in Rome. They were even frequently kept in aristocratic families as slaves and jesters. See Mart *Ep.* VII, 38, where a gigantic slave of Severus is mentioned. According to Plutarch, Rome had a special market for monsters (ἡ τῶν τεράτων ἀγορά) where persons crippled in all kinds of ways were offered for sale. As the business was lucrative, certain deformities were artificially produced.

[317] TABLETS ON THEIR KNEES. See Hor. *Epist. ad Pis.*, 19, etc.

[318] MANNIE. Such ponies are mentioned by Lucr., Hor., Prop., and Sen. They were distinguished for speed. The word is of Celtic origin.

[319] THIS WILD HORSE OF THE SUN. Herodianus alludes to the steeds of Helios and the fate of Phaethon, who obtained his father’s permission to guide the chariot of the Sun one day in his stead, but had so little control over the unruly steeds, that to save the earth from burning, Zeus was compelled to slay him with a thunderbolt and hurl him from the chariot into the river Eridanus.

[320] BURRHUS, THE SON OF PARTHENIUS. See Mart. *Ep.*, IV, 45; V, 6.

[321] WOLF’S-TOOTH BIT (*lupata frena*) a curb furnished with iron points shaped like a wolf’s tooth, used for hard-mouthed horses. See Hor. *Od.* I, 8, 6; *Nec lupatis temperat ora frenis...*

[322] SORACTE. A mountain north of Rome. See Varro R.R. II, 3, 3; Virg. *Aen.* VI, 696, Hor. *Od.* I, 9 (*alta nive candidum.*)

[323] GALLIA LUGDUNENSIS. Lugdunian Gaul (*Gallia Lugdunensis*, so called from the principal city Lugdunum, now Lyons) extended from the Seine (*Sequana*) to the Garonne (*Garumna*) and westward to the Atlantic Ocean. On the south, it was separated from the Mediterranean by Narbonensian Gaul.

[324] BEQUEATHED TO HIM A SMALL LEGACY. Legacies bequeathed by childless persons to those not connected by ties of blood, played a very important part in the society under the emperors. Legacy-hunting thrived greatly in consequence of its frequent occurrence.

[325] IN THE MIDST OF A VERY HUMBLE QUARTER. The right bank of the Tiber, in the (14) district, which bore the name “*Trans Tiberim*,” was inhabited exclusively by tradesfolk, sailors, etc.

[326] TITUS. The brother and predecessor of Domitian.

[327] THE FLAVII had come into possession of the government with Vespasian, the father of Titus and Domitian. The latter’s full name was: Titus Flavius Domitianus Augustus.

[328] JUNIUS RUSTICUS. See Suet. *Dom.* 10; Dio Cass. LXVII. 13.

[329] CAEPIO. Suet. *Dom.* 9, mentions a man of this name.

[330] CAESAR WAS TO INHERIT HIS FORTUNE. See Suet. *Dom.* 12: “Estates to which the emperor had no claim were seized, if only some one could be found to declare he had heard the dead man, during his life-time, say that the Caesar was to inherit his property.”

[331] THE DAUGHTERS OF OUR NOBLEST FAMILIES ARE STOLEN. That this was really to be expected, is proved by the incredible description Dio Cassius gives us of Nero’s conduct, (LXII, 15.)

[332] THE SUSPICIOUS TYRANT WHO HAS THE WALLS OF HIS SLEEPING-ROOM LINED WITH MIRRORS. See Suet, *Dom.* 14.

[333] THERE ARE TROOPS ENOUGH IN GALLIA LUGDUNENSIS. True, nothing is expressly stated concerning this fact in the reign of Domitian; but as it was the case under Nero, this extremely probable opposition certainly scarcely involves a license. The liberty I take in the treatment of the conspiracy itself, is much greater. Strictly speaking, it was only a revolution in the palace. Considerations more important to the novelist than strict historical accuracy, compel me here to deviate from the accounts of Suetonius and Dio Cassius.

- [334] RODUMNA on the Liger, (now the Loire). Called at the present day Roanne.
- [335] ISLANDS OF PONTIA. Now Isole di Ponza, opposite the Gulf of Gaeta.
- [336] MESSANA. Now Messina.
- [337] ARICIA. Now Ariccia.
- [338] LANUVIUM. Now Civita Lavigna.
- [339] AT THE FOOT OF THE AVENTINE was a slip arranged by the aediles M. Aemilius Lepidus and L. Aemilius Paulus in the year 193 B.C. Ships still lie at anchor there at the present day.
- [340] LONG-HAIRED WOOLLEN CLOAKS. The *paenulae*, the travelling and winter garments made of rough woollen material or leather. The *lacerna* differed from the *paenula* in being an open garment like the Greek pallium, and fastened on the right shoulder by means of a buckle (*fibula*), whereas the *paenula* was what is called a *vestimentum clausam* with an opening for the head. (Mart. XIV, 132, 133.) See Becker's *Gallus*, vol. II, p. 95, etc.
- [341] IMPLUVIUM. The cistern, in the floor of the atrium, intended to receive rain-water.
- [342] A BRAZIER FULL OF BURNING CHARCOAL. In ancient Rome, heat was usually supplied by means of movable stoves and iron braziers. Chimneys were also known.
- [343] FEAST OF SATURN. The so-called Saturnalia. See note, 292, Vol. I.
- [344] WHEN I STRUCK ALLOBROGUS IN THE FACE. This, according to Roman views, was a mild punishment for such an offence. It sometimes happened in such cases, that slaves were instantly condemned by their angry masters "to the *muraenae*," that is, to be thrown into the fish-ponds for food for the *muraenae*.
- [345] PONS MILVIUS. Now Ponte Molle.
- [346] THE CAELIAN HILL. (*Mons Caelius*) south and south-east of the Coliseum.
- [347] THE VIA LATINA branched off to the left, on entering the Via Appia, from the north.
- [348] TOMB OF THE SCIPIOS. Portions of this tomb, (discovered in the Vigna Sassi in the year 1780,) still exist at the present day. Here lay buried: among others: L. Cornelius Scipio Barbatus, Consul 298 B.C.; his son. Consul 259 B.C., the poet Ennius etc. The tomb was originally above the ground.
- [349] ARCH OF DRUSUS. This monument, still extant, was erected in 8 B.C. to Claudius DRUSUS Germanicus.
- [350] THE TOMBS THAT STOOD BY THE ROAD-SIDE. Abundant traces of these tombs on the Via Appia still exist.
- [351] ALMO. The little river still bears this name; it rises at Bovillae; mentioned by Ovid. (*Fast.* IV, 337-340.)
- [352] WE SWEAR TO EACH OTHER BY THE MEMORY OF THE CRUCIFIED. See Plin. *Ep.* X, 97, where in a report about the deeds of the Christians, he says: "But they assert that their guilt or error consisted in meeting before dawn on a certain day, singing hymns in honor of Christ as a god, and binding themselves by a vow, not to commit a crime, but to neither steal, commit adultery, break their promise, nor deny the possession of accumulated property; after which they usually dispersed, only meeting again at an innocent meal, shared by all without distinction of persons."
- [353] THE CLAUDIAN AQUEDUCT (*Aqua Claudia*.) Built by the Emperor Claudius 50 A.D. was twelve miles and a half long, and reached to Sublaqueum, (now Subiaco.)
- [354] AQUA MARCIA. Built 146 B.C. by the Praetor Q. Marcius Rex, was twelve miles long, and extended to the Sabine Hills. Its water was considered the best in all Rome. Ruins of it, as well as of the Aqua Claudia, exist at the present day.
- [355] THE LABICANIAN WAY. (*Via Labicana*) led through Toleria, Ferentinum, Frusino and Fregellae to Teanum (north of Capua) where it entered the Via Appia.
- [356] THE VIA PRAENESTINA was a road for local intercourse. Just beyond Praeneste (now Palestrina,) it entered (at Toleria) the Via Labicana.
- [357] XYSTUS (Συστός—Hall) the name of the luxuriously-adorned garden back of the peristyle. See Cic. *Acad.* II, 13.
- [358] VELEDA. (Vělēda or Vělēda) a German prophetess belonging to the Bructerian people, took part in the war against Rome under Civilis (A.D. 69) and afterwards roused her countrymen to another insurrection, but was captured and dragged to Rome. See Tac. *Hist.* IV, 61, 65; V, 23, 24, and Tac. *Germ.* 8.
- [359] THE GROVE OF NERTHUS. Nerthus, an ancient German divinity, the personification of mother earth, specially revered in the north of Germany. Her principal grove was at Rügen.
- [360] A SLAVE HAD JUST ANNOUNCED, THAT IT WAS TWO HOURS AFTER SUNRISE. In aristocratic families the hours of the day were announced by a slave, kept specially for this purpose.
- [361] BERENICE'S HAIR. A constellation, so called from the glittering hair of Berenice, daughter of Magas of Cyrene. See Cat. 66.
- [362] THE SENATORIAL PURPLE. From ancient times the privilege of wearing a broad purple stripe upon the edge of the toga was one of the distinctions of the Roman senators. The second class (*equites*) among other prerogatives, possessed the right to wear a gold ring on the finger. But at a very early period abuse of this privilege crept in, until members of the third class, nay, even freedmen, presumed to assume this badge of honor. The severest

punishments, such as confiscation of property, etc., could not prevent the misdemeanor. At the time of my story, the gold ring was actually as common as the use of the "von" in addressing simple citizens in Austria at the present day. See Mart. *Ep.* XI, 37, where the freedman Zoilus ventures to don a huge gold ring. The ring worn by Caius Aurelius—though legitimately his—must therefore have seemed all the more contemptible, in comparison with the senatorial purple. By the way, it may be said, that in the time of Tiberius the use of the purple was also abused. See Dio Cass. LVII, 13.

- [363] THE BONA DEA. A somewhat mystical divinity, allied with the Ops, the Fauna, and the Hellenic Demeter. Her temple stood on the northeastern slope of the Aventine Hill.
- [364] THE DELPHIAN WAY, (*Clivus Delphini*), led from the Circus Maximus to the Porta Raudusculana.
- [365] CLEAR A WAY THROUGH THE MASS OF PEOPLE. When people of distinction went out, this making a way through the crowd was often done with much ostentation, but it was always the duty of a few slaves to walk before their masters, and thus smooth the way for them.
- [366] KNIGHT'S PORTION. 400,000 sesterces.
- [367] A LARGE FOUR-WHEELED CHARIOT. Allusion is here made to the *rheda* (the travelling-coach) or the *carruca* (a comfortable, nay, magnificent equipage).
- [368] CISIUM. Such two-wheeled cabriolets were principally used when the greatest speed was desired. (See Cic., *Rosc.*: *cisiis pervolavit*)
- [369] LOADED WITH PROVISIONS. Aristocratic Romans, even on short journeys, carried a large quantity of baggage, principally table furniture and provisions, for the taverns so often mentioned were intended exclusively for the lower classes.
- [370] FICANA..A small town half-way between Ostia and Rome.
- [371] THESSALIAN HAT. This was worn principally in travelling. Thessalia was the name given to the eastern part of northern Greece.
- [372] UTICA. A city on the coast of the province of Africa, north of Tunis.
- [373] NICOPOLIS. A city of Epirus, at the entrance of the Ambracian Gulf, opposite Actium.
- [374] PANDATARIA. An island in the Tyrrhenian sea, opposite to the Gulf of Gaeta.
- [375] SINUESSA. A city on the Gulf of Gaeta.
- [376] THE WATER-CLOCK (*clepsydra*) served as a measure of time, especially in affairs connected with the administration of justice. A water-clock usually ran about twenty minutes.
- [377] PEONILLA, the wife of Julius Sabinus, who had incited an unsuccessful insurrection in Gaul, lived for nine years with her husband in a subterranean cave, always hoping the emperor would pardon the hunted man. But Vespasian was inexorable, and when Julius Sabinus was discovered, condemned not only him, but his faithful wife, to death. See Dio Cass. LXIV, 16. In Tacitus (*Hist.* IV, 67) she is called Epponina, in Plutarch (*Dial. de amicis*, 25,) Empona.
- [378] THULE (Θούλη) an island in the German ocean, was the moat extreme northern point of the earth known in those days. See Tac. *Agr.* X., Virg. *Geog.* I. 30. It is supposed to be what is now called Iceland, or a part of Norway.
- [379] A CARGO OF BEASTS FOR THE CENTENNIAL GAMES. A catalogue of animals, dating from the time of Gordian III, (238 to 244 A.D.) mentions thirty-two elephants, ten tigers, sixty tame lions, three hundred tame leopards—but only one rhinoceros.
- [380] LIVE HARES. See Mart. *Ep.* I, 6, ("the captured hare returning often in safety from the kindly tooth") 14 ("and running at large through the open jaws,") 22, 104.
- [381] GREAT PAN HIMSELF MUST BLESS THEM. Pan, son of Hermes and a daughter of Dryops, or of Zeus and the Arcadian nymph Callisto, etc., etc., is a divinity of the fields and forests. Cneius Afranius here uses the adjective "great" in the sense of "powerful," "influential,"—corresponding with the hyperbolic tone of the rest of his speech. The totally different expression, "the great Pan," in the sense of a symbolical appellation of the universe, originates in a verbal error, according to which the word Pan is derived from the Greek πᾶς "all" "the whole" while it really comes from πάω (I graze.)
- [382] MY SWEET EROTION. A child of this name, who died in early youth, is mentioned by Martial, *Ep.* V, 34, 37, and X, 61.

Ep. V, 34.

"Ye parents Fronto and Flaccilla here,
To you do I commend my girl, my dear,
Lest pale Erotion tremble at the shades,
And the foul Dog of Hell's prodigious heads.
Her age fulfilling just six winters was,
Had she but known so many days to pass.
'Mongst you, old patrons, may she sport and play,
And with her lisping tongue my name oft say.
May the smooth turf her soft bones hide, and be
O earth, as light to her, as she to thee!"

FLETCHER.

Ep. X, 61.

“Underneath this greedy stone
Lies little sweet Erotion;
Whom the Fates, with hearts as cold,
Nipp’d away at six years old.
Thou, whoever thou mayst be,
That hast this small field after me,
Let the yearly rites be paid
To her little slender shade;
So shall no disease or jar,
Hurt thy house, or chill thy Lar;
But this tomb be here alone
The only melancholy stone.”

LEIGH HUNT.

- [383] PHILOSOPHER OF SINOPE. The well-known Cynic philosopher Diogenes, born at Sinope on the Black Sea, 404. B.C.
- [384] FAUN (from *faveo*—to be favorable). A god of the fields and woods, akin to the Greek woodland deity, Pan.
- [385] DRYAD. The embodied life-principle of the tree, a tree-nymph.
- [386] PANNONIAN LYNX. Pannonia, now Hungary. Lynxes were also imported from Gaul.
- [387] WHERE YOU, CAIUS, ARE, THERE WILL I, CAIA, BE. An ancient formula, in which the bride vowed faith and obedience to the bridegroom.
- [388] ZEUXIS of Heracleia in Greece, a famous artist, who lived about 397 B.C. His contest with Parrhasius, in which he painted grapes so deceptive, that they lured the birds, is well known.
- [389] PERIPATETICS (wanderers.) A name given to Aristotles’ school of philosophers, from its founder’s habit of delivering his lectures, not seated, but walking about.
- [390] CABBAGE SPROUTS. In the spring the young cabbage shoots (*cimae, prototomi*) were eaten, in the summer and autumn the larger stalks (*caules cauliculi*) see Mart. *Ep.* V. 78.
- [391] CYBIUM (κύβιον). A sort of mayonnaise made of salt tunny-fish, cut into squares. See Mart. *Ep.* V. 78, where the sliced eggs are not lacking. There were two kinds of leek (porrum:) *porrum sectile* (chives) and *porrum capitatum*.

END OF VOL. I

Transcriber's Notes

The following table summarizes the various textual issues encountered, and their resolution. A number of punctuation errors and inconsistencies have been corrected. Where the errors seem most likely to be attributable to printer's errors, they have been corrected as noted below.

The name “Friedlander”, mentioned as a source a number of times in the notes, is variously spelled “Friedlander”, “Friedländer”, and “Friedlaender”.

p. 7	the commencement of this story[./.]	Corrected.
p. 43	in the wall.["]	Removed.
p. 61 n. 115	amounted to 60[./.]000,000 bushels	Corrected.
p. 75	min[i]ature	Added.
p. 97	in Caesar's name[?/.]	Corrected.
p. 98	glanced at her significantly[.]	Added.
p. 114	dissipation....["]	Added.
p. 129	["']and I honor and admire it.	Corrected.
p. 170 n. 265	the most corrupt in all Rome[./.]	Corrected.
p. 171	pantomi[n/m]e	Corrected.
p. 183 n. 278	(Pliny, <i>Ep.</i> X, 98.[.])	Added.
p. 188	po[in/ni]ard	Transposed.
p. 211 n. 295	was often used for writing[./.]	Corrected.
	my dear Quintus,["] he said	Added.
p. 214	interrupted his father, ["]and I do	Added.
p. 225	["]If it is ever in my power	Added.
p. 246 n. 341	to receive rain-water[./.]	Corrected.
p. 265	It i[t/s] all the same	Corrected.
p. 275	["]Chloe," she said at last,	Added.
	"Chloe raised her round head	Removed.
p. 280	to the present day[./.]	Corrected.
p. 282	discovery was inevitable.[.]	Removed.
p. 296 n. 378	See Tac. <i>_Agr._</i> X., Virg. <i>_Geog._</i> l. 30.[.])	Removed.

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