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THE BRIDE OF THE NILE

By Georg Ebers

Volume 5.

CHAPTER XVII.

During all these hours Orion had been in the solitude of his own rooms. Next to them was little Mary's sleeping-room; he had not seen the child again since leaving his father's death-bed. He knew that she was lying there in a very feverish state, but he could not so far command himself as to enquire for her. When, now and again, he could not help thinking of her, he involuntarily clenched his fists. His soul was shaken to the foundations; desperate, beside himself, incapable of any thought but that he was the most miserable man on earth—that his father's curse had blighted him—that nothing could undo what had happened—that some cruel and inexorable power had turned his truest friend into a foe and had sundered them so completely that there was no possibility of atonement or of moving him to a word of pardon or a kindly glance—he paced the long room from end to end, flinging himself on his knees at intervals before the divan, and burying his burning face in the soft pillows. From time to time he could pray, but each time he broke off; for what Power in Heaven or on earth could unseal those closed eyes and stir that heart to beat again, that tongue to speak—could vouchsafe to him, the outcast, the one thing for which his soul thirsted and without which he thought he must die: Pardon, pardon, his father's pardon! Now and then he struck his forehead and heart like a man demented, with cries of anguish, curses and lamentations.

About midnight—it was but just twelve hours since that fearful scene, and to him it seemed like as many days—he threw himself on the couch, dressed as he was in the dark mourning garments, which he had half torn off in his rage and despair, and broke out into such loud groans that he himself was almost frightened in the silence of the night. Full of self-pity and horror at his own deep grief, he turned his face to the wall to screen his eyes from the clear, full moon, which only showed him things he did not want to see, while it hurt him.

His torture was beginning to be quite unbearable; he fancied his soul was actually wounded, riven, and torn; it had even occurred to him to seize his sharpest sword and throw himself upon it like Ajax in his fury—and like Cato—and so put a sudden end to this intolerable and overwhelming misery.

He started up for—surely it was no illusion, no mistake—the door of his room was softly opened and a white figure came in with noiseless, ghostly steps. He was a brave man, but his blood ran cold; however, in a moment he recognized his nocturnal visitor as little Mary. She came across the moonlight without speaking, but he exclaimed in a sharp tone:

"What is the meaning of this? What do you want?"

The child started and stood still in alarm, stretching out imploring hands and whispering timidly:

"I heard you lamenting. Poor, poor Orion! And it was I who brought it all on you, and so I could not stay in bed any longer—I must—I could not help...." But she could say no more for sobs. Orion exclaimed:

"Very well, very well: go back to your own room and sleep. I will try not to groan so loud."

He ended his speech in a less rough tone, for he observed that the child had come to see him, though she was ill, with bare feet and only in her night-shift, and was trembling with cold, excitement, and grief. Mary, however, stood still, shook her head, and replied, still weeping though less violently:

"No, no. I shall stop here and not go away till you tell me that you—
Oh, God, you never can forgive me, but still I must say it, I must."

With a sudden impulse she ran straight up to him, threw her arms round his neck, laid her head against his, and then, as he did not immediately push her away, kissed his cheeks and brow.

At this a strange feeling came over him; he himself did not know what it was, but it was as though something within him yielded and gave way, and the moisture which felt warm in his eyes and on his cheeks was not from the child's tears but his own. This lasted through many minutes of silence; but at last he took the little one's arms from about his neck, saying:

"How hot your hands and your cheeks are, poor thing! You are feverish, and the night air blows in chill—you will catch fresh cold by this mad behavior."

He had controlled his tears with difficulty, and as he spoke, in broken accents, he carefully wrapped her in the black robe he had thrown off and said kindly:

"Now, be calm, and I will try to compose myself. You did not mean any harm, and I owe you no grudge. Now go; you will not feel the draught in the anteroom with that wrap on. Go; be quick."

"No, no," she eagerly replied. "You must let me say what I have to say or I cannot sleep. You see I never thought of hurting you so dreadfully, so horribly—never, never! I was angry with you, to be sure, because—but when I spoke I really and truly did not think of you, but only of poor Paula. You do not know how good she is, and grandfather was so fond of her before you came home; and he was lying there and going to die so soon, and I knew that he believed Paula to be a thief and a liar, and it seemed to me so horrible, so unbearable to see him close his eyes with such a mistake in his mind, such an injustice!—Not for his sake, oh no! but for Paula's; so then I—Oh Orion! the Merciful Saviour is my witness, I could not help it; if I had had to die for it I could not have helped it! I should have died, if I had not spoken!"

"And perhaps it was well that you spoke," interrupted the young man, with a deep sigh. "You see, child, your lost father's miserable brother is a ruined man and it matters little about him; but Paula, who is a thousand times better than I am, has at least had justice done her; and as I love her far more dearly than your little heart can conceive of, I will gladly be friends with you again: nay, I shall be more fond of you than ever. That is nothing great or noble, for I need love—much love to make life tolerable. The best love a man may have I have forfeited, fool that I am! and now dear, good little soul, I could not bear to lose yours! So there is my hand upon it; now, give me another kiss and then go to bed and sleep."

But still Mary would not do his bidding, but only thanked him vehemently and then asked with sparkling eyes:

"Really, truly? Do you love Paula so dearly?" At this point however she suddenly checked herself. "And little Katharina. . ."

"Never mind about that," he replied with a sigh. "And learn a lesson from all this. I, you see, in an hour of recklessness did a wrong thing; to hide it I had to do further wrong, till it grew to a mountain which fell on me and crushed me. Now, I am the most miserable of men and I might perhaps have been the happiest. I have spoilt my own life by my own folly, weakness, and guilt; and I have lost Paula, who is dearer to me than all the other creatures on earth put together. Yes, Mary, if she had been mine, your poor uncle would have been the most enviable fellow in the world, and he might have been a fine fellow, too, a man of great achievements. But as it is!—Well, what is done cannot be undone! Now go to bed child; you cannot understand it all till you are older."

"Oh I understand it already and much better perhaps than you suppose," cried the ten years' old child. "And if you love Paula so much why should not she love you? You are so handsome, you can do so many things, every one likes you, and Paula would have loved you, too, if only ... Will you promise not to be angry with me, and may I say it?"

"Speak out, little simpleton."

"She cannot owe you any grudge when she knows how dreadfully you are suffering on her account and that you are good at heart, and only that once ever did—you know what. Before you came home, grandfather said a hundred times over what a joy you had been to him all your life through, and now, now... Well, you are my uncle, and I am only a stupid little girl; still, I know that it will be just the same with you as it was with the prodigal son in the Bible. You and grandfather parted in anger...."

"He cursed me," Orion put in gloomily.

"No, no! For I heard every word he said. He only spoke of your evil deed in those dreadful words and bid you go out of his sight."

"And what is the difference—Cursed or outcast?"

"Oh! a very great difference! He had good reason to be angry with you; but the prodigal son in the Bible became his father's best beloved, and he had the fatted calf slain for him and forgave him all; and so will grandfather in heaven forgive, if you are good again, as you used to be to him and to all of us. Paula will forgive you, too; I know her—you will see. Katharina loved you of course; but she, dear Heaven! She is almost as much a child as I am; and if only you are kind to her and make her some pretty present she will soon be comforted. She really deserves to be punished for bearing false witness, and her punishment cannot, at any rate, be so heavy as yours."

These words from the lips of an innocent child could not but fall like seed corn on the harrowed field of the young man's tortured soul and refresh it as with morning dew. Long after Mary had gone to rest he lay thinking them over.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The funeral rites over the body of the deceased Mukaukas were performed on the day after the morrow. Since the priesthood had forbidden the old heathen practice of mummifying the dead, and even cremation had been forbidden by the Antonines, the dead had to be interred soon after decease; only those of high rank were hastily embalmed and lay in state in some church or chapel to which they had contributed an endowment. Mukaukas George was, by his own desire, to be conveyed to Alexandria and there buried in the church of St. John by his father's side; but the carrier pigeon, by which the news of the governor's death had been sent to the Patriarch, had returned with instructions to deposit the body in the family tomb at Memphis, as there were difficulties in the way of the fulfillment of his wishes.

Such a funeral procession had not been seen there within the memory of man. Even the Moslem viceroy, the great general Amru, came over from the other side of the Nile, with his chief military and civil officers, to pay the last honors to the just and revered governor. Their brown, sinewy figures, and

handsome calm faces, their golden helmets and shirts of mail, set with precious stones—trophies of the war of destruction in Persia and Syria—their magnificent horses with splendid trappings, and the authoritative dignity of their bearing made a great impression on the crowd. They arrived with slow and impressive solemnity; they returned like a cloud driven before the storm, galloping homewards from the burial-ground along the quay, and then thundering and clattering over the bridge of boats. Vivid and dazzling lightnings had flashed through the wreaths of white dust that shrouded them, as their gold armor reflected the sun. Verily, these horsemen, each of them worthy to be a prince in his pride, could find it no very hard task to subdue the mightiest realms on earth.

Men and women alike had gazed at them with trembling admiration: most of all at the heroic stature and noble dusky face of Amru, and at the son of the deceased Mukaukas, who, by the Moslem's desire, rode at his side in mourning garb on a fiery black horse.

The handsome youth, and the lordly, powerful man were a pair from whom the women were loth to turn their eyes; for both alike were of noble demeanor, both of splendid stature, both equally skilled in controlling the impatience of their steeds, both born to command. Many a Memphite was more deeply impressed by the head of the famous warrior, erect on a long and massive throat, with its sharply-chiselled aquiline nose and flashing black eyes, than by the more regular features and fine, slightly-waving locks of the governor's son—the last representative of the oldest and proudest race in all Egypt.

The Arab looked straight before him with a steady, commanding gaze; the youth, too, looked up and forwards, but turned from time to time to survey the crowd of mourners. As he caught sight of Paula, among the group of women who had joined the procession, a gleam of joy passed over his pale face, and a faint flush tinged his cheeks; his fixed outlook had knit his brows and had given his features an expression of such ominous sternness that one and another of the bystanders whispered:

"Our gay and affable young lord will make a severe ruler."

The cause of his indignation had not escaped the notice either of his noble companion or of the crowd. He alone knew as yet that the Patriarch had prohibited the removal of his father's remains to Alexandria; but every one could see that the larger portion of the priesthood of Memphis were absent from this unprecedented following. The Bishop alone marched in front of the six horses drawing the catafalque on which the costly sarcophagus was conveyed to the burying-place, in accordance with ancient custom:—Bishop Plotinus, with John, a learned and courageous priest, and a few choristers bearing a crucifix and chanting psalms.

On arriving at the Necropolis they all dismounted, and the barefooted runners in attendance on the Arabs came forward to hold the horses. By the tomb the Bishop pronounced a few warm words of eulogy, after which the thin chant of the choristers sounded trivial and meagre enough; but scarcely had they ceased when the crowd uplifted its many thousand voices, and a hymn of mourning rang out so loud and grand that this burial ground had scarcely ever heard the like. The remaining ceremonies were hasty and incomplete, since the priests who were indispensable to their performance had not made their appearance.

Amru, whose falcon eye nothing could escape, at once noted the omission and exclaimed, in so loud and inconsiderate a voice that it could be heard even at some distance.

"The dead is made to atone for what the living, in his wisdom, did for his country's good, hand-in-hand with us Moslems."

"By the Patriarch's orders," replied Orion, and his voice quavered, while the veins in his forehead swelled with rage. "But I swear, by my father's soul, that as surely as there is a just God, it shall be an evil day for Benjamin when he closes the gate of Heaven against this noblest of noble souls."

"We carry the key of ours under our own belt," replied the general, striking his deep chest, while he smiled consciously and with a kindly eye on the young man. "Come and see me on Saturday, my young friend; I have something to say to you! I shall expect you at sundown at my house over there. If I am not at home by dusk, you must wait for me."

As he spoke he twisted his hand in his horse's mane and Orion prepared to assist him to mount; but the Arab, though a man of fifty, was too quick for him. He flung himself into the saddle as lightly as a youth, and gave his followers the signal for departure.

Paula had been standing close to the entrance of the tomb with Dame Neforis, and she had heard every word of the dialogue between the two men. Pale, as she beheld him, in costly but simple, flowing, mourning robes, stricken by solemn and manly indignation, it was impossible that she should not confess that the events of the last days had had a powerful effect on the misguided youth.

When Paula had led the grief-worn but tearless widow to her chariot, and had then returned home with Perpetua, the image of the handsome and wrathful youth as he lifted his powerful arm and tightly-clenched fist and shook them in the air, still constantly haunted her. She had not failed to observe that he had seen her standing opposite to him by the open tomb and she had been able to avoid meeting his eye; but her heart had throbbed so violently that she still felt it quivering, she had not succeeded in thinking of the beloved dead with due devotion.

Orion, as yet, had neither come near her in her peaceful retreat, nor sent any messenger to deliver her belongings, and this she thought very natural; for she needed no one to tell her how many claims there must be on his time.

But though, before the funeral, she had firmly resolved to refuse to see him if he came, and had given her nurse full powers to receive from his hand the whole of her property, after the ceremony this line of conduct no longer struck her as seemly; indeed, she considered it no more than her duty to the departed not to repel Orion if he should crave her forgiveness.

And there was another thing which she owed to her uncle. She desired to be the first to point out to Orion, from Philip's point of view, that life was a post, a duty; and then, if his heart seemed opened to this admonition, then—but no, this must be all that could pass between them—then all must be at an end, extinct, dead, like the fires in a sunken raft, like a soap-bubble that the wind has burst, like an echo that has died away—all over and utterly gone.

And as to the counsel she thought of offering to the man she had once looked up to? What right had she to give it? Did he not look like a man quite capable of planning and living his own life in his own strength? Her heart thirsted for him, every fibre of her being yearned to see him again, to hear his voice, and it was this longing, this craving to which she gave the name of duty, connecting it with the gratitude she owed to the dead.

She was so much absorbed in these reflections and doubts that she scarcely heard all the garrulous old nurse was saying as she walked by her side.

Perpetua could not be easy over such a funeral ceremony as this; so different to anything that Memphis had been wont to see. No priests, a procession on horseback, mourners riding, and among them the son even of the dead—while of old the survivors had always followed the body on foot, as was everywhere the custom! And then a mere chirping of crickets at the tomb of such illustrious dead, followed by the disorderly squalling of an immense mob—it had nearly cracked her ears! However, the citizens might be forgiven for that, since it was all in honor of their departed governor!—this thought touched even her resolute heart and brought the tears to her eyes; but it roused her wrath, too, for had she not seen quite humble folk buried in a more solemn manner and with worthier ceremonial than the great and good Mukaukas George, who had made such a magnificent gift to the Church. Oh those Jacobites! They only were capable of such ingratitude, only their heretical prelate could commit such a crime. Every one in the Convent of St. Cecilia, from the abbess down to the youngest novice, knew that the Patriarch had sent word by a carrier pigeon forbidding the Bishop to allow the priests to take part in the ceremony. Plotinus was a worthy man, and he had been highly indignant at these instructions; it was not in his power to contravene them; but at any rate he had led the procession in person, and had not forbidden John's accompanying him. Orion, however, had not looked as though he meant to brook such an insult to his father or let it pass unpunished. And whose arm was long enough to reach the Patriarch's throne if not.... But no, it was impossible! the mere thought of such a thing made her blood run cold. Still, still... And how graciously the Moslem leader had talked with him!—Merciful Heaven! If he were to turn apostate from the holy Christian faith, like so many reprobate Egyptians, and subscribe to the wicked doctrines of the Arabian false prophet! It was a tempting creed for shameless men, allowing them to have half a dozen wives or more without regarding it as a sin. A man like Orion could afford to keep them, of course; for the abbess had said that every one knew that the great Mukaukas was a very rich man, though even the chief magistrate of the city could not fully satisfy himself concerning the enormous amount of property left. Well, well; God's ways were past finding out. Why should He smother one under heaps of gold, while He gave thousands of poor creatures too little to satisfy their hunger!

By the end of this torrent of words the two women had reached the house; and not till then was Paula clear in her own mind: Away, away with the passion which still strove for the mastery, whether it were in deed hatred or love! For she felt that she could not rightly enjoy her recovered freedom, her new and quiet happiness in the pretty home she owed to the physician's thoughtful care, till she had finally given up Orion and broken the last tie that had bound her to his house.

Could she desire anything more than what the present had to offer her? She had found a true haven of rest where she lacked for nothing that she could desire for herself after listening to the admonitions of Philip. Round her were good souls who felt with and for her, many occupations for which she

was well-fitted, and which suited her tastes, with ample opportunities of bestowing and winning love. Then, a few steps through pleasant shades took her to the convent where she could every day attend divine service among pious companions of her own creed, as she had done in her childhood. She had longed intensely for such food for the spirit, and the abbess—who was the widow of a distinguished patrician of Constantinople and had known Paula's parents—could supply it in abundance. How gladly she talked to the girl of the goodness and the beauty of those to whom she owed her being and whom she had so early lost! She could pour out to this motherly soul all that weighed on her own, and was received by her as a beloved daughter of her old age.

And her hosts—what kind-hearted though singular folks! nay, in their way, remarkable. She had never dreamed that there could be on earth any beings at once so odd and so lovable.

First there was old Rufinus, the head of the house, a vigorous, hale old man, who, with his long silky, snow-white hair and beard, looked something like the aged St. John and something like a warrior grown grey in service. What an amiable spirit of childlike meekness he had, in spite of the rough ways he sometimes fell into. Though inclined to be contradictory in his intercourse with his fellow-men, he was merry and jocose when his views were opposed to theirs. She had never met a more contented soul or a franker disposition, and she could well understand how much it must fret and gall such a man to live on,—day after day, appearing, in one respect at any rate, different from what he really was. For he, too, belonged to her confession; but, though he sent his wife and daughter to worship in the convent chapel, he himself was compelled to profess himself a Coptic Christian, and submit to the necessity of attending a Jacobite church with all his family on certain holy days, averse as he was to its unattractive form of worship.

Rufinus possessed a sufficient fortune to secure him a comfortable maintenance; and yet he was hard at work, in his own way, from morning till night. Not that his labors brought him any revenues; on the contrary, they led to claims on his resources; every one knew that he was a man of good means, and this would have certainly involved him in persecution if the Patriarch's spies had discovered him to be a Melchite, resulting in exile and probably the confiscation of his goods. Hence it was necessary to exercise caution, and if the old man could have found a purchaser for his house and garden, in a city where there were ten times as many houses empty as occupied, he would long since have set out with all his household to seek a new home.

Most aged people of vehement spirit and not too keen intellect, adopt a saying as a stop-gap or resting-place, and he was fond of using two phrases one of which ran: "As sure as man is the standard of all things" and the other—referring to his house—"As sure as I long to be quit of this lumber." But the lumber consisted of a well-built and very spacious dwellinghouse, with a garden which had commanded a high price in earlier times on account of its situation near the river. He himself had acquired it at very small cost shortly before the Arab incursion, and—so quickly do times change—he had actually bought it from a Jacobite Christian who had been forced by the Melchite Patriarch Cyrus, then in power, to fly in haste because he had found means to convert his orthodox slaves to his confession.

It was Philippus who had persuaded his accomplished and experienced friend to come to Memphis; he had clung to him faithfully, and they assisted each other in their works.

Rufinus' wife, a frail, ailing little woman, with a small face and rather hollow cheeks, who must once have been very attractive and engaging, might have passed for his daughter; she was, in fact, twenty years younger than her husband. It was evident that she had suffered much in the course of her life, but had taken it patiently and all for the best. Her restless husband had caused her the greatest trouble and alarms, and yet she exerted herself to the utmost to make his life pleasant. She had the art of keeping every obstacle and discomfort out of his way, and guessed with wonderful instinct what would help him, comfort him, and bring him joy. The physician declared that her stooping attitude, her bent head, and the enquiring expression of her bright, black eyes were the result of her constant efforts to discover even a straw that might bring harm to Rufinus if his callous and restless foot should tread on it.

Their daughter Pulcheria, was commonly called "Pul" for short, to save time, excepting when the old man spoke of her by preference as "the poor child." There was at all times something compassionate in his attitude towards his daughter; for he rarely looked at her without asking himself what could become of this beloved child when he, who was so much older, should have closed his eyes in death and his Joanna perhaps should soon have followed him; while Pulcheria, seeing her mother take such care of her father that nothing was left for her to do, regarded herself as the most superfluous creature on earth and would have been ready at any time to lay down her life for her parents, for the abbess, for her faith, for the leech; nay, and though she had known her for no more than two days, even for Paula. However, she was a very pretty, well-grown girl, with great open blue eyes and a dreamy expression,

and magnificent red-gold hair which could hardly be matched in all Egypt. Her father had long known of her desire to enter the convent as a novice and become a nursing sister; but though he had devoted his whole life to a similar impulse, he had more than once positively refused to accede to her wishes, for he must ere long be gathered to his fathers and then her mother, while she survived him, would want some one else to wear herself out for.

Just now "Pul" was longing less than usual to take the veil; for she had found in Paula a being before whom she felt small indeed, and to whom her unenvious soul, yearning and striving for the highest, could look up in satisfied and rapturous admiration. In addition to this, there were under her own roof two sufferers needing her care: Rustem, the wounded Masdakite, and the Persian girl. Neforis, who since the fearful hour of her husband's death had seemed stunned and indifferent to all the claims of daily life, living only in her memories of the departed, had been more than willing to leave to the physician the disposal of these two and their removal from her house.

In the evening after Paula's arrival Philippus had consulted with his friends as to the reception of these new guests, and the old man had interrupted him, as soon as he raised the question of pecuniary indemnification, exclaiming:

"They are all very welcome. If they have wounds, we will make them heal; if their heads are turned, we will screw them the right way round; if their souls are dark, we will light up a flame in them. If the fair Paula takes a fancy to us, she and her old woman may stay as long as it suits her and us. We made her welcome with all our hearts; but, on the other hand, you must understand that we must be free to bid her farewell—as free as she is to depart. It is impossible ever to know exactly how such grand folks will get on with humble ones, and as sure as I long to be quit of this piece of lumber I might one day take it into my head to leave it to the owls and jackals and fare forth, staff in hand.—You know me. As to indemnification—we understand each other. A full purse hangs behind the sick, and the sound one has ten times more than she needs, so they may pay. You must decide how much; only—for the women's sake, and I mean it seriously—be liberal. You know what I need Mammon for; and it would be well for Joanna if she had less need to turn over every silver piece before she spends it in the housekeeping. Besides, the lady herself will be more comfortable if she contributes to pay for the food and drink. It would ill beseem the daughter of Thomas to be down every evening under the roof of such birds of passage as we are with thanks for favors received. When each one pays his share we stand on a footing of give and take; and if either one feels any particular affection to another it is not strangled by 'thanks' or 'take it;' it is love for love's sake and a joy to both parties."

"Amen," said the leech; and Paula had been quite satisfied by her friend's arrangements.

By the next day she felt herself one of the household, though she every hour found something that could not fail to strike her as strange.

CHAPTER XIX.

When Paula had eaten with Rufinus and his family after the funeral ceremonies, she went into the garden with Pul and the old man—it had been impossible to induce Perpetua to sit at the same table with her mistress. The sun was now low, and its level beams gave added lustre to the colors of the flowers and to the sheen of the thick, metallic foliage of the south, which the drought and scorching heat had still spared. A bright-hued humped ox and an ass were turning the wheel which raised cooling waters from the Nile and poured them into a large tank from which they flowed through narrow rivulets to irrigate the beds. This toil was now very laborious, for the river had fallen to so low a level as to give cause for anxiety, even at this season of extreme ebb. Numbers of birds with ruffled feathers, with little splints on their legs, or with sadly drooping heads, were going to roost in small cages hung from the branches to protect them from cats and other beasts of prey; to each, as he went by, Rufinus spoke a kindly word, or chirruped to encourage and cheer it. Aromatic odors filled the garden, and rural silence; every object shone in golden glory, even the black back of the negro working at the water-wheel, and the white and yellow skin of the ox; while the clear voices of the choir of nuns thrilled through the convent-grove. Pul listened, turning her face to meet it, and crossing her arms over her heart. Her father pointed to her as he said to Paula:

"That is where her heart is. May she ever have her God before her eyes! That cannot but be the best thing for a woman. Still, among such as we are, we must hold to the rule: Every man for his fellowman on earth, in the name of the merciful Lord!—Can our wise and reasonable Father in Heaven desire that

brother should neglect brother, or—as in our case—a child forsake its parents?"

"Certainly not," replied Paula. "For my own part, nothing keeps me from taking the veil but my hope of finding my long-lost father; I, like your Pulcheria, have often longed for the peace of the cloister. How piously rapt your daughter stands there! What a sweet and touching sight!—In my heart all was dark and desolate; but here, among you all, it is already beginning to feel lighter, and here, if anywhere, I shall recover what I lost in my other home.—Happy child! Could you not fancy, as she stands there in the evening light, that the pure devotion which fills her soul, radiated from her? If I were not afraid of disturbing her, and if I were worthy, how gladly would I join my prayers to hers!"

"You have a part in them as it is," replied the old man with a smile. "At this moment St. Cecilia appears to her under the guise of your features. We will ask her—you will see."

"No, leave her alone!" entreated Paula with a blush, and she led Rufinus away to the other end of the garden.

They soon reached a spot where a high hedge of thorny shrubs parted the old man's plot from that of Susannah. Rufinus here pricked up his ears and then angrily exclaimed:

"As sure as I long to be quit of this lumber, they are cutting my hedge again! Only last evening I caught one of the slaves just as he was going to work on the branches; but how could I get at the black rascal through the thorns? It was to make a peep-hole for curious eyes, or for spies, for the Patriarch knows how to make use of a petticoat; but I will be even with them! Do you go on, pray, as if you had seen and heard nothing; I will fetch my whip."

The old man hurried away, and Paula was about to obey him; but scarcely had he disappeared when she heard herself called in a shrill girl's voice through a gap in the hedge, and looking round, she spied a pretty face between the boughs which had yesterday been forced asunder by a man's hands—like a picture wreathed with greenery.

Even in the twilight she recognized it at once, and when Katharina put her curly head forward, and said in a beseeching tone: "May I get through, and will you listen to me?" she gladly signified her consent.

The water-wagtail, heedless of Paula's hand held out to help her, slipped through the gap so nimbly that it was evident that she had not long ceased surmounting such obstacles in her games with Mary. As swift as the wind she came down on her feet, holding out her arms to rush at Paula; but she suddenly let them fall in visible hesitancy, and drew back a step. Paula, however, saw her embarrassment; she drew the girl to her, kissed her forehead, and gaily exclaimed:

"Trespassing! And why could you not come in by the gate? Here comes my host with his hippopotamus thong.—Stop, stop, good Rufinus, for the breach effected in your flowery wall was intended against me and not against you. There stands the hostile power, and I should be greatly surprised if you did not recognize her as a neighbor?"

"Recognize her?" said the old man, whose wrath was quickly appeased.
"Do we know each other, fair damsel—yes or no? It is an open question."

"Of course!" cried Katharina, "I have seen you a hundred times from the gnat-tower."

"You have had less pleasure than I should have had, if I had been so happy as to see you.—We came across each other about a year ago. I was then so happy as to find you in my large peach-tree, which to this day takes the liberty of growing over your garden-plot."

"I was but a child then," laughed Katharina, who very well remembered how the old man, whose handsome white head she had always particularly admired, had spied her out among the boughs of his peach-tree and had advised her, with a good-natured nod, to enjoy herself there.

"A child!" repeated Rufinus. "And now we are quite grown up and do not care to climb so high, but creep humbly through our neighbor's hedge."

"Then you really are strangers?" cried Paula in surprise. "And have you never met Pulcheria, Katharina?"

"Pul?—oh, how glad I should have been to call her!" said Katharina. "I have been on the point of it a hundred times; for her mere appearance makes one fall in love with her,—but my mother. . . ."

"Well, and what has your mother got to say against her neighbors?" asked Rufinus. "I believe we are peaceable folks who do no one any harm."

"No, no, God forbid! But my mother has her own way of viewing things; you and she are strangers still, and as you are so rarely to be seen in church. . . ."

"She naturally takes us for the ungodly. Tell her that she is mistaken, and if you are Paula's friend and you come to see her—but prettily, through the gate, and not through the hedge, for it will be closely twined again by to-morrow morning—if you come here, I say, you will find that we have a great deal to do and a great many creatures to nurse and care for—poor human creatures some of them, and some with fur or feathers, just as it comes; and man serves his Maker if he only makes life easier to the beings that come in his way; for He loves them all. Tell that to your mother, little wagtail, and come again very often."

"Thank you very much. But let me ask you, if I may, where you heard that odious nickname? I hate it."

"From the same person who told you the secret that my Pulcheria is called Pul!" said Rufinus; he laughed and bowed and left the two girls together.

"What a dear old man!" cried Katharina. "Oh, I know quite well how he spends his Days! And his pretty wife and Pul—I know them all. How often I have watched them—I will show you the place one day! I can see over the whole garden, only not what goes on near the convent on the other side of the house, or beyond those trees. You know my mother; if she once dislikes any one... But Pul, you understand, would be such a friend for me!"

"Of course she would," replied Paula. "And a girl of your age must chose older companions than little Mary."

"Oh, you shall not say a word against her!" cried Katharina eagerly. "She is only ten years old, but many a grown-up person is not so upright or so capable as I have found her during these last few miserable days."

"Poor child!" said Paula stroking her hair.

At this a bitter sob broke suddenly and passionately from Katharina; she tried with all her might to suppress it, but could not succeed. Her fit of weeping was so violent that she could not utter a word, till Paula had led her to a bench under a spreading sycamore, had induced her with gentle force to sit down by her side, clasping her in her arms like a suffering child, and speaking to her words of comfort and encouragement.

Birds without number were going to rest in the dense branches overhead, owls and bats had begun their nocturnal raids, the sky put on its spangled glory of gold and silver stars, from the western end of the town came the jackals' bark as they left their lurking-places among the ruined houses and stole out in search of prey, the heavy dew, falling through the mild air silently covered the leaves, the grass, and the flowers; the garden was more powerfully fragrant now than during the day-time, and Paula felt that it was high time to take refuge from the mists that came up from the shallow stream. But still she lingered while the little maiden poured out all that weighed upon her, all she repented of, believing she could never atone for it; and then all she had gone through, thinking it must break her heart, and all she still had to live down and drive out of her mind.

She told Paula how Orion had wooed her, how much she loved him, how her heart had been tortured by jealousy of her, Paula, and how she had allowed herself to be led away into bearing false witness before the judges. And then she went on to say it was Mary who had first opened her eyes to the abyss by which she was standing. In the afternoon after the death of the Mukaukas she had gone with her mother to the governor's house to join in her friends' lamentations. She had at once asked after Mary, but had not been allowed to see her, for she was still in bed and very feverish. She was then on her way to the cool hall when she heard her mother's voice—not in grief, but angry and vehement—so, thinking it would be more becoming to keep out of the way, she wandered off into the pillared vestibule opening towards the Nile. She would not for worlds have met Orion, and was terribly afraid she might do so, but as she went out, for it was still quite light, there she found him—and in what a state! He was sitting all in a heap, dressed in black, with his head buried in his hands. He had not observed her presence; but she pitied him deeply, for though it was very hot he was trembling in every limb, and his strong frame shuddered repeatedly. She had therefore spoken to him, begging him to be comforted, at which he had started to his feet in dismay, and had pushed his unkempt hair back from his face, looking so pale, so desperate, that she had been quite terrified and could not manage to bring out the consoling words she had ready. For some time neither of them had uttered a syllable, but at length he had pulled himself together as if for some great deed, he came slowly towards her and laid his hands on her shoulders with a solemn dignity which no one certainly had ever before seen in him. He stood gazing into her face — his eyes were red with much weeping—and he sighed from his very heart the two words: "Unhappy Child!"—She could hear them still sounding in her ears.

And he was altered: from head to foot quite different, like a stranger. His voice, even, sounded changed and deeper than usual as he went on:

"Child, child! Perhaps I have given much pain in my life without knowing it; but you have certainly suffered most through me, for I have made you, an innocent, trusting creature, my accomplice in crime. The great sin we both committed has been visited on me alone, but the punishment is a hundred—a thousand times too heavy!"

"And with this," Katharina went on, "he covered his face with his hands, threw himself on the couch again, and groaned and sighed. Then he sprang up once more, crying out so loud and passionately that I felt as if I must die of grief and pity: 'Forgive me if you can! Forgive me, wholly, freely. I want it—you must, you must! I was going to run up to him and throw my arms round him and forgive him everything, his trouble distressed me so much; but he gravely pushed me away—not roughly or sternly, and he said that there was an end of all love-making and betrothal between us—that I was young, and that I should be able to forget him. He would still be a true friend to me and to my mother, and the more we required of him the more gladly would he serve us."

"I was about to answer him, but he hastily interrupted me and said firmly and decisively: 'Lovable as you are, I cannot love you as you deserve; for it is my duty to tell you, I have another and a greater love in my heart—my first and my last; and though once in my life I have proved myself a wretch, still, it was but once; and I would rather endure your anger, and hurt both you and myself now, than continue this unrighteous tie and cheat you and others.'—At this I was greatly startled, and asked: 'Paula?' However, he did not answer, but bent over me and touched my forehead with his lips, just as my father often kissed me, and then went quickly out into the garden.

"Just then my mother came up, as red as a poppy and panting for breath: she took me by the hand without a word, dragged me into the chariot after her, and then cried out quite beside herself—she could not even shed a tear for rage: 'What insolence! what unheard-of behavior—How can I find the heart to tell you, poor sacrificed lamb. . .'"

"And she would have gone on, but that I would not let her finish; I told her at once that I knew all, and happily I was able to keep quite calm. I had some bad hours at home; and when Nilus came to us yesterday, after the opening of the will, and brought me the pretty little gold box with turquoises and pearls that I have always admired, and told me that the good Mukaukas had written with his own hand, in his last will, that it was to be given to me I his bright little 'Katharina,' my mother insisted on my not taking it and sent it back to Neforis, though I begged and prayed to keep it. And of course I shall never go to that house again; indeed my mother talks of quitting Memphis altogether and settling in Constantinople or some other city under Christian rule. 'Then our nice, pretty house must be given up, and our dear, lovely garden be sold to the peasant folk, my mother says. It was just the same a year and a half ago with Memnon's palace. His garden was turned into a corn-field, and the splendid ground-floor rooms, with their mosaics and pictures, are now dirty stables for cows and sheep, and pigs are fed in the rooms that belonged to Hathor and Dorothea. Good Heavens! And they were my clearest friends! And I am never to play with Mary any more; and mother has not a kind word for any living soul, hardly even for me, and my old nurse is as deaf as a mole! Am I not a really miserable, lonely creature? And if you, even you, will have nothing to say to me, who is there in all Memphis whom I can trust in? But you will not be so cruel, will you? And it will not be for long, for my mother really means to go away. You are older than I am, of course, and much graver and wiser...."

"I will be kind to you, child; but try to make friends with Pulcheria!"

"Gladly, gladly. But then my mother! I should get on very well by myself if it were not. . . Well, you yourself heard what Orion said to me, that time in the avenue. He surely loved me a little! What sweet, tender names he gave me then. Oh God! no man can speak like that to any one he is not fond of!—And he is rich himself; it cannot have been only my fortune that bewitched him. And does he look like a man who would allow himself to be parted from a girl by his mother, whether he would or no?"

"He was always fond of me I think; but then, afterwards, he remembered what a high position he had to fill and regarded me as too little and too childish. Oh, how many tears I have shed over being so absurdly little! A Water-wagtail—that is what I shall always be. Your old host called me so; and if a man like Orion feels that he must have a stately wife I can hardly blame him. That other one whom he thinks he loves better than he does me is tall and beautiful and majestic—like you; and I have always told myself that his future wife ought to look like you. It is all over between him and me, and I will submit humbly; but at the same time I cannot help thinking that when he came home he thought me pretty and attractive, and had a real fancy and liking for me. Yes, it was so, it certainly was so!—But then he saw that other one, and I cannot compare with her. She is indeed the woman he wants,—and that other, Paula, is yourself. Yes, indeed, you yourself; an inner voice tells me so. And I tell you truly, you may quite believe me: it is a pain no doubt, but I can be glad of it too. I should hate any mere girl to whom

he held out his hand—but, if you are that other—and if you are his wife. . ."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Paula decidedly. "Consider what you are saying. When Orion tempted you to perjure yourself, did he behave as my friend or as my foe, my bitterest and most implacable enemy?"

"Before the judges, to be sure. . ." replied the girl looking down thoughtfully. But she soon looked up again, fixed her eyes on Paula's face with a sparkling, determined glance, and frankly and unhesitatingly exclaimed: "And you?—In spite of it all he is so handsome, so clever, so manly. You can hardly help it—you love him!"

Paula withdrew her arm, which had been round Katharina, and answered candidly.

"Until to-day, at the funeral, I hated and abominated him; but there, by his father's tomb, he struck me as a new man, and I found it easy to forgive him in my heart."

"Then you mean to say that you do not love him?" urged Katharina, clasping her friend's round arm with her slender fingers.

Paula started to feel how icy cold her hand was. The moon was up, the stars rose higher and higher, so, simply saying: "Come away," she rose. "It must be within an hour of midnight," she added. "Your mother will be anxious about you."

"Only an hour of midnight!" repeated the girl in alarm. "Good Heavens, I shall have a scolding! She is still playing draughts with the Bishop, no doubt, as she does every evening. Good-bye then for the present. The shortest way is through the hedge again."

"No," said Paula firmly, "you are no longer a child; you are grown up, and must feel it and show it. You are not to creep through the bushes, but to go home by the gate. Rufinus and I will go with you and explain to your mother. . ."

"No, no!" cried Katharina in terror. "She is as angry with you as she is with them. Only yesterday she forbid. . ."

"Forbid you to come to me?" asked Paula. "Does she believe. . ."

"That it was for your sake that Orion.... Yes, she is only too glad to lay all the blame on you. But now that I have talked to you I.... Look, do you see that light? It is in her sitting-room."

And, before Paula could prevent her, she ran to the hedge and slipped through the gap as nimbly as a weasel.

Paula looked after her with mingled feelings, and then went back to the house, and to bed. Katharina's story kept her awake for a long time, and the suspicion—nay almost the conviction—that it was herself, indeed, who had aroused that "great love" in Orion's heart gave her no rest. If it were she? There, under her hand was the instrument of revenge on the miscreant; she could make him taste of all the bitterness he had brewed for her aching spirit. But which of them would the punishment hurt most sorely: him or herself? Had not the little girl's confidences revealed a world of rapture to her and her longing heart? No, no. It would be too humiliating to allow the same hand that had smitten her so ruthlessly to uplift her to heaven; it would be treason against herself.

Slumber overtook her in the midst of these conflicting feelings and thoughts, and towards morning she had a dream which, even by daylight, haunted her and made her shudder.

She saw Orion coming towards her, as pale as death, robed in mourning, pacing slowly on a coal-black horse; she had not the strength to fly, and without speaking to her or looking at her, he lifted her high in the air like a child, and placed her in front of him on the horse. She put forth all her strength to get free and dismount, but he clasped her with both arms like iron clamps and quelled her efforts. Life itself would not have seemed too great a price for escape from this constraint; but, the more wildly she fought, the more closely she was held by the silent and pitiless horseman. At their feet flowed the swirling river, but Orion did not seem to notice it, and without moving his lips, he coolly guided the steed towards the water. Beside herself now with horror and dread, she implored him to turn away; but he did not heed her, and went on unmoved into the midst of the stream. Her terror increased to an agonizing pitch as the horse bore her deeper and deeper into the water; of her own free will she threw her arms round the rider's neck; his paleness vanished, his cheeks gained a ruddy hue, his lips sought hers in a kiss; and, in the midst of the very anguish of death, she felt a thrill of rapture that she had never known before. She could have gone on thus for ever, even to destruction; and, in fact, they were still sinking—she felt the water rising breast high, but she cared not. Not a word had either of them

spoken. Suddenly she felt urged to break the silence, and as if she could not help it she asked: "Am I the other?" At this the waves surged down on them from all sides; a whirlpool dragged away the horse, spinning him round, and with him Orion and herself, a shrill blast swept past them, and then the current and the waves, the roaring of the whirlpool, the howling of the storm—all at once and together, as with one voice, louder than all else and filling her ears, shouted: "Thou!"— Only Orion remained speechless. An eddy caught the horse and sucked him under, a wave carried her away from him, she was sinking, sinking, and stretched out her arms with longing.—A cold dew stood on her brow as she slept, and the nurse, waking her from her uneasy dream, shook her head as she said:

"Why, child? What ails you? You have been calling Orion again and again, at first in terror and then so tenderly.—Yes, believe me, tenderly."

CHAPTER XX.

In the neat rooms which Rufinus' wife had made ready for her sick guests perfect peace reigned, and it was noon. A soft twilight fell through the thick green curtains which mitigated the sunshine, and the nurses had lately cleared away after the morning meal. Paula was moistening the bandage on the Masdakite's head, and Pulcheria was busy in the adjoining room with Mandane, who obeyed the physician's instructions with intelligent submission and showed no signs of insanity.

Paula was still spellbound by her past dream. She was possessed by such unrest that, quite against her wont, she could not long remain quiet, and when Pulcheria came to her to tell her this or that, she listened with so little attention and sympathy that the humble-minded girl, fearing to disturb her, withdrew to her patient's bed-side and waited quietly till her new divinity called her.

In fact, it was not without reason that Paula gave herself up to a certain anxiety; for, if she was not mistaken, Orion must necessarily present himself to hand over to her the remainder of her fortune; and though even yesterday, on her way from the cemetery, she had said to herself that she must and would refuse to meet him, the excitement produced by Katharina's story and her subsequent dream had confirmed her in her determination.

Perpetua awaited Orion's visit on the ground-floor, charged to announce him to Rufinus and not to her mistress. The old man had willingly undertaken to receive the money as her representative; for Philippus had not concealed from her that he had acquainted him with the circumstances under which Paula had quitted the governor's house, describing Orion as a man whom she had good reason for desiring to avoid.

By about two hours after noon Paula's restlessness had increased so much that now and then she wandered out of the sick-room, which looked over the garden, to watch the Nile-quay from the window of the anteroom; for he might arrive by either way. She never thought of the security of her property; but the question arose in her mind as to whether it were not actually a breach of duty to avoid the agitation it would cost her to meet her cousin face to face. On this point no one could advise her, not even Perpetua; her own mother could hardly have understood all her feelings on such an occasion. She scarcely knew herself indeed; for hitherto she had never failed, even in the most difficult cases, to know at once and without long reflection, what to do and to leave undone, what under special circumstances was right or wrong. But now she felt herself a yielding reed, a leaf tossed hither and thither; and every time she set her teeth and clenched her hands, determined to think calmly and to reason out the "for" and "against," her mind wandered away again, while the memory of her dream, of Orion as he stood by his father's grave—of Katharina's tale of "the other," and the fearful punishment which he had to suffer, nay indeed, certainly had suffered—came and went in her mind like the flocks of birds over the Nile, whose dipping and soaring had often passed like a fluttering veil between her eye and some object on the further shore.

It was three hours past noon, and she had returned to the sick-room, when she thought that she heard hoofs in the garden and hurried to the window once more. Her heart had not beat more wildly when the dog had flown at her and Hiram that fateful night, than it did now as she hearkened to the approach of a horseman, still hidden from her gaze by the shrubs. It must be Orion—but why did he not dismount? No, it could not be he; his tall figure would have overtopped the shrubbery which was of low growth.

She did not know her host's friends; it was one of them very likely. Now the horse had turned the

corner; now it was coming up the path from the front gate; now Rufinus had gone forth to meet the visitor—and it was not Orion, but his secretary, a much smaller man, who slipped off a mule that she at once recognized, threw the reins to a lad, handed something to the old man, and then dropped on to a bench to yawn and stretch his legs.

Then she saw Rufinus come towards the house. Had Orion charged this messenger to bring her her possessions? She thought this somewhat insulting, and her blood boiled with wrath. But there could be no question here of a surrender of property; for what her host was holding in his hand was nothing heavy, but a quite small object; probably, nay, certainly a roll of papyrus. He was coming up the narrow stairs, so she ran out to meet him, blushing as though she were doing something wrong. The old man observed this and said, as he handed her the scroll:

"You need not be frightened, daughter of a hero. The young lord is not here himself, he prefers, it would seem, to treat with you by letter; and it is best so for both parties."

Paula nodded agreement; she took the roll, and then, while she tore the silken tie from the seal, she turned her back on the old man; for she felt that the blood had faded from her face, and her hands were trembling.

"The messenger awaits an answer," remarked Rufinus, before she began to read it. "I shall be below and at your service." He left; Paula returned to the sick-room, and leaning against the frame of the casement, read as follows, with eager agitation:

"Orion, the son of George the Mukaukas who sleeps in the Lord, to his cousin the daughter of the noble Thomas of Damascus, greeting.

"I have destroyed several letters that I had written to you before this one." Paula shrugged her shoulders incredulously. "I hope I may succeed better this time in saying what I feel to be indispensable for your welfare and my own. I have both to crave a favor and offer counsel."

"Counsel! he!" thought the girl with a scornful curl of the lips, as she went on. "May the memory of the man who loved you as his daughter, and who on his death-bed wished for nothing so much as to see you—averse as he was to your creed—and bless you as his daughter indeed, as his son's wife,—may the remembrance of that just man so far prevail over your indignant and outraged soul that these words from the most wretched man on earth, for that am I, Paula, may not be left unread. Grant me the last favor I have to ask of you—I demand it in my father's name."

"Demand!" repeated the damsel; her cheeks flamed, her eye sparkled angrily, and her hands clutched the opposite sides of the letter as though to tear it across. But the next words: "Do not fear," checked her hasty impulse—she smoothed out the papyrus and read on with growing excitement:

"Do not fear that I shall address you as a lover—as the man for whom there is but one woman on earth. And that one can only be she whom I have so deeply injured, whom I fought with as frantic, relentless, and cruel weapons as ever I used against a foe of my own sex."

"But one," murmured the girl; she passed her hand across her brow, and a faint smile of happy pride dwelt on her lips as she went on:

"I shall love you as long as breath animates this crushed and wretched heart."

Again the letter was in danger of destruction, but again it escaped unharmed, and Paula's expression became one of calm and tender pleasure as she read to the end of Orion's clearly written epistle:

"I am fully conscious that I have forfeited your esteem, nay even all good feeling towards me, by my own fault; and that, unless divine love works some miracle in your heart, I have sacrificed all joy on earth. You are revenged; for it was for your sake—understand that—for your sake alone, that my beloved and dying father withdrew the blessings he had heaped on my remorseful head, and in wrath that was only too just at the recreant who had desecrated the judgment-seat of his ancestors, turned that blessing to a curse."

Paula turned pale as she read. This then was what Katharina had meant. This was what had so changed his appearance, and perhaps, too, his whole inward being. And this, this bore the stamp of truth, this could not be a lie—it was for her sake that a father's curse had blighted his only son! How had it all happened? Had Philippus failed to observe it, or had he held his peace out of respect for the secrets of another?—Poor man, poor young man! She must see him, must speak to him. She could not have a moment's ease till she knew how it was that her uncle, a tender father.—But she must go on, quickly to the end:

"I come to you only as what I am: a heart-broken man, too young to give myself over for lost, and at the same time determined to make use of all that remains to me of the steadfast will, the talents, and the self-respect of my forefathers to render me worthy of them, and I implore you to grant me a brief interview. Not a word, not a look shall betray the passion within and which threatens to destroy me.

"You must on no account fail to read what follows, since it is of no small real importance even to you. In the first place restitution must be made to you of all of your inheritance which the deceased was able to rescue and to add to by his fatherly stewardship. In these agitated times it will be a matter of some difficulty to invest this capital safely and to good advantage. Consider: just as the Arabs drove out the Byzantines, the Byzantines might drive them out again in their turn. The Persians, though stricken to the earth, the Avars, or some other people whose very name is as yet unknown to history, may succeed our present rulers, who, only ten years since, were regarded as a mere handful of unsettled camel-drivers, caravan-leaders, and poverty-stricken desert-tribes. The safety of your fortune would be less difficult to provide for if, as was formerly the case here, we could entrust it to the merchants of Alexandria. But one great house after another is being ruined there, and all security is at an end. As to hiding or burying your possessions, as most Egyptians do in these hard times, it is impossible, for the same reason as prevents our depositing it on interest in the state land-register. You must be able to get it at the shortest notice; since you might at some time wish to quit Egypt in haste with all your possessions.

"These are matters with which a woman cannot be familiar. I would therefore propose that you should leave the arrangement of them to us men; to Philippus, the physician, Rufinus, your host—who is, I am assured, an honest man—and to our experienced and trustworthy treasurer Nilus, whom you know as an incorruptible judge.

"I propose that the business should be settled tomorrow in the house of Rufinus. You can be present or not, as you please. If we men agree in our ideas I beg you—I beseech you to grant me an interview apart. It will last but a few minutes, and the only subject of discussion will be a matter—an exchange by which you will recover something you value and have lost, and grant me I hope, if not your esteem, at any rate a word of forgiveness. I need it sorely, believe me, Paula; it is as indispensable to me as the breath of life, if I am to succeed in the work I have begun on myself. If you have prevailed on yourself to read through this letter, simply answer 'Yes' by my messenger, to relieve me from torturing uncertainty. If you do not—which God forefend for both our sakes, Nilus shall this very day carry to you all that belongs to you. But, if you have read these lines, I will make my appearance to-morrow, at two hours after noon, with Nilus to explain to the others the arrangement of which I have spoken. God be with you and infuse some ruth into your proud and noble soul!"

Paula drew a deep breath as the hand holding this momentous epistle dropped by her side; she stood for some time by the window, lost in grave meditation. Then calling Pulcheria, she begged her to tend her patient, too, for a short time. The girl looked up at her with rapt admiration in her clear eyes, and asked sympathetically why she was so pale; Paula kissed her lips and eyes, and saying affectionately: "Good, happy child!" she retired to her own room on the opposite side of the house. There she once more read through the letter.

Oh yes; this was Orion as she had known him after his return till the evening of that never-to-be-forgotten water-party. He was, indeed, a poet; nature herself had made it so easy to him to seduce unguarded souls into a belief in him! And yet no! This letter was honestly meant. Philippus knew men well; Orion really had a heart, a warm heart. Not the most reckless of criminals could mock at the curse hurled at him by a beloved father in his last moments. And, as she once more read the sentence in which he told her that it was his crime as an unjust judge towards her that had turned the dying man's blessing to a curse, she shuddered and reflected that their relative attitude was now reversed, and that he had suffered more and worse through her than she had through him. His pale face, as she had seen it in the Necropolis, came back vividly to her mind, and if he could have stood before her at this moment she would have flown to him, have offered him a compassionate hand, and have assured him that the woes she had brought upon him filled her with the deepest and sincerest pity.

That morning she had asked the Masdakite whether he had besought Heaven to grant him a speedy recovery, and the man replied that Persians never prayed for any particular blessing, but only for "that which was good;" for that none but the Omnipotent knew what was good for mortals. How wise! For in this instance might not the most terrible blow that could fall on a son—his father's curse—prove a blessing? It was undoubtedly that curse which had led him to look into his soul and to start on this new path. She saw him treading it, she longed to believe in his conversion—and she did believe in it. In this letter he spoke of his love; he even asked her hand. Only yesterday this would have roused her wrath; to-day she could forgive him; for she could forgive anything to this unhappy soul—to the man on whom she had brought such deep anguish. Her heart could now beat high in the hope of seeing him again; nay, it even seemed to her that the youth, whose return had been hailed with such welcome and who

had so powerfully attracted her, had only now grown and ripened to full and perfect manhood through his sin, his penitence, and his suffering.

And how noble a task it would be to assist him in seeking the right way, and in becoming what he aspired to be!

The prudent care he had given to her worldly welfare merited her gratitude. What could he mean by the "exchange" he proposed? The "great love" of which he had spoken to Katharina was legible in every line of his letter, and any woman can forgive any man—were he a sinner, and a scarecrow into the bargain—for his audacity in loving her. Oh! that he might but set his heart on her—for hers, it was vain to deny it, was strongly drawn to him. Still she would not call it Love that stirred within her; it could only be the holy impulse to point out to him the highest goal of life and smooth the path for him. The pale horseman who had clutched her in her dream should not drag her away; no, she would joyfully lift him up to the highest pinnacle attainable by a brave and noble man.

So her thoughts ran, and her cheeks flushed as, with swift decision, she opened her trunk, took out papyrus, writing implements and a seal, and seated herself at a little desk which Rufinus had placed for her in the window, to write her answer.

At this a sudden fervent longing for Orion came over her. She made a great effort to shake it off; still, she felt that in writing to him it was impossible that she should find the right words, and as she replaced the papyrus in the chest and looked at the seal a strange thing happened to her; for the device on her father's well-known ring: a star above two crossed swords—perchance the star of Orion—caught her eye, with the motto in Greek: "The immortal gods have set sweat before virtue," meaning that the man who aims at being virtuous must grudge neither sweat nor toil.

She closed her trunk with a pleased smile, for the motto round the star was, she felt, of good augury. At the same time she resolved to speak to Orion, taking these words, which her forefathers had adopted from old Hesiod, as her text. She hastened down stairs, crossed the garden, passing by Rufinus, his wife and the physician, awoke the secretary who had long since dropped asleep, and enjoined him to say: "Yes" to his master, as he expected. However, before the messenger had mounted his mule, she begged him to wait yet a few minutes and returned to the two men; for she had forgotten in her eagerness to speak to them of Orion's plans. They were both willing to meet him at the hour proposed and, while Philippus went to tell the messenger that they would expect his master on the next day, the old man looked at Paula with undisguised satisfaction and said:

"We were fearing lest the news from the governor's house should have spoilt your happy mood, but, thank God, you look as if you had just come from a refreshing bath.—What do you say, Joanna? Twenty years ago such an inmate here would have made you jealous? Or was there never a place for such evil passions in your dove-like soul?"

"Nonsense!" laughed the matron. "How can I tell how many fair beings you have gazed after, wanderer that you are in all the wide world far away?"

"Well, old woman, but as sure as man is the standard of all things, nowhere that I have carried my staff, have I met with a goddess like this!"

"I certainly have not either, living here like a snail in its shell," said Dame Joanna, fixing her bright eyes on Paula with fervent admiration.

CHAPTER XXI.

That evening Rufinus was sitting in the garden with his wife and daughter and their friend Philippus. Paula, too, was there, and from time to time she stroked Pulcheria's silky golden hair, for the girl had seated herself at her feet, leaning her head against Paula's knee.

The moon was full, and it was so light out of doors that they could see each other plainly, so Rufinus' proposition that they should remain to watch an eclipse which was to take place an hour before midnight found all the more ready acceptance because the air was pleasant. The men had been discussing the expected phenomenon, lamenting that the Church should still lend itself to the superstitions of the populace by regarding it as of evil omen, and organizing a penitential procession for the occasion to implore God to avert all ill. Rufinus declared that it was blasphemy against the

Almighty to interpret events happening in the course of eternal law and calculable beforehand, as a threatening sign from Him; as though man's deserts had any connection with the courses of the sun and moon. The Bishop and all the priests of the province were to head the procession, and thus a simple natural phenomenon was forced in the minds of the people into a significance it did not possess.

"And if the little comet which my old foster father discovered last week continues to increase," added the physician, "so that its tail spreads over a portion of the sky, the panic will reach its highest pitch; I can see already that they will behave like mad creatures."

"But a comet really does portend war, drought, plague, and famine," said Pulcheria, with full conviction; and Paula added:

"So I have always believed."

"But very wrongly," replied the leech. "There are a thousand reasons to the contrary; and it is a crime to confirm the mob in such a superstition. It fills them with grief and alarms; and, would you believe it—such anguish of mind, especially when the Nile is so low and there is more sickness than usual, gives rise to numberless forms of disease? We shall have our hands full, Rufinus."

"I am yours to command," replied the old man. "But at the same time, if the tailed wanderer must do some mischief, I would rather it should break folks' arms and legs than turn their brains."

"What a wish!" exclaimed Paula. "But you often say things—and I see things about you too—which seem to me extraordinary. Yesterday you promised. . . ."

"To explain to you why I gather about me so many of God's creatures who have to struggle under the burden of life as cripples, or with injured limbs."

"Just so," replied Paula. "Nothing can be more truly merciful than to render life bearable to such hapless beings. . . ."

"But still, you think," interrupted the eager old man, "that this noble motive alone would hardly account for the old oddity's riding his hobby so hard.—Well, you are right. From my earliest youth the structure of the bones in man and beast has captivated me exceedingly; and just as collectors of horns, when once they have a complete series of every variety of stag, roe, and gazelle, set to work with fresh zeal to find deformed or monstrous growths, so I have found pleasure in studying every kind of malformation and injury in the bones of men and beasts."

"And to remedy them," added Philippus. "It has been his passion from childhood."

"And the passion has grown upon me since I broke my own hip bone and know what it means," the old man went on. "With the help of my fellow-student there, from a mere dilettante I became a practised surgeon; and, what is more, I am one of those who serve Esculapius at my own expense. However, there are accessory reasons for which I have chosen such strange companions: deformed slaves are cheap and besides that, certain investigations afford me inestimable and peculiar satisfaction. But this cannot interest a young girl."

"Indeed it does!" cried Paula. "So far as I have understood Philippus when he explains some details of natural history. . . ."

"Stay," laughed Rufinus, "our friend will take good care not to explain this. He regards it as folly, and all he will admit is that no surgeon or student could wish for better, more willing, or more amusing house-mates than my cripples."

"They are grateful to you," cried Paula.

"Grateful?" asked the old man. "That is true sometimes, no doubt; still, gratitude is a tribute on which no wise man ever reckons. Now I have told you enough; for the sake of Philippus we will let the rest pass."

"No, no," said Paula putting up entreating hands, and Rufinus answered gaily:

"Who can refuse you anything? I will cut it short, but you must pay good heed.—Well then Man is the standard of all things. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, I often hear you say so. Things you mean are only what they seem to us."

"To us, you say, because we—you and I and the rest of us here—are sound in body and mind. And we must regard all things—being God's handiwork—as by nature sound and normal. Thus we are justified in requiring that man, who gives the standard for them shall, first and foremost, himself be sound and

normal. Can a carpenter measure straight planks properly with a crooked or sloping rod?"

"Certainly not."

"Then you will understand how I came to ask myself: 'Do sickly, crippled, and deformed men measure things by a different standard to that of sound men? And might it not be a useful task to investigate how their estimates differ from ours?'"

"And have your researches among your cripples led to any results?"

"To many important ones," the old man declared; but Philippus interrupted him with a loud: "Oho!" adding that his friend was in too great a hurry to deduce laws from individual cases. Many of his observations were, no doubt, of considerable interest... Here Rufinus broke in with some vehemence, and the discussion would have become a dispute if Paula had not intervened by requesting her zealous host to give her the results, at any rate, of his studies.

"I find," said Rufinus very confidently, as he stroked down his long beard, "that they are not merely shrewd because their faculties are early sharpened to make up by mental qualifications for what they lack in physical advantages; they are also witty, like AEsop the fabulist and Besa the Egyptian god, who, as I have been told by our old friend Horus, from whom we derive all our Egyptian lore, presided among those heathen over festivity, jesting, and wit, and also over the toilet of women. This shows the subtle observation of the ancients; for the hunchback whose body is bent, applies a crooked standard to things in general. His keen insight often enables him to measure life as the majority of men do, that is by a straight rule; but in some happy moments when he yields to natural impulse he makes the straight crooked and the crooked straight; and this gives rise to wit, which only consists in looking at things obliquely and—setting them askew as it were. You have only to talk to my hump-backed gardener Gibbus, or listen to what he says. When he is sitting with the rest of our people in an evening, they all laugh as soon as he opens his mouth.—And why? Because his conformation makes him utter nothing but paradoxes.—You know what they are?"

"Certainly."

"And you, Pul?"

"No, Father."

"You are too straight-nay, and so is your simple soul, to know what the thing is! Well, listen then: It would be a paradox, for instance, if I were to say to the Bishop as he marches past in procession: 'You are godless out of sheer piety;' or if I were to say to Paula, by way of excuse for all the flattery which I and your mother offered her just now: 'Our incense was nauseous for very sweetness.'—These paradoxes, when examined, are truths in a crooked form, and so they best suit the deformed. Do you understand?"

"Certainly," said Paula.

"And you, Pul?"

"I am not quite sure. I should be better pleased to be simply told: "We ought not to have made such flattering speeches; they may vex a young girl."

"Very good, my straightforward child," laughed her father. "But look, there is the man! Here, good Gibbus—come here!—Now, just consider: supposing you had flattered some one so grossly that you had offended him instead of pleasing him: How would you explain the state of affairs in telling me of it?"

The gardener, a short, square man, with a huge hump but a clever face and good features, reflected a minute and then replied: "I wanted to make an ass smell at some roses and I put thistles under his nose."

"Capital!" cried Paula; and as Gibbus turned away, laughing to himself, the physician said:

"One might almost envy the man his hump. But yet, fair Paula, I think we have some straight-limbed folks who can make use of such crooked phrases, too, when occasion serves."

But Rufinus spoke before Paula could reply, referring her to his Essay on the deformed in soul and body; and then he went on vehemently:

"I call you all to witness, does not Baste, the lame woman, restrict her views to the lower aspect of things, to the surface of the earth indeed? She has one leg much shorter than the other, and it is only with much pains that we have contrived that it should carry her. To limp along at all she is forced

always to look down at the ground, and what is the consequence? She can never tell you what is hanging to a tree, and about three weeks since I asked her under a clear sky and a waning moon whether the moon had been shining the evening before and she could not tell me, though she had been sitting out of doors with the others till quite late, evening after evening. I have noticed, too, that she scarcely recognizes men who are rather tall, though she may have seen them three or four times. Her standard has fallen short-like her leg. Now, am I right or wrong?"

"In this instance you are right," replied Philippus, "still, I know some lame people. . ."

And again words ran high between the friends; Pulcheria, however, put an end to the discussion this time, by exclaiming enthusiastically:

"Baste is the best and most good-natured soul in the whole house!"

"Because she looks into her own heart," replied Rufinus. "She knows herself; and, because she knows how painful pain is, she treats others tenderly. Do you remember, Philippus, how we disputed after that anatomical lecture we heard together at Caesarea?"

"Perfectly well," said the leech, "and later life has but confirmed the opinion I then held. There is no less true or less just saying than the Latin motto: 'Mens sana in corpore sano,' as it is generally interpreted to mean that a healthy soul is only to be found in a healthy body. As the expression of a wish it may pass, but I have often felt inclined to doubt even that. It has been my lot to meet with a strength of mind, a hopefulness, and a thankfulness for the smallest mercies in the sickliest bodies, and at the same time a delicacy of feeling, a wise reserve, and an undeviating devotion to lofty things such as I have never seen in a healthy frame. The body is but the tenement of the soul, and just as we find righteous men and sinners, wise men and fools, alike in the palace and the hovel—nay, and often see truer worth in a cottage than in the splendid mansions of the great—so we may discover noble souls both in the ugly and the fair, in the healthy and the infirm, and most frequently, perhaps, in the least vigorous. We should be careful how we go about repeating such false axioms, for they can only do harm to those who have a heavy burthen to bear through life as it is. In my opinion a hunchback's thoughts are as straightforward as an athlete's; or do you imagine that if a mother were to place her new-born children in a spiral chamber and let them grow up in it, they could not tend upwards as all men do by nature?"

"Your comparison limps," cried Rufinus, "and needs setting to rights. If we are not to find ourselves in open antagonism. . . ."

"You must keep the peace," Joanna put in addressing her husband; and before Rufinus could retort, Paula had asked him with frank simplicity:

"How old are you, my worthy host?"

"Your arrival at my house blessed the second day of my seventieth year," replied Rufinus with a courteous bow. His wife shook her finger at him, exclaiming:

"I wonder whether you have not a secret hump? Such fine phrases. . ."

"He is catching the style from his cripples," said Paula laughing at him. "But now it is your turn, friend Philippus. Your exposition was worthy of an antique sage, and it struck me—for the sake of Rufinus here I will not say convinced me. I respect you—and yet I should like to know how old. . . ."

"I shall soon be thirty-one," said Philippus, anticipating her question.

"That is an honest answer," observed Dame Joanna. "At your age many a man clings to his twenties."

"Why?" asked Pulcheria.

"Well," said her mother, "only because there are some girls who think a man of thirty too old to be attractive."

"Stupid creatures," answered Pulcheria. "Let them find me a young man who is more lovable than my father; and if Philippus—yes you, Philippus—were ten or twenty years over nine and twenty, would that make you less clever or kind?"

"Not less ugly, at any rate," said the physician. Pulcheria laughed, but with some annoyance, as though she had herself been the object of the remark. "You are not a bit ugly!" she exclaimed. "Any one who says so has no eyes. And you will hear nothing said of you but that you are a tall, fine man!"

As the warm-hearted girl thus spoke, defending her friend against himself, Paula stroked her golden

hair and added to the physician:

"Pulcheria's father is so far right that she, at any rate, measures men by a true and straight standard. Note that, Philippus!—But do not take my questioning ill.—I cannot help wondering how a man of one and thirty and one of seventy should have been studying in the high schools at the same time? The moon will not be eclipsed for a long time yet—how bright and clear it is!—So you, Rufinus, who have wandered so far through the wide world, if you would do me a great pleasure, will tell us something of your past life and how you came to settle in Memphis."

"His history?" cried Joanna. "If he were to tell it, in all its details from beginning to end, the night would wane and breakfast would get cold. He has had as many adventures as travelled Odysseus. But tell us something husband; you know there is nothing we should like better."

"I must be off to my duties," said the leech, and when he had taken a friendly leave of the others and bidden farewell to Paula with less effusiveness than of late, Rufinus began his story.

"I was born in Alexandria, where, at that time, commerce and industry still flourished. My father was an armorer; above two hundred slaves and free laborers were employed in his work-shops. He required the finest metal, and commonly procured it by way of Massilia from Britain. On one occasion he himself went to that remote island in a friend's ship, and he there met my mother. Her ruddy gold hair, which Pul has inherited, seems to have bewitched him and, as the handsome foreigner pleased her well— for men like my father are hard to match nowadays—she turned Christian for his sake and came home with him. They neither of them ever regretted it; for though she was a quiet woman, and to her dying day spoke Greek like a foreigner, the old man often said she was his best counsellor. At the same time she was so soft-hearted, that she could not bear that any living creature should suffer, and though she looked keenly after everything at the hearth and loom, she could never see a fowl, a goose, or a pig slaughtered. And I have inherited her weakness—shall I say 'alas!' or 'thank God?'"

"I had two elder brothers who both had to help my father, and who were to carry on the business. When I was ten years old my calling was decided on. My mother would have liked to make a priest of me and at that time I should have consented joyfully; but my father would not agree, and as we had an uncle who was making a great deal of money as a Rhetor, my father accepted a proposal from him that I should devote myself to that career. So I went from one teacher to another and made good progress in the schools.

"Till my twentieth year I continued to live with my parents, and during my many hours of leisure I was free to do or leave undone whatever I had a fancy for; and this was always something medical, if that is not too big a word. I was but a lad of twelve when this fancy first took me, and that through pure accident. Of course I was fond of wandering about the workshops, and there they kept a magpie, a quaint little bird, which my mother had fed out of compassion. It could say 'Blockhead,' and call my name and a few other words, and it seemed to like the noise, for it always would fly off to where the smiths were hammering and filing their loudest, and whenever it perched close to one of the anvils there were sure to be mirthful faces over the shaping and scraping and polishing. For many years its sociable ways made it a favorite; but one day it got caught in a vice and its left leg was broken. Poor little creature!"

The old man stooped to wipe his eyes unseen, but he went on without pausing:

"It fell on its back and looked at me so pathetically that I snatched the tongs out of the bellows-man's hand—for he was going to put an end to its sufferings in all kindness—and, picking it up gently, I made up my mind I would cure it. Then I carried the bird into my own room, and to keep it quiet that it might not hurt itself, I tied it down to a frame that I contrived, straightened its little leg, warmed the injured bone by sucking it, and strapped it to little wooden splints. And behold it really set: the bird got quite well and fluttered about the workshops again as sound as before, and whenever it saw me it would perch upon my shoulder and peck very gently at my hair with its sharp beak.

"From that moment I could have found it in me to break the legs of every hen in the yard, that I might set them again; but I thought of something better. I went to the barbers and told them that if any one had a bird, a dog, or a cat, with a broken limb, he might bring it to me, and that I was prepared to cure all these injuries gratis; they might tell all their customers. The very next day I had a patient brought me: a black hound, with tan spots over his eyes, whose leg had been smashed by a badly-aimed spear: I can see him now! Others followed; feathered or four-footed sufferers; and this was the beginning of my surgical career. The invalid birds on the trees I still owe to my old allies the barbers. I only occasionally take beasts in hand. The lame children, whom you saw in the garden, come to me from poor parents who cannot afford a surgeon's aid. The merry, curly-headed boy who brought you a rose just now is to go home again in a few days.—But to return to the story of my youth.

"The more serious events which gave my life this particular bias occurred in my twentieth year, when I had already left even the high school behind me; nor was I fully carried away by their influence till after my uncle had procured me several opportunities of proving my proficiency in my calling. I may say without vanity that my speeches won approval; but I was revolted by the pompous, flowery bombast, without which I should have been hissed down, and though my parents rejoiced when I went home from Niku, Arsmoe, or some other little provincial town, with laurel-wreaths and gold pieces, to myself I always seemed an impostor. Still, for my father's sake, I dared not give up my profession, although I hated more and more the task of praising people to the skies whom I neither loved nor respected, and of shedding tears of pathos while all the time I was minded to laugh.

"I had plenty of time to myself, and as I did not lack courage and held stoutly to our Greek confession, I was always to be found where there was any stir or contention between the various sects. They generally passed off with nothing worse than bruises and scratches, but now and then swords were drawn. On one occasion thousands came forth to meet thousands, and the Prefect called out the troops—all Greeks—to restore order by force. A massacre ensued in which thousands were killed. I could not describe it! Such scenes were not rare, and the fury and greed of the mob were often directed against the Jews by the machinations of the creatures of the archbishop and the government. The things I saw there were so horrible, so shocking, that the tongue refuses to tell them; but one poor Jewess, whose husband the wretches—our fellow Christians—killed, and then pillaged the house, I have never forgotten! A soldier dragged her down by her hair, while a ruffian snatched the child from her breast and, holding it by its feet, dashed its skull against the wall before her eyes—as you might slash a wet cloth against a pillar to dry it—I shall never forget that handsome young mother and her child; they come before me in my dreams at night even now.

"All these things I saw; and I shuddered to behold God's creatures, beings endowed with reason, persecuting their fellows, plunging them into misery, tearing them limb from limb—and why? Merciful Saviour, why? For sheer hatred—as sure as man is the standard for all things—merely carried away by a hideous impulse to spite their neighbor for not thinking as they do—nay, simply for not being themselves—to hurt him, insult him, work him woe. And these fanatics, these armies who raised the standard of ruthlessness, of extermination, of bloodthirstiness, were Christians, were baptized in the name of Him who bids us forgive our enemies, who enlarged the borders of love from the home and the city and the state to include all mankind; who raised the adulteress from the dust, who took children into his arms, and would have more joy over a sinner who repents than over ninety and nine just persons!—Blood, blood, was what they craved; and did not the doctrine of Him whose followers they boastfully called themselves grow out of the blood of Him who shed it for all men alike,—just as that lotos flower grows out of the clear water in the marble tank? And it was the highest guardians and keepers of this teaching of mercy, who goaded on the fury of the mob: Patriarchs, bishops, priests and deacons—instead of pointing to the picture of the Shepherd who tenderly carries the lost sheep and brings it home to the fold.

"My own times seemed to me the worst that had ever been; aye, and—as surely as man is the standard of all things—so they are! for love is turned to hatred, mercy to implacable hardheartedness. The thrones not only of the temporal but of the spiritual rulers, are dripping with the blood of their fellow-men. Emperors and bishops set the example; subjects and churchmen follow it. The great, the leading men of the struggle are copied by the small, by the peaceful candidates for spiritual benefices. All that I saw as a man, in the open streets, I had already seen as a boy both in the low and high schools. Every doctrine has its adherents; the man who casts in his lot with Cneius is hated by Caius, who forthwith speaks and writes to no other end than to vex and put down Cneius, and give him pain. Each for his part strives his utmost to find out faults in his neighbor and to put him in the pillory, particularly if his antagonist is held the greater man, or is likely to overtop him. Listen to the girls at the well, to the women at the spindle; no one is sure of applause who cannot tell some evil of the other men or women. Who cares to listen to his neighbor's praises? The man who hears that his brother is happy at once envies him! Hatred, hatred everywhere! Everywhere the will, the desire, the passion for bringing grief and ruin on others rather than to help them, raise them and heal them!

"That is the spirit of my time; and everything within me revolted against it with sacred wrath. I vowed in my heart that I would live and act differently; that my sole aim should be to succor the unfortunate, to help the wretched, to open my arms to those who had fallen into unmerited contumely, to set the crooked straight for my neighbor, to mend what was broken, to pour in balm, to heal and to save!

"And, thank God! it has been vouchsafed to me in some degree to keep this vow; and though, later, some whims and a passionate curiosity got mixed up with my zeal, still, never have I lost sight of the great task of which I have spoken, since my father's death and since my uncle also left me his large fortune. Then I had done with the Rhetor's art, and travelled east and west to seek the land where love unites men's hearts and where hatred is only a disease; but as sure as man is the standard of all things, to this day all my endeavors to find it have been in vain. Meanwhile I have kept my own house on such

a footing that it has become a stronghold of love; in its atmosphere hatred cannot grow, but is nipped in the germ.

"In spite of this I am no saint. I have committed many a folly, many an injustice; and much of my goods and gold, which I should perhaps have done better to save for my family, has slipped through my fingers, though in the execution, no doubt, of what I deemed the highest duties. Would you believe it, Paula?—Forgive an old man for such fatherly familiarity with the daughter of Thomas;—hardly five years after my marriage with this good wife, not long after we had lost our only son, I left her and our little daughter, Pul there, for more than two years, to follow the Emperor Heraclius of my own free will to the war against the Persians who had done me no harm—not, indeed, as a soldier, but as a surgeon eager for experience. To confess the truth I was quite as eager to see and treat fractures and wounds and injuries in great numbers, as I was to exercise benevolence. I came home with a broken hip-bone, tolerably patched up, and again, a few years later, I could not keep still in one place. The bird of passage must need drag wife and child from the peace of hearth and homestead, and take them to where he could go to the high school. A husband, a father, and already grey-headed, I was a singular exception among the youths who sat listening to the lectures and explanations of their teachers; but as sure as man is the standard of all things, they none of them outdid me in diligence and zeal, though many a one was greatly my superior in gifts and intellect, and among them the foremost was our friend Philippus. Thus it came about, noble Paula, that the old man and the youth in his prime were fellow-students; but to this day the senior gladly bows down to his young brother in learning and feeling. To straighten, to comfort, and to heal: this is the aim of his life too. And even I, an old man, who started long before Philippus on the same career, often long to call myself his disciple."

Here Rufinus paused and rose; Paula, too, got up, grasped his hand warmly, and said:

"If I were a man, I would join you! But Philippus has told me that even a woman may be allowed to work with the same purpose.—And now let me beg of you never to call me anything but Paula—you will not refuse me this favor. I never thought I could be so happy again as I am with you; here my heart is free and whole. Dame Joanna, do you be my mother! I have lost the best of fathers, and till I find him again, you, Rufinus, must fill his place!"

"Gladly, gladly!" cried the old man; he clasped both her hands and went on vivaciously: "And in return I ask you to be an elder sister to Pul. Make that timid little thing such a maiden as you are yourself.—But look, children, look up quickly; it is beginning!—Typhon, in the form of a boar, is swallowing the eye of Horns: so the heathen of old in this country used to believe when the moon suffered an eclipse. See how the shadow is covering the bright disk. When the ancients saw this happening they used to make a noise, shaking the sistrum with its metal rings, drumming and trumpeting, shouting and yelling, to scare off the evil one and drive him away. It may be about four hundred years since that last took place, but to this day—draw your kerchiefs more closely round your heads and come with me to the river—to this day Christians degrade themselves by similar rites. Wherever I have been in Christian lands, I have always witnessed the same scenes: our holy faith has, to be sure, demolished the religions of the heathen; but their superstitions have survived, and have forced their way through rifts and chinks into our ceremonial. They are marching round now, with the bishop at their head, and you can hear the loud wailing of the women, and the cries of the men, drowning the chant of the priests. Only listen! They are as passionate and agonized in their entreaty as though old Typhon were even now about to swallow the moon, and the greatest catastrophe was hanging over the world. Aye, as surely as man is the standard of all things, those terrified beings are diseased in mind; and how are we to forgive those who dare to scare Christians; yes, Christian souls, with the traditions of heathen folly, and to blind their inward vision?"

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

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