

# THE EMPEROR - COMPLETE

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Dried merry-thought bone of a fowl  
More to the purpose to think of the future than of the past  
So long as we do not think ourselves wretched, we are not so  
Temples would be empty if mortals had nothing left to wish for

THE EMPEROR, Part 2.

By Georg Ebers

Volume 8.

## CHAPTER X.

The story told by Mastor which had so greatly agitated Pollux and had prompted him to his mad flight was the history of events which had taken place in the steward's rooms during the hours when the young artist was helping his parents to transfer their household belongings into his sister's tiny dwelling. Keraunus was certainly not one of the most cheerful of men, but on the morning when Sabina came to the palace and the gate-keeper was driven from his home, he had worn the aspect of a thoroughly-contented man.

Since visiting Selene the day before he had given himself no farther concern about her. She was not dangerously ill and was exceptionally well taken care of, and the children did not seem to miss her. Indeed, he himself did not want her back to-day. He avoided confessing this to himself it is true, still he felt lighter and freer in the absence of his grave monitor than he had been for a long time. It would be delightful, he thought, to go on living in this careless manner, alone with Arsinoe and the children, and now and again he rubbed his hands and grinned complacently. When the old slave-woman brought a large dish full of cakes which he had desired her to buy, and set it down by the side of the children's porridge, he chuckled so heartily that his fat person shook and swayed; and he had very good reason to be happy in his way, for Plutarch quite early in the morning, had sent a heavy purse of gold pieces for his ivory cup, and a magnificent bunch of roses to Arsinoe;

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he might give his children a treat, buy himself a solid gold fillet, and dress Arsinoe as finely as though she were the prefect's favorite daughter.

His vanity was gratified in every particular.

And what a splendid fellow was the slave who now—with a superbly reverential bow—presented him with a roast chicken and who was to walk behind him in the afternoon to the council-chamber. The tall Thessalian who marched after the Archidikastes to the Hall of justice, carrying his papers, was hardly grander than his "body-servant." He had bought him yesterday at quite a low price. The well-grown Samian was scarcely thirty years old; he could read and write and was in a position therefore to instruct the children in these arts; nay, he could even play the lute. His past, to be sure, was not a spotless record, and it was for that reason that he had been sold so cheaply. He had stolen things on several occasions; but the brands and scars which he bore upon his person were hidden by his new chiton and Keraunus felt in himself the power to cure him of his evil propensities.

After desiring Arsinoe to let nothing he about of any value, for their new house-mate seemed not to be perfectly honest, he answered his daughter's scruples by saying:

"It would be better, no doubt, that he should be as honest as the old skeleton I gave in exchange for him, but I reflect that even if my body-servant should make away with some of the few drachmae we carry about with us, I need not repent of having bought him, since I got him for many thousand drachmae less than he is worth, on account of his thefts, while a teacher for the children would have cost more than he can steal from us at the worst. I will lock up the gold in the chest with my documents. It is strong and could only be opened with a crow-bar. Besides the fellow will have left off stealing at any rate at first, for his late master was none of the mildest and had cured him of his pilfering I should think, once for all. It is lucky that in selling such rascals we should be compelled to state what their faults are; if the seller fails to do so compensation maybe claimed from him by the next owner for what he may lose. Lykophron certainly concealed nothing, and setting aside his thieving propensities the Samian is said to be in every respect a capital fellow."

But father," replied Arsinoe, her anxiety once more urging her to speak, "it is a bad thing to have a dishonest man in the house."

"You know nothing about it child!" answered Keraunus. "To us to live and to be honest are the same thing, but a slave!—King Antiochus is said to have declared that the man who wishes to be well served must employ none but rascals."

When Arsinoe had been tempted out on to the balcony by her lover's snatch

of song and had been driven in again by her father, the steward had not reproved her in any way unkindly, but had stroked her cheeks and said with a smile: "I rather fancy that lad of the gatekeeper's—whom I once turned out of doors has had his eye on you since you were chosen for Roxana. Poor wretch! But we have very different suitors in view for you my little girl. How would it be, think you, if rich Plutarch had sent you those roses, not on his own behalf but as a greeting on the part of his son? I know that he is very desirous of marrying him but the fastidious man has never yet thought any Alexandrian girl good enough for him."

"I do not know him, and he does not think of a poor thing like me," said Arsinoe.

"Do you think not?" asked Keraunus smiling. "We are of as good family, nay of a better than Plutarch, and the fairest is a match for the wealthiest. What would you say child to a long flowing purple robe and a chariot with white horses, and runners in front?"

At breakfast Keraunus drank two cups of strong wine, in which he allowed Arsinoe to mix only a few drops of water. While his daughter was curling his hair a swallow flew into the room; this was a good omen and raised the steward's spirits. Dressed in his best and with a well-filled purse, he was on the point of starting for the council-chamber with his new slave when Sophilus the tailor and his girl-assistant were shown into the living-room. The man begged to be allowed to try the dress, ordered for Roxana by the prefect's wife, on the steward's daughter. Keraunus received him with much condescension and allowed him to bring in the slave who followed him with a large parcel of dresses,—and Arsinoe, who was with the children, was called.

Arsinoe was embarrassed and anxious and would far rather have yielded her part to another; still, she was curious about the new dresses. The tailor begged her to allow her maid to dress her; his assistant would help her because the dresses which were only slightly stitched together for trying on, were cut, not in the Greek but in the Oriental fashion.

"Your waiting woman," he added turning to Arsinoe, "will be able to learn to-day the way to dress you on the great occasion."

"My daughter's maid," said Keraunus, winking slyly at Arsinoe, "is not in the house."

"Oh, I require no help," cried the tailor's girl. "I am handy too at dressing hair, and I am most glad to help such a fair Roxana."

"And it is a real pleasure to work for her," added Sophilus. "Other young ladies are beautified by what they wear, but your daughter adds beauty to all she wears."

"You are most polite," said Keraunus, as Arsinoe and her handmaid left the room.

"We learn a great deal by our intercourse with people of rank," replied the tailor. "The illustrious ladies who honor me with their custom like not only to see but to hear what is pleasing. Unfortunately there are among them some whom the gods have graced with but few charms, and they, strangely enough, crave the most flattering speeches. But the poor always value it more than the rich when benevolence is shown them."

"Well said," cried Keraunus. "I myself am but indifferently well off for a man of family, and am glad to live within my moderate means—so that my daughter—"

"The lady Julia has chosen the costliest stuffs for her; as is fitting—as the occasion demands," said the tailor. "Quite right, at the same time—"

"Well, my lord?"

"The grand occasion will be over and my daughter, now that she is grown up, ought to be seen at home and in the street in suitable and handsome, though not costly, clothes.

"I said just now, true beauty needs no gaudy raiment."

"Would you be disposed now, to work for me at a moderate price?"

"With pleasure; nay, I shall be indebted to her, for all the world will admire Roxana and inquire who may be her tailor."

"You are a very reasonable and right-minded man. What now would you charge for a dress for her?"

"That we can discuss later."

"No, no, I beg you sincerely—"

"First let me consider what you want. Simple dresses are more difficult, far more difficult to make, and yet become a handsome woman better than rich and gaudy robes. But can any man make a woman understand it? I could tell you a tale of their folly! Why many a woman who rides by in her chariot wears dresses and gems to conceal not merely her own limbs, but the poverty-stricken condition of her house."

Thus, and in this wise did Keraunus and the tailor converse, while the assistant plaited up Arsinoe's hair with strings of false pearls that she had brought with her, and fitted and pinned on her the costly white and blue silk robes of an Asiatic princess. At first Arsinoe was very still and timid. She no longer cared to dress for any one but Pollux; but the

garments prepared for her were wonderfully pretty—and how well the fitter knew how to give effect to her natural advantages. While the neat-handed woman worked busily and carefully many merry jests passed between them—many sincere and hearty words of admiration—and before long Arsinoe had become quite excited and took pleased interest in the needle-woman's labors.

Every bough that is freshly decked by spring seems to feel gladness, and the simple child who was to-day so splendidly dressed was captivated by pleasure in her own beauty, and its costly adornment which delighted her beyond measure. Arsinoe now clapped her hands with delight, now had the mirror handed to her, and now, with all the frankness of a child, expressed her satisfaction not only with the costly clothes she wore, but with her own surprisingly grand appearance in them.

The dress-maker was enchanted with her, proud and delighted, and could not resist the impulse to give a kiss to the charming girl's white, beautifully round throat.

"If only Pollux could see me so!" thought Arsinoe. "After the performance perhaps I might show myself in my dress to Selene, and then she would forgive my taking part in the show. It is really a pleasure to look so nice!"

The children all stood round her while she was being dressed, and shouted with admiration each time some new detail of the princess's attire was added. Helios begged to be allowed to feel her dress, and after satisfying herself that his little hands were clean she stroked them over the glistening white silk.

She had now advanced so far that her father and the tailor could be called in. She felt remarkably content and happy. Drawn up to her tallest, like a real king's daughter, and yet with a heart beating as anxiously as that of any girl would who is on the point of displaying her beauty—hitherto protected and hidden in her parents' home—to the thousand eyes of the gaping multitude, she went towards the sitting-room; but she drew back her hand she had put forth to raise the latch, for she heard the voices of several men who must just now have joined her father.

"Wait a little while, there are visitors," she cried to the seamstress who had followed her, and she put her ear to the door to listen. At first she could not make out anything that was going on, but the end of the strange conversation that was being carried on within was so hideously intelligible that she could never forget it so long as she lived.

Her father had ordered two new dresses for her, beating down the price with the promise of prompt payment, when Mastor came into the steward's room and informed Keraunus that his master and Gabinius, the curiosity-dealer from Nicaea, wished to speak with him.

"Your master," said Keraunus haughtily, "may come in; I think that he regrets the injury he has done me; but Gabinius shall never cross this threshold again, for he is a scoundrel."

"It would be as well that you should desire that man to leave you for the present," said the slave, pointing to the tailor.

"Whoever comes to visit me," said the steward loftily, "must be satisfied to meet any one whom I permit to enter my house."

"Nay, nay," said the slave urgently, "my master is a greater man than you think. Beg this man to leave the room."

"I know, I know very well," said Keraunus with a smile. "Your master is an acquaintance of Caesar's. But we shall see, after the performance that is about to take place, which of us two Caesar will decide for. This tailor has business here and will stay at my pleasure. Sit in the corner there, my friend."

"A tailor!" cried Mastor, horrified. "I tell you he must go."

"He must!" asked Keraunus wrathfully. "A slave dares to give orders in my house? We will see."

"I am going," interrupted the artisan who understood the case. "No unpleasantness shall arise here on my account, I will return in a quarter of an hour."

"You will stay," commanded Keraunus. "This insolent Roman seems to think that Lochias belongs to him; but I will show him who is master here."

But Mastor paid no heed to these words spoken in a high pitch; he took the tailor's hand and led him out, whispering to him:

"Come with me if you wish to escape an evil hour."

The two men went off and Keraunus did not detain the artisan, for it occurred to his mind that his presence did him small credit. He purposed to show himself in all his dignity to the overbearing architect, but he also remembered that it was not advisable to provoke unnecessarily the mysterious bearded stranger, with the big clog. Much excited, and not altogether free from anxiety, he paced up and down his room. To give himself courage he hastily filled a cup from the wine-jar that stood on the breakfast table, emptied it, refilled it and drank it off a second time without adding any water, and then stood with his arms folded and a strong color in his face awaiting his enemy's visit.

The Emperor walked in with Gabinius. Keraunus expected some greeting, but Hadrian spoke not a word, cast a glance at him of the utmost contempt and passed by him without taking any more notice of him than if he had been a pillar or a piece of furniture. The blood mounted to the steward's head and heated his eyes and for fully a minute he strove in vain to find words to give utterance to his rage. Gabinius paid no more heed to Keraunus than the Roman had done. He walked on ahead and paused in front of the mosaic for which he had offered so high a price, and over which a few days since he had been so sharply dealt with by the steward.

"I would beg you," he said, "to look at this masterpiece."

The Emperor looked at the ground, but hardly had he begun to study the picture, of which he quite understood and appreciated the beauty, when just behind him he heard in a hoarse voice these words uttered with difficulty:

"In Alexandria—it is the custom, to greet—to say something—to the people you visit." Hadrian half turned his head towards the speaker and said indifferently but with strong and insulting contempt:

"In Rome too it is the custom to greet honest people." Then looking down again at the mosaic he said, "Exquisite, exquisite an inestimable and precious work." At Hadrian's words Keraunus' eyes almost started out of his head. His face was crimson and his lips pale; he went close up to him and as soon as he had found breath to speak he said:

"What have you—what are your words intended to convey?"

Hadrian turned suddenly and full upon the steward; in his eyes sparkled that annihilating fire which few could endure to gaze on and his deep voice rolled sullenly through the room as he said to the miserable man:

"My words are intended to convey that you have been an unfaithful steward, that I know what you would rather I should not know, that I have learned how you deal with the property entrusted to you, that you—"

"That I?"—cried the steward trembling with rage and stepping close up to the Emperor.

"That you," shouted Hadrian in his face, "tried to sell this picture to this man; in short that you are a simpleton and a scoundrel into the bargain."

"I—I," gasped Keraunus slapping his hand on his fat chest. "I—a—a—but you shall repent of these words."

Hadrian laughed coldly and scornfully, but Keraunus sprang on Gabinius with a wonderful agility for his size, clutched him by the collar of his chiton and shook the feeble little man as if he were a sapling, shrieking

meanwhile:

"I will choke you with your own lies—serpent, mean viper!"

"Madman!" cried Hadrian "leave hold of the Ligurian or by Sirius you shall repent it."

"Repent it?" gasped the steward. "It will be your turn to repent when Caesar comes. Then will come a day of reckoning with false witnesses, shameless calumniators who disturb peaceful households, while credulous idiots—"

"Man, man," interrupted Hadrian, not loudly but sternly and ominously, "you know not to whom you speak."

"Oh I know you—I know you only too well. But I—I—shall I tell you who I am?"

"You—you are a blockhead," replied the monarch shrugging his shoulders contemptuously. Then he added calmly, with dignity—almost with indifference:

"I am Caesar."

At these words the steward's hand dropped from the chiton of the half-throttled dealer. Speechless and with a glassy stare he gazed in Hadrian's face for a few seconds. Then he suddenly started, staggered backwards, uttered a loud choking, gurgling, nameless cry, and fell back on the floor like a mass of rock shaken from its foundations by an earthquake. The room shook again with his fall.

Hadrian was startled and when he saw him lying motionless at his feet he bent over him—less from pity than from a wish to see what was the matter with him; for he had also dabbled in medicine. Just as he was lifting the fallen man's hand to feel his pulse Arsinoe rushed into the room. She had heard the last words of the antagonists with breathless anxiety and her father's fall and now threw herself on her knees by the side of the unhappy man, just opposite to Hadrian, and as his distorted and grey-white face told her what had occurred she broke out in a passionate cry of anguish. Her brothers and sisters followed at her heels, and when they saw their favorite sister bewailing herself they followed her example without knowing at first what Arsinoe was crying for, but soon with terror and horror at their father lying there stiff and disfigured. The Emperor, who had never had either son or daughter of his own, found nothing so intolerable as the presence of crying children. However he endured the wailing and whimpering that surrounded him till he had ascertained the condition of the man lying on the ground before him.

"He is dead," he said in a few minutes. "Cover his face, Master."

Arsinoe and the children broke out afresh, and Hadrian glanced down at them with annoyance. When his eye fell on Arsinoe, whose costly robe, merely pinned and slightly stitched together had come undone with the vehemence of her movements and were hanging as flapping rags in tumbled disorder, he was disgusted with the gaudy fluttering trumpery which contrasted so painfully with the grief of the wearer, and turning his back on the fair girl he quitted the chamber of misery.

Gabinius followed him with a hideous smirk. He had directed the Emperor's attention to the mosaic pavement in the steward's room, and had shamelessly accused Keraunus of having offered to sell him a work that belonged to the palace, contrasting his conduct with his own rectitude. Now the calumniated man was dead, and the truth could never come to light; this was necessarily a satisfaction to the miserable man, but he derived even greater pleasure from the reflection that Arsinoe could not now fill the part of Roxana, and that consequently there was once more a possibility that it might devolve on his daughter.

Hadrian walked on in front of him, silent and thoughtful. Gabinius followed him into his writing-room, and there said with fulsome smoothness:

"Ah, great Caesar, thus do the gods punish with a heavy hand the crimes of the guilty."

Hadrian did not interrupt him, but he looked him keenly and enquiringly in the face, and then said, gravely, but coolly:

"It seems to me, man, that I should do well to break off my connection with you, and to give some other dealer the commissions which I proposed to entrust to you."

"Caesar!" stammered Gabinius, "I really do not know—"

"But I do know," interrupted the Emperor. "You have attempted to mislead me, and throw your own guilt on the shoulders of another."

"I—great Caesar? I have attempted—" began the Ligurian, while his pinched features turned an ashy grey. "You accused the steward of a dishonorable trick," replied Hadrian. "But I know men well, and I know that no thief ever yet died of being called a scoundrel. It is only undeserved disgrace that can cost a man's life."

"Keraunus was full-blooded, and the shock when he learnt that you were Caesar—"

"That shock accelerated the end no doubt," interrupted the monarch, "but the mosaic in the steward's room is worth a million of sesterces, and now I have seen enough to be quite sure that you are not the man to save your money when a work like that mosaic is offered you for sale—be the

circumstances what they may. If I see the case rightly, it was Keraunus who refused your demand that he should resign to you the treasure in his charge. Certainly, that was the case exactly! Now, leave me. I wish to be alone.”

Gabinius retired with many bows, walking backwards to the door, and then turned his back on the palace of Lochias muttering many impotent curses as he went.

The steward’s new ‘body-servant,’ the old black woman, Mastor, the tailor and his slave, helped Arsinoe to carry her father’s lifeless body and lay it on a couch, and the slave closed his eyes. He was dead—so each told the despairing girl, but she would not, could not believe it. As soon as she was alone with the old negress and the dead, she lifted up his heavy, clumsy arm, and as soon as she let go her hold it fell by his side like lead. She lifted the cloth from the dead man’s face, but she flung it over him again at once, for death had drawn his features. Then she kissed his cold hand and brought the children in and made them do the same, and said sobbing:

”We have no father now; we shall never, never see him again.”

The little blind boy felt the dead body with his hands, and asked his sister:

”Will he not wake again to-morrow morning and make you curl his hair, and take me up on his knee?”

”Never, never; he is gone, gone for ever.”

As she spoke Mastor entered the room, sent by his master. Yesterday had he not heard from the overseer of the pavement-workers the comforting tidings that after our grief and suffering here on earth there would be another, beautiful, blissful and eternal life? He went kindly up to Arsinoe and said:

”No, no, my children; when we are dead we become beautiful angels with colored wings, and all who have loved each other here on earth will meet again in the presence of the good God.”

Arsinoe looked at the slave with disapproval.

”What is the use,” she asked, ”of cheating the children with silly tales? Their father is gone, quite gone, but we will never, never forget him.”

”Are there any angels with red wings?” asked the youngest little girl.

”Oh! I want to be an angel!” cried Helios, clapping his hands. ”And can the angels see?”

"Yes, dear little man," replied Mastor, "and their eyes are wonderfully bright, and all they look upon is beautiful."

"Tell them no more Christian nonsense," begged Arsinoe. "Ah! children, when we shall have burned our father's body there will be nothing left of him but a few grey ashes."

But the slave took the little blind boy on his knees and whispered to him:

"Only believe what I tell you—you will see him again in Heaven."

Then he set him down again, gave Arsinoe a little bag of gold pieces in Caesar's name, and begged her—for so his master desired—to find a new abode and, after the deceased was burned on the morrow, to quit Lochias with the children. When Mastor was gone Arsinoe opened the chest, in which lay her father's papyri and the money that Plutarch had paid for the ivory cup, put in the heavy purse sent by the Emperor, comforting herself while her tears flowed, with the reflection that she and the children were provided at any rate against immediate want.

But where was she to go with the little ones? Where could she hope to find a refuge at once? What was to become of them when all they now possessed was spent. The gods be thanked! she was not forlorn; she still had friends. She could find protection and love with Pollux and look to dame Doris for motherly counsel.

She quickly dried her eyes and changed the remains of her splendor for the dark dress in which she was accustomed to work at the papyrus factory; then, as soon as she had taken the pearls out of her hair, she went down to the little gate-house.

She was only a few steps from the door—but why did not the Graces come springing out to meet her? Why did she see no birds, no flowers in the window? Was she deceived, was she dreaming or was she tricked by some evil spirit? The door of the dear home-like little dwelling was wide open and the sitting-room was absolutely empty, not a chattel was left behind, forgotten—not a leaf from a plant was lying on the ground; for dame Doris, in her tidy fashion, had swept out the few rooms where she had grown grey in peace and contentment as carefully as though she were to come into them again to-morrow.

What had happened here? Where were her friends gone? A great terror came over her, all the misery of desolation fell upon her, and as she sank upon the stone bench outside the gate-house to wait for the inhabitants who must presently return, the tears again flowed from her eyes and fell in heavy drops on her hands as they lay in her lap.

She was still sitting there, thinking with a throbbing heart of Pollux and of the happy morning of this now dying day, when a troupe of Moorish

slaves came towards the deserted house. The head mason who led them desired her to rise from the bench, and in answer to her questions, told her that the little building was to be pulled down, and that the couple who had inhabited it were evicted from their post, turned out of doors and had gone elsewhere with all their belongings. But where Doris and her son had taken themselves no one knew. Arsinoe as she heard these tidings felt like a sailor whose vessel has grounded on a rocky shore, and who realizes with horror that every plank and beam be neath him quivers and gapes. As usual, when she felt too weak to help herself unaided, her first thought was of Selene, and she decided to hasten off to her and to ask her what she could do, what was to become of her and the children.

It was already growing dark. With a swift step, and drying her eyes from time to time on her peplum as she went, she returned to her own room to fetch a veil, without which she dared not venture so late into the streets. On the steps—where the dog had thrown down Selene—she met a man hurrying past her; in the dim light she fancied he bore some resemblance to the slave that her father had bought the day before; but she paid no particular heed, for her mind was full of so many other things. In the kitchen sat the old negress in front of a lamp and the children squatted round her; by the hearth sat the baker and the butcher, to whom her father owed considerable sums and who had come to claim their dues, for ill news has swifter wings than good tidings, and they had already heard of the steward's death. Arsinoe took the lamp, begged the men to wait, went into the sitting-room, passing, not without a shudder, the body of the man who a few hours since had stroked her cheeks and looked lovingly into her eyes.

How glad she felt to be able to pay her dead father's debts and save the honor of his name! She confidently drew the key out of her pocket and went up to the chest. What was this? She knew, quite positively, that she had locked it before going out and yet it was now standing wide open; the lid, thrown back, hung askew by one hinge; the other was broken. A dread, a hideous suspicion, froze her blood; the lamp trembled in her hand as she leaned over the chest which ought to have contained every thing she possessed. There lay the old documents, carefully rolled together, side by side, but the two bags with Plutarch's money and the Emperor's, had vanished. She took out one roll after another; then she tossed them all out on to the floor till the bottom of the chest was bare—but the gold was really gone, nowhere to be found.

The new slave had forced open the lid of the chest and stolen the whole possessions of the orphans of the man who, to gratify his own vanity, had brought him into the house.

Arsinoe screamed aloud, called in her creditors, explained to them all that had occurred and implored them to pursue the thief; and when they only listened to her with an incredulous shrug, she swore that she was speaking the truth, and promised that whether the slave were caught or

not she would pay them with the price of her own and her father's personal ornaments. She knew the name of the dealer of whom her father had bought the slave and told it to the unsatisfied dealers, who at last left her to follow up the thief as promptly as possible.

Once more Arsinoe was alone. Tearless, but shivering and scarcely mistress of herself from misery and agitation, she took out her veil, flung it over her head, and hurried through the court and along the streets to her sister.

Verily, since Sabina's visit to the palace all good spirits had deserted it.

## CHAPTER XI.

In a perfectly dark spot by the wall of the widow's garden, stood the cynic philosopher who had met Antinous with so little courtesy, defending himself eagerly, but in low tones against the rebukes of another man, who, dressed, like himself in a ragged cloak and bearing a beggar's wallet, appeared to be one of the same kidney.

"Do not deny," said the latter, "that you cling much to the Christians."

"But hear me out," urged the other.

"I need hear nothing, for I have seen you for the tenth time sneaking in to one of their meetings."

"And do I deny it? Do I not honestly confess that I seek truth wherever I may, where I see even a gleam of hope of finding it?"

"Like the Egyptian who wanted to catch the miraculous fish, and at last flung his hook into the sand."

"The man acted very wisely."

"What now!"

"A marvel is not to be found just where everything else is. In hunting for truth you must not be afraid of a bog."

"And the Christian doctrine seems to be very much such a muddy thicket."

"Call it so for aught I care."

"Then beware lest you find yourself sticking in the morass."

"I will take care of myself."

"You said just now that there were decent folks among them."

"A few no doubt. But the others! eternal gods! mere slaves, beggars, ruined handicraftsmen, common people, untaught and unphilosophical brains, and women, for the most part."

"Avoid them then."

"You ought to be the last to give me that advice."

"What do you mean?"

The other went close up to him and asked him in a whisper:

"Why, where do you suppose I get the money with which I pay for our food and lodging?"

"So long as you do not steal it, it is all the same to me."

"If I had no more, you would ask the question fast enough."

"Certainly not, we strive after virtue and ought to do everything to render ourselves independent of nature and her cravings. But to be sure she often asserts her rights—to return then: where do you get the money?"

"Why, it burns in the purses of the people in there. It is their duty to give to the poor, and to tell the truth, their pleasure also; and so week by week they give me a few drachmae for my suffering brother."

"Bah! you are the only son of your father, and he is dead."

"'All men are brethren' say the Christians, consequently I may call you mine without lying."

"Join them then for aught I care," laughed the other. "How would it be if I followed you among the Christians? Perhaps they would give me weekly money too, for my suffering brother, and then we could have double meals."

The cynics laughed loudly and parted; one went back into the city, the other into the garden belonging to the Christian widow.

Arsinoe had entered here before the dishonest philosopher and had gone straight to Hannah's house without being detained by the gate-keeper. As she got nearer to her destination, she tried more and more earnestly to

devise some way in which she might inform her sister of all the dreadful things that had happened, and which she must learn sooner or later, without giving her too great a shock. Her dread was not much less than her grief. As she reflected on the last few days and on all that had occurred, it almost seemed as though she herself had been the cause of the misfortunes of her family.

On the way to see Selene she could shed no tears, but she could not help softly moaning to herself now and then. A woman, who for some distance had kept pace with her, thought she must be suffering some severe bodily pain, and when the girl passed her, she looked after her with sincere compassion, the wailing of the desolate young creature had sounded so piteous.

True, midway, Arsinoe had suddenly stopped and had thought that instead of going to Selene for advice, she would turn round and seek Pollux and ask him to help her. The thought of her lover forced its way through all her sorrow and anxiety, through the reproaches she heaped upon herself and the vague plans floating in the air which her brain—unaccustomed to any serious thought, vainly tried to sketch for the future. He was kind, and would certainly be ready to help her; but maidenly modesty held her back from seeking him at so late an hour; besides, how could she discover him or his parents?

The place where her sister was she was now familiar with, and no one could judge of their position better or give sounder counsel than prudent Selene. So she had not turned round, but had hurried on to reach her destination as soon as possible; and now she was standing before the little house in the garden. Before opening the door she once more considered in what way she could prepare Selene and tell her terrible news, and, as all that happened stood vividly before her mind's eye, she began to weep once more.

In front of her, and following her, men and veiled women, singly or in couples or in larger groups, passed into Paulina's garden. They came from workshops and writing-rooms, from humble houses in narrow lanes, and from the handsomest and largest in the main street. Each and all, from the wealthy merchant down to the slave who could not call the coarse tunic or scanty apron that he wore, his own, walked gravely and with a certain dignified reserve. All who met within that gate greeted each other as friends; the master gave a brotherly kiss to the servant, the slave to his owner; for the congregation to which they all belonged was as one body, animated and dwelt in by Christ, so that each member was esteemed as equal to the others however different their gifts of body or mind might be, or the worldly possessions with which they were endowed. Before God and his Saviour the rich ship-owner or the grey-haired sage stood no higher than the defenceless widow and the ignorant slave crippled with blows. Still, the members of the community submitted to those more implicitly than to these, for the special talents which graced certain superior Christians were gifts of grace from the Lord, readily

acknowledged as such and, so far as they concerned the inner man, deemed worthy of honor.

On Sunday, the day of the Resurrection of the Lord, all Christians, without exception, visited their place of assembly for divine worship. To-day, being the middle of the week, all who could or chose came to the love-feast at Paulina's suburban house. She herself dwelt in the city and she had placed the banqueting hall of her villa, which would hold more than a hundred souls, at the disposal of her fellow Christians in that quarter of the town. The regular service was held in the morning, but after the day's labor was ended the Christians met at one table to have an evening meal in common, or—on other occasions to partake of the sacramental supper. After sunset the elders, deacons, and deaconesses—most of whom, so long as it was light, had secular work to attend to—met to take counsel together.

Paulina, the widow of Pudeus and sister of Pontius the architect, was a woman of considerable property and at the same time a prudent steward, who did not consider herself justified in seriously impairing her son's inheritance. This son was residing at Smyrna as a partner in an uncle's business, and always avoided Alexandria, as he did not like his mother's intercourse with the Christians. Paulina took the most anxious care not to make any inroads on the capital intended for him, and never allowed her hospitality to her fellow-believers to cost her any more than it did the other wealthy members of the circle that met at her house. There the rich brought more than they needed for themselves and the poor were always welcome; not feeling themselves oppressed by the benevolence they profited by, for they were often told that their entertainer was not a mortal, but the Saviour, who invited each one who followed him faithfully to be his guest.

The hour was approaching which would summon dame Hannah to join the assembly of her fellow Christians. She could not fail to appear, for she was one of the deaconesses entrusted with the distribution of alms and the care of the sick. She noiselessly made her preparations for going, carefully setting the lamp behind the water-pitcher so that it should not dazzle Selene, and she desired Mary to be exact in administering the medicine to her patient. She knew that the girl had yesterday attempted to make away with herself, and guessed the cause; but she asked no questions and disturbed the poor child, who slept a good deal or lay dreaming with open eyes, as little as possible. The old physician wondered at her sound constitution, for since her plunge into the water the fever had left her and even the injured foot was not much the worse. Hannah might now hope the best for Selene if no unforeseen contingency checked her recovery. To prevent this the unfortunate girl was never to be left alone, and Mary had gladly agreed with her friend to fill her place whenever she was obliged to leave the house.

The meeting of the elders and guardians had already begun when Hannah took her tablets in her hand, on which was noted the distribution she had

made of the money entrusted to her during the last week. She greeted the sick girl and Mary with a kindly look and whispered to the deformed girl:

"I will think of thee in my prayers thou faithful soul. There is some food in the little cupboard—not much, for we must be sparing, the last medicine was so dear."

In the little anteroom a lamp was burning which Mary had lighted as it began to grow dark, and the widow paused for a moment, considering whether she should not extinguish it to save the oil. She had taken up the tongs that hung by it, and was about to put it out, when she heard a gentle tap at the house-door. Before she could enquire who it was that asked admission at so late an hour, the door was opened and Arsinoe entered the little hall. Her eyes were still full of tears and she had great difficulty in finding words to return Hannah's greeting.

"Why what ails you my child?" asked the Christian anxiously when by the dim light, she saw how tearful and sad the girl looked. Arsinoe was long before she could answer. At last she collected herself sufficiently to sob out amid her tears:

"Oh dame Hannah! It is all over with us—my father, our poor father—"

The widow guessed at the blow that had fallen on the sisters and full of anxiety on Selene's account she interrupted the weeping child saying:

"Hush, hush my child—Selene must not hear you. Come out with me and then you can tell me all." Once outside the door Hannah put her arm round Arsinoe drew her towards her, kissed her forehead, and said:

"Now speak and tell me every thing; think that I am your mother or your sister. Poor Selene is still too weak to advise or help you. Take courage. What happened to your poor father?"

"Struck by apoplexy, dead—dead!" wept the girl. Poor, dear little orphan," said the widow in a husky voice and she clasped Arsinoe closely in her arms. For some time she allowed the girl to weep silently on her bosom; then she spoke:

"Give me your hand my daughter and tell me how it has all happened so suddenly. Your father was quite well yesterday and now? Yes my girl life is a grave matter, you have to learn it while you are still young. I know you have six little brothers and sisters and perhaps you may soon lack even the necessaries of life. But that is no disgrace; I am certainly even poorer than you and yet, by God's help, I hope to be able to advise you and perhaps even to assist you. Every thing that I can possibly do shall be done, but first I must know how matters stand with you and what you need."

There was so much kindness and consolation in the Christian's tones, so much to revive hope that Arsinoe willingly complied with her demand and began her story.

At first, to be sure, her pride shunned confessing how poor, how absolutely destitute they were; but Hannah's questions soon brought the truth to light; and when Arsinoe perceived that the widow understood the misfortunes of their house in their fullest extent, and that it would be unavailing to conceal how matters stood with her and the children, she yielded to the growing impulse to relieve her soul by pouring out her griefs and described frankly and without reserve the whole position of the family, to the good woman who listened with attention and sympathy. The widow asked about each child separately, and ended by enquiring who, in Arsinoe's absence, was left in charge of the little ones; and when she heard that the old slave-woman to whose care the children were entrusted, was infirm and half-blind, she shook her head thoughtfully.

"Here help is needed and at once," she said decidedly. "You must go back to the little ones presently. Your sister must not at present hear of your father's death; when your future lot is to some extent secure we will tell her by degrees all that has occurred. Now come with me, it is by the Lord's guidance that you came here at the right moment."

Hannah conducted Arsinoe to Paulina's villa, first into a small room at the side of the entrance hall, where the deaconesses took off their veils and their warm wraps in winter evenings. There the girl could be alone, and safe from inquisitive questionings which could not fail to be painful to her. Hannah desired her to await her return, and then joined her colleagues.

In order to do so she had to pass through the room where the elders and deacons were sitting in council. The bishop, who presided over the assembly, sat on a raised seat at the head of an oblong table, and on his right hand and his left sat a number of elderly men, some of whom seemed to be of Jewish or Egyptian extraction but most of them were Greeks. In these the lofty intellectual brow was conspicuous, in those a bright, ecstatic expression particularly in the eyes. Hannah went past the assembly with a reverential greeting into the adjoining room in which the deaconesses sat waiting, for women were not admitted to join or hear the deliberations of the elders. The bishop, a fine old man with a full white beard; raised his kindly eyes as the door closed upon Hannah, fixed them for a few moments on the tips of his fingers that he had raised and then addressed the presbyter who had presented for baptism several candidates who had been grounded during the past year in the Christian faith and doctrine, as follows:

"Most of the catechumens you have presented to me cling faithfully no doubt to the Redeemer. They believe in Him and love Him. But have they attained to that sanctification, that new birth in Christ, which alone can justify us in admitting them through baptism among the lambs of our

Good Shepherd? Let us beware of the tainted sheep which may infect the whole flock. Verily, in these latter years there has been no lack of them, and they have been received among us and have brought the name of Christian into evil repute. Shall I give you an example? There was an Egyptian in Rhakotis; few seemed to strive so fervently as he for the remission of his sins. He could fast for many days, and yet no sooner was he baptized than he broke into a goldsmith's shop. He was condemned to death, and before his end he sent for me and confessed to me that in former years he had soiled his soul with many robberies and murders. He had hoped to win forgiveness of his sins by the act of baptism, the mere washing in water, not by repentance and a new birth to a pure and holy life; and he had gone on boldly in new sin because he confidently hoped that he might again count on the unwearying mercy of the Saviour. Others again, who had been brought up in the practice of the ablutions which have to be performed by those who are initiated into the deeper secrets of the heathen mysteries, regarded baptism as an act of purification, a mystical process of happy augury, or at the best a figurative purification of the soul, and crowded to receive it. Here, in Alexandria, the number of these deluded ones is especially great; for where could any superstition find a more favorable soil than in this seat of philosophical half-culture, or over-culture; of the worship of Serapis, of astrology, of societies of Mystics, of visionaries and exorcisers, and of incredulity—the twin-sister of credulity. Be cautious then to hold back from baptism all those who regard it as a preserving charm or an act of good omen—remembering that the same water which, sprinkled on sanctified hearts, leads them to holy living, brings death to the unclean soul. It is your turn to speak, Irenaeus.”

”I only have to say,” began the young Christian thus designated, ”that I have recently met among the catechumens with some who have attached themselves to us from the basest motives. I mean the idlers who are glad to receive our alms. Have you noticed here a cynic philosopher whose starving brother we maintain? Our deacon Clemens has just ascertained that he is the only son of his father—”

”We will investigate this matter more closely when we discuss the distribution of alms,” replied the bishop. ”Here we have petitions from several women who desire to have their children baptized; this question we cannot decide here; it must be referred to the next Synod. So far as I am concerned, I should be inclined not to reject the prayer of the mothers. Wherein does the utmost aim of the Christian life consist? It seems to me in being perfectly conformable to the example of the Saviour. And was not he a Man among men, a Youth among the young, a Child among children? Did not His existence lend sanctity to every age, and especially childhood? He commanded that little children should be brought to Him, and He promised them the Kingdom of Heaven. Wherefore then should we exclude them and deny them baptism?”

”I cannot share your views,” replied a presbyter with a high forehead and sunken eyes. ”We ought no doubt to follow the Saviour, but those who

tread in His steps should do so of their own free choice, out of love for Him, and after He has sanctified their souls. What is the sense of a new birth in a life that has scarcely begun.

"Your discourse," replied the bishop, "only confirms my opinion that this question is one for a higher assembly. We will now close our discussion of that point, and go on to the care of the poor. Call in the women, my good Justinus."

The deaconesses came into the room and took seats at the lower end of the table, Paulina, the widow of Pudeus, taking her place opposite the bishop in the middle of the other women. She had learnt from Selene's kind nurse in what pressing difficulties the children of the deceased steward now found themselves, and that Hannah had promised to assist them.

The deacons first gave their reports of what their works had been among the poor; after them the women were allowed to speak. Paulina, a tall, slight woman with black hair faintly streaked with gray, drew from her dress, which was perfectly plain, but made of particularly soft, fine white woollen stuff—a tablet that she placed before her, and slowly raising her eyes and looking at the assembly she said:

"Dame Hannah has a melancholy story to tell you, for which I crave your sympathy. Will you be so good as to allow her to speak?"

Paulina seemed to feel that she was the hostess to her brethren. She looked ill and suffering; a line of pain had settled about her lips, and there were always dark shades under her eyes; still, there was something firm and decisive in her voice, and her glance was anything rather than soft and winning. After her commanding tones Hannah's tale sounded as soft as a song. She described the different natures of the two sisters as lovingly as though they were her own daughters, each in her own way seemed to her so worthy of compassion, and she spoke with pathetic lament of the unprotected, helpless orphans abandoned to misery, and among them a pretty little blind boy. And she ended her speech by saying:

"The steward's second daughter—she is sixteen and so beautiful that she must be exposed to every temptation—has now the whole charge of the nourishment and care of her six young brothers and sisters. Ought we to withhold from them a protecting hand? No, so surely as we love the Saviour we ought not. You agree with me? Well then, do not let us delay our help. The second daughter of the deceased Keraunus is here, in this house; to-morrow early the children must all quit the palace, and now, while I am speaking, are at home alone and but ill tended."

The Christian woman's good words fell on kindly soil, and the presbyters and deacons determined to recommend the congregation who should assemble at the love-feast to give their assistance to the steward's children.

The elders had still much to discuss, so Hannah and Paulina were charged

with the task of appealing to the hearts of the well-to-do members of the congregation to provide for the orphans. The poor widow first conducted her wealthy friend and hostess to the little room where Arsinoe was waiting with growing impatience. She looked paler than usual but, in spite of her tear-reddened eyes which she kept fixed on the ground, she was so lovely, so touchingly lovely, that the mere sight of her moved Paulina's heart. She had once had two children, an only daughter besides her son. The girl had died in the spring-time of her maidenhood, and Paulina thought of her at every hour of her life. It was for her sake that she had been baptized and devoted her existence to a series of painful sacrifices. She strove with all her might to be a good Christian—for surely she, the self-denying woman who had taken up the cross of her own free will, the suffering creature who loved stillness and who had made her country-house, which she visited daily, a scene of unrest, could not fail to win Heaven, and there she hoped to meet her innocent child.

Arsinoe reminded her of her Helena, who certainly had been far less fair than the steward's lovely daughter, but whose image had assumed new and glorified forms in the mother's faithful heart. Since her son had left home for a foreign country she had often asked herself whether she might not find some young creature to take into her home, to attach to herself, to bring up as a Christian, and to bring as an offering to her Saviour's feet.

Her daughter had died a heathen, and nothing troubled Paulina so deeply as that her soul was lost, and that her own struggling and striving for grace could not lead her to the goal beyond the grave. No sacrifice seemed too great to purchase her child's beatitude, and now, standing before Arsinoe and looking at her with deep emotion and admiration, she was seized with an idea which swiftly ripened to resolve. She would win this sweet soul for the Redeemer, and implore Him with ceaseless prayers to save her hapless child as a reward for the work of grace in Arsinoe's soul; and she felt as if she had signed the compact with the Redeemer, when, fully determined on this course, she went up to the girl and asked her:

"You are quite forlorn, quite without relations?" Arsinoe bowed her head in assent, and Paulina went on:

"And do you bear your loss with resignation?"

"What is resignation?" asked the girl modestly. Hannah laid her hand on the widow's arm and whispered:

"She is a heathen."

"I know it," said Paulina shortly, and then went on kindly but positively:

"You and yours have lost both parents and a home by your father's death. You shall find a new home in my house, with me; I ask nothing of you in return but your love."

Arsinoe looked at the haughty lady in astonishment. She could not yet feel any impulse of affection towards her, and she did not as yet understand that what was required of her was the one gift which the best will, the most loving heart in the world, could not offer at a command. Paulina did not wait for her reply, but signed to Hannah to follow her to join the congregation now assembled at the evening meal.

A quarter of an hour later the two women returned. The steward's orphans were provided for. Two or three Christian families were ready and willing to take in some of them, and many a kindly house-mother had begged to have the blind child; but in vain, for Hannah had claimed the right to bring up the hapless little boy in her own house, at any rate for the present. She knew how Selene clung to him, and hoped by his presence to be able to work powerfully on the crushed and chilled heart of the poor girl.

Arsinoe did not contravene the arrangements of the two women. She thanked them, indeed, for she felt that she once more stood on firm ground, but she also was immediately aware that it would be strewn with sharp stones. The thought of parting from her little brothers and sisters was terrible and cruel, and never left her mind for an instant, while, accompanied by Hannah in person, she made her way back to Lochias.

The next morning her kind friend appeared again and led her and the little troupe to Paulina's town-house. The steward's creditors divided his little possessions; nothing but the chest of papyri followed the girl to her new home. The hour in which the fondly-linked circle of children was riven asunder, when one child was taken here and another there, was the bitterest which Arsinoe had ever experienced or ever could experience through all the after years of her life.

## CHAPTER XII.

A lovely garden adjoined the Caesareum, the palace in which Sabina was residing. Balbilla was fond of lingering there, and as the morning of the twenty-ninth of December was particularly brilliant—the sky and its infinite mirror the sea, gleaming in indescribably deep blue, while the fragrance of a flowering shrub was wafted in at her window like an invitation to quit the house she had sought a certain bench which, though placed in a sunny spot, was slightly shaded by an acacia. This seat was screened from the more public paths by bushes; the promenaders who did not seek Balbilla could not observe her here, but she could command a

view, through a gap in the foliage, of the path, which was strewn with small shells.

To-day, however, the young poetess was far from feeling any curiosity; instead of gazing at the shrubbery enlivened by birds, at the clear atmosphere or the sparkling sea, her eyes were fixed on a yellow roll of papyrus and she was impressing very dry details on her retentive memory.

She had determined to keep her word to learn to speak, write, and compose verses in the Aeolian dialect of the Greek tongue. She had chosen for her teacher Apollonius, the great grammarian, who was apt to call his scholars "the dullards;" and the work which was the present object of her studies was derived from the famous library of the Serapeum, which far exceeded in completeness that of the Museum since the siege of Julius Caesar in the Bruchiom, when the great Museum library was burnt.

Any one observing Balbilla at her occupation could hardly have believed that she was studying. There was no fixed effort in her eyes or on her brow; still, she read line for line, not skipping a single word; only she did it not like a man who climbs a mountain with sweat on his brow, but like a lounging man who walks in the main street of some great city, and is charmed at every new and strange thing that meets his eye. Each time she came upon some form of structure in the book she was reading that had been hitherto unknown to her, she was so delighted that she clapped her hands and laughed out softly. Her learned master had never before met with so cheerful a student, and it annoyed him, for to him science was a serious matter while she seemed to make a joke of it, as she did of every thing, and so desecrated it in his eyes. After she had been sitting an hour on the bench, studying in her own way, she rolled up the book and stood up to refresh herself a little. Feeling sure that no one could see her, she stretched herself in all her limbs and then stepped up to the gap in the shrubbery in order to see who a man in boots might be who was pacing up and down in the broad path beyond.

It was the praetor—and yet it was not! Verus, under this aspect at any rate, she had never seen till now. Where was the smile that was wont to twinkle in his merry eye like the sparkle of a diamond and to play saucily about his lips—where the unwrinkled serenity of his brow and the defiantly audacious demeanor of his whole handsome person? He was slowly striding up and down with a gloomy fire in his eye, a deeply-lined brow, and his head sunk on his breast: and yet it was not bowed with sorrow. If so, could he have snapped his fingers in the air as he did just as he passed in front of Balbilla, as much as to say: "Come what may! to-day I live and laugh the future in the face!"

But this vestige of his old reckless audacity did not last longer than the time it took to part his fingers again, and the next time Verus passed Balbilla he looked, if possible, more gloomy than before. Something very unpleasant must have arisen to spoil the good humor of her friend's husband; and the poetess was sincerely sorry; for, though she

herself had daily to suffer under the praetor's impertinence, she always forgave it for the sake of the graceful form in which he knew how to clothe his incivilities.

Balbilla longed to see Verus content once more, and she therefore came forth from her hiding place. As soon as he saw her he altered the expression of his features and cried out as brightly as ever:

"Welcome, fairest of the fair!"

She made believe not to recognize him, but, as she passed him and bowed her curly head, she said gravely and in deep tones:

"Good day to you, Timon."

"Timon?" he asked, taking her hand.

"Ah! is it you, Verus?" she answered, as though surprised. "I thought the Athenian misanthrope had quitted Hades and come to take the air in this garden."

"You thought rightly," replied the praetor. "But when Orpheus sings the trees dance, the Muse can turn dull, motionless stones into a Bacchante, and when Balbilla appears Timon is at once transformed into the happy Verus."

"The miracle does not astonish me," laughed the girl. "But is it permitted to ask what dark spirit so effectually produced the contrary result, and made a Timon of the fair Lucilla's happy husband?"

"I ought rather to beware of letting you see the monster, or our joyous muse Balbilla might easily become the sinister Hecate. But the malicious sprite is close at hand, for he is hidden in this little roll."

"A document from Caesar?"

"Oh! no, only a letter from a Jew."

"Possibly the father of some fair daughter!"

"Wrongly guessed—as wrong as possible!"

"You excite my curiosity."

"Mine has already been satisfied by this roll. Horace is wise when he says that man should never trouble himself about the future."

"An oracle!"

"Something of the kind."

"And can that darken this lovely morning to you? Did you ever see me melancholy? Yet my future is threatened by a prophecy—such a hideous prophecy."

"The fate of men is different to the destiny of women."

"Would you like to hear what was prophesied of me?"

"What a question!"

"Listen then; the saying I will repeat to you came to me from no less an oracle than the Delphic Pythia:

"That which thou boldest most precious and dear  
Shall be torn from thy keeping,  
And from the heights of Olympus,  
Down shalt thou fall in the dust."

"Is that all?"

"Nay—two consolatory lines follow."

"And they are—?"

"Still the contemplative eye  
Discerns under mutable sand drifts  
Stable foundations of stone,  
Marble and natural rock."

"And you are inclined to complain of this oracle?"

"Is it so pleasant to have to wade through dust? We have enough of that intolerable nuisance here in Egypt—or am I to be delighted at the prospect of hurting my feet on hard stones?"

"And what do the interpreters say?"

"Only silly nonsense."

"You have never found the right one; but I—I see the meaning of the oracle."

"You?"

"Ay, I! The stern Balbilla will at last descend from the lofty Olympus of her high-anti-mightiness and no longer disdain that immutable foundation-rock, the adoration of her faithful Verus."

"That foundation—that rock!" laughed the girl. "I should think it as well advised to try to walk on the surface of the sea out there as on that rock!"

"Only try."

"It is not necessary; Lucilla has made the experiment for me. Your interpretation is wrong; Caesar gave me a far better one."

"What was that?"

"That I should give up writing poetry and devote myself to strict scientific studies. He advised me to try astronomy."

"Astronomy," repeated Verus, growing graver. Farewell, fair one; I must go to Caesar!"

"We were with him yesterday at Lochias. How everything is changed there! The pretty little gate house is gone, there is nothing more to be seen of all the cheerful bustle of builders and artists, and what were gay workshops are turned into dull, commonplace halls. The screens in the hall of the Muses had to go a week ago, and with them the young scatter-brain who set himself against my curls with so much energy that I was on the point of sacrificing them—"

"Without them you would no longer be Balbilla," cried Verus eagerly. "The artist condemns all that is not permanently beautiful, but we are glad to see any thing that is graceful, and can find pleasure in it with the other children of the time. The sculptor may dress his goddesses after the fashion of graver days and the laws of his art, but mortal women—if he is wise—after the fashion of the day. However, I am heartily sorry for that clever, genial young fellow. He has offended Caesar and was turned out of the palace, and now he is nowhere to be found."

"Oh!" cried Balbilla, full of regret, "poor man—and such a fine fellow! And my bust? we must seek him out. If the opportunity offers I will entreat Caesar—"

"Hadrian will hear nothing about him. Pollux has offended him deeply."

"From whom do you know that?"

"From Antinous."

"We saw him, too, only yesterday," cried Balbilla, eagerly.

"If ever a man was permitted to wear the form of a god among mortals, it is he."

"Romantic creature!"

"I know no one who could look upon him with indifference. He is a beautiful dreamer, and the trace of suffering which we observed yesterday in his countenance is probably nothing more than the outward expression of that obscure regret, felt by all that is perfect, for the joy of development and conscious ripening into an incarnation of the ideal in its own kind, of which he is an instance in himself."

The poetess spoke the last words in a rapt tone, as if the form of a god was then and there before her eyes. Verus had listened to her with a smile, but now he interrupted her, and, holding up a warning finger, he said:

"Poetess, philosopher, and sweetest maiden, beware of descending from your Olympus for the sake of this boy! When imagination and dreaminess meet half-way they make a pair which float in the clouds and never even suspect the existence of that firmer ground of which your oracle speaks."

"Nonsense," said Balbilla crossly. "Before we can fall in love with a statue, Prometheus must animate it with a soul and fire from heaven."

"But often," retorted the praetor, "Eros proves to be a substitute for that unhappy friend of the gods."

"The true or the sham Eros," asked Balbilla testily.

"Certainly not the sham Eros," replied Verus. "On this occasion he merely plays the part of a kindly monitor, taking the place of Pontius, the architect, of whom your worthy matron-companion is so much afraid. During the tumult of the Dionysiac festival you are reported to have carried on as grave a discussion as any two gray-bearded philosophers walking in the Stoa among attentive students."

"With intelligent men, no doubt, we talk with intelligence!"

"Aye, and with stupid ones gayly. How much reason have I to be thankful that I am one of the stupid ones. Farewell, till we meet again, fair Balbilla," and the praetor hurried off.

Outside the Caesareum he got into his chariot and set out for Lochias. The charioteer held the reins, while he himself gazed at the roll in his hand which contained the result of the calculations of the astrologer, Rabbi Simeon Ben Jochai; and this was certainly likely enough to disturb the cheerfulness of the most reckless of men.

When, during the night which preceded the praetor's birthday, the Emperor should study the heavens with special reference to the position of the stars at his birth, he would find that, as far as till the end of the second hour after midnight all the favorable planets promised Verus a

happy lot, success and distinction. But, with the commencement of the third hour—so said Ben Jochai—misfortune and death would take possession of his house of destiny; in the fourth hour his star would vanish, and anything further that might declare itself in the sky during that night would have nothing more to do with him, or his destiny. The Emperor's star would triumph over his. Verus could make out but little of the signs and calculations in the tables annexed by the Jew, but that little confirmed what was told in the written statement.

The praetor's horses carried him swiftly along while he reflected on what remained for him to do under these unfavorable circumstances, in order not to be forced to give up entirely the highest goal of his ambition. If the Rabbi's observations were accurate—and of this Verus did not for a moment doubt—all his hopes of adoption were at an end in spite of Sabina's support. How should Hadrian choose for his son and successor a man who was destined to die before him? How could he, Verus, expect that Caesar should ally his fortunate star with the fatal star of another doomed to die?

These reflections did nothing to help him, and yet he could not escape from them, till suddenly his charioteer pulled up the horses abruptly by the side of the footway to make room for a delegation of Egyptian priests who were going in procession to Lochias. The powerful hand with which his servant had promptly controlled the fiery spirit of the animals excited his approbation, and seemed to inspire him to put a clog boldly on the wheels of speeding fate. When they were no longer detained by the Egyptian delegates he desired the charioteer to drive slowly, for he wished to gain time for consideration.

"Until the third hour after midnight," said he to himself. "all is to go well; it is not till the fourth hour that signs are to appear in the sky which are of evil augury for me. Of course the sheep will play round the dead lion, and the ass will even spurn him with his hoof so long as he is merely sick. In the short space of time between the third and fourth hours all the signs of evil are crowded together. They must be visible; but"—and this "but" brought sudden illumination to the praetor's mind, "why should Caesar see them?"

The anxious aspirant's heart beat faster, his brain worked more actively, and he desired the driver to make a short circuit, for he wanted to gain yet more time for the ideas that were germinating in his mind to grow and ripen.

Verus was no schemer; he walked in at the front door with a free and careless step, and scorned to climb the backstairs. Only for the greatest object and aim of his life was he prepared to sacrifice his inclinations, his comfort and his pride, and to make unhesitating use of every means at hand. For the sake of that he had already done many things which he regretted, and the man who steals one sheep out of the flock is followed by others without intending it. The first degrading

action that a man commits is sure to be followed by a second and a third. What Verus was now projecting he regarded as being a simple act of self-defence; and after all, it consisted merely in detaining Hadrian for an hour, interrupting him in an idle occupation—the observation of the stars.

There were two men who might be helpful to him in this matter—Antinous and the slave Mastor. He first thought of Mastor; but the Sarmatian was faithfully devoted to his master and could not be bribed. And besides!—No! it really was too far beneath him to make common cause with a slave. But he could count even less on support from Antinous. Sabina hated her husband's favorite, and for her sake Verus had never met the young Bithynian on particularly friendly terms. He fancied, too, that he had observed that the quiet, dreamy lad kept out of his way. It was only by intimidation, probably, that the favorite could be induced to do him a service.

At any rate, the first thing to be done was to visit Lochias and there to keep a lookout with his eyes wide open. If the Emperor were in a happy frame of mind he might, perhaps, be induced to appear during the latter part of the night at the banquet which Verus was giving on the eve of his birthday, and at which all that was beautiful to the eye and ear was to be seen and heard; or a thousand favoring and helpful accidents might occur—and at any rate the Rabbi's forecast furnished him good fortune for the next few years.

As he dismounted from his chariot in the newly-paved forecourt and was conducted to the Emperor's anteroom he looked as bright and free from care as if the future lay before him sunny and cloudless.

Hadrian now occupied the restored palace, not as an architect from Rome but as sovereign of the world; he had shown himself to the Alexandrians and had been received with rejoicings and an unheard-of display in his honor. The satisfaction caused by the imperial visit was everywhere conspicuous and often found expression in exaggerated terms; indeed the council had passed a resolution to the effect that the month of December, being that in which the city had had the honor of welcoming the 'Imperator,' should henceforth be called:

"Hadrianus." The Emperor had to receive one deputation after another and to hold audience after audience, and on the following morning the dramatic representations were to begin, the processions and games which promised to last through many days, or—as Hadrian himself expressed it—to rob him of at least a hundred good hours. Notwithstanding, the monarch found time to settle all the affairs of the state, and at night to question the stars as to the fate which awaited him and his dominions during all the seasons of the new year now so close at hand.

The aspect of the palace at Lochias was entirely changed. In the place of the gay little gate-house stood a large tent of gorgeous purple stuff,

in which the Emperor's body-guard was quartered, and opposite to it another was pitched for lictors and messengers. The stables were full of horses. Hadrian's own horse, Borysthenes, which had had too long a rest, pawed and stamped impatiently in a separate stall, and close at hand the Emperor's retrievers, boar-hounds and harriers were housed in hastily-contrived yards and kennels.

In the wide space of the first court soldiers were encamped, and close under the walls squatted men and women—Egyptians, Greeks and Hebrews—who desired to offer petitions to the sovereign. Chariots drove in and out, litters came and went, chamberlains and other officials hurried hither and thither. The anterooms were crowded with men of the upper classes of the citizens who hoped to be granted audience by the Emperor at the proper hour. Slaves, who offered refreshments to those who waited or stood idly looking on, were to be seen in every room, and official persons, with rolls of manuscript under their arms, bustled into the inner rooms or out of the palace to carry into effect the orders of their superior.

The hall of the Muses had been turned into a grand banqueting-hall. Papias, who was now on his way to Italy by the Emperor's command, had restored the damaged shoulder of the Urania. Couches and divans stood between the statues, and under a canopy at the upper end of the vast room stood a throne on which Hadrian sat when he held audience. On these occasions he always appeared in the purple, but in his writing-room, which he had not changed for another, he laid aside the imperial mantle and was no more splendid in his garb than the architect Claudius Venator had been.

In the rooms that had belonged to the deceased Keraunus now dwelt an Egyptian without wife or children—a stern and prudent man who had done good service as house-steward to the prefect Titianus, and the living-room of the evicted family now looked dreary and uninhabited. The mosaic pavement which had indirectly caused the death of Keraunus, was now on its way to Rome, and the new steward had not thought it worth while to fill up the empty, dusty, broken-up place which had been left in the floor of his room by the removal of the work of art, nor even to cover it over with mats. Not a single cheerful note was audible in the abandoned dwelling but the twitter of the birds which still came morning and evening to perch on the balcony, for Arsinoe and the children had never neglected to strew the parapet with crumbs for them at the end of each meal.

All that was gracious, all that was attractive in the old palace had vanished at Sabina's visit, and even Hadrian himself was a different man to what he had been a few days previously. The dignity with which he appeared in public was truly imperial and unapproachable, and even when he sat with his intimates in his favorite room he was grave, gloomy and taciturn. The oracle, the stars, and other signs announced some terrible catastrophe for the coming year with a certainty that he could not evade;

and the few careless days that he had been permitted to enjoy at Lochias had ended with unsatisfactory occurrences.

His wife, whose bitter nature struck him in all its repellent harshness here in Alexandria—where everything assumed sharper outlines and more accentuated movement than in Rome—had demanded of him boldly that he should no longer defer the adoption of the praetor.

He was anxious and unsatisfied; the infinite void in his heart yawned before him whenever he looked into his soul, and at every glance at the future of his external life a long course of petty trifles started up before him which could not fail to stand in the way of his unwearying impulse to work. Even the vegetative existence of his handsome favorite Antinous, untroubled as it was by the sorrows or the joys of life, had undergone a change. The youth was often moody, restless and sad. Some foreign influences seemed to have affected him, for he was no longer content to hang about his person like a shadow; no, he yearned for liberty, had stolen into the city several times, seeking there the pleasures of his age which formerly he had avoided.

Nay, a change had even come over his cheerful and willing slave Mastor. Only his hound remained always the same in unaltered fidelity.

And he himself? He was the same to-day as ten years since: different every day and at every hour of the day.

## CHAPTER XIII.

When Verus entered the palace Hadrian had returned thither but a few minutes previously from the city. The praetor was conducted through the reception-rooms to the private apartments, and here he had not long to wait, for Hadrian wished to speak with him immediately. He found the sovereign so thoroughly out of tune that he could not think of inviting him to his banquet. The Emperor restlessly paced the room while Verus answered his questions as to the latest proceedings of the Senate in Rome, but he several times interrupted his walk and gazed into the adjoining room.

Just as the praetor had concluded his report Argus set up a howl of delight and Antinous came into the room. Verus at once withdrew into the window and pretended to be absorbed in looking out on the harbor.

"Where have you been?" asked the Emperor, disregarding the praetor's presence.

"Into the city a little way," was the Bithynian's answer.

"But you know I cannot bear to miss you when I come home."

"I thought you would have been longer absent."

"For the future arrange so that I may be able to find you at whatever time I may seek you. Tell me, you do not like to see me vexed and worried?"

"No, my lord," said the lad and he raised a supplicating hand and looked beseechingly at his master.

"Then let it pass. But now for something else; how did this little phial come into the hands of the dealer Hiram?" As he spoke the Emperor took from his table the little bottle of Vasa Murrhina which the lad had given to Arsinoe and which she had sold to the Phoenician, and held it up before the favorite's eyes. Antinous turned pale, and stammered in great confusion. "It is incomprehensible—I cannot in the least recollect—"

"Then I will assist your memory," said the Emperor decidedly. "The Phoenician appears to me to be an honest man than that rogue Gabinus. In his collection, which I have just been to see, I found this gem, that Plotina—do you hear me, boy—that Trajan's wife Plotina, my heart's friend, never to be forgotten, gave me years ago. It was one of my dearest possessions and yet I thought it not too precious to give to you on your last birthday."

"Oh, my lord, my dear lord!" cried Antinous in a low tone and again lifting his eyes and hands in entreaty.

"Now, I ask you," continued Hadrian, gravely, and without allowing himself to yield to the lad's beseeching looks, "how could this object have passed into the possession of one of the daughters of the wretched palace-steward Keraunus from whom Hiram confessed that he had bought it?"

Antinous vainly strove for utterance; Hadrian however came to his aid by asking him more angrily than before:

"Did the girl steal it from you? Out with the truth!"

"No, no," replied the Bithynian quickly and decidedly. "Certainly not. I remember—wait a minute—yes, that was it.—You know it contained excellent balsam, and when the big dog threw down Selene—the steward's daughter is called Selene—threw her down the steps so that she lay hurt on the stones I fetched the phial and gave her the balsam."

"With the bottle that held it?" asked the Emperor looking at Antinous.

"Yes, my lord—I had no other."

"And she kept it and sold it at once."

"You know, of course, her father—"

"A gang of thieves!" snarled Hadrian.

"Do you know what has become of the girl?"

"Yes my lord," said Antinous trembling with alarm. "I will have her taken by the lictors," asserted the infuriated sovereign.

"No," said the lad positively. "No, you positively must not do that."

"No—? we shall see!"

"No, positively not, for at the same time you must know that Keraunus' daughter Selene—"

"Well?"

"She flung herself into the water in despair; yes, into the water, at night—into the sea."

"Oh!" said Hadrian more gently, "that certainly alters the case. The lictors would find it difficult to apprehend a shade and the girl has suffered the worst punishment of all.—But you? what shall I say to your perfidy? You knew the value of the gem. You knew how highly I valued it, and could part with it to such hands?"

"It contained the salve," stammered the boy. "How could I think—?"

The Emperor interrupted the boy, striking his forehead with his hand as he spoke:

"Aye, think—we have known unfortunately too long that thinking is not your strong point. This little bottle has cost me a pretty sum; still, as it once belonged to you I give it back to you again; I only require you to take better care of it this time. I shall ask for it again before long! But in the name of all the gods, boy, what is the matter? Am I so alarming that a simple question from me is enough to drive all the blood out of your cheeks? Really and truly, if I had not had the thing from Plotina I should have left it in the Phoenician's hands and not have made all this coil about it."

Antinous went quickly up to the Emperor to kiss his hand, but Hadrian pressed his lips to his brow with fatherly affection.

"Simpleton," he said, "if you want me to be pleased with you, you must be again just what you were before we came to Alexandria. Leave it to others to do things to vex me. You are created by the gods to delight

me.”

During Hadrian’s last words a chamberlain had entered the room to inform the Emperor that the deputation of the Egyptian priesthood had arrived to do homage to him. He immediately assumed the purple mantle and proceeded to the hall of the Muses where, surrounded by his court, he received the high-priests and spiritual fathers of the different temples of the Nile Valley, to be hailed by them as the Son of Sun-god, and to assure them and the religion they cherished his gracious countenance. He vouchsafed his consent to their prayer that he would add sanctity and happiness to the temples of the immortals which they served by gracing them with his presence, but set aside for the moment the question as to which town might be permitted to have the care of the recently-discovered Apis.

This audience took up several hours. Verus shirked the duty of attending it with Titianus and the other dignitaries of the court, and remained sitting motionless by the window; it was not till Hadrian was gone from the room that he came forward into it again. He was quite alone, for Antinous had left the room with the Emperor. The praetor’s remaining behind had not escaped the lad’s notice, but he sought to avoid him, for the domineering, mocking spirit of Verus repelled him. Besides this the terror which he had gone through, as well as the consciousness that he had been guilty of a lie and had daringly deceived his kind master, had upset a soul hitherto untainted by any subterfuge and had thrown him off his balance. He longed to be alone, for it would have been keenly painful to him at this moment to discuss indifferent subjects, or to be forced to affect an easy demeanor. He sat in his little room, before a table, with his face buried in his hands that rested on it.

Verus did not immediately follow him, for he understood what was passing in his mind and knew that here he could not escape him. In a few minutes all was still alike in the large room and in the small one. Then the praetor heard the door between the smaller room and the corridor hastily opened and immediately the Bithynian’s exclamation:

”At last, Mastor—have you seen Selene?”

With two long, noiseless steps Verus went close to the door leading into the adjoining room, and listened for the slave’s answer, though a less sharp ear than that of the praetor might have heard every syllable.

”How should I have seen her?” asked the Sarmatian sharply. ”She is still suffering and in bed. I gave your flowers to the deformed girl who takes care of her; but I will not do it again, you may rely upon it, not if you coax even more fondly than you did yesterday and promise me all Caesar’s treasure into the bargain! And what can you want with that wretched, pale-faced, innocent creature? I am but a poor slave, but I can tell you this—”

Here the Sarmatian broke off abruptly, and Verus rightly guessed that Antinous had remembered his presence in the Emperor's room and had signed to the slave to be silent.

But the listener had learnt enough. The favorite had told his master a lie, and the suicide of the steward's daughter was a pure romance. Who would have believed that the silent, dreamy lad had so much presence of mind, and such cunning powers of invention? The praetor's handsome face was radiant with satisfaction as he made these reflections, for now he had the Bithynian under his thumb, and now he knew how to accomplish all he wished. Antinous himself had indicated the right course when he had hastened to the Emperor with a gush of tenderness, in which the warmth was certainly not affected, to kiss his hand.

The favorite loved his master, and Verus could ground his demands on this love without exposing himself, or having to dread the Emperor's avenging hand in case of betrayal. He knocked at the door of the adjoining room with a firm hand, and then went confidently and composedly up to the Bithynian, told him that he had an important matter to discuss with him, begged him to return with him into the Emperor's room and then said, as soon as they were alone together:

"I am so unfortunate as not to be able to number you among my particular friends; but one strong sentiment we have in common. We both love Caesar."

"I love him, certainly," replied the lad.

"Well then, you must have it at heart to spare him all great sorrow, and to prevent grave apprehensions from paralyzing the pinions of his free and noble soul."

"No doubt."

"I knew I should find a colleague in you. See this roll. It contains the calculations and diagrams of the greatest astrologer of our time, and from these it is to be discovered that this night, from the end of the second hour of the morning till the beginning of the fourth, the stars will announce fearful disasters to our Sovereign. Do you understand?"

"Alas! perfectly."

"After that the indications of evil disappear. Now if we could only succeed in preventing Hadrian observing the heavens merely during the third hour after midnight we should preserve him from trouble and anxiety, which will torment and spoil his life. Who knows whether the stars may not be? But even if they tell the truth, misfortune, when it does come, always comes much too soon. Do you agree with me?"

"Your suggestion sounds a very sensible one—still I think—"

"It is both sensible and wise," said the praetor, shortly and decidedly, interrupting the boy. "And it must be your part to hinder Hadrian from marking the course of the stars from the end of the second to the beginning of the fourth hour after midnight."

"My part?" cried Antinous, startled.

"Yours—for you are the only person who can accomplish it."

"I?" repeated the Bithynian, greatly perturbed. "I—disturb Caesar in his observations!"

"It is your duty."

"But he never allows any one to disturb him at his studies, and if I were to attempt it he would be very angry and send me off in no time. No, no, what you ask is impossible."

"It is not only possible but imperatively necessary."

"That it certainly cannot be," replied Antinous, clasping his forehead in his hand. "Only listen! Hadrian has known for several days past that some great misfortune threatens him. I heard it from his own lips. If you know him at all you must know that he gazes at the stars not merely to rejoice in future happiness, but also to fortify himself against the disasters which threaten him or the state. What would crush a weaker man only serves to arm his bold spirit. He can bear all that may befall, and it would be a crime to deceive him."

"To cloud his heart and mind would be a greater," retorted Verus. "Devise some means of taking him away from his star-gazing for only an hour."

"I dare not, and even if I wished it, it could not be done. Do you suppose he follows me whenever I call?"

"But you know him; invent something which will be sure to make him come down from his watchtower."

"I cannot invent or think of any thing."

"Nothing?" asked Verus, going close tip to the Bithynian. "You just now gave striking proof to the contrary."

Antinous turned pale and the praetor went on:

"When you wanted to rescue the fair Selene from the lictors your swift invention threw her into the sea!"

"She did throw herself in, as truly as that the gods—"

"Stay, stay," cried the praetor. "No perjury, at least! Selene is living, you send her flowers, and if I should think proper to conduct Hadrian to the house of Paulina—"

"Oh!" cried Antinous lamentably enough, and grasping the Roman's hand. "You will not—you can not. Oh Verus! you will not do that."

"Simpleton," laughed the praetor, slapping the alarmed youth lightly on the shoulder. "What good could it do me to ruin you? I have only one thing at heart just now, and that is to save Caesar from care and anxiety. Keep him occupied only during the third hour after midnight and you may count on my friendship; but if out of fear or ill-will you refuse me your assistance you do not deserve your sovereign's favor and then you will compel me—"

"No more, no more!" cried Antinous interrupting his tormentor in despair.

"Then you promise me to carry out my wish?"

"Yes, by Hercules! Yes, what you require shall be done. But eternal gods! how am I to get Caesar—"

"That, my young friend, I leave with perfect confidence to you and your shrewdness."

"I am not shrewd—I can devise nothing," groaned the lad.

"What you could do out of terror of your master you can do still better for love of him," retorted the praetor. "The problem is an easy one; and if after all you should not succeed I shall feel it no less than my duty to explain to Hadrian how well Antinous can take care of his own interests and how badly of his master's peace of mind. Till to-morrow, my handsome friend—and if for the future you have flowers to send, my slaves are quite at your service."

With these words the praetor left the room, but Antinous stood like one crushed, pressing his brow against the cold porphyry pillar by the window. What Verus required of him did not seem to have any harm in it, and yet it was not right. It was treason to his noble master, whom he loved with tender devotion as a father, a wise, kind friend, and preceptor, and whom he revered and feared as though he were a god. To plot to hide impending trouble from him, as if he were not a man but a feeble weakling, was absurd and contemptible, and must introduce an error of unknown importance and extent into his sovereign's far-seeing predeterminations. Many other reasons against the praetor's demands crowded on him, and as each occurred to his mind he cursed his tardy spirit which never let him see or think the right thing till it was too

late. His first deceit had already involved him in a second.

He hated himself; he hit his forehead with his fists and sobbed aloud bitterly again and again, though he shed no tears. Still, in the midst of his self-accusation, the flattering voice made itself heard in his soul: "It is only to preserve your master from sorrow, and it is nothing wrong that you are asked to do." And each time that his inward ear heard these words he began to puzzle his brain to discover in what way it might be possible for him to tempt the Emperor, at the hour named, down from his watch-tower in the palace. But he could hit on no practicable plan.

"It cannot be done, no—it cannot be done!" he muttered to himself and then he asked himself if it were not even his duty to defy the praetor and to confess to Hadrian that he had deceived him in the morning. If only it had not been for the little bottle! Could he ever confess that he had heedlessly parted with this gift of all others from his master? No, it was too hard, it might cost him his sovereign's affection for ever. And if he contented himself with a half-truth and confessed, merely to anticipate the praetor's accusation, that Selene was still living, then he would involve the daughters of the hapless Keraunus in persecution and disgrace Selene whom he loved with all the devotion of a first passion, which was enhanced and increased by the hindrances that had come in its way. It was impossible to confess his guilt—quite impossible. The longer he thought, tormenting himself to find some way out of it all, the more confused he became, and the more impotent his efforts at resistance. The praetor had entangled him with thongs and meshes, and at every struggle to escape they only seemed knotted more closely round him.

His head began to ache sadly; and what an endless time Caesar was absent! He dreaded his return, and yet he longed for it. When at last Hadrian came in and signed to Master to relieve him of his imperial robes, Antinous slipped behind him, and silently and carefully fulfilled the slave's office. He felt uneasy and worried, and yet he forced himself to appear in good spirits during supper when he had to sit opposite the Emperor.

When, shortly before midnight, Hadrian rose from the table to go up to the watch-tower on the northern side of the palace, Antinous begged to be allowed to carry his instruments for him, and the Emperor, stroking his hair, said kindly:

"You are my dear and faithful companion. Youth has a right to go astray now and then so long as it does not entirely forget the path in which it ought to tread."

Antinous was deeply touched by these words, and he secretly pressed to his lips a fold of the Emperor's toga as he walked in front. It was as though he wanted to make amends in advance for the crime he had not yet committed.

Wrapped in his cloak he kept the Emperor silent company during his studies, till the close of the first hour after midnight. The sharp, north wind which blew through the darkness did his aching head good, and still he racked his wits for some pretext to attract Hadrian from his labors, but in vain. His tormented brain was like a dried-up well; bucket after bucket did he send down, but not one brought up the refreshing draught he needed. Nothing—nothing could he think of that could conduce to his end. Once he plucked up courage and said imploringly as he went close up to the Emperor: "Go down earlier to-night my lord; you really do not allow yourself enough rest and will injure your health."

Hadrian let him speak, and answered kindly:

"I sleep in the morning. If you are tired, go to bed now."

But Antinous remained, gazing, like his master, at the stars. He knew very few of the brilliant bodies by their names, but some of them were very dear to him, particularly the Pleiades which his father had pointed out to him and which reminded him of his home. There he had been so quiet and happy, and how wildly his anxious heart was throbbing now!

"Go to bed, the second hour is beginning," said Hadrian.

"Already!" said the boy; and as he reflected how soon that must be done which Verus had required of him, and then looked up again at the heavens, it seemed to him as though all the stars in the blue vault over his head had glided from their places and were dancing in wild and whirling confusion between the sky and the sea. He closed his eyes in his bewilderment; then, bidding his master good-night he lighted a torch and by its flaring and doubtful light descended from the tower.

Pontius had erected this slight structure expressly for Hadrian's nightly observations. It was built of timber and Nile-mud and stood up as a tall turret on the secure foundation of an ancient watch-tower built of hewn stone, which, standing among the low buildings that served as storehouses for the palace, commanded a free outlook over all the quarters of the sky. Hadrian, who liked to be alone and undisturbed when observing the heavens, had preferred this erection—even after he had made himself known to the Alexandrians—to the great observatory of the Serapeum, from which a still broader horizon was visible.

After Antinous had got out of the smaller and newer tower into the larger and older one he sat down on one of the lowest steps to collect his thoughts and to quiet his loudly-beating heart. His vain cogitations began all over again. Time slipped on-between the present moment and the deed to be done there were but a certain number of minutes. He told himself so, and his weary brain stirred more actively, suggesting to him to feign illness and bring the Emperor to his bedside. But Hadrian was

physician enough to see that he was well, and even if he should allow himself to be deceived, he, Antinous, was a deceiver. This thought filled him with horror of himself and with dread for the future, and yet it was the only plan that gave any hope of success. And even when he sprang to his feet and walked hastily up and down among the out-houses he could hit upon no other scheme. And how fast the minutes flew! The third hour after midnight must be quite close at hand, and he had scarcely left himself time to rush back into the palace, throw himself on his couch, and call Mastor. Quite bewildered with agitation and tottering like a drunken man he hastened back into the old tower where he had left his torch leaning against the wall and looked up the stone stairs; it suddenly flashed through his mind that he might go up again to fling himself down them. What did he care for his miserable life.

His fall, his cry, would bring the Emperor down from his observatory and he knew that he would not leave his bleeding favorite uncared for and untended he could count upon that. And if then Hadrian watched by his bed it would be that, perhaps, of a dying man, but not of a deceiver. Fully determined on extreme measures, he tightened the girdle which held his chiton above his hips and once more went out into the night to judge by the stars what hour it was. He saw the slender sickle of the waning moon—the same moon which at the full had been mirrored in the sea when he had gone into the water to save Selene. The image of the pale girl rose before him, tangibly distinct. He felt as if he held her once more in his arms—saw her once more lying on her bed—could once more press his lips to her cold brow. Then the vision vanished; instead he was possessed by a wild desire to see her, and he said to himself that he could not die without having seen her once more.

He looked about him in indecision. Before him lay one of the largest of the storehouses that surrounded the tower. With his torch in one hand he went in at the open door. In the large shed lay the chests and cases, the hemp, linseed, straw and matting that had been used in packing the vessels and works of art with which the palace had been newly furnished. This he knew; and now, looking up at the stars once more and seeing that the second hour after midnight had almost run to an end, a fearful thought flashed through his mind, and without daring to consider, he flung the torch into the open shed, crammed to the roof with inflammable materials, and stood motionless, with his arms crossed, to watch through the door of the shed the rapidly spreading flame, the soaring smoke, the struggle and mingling of the noiseless wreaths of black vapor from the various combustibles with the ruddy light, the victory of the fire and the leaping flames as they flew upward.

The roof, thatched with palm-leaves and reeds, had begun to crackle when Antinous rushed into the tower only a few paces off crying: "Fire—fire!" and up the stairs which led to the observatory of the imperial stargazer.

THE EMPEROR, Part 2.

By Georg Ebers

Volume 9.

## CHAPTER XIV.

The entertainment which Verus was giving on the eve of his birthday seemed to be far from drawing to an end, even at the beginning of the third hour of the morning. Besides the illustrious and learned Romans who had accompanied the Emperor to Alexandria, the most famous and distinguished Alexandrians had also been invited by the praetor. The splendid banquet had long been ended, but jar after jar of mixed wine was still being filled and emptied. Verus himself had been unanimously chosen as the king and leader of the feast. Crowned with a rich garland, he reclined on a couch strewn with rose-leaves, an invention of his own, and formed of four cushions piled one on another. A curtain of transparent gauze screened him from flies and gnats, and a tightly-woven mat of lilies and other flowers covered his feet and exhaled sweet odors for him and for the pretty singer who sat by his side.

Pretty boys dressed as little cupids watched every sign of the 'sham Eros.'

How indolently he lay on the deep, soft cushions! And yet his eyes were every where, and though he had not failed to give due consideration to the preparations for his feast, he devoted all the powers of his mind to the present management of it. As at the entertainments which Hadrian was accustomed to give in Rome, first of all short selections from new essays or poems were recited by their authors, then a gay comedy was performed; then Glycera, the most famous singer in the city, had sung a dithyramb to her harp, in a voice as sweet as a bell, and Alexander, a skilled performer on the trigonon, had executed a piece. Finally a troop of female dancers had rushed into the room and swayed and balanced themselves to the music of the double-flute and tambourine.

Each fresh amusement had been more loudly applauded than the last. With every jar of wine a new torrent of merriment went up through the opening in the roof, by which the scent of the flowers and of the perfume burnt on beautiful little altars found an exit into the open air. The wine offered in libations to the gods already lay in broad pools upon the hard pavement of the hall, the music and singing were drowned in shouts the feast had become an orgy.

Verus was inciting the more quiet or slothful of his guests to a freer enjoyment and encouraging the noisiest in their extravagant recklessness to still more unbridled license. At the same time he bowed to each one

who drank to his health, entertained the singer who sat by his side, flung a sparkling jest into one and another silent group, and proved to the learned men who reclined on their couches near to his that whenever it was possible he took an interest in their discussions. Alexandria, the focus of all the learning of the East and the West, had seen other festivals than this riotous banquet. Indeed, even here a vein of grave and wise discourse flavored the meal of the circle that belonged to the Museum; but the senseless revelry of Rome had found its way into the houses of the rich, and even the noblest achievements of the human mind had been made, unawares, subservient to mere enjoyment. A man was a philosopher only that he might be prompt to discuss and always ready to take his share in the talk; and at a banquet a well-told anecdote was more heartily welcome than some profound idea that gave rise to a reflection or provoked a subtle discussion.

What a noise, what a clatter was storming in the hall by the second hour after midnight! How the lungs of the feasters were choked with overpowering perfumes! What repulsive exhibitions met the eye! How shamelessly was all decency trodden under foot! The poisonous breath of unchecked license had blasted the noble moderation of the vapor of wine which floated round this chaos of riotous toppers slowly rose the pale image of Satiety watching for victims on the morrow.

The circle of couches on which lay Florus, Favorinus and their Alexandrian friends stood like an island in the midst of the surging sea of the orgy. Even here the cup had been bravely passed round, and Florus was beginning to speak somewhat indistinctly, but conversation had hitherto had the upper hand.

Two days before, the Emperor had visited the Museum and had carried on learned discussions with the most prominent of the sages and professors there, in the presence of their assembled disciples. At last a formal disputation had arisen, and the dialectic keenness and precision with which Hadrian, in the purest Attic Greek, had succeeded in driving his opponents into a corner had excited the greatest admiration. The Sovereign had quitted the famous institution with a promise to reopen the contest at an early date. The philosophers, Pancrates and Dionysius and Apollonius, who took no wine at all, were giving a detailed account of the different phases of this remarkable disputation and praising the admirable memory and the ready tongue of the great monarch.

"And you did not even see him at his best," exclaimed Favorinus, the Gaul, the sophist and rhetorician. "He has received an unfavorable oracle and the stars seem to confirm the prophecy. This puts him out of tune. Between ourselves let me tell you I know a few who are his superiors in dialectic, but in his happiest moments he is irresistible-irresistible. Since we made up our quarrel he is like a brother to me. I will defend him against all comers, for, as I say, Hadrian is my brother."

The Gaul had poured out this speech in a defiant tone and with flashing eyes. He grew pale in his cups, touchy, boastful and very talkative.

"No doubt you are right," replied Apollonius, "but it seemed to us that he was bitter in discussion. His eyes are gloomy rather than gay."

"He is my brother," repeated Favorinus, "and as for his eyes, I have seen them flash—by Hercules! like the radiant sun, or merry twinkling stars! And his mouth! I know him well! He is my brother, and I will wager that while he condescended—it is too comical—condescended to dispute with you—with you, there was a sly smile at each corner of his mouth—so—look now—like this he smiled."

"I repeat, he seemed to us gloomy rather than gay," retorted Apollonius, with annoyance; and Pancrates added:

"If he does really know how to jest he certainly did not prove it to us."

"Not out of ill-will," laughed the Gaul, "you do not know him, but I—I am his friend and may follow wherever—he goes. Now only wait and I will tell you a few stories about him. If I chose I could describe his whole soul to you as if it lay there on the surface of the wine in my cup. Once in Rome he went to inspect the newly-decorated baths of Agrippa, and in the undressing-room he saw an old man, a veteran who had fought with him somewhere or other. My memory is greatly admired, but his is in no respect inferior. Scaurus was the old man's name—yes—yes, Scaurus. He did not observe Caesar at first, for after his bath his wounds were burning and he was rubbing his back against the rough stone of a pillar. Hadrian however called to him: 'Why are you scratching yourself, my friend?' and Scaurus, not at once recognizing Caesar's voice, answered without turning round: 'Because I have no slave to do it for me.' You should have heard Caesar laugh! Liberal as he is sometimes—I say sometimes—he gave Scaurus a handsome sum of money and two sturdy slaves. The story soon got abroad, and when Caesar, who—as you believe—cannot jest, a short time after again visited the bath, two old soldiers at once placed themselves in his way, scrubbed their backs against the wall like Scaurus, and called out to him 'Great Caesar, we have no slaves.'—'Then scratch each other,' cried he, and left the soldiers to rub themselves."

"Capital!" laughed Dionysius.

"Now one more true story," interrupted the loquacious Gaul. "Once upon a time a man with white hair begged of him. The wretch was a low fellow, a parasite who wandered round from one man's table to another, feeding himself out of other folks' wallets and dishes. Caesar knew his man and warned him off. Then the creature had his hair dyed that he might not be recognized, and tried his luck a second time with the Emperor. But Hadrian has good eyes; he pointed to the door, saying, with the gravest face: 'I have just lately refused to give your father anything.' And a hundred such jokes pass from mouth to mouth in Rome, and if you like I can give you a dozen of the best."

"Tell us, go on, out with your stories. They are all old friends!" stammered Florus. "But while Favorinus chatters we can drink."

The Gaul cast a contemptuous glance at the Roman, and answered promptly:

"My stories are too good for a drunken man."

Florus paused to think of an answer, but before he could find one, the praetor's body-slave rushed into the hall crying out: "The palace at Lochias is on fire."

Verus kicked the mat of lilies off his feet on to the floor, tore down the net that screened him in, and shouted to the breathless runner.

"My chariot-quick, my chariot! To our next merry meeting another evening my friends, with many thanks for the honor you have done me. I must be off to Lochias."

Verus flew out of the hall, without throwing on his cloak and hot as he was, into the cold night, and at the same time most of his guests had started up to hurry into the open air, to see the fire and to hear the latest news; but only very few went to the scene of the conflagration to help the citizens to extinguish it, and many heavily intoxicated drinkers remained lying on the couches.

As Favorinus and the Alexandrians raised themselves on their pillows Florus cried:

"No god shall make me stir from this place, not if the whole house is burnt down and Alexandria and Rome, and for aught I care every nest and nook on the face of the earth. It may all burn together. The Roman Empire can never be greater or more splendid than under Caesar! It may burn down like a heap of straw, it is all the same to me—I shall lie here and drink."

The turmoil and confusion on the scene of the interrupted feast seemed inextricable, while Verus hurried off to Sabina to inform her of what had occurred. But Balbilla had been the first to discover the fire and quite at the beginning, for after sitting industriously at her studies, and before going to bed, she had looked out toward the sea. She had instantly run out, cried "Fire!" and was now seeking for a chamberlain to awake Sabina.

The whole of Lochias flared and shone in a purple and golden glow. It formed the nucleus of a wide spreading radiance of tender red of which the extent and intensity alternately grew and diminished. Verus met the poetess at the door that led from the garden into the Empress' apartments. He omitted on this occasion to offer his customary greeting,

but hastily asked her:

"Has Sabina been told?"

"I think not yet."

"Then have her called. Greet her from me—I must go to Lochias"

"We will follow you."

"No, stay here; you will be in the way there."

"I do not take much room and I shall go. What a magnificent spectacle."

"Eternal gods! the flames are breaking out too below the palace, by the King's harbor. Where can the chariots be?"

"Take me with you."

"No you must wake the Empress."

"And Lucilla?"

"You women must stay where you are."

"For my part I certainly will not. Caesar will be in no danger?"

"Hardly—the old stones cannot burn."

"Only look! how splendid! the sky is one crimson tent. I entreat you, Verus, let me go with you."

"No, no, pretty one. Men are wanted down there."

"How unkind you are."

"At last! here are the chariots! You women stay here; do you understand me?"

"I will not take any orders; I shall go to Lochias."

"To see Antinous in the flames! such a sight is not to be seen every day, to be sure!" cried Verus, ironically, as he sprang into his chariot, and took the reins into his own hand.

Balbilla stamped with rage.

She went to Sabina's rooms fully resolved to go to the scene of the fire. The Empress would not let herself be seen by any one, not even by Balbilla, till she was completely dressed. A waiting-woman told Balbilla

that Sabina would get up certainly, but that for the sake of her health she could not venture out in the night-air.

The poetess then sought Lucilla and begged her to accompany her to Lochias; she was perfectly willing and ready, but when she heard that her husband had wished that the women should remain at the Caesareum she declared that she owed him obedience and tried to keep back her friend. But the perverse curly-haired girl was fully determined, precisely because Verus had forbidden her—and forbidden her with mocking words, to carry out her purpose. After a short altercation with Lucilla she left her, sought her companion Claudia, told her what she intended doing, dismissed that lady's remonstrance with a very positive command, gave orders herself to the house-steward to have horses put to a chariot and reached the imperilled palace an hour and a half after Verus.

An endless, many-headed crowd of people besieged the narrow end of Lochias on the landward side and the harbor wharves below, where some stores and shipyards were in flames. Boats innumerable were crowded round the little peninsula. An attempt was being made, with much shouting, and by the combined exertions of an immense number of men, to get the larger ships afloat which lay at anchor close to the quay of the King's harbor and to place them in security. Every thing far and wide was lighted up as brightly as by day, but with a ruddier and more restless light. The north-east breeze fanned the fire, aggravating the labors of the men who were endeavoring to extinguish it and snatching flakes of flame off every burning mass. Each blazing storehouse was a gigantic torch throwing a broad glare into the darkness of the night. The white marble of the tallest beacon tower in the world, on the island of Pharos, reflected a rosy hue, but its far gleaming light shone pale and colorless. The dark hulls of the larger ships and the flotilla of boats in the background were afloat in a fiery sea, and the still water under the shore mirrored the illumination in which the whole of Lochias was wrapped.

Balbilla could not tire of admiring this varying scene, in which the most gorgeous hues vied with each other and the intensest light contrasted with the deepest shadows. And she had ample time to dwell on the marvellous picture before her eyes, for her chariot could only proceed slowly, and at a point where the street led up from the King's harbor to the palace, lictors stood in her way and declared positively that any farther advance was out of the question. The horses, much scared by the glare of the fire and the crowd that pressed round them, could hardly be controlled, first rearing and then kicking at the front board of the chariot. The charioteer declared he could no longer be answerable. The people who had hurried to the rescue now began to abuse the women, who ought to have staid at home at the loom rather than come stopping the way for useful citizens.

"There is time enough to go out driving by daylight!" cried one man; and another: "If a spark falls in those curls another conflagration will

break out.”

The position of the ladies was becoming every instant more unendurable and Balbilla desired the charioteer to turn round; but in the swarming mass of men that filled the street this was easier said than done. One of the horses broke the strap which fastened the yoke that rested on his withers to the pole, started aside and forced back the crowd which now began to scold and scream loudly. Balbilla wanted to spring out of the chariot, but Claudia clung tightly to her and conjured her not to leave her in the lurch in the midst of the danger. The spoilt patrician's daughter was not timid, but on this occasion she would have given much not to have followed Verus. At first she thought, "A delightful adventure! still, it will not be perfect till it is over." But presently her bold experiment lost every trace of charm, and repentance that she had ever undertaken it filled her mind. She was far nearer weeping than laughing already, when a man's deep voice said behind her, in tones of commanding decision:

"Make way there for the pumps; push aside whatever stops the way."

These terrible words reduced Claudia to sinking on to her knees, but Balbilla's quelled courage found fresh wings as she heard them, for she had recognized the voice of Pontius. Now he was close behind the chariot, high on a horse. He then was the man on horseback whom she had seen dashing from the sea-shore up to the higher storehouses that were burning, down to the lake, and hither and thither.

She turned full upon him and called him by his name. He recognized her, tried to pull up his horse as it was dashing forward, and smilingly shook his head at her, as much as to say: "She is a giddy creature and deserves a good scolding; but who could be angry with her?" And then he gave his orders to his subordinates just as if she had been a mere chattel, a bale of goods or something of the kind, and not an heiress of distinction.

"Take out the horses," he cried to the municipal guards; "we can use them for carrying water."—"Help the ladies out of the chariot."—"Take them between you Nonnus and Lucanus."—"Now, stow the chariot in there among the bushes."—"Make way there in front, make way for our pumps." And each of these orders was obeyed as promptly as if it was the word of command given by a general to his well-drilled soldiers.

After the pumps had been fairly started Pontius rode close up to Balbilla and said:

"Caesar is safe and sound. You no doubt wished to see the progress of the fire from a spot near it, and in fact the colors down there are magnificent. I have not time to escort you back to the Caesareum; but follow me. You will be safe in the harbor-guard's stone house, and from the roof you can command a view of Lochias and the whole peninsula. You will have a rare feast for the eye, noble Balbilla; but I beg you not to

forget at the same time how many days of honest labor, what rich possessions, how many treasures earned by bitter hardship are being destroyed at this moment. What may delight you will cost bitter tears to many others, and so let us both hope that this splendid spectacle may now have reached its climax, and soon may come to an end.”

”I hope so—I hope it with all my heart!” cried the girl.

”I was sure you would. As soon as possible I will come to look after you. You Nonnus and Lucanus, conduct these noble ladies to the harbor-guard’s house.

”Tell him they are intimate friends of the Empress. Only keep the pumps going! Till we meet again Balbilla!” and with these words the architect gave his horse the bridle and made his way through the crowd.

A quarter of an hour later Balbilla was standing on the roof of the little stone guard-house. Claudia was utterly exhausted and incapable of speech. She sat in the dark little parlor below on a rough-hewn wooden bench. But the young Roman now gazed at the fire with different eyes than before. Pontius had made her feel a foe to the flames which only a short time before had filled her with delight as they soared up to the sky, wild and fierce. They still flared up violently, as though they had to climb above the roof; but soon they seemed to be quelled and exhausted, to find it more and more difficult to rise above the black smoke which welled up from the burning mass. Balbilla had looked out for the architect and had soon discovered him, for the man on horseback towered above the crowd. He halted now by one and now by another burning storehouse. Once she lost sight of him for a whole hour, for he had gone to Lochias. Then again he reappeared, and wherever he stayed for a while, the raging element abated its fury.

Without her having perceived it, the wind had changed and the air had become still and much warmer. This circumstance favored the efforts of the citizens trying to extinguish the fire, but Balbilla ascribed it to the foresight of her clever friend when the flames subsided in some places and in others were altogether extinguished. Once she saw that he had a building completely torn down which divided a burning granary from some other storehouses that had been spared, and she understood the object of this order; it cut off the progress of the flames. Another time she saw him high on the top of a rise in the ground. Close before him in a sheet of flame was a magazine in which were kept tow and casks of resin and pitch. He turned his face full towards it and gave his orders, now on this side, now on that. His figure and that of his horse, which reared uneasily beneath him, were flooded in a crimson glow—a splendid picture! She trembled for him, she gazed in admiration at this calm, resolute, energetic man, and when a blazing beam fell close in front of him and after his frightened horse had danced round and round with him, he forced it to submit to his guidance, the praetor’s insinuation recurred to her mind, that she clung to her determination

to go to Lochias because she hoped to enjoy the spectacle of Antinous in the flames. Here, before her, was a nobler display, and yet her lively imagination which often, sometimes indeed against her will, gave shape to her formless thoughts—called up the image of the beautiful youth surrounded by the glowing glory which still painted the horizon.

Hour after hour slipped by; the efforts of the thousands who endeavored to extinguish the blaze were crowned by increasing success; one burning mass after another was quenched, if not extinguished, and instead of flames smoke, mingled with sparks, rose from Lochias blacker and blacker—and still Pontius came not to look after her. She could not see any stars for the sky was overcast with clouds, but the beginning of a new day could not be far distant. She was shivering with cold, and her friend's long absence began to annoy her. When, presently, it began to rain in large drops, she went down the ladder that led from the roof and sat down by the fire in the little room where her companion had gone fast asleep.

She had been sitting quite half an hour and gazing dreamily into the warming glow, when she heard the sound of hoofs and Pontius appeared. His face was begrimed, and his voice hoarse with shouting commands for hours. As soon as she saw him Balbilla forgot her vexation, greeted him warmly, and told him how she had watched his every movement; but the eager girl, so readily fired to enthusiasm, could only with the greatest difficulty bring out a few words to express the admiration that his mode of proceeding had so deeply excited in her mind.

She heard him say that his mouth was quite parched and his throat was longing for a draught of some drink, and she—who usually had every pin she needed handed to her by a slave, and on whom fate had bestowed no living creature whom she could find a pleasure in serving—she, with her own hand dipped a cup of water out of the large clay jar that stood in a corner of the room and offered it to him with a request that he would drink it. He eagerly swallowed the refreshing fluid, and when the little cup was empty Balbilla took it from his hand, refilled it, and gave it him again.

Claudia, who woke up when the architect came in, looked on at her foster-child's unheard-of proceedings with astonishment, shaking her head. When Pontius had drained the third cupful that Balbilla fetched for him he exclaimed, drawing a deep breath:

"That was a drink—I never tasted a better in the whole course of my life."

"Muddy water out of a nasty earthen pitcher!" answered the girl.

"And it tasted better than wine from Byblos out of a golden goblet."

"You had honestly earned the refreshment, and thirst gives flavor to the

humblest liquor.”

”You forget the hand that gave it me,” replied the architect warmly.

Balbilla colored and looked at the floor in confusion, but presently raised her face and said, as gayly and carelessly as ever:

”So that you have been deliciously refreshed; and now that is done you will go home and the poor thirsty soul will once more become the great architect. But before that happens, pray inform us what god it was that brought you hither from Pelusium in the very nick of time when the fire broke out, and how matters look now in the palace at Lochias?”

”My time is short,” replied Pontius, and he then rapidly told her that, after he had finished his work at Pelusium, he had returned to Alexandria with the imperial post. As he got out of the chariot at the post-house he observed the reflection of fire over the sea and was immediately after told by a slave that it was the palace that was burning. There were horses in plenty at the post-house; he had chosen a strong one and had got to the spot before the crowd had collected. How the fire had originated, so far remained undiscovered. ”Caesar,” he said, ”was in the act of observing the heavens when a flame broke out in a store-shed close to the tower. Antinous was the first to detect it, cried ’Fire,’ and warned his master. I found Hadrian in the greatest agitation; he charged me to superintend the work of rescuing all that could be saved. At Lochias. Verus helped me greatly and indeed with so much boldness and judgment that I owe very much to him. Caesar himself kept his favorite within the palace, for the poor fellow burned both his hands.”

”Oh!” cried Balbilla with eager regret. ”How did that happen?”

”When Hadrian and Antinous first came down from the tower they brought with them as many of the instruments and manuscripts as they could carry. When they were at the bottom Caesar observed that a tablet with important calculations had been left lying up above and expressed his regret. Meanwhile the fire had already caught the slightly-built turret and it seemed impossible to get into it again. But the dreamy Bithynian can wake out of his slumbers it would seem, and while Caesar was anxiously watching the burning bundles of flax which the wind kept blowing across to the harbor the rash boy rushed into the burning building, flung the tablet down from the top of the tower and then hurried down the stairs. His bold action would indeed have cost the poor fellow his life if the slave Mastor; who meanwhile had hurried to the spot, had not dragged him down the stone stair of the old tower on which the new one stood and carried him into the open air. He was half suffocated at the top of them and had dropped down senseless.”

”But he is alive, the splendid boy, the image of the gods! and he is out of danger?” cried Balbilla, with much anxiety.

"He is quite well; only his hands, as I said, are somewhat burnt, and his hair is singed, but that will grow again."

"His soft, lovely curls!" cried Balbilla. "Let us go home, Claudia. The gardener shall cut a magnificent bunch of roses, and we will send it to Antinous to please him."

"Flowers to a man who does not care about them?" asked Pontius, gravely.

"With what else can women reward men's virtues or do honor to their beauty?" asked Balbilla.

"Our own conscience is the reward of our honest actions, or the laurel wreath from the hand of some famous man."

"And beauty?"

"That of women claims and wins admiration, love too perhaps and flowers—that of men may rejoice the eye, but to do it Honor is a task granted to no mortal woman."

"To whom, then, if I may ask the question?"

"To Art, which makes it immortal."

"But the roses may bring some comfort and pleasure to the suffering youth."

"Then send them—but to the sick boy, and not to the handsome man," retorted Pontius.

Balbilla was silent, and she and her companion followed the architect to the harbor. There he parted from them, putting them into a boat which took them back to the Caesareum through one of the arch-gates under the Heptastadium.

As they were rowed along the younger Roman lady said to the elder:

"Pontius has quite spoilt my fun about the roses. The sick boy is the handsome Antinous all the same, and if anybody could think—well, I shall do just as I please; still it will be best not to cut the nosegay."

## CHAPTER XV.

The town was out of danger; the fire was extinct. Pontius had taken no rest till noonday. Three horses had he tired out and replaced by fresh

ones, but his sinewy frame and healthy courage had till now defied every strain. As soon as he could consider his task at an end he went off to his own house, and he needed rest; but in the hall of his residence he already found a number of persons waiting, and who were likely to stand between him and the enjoyment of it.

A man who lives in the midst of important undertakings cannot, with impunity, leave his work to take care of itself for several days. All the claims upon him become pent up, and when he returns home they deluge him like water when the sluice-gates are suddenly opened behind which it has been dammed up.

At least twenty persons, who had heard of the architect's return, were waiting for him in his outer hall, and crowded upon him as soon as he appeared. Among them he saw several who had come on important business, but he felt that he had reached the farthest limit of his strength, and he was determined to secure a little rest at any cost. The grave man's natural consideration, usually so conspicuous, could not hold out against the demands made on his endurance, and he angrily and peevishly pointed to his begrimed face as he made his way through the people waiting for him.

"To-morrow, to-morrow," he cried; "nay, if necessary, to-day, after sunset. But now I need rest. Rest! Rest! Why, you yourselves can see the state I am in."

All—even the master-masons and purveyors who had come on urgent affairs, drew back; only one elderly man, his sister Paulina's house-steward, caught hold of his chiton, stained as it was with smoke and scorched in many places, and said quickly and in a low tone:

"My mistress greets you; she has things to speak of to you which will bear no delay; I am not to leave you till you have promised to go to see her to-day. Our chariot waits for you at the garden-door."

"Send it home," said Pontius, not even civilly; "Paulina must wait a few hours."

"But my orders are to take you with me at once."

"But in this state—so—I cannot go with you," cried the architect with vehemence. "Have you no sort of consideration? And yet—who can tell—well, tell her I will be with her in two hours."

When Pontius had fairly escaped the throng he took a bath; then he had some food brought to him, but even while he ate and drank, he was not unoccupied, for he read the letters which awaited him, and examined some drawings which his assistants had prepared during his absence.

"Give yourself an hour's respite," said the old housekeeper, who had been

his nurse and who loved him as her own son.

"I must go to my sister," he answered with a shrug. "We know her of old," said the old woman. "For nothing, and less than nothing, she has sent for you be fore now; and you absolutely need rest. There—are your cushions right—so? And let me ask you, has the humblest stone-carrier so hard a life as you have? Even at meals you never have an hour of peace and comfort. Your poor head is never quiet; the nights are turned into day; something to do, always something to do. If one only knew who it is all for?"

"Aye—who for, indeed?" sighed Pontius, pushing his arm under his head, between it and the pillow. "But, you see, little mother, work must follow rest as surely as day follows night or summer follows winter. The man who has something he loves in the House—a wife and merry children, it may be, for aught I care—who sweeten his hours of rest and make them the best of all the day, he, I say is wise when he tries to prolong them; but his case is not mine—"

"But why is it not yours, my son Pontius?"

"Let me finish my speech. I, as you know full well, do not care for gossip in the bath nor for reclining long over a banquet. In the pauses of my work I am alone, with myself and with you, my very worthy Leukippe. So the hours of rest are not for me the fairest scenes, but empty waits between the acts of the drama of life; and no reasonable man can find fault with me for trying to abridge them by useful occupation."

"And what is the upshot of this sensible talk? Simply this: you must get married."

Pontius sighed, but Leukippe added eagerly:

"You have not far to look! The most respectable fathers and mothers are running after you and would bring their prettiest daughters into your door."

"A daughter whom I do not know, and who might perhaps spoil the pauses between the acts, which at present I can at any rate turn to some account."

"They say," the old woman went on, "that marriage is a cast of the dice. One throws a high number, another a low one; one wins a wife who is a match for the busy bee, another gets a tiresome gnat. No doubt there is some truth in it; but I have grown grey with my eyes open and I have often seen it happen, that how the marriage turned out depended on the husband. A man like you makes a bee out of a gnat—a bee that brings honey to the hive. Of course a man must choose carefully."

"How, pray?"

"First see the parents and then the child. A girl who has grown up surrounded by good habits, in the house of a sensible father and a virtuous mother—"

"And where in this city am I to find such a miracle? Nay, nay, Leukippe, for the present all shall be left to my old woman. We both do our duty, we are satisfied with each other and—"

"And time is flying," said the housekeeper, interrupting her master in his speech. "You are nearly thirty-five years of age, and the girls—"

"Let them be! let them be! They will find other men! Now send Cyrus with my shoes and cloak, and have my litter got ready, for Paulina has been kept waiting long enough."

The way from the architect's house to his sister's was long, and on his way he found ample time for reflection on various matters besides Leukippe's advice to marry. Still, it was a woman's face and form that possessed him heart and soul; at first, however, he did not feel inclined to feast his fancy on Balbilla's image, lovely as it appeared to him; on the contrary, with self-inflicted severity he sought everything in her which could be thought to be opposed to the highest standard of feminine perfections. Nor did he find it difficult to detect many defects and deficiencies in the Roman damsel; still he was forced to admit that they were quite inseparable from her character, and that she would no longer be what she was, if she were wholly free from them. Each of her little weaknesses presently began to appear as an additional charm to the stern man who had himself been brought up in the doctrine of the Stoics.

He had learnt by experience that sorrow must cast its shadow over the existence of every human being; but still, the man to whom it should be vouchsafed to walk through life hand-in-hand with this radiant child of fortune could, as it seemed to him, have nothing to look forward to but pure sunshine. During his journey to Pelusium and his stay there he had often thought of her, and each time that her image had appeared to his inward eye he had felt as though daylight had shone in his soul. To have met her he regarded as the greatest joy of his life, but he dared not aspire to claim her as his own.

He did not undervalue himself and knew that he might well be proud of the position he had won by his own industry and talents; and still she was the grandchild of the man who had had the right to sell his grandfather for mere coin, and was so high-born, rich and distinguished that he would have thought it hardly more audacious to ask the Emperor what he would take for the purple than to woo her. But to shelter her, to warn her, to allow his soul to be refreshed by the sight of her and by her talk—this he felt was permissible, this happiness no one could deprive him of. And this she would grant him—she esteemed him and would give him the right

to protect her, this he felt, with thankfulness and joy. He would, then and there, have gone through the exertions of the last few hours all over again if he could have been certain that he should once more be refreshed with the draught of water from her hand. Only to think of her and of her sweetness seemed greater happiness than the possession of any other woman.

As he got out of his litter at the door of his sister's town-house he shook his head, smiling at himself; for he confessed to himself that the whole of the long distance he had hardly thought of anything but Balbilla.

Paulina's house had but few windows opening upon the street and these belonged to the strangers' rooms, and yet his arrival had been observed. A window at the side of the house, all grown round with creepers, framed in a sweet girlish head which looked down from it inquisitively on the bustle in the street. Pontius did not notice it, but Arsinoe—for it was her pretty face that looked out—at once recognized the architect whom she had seen at Lochias and of whom Pollux had spoken as his friend and patron.

She had now, for a week, been living with the rich widow; she wanted for nothing, and yet her soul longed with all its might to be out in the city, and to inquire for Pollux and his parents, of whom she had heard nothing since the day of her father's death. Her lover was no doubt seeking her with anxiety and sorrow; but how was he to find her?

Three days after her arrival she had discovered the little window from which she had a view of the street. There was plenty to be seen, for it led to the Hippodrome and was never empty of foot-passengers and chariots that were proceeding thither or to Necropolis. No doubt it was a pleasure to her to watch the fine horses and garlanded youths and men who passed by Paulina's house; but it was not merely to amuse herself that she went to the bowery little opening; no, she hoped, on the contrary, that she might once see her Pollux, his father, his mother, his bother Teuker or some one else they knew pass by her new home. Then she might perhaps succeed in calling them, in asking what had become of her friends, and in begging them to let her lover know where to seek her.

Her adoptive mother had twice found her at the window and had forbidden her, not unkindly but very positively, to look out into the street. Arsinoe had followed her unresistingly into the interior of the house, but as soon as she knew that Paulina was out or engaged, she slipped back to the window again and looked out for him, who must at every hour of the day be thinking of her. And she was not happy amid her new and wealthy surroundings. At first she had found it very pleasant to stretch her limbs on Paulina's soft cushions, not to stir a finger to help herself, to eat the best of food and to have neither to attend to the children nor to labor in the horrible papyrus-factory; but by the third day she pined

for liberty—and still more for the children, for Selene and Pollux. Once she went out driving with Paulina in a covered carriage for the first time in her life. As the horses started she had enjoyed the rapid movement and had leaned out at one side to see the houses and men flying past her; but Paulina had regarded this as not correct—as she did so many other things that she herself thought right and permissible—had desired her to draw in her head, and had told her that a well-conducted girl must sit with her eyes in her lap when out driving.

Paulina was kind, never was irritable, had her dressed and waited upon like her own daughter, kissed her in the morning and when she bid her good-night; and yet Arsinoe had never once thought of Paulina's demand that she should love her. The proud woman, who was so cool in all the friendly relations of life, and who, as she felt was always watching her, was to her only a stranger who had her in her power. The fairest sentiments of her soul she must always keep locked up from her.

Once, when Paulina, with tears in her eyes had spoken to her of her lost daughter, Arsinoe had been softened and following the impulse of her heart, had confided to her that she loved Pollux the sculptor and hoped to be his wife.

"You love a maker of images!" Paulina had exclaimed, with as much horror as if she had seen a toad; then she had paced uneasily up and down and had added with her usual calm decision:

"No, no, my child! you will forget all this as soon as possible; I know of a nobler Bridegroom for you; when once you have learned to know Him you will never long for any other. Have you seen one single image in this house?"

"No," replied Arsinoe, "but so far as regards Pollux—"

"Listen to me" said the widow, "have I not told you of our loving Father in Heaven? Have I not told you that the gods of the heathen are unreal beings which the vain imaginings of fools have endowed with all the weaknesses and crimes of humanity? Can you not understand how silly it is to pray to stones? What power can reside in these frail figures of brass or marble?"

"Idols we call them. He who carves them, serves them and offers sacrifice to them; aye and a great sacrifice, for he devotes his best powers, to their service. Do you understand me?"

"No—Art is certainly a lofty thing, and Pollux is a good man, full of the divinity as he works."

"Wait a while, only wait—you will soon learn to understand," Paulina had answered, drawing Arsinoe towards her, and had added, at first speaking gently but then more sternly: "Now go to bed and pray to your gracious

Father in Heaven that he may enlighten your heart. You must forget the carved image-maker, and I forbid you ever to speak in my presence again of such a man.”

Arsinoe had grown up a heathen, she clung with affection to the gods of her fathers and hoped for happier days after the first bitterness of the loss of her father and the separation from her brothers and sisters was past. She was little disposed to sacrifice her young love and all her earthly happiness for spiritual advantages of which she scarcely comprehended the value. Her father had always spoken of the Christians with hatred and contempt. She now saw that they could be kind and helpful, and the doctrine that there was a loving God in Heaven who cared for all men as his children appealed to her soul; but that we ought to forgive our enemies, to remember our sins, and to repent of them, and to regard all the pleasure and amusement which the gay city of Alexandria could offer as base and worthless—this was absurd and foolish.

And what great sins had she committed? Could a loving God require of her that she should mar all her best days because as a child she had pilfered a cake or broken a pitcher; or, as she grew older had sometimes been obstinate or disobedient? Surely not. And then was an artist, a kind faithful soul like her tall Pollux, to be odious in the eyes of God the Father of all, because he was able to make such wonderful things as that head of her mother, for instance? If this really was so she would rather, a thousand times rather, lift her hands in prayer to the smiling Aphrodite, roguish Eros, beautiful Apollo, and all the nine Muses who protected her Pollux, than to Him.

An obscure aversion rose up in her soul against the stern woman who could not understand her, and of whose teaching and admonitions she scarcely took in half; and she rejected many a word of the widow's which might otherwise easily have found room in her heart, only because it was spoken by the cold-mannered woman who at every hour seemed to try to lay some fresh restraint upon her.

Paulina had never yet taken her with her to of the Christian assemblies in her suburban villa; wished first to prepare her and to open her soul to salvation. In this task no teacher of the congregation should assist her. She, and she alone, should win to the Redeemer the soul of this fair creature that had walked so resolutely in the ways of the heathen; this was required of her as the condition of the covenant that she felt she had made with Him, it was with the price of this labor that she hoped to purchase her own child's eternal happiness. Day after day she had Arsinoe into her own room, that was decked with flowers and with Christian symbols, and devoted several hours to her instruction. But her disciple proved less impressionable and less attentive every day; while Paulina was speaking Arsinoe was thinking of Pollux, of the children, of the festival prepared for the Emperor or of the beautiful dress she was to have worn as Roxana. She wondered what young girl would fill her place, and how she could ever hope to see her lover again. And it was

the same during Paulina's prayers as during her instruction, prayers that often lasted more than hour, and which she had to attend, on her knees on Wednesday and Friday, and with hands uplifted on all the other days of the week.

When her adoptive mother had discovered how often she looked out into the street she thought she had found out the reason of her pupil's distracted attention and only waited the return of her brother, the architect, in order to have the window blocked up.

As Pontius entered the lofty hall of his sister's house, Arsinoe came to meet him. Her cheeks were flushed, she had hurried to fly down as fast as possible from her window to the ground floor, in order to speak to the architect before he went into the inner rooms or had talked with his sister, and she looked lovelier than ever. Pontius gazed at her with delight. He knew that he had seen this sweet face before, but he could not at once remember where; for a face we have met with only incidentally is not easily recognized when we find it again where we do not expect it.

Arsinoe did not give him time to speak to her, for she went straight up to him, greeted him, and asked timidly:

"You do not remember who I am?"

"Yes, yes," said the architect, "and yet—for the moment—"

"I am the daughter of Keraunus, the palace-steward at Lochias, but you know of course"

"To be sure, to be sure! Arsinoe is your name; I was asking to-day after your father and heard to my great regret—"

"He is dead."

"Poor child! How everything has changed in the old palace since I went away. The gate-house is swept away, there is a new steward and there—but, tell me how came you here?"

"My father left us nothing and Christians took its in. There were eight of us."

"And my sister shelters you all?"

"No, no; one has been taken into one house and others into others. We shall never be together again." And as she spoke the tears ran down Arsinoe's cheeks; but she promptly recovered herself, and before Pontius could express his sympathy she went on:

"I want to ask of you a favor; let me speak before any one disturbs us."

"Speak, my child."

"You know Pollux—the sculptor Pollux?"

"Certainly."

And you were always kindly disposed toward him?"

"He is a good man and an excellent artist."

"Aye that he is, and besides all that—may I tell you something and will you stand by me?"

"Gladly, so far as lies in my power."

Arsinoe looked down at the ground in charming and blushing confusion and said in a low tone:

"We love each other—I am to be his wife."

"Accept my best wishes."

"Ah, if only we had got as far as that! But since my father's death we have not seen each other. I do not know where he and his parents are, and how are they ever to find me here?"

"Write to him."

"I cannot write well, and even if I could my messenger—"

"Has my sister had any search made for him?"

"No—oh, no. I may not even let his name pass my lips. She wants to give me to some one else; she says that making statues is hateful to the God of the Christians."

"Does she? And you want me to seek your lover?"

"Yes, yes, my dear lord! and if you find him tell him I shall be alone to-morrow early, and again towards evening, every day indeed, for then your sister goes to serve her God in her country house."

"So you want to make me a lover's go-between. You could not find a more inexperienced one."

"Ah! noble Pontius, if you have a heart—"

"Let me speak to the end, child! I will seek your lover, and if I find him he shall know where you are, but I cannot and will not invite him to an assignation here behind my sister's back. He shall come openly to

Paulina and prefer his suit. If she refuses her consent I will try to take the matter in hand with Paulina. Are you satisfied with this?"

"I must need be. And tell me, you will let me know when you have found out where he and his parents have gone?"

"That I promise you. And now tell the one thing. Are you happy in this house?"

Arsinoe looked down in some embarrassment, then she hastily shook her head in vehement negation and hurried away. Pontius looked after her with compassion and sympathy.

"Poor, pretty little creature!" he murmured to himself, and went on to his sister's room.

The house-steward had announced his visit, and Paulina met him on the threshold. In his sister's sitting-room the architect found Eumenes, the bishop, a dignified old man with clear, kind eyes.

"Your name is in everybody's mouth to-day," said Paulina, after the usual greetings. They say you did wonders last night."

"I got home very tired," said Pontius, "but as you so pressingly desired to speak to me, I shortened my hours of rest."

"How sorry I am!" exclaimed the widow.

The bishop perceived that the brother and sister had business to discuss together, and asked whether he were not interrupting it.

"On the contrary," cried Paulina. "The subject under discussion is my newly-adopted daughter who, unhappily, has her head full of silly and useless things. She tells me she has seen you at Lochias, Pontius."

"Yes, I know the pretty child."

"Yes, she is lovely to look upon," said the widow. "But her heart and mind have been left wholly untrained, and in her the doctrine falls upon stony ground, for she avails herself of every unoccupied moment to stare at the horsemen and chariots that pass on the way to the Hippodrome. By this inquisitive gaping she fills her head with a thousand useless and distracting fancies; I am not always at home, and so it will be best to have the pernicious window walled up."

"And did you send for me only to have that done?" cried Pontius, much annoyed. "Your house-slaves, I should think, might have been equal to that without my assistance."

"Perhaps, but then the wall would have to be freshly whitewashed—I know how obliging you always are." Thank you very much. To-morrow I will send you two regular workmen."

"Nay, to-day, at once if possible."

"Are you in such pressing haste to spoil the poor child's amusement? And besides I cannot but think that it is not to stare at the horsemen and chariots that she looks out, but to see her worthy lover."

"So much the worse. I was telling you, Eumenes, that a sculptor wants to marry her."

"She is a heathen," replied the bishop.

"But on the road to salvation," answered Paulina. "But we will speak of that presently. There is still something else to discuss, Pontius. The hall of my country villa must be enlarged."

"Then send me the plans."

"They are in the book-room of my late husband." The architect left his sister to go into the library, which he knew well.

As soon as the bishop was left alone with Paulina, he shook his head and said:

"If I judge rightly, my dear sister, you are going the wrong way to work in leading this child intrusted to your care. Not all are called, and rebellious hearts must be led along the path of salvation with a gentle hand, not dragged and driven. Why do you cut off this girl, who still stands with both feet in the world, from all that can give her pleasure? Allow the young creature to enjoy every permitted pleasure which can add to the joys of life in youth. Do not hurt Arsinoe needlessly, do not let her feel the hand that guides her. First teach her to love you from her heart, and when she knows nothing dearer than you, a request from you will be worth more than bolts or walled-up windows."

"At first I wished nothing more than that she should love me," interrupted Paulina.

"But have you proved her? Do you see in her the spark which may be fanned to a flame? Have you detected in her the germ which may possibly grow to a strong desire for salvation and to devotion to the Redeemer?"

"That germ exists in every heart—these are your own words."

"But in many of the heathen it is deeply buried in sand and stones; and do you feel yourself equal to clearing them away without injury to the

seed or to the soil in which it lies?"

"I do, and I will win Arsinoe to Jesus Christ," said Paulina firmly.

Pontius interrupted the conversation; he remained with his sister some time longer discussing with her and with Eumenes the new building to be done at her country house; then he and the bishop left at the same time and Pontius proceeded to the scene of the fire by the harbor and in the old palace.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Pontius did not find the Emperor at Lochias, for Hadrian had moved at mid-day to the Caesareum. The strong smell of burning in every room in the palace had sickened him and he had begun to regard the restored building as a doomed scene of disaster. The architect was waited for with much anxiety, for the rooms originally furnished for the Emperor in the Caesareum had been despoiled and disarranged to decorate the rooms at Lochias, and Pontius was wanted to superintend their immediate rehabilitation. A chariot was waiting for him and there was no lack of slaves, so he began this fresh task at once and devoted himself to it till late at night. It was in vain this time that his anteroom was filled with people waiting for his return.

Hadrian had retired to some rooms which formed part of his wife's apartments. He was in a grave mood, and when the prefect Titianus was announced he kept him waiting till, with his own hand, he had laid a fresh dressing on his favorite's burns.

"Go now, my lord," begged the Bithynian, when the Emperor had finished his task with all the skill of a surgeon: "Titianus has been walking up and down in there for the last quarter of an hour."

"And so he may," said the monarch. "And if the whole world is shrieking for me it must wait till these faithful hands have had their due. Yes, my boy! we will wander on through life together, inseparable comrades. Others indeed do the same, and each one who goes through life side by side with a companion sharing all he enjoys or suffers, comes to think at last that he knows him as he knows himself; still the inmost core of his friend's nature remains concealed from him. Then, some day Fate lets a storm come raging down upon their; the last veil is torn, under the wanderer's eyes, from the very heart of his companion, and at last he really sees him as he is, like a kernel stripped of its shell, a bare and naked body. Last night such a blast swept over us and let me see the heart of my Antinous, as plainly as this hand I hold before my eyes. Yes, yes, yes! for the man who will risk his young and happy existence

for a thing his friend holds precious would sacrifice ten lives if he had them, for his friend's person. Never, my friend, shall that night be forgotten. It gives you the right to do much that might pain me, and has graven your name on my heart, the foremost among those to whom I am indebted for any benefit.—They are but few.”

Hadrian held out his hand to Antinous as he spoke. The boy, who had kept his eyes fixed on the ground in much confusion, raised it to his lips and pressed it against them in violent agitation. Then he raised his large eyes to the Emperor's and said:

”You must not speak to me so kindly, for I do not deserve such goodness. What is my life after all? I would let it go, as a child leaves go of a beetle it has caught, to spare you one single anxious day.”

”I know it,” answered Hadrian firmly, and he went to the prefect in the adjoining room.

Titianus had come in obedience to Hadrian's orders; the matter to be settled was what indemnification was to be paid to the city and to the individual owners of the storehouses that had been destroyed, for Hadrian had caused a decree to be proclaimed that no one should suffer any loss through a misfortune sent by the gods and which had originated in his residence. The prefect had already instituted the necessary inquiries and the private secretaries, Phlegon, Heliodorus and Celer, were now charged with the duty of addressing documents to the injured parties in which they were invited, in the name of Caesar, to declare the truth as to the amount of the loss they had suffered. Titianus also brought the information that the Greeks and Jews had determined to express their thankfulness for Caesar's preservation by great thank-offerings.

And the Christians,” asked Hadrian.

”They abominate the sacrifice of animals, but they will unite in a common act of thanksgiving.”

”Their gratitude will not cost them much,” said Hadrian.

”Their bishop, Eumenes, brought me a sum of money for which a hundred oxen might be bought, to distribute among the poor. He said the God of the Christians is a spirit and requires none but spiritual sacrifices; that the best offering a man can bring him is a prayer prompted by the spirit and proceeding from a loving heart.”

”That sounds very well for us,” said Hadrian. ”But it will not do for the people. Philosophical doctrines do not tend to piety; the populace need visible gods and tangible sacrifices. Are the Christians here good citizens and devoted to the welfare of the state?”

"We need no courts of justice for them."

"Then take their money and distribute it among the needy; but I must forbid their meeting for a general thanksgiving; they may raise their hands to their great spirit in my behalf, in private. Their doctrine must not be brought into publicity; it is not devoid of a delusive charm and it is indispensable to the safety of the state that the mob should remain faithful to the old gods and sacrifices."

"As you command, Caesar."

"You know the account given of the Christians by Pliny and Trajan?"

"And Trajan's answer."

"Well then let us leave them to follow their own devices in private after their own fashion; only they must not commit any breach of the laws of the state nor force themselves into publicity. As soon as they show any disposition to refuse to the old gods the respect that is due to them, or to raise a finger against them, severity must be exercised and every excess must be punished by death."

During this conversation Verus had entered the room; he was following the Emperor everywhere to-day for he hoped to hear him say a word as to his observation of the heavens, and yet he did not dare to ask him what he had discovered from them.

When he saw that Hadrian was occupied he made a chamberlain conduct him to Antinous. The favorite turned pale as he saw the praetor, still he retained enough presence of mind to wish him all happiness on his birthday. It did not escape Verus that his presence had startled the lad; he therefore plied him at first with indifferent questions, introduced pleasing anecdotes into his conversation and then, when he had gained his purpose, he added carelessly:

"I must thank you in the name of the state and of every friend of Caesar's. You carried out your undertaking well to the end, though by somewhat overpowering means."

"I entreat you say no more," interrupted Antinous eagerly, and looking anxiously at the door of the next room.

"Oh! I would have sacrificed all Alexandria to preserve Caesar's mind from gloom and care. Besides we have both paid dearly for our good intentions and for those wretched sheds."

"Pray talk of something else."

"You sit there with your hands bound up and your hair singed, and I feel very unwell."

"Hadrian said you had helped valiantly in the rescue."

"I was sorry for the poor rats whose gathered store of provisions the flames were so rapidly devouring, and all hot as I was from my supper, I flung myself in among the men who were extinguishing the fire. My first reward was a bath of cold, icy-cold sea-water, which was poured over my head out of a full skin. All doctrines of ethics are in disgrace with me, and I have long considered all the dramatic poets, in whose pieces virtue is rewarded and crime punished, as a pack of fools; for my pleasantest hours are all due to my worst deeds; and sheer annoyance and misery, to my best. No hyena can laugh more hoarsely than I now speak; some portion of me inside here, seems to have been turned into a hedgehog whose spines prick and hurt me, and all this because I allowed myself to be led away into doing things which the moralists laud as virtuous."

"You cough, and you do not look well. He down awhile."

"On my birthday? No, my young friend. And now let me just ask you before I go: Can you tell me what Hadrian read in the stars?"

"No."

"Not even if I put my Perseus at your orders for every thing you may require of him? The man knows Alexandria and is as dumb as a fish."

"Not even then, for what I do not know I cannot tell. We are both of us ill, and I tell you once more you will be wise to take care of yourself." Verus left the room, and Antinous watched him go with much relief.

The praetor's visit had filled him with disquietude, and had added to the dislike he felt for him. He knew that he had been used to base ends by Verus, for Hadrian had told him so much as that he had gone up to the observatory not to question the stars for himself but to cast the praetor's horoscope, and that he had informed Verus of his intention.

There was no excuse, no forgiveness possible for the deed he had done; to please that dissolute coxcomb, that mocking hypocrite, he had become a traitor to his master and an incendiary, and must endure to be overwhelmed with praises and thanks by the greatest and most keen-sighted of men. He hated, he abhorred himself, and asked himself why the fire which had blazed around him had been satisfied only to inflict slight injuries on his hands and hair. When Hadrian returned to him he asked his permission to go to bed. The Emperor gladly granted it, ordered Mastor to watch by his side, and then agreed to his wife's request that he would visit her.

Sabina had not been to the scene of the fire, but she had sent a

messenger every hour to inquire as to the progress of the conflagration and the well-being of her husband. When he had first arrived at the Caesareum she had met and welcomed him and then had retired to her own apartments.

It wanted only two hours of midnight when Hadrian entered her room; he found her reclining on a couch without the jewels she usually wore in the daytime but dressed as for a banquet.

"You wished to speak with me?" said the Emperor. "Yes, and this day—so full of remarkable events as it has been—has also a remarkable close since I have not wished in vain."

"You so rarely give me the opportunity of gratifying a wish."

"And do you complain of that?"

"I might—for instead of wishing you are wont to demand."

"Let us cease this strife of idle words."

"Willingly. With what object did you send for me?"

"Verus is to-day keeping his birthday."

"And you would like to know what the stars promise him?"

"Rather how the signs in the heavens have disposed you towards him."

"I had but little time to consider what I saw. But at any rate the stars promise him a brilliant future."

A gleam of joy shone in Sabina's eyes, but she forced herself to keep calm and asked, indifferently:

"You admit that, and yet you can come to no decision?"

"Then you want to hear the decisive word spoken at once, to-day?"

"You know that without my answering you."

"Well, then, his star outshines mine and compels me to be on my guard against him."

"How mean! You are afraid of the praetor?"

"No, but of his fortune which is bound up with you?"

"When he is our son his greatness will be ours."

"By no means, since if I make him what you wish him to be, he will certainly try to make our greatness his. Destiny—"

"You said it favored him; but unfortunately I must dispute the statement."

"You? Do you try too, to read the stars?"

"No, I leave that to men. Have you heard of Ammonius, the astrologer?"

"Yes. A very learned man who observes from the tower of the Serapeum, and who, like many of his fellows in this city has made use of his art to accumulate a large fortune."

"No less a man than the astronomer Claudius Ptolemaeus referred me to him."

"The best of recommendation."

"Well, then, I commissioned Ammonius to cast the horoscope for Verus during the past night and he brought it to me with an explanatory key. Here it is."

The Emperor hastily seized the tablet which Sabina held out to him, and as he attentively examined the forecasts, arranged in order according to the hours, he said:

"Quite right. That of course did not escape me! Well done, exactly the same as my own observations—but here—stay—here comes the third hour, at the beginning of which I was interrupted. Eternal gods! what have we here?"

The Emperor held the wax tablet prepared by Ammonius at arm's length from his eyes and never parted his lips again till he had come to the end of the last hour of the night. Then he dropped the hand that held the horoscope, saying with a shudder:

"A hideous destiny. Horace was right in saying the highest towers fall with the greatest crash."

"The tower of which you speak," said Sabina, "is that darling of fortune of whom you are afraid. Vouchsafe then to Verus a brief space of happiness before the horrible end you foresee for him."

While she spoke Hadrian sat with his eyes thoughtfully fixed on the ground, and then, standing in front of his wife, he replied:

"If no sinister catastrophe falls upon this man, the stars and the fate of men have no more to do with one another than the sea with the heart of the desert, than the throb of men's pulses with the pebbles in the brook.

If Ammonius has erred ten times over still more than ten signs remain on this tablet, hostile and fatal to the praetor. I grieve for Verus—but the state suffers with the sovereign's misfortunes.—This man can never be my successor.”

”No?” asked Sabina rising from her couch. ”No? Not when you have seen that your own star outlives his? Not though a glance at this tablet shows you that when he is nothing but ashes the world will still continue long to obey your nod?”

”Compose yourself and give me time.—Yes, I still say not even so.”

”Not even so,” repeated Sabina sullenly. Then, collecting herself, she asked in a tone of vehement entreaty:

”Not even so—not even if I lift my hands to you in supplication and cry before your face that you and Fate have grudged me the blessing, the happiness, the crown and aim of a woman's life, and I must and I will attain it; I must and I will once, if only for a short time, hear myself called by some dear lips by the name which gives the veriest beggar-woman with her infant in her arms preeminence above the Empress who has never stood by a child's cradle. I must and I will, before I die, be a mother, be called mother and be able to say, 'my child, my son—our son.'” And as she spoke she sobbed aloud and covered her face with her hands.

The Emperor drew back a step from his wife. A miracle had been wrought before his eyes. Sabina—in whose eyes no tear had ever been seen—Sabina was weeping, Sabina had a heart like other women. Greatly astonished and deeply moved he saw her turn from him, utterly shaken by the agitation of her feelings, and sink on her knees by the side of the couch she had quitted to hide her face in the cushions. He stood motionless by her side, but presently going nearer to her:

”Stand up, Sabina,” he said. ”Your desire is a just one. You shall have the son for whom your soul longs.”

The Empress rose and a grateful look in her eyes, swimming in tears, met his glance. Sabina could smile too, she could look sweet! It had taken a lifetime, it had needed such a moment as this to reveal it to Hadrian.

He silently drew a seat towards her and sat down by her side; for some time he sat with her hand clasped in his, in silence. Then he let it go and said kindly:

”And will Verus fulfil all you expect of a son?” She nodded assent.

”What makes you so confident of that?” asked the Emperor. ”He is a Roman and not lacking in brilliant and estimable gifts. A man who shows such mettle alike in the field and in the council-chamber and yet can play the part of Eros with such success will also know how to wear the

purple without disgracing it. But he has his mother's light blood, and his heart flutters hither and thither."

"Let him be as he is. We understand each other and he is the only man on whose disposition I can build, on whose fidelity I can count as securely as if he were my favorite son."

"And on what facts is this confidence based?"

"You will understand me, for you are not blind to the signs which Fate vouchsafes to us. Have you time to listen to a short story?"

"The night is yet young."

"Then I will tell you. Forgive me if I begin with things that seem dead and gone; but they are not, for they live and work in me to this hour. I know that you yourself did not choose me for your wife. Plotina chose me for you—she loved you, whether your regard for her was for the beautiful woman or for the wife of Caesar to whom everything belonged that you had to look for—how should I know?"

"It was Plotina, the woman, that I honored and loved—"

"In choosing me she chose you a wife who was tall and so fitted to wear the purple, but who was never beautiful. She knew me well and she knew that I was less apt than any other woman to win hearts; in my parents' house no child ever enjoyed so slender a share of the gifts of love, and none can know better than you that my husband did not spoil me with tenderness."

"I could repent of it at this moment."

"It would be too late now. But I will not be bitter—no, indeed I will not. And yet if you are to understand me I must own that so long as I was young I longed bitterly for the love which no one offered me."

"And you yourself have never loved?"

"No—but it pained me that I could not. In Plotina's apartments I often saw the children of her relations, and many a time I tried to attract them to me, but while they would play confidently with other women they seemed to shun me. Soon I even grew cross to them—only our Verus, the little son of Celonius Commodus, would give me frank answers when I spoke to him, and would bring me his broken toys that I might mend their injuries. And so I got to love the child."

"He was a wonderfully sweet, attractive boy."

"He was indeed. One day we women were all sitting together in Caesar's garden. Verus came running out with a particularly fine apple that

Trajan himself had given him. The rosy-cheeked fruit was admired by every one. Then Plotina, in fun took the apple out of the boy's hand and asked him if he would not give his apple to her. He looked at her with wide-open puzzled eyes, shook his curly head, ran up to me and gave me—yes, me, and no one else—the fruit, throwing his arms round my neck and saying, 'Sabina you shall have it.'"

"The judgment of Paris."

"Nay, do not jest now. This action of an unselfish child gave me courage to endure the troubles of life. I knew now that there was one creature that loved me, and that one repaid all that I felt for him, all that I was never weary of doing for him with affectionate liking. He is the only being, of whom I know, that will weep when I die. Give him the right to call me his mother and make him our son."

"He is our son," said Hadrian, with dignified gravity, and held out his hand to Sabina. She tried to lift it to her lips but he drew it away and went on:

"Inform him that we accept him as our son. His wife is the daughter of Nigrinus—who had to go, as I desired to stay and stand firm. You do not love Lucilla, but we must both admire her for I do not know another woman in Rome whose virtue a man might vouch for. Besides, I owe her a father, and am glad to have such a daughter; thus we shall be blessed with children. Whether I shall appoint Verus my successor and proclaim to the world who shall be its future ruler I cannot now decide; for that I need a calmer hour. Till to-morrow, Sabina. This day began with a misfortune; may the deed with which we have combined to end it prosper and bring us happiness."

## CHAPTER XVII.

There are often fine warm days in February, but those who fancy the spring has come find themselves deceived. The bitter, hard Sabina could at times let soft and tender emotions get the mastery over her, but as soon as the longing of her languishing soul for maternal happiness was gratified, she closed her heart again and extinguished the fire that had warmed it. Every one who approached her, even her husband, felt himself chilled and repelled again by her manner.

Verus was ill. The first symptoms of a liver complaint which his physicians had warned him might ensue, if he, an European, persisted in his dissipated life at Alexandria as if it were Rome, now began to occasion him many uneasy hours, and this, the first physical pain that fate had ever inflicted on him, he bore with the utmost impatience.

Even the great news which Sabina brought him, realizing his boldest aspirations, had no power to reconcile him to the new sensation of being ill. He learnt, at the same time, that Hadrian's alarm at the transcendent brightness of his star had nearly cost him his adoption, and as he firmly believed that he had brought on his sufferings by his efforts to extinguish the fire that Antinous had kindled, he bitterly rued his treacherous interference with the Emperor's calculations. Men are always ready to cast any burden, and especially that of a fault they have committed, on to the shoulders of another; and so the suffering praetor cursed Antinous and the learning of Simeon Ben Jochai, because, if it had not been for them the mischievous folly which had spoilt his pleasure in life would never have been committed.

Hadrian had requested the Alexandrians to postpone the theatrical displays and processions that they had prepared for him, as his observations as to the course of destiny during the coming year were not yet complete. Every evening he ascended the lofty observatory of the Serapeum and gazed from thence at the stars. His labors ended on the tenth of January; on the eleventh the festivities began. They lasted through many days, and by the desire of the praetor the pretty daughter of Apollodorus the Jew was chosen to represent Roxana. Everything that the Alexandrians had prepared to do honor to their sovereign was magnificent and costly. So many ships had never before been engaged in any Naumachia as were destroyed here in the sham sea-fight, no greater number of wild beasts had ever been seen together on any occasion even in the Roman Circus; and how bloody were the fights of the gladiators, in which black and white combatants afforded a varied excitement for both heart and senses. In the processions, the different elements which were supplied by the great central metropolis of Egyptian, Greek and Oriental culture afforded such a variety of food for the eye that, in spite of their interminable length, the effect was less fatiguing than the Romans had feared. The performances of the tragedies and comedies were equally rich in startling effects; conflagrations and floods were introduced and gave the Alexandrian actors the opportunity of displaying their talents with such brilliant success that Hadrian and his companions were forced to acknowledge that even in Rome and Athens they had never witnessed any representations equally perfect.

A piece by the Jewish author Ezekiel who, under the Ptolemies, wrote dramas in the Greek language of which the subject was taken from the history of his own people, particularly claimed the Emperor's attention.

Titianus during all this festive season was unluckily suffering from an attack of old-standing breathlessness, and he also had his hands full; at the same time he did his best in helping Pontius in seeking out the sculptor Pollux. Both men did their utmost, but though they soon were able to find Euphorion and dame Doris, every trace of their son had vanished. Papias, the former employer of the man who had disappeared, was no longer in the city, having been sent by Hadrian to Italy to execute centaurs and other figures to decorate his villa at Tibur. His

wife who remained at home, declared that she knew nothing of Pollux but that he had abruptly quitted her husband's service. The unfortunate man's fellow-workmen could give no news of him whatever, for not one of them had been present when he was seized; Papias had had foresight enough to have the man he dreaded placed in security without the presence of any witnesses. Neither the prefect nor the architect thought of seeking the worthy fellow in prison, and even if they had done so they would hardly have found him, for Pollux was not kept in durance in Alexandria itself. The prisons of the city had overflowed after the night of the holiday and he had been transferred to Canopus and there detained and brought up for trial.

Pollux had unhesitatingly owned to having taken the silver quiver and to having been very angry at his master's accusation. Thus he produced from the first an unfavorable impression on the judge, who esteemed Papias as a wealthy man, universally respected. The accused had hardly been allowed to speak at all and judgment was immediately pronounced against him, on the strength of his master's accusation and his own admissions. It would have been sheer waste of time to listen to the romances with which this audacious rascal—who forgot all the respect he owed to his teacher and benefactor—wanted to cram the judges. Two years of reflection, the protectors of the law deemed, might suffice to teach this dangerous fellow to respect the property of others and to keep him from outbreaks against those to whom he owed gratitude and reverence.

Pollux, safe in the prison at Canopus, cursed his destiny and indulged in vain hopes of the assistance of his friends. These were at last weary of the vain search and only asked about him occasionally. He at first was so insubordinate under restraint that he was put under close ward from which he was not released until, instead of raging with fury he dreamed away his days in sullen brooding. The gaoler knew men well, and he thought he could safely predict that at the end of his two years' imprisonment this young thief would quit his cell a harmless imbecile.

Titianus, Pontius, Balbilla and even Antinous had all attempted to speak of him to the Emperor, but each was sharply repulsed and taught that Hadrian was little inclined to pardon a wound to his artist's vanity. But the sovereign also proved that he had a good memory for benefits he had received, for once, when a dish was set before him consisting of cabbage and small sausages he smiled, and taking out his purse filled with gold pieces, he ordered a chamberlain to take it in his name to Doris, the wife of the evicted gate-keeper. The old couple now resided in a little house of their own in the neighborhood of their widowed daughter Diotima. Hunger and external misery came not nigh them, still they had experienced a great change. Poor Doris' eyes were now red and bloodshot, for they were accustomed to many tears, which were seldom far off and overflowed whenever a word, an object, a thought reminded her of Pollux, her darling, her pride and her hope; and there were few half-hours in the day when she did not think of him.

Soon after the steward's death she had sought out Selene, but dame Hannah could not and would not conduct her to see the sick girl, for she learnt from Mary that she was the mother of her patient's faithless lover; and on a second visit Selene was so shy, so timid and so strange in her demeanor, that the old woman was forced to conclude that her visit was an unpleasant intrusion.

And from Arsinoe, whose residence she discovered from the deaconess, she met with even a worse reception. She had herself announced as the mother of Pollux the sculptor and was abruptly refused admission, with the information that Arsinoe was not to be spoken with by her and that her visits were, once for all, prohibited. After the architect Pontius had been to seek her out and had encouraged her to make another attempt to see and speak to Arsinoe, who clung faithfully to Pollux, Paulina herself had received her and sent her away with such repellent words that she went home to her husband deeply insulted and distressed to tears. Nor had she resisted Euphorion's decision when he prohibited her ever again crossing the Christian's threshold.

The Emperor's donation had been most welcome and timely to the poor old couple, for Euphorion had completely lost the softness of his voice as well as his memory through the agitations and troubles of the last few months; he had been dismissed from the chorus of the theatre and could only find employment and very small pay of a few drachmae, in the mysteries of certain petty sectarians or in singing at weddings or in hymns of lamentation. At the same time the old folks had to maintain their daughter whom Pollux could no longer provide for, and the birds, the Graces and the cat all must eat. That it would be possible to get rid of them was an idea which never occurred to either Euphorion or Doris.

By day the old folks had ceased to laugh; but at night they still had many cheerful hours, for then Hope would beguile them with bright pictures of the future, and tell them all sorts of possible and impossible romances which filled their souls with fresh courage. How often they would see Pollux returning from the distant city whither he had probably fled—from Rome, or even from Athens—crowned with laurels and rich in treasure. The Emperor, who still so kindly remembered them, could not always be angry with him; perhaps he might some day send a messenger to seek Pollux and to make up to him by large commissions for all he had made him suffer. That her darling was alive she was sure; in that she could not be mistaken, often as Euphorion tried to persuade her that he must be dead. The singer could tell many tales of luckless men who had been murdered and never seen or heard of again; but she was not to be convinced, she persisted in hope, and lived wholly in the purpose of sending her younger son, Teuker, on his travels to seek his lost brother as soon as his apprenticeship was over, which would be in a few months.

Antinous, whose burnt hands had soon got well under the Emperor's care,

and who had never felt a liking and friendship for any other young man but Pollux, lamented the artist's disappearance and wished much to seek out dame Doris; but he found it harder than ever to leave his master, and was so eager always to be at hand that Hadrian often laughingly reproached him with making his slaves' duties too light.

When at last he really was master of an hour to himself he postponed his intention of seeing his friend's parents; for with him there was always a wide world between the purpose and the deed which he never could overleap, if not urged by some strong impulse; and his most pressing instincts prompted him, when the Emperor was disputing in the Museum or receiving instructions from the chiefs of the different religious communities as to the doctrines they severally professed, to visit the suburban villa where, when February had already begun, Selene was still living. He had often succeeded in stealing into Paulina's garden, but he could not at first realize his hope of being observed by Selene of obtaining speech with her. Whenever he went near Hannah's little house, Mary, the deformed girl, would come in his way, tell him how her friend was, and beg or desire him to go away. She was always with the sick girl, for now her mother was nursed by her sister, and dame Hannah had obtained permission for her to work at home in gumming the papyrus-strips together.

The widow herself was obliged to be at her post in the factory, for her duties as overseer made her presence indispensable in the work-room.

Thus it came to pass that it was always by Mary and never by Hannah that Antinous was received and dismissed. A certain understanding had arisen between the beautiful youth and the deformed girl. When Antinous appeared and she called out to him: "What, again already!" he would grasp her hand and implore her only once to grant his wish; but she was always firm, only she never sent him away sternly but with smiles and friendly admonitions. When he brought rare and lovely flowers in his pallium and entreated her to give them to Selene in the name of her friend at Lochias, she would take them and promise to place them in her room; but she always said it would do neither him nor her any good at all that Selene should know from whom they came. After such repulses he well knew how to flatter and coax her with appealing words, but he had never dared to defy her or to gain his end by force. When the flowers were placed in the room Mary looked at them much oftener than Selene did, and when Antinous had been long absent the deformed girl longed to see him again, and would pace restlessly up and down between the garden gate and her friend's little house. She, like him, dreamed of an angel, and the angel of whom she dreamed was exactly like himself. In all her prayers she included the name of the handsome heathen and a soft tenderness in which a gentle pity was often infused, a grief for his unredeemed soul, was inseparable from all her thoughts of him.

Hannah was informed by her of each of the young man's visits, and as often as Mary mentioned Antinous the deaconess seemed anxious and desired

her to threaten to call the gate-keeper to him. The widow knew full well who her patient's indefatigable admirer was, for she had once heard him speaking to Mastor, and she had asked the slave, who availed himself of every spare moment to attend the services of the Christians, who the lad was. All Alexandria, nay all the Empire, knew the name of the most beautiful youth of his time, the spoilt favorite of Caesar. Even Hannah had heard of him and knew that poets sang his praises and heathen women were eager to obtain a glance from his eyes. She knew how devoid of all morality were the lives of the nobles at Rome, and Antinous appeared to her as a splendid falcon that wheels above a dove to swoop down upon it at a favorable moment and to tear it in its beak and talons. Hannah also knew that Selene was acquainted with Antinous, that it was he who had formerly rescued her from the big dog and afterward saved her from the water; but that Selene, who was now recovering, did not know who her preserver had been on this second occasion was clear from all that she said.

Towards the end of February Antinous had come on three days in succession, and Hannah now took the step of begging the bishop, Eumenes, to give the gate keeper strict injunctions to look out for the young man and to forbid his entering the garden, even with force if it should prove necessary.

But "love laughs at locksmiths" and finds its way through locked doors, and Antinous succeeded all the same in finding his way into Paulina's garden. On one of these occasions he was so happy to surprise Selene, as, supported on a stick and accompanied by a fair-haired boy and dame Hannah herself, she hobbled up and down.

Antinous had learnt to regard everything crippled or defective with aversion, as a monstrous failure of nature's plastic harmony, but to pity it tenderly; but now he felt quite differently. Mary with her humpback had at first horrified him; now he was always glad to see her though she always crossed his wishes; and poor lame Selene, who had been mocked at by the street boys as she limped along, seemed to him more adorable than ever. How lovely were her face and form, how peculiar her way of walking—she did not limp—no, she swayed along the garden. Thus, as he said to himself afterwards, the Nereids are borne along on the undulating waves. Love is easily satisfied, nor is this strange, for it raises all that comes within its embrace to a loftier level of existence. In the light of love weakness is a virtue and want an additional charm.

But the Bithynian's visits were not the widow's only cares; though she bore the others, it is true, not anxiously but with pleasure. Her household had increased by two living souls, and her income was very small. That her patient might not want, she had to work with her own hands while she superintended the girls in the factory, and to carry home with her in the evening papyrus-leaves, not only for Mary, but for herself too, and to glue them together during the long hours of the night. As soon as Selene's condition improved, she too helped willingly

and diligently, but for many weeks the convalescent had to give up every kind of employment.

Mary often looked at Hannah in silent trouble, for she looked very pale. After she had, on one occasion fallen in a fainting fit, the deformed girl had gathered courage and had represented to her that though she ought indeed to put out at interest the talent intrusted to her by the Lord, she ought not to spend it recklessly. She was giving herself no rest, working day and night; visiting the poor and sick in her hours of recreation just as she used, and if she did not give herself more rest would soon need nursing instead of nursing others.

"At any rate," urged Mary, "give yourself a little indispensable sleep at night."

"We must live," replied Hannah, "and I dare not borrow, for I may never be able to repay."

"Then beg Paulina to remit your house-rent; she will do so gladly."

"No," said Hannah, decidedly. "The rent of this little house goes to benefit my poor people, and you know how badly they want it. What we give we lend to the Lord, and he taxes no man above his ability."

Selene was now well, but the physician had said that no human skill could ever cure her of her lameness. She had become Hannah's daughter, and blind Helios the son of the house.

Arsinoe was only allowed to see her sister rarely and always accompanied by her protectress, and she and Selene never were able to have any unchecked and open conversation. The steward's eldest daughter was now contented and cheerful, while the younger was not only saddened by the disappearance of her lover, but also, from being unhappy in her new home, she had become fractious and easily moved to shed tears. All was well with the younger orphans; they were often taken to see Selene, and spoke with affection of their new parents.

As she got well her help diminished the strain on her two friends, and in the beginning of March a call came to the widow which, if she followed it, must give their simple existence a new aspect.

In Upper Egypt certain Christian fraternities had been established, and one of these had addressed a prayer to the great mother-community at Alexandria, that it would send to them a presbyter, a deacon and a deaconess capable of organizing and guiding the believers and catechumens in the province of Hermopolis where they were already numbered by thousands. The life of the community and the care of the poor, and sick in the outlying districts required organization by experienced hands, and Hannah had been asked whether she could make up her mind to leave the metropolis and carry on the work of benevolence at Besa in an extended

sphere.

She would there have a pleasant house, a palm-garden, and gifts from the congregation which would secure not merely her own maintenance, but that of her adopted children.

Hannah was bound to Alexandria by many ties; in the first place she clung to the poor and sick, many of whom had grown very dear to her, and how many girls who had gone astray had she rescued from evil in the factory alone! She begged for a short time for reflection, and this was granted to her. By the fifteenth of March she was to decide, but by the fifth she had already made up her mind, for while Hannah was in the papyrus-factory Antinous had succeeded in getting into Paulina's garden shortly before sunset and in stealing close up to Hannah's house. Mary again observed him as he approached and signed to him to go, in her usual pleasant way; but the Bithynian was more excited than usual; he seized her hand and clasped her with urgent warmth as he implored her to be merciful. She endeavored at once to free herself, but he would not let her go, but cried in coaxing tones:

"I must see her and speak to her to-day, dear, good Mary, only this once!" And before she could prevent it he had kissed her forehead and had flown into the house to Selene. The little hunchback did not know what had happened to her; confused and almost paralyzed by conflicting feelings she stood shame-faced, gazing at the ground. She felt that something quite extraordinary had happened to her, but this wonderful something radiated a dazzling splendor, and since this had risen for her, for poor Mary, a feeling of pride quite new to her mingled with the shame and indignation that filled her soul. She needed a few minutes to collect herself and to recover a sense of her duty, and those few minutes were made good use of by Antinous.

He flew with long steps into the room in which, on that never-to-be-forgotten night, he had laid Selene on the couch, and even at the threshold he called her by her name. She started and laid aside the book out of which she was reading to her blind brother. He called a second time, beseechingly. Selene recognized him and asked calmly:

"Do you want me, or dame Hannah?"

"You, you!" he cried passionately. "Oh Selene, I pulled you out of the water, and since that night I have never ceased to think of you and I must die for love of you. Have your thoughts never, never met mine on the way to you? Are you still and always as cold, as passive as you were then when you belonged half to life and half to death? For months have I prowled round this house as the shade of a dead man haunts the spot where he had left all that was dear to him on earth, and I have never been able to tell you what I feel for you?" As he spoke the lad fell on the ground before her and tried to clasp her knees; but she said reproachfully:

"What does all this mean? Stand up and compose yourself."

"Oh! let me, let me—" he besought her. "Do not be so cold and so hard; have pity on me and do not reject me!"

"Stand up," repeated the girl. "I will certainly not reproach you—I owe you thanks on the contrary."

"Not thanks, but love—a little love is all I ask."

"I try to love all men," replied the girl, "and so I love you because you have shown me very much kindness."

"Selene, Selene!" he exclaimed in joyful triumph. He threw himself again at her feet and passionately seized her right hand; but hardly had he taken it in his own when Mary, scarlet with agitation, rushed into the room. In a husky voice, full of hatred and fury, she commanded him to leave the house at once, and when he attempted again to besiege her ear with entreaties she cried out:

"If you do not obey I will call the men in to help us, who are out there attending to the flowers. I ask you, will you obey or will you not?"

"Why are you so cruel, Mary?" asked the blind boy. "This man is good and kind and tells Selene he loves her."

Antinous pointed to the child with an imploring gesture but Mary was already by the window and was raising her hand to her mouth to make her call heard.

"Don't, don't," cried Antinous. "I am going at once."

And he went slowly and silently towards the door, still gazing at Selene with passionate ardor; then he quitted the room groaning with shame and disappointment, though still with a look of radiant pride as though he had achieved some great deed. In the garden he was met by Hannah, who immediately hastened with accelerated steps to her own house where she found Mary sobbing violently and dissolved in tears.

The widow was soon informed of all that had occurred in her absence, and an hour later she had announced to the bishop that she would accept the call to Besa and was ready to start for Upper Egypt.

"With your foster-children?" asked Eumenes.

"Yes. It was indeed Selene's most earnest wish to be baptized by you, but as a year of probation is required—"

"I will perform the rite to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow, Father?"

"Yes, Sister, in all confidence. She buried the old man in the waves of the sea, and before we were her teachers she had gone through the school and discipline of life. While she was yet a heathen she had taken up her cross and proved herself as faithful as though she were a child of the Lord. All that was lacking to her—Faith, Love and Hope—she has found under your roof. I thank thee for this soul thou hast found Sister, in the name of the Lord."

"Not I, not I," said the widow. "Her heart was frozen, but it is not I but the innocent faith of the blind child that has melted it."

"She owes her salvation to him and to you," replied the bishop, "and they both shall be baptized together. We will give the lovely boy the name of the fairest of the disciples, and call him John. Selene for the future, if she herself likes it, shall be known as Martha."