

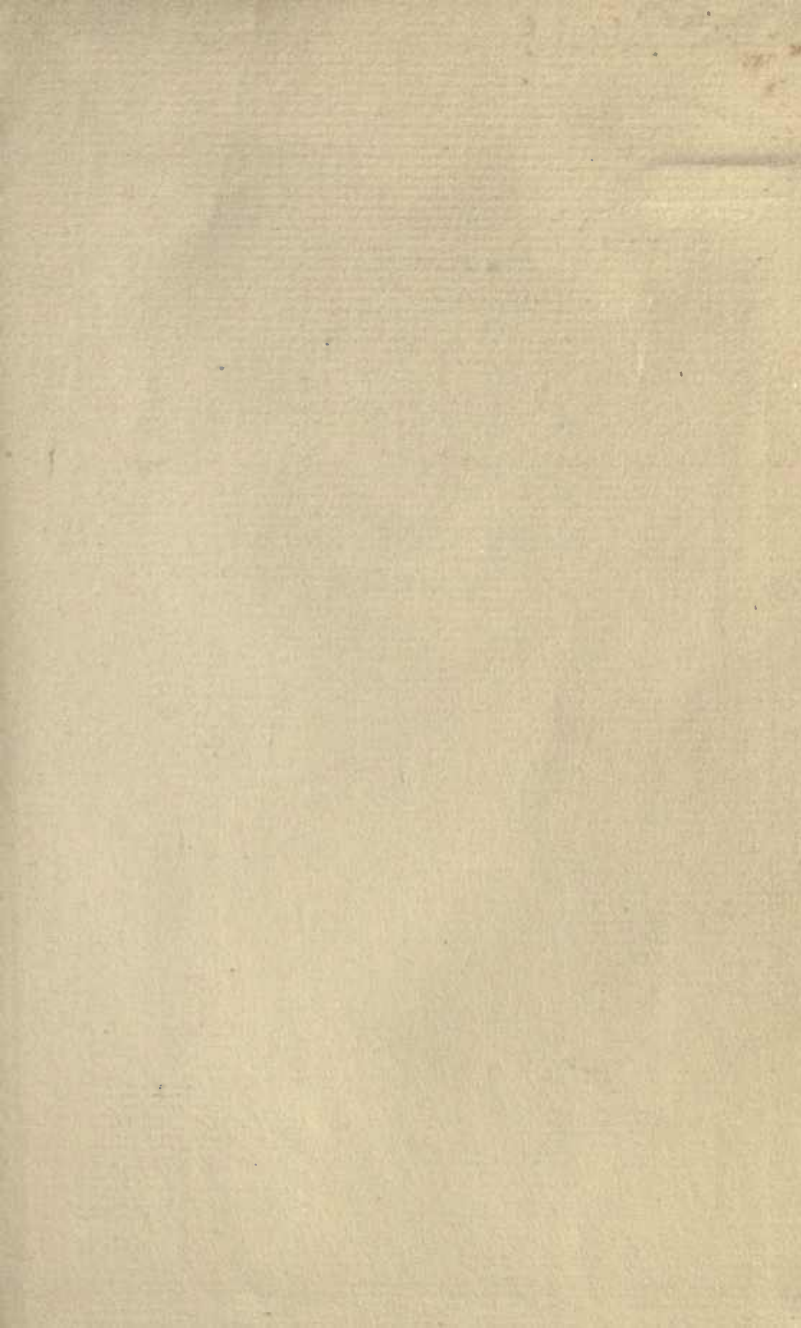
THE DREAD
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OF KINGS

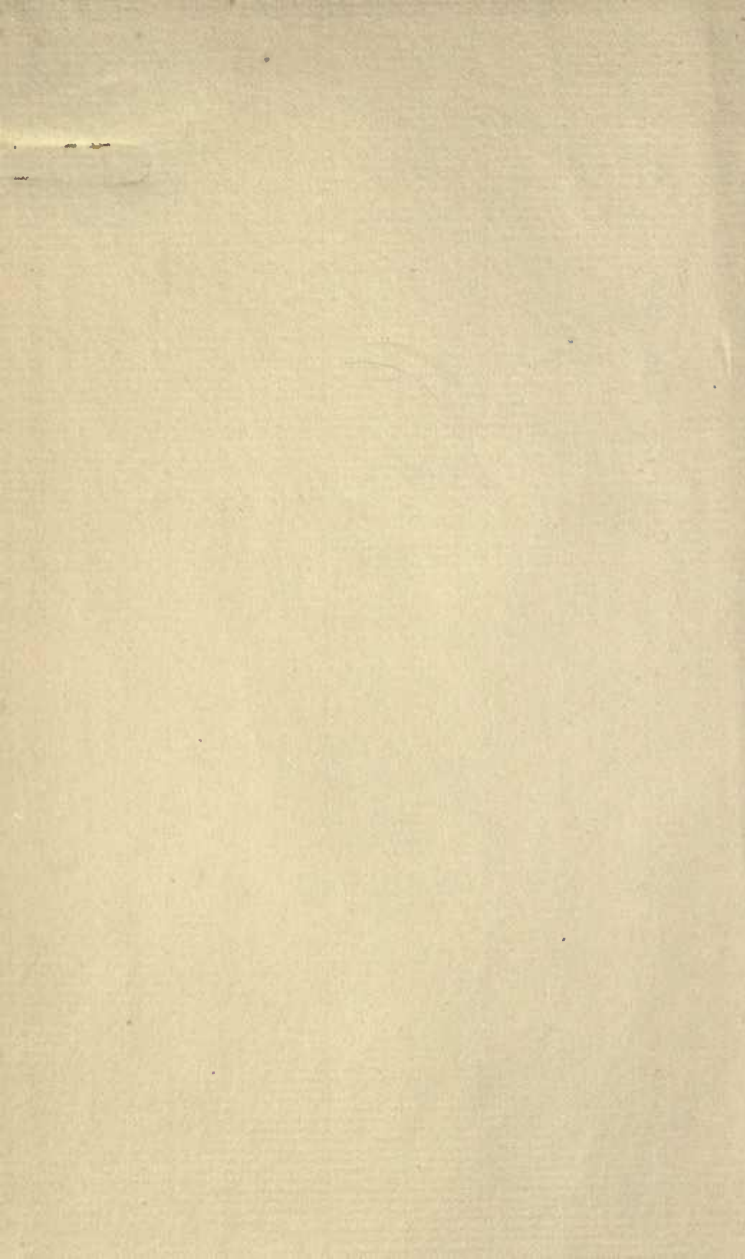


J. BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS



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THE DREAD AND FEAR
OF KINGS

THE DREAD AND FEAR OF KINGS

BY

J. BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS



CHICAGO

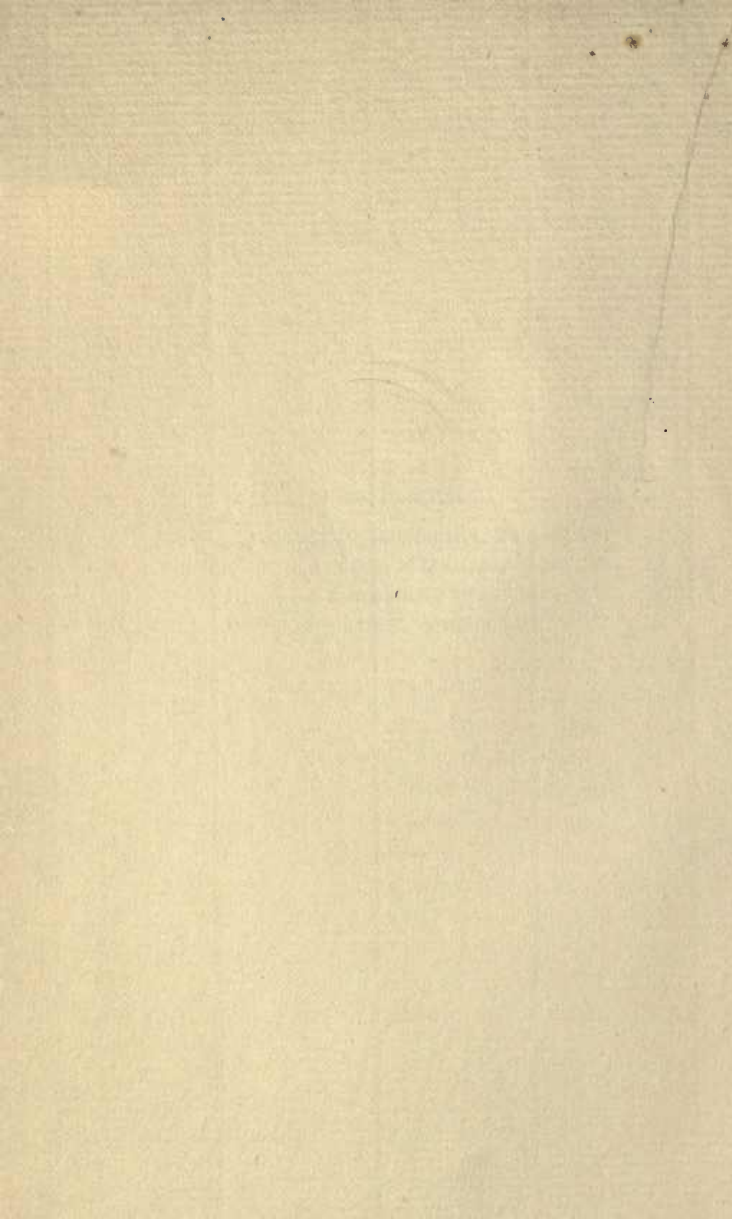
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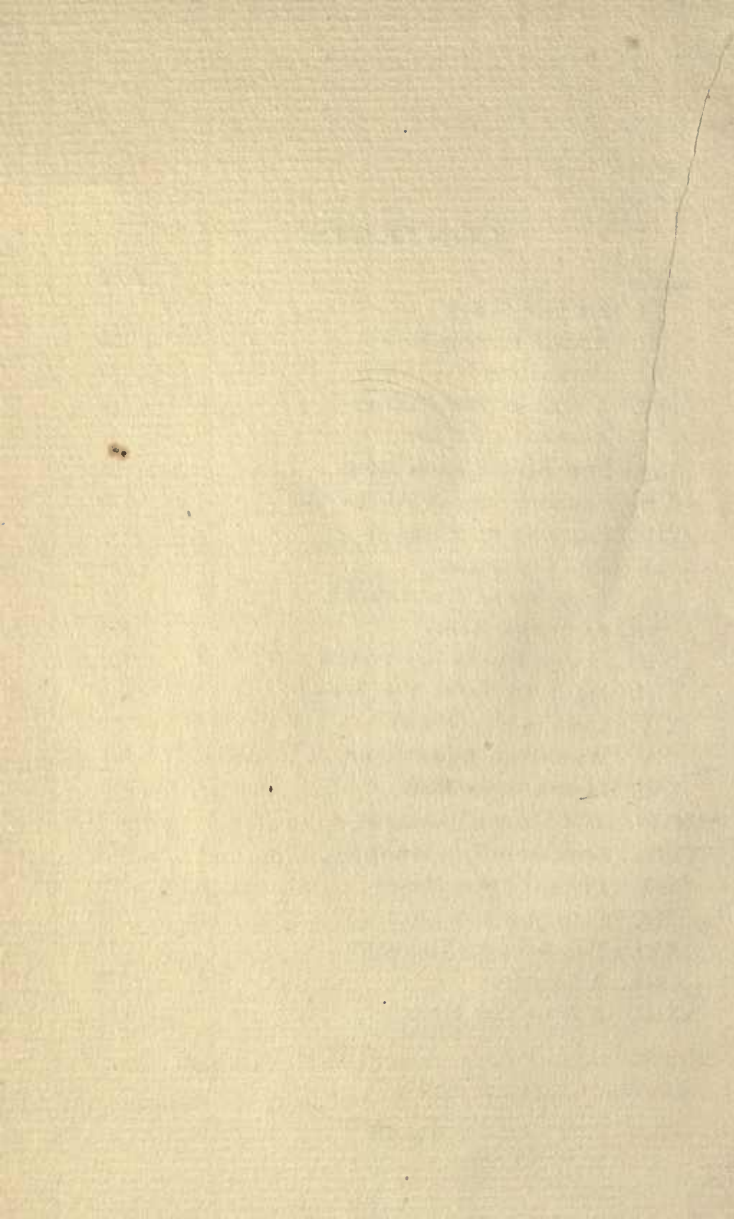
DEDICATION

To those who gave me life and taught me how
To find its buried gold in every hour,
I give the fruits of training and of love ;
Mine their incitement,—what I write is theirs.



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THE DREAD AND FEAR OF KINGS.

CHAPTER I.

ZIA THE SLAVE.

Alexis, leaning upon the railing that partly surrounded the upper deck, watched the coast of Sardinia vanish in the southwest. He breathed a deep sigh of relief, for he had grown weary of the ship, and now no more ports lay between him and Ostia, the port of Rome. Since leaving Athens, he had once suffered the dangers and inconveniences of shipwreck. While passing through the straits of Messina, the vessel in which he now sailed had been injured, necessitating slow progress. After several days of dead calm on the Tyrrhenian Sea, contrary winds had forced them to put in at Sardinia, and the unpleasantness of the journey had recently received its finishing touch by the addition of Roman soldiers who had embarked at the Sardinian port.

But Alexis did not long suffer himself to be irritated by ordinary causes; and although the soldiers seized upon the best quarters of the ship,

and strode about clanking their weapons in the manner of those who seek quarrels, the traveler from Greece presently began to take an interest in their superior officer. This officer was a centurion, although his command consisted at present of only thirty men. He was a young man, evidently younger than Alexis. His face was handsome, bold, and dark, the features of a pure Roman type. The face of Alexis was also dark, and as handsome, though in a different way. His eyes did not burn with a restless daring, his mouth was not shaped in hard, but in gentle lines, his arms did not denote strength, and the absence of weapons accented the difference.

As Sardinia faded from sight the Roman drew near the isolated figure at the railing. "Whence art thou?" he inquired, condescendingly.

Alexis flashed a sunny smile at the Roman. He had been lonesome so long that any companionship was sweet. "I am from Athens, and I go to Ostia. I am pleased to speak with thee, for in the days past there was but the master of the ship to speak with; a most tiresome fellow, who will not listen to another man, but either hath a tale to tell or else is busy. True, there were the rowers—but will a man converse with dogs?"

"Thou speakest like a Roman!" said the soldier. "Art thou—but thy face speaks in another language."

“My face speaks Greek,” replied Alexis.

“Tell me,” said the Roman, “dost thou believe in the thirty thousand gods of Hesiod? As for myself, I hold to but the twelve greater gods.”

“I know not if there be so many,” said Alexis. “I think they make a poor show of governing the world, between them! But I care not for the gods, nor they for me. I am an Epicurean. Pleasure, sunshine, the bath, the theater, a woman’s smile—give me these, and let Jupiter have Olympus!”

“As to governing the world,” said the Roman, “the gods are relieved of that duty. Cæsar does it for them, and right handsomely. May he live many years!”

“Let him live,” said the Greek. “For since he became emperor peace has settled upon the world. A good man must he be!”

“See that thou sayest so while in Rome,” observed the centurion. “It likes him not to be criticised. Of course, there is nothing that can be truthfully said against Tiberius Cæsar.”

“May the gods protect him!” said the Greek.

“He needs only to die to become a god himself,” observed the other. “Praised be his name!”

At this moment the angry voice of the shipmaster was heard: “Do but see that dog of a slave resting upon his oar!” He pointed toward

the highest bank of rowers, where a short and delicate man had paused in his monotonous work. Like his fellows, his right leg was chained to the bench, his head was bared to the blazing sun; like them, he was stripped to the waist, and his back streamed with perspiration. "Thou dog of a Jew!" cried the master, as he fell to beating the slave. "I will teach thee how to dream to some purpose."

Alexis turned away his head. "Look below," said his companion. "Thou art missing a fair sight."

"I like it not," said Alexis; "I would I could not hear the blows."

The Roman stared a moment at Alexis in disdainful surprise; then he said: "It is a sight worthy the arena! The barbarian hath not once flinched, although the thong is knotted and well wielded. And now the blood doth appear. Ha! it warms my heart. It reminds me of the camp. Would I were back in Germany with my legion! One thing is sure, I shall not tarry long in Rome. Now, friend Greek, thou mayest face about. The beating hath an end, as have all delights. The barbarian hath the spirit of a Roman. He whined not, he trembled not."

"And yet he is a Jew," said Alexis, looking down upon the chastised rower, who was now hard at work; "and an old man, his hair white. His back is cruelly bruised. Hither,

good shipmaster. Let yonder Jew rest, that his back may heal, else he will faint, and thou wilt have an empty oar."

"I have plenty more of the dogs down below," said the master, unconcernedly. "Let him die, he is but a Jew, and, as thou seest, he is not for many years more. But while he lives let him earn his dinner. Sayest thou not so, centurion?"

"I would I might see him beaten for as long again," said the Roman, "merely to see if he would quail at the last."

"Perhaps he will shirk again," said the master. "In that case, I will call thee to see me play upon him."

"I thank thee for thy courtesy," said the soldier. Then he turned to Alexis. "Since we are to be together for a day or so, and since I like thee, though a Greek, let us give our names between us. I am Caius Lepidus."

"Thou!" cried Alexis, with a beaming face. "Praised be the gods, for now I believe in them! I do so believe whenever my affairs prosper. I am saved the trouble of seeking thy father, Manius Lepidus, the senator."

"Why, truly, I can show thee the way, since I go thither. But who art thou?"

"I am Alexis, the Grecian architect, whom Tiberius Cæsar hath sent for. I am to build the emperor a curious, underground, and secret edifice in the Isle of Caprææ. Sejanus bade

me come to thy father's house, where I should be entertained till his glorious lordship send for me."

"In that case, thou art my guest while on this ship. Let us go below and refresh ourselves."

After a light repast they went to the bath, and then both sought slumber in their different apartments.

When Alexis awoke it was night. It had been his custom to sleep through the tedious, burning days, and enjoy the soft, dark hours on deck. He started up, when by a movement in the darkness he knew he was not alone. "Who is there?" he exclaimed, as he sprang toward the lamp.

"Hush!" said some one in Greek. "Do not betray me, or my life is forfeit. I am the Jew that was beaten. Nay, I pray thee do not strike a light till I am gone. I saw thee turn thy head. I knew thou wert sorry. As thou lovest God, hear me!"

"As I love God!" echoed Alexis, drawing his dagger in the dark, to be fully prepared for any surprise. "Which god? But why art thou, a slave, in my bedroom? Thou comest for booty; I shall make an outcry and betray thee, thou insolent one!"

"Hear me, hear me, first."

"I listen—but come no nearer."

"Every night I am taken from the oar to rest

till dawn. Another takes my place. Last night, as I was being led to our foul hole, my foot felt something cold. By my bare foot I knew it was a key. I stooped and secured it unseen. It was the key the master lost; it unlocks our fetters. So I have been able to slip to thee."

"But why dost slip to me? And why tell this tale? Thou knowest I will repeat it to the master."

"Thou wilt not repeat it. Thou art not a Roman. Thou art not even a—"

"Who art thou?" Alexis demanded, fiercely.

"It is enough that I am a Jew. Let me tell thee my errand. In Rome, whither thou goest, is my daughter. Her name is Mary. She is a maiden; I have not seen her since she was a child. She liveth somewhere on the Via Alba. Thou wilt seek for Mary, the daughter of Zia, for I am Zia."

"But why should I seek for her?" returned Alexis. "What care I for Zia or Mary or the Via Alba? I am not going to Rome to seek Jewesses."

"My daughter is in fearful danger. The eyes of the powerful and the wicked are upon her. You must save her, for I cannot. And yet, if I escape, I may be in time. But I may be slain! Thou art a free man. Save my child."

"I am sorry for the maiden," said Alexis, impatiently, "but if the eyes of the great are

upon her, I am not going to thrust my life between. Who am I to be helping every damsel that is in danger? Return to thy couch, Zia, before thou art discovered."

"I can tell thee of the three letters," said Zia.

"What three letters?" asked Alexis, quickly.

"The three thou hidest every day."

"Thou knowest all? Quick—speak!"

"And if I speak—if I tell all thou desirest to know—wilt thou save my child?"

"If thou canst tell me all I wish to know, indeed, then will I do all I can—yes, everything."

"It was twenty-seven years ago," began the slave.

"True, for I am twenty and eight years old," said Alexis. "But draw nearer; I fear thee no longer. And speak lower."

The Jew came close to the couch, and for a long time the silence in the room was only broken by his scarcely audible voice. He ended with: "But now I must hasten back, else my companions will wake and find me gone. No, I cannot tell thee with whom my daughter liveth. All is a mystery to me, save that she is on the Via Alba. Since she was a child I have been in captivity. Her mother is dead. Her uncle liveth; it may be she is with him. If so, she may not need thine aid. But thou wilt seek her?"

"I will seek and find. That much I owe thee

for what thou hast told me. And I will do what I can to save her, if she be in danger. But how knowest thou she liveth on the Via Alba?"

"I cannot tell thee now. Time presses: Farewell."

Alexis quickly dressed and went upon deck, his mind filled with many vivid images, conjured up by what he had just heard. A refreshing southeastern breeze was blowing, and the sails swelled proudly toward the direction of Rome, while the rhythmical sound of the oars, the creaking of the ropes, the tramp of the night-watch, and the washing of the sea gave his thoughts a tinge of melancholy. A half-moon had just risen above the horizon, and as the water quivered it seemed to ride the sea like a boat of transparent silver. Its light rushed across the dark expanse, cutting a path of glory across the still solitude of the world.

"Thou didst escape me," said a voice at his ear. Alexis turned, and found Caius Lepidus, preparing for comfort. His attendants had brought a long couch upon deck, strewn with cushions. "This is for me and thee," said the Roman. "Let us ease our minds with conversation while we ease our bodies with softness." They assumed half-reclining positions upon the couch. The attendants withdrew.

"I have a mind to speak of mine affairs," observed Caius. "Since thou art to go to my

house, let me tell thee what thou wilt find. First, my father, Manius Lepidus, a senator; secondly, Phædrus, who is a freedman, and who writes verses.”

“Good verses?” inquired Alexis.

“What matter if good or bad? They be verses, as I told thee, and that tells the story. However, he is a good sort of fellow, five and thirty—I am ten years younger. But what can you expect of a freedman? The verses do no harm, except to waste the hours that witness their creation. The deified Augustus freed him when a youth on account of his ready pen. He lives with my father as an overseer of the estate, and even as a friend. I will tell thee more of him anon.

“Next door dwells a Roman knight, by name Titius Sabinus. Mark this point: Sabinus hath an adopted daughter; her name, Julia. She is sixteen. We were betrothed when she was ten. Some day we are to marry. So when thou seest Julia, remember that she is for me, my Greek!”

“I shall remember,” said Alexis, smiling.

“At seventeen I became a Roman soldier,” continued Caius. “I would have taken arms earlier had the law allowed. I love the whole life—the camp, the tumult of battle, the sight of carnage. Alexis, there is no other excitement such as this. I joined the German legions, since peace curses Italy. The Germans are restless;

they give us many opportunities for washing our swords in blood. I have been in Germany five years; so Julia was but eleven when I saw her last. To tell truth, I have scarce thought of her; more important themes engaged me. But recently such a detestable peace hath dulled the valor of the barbarians that I thought, 'This is a time to see my father once more, and Julia.' So I hastened to Rome with mine escort. What happens? Scarce have I entered the gate when I am met by a messenger from Sejanus. 'Haste to Sardinia,' saith he. 'There is a business there for thee.' I put forth without visiting my home, though it lay but two streets away!"

"What will the fair Julia say when she knows that?" said Alexis.

"She will say I loved my duty better than father or betrothed," said Caius, proudly. "This is what it means to be a Roman! But now I shall tell thee why I went to Sardinia. Listen attentively. The tale hath a moral. There was a man in Rome who said one day, 'Why doth Tiberius hide himself in Capreæ and never visit his capital?' There was one who overheard him; for every word thou speakest in Rome hath a witness. The informer summoned the man before the senate. There was an eloquent accusation. This man had accused Tiberius of dissimulation, of fear, of selfishness—above all, he had dared to accuse his emperor

of failing in his duty. The senate knew not what sentence to bring, because they did not know the mind of Tiberius. They sent an ambassador to Sejanus. 'What sentence shall we bring?' they inquired. 'Find him guilty,' said Sejanus. So the man was sentenced to be strangled. But when Tiberius knew of it, he sent them a letter. 'Why are ye so severe?' he demanded. 'Have ye no compassion? What do I care what another saith of me? If I remain in Capreæ, is it not for the interest of the state? I censure your severity.' Thereupon the senate revoked the sentence. Another letter from Tiberius: 'I see ye have freed this incendiary,' he wrote. 'He throws blame upon me, and ye show no resentment. This is worse than your former harshness!' The senate then banished the man to Sardinia, and interdicted him from fire and water.

"And why was I sent to Sardinia? To put this man to death. We found him isolated, wretched, clothed in rags. We took off his head. The informer got half of his property, Tiberius the rest. Let us praise the name of Tiberius!"

"May he live eternally," said Alexis.

"Now, when thou art in Rome," added Caius, "see that thou sayest no word that might in any wise be twisted to the semblance of a censure of this glorious emperor. But at the same time

dare not to keep silence respecting him, else thy very silence will condemn thee. But enough of Tiberius. Howbeit, when I say enough I mean for the present. Thou knowest life were not long enough to tell all his excellences."

"I understand thee," replied Alexis.

"I know not if Julia will please me," said Caius, musingly. "But what then? Divorces come as cheap as the leaves on the trees. Besides, I shall not marry at present. I detest the thought of having any ties to hamper me. A wife is a vexation. One must think of her comfort, or at least support her, and wives are fearfully extravagant. They waste whole estates in their dressing. They think only of how they may get an extra denarius, and how they may most expeditiously get rid of it." Caius sighed deeply.

"But while thou art putting from thy mind the marriage," said Alexis, "how is it with the betrothed Julia? Art not fearful that she will cast her eyes upon another in thine absence?"

"Not I. For Phædrus, the freedman, who loves me devotedly, hath sworn to me that while I am away he will watch over Julia and keep her for me."

"Phædrus, then, is married?"

"Not he; nor ever was, save to his poetry. But he is old—yea, full five and thirty. He loveth me. He is protected by my father.

Once my father saved his life. Besides, he was a slave, and no Roman; I have no fear of Phædrus. He careth no more for a pretty face than do I."

"Do Romans, then, cease falling in love at five and thirty?" inquired Alexis, skeptically.

"Love!" echoed Caius, scornfully. "Me-thinks we might have chosen a subject more fitting men. Were all the thoughts that I have thought of love piled one on another, they would not reach high enough to throw a shadow."

"And were all my thoughts of love heaped up," said Alexis, "they would hide the world!"

When the new friends reached the deck the next morning, the sun was shining in a cloudless sky. In the southeast the coast of Italy was clearly visible. "There is Ostia," said Caius, pointing. "Now, slaves, row your best. Ha! there is the beaten Jew, snug at his post!"

Alexis glanced quickly at Zia, but the slave sat with bowed head.

There were two important ports where the corn ships unloaded their cargoes destined for Rome, and where vessels from all points of the world disembarked their passengers. One was Puteoli, on the bay of Naples; the other, Ostia, a city sixteen miles from Rome. Ostia stood at the mouth of the Tiber, and stretched almost three miles along its bank. The turbid river had washed such a vast amount of alluvium into the

harbor that the larger ships could no longer reach the port, but were obliged to send their cargoes ashore in smaller boats.

Caius and Alexis found themselves in the midst of a picturesque and animated scene. The vessels of the navy guarded the mouth of the Tiber, and upon their decks lounged soldiers in resplendent uniforms. Huge merchantmen from Alexandria rode at sea while wheat was being handed down their sides into smaller crafts. Those ships which did not draw a heavy burden were cautiously entering the harbor between concealed ramparts of earth and stone, while among them passed the shore boats, going forth to relieve the larger ships. Shouts and curses and mocking laughter rang over the water.

The ship from Sardinia was small enough to attempt the entrance. "Now, dogs," said the master to the rowers, "strand us upon the way, and ye shall every one have a sore scourging!"

Thus encouraged, they bent to their oars, while the man at the rudder stood anxiously awaiting directions. Suddenly the shipmaster gave a furious cry: "The dog Jew! Gone! gone!"

Caius and Alexis ran to the railing and looked down. There idly hung the chain that had held Zia's leg to the bench. Zia had escaped. Since he had leaped into the water, it was only a

matter of time before he must come to the surface to breathe.

“Lepidus,” cried the master, in a fury, “poise thy javelin, I pray thee, and have at his head when it appears!”

“So shall I,” cried the soldier, excitedly.

“Nay,” said Alexis, “why shouldst thou kill the man? What harm hath he done thee?”

“He is a slave,” said Caius, haughtily. “He doth not belong to himself. He who kills a runaway slave defends his country’s laws.”

At this moment one of the smaller boats, laden with corn from a merchantman, almost grazed the side of the ship as it passed over the place where Zia had dived. It was rowed by slaves of the merchantman, who were not chained to the benches, but who were guarded by a burly African.

“Give way!” cried the trader from Carthage, angry because the ship from Sardinia had stopped. “If ye will not move on, return to the open.” Then catching sight of Caius Lepidus, as the Roman stood with poised javelin, the African roared: “What! Threatenest me? Have at thee!” And he seized his bow and began to draw it.

“Thou fool Ethiope!” cried Caius. “Get thee out of my way. It is not thee I seek, but an escaped slave. What sort of a Roman dost think me, to waste a javelin on thy black skin?”

The African gave a sullen order to his slaves

to move on. The boat squeezed past the ship and made for port. The soldiers strained their eyes to catch a glimpse of the Jew, but they were unrewarded. Presently, however, a burst of laughter came from a ship of the royal navy. Following the direction of their pointing hands, Alexis beheld a man struggling in the water in the wake of the African's boat. At first Caius supposed it to be the Jew, and the ship was started forward, that he might take closer aim. But he soon perceived that the man in the water was an African. At the amazement of the Roman the laughter rose derisively. "The Jew hath changed his skin!" some one shouted. "The Jew rideth at his ease," cried another.

It was true. Zia had dived under the African boat; he had clambered upon the lowest bench, dedicated to the rowers, and having pushed the hindmost slave overboard, he had calmly taken possession of the empty oar. His bold daring had so well succeeded that his presence was unsuspected, even by the one who rowed just before him. Finding that he had been seen, Zia now turned and smiled upon his former master. That smile added fuel to the master's fury. The ship was urged forward at all possible speed, while the African trader was hailed by many voices: "Look behind thee, burly barbarian!" "Have a care to the hindmost rower, thou dull Ethiope!" "Ho, Carthage, a Jew for a Scipio

hath invaded thee!" "Hannibal, thou wilt never cross the Alps!"

Infuriated by these jests, the cause of which was unsuspected, the African turned about. His eyes fell upon Zia. His mouth flew open in dull stupor, while his eyes became almost lost in their own whites. Before he could draw his bow, the Jew sprang to his feet and leaped far out into the water. He disappeared from sight close to the smooth stone wall that inclosed that part of the harbor. The ship had passed the dangerous sand bars, and as it paused in a convenient spot, Caius again drew his javelin. His example was followed by several of his soldiers, but the centurion said to them, briefly, "Save your weapons."

When Zia again appeared, he was close to the wall. Thrusting up his hand, he grasped a crevice between two massive rocks. Slowly he crawled up the slimy surface till at length his entire body, naked to the waist, was exposed to view. There was but a small space between his hands and the top of the wall. Above his head stood a group of laborers, who had dropped everything to watch the little drama.

"Cast not thy javelin," said Alexis, with a white face; "for if thou fail, he will be taken by the men upon the wall."

"And shall I spoil my sport for that?" returned Caius, his eyes glowing. With a quick and powerful motion he hurled the javelin from the deck.

It flashed in the sunlight for a brief moment, and then its sharp edge struck the wall, entering a crevice, where it stood quivering. It had passed between Zia's head and upraised right arm. As quick as the thought occurred to him, the Jew threw his weight upon the javelin, and with a powerful contraction of the muscles in his arms he threw himself over the edge of the wall, flat upon the ground.

Instantly the laborers cast themselves upon him and hid him from sight. A throng rushed toward them from other parts of the quay. The laborers disappeared down a narrow street.

"Since he is captured, no matter," said Caius, seeking to hide his disappointment.

"Captured!" roared the shipmaster. "May Neptune get him yet! He hath escaped!"

"How sayest thou he has escaped, when we saw him overborne by the workmen?"

"What were those workmen?" returned the other. "They were Jews. Will a Jew injure a Jew? They have taken him away to liberty. May Jupiter strike the race with thunderbolts! May Mars exterminate them to the last man! And may Pluto munch upon their bones!"

Alexis smiled, and turned to Caius. "It is a happy day," he said, "that sees my coming to Italy."

"Mayest thou not find thy grave here," said Caius, moodily.

CHAPTER II.

ALEXIS ENTERS ROME.

Horses were awaiting the soldiers at Ostia. Without pausing to rest from the voyage, Caius Lepidus set out upon the Via Ostiensis, at the head of his thirty men. At his side rode Alexis, the architect. The centurion had fallen into a mood of deep meditation, returning only necessary words to the ceaseless exclamations and questionings of the Greek. The day was fair, the fields were waving with corn, and the salt-marshes were covered by luxuriant vegetation. Alexis was as merry as the children who came from the village doors to gaze after the company. He knew his ceaseless flow of conversation was wasted upon the Roman, but still he talked on, for his own content. For two hours they clattered over the broad stone pavement of the Via Ostiensis, then the massive walls of a great city appeared in sight. Their journey had followed the course of the Tiber, which was always visible, save when undulating fields and clustering houses hid the rushing tide.

“Ah! it is Rome,” said Alexis. “By the river the walls make two half-circles, and our

road passes between them. That next the Tiber surrounds one of your seven hills. It must be the Aventine. All my life long I have desired to rest in the shade of those hills, and tread the streets of Cæsar."

"She will want me to marry her before I return to Germany," said Caius, discontentedly.

"I would somebody wished to marry me," said Alexis. "This gate—is it not the Porta Raudusculana?"

"But I will not, I will not!" exclaimed Caius. "Above everything, I am a warrior. Let her wait till I am weary of blood, then I will return and make her my wife. This is what I will say to her adopted father. I am resolved."

They rode through the gate, and found themselves on the eastern spur of the Aventine. Caius dismissed his soldiers, then rode on with Alexis. They had scarcely passed the Aventine hill, when Alexis stopped his horse, and leaped to the ground.

"What has happened?" demanded Caius.

Alexis pointed at a naked infant which lay at the edge of the road, and whose feeble voice was drowned by the traffic of the city.

"Poor little one!" exclaimed the Greek. "I will not see it die thus." He advanced toward the place, leading his horse.

"Mount thy horse," cried Caius, in a tone of disgust. "Wilt thou have us laughed at by all

these slaves? Come, I charge thee. If thou pick up every child who has been exposed on the streets—come, or I leave thee!”

But Alexis pressed forward resolutely. As he stooped over the doomed child, an armed slave spoke to him. “Who art thou?”

Alexis looked up, and saw other slaves drawing near. “Knowest thou aught of this child?” he demanded.

“It is the son of Latinius Latiaris,” said the slave. “The master hath exposed him. Thy name?”

“Name him a fool!” cried Caius. “Ask not his name. He is a Greek. Come, for thy life’s sake!”

Alexis mounted his horse, and followed Caius ruefully. As they entered the valley between the Aventine and Palatine hills, Caius spoke angrily.

“Look thou, friend Greek. Thou wilt never get so far as my father’s house if thou dost not concentrate all thy powers upon thine own affairs. This child hath been lawfully exposed. If one may not do what one pleases with one’s own, then, in the name of Jupiter, one might as well be a barbarian, and no Roman. When a child is born, it is laid upon the floor at the father’s feet. If the father lift it up, it shall live. If he turn away, it shall be exposed. But this exposing of children can be no new thing to thee. Did not

we Romans borrow the very agreeable and economical custom from the Greeks?"

"It is true. But in some things I am no Greek. When I see a sight like this, the tears blind mine eyes. Once I did rescue such a poor child—it was in Athens, ten years ago. And she is a beautiful little maid, and as fond of me as if I were a perpetual banquet. Is not this enormous affair the Circus Maximus? That must be the Appian Way, leading from it. And what a noble flight of stone steps, clear from the base to the top of the Palatine! How I shall wander among the palaces up there in the favored spot of earth! And here in the Circus Maximus, what games—"

"Thou shalt see no games," returned Caius. "Games are forbidden."

"What! Forbidden? Can it be that Tiberius hath forbidden amusements to his people?"

"Thy name?" said a voice at his side. Alexis turned sharply, and found a slave walking beside his horse.

"What is my name to thee?" returned Alexis.

"I would know the name of one who casts blame upon the emperor," said the other, boldly.

"I cast no blame," retorted Alexis. "May he live forever!"

"If thou praise him, thou canst not be afraid to give thy name."

"Hear me," said Caius, turning to the slave.

“This stranger hath been sent for by Sejanus. At thy peril thou detain him!”

The slave slunk away.

“Why is it,” Alexis asked, “that in the streets only slaves are seen? Where are the people?”

“In their houses, as I hope to get thee before thine eternal questions cost thee thy life!”

“May not a man question in Rome?”

“Thou art at it again! Had *that* been overheard—what a din is this!”

From a large house arose horrible screams. The horses started at the sounds and began to tremble and prance.

“Some one is being murdered!” cried Alexis, who was very pale. “To the rescue!” He sprang from his horse. Before the entrance stood some soldiers. “Brave men,” cried Alexis, “come with me. Will ye stand like images, unmoved by those shrieks for aid?”

“Who art thou?” asked one of the soldiers.

“I am a man; therefore I take an interest in all that concerns mankind,” cried Alexis, quoting from the famous play.

“Then thou hast no concern here, for mankind is not involved. These screeching wretches are only slaves. Yesterday the master of this house was slain by one of them, but which one has not been developed; therefore it is necessary to kill them all. There are one thousand eight hundred and thirty—men and women and children.

How can so many be dispatched without an outcry? It cannot be helped. If the noise disturb thee, move on."

"Who hath commanded this cruel slaughter?"

"What! Thou callest this a 'cruel slaughter'? Know, then, that it is conducted by the brother of the murdered master. His name is Latinus Latiaris. Mark, comrades; he calls it a 'cruel slaughter'! Give us thy name quickly, meddling stranger!"

Caius interposed, and succeeded in getting Alexis safely upon his horse and away from the place. When they were out of hearing, the soldier said: "The gods be thanked! Here is my home. I would rather lead a campaign than conduct thee through this city!"

CHAPTER III.

BETROTHED.

They drew rein before a modest residence at the foot of the Palatine hill. Alexis held the horses while Caius traversed the court that lay open to the street, and rapped upon the bronze door with the knocker. A face appeared in a reconnoitering attitude at one of the apertures in the door-posts. "Caius has returned," said the centurion to this face. The door swung open, disclosing the janitor, chained to his bench by one leg. Caius entered the house. Not long after he returned, preceded by a slave, who relieved Alexis of the horses.

"Enter," said Caius. The Greek crossed the pillared court and entered the atrium, or hall, an oblong apartment, about twenty feet wide, in the midst of which was the open cistern. Caius had been met by two men who still bore evidences of joyful surprise. They were presented as Manius Lepidus, the father of Caius, and Phædrus, the friend of the family and supervisor of the estate.

"And how dost thou happen to come at the very moment my son returns from Germany?"

inquired Manius Lepidus, leading the way to the tablinum, or chief room, which stood at the end of the atrium.

“He was upon the same ship,” said Alexis, with his beaming smile. “He got on at Sardinia. When he learned that I was the architect sent for by the emperor, to stay here till needed, we became great friends.”

Caius shrugged his shoulders, as if this affectionate term was not justified by his own feelings. All four seated themselves in the tablinum, to await the noon meal, which was nearly due. Alexis was secretly surprised at the modesty of the house and the absence of luxury.

“Sardinia!” repeated Manius, looking at his son in astonishment. “Then thou didst not come to Rome, save by passing around the world?”

“Yea, I came direct. But scarce had I set foot in the city when Sejanus sent me to lift off the head of a man who had been exiled to Sardinia. I did not pause to greet thee, for duty is a muzzle that prevents your beast from grazing.”

“Thou didst right. Thou art a Lepidus! And now canst thou graze at thine ease!”

“That seemed a strange case to me,” spoke up Alexis. “The senate banished the man, and spoke not of death; yet he has been slain.”

“Sejanus spoke,” said Caius.

“Is he greater than the senate?” inquired the Greek.

Lepidus glanced quickly at Phædrus, and then at his son. Caius held up a finger warningly.

“May my tongue perish!” cried Alexis. “What has it done this time?”

Caius crept to the swinging curtains that divided the tablinum from other apartments. Having peeped into all four of these, he spoke: “No slave is listening.”

“There is a chamber above this one,” said Lepidus in a low voice. “But let us speak in whispers, and for this once only. I perceive, Alexis, that thou art a stranger in Italy. But there is another fact which concerns me nearer; thou art a stranger to *me*. Yet thy face is honest. Although thou art the friend of the emperor’s favorite—”

“Thou mistakest,” cried Alexis; “I am no friend of Sejanus.”

“For the love of the gods, not so loud!”

“Nay, I mean only that I do not know him. I have never seen him; I doubt not I need only behold his face to love him.”

“Now thou speakest! Yet why hath he sent for thee, knowing thee not?”

“I am known as an architect,” said Alexis, with beaming pride. “Have not I built in Athens? I am to fashion for the emperor a gorgeous structure on the Isle of Caprææ.”

“Then this much I will say: the greatest labor we have nowadays in Rome is to keep

ourselves alive. No more. Art thou a man of family?"

"Not I. But, Phædrus, Caius hath told me thou art a poet."

"I am an imitator," said Phædrus, modestly. "Æsop is my model. The days of Virgil and Horace are gone. But doubtless it will be our boast when we are old men, if we live to be old, that we lived in their day, and conversed with them face to face."

"Truly," said Alexis, "it is no spring-time for the budding of poetry when every one is afraid to say his nose which smelleth is his own! Yea, I perceive—perish my tongue! I vow to heaven I will not speak another word till I have eaten." And the Greek sank back in his chair with a resolute expression.

Caius turned to the freedman. "Hast thou kept thy trust, friend Phædrus? How doth Julia?"

"I have kept my trust," said Phædrus, in a somber voice. "Julia is well."

"Ha!" said Alexis to himself; "what meaneth that tone?"

Caius laughed. "I perceive she doth not suit thy mind," he cried. "Doubtless she is too frivolous and light-headed for the solemn poet. Poor Phædrus! To set thee such a task as guarding over a gay girl—for she must be still under seventeen. And thou, with thy thirty-five heavy

years—it was more than my friendship was worth, I fear, to make thee her guardian.”

“Perhaps,” said Phædrus, with a serious smile, “thou wilt now relieve me of my guardianship.”

“Not I—not I! Father, I must not marry now; I cannot marry. I have no taste for chains. Think thou it will offend her, or her father, if I speak not of marriage during this visit?”

“I fear they will claim thee, Caius.”

“I would be sorry to offend your old friend, father; but I will die by my own sword sooner than be captured by a maid before I choose to surrender.”

“Thou hast not seen Julia,” said his father, simply.

The noon meal was announced—a light repast; and after that Alexis was shown to a sleeping apartment, to take a siesta. Before he fell asleep, he remembered the runaway slave, Zia, and the promise made to seek the daughter Mary. But since Zia was at liberty, Alexis did not feel bound by his promise. However, he would look up the Via Alba at his convenience, and give a desultory search for his conscience’s sake. Only not to-day, nor the day after; just—some time. And then he fell asleep.

About two hours later he arose, and wandered aimlessly in the atrium, examining the waxen images of the ancestors, admiring the limpid

water in the open cistern, and rejoicing in the sunny square of Italian sky which was visible through the opening in the roof. Here he was joined by Caius.

“While here this is thy home,” said Caius. “The library, the gardens, everything is open to thee. We are not rich, but we are content. But now I desire thy company to the home of Sabinus.”

“Thou art kind,” said Alexis; “but I know well thou wouldst prefer to see the fair Julia Sabina alone.”

“Nay, not I,” rejoined Caius, hastily. “It is to prevent that very thing that I ask thy company. Yea—and I dare not leave thee alone. But her name you mistake. Remember, she is only an adopted child. Her name is Julia Silia. But come. We have but to walk to the next house.”

The home of Sabinus was magnificent. The apartments gleamed with gold and pure marble. The floors were rich with mosaics, every niche was adorned with a handsome statue. In the impluvium—the open court beyond the tablinum—a beautiful fountain played in the center. On either side gilded doors opened into apartments. A glimpse was afforded of a magnificent dining-hall, with its three richly cushioned couches surrounding a table of citrus-wood, which would have been cheap at a million sesterces.

Alexis breathed a sigh of soft content. Through another open door he had a partial view of the library, the walls of which were hung with the paintings of masters, while luxurious rugs lay strewn upon the polished floor. Everywhere were slaves, noiseless but incessant in their movements. Some of the learned were transcribing manuscripts; others were gliding from room to room on endless errands.

At last the heavy draperies that concealed an opening were held aside by two female slaves, and a girl of sixteen advanced into the court. Alexis and Caius arose. The slaves followed their young mistress.

"Is this Julia Silia?" said Caius in a hesitating voice.

"As surely as thou art Caius Lepidus."

"Greetings to my old friend," said Caius. They clasped hands. "This is Alexis, my friend. He is an architect, but he is a great one. He is a friend of Sejanus, and the emperor himself knows him. Therefore, think not he is a common builder of houses for other people to live in. Although he is a Greek, thou seest he is as dark as a Roman."

"I hope," said Alexis to Julia, "that now thou wilt forgive me for being an architect."

"Thou art pardoned," she answered, looking him curiously in the face. "My father is not at home. None is here save myself. Shall we

sit? Or would you prefer to go to the æcus? As for myself, I love the open air best of all."

"And I," said Alexis. "I wish I could always feel the weight of the sky upon my head."

Julia turned to Caius. "It has been—how many years since I saw thee?"

"Nay, hast thou not kept count?"

"Not I. Why should we count the years? Have no fear; they will pass fast enough."

"Then the time has not seemed long to thee?"

"Yesterday I was a girl; to-day I am a woman. It seems but the breath of a sigh since I cried for the golden ball dangling upon thy purple toga—and now thou art a centurion. Yea, and a centurion not particularly glad to see his betrothed."

"Why dost thou say that? I am glad indeed."

"Nay, I leave it to thy friend. Sir, dost think Caius was glad to see me?"

"I am sure of it, since he is human."

"But was his gladness a human gladness, or the gladness of one betrothed?"

"I cannot speak of the feelings of one betrothed," replied Alexis, "for twenty-eight years have not brought me this good fortune."

"Nay; it is no good fortune. It is a weight that hangs about one forever. You think to take delight in some mad enterprise, to enjoy the freedom of youth, and then comes the thought, 'But I am betrothed!' Yea, then comes the

thought, 'What matter if I be sad or merry? I am another's.' "

"There is, however, a simple remedy," said Alexis, thinking to do a good part by his friend. "One is easily released. I doubt not Caius will surrender cheerfully thy liberty to thee."

"Never!" cried Caius, whose brow had darkened perceptibly during this conversation.

Julia held her head proudly. "Pray observe, Caius, that I did not ask it of thee," she said.

There was a pause, during which Alexis studied the fair face, now cold and haughty. Julia Silia was very dark, as became a Roman, and her form, which was not tall, was admirably rounded, and suggested throbbing vitality. Her every tone was charged with some emotion, and all of her emotions were intense, and for themselves alone. To look upon her face was to lose the ideas of repose and gentleness. One felt while in her presence that, for her, life had none of those inevitable dull intervals, between interests, which befall the majority of mankind. She could never be listless. While she lived, she must be interested. To hear her magnetic, flexible voice was to feel all the while that strange things might be expected to happen. There was a dark red glow in her cheeks, showing that her blood was never calm. The eyes changed with lightning rapidity, but they always burned with whatever fancy. The lips were as change-

ful as her thoughts, full, and perhaps larger than the perfect standard. Her cheek-bones were rather prominent, and curiously gave an effect of noble beauty, of aristocratic fineness. There were deep dimples in each cheek, where the light seemed to hide and play in the dark satin skin. The red in her cheeks made her black hair seem blacker, more akin to the night. Indeed, her whole appearance suggested to Alexis a warm, luxurious, perfume-laden night, soft, with unutterable, unfathomable passions. As he gazed upon her, it was as if he were surrounded by such a night, and felt the longings that have never found words for their embodiment, but which come to us at times like a sigh breathing upon the chords of the heart, setting them to vibrate, but not strong enough to strike them into audible music. To be with her was to experience uneasiness, unrest, and a tender sadness which he would not have exchanged for the most exquisite joy.

“Caius tells me thou art an adopted daughter,” said Alexis, at length. “Unhappy parents, who could not be spared of the gods to see so fair a consummation of their marriage!”

“Unhappy indeed!” said Julia. “My father, Caius Silius, was a great man—the general of a splendid army. Seven years he rode at their head. The Gauls he subdued; and for his conquests in Germany he was time and again dis-

tinguished with the ensigns of triumph. When the deified Augustus died, and the uneasy spirit of revolt spread among the legions, it was my father's army which stood firm and made the accession of Tiberius possible. He had but one fault; he was too great."

"Alas!" cried Alexis, his changeful tones trembling with sympathy. "What god envied him?"

Julia's eyes seemed to leap with a sudden flame as she answered, "The god Sejanus!"

"Thou meanest Tiberius's favorite minister?"

"The same. My father was brought before the senate and accused—no matter of what. All was false. For a time he said nothing, but treated the informer with cold and steely contempt. At last these words he said, 'I am the victim of a tyrant's resentment!'"

Caius here interposed. "Julia, thou art not prudent. Are these words for slaves to overhear?"

"What care I? I am a soldier's daughter, and I am not afraid to die."

"Thou brave one!" cried Alexis, with enthusiasm. "Fear hath never found thee! Thou art of my spirit. Since I came to Rome my tongue hath stiffened and grown cold for want of use."

"I, too, am brave," cried Caius. "I do not fear battle. But shall I cut my throat to show

how brave I am? How many slaves has Sabinus.”

“Nay, I know not,” returned the girl. “There are above three thousand that I know. Who can keep a reckoning in one’s head of so many?”

“Three thousand slaves are three thousand enemies,” said Caius. “Speak not of Sejanus.”

“Never while I live,” cried Julia, “will I be silent concerning my parents. And then,” she added, turning to Alexis, who made a most sympathetic listener, “when my father found he was to be condemned, he took his own life like a true Roman, and deprived Sejanus of that pleasure.”

“Brave father of brave Julia Silia!” cried Alexis. “And thy mother?”

“Her name was Sosia Galla. She also was accused for this alone: that she was loved by Agrippina, wife of the noble Germanicus. What if Agrippina loved her? This—that Tiberius hateth Agrippina. So my mother was banished, and in exile she died. They wished to give half of the estate to the informer and half to me and my brother. But Manius Lepidus, the father of this very Caius who says he would not cut his throat to show how brave he is—meaning that he dare not mention Sejanus—Manius Lepidus, I say, rose in the senate and dared to oppose the proposition. ‘Let the informer have but a

fourth,' he pleaded. And it was done, so powerful was the voice of one brave man. My brother went with Sosia Galla to share her exile. He died before she passed away. My father's intimate friend was Sabinus; he adopted me. And Lepidus, who befriended us in the senate, and who alone of all Rome dares to be just, has ever been my friend."

"I wonder," said Alexis, "that this same Manius Lepidus hath not been accused."

"Certainly he is loved of the gods, if gods there are. But one marvelous trait he hath, which preserves him: he knows when not to speak."

"I would thou hadst learned of my father!" interposed Caius. "Come, let us converse upon other matters. Tell me how hast thou agreed with mine own friend, Phædrus? Methought, when I questioned him as touching thee, that his face did grow as clouded and bleak as the sky when it snatches up vapor-veils to hide behind."

"I hate him! I hate him!" cried Julia. "He is the living personation of an ungracious 'nay.'"

"What! He bendeth not to thy whims?"

"Bend? Phædrus bend? No more than a broken bow. I wish to walk in the streets. 'Nay,' saith Phædrus. I long to attend the theater. 'Let me rather read thee my verses,' he saith. A plague upon his verses! It is not poetry, but life, that calls to me. I long—ah,

passionately!—to answer. I appeal to my adopted father. ‘Consult Phædrus,’ he saith; ‘Phædrus hath been made thy guardian by thy future husband.’ So saith Sabinus. Thus I am driven mad, day after day, by my future husband and my guardian Phædrus.”

“There is one comfort, however,” said Caius. “There is no more theater to go to, since Tiberius has forbidden entertainments in Rome.”

“Ah, is he not kind to his people!” exclaimed Julia. “He, luxuriating in the pleasures of the Isle of Capreæ, denies pleasures to his capital. And why? Because he cannot endure that any one be happy but himself. I care not if he *is* the emperor; I am the daughter of Silius! But I must tell thee of the hardest fate I have to bear. A certain freedman hath built an enormous amphitheater in Fidenæ for a great gladiatorial combat. There are seats for a hundred thousand souls. All Rome is going thither, since it cannot be diverted at home. All Rome is going, save poor Julia Silia. I have offered my all to Phædrus if he would relent—jewels, smiles, and tears: they are all I have. He says it is no fit place for me, because he is a freedman from Thrace, who doth not understand Roman morals, and who findeth all the joy he desires in writing fables—and, peradventure, in reading them to helpless ones. But princes and noble ladies are going to Fidenæ—there will not be left a woman

in Rome save a few pauper plebeians and Julia Silia. Ah, unhappy Julia! Doomed by a guardian Phædrus and a future husband to mope behind gloomy walls, while not five miles away all the world will gather to be thrilled!"

"When doth this transpire?" asked Caius.

"In three days—in three pitiful days, O Caius!"

"Surely," cried Alexis, "Caius will not deny thee this lawful pleasure. It is not in his heart."

"Phædrus is wise and prudent," said Caius.

"Yea, that is why I hate him!" cried Julia.

"Thou wilt let her go!" exclaimed Alexis, his face pale from very pity. Suddenly the girl rose from the bench, and fell upon one knee before the centurion. "My lord," she said, "grant my request!"

So proud she was in her humility, so queenlike upon her knee—above all, so throbbing with the wild rush of life and youth—Alexis could not bear the picture. He rose abruptly, and turning away, pretended to admire the fountain. For a moment the silence was broken only by the splashing of the water. Caius looked down upon the upturned face, with its red-stained cheeks, the lips tremulous, the eyes entreating. As he looked he grew pale, and his features settled sternly. What was this plucking at his heart? The next moment she rose, exclaiming,

“Never again will I kneel at the feet of Caius Lepidus!”

“Nay,” said Caius; “be not so hasty. I have not refused thy request. On the contrary, I grant it. Thou shalt go to Fidenæ. Thou shalt witness the battles of the arena.”

“A reluctant consent,” cried Julia, “is more unkind than a prompt refusal.” The tears were in her eyes.

“I understand thee not, Julia. Thou art full of changing moods. Thou wouldst have me grant favors before I know them, answer before questioned. But thou art a child—why should I blame thee? And still thou art angry!”

“That I knelt to thee!” she exclaimed, standing before him. “Ah, why did I humble myself so? What mad impulse drove me? Take back thy permission. I will not go to Fidenæ! I will hide behind these walls, and never smile, though all the world laugh aloud.”

“I leave thee!” exclaimed the centurion, with great displeasure. “Come, Alexis; doubtless another time she will have an impulse to reason.”

“My lord Caius Lepidus,” said a slave, entering from the front part of the mansion.

“Speak.”

“A soldier waits without; he would see thee.”

Caius left the impluvium, followed by Alexis, who longed to remain, but feared displeasing his host. The soldier handed Caius a letter.

Having read it, the centurion turned abruptly to the Greek. "There is an uprising in Germany," he said, in rapid tones. "The Frisians have revolted. I am called to my legion without delay. Come to my father's, where I will take horse instantly. A soldier's life—just in time came this letter! Just in time! A little later—but come! but come!"

"And thou wilt not bid Julia farewell?"

"Thou shalt do that for me," said Caius Lepidus.

CHAPTER IV.

A KISS IN THE GARDEN.

Caius took a hurried leave of his father and of Phædrus. He drew Alexis apart. "Thou didst witness our little quarrel," he said; "I pray thee make all amends as soon as convenient. Bid her farewell in my name, and in my name be kind to her, and assure her that it grieves me to part thus."

Then to Phædrus, Caius said: "Julia hath a desire to attend the gladiatorial combats at Fidenæ; refuse her not."

The Thracian poet allowed a shadow to cross his face. "There will be an enormous throng," he suggested.

"True; that is why she desireth to attend. Yield to her in this one instance, and let her know it is granted because of my love for my betrothed."

Phædrus bowed gravely, without replying. Caius mounted and rode away with his guard, with as little show of sorrow as if he expected to return the next day. Alexis spent the rest of the afternoon in the streets of Rome, accompanied by Phædrus. The poet appeared the

prey of somber thoughts. It might be due to his thirty-five years. Perhaps he was always grave. The Greek found himself wondering how *he* would feel at thirty-five. His other thoughts he spoke aloud as they came, and the freedman made a good listener. When they returned home, Manius Lepidus met them in the atrium.

“We are invited to a banquet at the home of Sabinus,” he said.

Alexis’s face suddenly shone as if the light of a fire had fallen upon it.

“I am busy,” said Phædrus. “Wilt thou not make my excuses?”

“Thou art particularly named,” returned Manius, as if this settled the matter. They repaired to the bath-rooms at the back of the house, and refreshed themselves from the heat of the day. When they set forth to the banquet, the sun had set and a soft breeze was stirring. Besides themselves, but one noble was to be seen. He passed them with averted head, not daring to recognize Manius, since no one could tell who would next day be a victim to the rapacity of Sejanus. Throngs of slaves hurried along the road, among whom rich freedmen mingled, each eager to find occasion to become an informer against a Roman knight, and thus secure fame and fortune. Suddenly a man accosted Manius Lepidus.

“Thou art upon pleasure bent?” asked he, insolently.

“Ah, Latinius Latiaris,” returned Manius, coolly, “my time has not yet come.”

“Thy time, noble Lepidus? Nay, thou wilt ever jest! I would inquire if the Grecian architect hath yet arrived.”

“I am he,” said Alexis, scowling at this man whose babe had been exposed that very day.

“Ah? Welcome to Rome. My master, Sejanus, hath bidden me bring thee to Capreæ soon. So keep in readiness. Thou hast perhaps heard of me?” and he smiled superciliously.

“That have I,” said Alexis. “Was it not by thine orders that nearly two thousand slaves were massacred this morning?”

“They were lawfully put to death,” returned Latiaris. “One of their number slew his master, my brother. Besides, the death of every slave is the death of an enemy of Rome. But I must leave you here, for I dine with Titius Sabinus.”

“Thou?” cried Lepidus. “Then we have well met, for we also are invited.”

All four were admitted by the janitor, and they were presently greeted by Sabinus, an old, gray-bearded man. It was not long before Flavia, the wife of Sabinus, entered the reception-room, followed by her children and by Julia Silia. Sabinus had married late in life, and his children were still of a tender age. They made

a pretty picture as they clung to their mother and nestled at her side. Sabinus embraced Manius Lepidus, and gave Latiaris a reception scarcely less demonstrative. Phædrus sought the side of Flavia, and began to jest with the children, while the grave lines of his face relaxed. He became a child with them, much to the surprise of Alexis.

“Beloved Sabinus,” said Latiaris, “every time I am in thy home, and see thy respect for thy wife and children, making of them thine equals, allowing them the reception, and even sharing with them thy repast, my heart is moved to admiration. I have even seen thee walking with them in the streets.”

“It is true; I am old-fashioned,” said Sabinus.

“Alas!” cried Latiaris, “the honorable customs of the ancients have wellnigh passed away. Happy the home in which the virtues of former days find shelter!”

“It is too true,” said Sabinus, “that the glorious days of morality and liberty are—”

“My son hath been called away to Germany,” Manius here interposed. “There is an uprising among the Frisians. He sent his farewell.”

“Gone before I could see his face!” exclaimed old Sabinus. He turned to Julia Silia. “My daughter, I fear this will drive mirth from the banquet. I have been expecting to see him

enter every moment—to see him with his soldier tread and abrupt tones.”

Julia tossed her head, but made no reply. Phædrus was watching her, and Alexis was observing them both.

“You were saying,” said the smooth tones of Latiaris, “that the days of liberty are over.”

“Nay,” said Manius; “I have heard no one say such a thing but thee, O former prætor!”

“We are among intimate friends,” returned Latiaris, reproachfully. “Why this distrust? When I think of Germanicus—”

Sabinus, with a face of enthusiasm, cried, “The noblest prince that ever breathed!”

“Nay,” said Manius; “Tiberius breathes!”

“I care not. I have said. Germanicus, the brave, the heroic, the true; loved of his army, adored by his wife, worshiped by the Roman people; called by nature and talent to the throne, and therefore hated by—”

Manius again interposed. “These times are the only times we have, Sabinus!”

Sabinus would not be warned. “It is the tallest tree that first feels the breath of the storm. So Germanicus fell. The earth still trembles with that fall. The hills, the plains, still echo with the charge of murder. And now Agrippina, the noble wife of Germanicus, who shared his marches in the forests of Germany, and who has been true to his memory—”

"Poor Agrippina!" cried Latiaris.

"Even the gods would weep for her!" cried Sabinus.

"Doomed!" exclaimed Latiaris. "Doomed Agrippina!"

"Yea," cried the old man, "doomed to the jealousy of an aged emperor, who hates her because she is loved."

"Ah!" said Latiaris. "Thou thinkest, then, that she is in danger from Tiberius?"

Sabinus stared at Latiaris in surprise. "From whom else should she be in danger?"

"And it is Tiberius who is jealous of her?"

"Thou hast said. Thou knowest this as well as I. I do not understand thee, Latiaris."

Julia spoke. "Was it not because my mother was loved of Agrippina that Tiberius banished her? Was it not because my father loved Germanicus that he was driven to take his own life?"

"Was it even so?" asked Latiaris.

Again Sabinus stared in wonder. "I have told thee all this before, my friend," he said.

"So thou hast," said Latiaris. "But it is difficult to understand it. However, I am trying hard."

"It must ever be an effort for thee to seize upon an understanding," observed Manius.

"Especially if it be a speech against Tiberius," retorted Latiaris. "Tell me, Manius Lepidus, O noble senator, are the feelings of Sabinus thy feelings?"

“No two men feel alike,” said the senator.

“But dost thou think Tiberius jealous of the wife of Germanicus?”

“Is the eagle jealous of a worm?” returned Manius.

“Nay, do I understand thee?” said Latiaris, cautiously. “Who is this worm in thy comparison?”

“Thou art the worm,” replied Manius, calmly; “trying to crawl below the surface of my meaning.”

Latiaris grinned, in a vain attempt to conceal his fury at these baffling words.

“Nay,” spoke up Sabinus; “I will not have my friends calling each other worms!” Julia laughed aloud, and Alexis joined her openly, for when the Greek was merry he could not but laugh. Manius contrived to keep the conversation off such dangerous reefs till the banquet was announced. Slaves led the way to the resplendent dining-room. Other slaves smoothed the cushions upon the couches and chairs, for the men reclined and the ladies sat. Fresh slaves brought basins, that they might wash their hands before the course. Still others brought their food, and even broke it up for them, that all exertion might be confined to the muscular feat of eating. No wonder Julia did not know the number of slaves, for ever new supplies relieved the old.

When the ladies arose, Alexis followed their example. "I have a message for thee," he said to Julia.

Julia turned to Phædrus. "May he deliver it?"

"Why dost thou ask me?" said the poet, gloomily.

"Because thou art the guardian of my every act."

Phædrus flushed. "Have I ever proved unreasonable or tyrannical? It is my wish to give thee all liberty in what cannot hurt thee."

"Nay, I know not but this Greek may hurt me," retorted Julia. "Thou knowest my judgment is naught. Then I have thy permission?"

"Thou knowest."

"Then let us to the garden," said Julia to Alexis. "May we go to the garden, Phædrus?"

"Go where thou wilt!" exclaimed the other. They departed

"Heed her not, Phædrus," said Sabinus. "She loves to tease thee, but deep in her heart I know she is very fond of thee."

The poet made no reply, but his face expressed a different opinion.

"Before we came hither," said Latiaris, "we were talking of the greatest prince that ever lived. Let us drink his memory."

"Stay," said Manius. "Before we drink let us know whose memory we celebrate. Thou sayest 'the greatest prince.' Tell us his name."

“Whom should I mean?” retorted the ex-prætor. “He has been named. To his memory!”

“Several have been named,” said Lepidus. “Is it Tiberius, or Sejanus, or Germanicus?”

“Germanicus! Germanicus!” cried Sabinus, and he drained his glass.

“I will not drink to Germanicus,” said Manius, “but let others drink as they please.”

“Now let us drink to the one who terrifies brave men,” cried Latiaris, virtuously, “so that they dare not speak their minds!”

“Yea!” exclaimed Sabinus; “let us drink to his confusion!”

“Thou hearest!” cried Latiaris. “To his confusion! To his death!”

“To the death, to the death of—”

“Silence!” cried Manius, springing from his couch.

“We drink to the emperor!” cried Latiaris.

“Yea,” said Sabinus, “to the death of the emperor!”

“From this hour henceforth,” said Manius to Titius Sabinus, “thou art no friend of mine; for Tiberius is my honored emperor, and by his acts I even swear. As for thee, Latiaris, thou shalt not escape me. Thou wouldst be senator. Ah, but I am senator before thee. What thou hast heard Sabinus say, repeat at thy peril. Phædrus, come.” The senator wrapped his

robe sternly about him and stalked from the room, followed by the gloomy Phædrus.

“Let them go!” cried Latiaris to the perturbed Sabinus. “As long as I am thy friend, thou art secure. Now we two are alone. I pray thee, tell me all thy troubles, and all the greatness of Germanicus and the perfidy of Tiberius. Thou and I are not afraid to voice our opinions in each other’s ears!”

Manius Lepidus went straight from the house, but Phædrus lingered in the impluvium, beside the fountain. Fantastic lamps threw a mellow light upon the pavement. Through the pillared corridor, which at the rear of the open court connected the two wings of the house, was visible the garden—dusky, sweet with odors. Out there were Julia and the Greek. What were they saying to each other? Why was Alexis gone so long? Phædrus stared at the sparkling water with unseeing eyes.

“What seest thou in the fountain?” asked a clear, childish voice. Phædrus started and smoothed the lines from his brow. The two sons of Sabinus had entered the court. “Come and play with us,” they cried. “See, here is a new hand ball. Let us toss it back and forth. See how beautiful it is; it is a gift from Seneca.”

“We cannot play at night,” returned Phædrus, laying a hand upon the shoulder of each, “for the light is dim.”

“O Phædrus! Have you not played with us many nights? Come, thou upon this side of the fountain, we upon the other.”

“I cannot play to-night,” said Phædrus.

“Is it for what thou sawest in the fountain? And art thou sad? But for our sakes thou layest thy sadness aside as a garment. Come, be a boy with us! He rises, Lucius! He is going to play! He is our Phædrus!” The children danced around to the opposite side of the fountain. “Well caught!”

“Now to thee,” cried Phædrus. “Nay, but thou art a brave catcher of hand-balls! But, Lucius, thy fingers are so outspread I could throw my head between them.”

“He says he could throw his head!” cried the child, bubbling with merriment. “Nobody but Phædrus could have said that. Phædrus, I would thou didst live with us every day and night. We would play ball before breakfast, and thou shouldst make us up a new fable every evening.”

“A fable!” cried the other boy. “Let us cease sporting, and hear a new fable.”

“Perchance he hath no more to tell,” said the child named Lucius.

“No more?” echoed his brother. “His head is full of poetry and fables; all he has to do is to move his tongue and they run out!”

At this moment Flavia entered, and found her

boys perched each upon a knee of the freedman. "Ah, Phædrus," said the matron, "they love thee well."

"Alas, noble lady, that my heart cannot rise to theirs! O Flavia, I pray thee bid them begone, for I have not the heart to send them away. Yet I must speak to thee alone."

At the mother's command the boys ruefully withdrew, tears shining in their dark eyes. "Never grieve," called Phædrus; "I will sport with you to-morrow."

"And take us to the Forum?" called Lucius, his voice trembling with a stifled sob.

"Yea, yea! Good boys! Good night to you, dear children. And I will tell you a new fable on the morrow."

"Let it be about goats!" cried Lucius. "Shall it be about goats? Let us have three goats, good Phædrus!"

"I promise you three goats; we shall have a great butting between them!"

Lucius laughed aloud, and hugged his brother. "Come, let us dream of them!" he cried. They departed. The face of Phædrus instantly darkened.

"O Flavia, Flavia, I fear thou art undone! This Latinius Latiaris is even now alone with thy husband. Sabinus was never prudent."

"If they are alone, there are no witnesses,"

said Flavia, trembling. "But is not Manius Lepidus in the banquet-hall?"

"He hath departed, saying he renounces the friendship of Sabinus. For Sabinus hath drunk to the death of the—thou knowest whom. And thou knowest well, when Lepidus casteth off an old friend, it is because that friend is in danger. For Lepidus hath a sixth sense, telling him whom to avoid."

"Unhappy Sabinus!" cried Flavia. "Perfidious Latiaris! Nay, I have already warned my husband against him. It is useless. Sabinus holdeth him true."

"Latiaris will become an informer," said Phædrus. "True, there are no witnesses now, save the slaves. But this friendship must be broken up at all hazards. Sabinus is rich; therefore he is in danger. He is imprudent; that is fatal. Warn him, O Flavia! Plead with him, remind him of his children."

When Julia Silia and Alexis left the table, they passed through the corridor into the garden. Along the broad paths, laid out in precious marble, lights twinkled from amidst luxurious foliage. The perfume of many flowers was heavy upon the night air. The stars were brilliantly set off by the blackness of the sky, for the moon had not risen. A band of musicians were playing softly upon diverse instruments, and the melody

caused the Greek's heart to thrill, as his eyes rested upon the half-averted face of the maiden. The music was an expression of his emotions. He felt the plaintive melancholy which occasionally was interrupted by wild, spirited complaints, as if a soul struggled to be free. The loveliness of the face, the soft gleam of the arms, the little feet in their yellow shoes, the black hair sparkling with powdered gold—all this moved him with irresistible force. With this was the consciousness of her impetuous heart, of her impassioned nature, that found partial expression in the red flush upon her cheek, the heaving bosom, the very step, quick and nervous—and above all, in the rich, hurried, passionate voice that made everything of which it spoke important.

She led the way to a bench, where they seated themselves, and maidens came and danced upon the pavement before them. Not for a moment had they been unattended by female slaves. But at last Julia waved her hand. The dancers flitted away; the attendants disappeared. All this while Alexis had been watching her, only vaguely conscious of the flashing movements of the beautiful dancers, hardly knowing that the music was interpreting for him his emotions. The grateful breeze bore to him the odor of roses and geraniums, but he thought it was the breath of Julia. The music was the beating of her heart; the graceful flitting of the dancers

embodied the wild freedom of her nature. The very stars were but the golden dust in her raven hair. All the beauties and thrilling delights of the world had been swallowed up in her form, and beside her the world was blank.

“Thou hadst a message,” she said presently. “I pray thee deliver it.”

He drew a deep breath. “Ah, the message! It is from thy betrothed, from Caius Lepidus, as I said. Yea, from him who is to marry thee.”

“Play not so long upon that string!” she interposed. “Thou hast touched the note; enough. Are there not other tones for thee to sound?”

“If I might sound thy praise—”

“Nay, thou knowest me not, neither to praise nor blame.”

“But thy beauty—”

“We have slaves as beautiful as I. But thou art outspoken in thine opinions. Tell me truly what thou thinkest of Latinus Latiaris.”

The eyes of Alexis burned, his face whitened. “He is the greatest villain in Italy! This morning he exposed his babe upon the open street; he had two thousand slaves massacred that a guilty one might not escape. And now he seeketh to force Sabinus to reveal treachery to the emperor.”

“With what heat thou speakest!”

“Other people I do not understand,” said

Alexis, still fiercely. "But as for myself, when I am angry I have heat. It may be because my life hath been passed in Athens. But thou canst know when I am angry by seeing the blaze."

"Then art thou not like Phædrus; for when he is displeased he smoldereth. Come, thou art so frank, tell me what thou thinkest of Phædrus—or perchance thou wouldst rather conceal thy thoughts."

"Not I. As for Phædrus, who is thy guardian—"

"Too well, too well I know it! Nay, proceed."

"I thought he could not smile till I saw him with the little boys. Before that, I considered him a sulky, sour man, clouded over by the clouds of his own vapors. But methinks the one who can reflect the innocent smile of a child hath crystal waters in his soul."

"Thou art right. Phædrus is a good man, but a bad guardian. And what thinkest thou of Caius—but surely you would rather conceal that thought."

"I conceal? To conceal a thought is harder with me than to dig up a new one! And to tell thee my thoughts, knowing as I do it is just between me and thee, is the sweetest experience I have ever known. For the happiest moments of my life are these moments that now slip away; and, were I a god, I would catch and bind them with golden chains. But ah! they slip away; they

will soon be gone! This perfect night will pass, to remain a perfect memory in my life."

"Other nights will come," said Julia.

"True, O Julia! But other nights with thee?"

"This is not to tell me what thou thinkest of Caius."

"I think him cold and hard; I think him cruel and indifferent. I think him blessed of the gods, and the most ungrateful of mortals; a welcome friend, a true soldier, a poor lover."

"And now tell me his message."

"Nay, ask me what I think of thee, O Julia!"

"I seek not to know. The message!"

"Thou art to go to Fidenæ, and to remember upon that day that thy going is a gift from him. And I am to bid thee farewell, since he could not take the time—or did not have the inclination—to take his own farewell. And so, O beautiful one, with thy dark satin cheeks, in which the dimples are wells full of laughing light, and O most lovely of all Romans, with the rich blood painting rose-leaves on thy face, in the name of Caius Lepidus, farewell!" And suddenly Alexis bent and pressed his lips passionately to hers.

She sprang to her feet, while her eyes blazed.

"Traitor!" she cried. "Traitor!" She turned from him. He reached out an arm which trembled. She fled. He sought to follow,

murmuring: "What have I done! O fool, ever fool of time and chance, thy name is Alexis!"

Julia Silia, taking advantage of her intimate knowledge of the walks, easily eluded him. She sped toward the house. She had reached a spot darkened by broad-leaved shrubbery, when she discovered the indistinct outline of a man.

"Whither dost thou flee, O Julia?" asked a sad voice.

"The gods be praised! It is Phædrus." She ran to his side and seized his arm with both her hands. He felt her trembling violently.

"What has happened?" he demanded abruptly.

She burst into a tempest of weeping, and as her form shook she pressed her cheek to his arm. He stood impassive, looking down at the perfumed hair, which had shaken itself loose and hung, a rich, black mass, about the indistinct face and neck. "O Phædrus, Phædrus! O my wise guardian, my true friend!"

"What did the Greek?" asked Phædrus, not raising his voice. "What said he?"

"He hath taught me to love thee, Phædrus, to understand better thy worth. He hath shown me how unlike other men art thou. He hath made me see my wickedness in treating thee as I have so long, with ridicule and mockery."

"It seems I owe this Greek a great debt!" said Phædrus, dryly. "But explain more clearly."

“Phædrus, dear old Phædrus, thou hast not thought in the days past that I disliked thee because I heedlessly strained at the checks thou thoughtest best to put upon me?”

“Indeed, I think thou hast grown to hate me.”

“Never, oh, never, my guardian. What! Can I forget the time of my childhood, when thou wast my tutor? Did we not laugh and sing together, and take long journeys in the fields when other Romans were at the baths or the Forum? Have we not made these old walls ring with the echo of our sport? Those were the days when thou wouldst draw me, laughing, by the hand, as if I could not walk alone; when thou didst delight to smooth my hair, making it all wild and rough with thy fond touch. Ah, those were the days when thou didst not shrink from my presence, but sought me rather; and I did think thou wast never so happy as when I perched upon the edge of the table, and thou didst sit before me, trying to be grave. But gradually thou didst grow cold and unfriendly, and it was as if thou hadst plucked from thy heart all tenderness. What had I done to thee, Phædrus?”

“Thou hadst done nothing, child.”

“Then wherefore didst thou begin to hate me, to avoid me, to come only at necessity, to speak ever cold and passionless?”

“Julia, I have but done my duty.”

“That is why I do complain of thee. Duty! Does a friend owe no more to the one who loves him? I have been proud—I would not question thee. The memory of former love, and the appearance of present indifference, goaded me to taunt thee, to worry thee, to seek to drive thee to some emotion, whether of love or hate. But now I am humbled—ah, ye gods! how humbled I am this night, and at the hands of a base Greek, a mean architect! I feel I shall never be the true Julia Silia again. Protect me, Phædrus. Be as stern with me as thou wilt. Give me less freedom!”

“I charge thee, Julia, tell me what did the Greek?”

“He would have made love to me. I fled.” Phædrus said nothing, but she felt his arm tremble. Again she pressed her wet cheek against it. “How didst thou know who I was when I ran hither?” she asked; “for it is very dark.”

“Ah, Julia, better do I know the sound of thy footstep than the voice of another. Shall we not return to thy mother?”

“Ever thou seekest to leave me,” she said. “Yea, let us go, for thou hast grown to hate me.”

“Do not say those words, Julia. Hate thee? Only he who is blind hateth the light.”

“Phædrus, dear old Phædrus, let us return to those old days—let us be comrades as then we

were. Put from thee this heavy cloak, behind which thou hidest thy soul. Behold, I am so full of life, and of the desire for pleasure—but there is no pleasure in the wide world that would not be sweeter if shared with thee, my dear preceptor, guardian, and friend. The bitterness and austerity of the past few years shall be forgotten. Come! I will be to thee the child thou didst tenderly love—or woefully deceive.”

“Julia Silia,” said the poet, in his serious tones, “whatever else may happen in life, this may not happen—that one may turn backward to one’s youth. The days thou hast spoken of were happy days to me and thee, but now they belong to memory. Seek not to rob memory of her golden fruit, to enjoy in the present hour. The apple which has been tasted, then put aside, hath forever lost its former charm. Shall we not return to Flavia?”

He heard a stifled sob. Then her hands fell from his arm, and she sped on before him. He found Alexis and Flavia alone in the atrium. The matron was pale, the Greek excited. “Let us return home,” said the freedman, coldly. Alexis followed him from the house. Scarcely had they gained the street when Alexis said:

“Phædrus, I am undone. Thou hast in thy company the most miserable man in Rome. I have been ungrateful to Caius, untrue to Manius Lepidus, and a villain to Julia Silia.”

“I know,” said Phædrus, gloomily. “But say no more. Thou must not see her again. Thou art our guest, the friend of the emperor. No one else need know. The harm is done.”

“Nay,” cried Alexis. “Have I not already told Flavia everything? I shall tell Manius and write to Caius. I am a villain, and the world shall know it. She was so beautiful, and her hair so dark—heavens! The air smelt so of roses, and the music made each breath an ecstasy. O Venus! O Cupid! O Juno!—”

“I pray thee not to name them all,” said the poet. “Thou canst not get to Morpheus and Somnus before we reach home. And consider, if thou seekest to name all the gods, and leave one of them out, thou mayest have a harrowing time!”

“Thou hast no heart,” cried Alexis. “As for me, my heart is breaking.”

“Thou hast spoken me a compliment,” returned the poet, somberly. “Surely it is better not to have a heart; then it cannot be broken.”

CHAPTER V.

ALEXIS AND MARY.

Alexis, the most miserable man in Rome by his own confession, would not hear of going to bed till he had confessed to Manius Lepidus the kissing of Julia Silia. The senator took this momentous affair with stoic calmness. "Your wrong-doing is remedied in a simple manner; you must see her no more." This was simple indeed; far too simple to suit the Greek. He inwardly lamented his rash act, and at the same time told himself that the punishment was too severe. The next morning he was disconsolate. Lepidus was at the temple, where the senate was sitting. Phædrus was in the tablinum, composing verses, and wearing an expression—when the Greek intruded—that plainly indicated this was the only time of all times suitable for a poet to ply his vocation. What was the beautiful, passion-stirring Julia Silia doing at this hour? Alas! he might not inquire. Oh, if he were back in Athens again, with his little maid, her whom he saved from death, exposed by some cruel father! This gloomy Rome, with its terrible vague fears, where every word was weighed by informers,

and where the knights kept jealously within doors till they dared hide no longer, fearing ruin, yet fearing to appear to fear—it broke his spirit. The beautiful Greek wandered about the house, drooping and pining, with a nauseating homesickness gnawing at his vitals.

He sought distraction in the library, not by reading, but by taking up roll after roll and trying to work himself into a mood for reading. It was no use. The scene in the garden rose ever before his mind; and that supreme moment—ah! if such a thing might be lived over again!

Among the pictures hanging upon the walls was that of a young girl. Alexis did not know when he first observed it. The portrait seemed gradually to steal upon his consciousness and to master his attention, whether he would or no. At last he found himself staring at it fixedly. He roused himself as from a dream, and turned away. But almost instantly he returned, and stood before it wondering.

It was not like any face he had ever seen before. It was not beautiful. The eyes, the oval cheeks, the lips—these were not to be compared with the perfection of Julia Silia. This caused his wonder to grow. Why should he be attracted by a face which was not especially pretty? Yet there was something expressed by this face which drew him with irresistible power.

It was something the painter had contrived to express which lay far beyond his experience—a new thing, a fascination not to be classified or named. There was a message looking from the eyes and made tender by the gentle mouth, but this message was in an unknown language. The mystery of this face seemed to the young man greater than the mystery of his own life. He stared up into the painted face, his lips apart, his breath coming fitfully. There was not here the light, sensuous gayety of the Grecians, nor the mad, blind, passionate burning of the Romans; there was here neither the indifferent acceptance of existing morals nor the fierce, reckless lust for crime.

Alexis appeared at the doorway of the tablinum. "Who is she?" he cried, eagerly.

Phædrus looked up, poising his stylus. "As a gadfly upon the pate barren of a man did alight, it the gadfly did bite.—Didst thou speak, O Alexis?"

"Yea, I pray thee answer. I am wild with curiosity. I am the most tantalized man in Rome!"

Phædrus sought to fasten one eye upon the Greek and the other upon his parchment. "He, the gadfly thinking to destroy, himself smote. This quantity is a difficult matter.—But what didst ask?"

"The picture—the maiden—is it real? Doth she live—such a one?"

“Yea; but she is only a Jewess.”

Alexis returned to the library, and resumed his position before the picture. Yes, he saw now that she was a Jewess. But that explained nothing. Had he not seen many Jews? But not one of them wore this look. There was here no pride in a national God not to be shared by other nations; there was here no hatred for the Gentile world. But had he not seen a face resembling this one—not in its distinctive characteristic, this indefinable expression, but in the cast of features? Again he returned to the tablinum. “If such a maiden lives, I charge thee, O Phædrus, tell me where she may be found.”

Phædrus frowned. “This is of this tale the moral—‘est—est’— Where may she be found? Why dost thou ask?”

“Because I cannot keep from asking what every throb of my heart is clamoring to know.”

Phædrus looked at him keenly. “Thou knowest it is against the law for the Jews to be found in the empire; that if found here they can be seized upon and made slaves. Thou knowest that many have thus been sold into captivity. Perhaps thou also knowest that the law doth become lax in the working since we are kept busy in putting the nobility to death.”

“Then she is in Rome?”

“Perhaps she is in Rome.”

“I swear to thee by all the gods, O Phædrus,

that I mean her no harm, that I will not betray her. But how camest thou by the picture? For the Jews will not allow pictures of themselves to be made; they have a law against it."

"I do not pretend to know where this maiden is. Should I know where a Jew hides, it would be my duty to deliver up such a one.

"Thou distrustest me.—Hear, then, my words. I did meet a Hebrew slave who desired me to hunt out his daughter, and protect her, if possible, from a threatening danger. This father knows and trusts me; therefore mayest thou. His daughter liveth upon the Via Alba."

Phædrus answered, very slowly: "I not only write fables; I also paint. Thou knowest I was once a slave; therefore I learned to do many things beneath a knight. I painted that picture. Perhaps the one whose face I delineated liveth upon the Via Alba. Perhaps thou knowest her name?"

"Mary, the daughter of Zia; and she liveth with her uncle."

"Enough; I see thou knowest. Perhaps she liveth in a small red brick house, surrounded by a court, and next to the huge Julian tenement-house, with its eight stories. Perhaps I watched her from a window of that house, and painted her without her knowledge. But if this be so, this also is true, that she knoweth me not, that I heard her name called by her uncle, and thus

learned it; and that she must not be injured. For though a stranger, I grew to feel for her as a brother.”

“It must be the look upon her face which bought you for her friend.”

“Alexis, that is true. It is a wonderful face—alas! that I could not paint it as it lives. What saith that face to thee?”

“Nay, I know not,” replied the Greek.

“Nor I,” said Phædrus, musingly. “It seems to speak of thoughts and deeds that belong to a different world. She doth not appear a sister mortal. That was what drew me to paint her like—like—the haunting novelty of her personality. But a word of warning: if she be in danger—said her father so?”

“Yea, and from a high power.”

“Then, on thy life, seek her not! I say no more openly. The world is full of ears. But mark this simile: How mayest thou keep thine own light from being blown out if thou give thine attention to preserving the blaze of another’s lamp? For a strong wind is ever blowing! Enough. But thou wilt be wise if thou findest thyself a harmless occupation, such as this gadfly doth occupy my time withal.”

Alexis, however, had no intention of occupying his time with gadflies. That noon, while nearly all Rome was taking its siesta, he sought out the Via Alba and the Julian tenement-house.

It could not be mistaken, for it towered above all the houses of this valley-street, showing a height of seventy feet—the utmost allowed by law. The Via Alba branched off from the Via Sacra in the valley at the foot of the Capitoline hill. It was not as quiet as the aristocratic quarters, for here lived janitors of public buildings, freedmen, and foreigners, who had little to fear from informers, since they had little property to be confiscated. Alexis inquired if the room formerly occupied by Phædrus was vacant, and receiving an answer in the affirmative, rented it for a week. Would he be shown there at once? Certainly! And now he was alone in a small bed-chamber. He rapidly took note of a chair, a single bed, a table upon which lay a stiffened paint-brush. There was one window, upon the sash of which was stretched a sheet of linen cloth.

Alexis approached this window. It admitted the light, but no view of the outside world. The sash was fastened upon hinges. He pushed it cautiously ajar. The window-sill was not more than ten feet above the stone pavement of a court. A tree grew beside the wall, and effectually hid the window from the court. Thus Phædrus had been given a splendid opportunity to paint undiscovered. Under this tree sat a maiden, weaving a tent-cloth from goat's-hair. It was the one whom he sought. Her face was

bent over her work, but he saw enough to assure himself. Glancing along the outside wall, he found that his chamber was built in a curious projection of the house. His was the only window that looked directly into the court. He drew the chair to the window, and seating himself, stared fixedly at the Jewess. He longed to see her face, and to study from life that strange expression which haunted his memory. He was soon gratified. A man issued from the little house that opened into the court. She looked up. Her face was pale, and upon that white page sorrow was painted. But it was not sorrow which seemed so strange—alas! how universal is the look of grief! For miles and miles may stretch the woods and rolling plains, glad with birds and river, sunny with golden sunbaths; beyond the horizon may stretch the great good-humored smile of the world; but when man enters the scene, sorrow, like his shadow, attends him.

Ah, no! This sorrow was no new thing. What then? Alexis wondered, and listened.

“Thou art ever busy, Mary,” said the Jew, drawing near.

“How may it otherwise be, mine uncle?”

“Thou knowest. Hath not Latinius Latiaris shown thee a way?”

“No way that I could follow,” she answered.

“He is rich, Mary; he is a friend of Sejanus.

True, he is a Gentile. But do we not in these days make friends with Gentiles as we may? There is no life for us in Italy if we hate the Gentiles. Besides, thou mayest win him to the true religion."

"Ask not this of me, mine uncle. What wouldst thou have me do? Give myself to a heathen, and to one whom I fear, and from whose very voice my soul doth recoil?"

"Thou fillest me with grief, Mary. For how may I refuse him? He will ruin us all, and thou wilt be the cause; and after all these years, during which thou hast lived upon my bounty, thy father a slave! And now thou wilt repay me by bringing destruction upon us all! And for what? Because thou wilt not marry a great and rich Roman, whom thou mayest easily make a proselyte."

"I cannot. I owe thee much for years of kindness and protection; but my soul I owe to God."

"He cometh this day, Mary. When I tell him thou wilt not of him—alas! alas! He will seize upon my goods, mayhap run me through with his sword—and, at all events, he will drag thee hence, whether thou wilt or no. Much better, oh, much better, to be his wife than his slave!"

"Thou faint-heart!" muttered Alexis to himself. "Would I had the wringing of thy neck!"

“I may be forced to evil,” replied Mary, “but I will not undertake it willingly. God be with us.”

“There spoke the bravest woman in Italy!” mused Alexis. “But I wonder why she maketh so great objection to this marriage? It is a strange thing.”

“Oh, Mary!” cried the uncle; “if thou hadst not gone with me to Jerusalem last year! For since then strange has been thy behavior, strange thy speech, strange thy look. Misguided child! Led away by a popular enthusiasm, deluded by a fanatic Galilean, saturating thyself with his words, as if he were more than a simple carpenter of Nazareth! But thou wouldst go. ‘My father may be there,’ thou saidst. I took thee, to my undoing!”

At this moment a knock was heard at the gate. “Latinus Latiaris cometh!” muttered the Jew, wringing his hands. He went to open the gate. The maiden bowed her head. Then a loud exclamation was heard, and the sound of rushing footsteps. The maiden sprang to her feet, reaching out her arms. Alexis caught a glimpse of the new-comer; he was Zia, the slave, the father of Mary. He folded his child in his arms, and they stood sobbing, while the uncle of Mary paced the court uneasily. Zia was the first to recover his voice.

“Praise to the God of Israel! For was it not

he who kept for me my little one, unhurt, untarnished, through these many years of my captivity?"

• "Nay," said the uncle; "I think I had some hand in that matter. But what wilt thou do, Zia? Art thou free? Hast bought thy freedom?"

"Yea—I bought it with my feet."

"Then they pursue thee?"

"Fear not, brother-by-gift-of-my-sister; no one knoweth whither I have fled."

"Thou speakest vain words, Zia. Not a deed is done in Rome but it is known, or will be known. Thou must not stay here. I cannot harbor a runaway slave, though the brother of my wife. As for Mary, she is in danger herself, and like to bring me to ruin."

"Father, father, thou wilt protect me?"

"With my life, little one!"

"Then let us flee from this place, thee and me. My dream has come true. Wilt flee with me?"

"Yea, when the night cometh, we two shall vanish from the earth."

"Stay not till night," cried the host. "Think not I be sorry to see thee, Zia, or glad to have Mary gone. It is my life I consider, and the safety of my goods, and the title to my home. I charge thee, dear brother, depart."

"Nay, brother; let me hide myself here till it is dark."

"Hide here!" cried the other in horror.

“What! And be found on my place concealed. Never, Zia.”

“It is a cool welcome,” said Zia. “No matter. It is enough to be free, and to hold my Mary in my arms. Let us then depart, my daughter. Well that thou wentest to Jerusalem last year, for a slave from that place told me of thee. He saw thee there, with this brother of my sister’s making. But come!”

“Anywhere, with thee, father. Horrible dangers have been crowding about me. To die with thee were better than this other fate which threatens me.”

“The noblest maiden in the world!” Alexis whispered. “I would she were fleeing with me!”

“Away, away!” cried Mary. “Ah, how worn thou art, dear father, and how thy hair has grown gray! Were they unkind to thee? How thou hast suffered, while I was tormented only by vague fears!”

“Nay, I made little of blows. It was because the chain held me from thee that I loathed the chain.”

“They will never escape!” whispered Alexis, in an agony of impatience. “Why do they linger there discoursing? As the gods live! they come—unhappy Zia! unhappy Mary!”

The gate was thrown open. Some soldiers burst into the court, headed by the shipmaster.

With them was a man in the dress of a citizen. This was Latinius Latiaris.

“There is my slave!” cried the shipmaster, pointing out Zia. The soldiers rushed upon him and tore his child from his arms. Latinius stood gloomily at one side, looking on. The uncle, white with terror, wrung his hands, and even wept.

“Do not take me from my child!” cried Zia, in a voice of anguish. “Nay; ye are Roman soldiers, ye are men. Consider how for years I have spent my days chained by the leg in the galleys, the sun burning my naked back or the rains chilling my undefended body. And all the time I was thinking of this maiden. Look at her—is there such another? Will ye tear me from her when I have but just returned? Years of suffering and waiting—and only a moment with her in mine arms. Have ye daughters? As God lives, I have done no wrong; only I love my child, and for her sake I ran away.”

“Thou shalt have thy liberty,” said Latinius Latiaris, stepping forward, “if thy daughter ask it of me. For I have made this agreement with the master. I will buy thee, and free thee, if Mary will become my wife.”

“I know thee not,” said Zia. “Art thou a Jew?”

“Am I a dog? No; I am no Jew! Ask Mary’s uncle if I am not a great man—formerly

a prætor, presently to be a senator. I am rich—I love thy daughter.'

Zia looked inquiringly at Mary.

"He is already married," she said, faintly.

"What then?" returned Latinus. "Say the word, and I will instantly go home and send my wife out of it. It is time for us to be divorced; nearly a year hath she lived with me, and thou knowest long marriages are no more the fashion."

"Now she will surely wed with him," thought Alexis. "Was ever such a chance as this for the daughter of a Jewish slave?"

"Carry me hence!" cried Zia, wildly. "Do with me as ye will. Mary is a daughter of Zion, a child of the Lord God. What is my poor life that it should be thought of more worth than her sweet self? Or my agony—is it a greater thing than her soul?"

"Have him away!" shouted the shipmaster. "To my ship-gang with him! We shall soon have him speeding over the blue depths. He shall work his oar till the veins stand forth upon his arms, I promise me."

"Once more let me embrace my child!" cried Zia.

"Not so! Hale him forth, noble soldiers."

"Wait!" cried Latinus. "Stands Mary to her father's decision? Will she marry with me?"

"Our Father," murmured Mary, who had

sunk upon the ground. She struggled to her knees. "Thy will be done."

"What does she say?" asked her uncle. "Mary, I pray thee hear the prætor. Consider how great a man is he. Spare thy father! Shun this disgrace."

"I cannot marry him. If I could, I would, as God liveth. But though he divorce his wife a hundred times, still is she his wife while she lives, unless she hath been untrue."

"Now this is passing strange!" muttered Alexis. "What words are these?"

"Hear her!" cried Latinus. "She maketh light with the divorce laws of Rome. Traitor!"

"Nay," muttered Alexis, glaring at the ex-prætor; "do not try that, I warn thee!"

The soldiers were dragging Zia from the court. "Stay!" cried Latinus. "One of you have me this maiden to my palace. I arrest her; I will send her as a gift to Tiberius."

"That shalt thou not!" hissed the Greek, in an inaudible voice, as he hung from his window.

A soldier approached the maiden. "Mercy—O my father, O mine uncle—alas! that I must perish."

"Thou shalt not perish!" shouted Alexis at the top of his voice, adding immediately in a low voice, "Thou fool, Alexis! Thou fool, Alexis!"

"What have we there?" thundered Latinus. "Is it another traitor? Bind the girl!"

"It is only a voice," jeered the soldier.

"I would I had left my tongue in Athens," thought Alexis. "Howbeit, they seem disposed to overlook my madness. An I get well out of this, I will never more shout from window!"

"It is some caitiff plebeian," said Latinius, scornfully. "But why dost not bind her arms?"

"It is her face that prevents him," thought Alexis. "How can one be cruel before such eyes?"

"Come, woman!" snarled the soldier. "Look not thus at the emperor's warrior. Thine arms!"

"By heaven, he shall never touch them!" cried Alexis. Leaping from the window into the midst of the tree, he lowered himself rapidly to the side of Mary.

"I am here," Alexis shouted, seizing Mary by the hand. "Courage, maiden, daughter of Zia, I will not desert thee."

Zia, who had been dragged to the gateway, exclaimed: "Thou! Heaven's blessings upon a true friend."

"Stand aside!" bellowed the warrior, "or this sword through thy neck!"

"At thy peril! In the name of Tiberius, touch me not. I am the emperor's master architect."

Latinius Latiaris spoke. "He saith true.

Do not harm the Greek. He is reserved for Capreæ."

"Woe to you all!" shouted Alexis, quite beside himself with wild excitement, "if a hair of my head is touched. In me there is the capacity for great buildings. Palaces are in my brain. Kill me, and ye kill a thousand gorgeous plans that want only time to become beautiful realities. These ideas belong to Tiberius."

"Have no fear," said Latinus, scornfully. "Thou shalt be reserved."

"And this maiden!" cried Alexis. "I stand between her and captivity. I will die before I give her up. Do I fear thee, Latinus Latiaris? Who art thou? As for me, I am called to greatness by Sejanus. I am protected as by a legion of soldiers. We shall see who hath more might, I or thou."

The freedman sneered contemptuously, but said to the men: "Come away. He says true. He is greater than I. We must obey. He is a great one, this Greek. As to Zia, wilt thou sell him to me, O shipmaster?"

"Gladly—and at a cheap price."

"Then come to my house. I will send this dog of a runaway Jew to Fidenæ, to engage in the gladiatorial battles. I am public-spirited, and I will contribute thus much to the public joy. Farewell, Mary; thou wilt not see thy father fall upon the arena, his head cleft from his

neck! Farewell, Alexis; I blame thee not—she is a fair maiden.”

“Good Latinus,” exclaimed Mary’s uncle, following to the gate, “be not angry with me, for I am thy friend, thou knowest; I would have persuaded Mary to wed with thee; I knew not this strange Greek was nigh—”

“Peace, miserable worm!” said the ex-prætor, leaving the court and slamming the gate in the other’s terrified face.

“Alas, alas!” moaned the master of the house. “Now am I undone. Good stranger, why didst thou—”

“Get into the house!” cried Alexis. “The sight of thee doth affect my soul as my first sea voyage wrought with my stomach. In, I say! I am the servant of Tiberius, thou boneless worm—I thank Latinus for the word.” Before this fury the Jew fled from sight. “That there are such men in the world!” Alexis stormed. “But rest thee upon the bench. How pale art thou!”

“Think not of me.”

“Of whom, then, should I think, of all mankind?”

“My father! Years of waiting, then one brief embrace—and there the end. To die in the arena—to fight for his life in vain, against trained gladiators—to fall with a useless sword in his hand—I care not what becomes of me!”

“Say not so, maiden. He will not die unhappy, knowing thou hast found a friend.”

“Can a friend give me back my father? And this is all I have had to live for. I have dreamed of his return, and of our going away together, to share each other’s life.”

“Nay, Mary, if all thought so, the world would be one long, loud wail; for has not every one’s father died or been destined to die? Fathers do not possess a miraculous immortality.”

“Thou dost not understand my case, O friend of my father—”

“Nay, call me *thy* friend. But what is this case?”

“I have had no other interests in life, no distractions to lead my thoughts astray, no friends to claim a part of my regard.”

“That I can readily believe from the sample of thine aunt’s husband. Poor walled-in, desponding heart! And hath no one taught thee how to laugh?”

“To laugh! Ah—but heaven hath taught me how to weep.”

“Nay, maiden, thou hast not learned heaven’s lesson aright. For it doth not speak of tears, but of smiles and brightness. Heaven is always smiling, whatever clouds hide its face from our eyes. And even by night its lamps are set forth to show us that beyond the black gulf there is life and merriment.”

“Thy glad voice wrings my heart, for I seem to see the sunbeams dancing upon the dead face of my father.”

“Say not that my voice brings thee grief. Consider how life is given us for our pleasure, and not to be mourned over, as if we would ask the gods, ‘Why have ye given me this thing?’ For what is death but a not-being? And when we are not, can we be unhappy? And while we are, death is absent from us. So while we live, it is as if there were no death in all the world. And when we be dead it is as if there were no such a thing as sorrow.”

“Nay, now thou remindest me of what I should never have forgotten, that there is indeed comfort in heaven, and an everlasting voice bidding us not despair. But it has been only a short time since I learned the great truth. And oh! I do forget at times—it is hard to remember at the same time that our heart is breaking and that God will heal the wound.”

“Which god dost thou speak of? I know not one of the thirty thousand that goeth about healing broken hearts.”

“I speak of the only God, for there is but one; and I have seen his Son, for he liveth in Judea.”

“What. a god walketh the earth?”

“These things be strange to thee, for thou art a Gentile. Thou wilt not believe. Thou art

a Greek. Yet even Greeks believe in Jerusalem."

"But why should a god come to this earth of ours? Methinks if I were a god, I would create me a happier place, and never so much as look out the window."

"The son of God hath not come to enjoy himself," said Mary. "He hath come to comfort troubled hearts, to heal dreadful diseases, and to tell us the way of life."

"And what is this way of life? And why should a god trouble himself to comfort others?"

"Because he loveth all men. For are not all men his children; born into the world by the power of his will? Without God there would be no life. And where life is, there is a child of God."

"And he loveth all men?"

"Yea; rich and poor, publican and sinner."

"Even the Gentiles?"

"As children who have gone astray."

"Doth he love Tiberius?"

"It is a hard thing to understand," faltered Mary.

"But what is this way of life?" asked Alexis.

"Love God with all our soul, and our neighbors as ourselves."

"But how may we love this God whom we know not?"

"By doing what he saith."

“Will that rouse up this love indeed?”

“It will; obey and thou shalt love.”

“But how shall we get to loving our neighbors as ourselves—especially such a neighbor as Latinus Latiaris?”

“That I know not. It is a great mystery.”

“Thou speakest well. Trouble we our heads not about this mystery! I would as lieve be an oyster as contain within me a pulpy, flabby heart that knew no honest anger, no free hate. Only a slave may not hate! Tell me, surely thou hatest some one?”

“No one. Latinus I fear, but I dare not hate. For God will love me only so far as I love others.”

“Thou seemest very far from me, Mary. Is there no one thou wouldst like to see injured? Come, thou must despise some person! Let it be but one, that I may feel some common bond between us.”

“No one at all. God loveth mine enemies. Dare I do less? Dare I hate whom God loveth?”

“But think of thy father’s plight. Wouldst thou not be pleased if some one smote this Latiaris upon the head and made an end of him? Suppose I kill this Latiaris—for that is the only way. Suppose I thrust him through—”

“Thou wilt not, thou wilt not, my friend!”

“Nay; I will steal thy father this very night.

If he get to Fidenæ, he is lost. Perchance I may come upon this Latiaris—”

“I pray thee, think not of it.”

“What! and are we to love our enemies better than our friends?”

“May God guard them both!”

“This is a strange thing. Although we sit side by side, thou art a thousand miles from me! Come, I will tell thee a secret, and thus bind thee somewhat to me, Mary. To none other would I tell this. To none other have I ever spoken these words. Yet I ask thee not to keep my secret, for in the clear recesses of thy soul dwells no dark monster of ingratitude. I am a Jew.”

“Thou! Nay, thou art a Greek.”

“As surely as my father was a Jew, so am I. And as surely as my mother was a Greek, so am I a Greek. I was reared a Greek, my nature is Greek, but I am a Jew. Not in superstition am I a Jew, not in thought or motive; but it is enough. This is my secret. And never did I take pride in my parentage till this day. For it was my intention to live and die a Gentile.”

“Alas! Wouldst thou tread under foot thy heritage?”

“My father, O Mary, lived as a Gentile. He cared nothing for his heritage. He sought the favor of the great—he would hold no intercourse with his own race, he would forget that he was

a Jew. He would have no children to remind the world. What then? He had me exposed upon the mountain-side—a naked babe, helpless. And when now I find babes exposed, my heart is thrilled. I was found and cared for by a rough but great-hearted fellow; I have but a dim recollection of him, for while I was still a child he was executed as a thief. A Greek architect adopted me. When he died, I was at the head of his estate. To all the world but to thee and to Zia I am a Greek. Zia knoweth who my father is. He did tell me one night as I rode upon the Tyrrhenian sea.”

“Ah! tell me how thou camest to know my father. Tell me his every word. Describe his every gesture.”

Alexis sighed. “Thou wouldst rather have one word about Zia than a hundred about Alexis! But can I blame thee? Poor loving daughter, torn from thy joy by a cursed freed-man! And thou mayest not hate him! Take comfort; *I* shall hate him enough for us twain!”

The Greek related all that had passed upon his voyage, ending with the wonderful escape of the slave. “Perchance he will not die in the arena,” he concluded. “Who can tell what will happen to such a nimble Jew? Now I must leave thee, Mary, hoping I have comforted thee somewhat. And while I live thou shalt not be harmed.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE FLIGHT FROM ROME.

When Alexis left Mary, his thoughts ran in this order: "I have promised to protect her while I live. There is no harm in that; she may believe me, and take comfort for a time. But in truth what can I do? How may one protect a maiden unless one marry her safely? Even as my feet depart from her home, the feet of Latinius may be approaching her threshold. Marry her? And would I, a Greek, give up my prospects for one whom I do not love? Thou impulsive fool! Thou dog Alexis, what wouldst thou do on finding a *second* damsel in danger? Canst thou marry the whole female sex? But they all be not as this Mary. True. What a divine innocence shines upon her brow, as if the radiance of an invisible crown were there made visible. How this spirit of hers, with its nameless something that is not of earth, seems far, far, far away from me, so different from anything I have seen before. It must be that her God has put his seal upon her, as if to mark her apart from the devotees of other gods. As I sat beside her my heart did not leap and bound

uncontrollable; my breath did not hang in suspended gasps; my blood was calm. To look into her face and hear her tones is to sit beside the springs of peace and hear the calm whisper of a still evening. Ah, heaven! if she were only beautiful! If Mary had the glorious, regal beauty of Julia Silia, or if Julia Silia had the spirituality of Mary! Then were I undone. Then were the world spurned beneath my feet. But between these two half-perfections my heart is balanced, my brain hangs level."

When his thoughts had reached this conclusion he heard a voice near at hand say, "Alexis is dead."

Another voice said, "Who is Alexis?"

"He was the architect sent for by the emperor," replied the first. "He hath been slain in his bed."

Alexis was in a crowded street. The two speakers were slaves; they did not appear to know of his presence. He could not remember having ever seen them before. The Greek threw back his head and laughed. "I am not dead yet," he said to himself; but he did not think it worth while to undeceive the slaves, so he continued on his way without accosting them.

At the corner of the next street a knight and a freedman were conversing. Alexis heard his own name, and listened. The knight said:

“What, then, will the emperor do for an architect?”

The freedman replied, “I suppose this Alexis was not the only one in Greece!”

Alexis approached the freedman. “Sir, what hath happened unto this same Alexis?” he asked.

“He hath been slain in his bed,” replied the freedman, while the knight, fearing to hold converse with a stranger, hastened away.

“And how knowest thou of the deed?”

“I have it from Phædrus the poet,” replied the other.

“Surely Phædrus should know!” exclaimed the Greek. He passed on, this time without laughter. He had not gone far when once more he heard those disturbing words, “Alexis is dead!”

Alexis laid his hand upon the arm of the speaker. “Nay, sir; judge if I be alive or dead!”

“Who art thou?” demanded the other, drawing away.

“I am Alexis, the emperor’s architect.”

The other laughed. “Alexis hath been slain in his bed,” the man said.

The Greek hurried on, now with a face from which all light had fled. He reached the home of Manius Lepidus, and in the atrium found Phædrus, pacing the floor, his hands clasped

behind him. "What!" cried the poet. "Thou livest! It is Alexis!"

"What meanest thou?" cried Alexis, excitedly. "What mean the men upon the street? How got the rumor abroad that I am dead? It is enough to make a man think himself a ghost!"

"In very truth thou livest! Thou speakest, thou movest before me. It is Alexis! But read this letter." He handed the Greek a parchment which ran as follows:

"Alexis is dead. Seek not his corpse. The sword which slew him is still thirsty."

"Who brought this vile communication?"

"Some slave, who quickly departed before I had broken the seal. When I read I was convinced. Why should one seek to deceive me in a matter that must be soon revealed? Knowing thou must soon return, why cause this alarm?"

"Do not ask *me*. My blood runs cold! Surely it is a threat. But why didst thou give it out that I was slain in my bed?"

"In thy bed? Nay, I said not so. In truth, I have not yet told a soul of the letter."

"Yet all Rome is telling each other that I was slain. Every street rings with the lie."

"If this be so, thou art a dead man!"

"How dead, while yet I live!"

"Nay, thou art a dead man practically; thy living will soon be o'er! Surely thou hast

lacked discretion this day. Thou hast angered some powerful one. Evidently thy doom is sealed."

"Say not so. The thought of death is the beginning of madness. What shall I do? I will appeal to Manius Lepidus for a guard."

"Thou art evidently devoted to destruction," said the poet. "In that case, think not to call upon Lepidus. Did he hesitate to renounce a lifelong friendship with Titius Sabinus, simply because Sabinus is in danger? Lepidus will never seek to uphold a drowning man, lest he himself be dragged to the bottom of the sea."

"Advise me, O Phædrus. How calm and cold art thou! Tell me what to do, and I will obey."

"Alexis, if thou art marked out for death, as appeareth to be certain, thou must fight thine own brief, vain fight alone. There is no one in the world who can save thee, except the emperor. Whoso seeketh to befriend thee will himself fall a victim to his unwise pity. Should I take thy part, I should be as ruthlessly put to death as thou art soon to be sacrificed. Unhappy man! Far from thy sunny home of Athens, with thine impulsive heart and heedless tongue! I give thee no advice. I dare no longer be thy friend. Go where thou wilt, let it be known that thou art Alexis, and men will flee from thee as from the plague."

"What can I say to touch thy heart!" ex-

claimed the terror-stricken Greek. "Hear, then, what I have done. I did this day save Mary the Jewess from the power of Latinus Latiaris."

"Ah! that explains everything. Thou hast saved her? Yea, perhaps for a single hour! What canst thou against *him*? There are yet but two chances for thee. After I have spoken, never must I hold secret counsel with thee more. First, thou must cease to be Alexis."

"How cease to be myself? Can I be another?"

"That thou must determine."

"Then I say, I cannot. While I live I am Alexis."

"Then soon wilt thou die, Alexis! But the second way is to fall at the feet of Tiberius. Now I leave thee. Even now a slave is watching us from the garden. No more art thou my friend. There is nothing so dangerous, when a tyrant reigns, as friendship." Phædrus retreated to his study.

Alexis, now a prey to nervous excitement, wandered about the house, starting at every sound, often laying his hand upon the dagger that lay concealed upon his person. Only when he stood in the library before the portrait of Mary, did a certain firmness return to him. The face spoke of serene and steadfast faith. He was looking up at the face, deriving some confidence from the clear, gentle eyes, when a slave

approached him with a package. "For thee," said the slave.

On the paper cover was written, "For Alexis; from Mary."

His heart thrilled with joy. Even as he was looking into the likeness of her features came this proof that he was not forgotten! He unwrapped the package, and found half a dozen large, ruddy apples. With a cry of joy he ran into the tablinum, where Phædrus was rewriting his fable of the gadfly.

"Thou hast said thou art not my friend," cried Alexis, "but I cannot so easily smother my liking for thee. Dost see this luscious fruit without a watering mouth? Hate me if thou wilt, but canst thou despise such apples?"

"Whence came they?" asked Phædrus, unmoved.

"See the direction—from the Jewess!"

Phædrus read the legend, "To Alexis; from Mary." He drew from his bosom the note which began "Alexis is dead." He placed them side by side, and said, coldly, "The same hand wrote both."

Alexis stared, while his smile died away.

Phædrus cut open one of the apples, and disclosed a curious yellow stain in the fruit. He smelled the cut place, and said, quietly: "It is still morning. I shall not break my fast till the prandium."

“Tell me what it means!” faltered Alexis.

“I can tell thee nothing. But as for this knife which cut the apple, it is a knife I desire to give away, for I have no further use for it. Or it would be better to destroy it, since I hate no one enough to make him such a gift. Shall I read to thee? Wouldst hear my fable?”

Alexis fled from the room as in a panic. Out in the sunny garden his fears grew less gloomy. When he was summoned to the noon meal, he found that Lepidus had returned from the senate. Lepidus gazed at him unemotionally, and remarked: “I thought thee dead. It was so reported in the city.”

“I still live,” said Alexis. “Wilt thou send me away from thy house?”

“Not so. Thou art here by the order of Sejanus.”

“Wilt thou not advise me, O wise Lepidus?”

“Advise thee, as touching what?”

“How may I escape my destruction?”

“Tiberius is great,” said Phædrus, somberly.

“May he live forever!” said Lepidus.

“And I with him,” added Alexis.

The rest of the meal was passed in silence. In his cell-like cubiculum the Greek threw himself upon the bed and sought refuge in sleep. But even now his fears pursued him and mingled with his dreams. He thought some one burst through the door as if to rush upon him. The

phantom paused, and appeared to listen, advanced a step toward the bed, then paused again.

Alexis cried out, and awoke. He sprang shuddering from the bed. He was alone. But what odor was this that filled the room, causing him to turn faint? He staggered to the door, passing as he did so a vial that lay shattered upon the brick floor. With a frenzied hand he tore open the door and fell forward into the corridor. The fresh air revived him. He made his way to the fountain, bathed his face, and felt quite well again, except for the horror of his position.

“What I do, I must do quickly,” he thought. “Let me think, let me plan. This rebellious brain of mine lies jellied with fear, not stirring. Ye gods, send me a thought, for I die of this vacuum! Would not Titius Sabinus aid me? But if I go thither, I should doubtless bring trouble upon him and his house. I promised to protect Mary—I who cannot defend myself against invisible pitfalls! Perhaps even now she is in the clutches of Latiaris. Poor, vainly fluttering bird! But let me think. Ah, heaven! my mind hath gone to sleep, and refuseth even to dream!”

He rose with agitation, and began to pace back and forth in an agony of endeavor; but no hope was produced. What hissing sound is this? And now a crash, a rattle—and a javelin lies upon the

pavement, where it has rebounded from the wall. Scarcely did it miss him; his toga has a rent in the side. It came from yonder doorway, where even yet the heavy curtains sway. Alexis, his blood boiling with fury, rushes thither and draws aside the hangings. The room is empty. There are four doors. He passes through one, and presently finds himself in the atrium alone.

Whither shall he flee? Even as he stands debating, a second javelin may be hurled. Lepidus refuses to protect him. He remembers the words of Phædrus. Yes, he will seek an audience with the emperor, not wait till he is sent for. There is death in delay. Alexis flees from the house.

Rome has not risen from its siesta. The deserted streets fill him with haunting fears. Every passing slave causes him to shrink and draw his robe closer about him. He looks up hastily at the windows under which he must pass. No one accosts him. Yet he knows he is pursued. He warily slows his footsteps, he darts into gloomy passages, turns and makes wild circuits. It is in vain. All the city has its eyes upon him. Every street is waiting for his passing. Sometimes he doubles upon his pursuers and meets them face to face. They are slaves, and every face is a new one. Before he can seize or question them, they are gone. He is near the city gate when Rome awakes and

opens its doors. A public herald parades the street, shouting in resounding tones: "A reward! A reward! One thousand denarii for the murderer of Alexis the architect!"

Was he in a horrible dream? In his thoughts nothing was steadfast, nothing sure; he was not even certain that he was escaping from any other than an imaginary danger. Once outside the city, on the Via Appia, "Queen of Roman ways," his mad flight was checked by the throng. Many were going upon a pilgrimage to Capreæ, or at least to the coast that overlooked that island. Those who daily set forth upon this long journey were the most distinguished men of Rome, who dared not fail to appear before their emperor, even though he had expressed his wish to be left alone. But the words of Tiberius were never to be taken literally. As a speaking being he was the perfection of Roman virtue. But if Tiberius will not deign to see us, perhaps the powerful Sejanus will condescend to cross the intervening sea that we may fall at his feet and worship him; and Sejanus is more powerful than Tiberius, since he rules his master. And if Sejanus will not hear our petitions or receive our flatteries, he will certainly send porters among us, whom we may bribe with wealth and kisses. It is too true that Sejanus may send us back with parting blessings, meaning in his heart to have our heads within a week. But if

we hold aloof, much more certainly will our heads pay toll for our indiscretion.

The Via Appia, with its average width of twenty feet, was not sufficient for the stream now pouring both ways. Alexis presently found himself in danger of being crushed between a cisium, a two-wheel vehicle drawn by three mules, and a carruca, a private coach, decorated with silver. These vehicles were going in opposite directions, and the drivers of both shouted to him in derision to look to his life, at the same time bringing the wheels of each as close together as safety would permit. In the cisium sat a flamen, attired in his sacerdotal robes. The private coach was empty, save for the driver. Quick as the quick thought of a Greek, Alexis sprang into the coach, for the narrow openings in the sides were protected, not by doors, but by hanging curtains of leather. By the swaying of these curtains he had discovered the empty seat in the rear.

“By the memory of Germanicus!” cried the driver, turning his head to stare at the intruder, “thou art an unexpected bird in my nest. Pipe me a warbling tune, I charge thee, and for a first ditty relate thy name and condition.”

“I am Alexis, the Greek architect, on my way to the emperor.”

“What! Here is adventure. Climb over upon the seat beside me, that I may see thee and my

horses at the same time. It has been long since I rode with a ghost."

"I obey, since the carruca is thine; but I warn thee, I am armed, and not cheaply shall I sell my life."

"Then thou likest not dying? Nay, O ghost, what right hast thou with weapons? It is unkind of thee to come haunting me with a dagger under thy toga."

"I am no ghost, driver, and I intend that no man shall send me haunting. As thou art from Rome, thou hast heard this silly rumor, but I am before thee to deny it with my presence."

"True enough, all Rome rings with the charge against thee. And dost thou call this a 'silly rumor' which indeed meaneth the shortening of thy span? Nay, thou art after mine own heart. For what, after all, is death but a cutting short of meals, a decrease of morning dressings and nightly undressings? Nay, be content; when we be dead we shall not have the trouble of breathing."

"I shall be content, indeed, if thou lettest me ride with thee in this carruca as far, at least, as thou mayest drive toward Capreæ. Yet it is honest to confess that my company may bring thee into danger."

"That know I well enough; and that is why I suffer thee to add thy hundred and forty pounds to the discomfort of my horses. Thou

art a blessing to me, Alexis, for thou art a potential adventure sitting beside me. Any moment thou mayest bring joy to my soul by drawing upon us curious dangers.”

Alexis shuddered. “Ah, the world is so bright! Why is mankind so dark and secret? Danger! It is a torture! Do you understand that they pursue me—the slaves of a great freedman, Latinus Latiaris? He hath thousands of slaves. Every one is upon my track, it seems. How can I escape? I cannot be merry, for the laughter that comes finds my heart too heavy to express it. Nameless dreads numb my faculties. I cannot think, cannot plan; I am like an insensate beast, driven mad in the arena by vanishing sword-points.”

“Nay, Alexis, take comfort, be content. If they catch thee, thou wilt not have the trouble of fleeing further. I understand thy mood, but it is as I understand yonder distant mountain-peak; I am not of it. The snow may glisten there, but I, down here, am warm. I am no neighbor to the mountain-peak. Thou art to me a blessing, for thou art an excitement. Ye gods, how dull crawls the world, like a gigantic turtle wandering unpursued! No games in Rome—the theater empty, the circus barren, the amphitheater closed; nothing to stir one but the judicial trial of illustrious knights, who kill themselves in their own homes to escape public

execution. Thus even in death do they deprive us of pleasure! Behold me, rolling up and down Italy in my *carruca*, seeking diversion from this maddening monotony—and thou alightest upon me! Blessed Alexis! Thou shalt not part from me till I lay thee in the arms of the emperor.”

“Thou art a quick friend,” said Alexis, “therefore, I fear, a sudden enemy. But I thank thee, for never was mortal in more need of help. Thy name?”

“My name? If that I should proclaim, certainly I would have excitement enough. But for convenience thou mayest know me as Varro Silius.”

“Silius? Canst thou be related to that Caius Silius whom Sejanus devoted to destruction, and whose daughter, Julia Silia, liveth?”

“My father, Marcus Silius, was the brother of Titius; I am Julia’s cousin. A beautiful cousin she is, O Alexis!”

“And yet if thy name is not Silius, how art thou related to her?”

“Nay; did I not say my father was her father’s cousin?”

“Not so; thou saidst he was the brother.”

“What matter what I said? Are thine ears two scales that weigh the words of others? In that case, I must have a care of thee.”

“Fear me not. For though thou didst speak

of the memory of Germanicus, yet did I reproach thee?"

"And why, thinkest thou, did I so refer? I know it is a name no Roman dare mention. Yet I was so intolerably bored by the dullness of this day that I hoped thou wouldst take offense, and seek to inform against me. Then might I have had a merry adventure. But, however, all hope is not lost; for I see we are being pursued by a slave who hath got him a horse. How subtly he rideth along, pretending not to have his eyes glued to the back of thy head!"

Alexis turned white. "Oh, if I were in Athens, with my little maid! Hasten the horses, Varro Silius, or whoever thou art—how may I escape?"

"Escape doth not lie in laying whip to horse's back. Not till we have had sweet sport, shalt thou, if ever, get thy skin out of the lion's teeth! Thou blessed Alexis, hail the day that brought thee in my way! But look not so sick. If thou hast indeed a coward's liver, never shall liver of mine throb or leap, or act however a liver acteth, in thy behalf. For now that I do peep around the side of my carruca I discern two horsemen—nay, three, who have thy death written upon their faces."

"I am no coward, Varro. Yet may not a brave man fear? Yet what I fear is not one man, nor two, nor even three; it is this gigantic net-

work that has fallen about me—an invisible coil, a thousand slaves thirsting for my blood, hoping thus to gain a reward from their master. The one who first assassinates me will doubtless be manumitted. It is a stab in the dark, a blow in the back, that makes me shudder. And I, who love so much the light and would never cause a tear to fall—”

“In other words, thou, who art a Greek, art a mirror set to catch the sunlight; and when the sun goes down, out goes thy light! Look at me; I am as happy in this moment as if I were seeing a score of gladiators cutting each other’s throats.”

Alexis made no reply, but furtively studied his companion’s face. Varro was a young man, heavy and thick-limbed, his head set solidly upon a great neck, his forehead narrow and crowned by short, coarse hair. He was clean-shaven. His left eye was concealed by a big black plaster; a similar plaster stretched over his right cheek. Apparently he had recently been having adventures enough. His appearance was distinctly unpleasant to the Greek. The thin lips were set in lines that suggested cruelty, and the curves upon the forehead, as clearly as they might be distinguished from a certain grime, bespoke no trait of clemency. What was this Varro? Certainly not a slave; as equally certain not a freedman, since there was no evidence that

the holes in his ears had been artificially filled in. Yet he did not impress the Greek as of sufficient rank to own a *carruca*. The words of this strange person recurred to Alexis: "My name? If that I should proclaim, certainly I should have excitement enough!" These words indicated either that Varro was a great man in disguise, or that he was a notorious criminal. Suddenly Varro turned and found Alexis examining him. The driver laughed as the Greek started back.

"No matter what I am," he said, "since I have two horses. Patience! Be content. If thou dost not know my real name, thou wilt not have to introduce me. Yonder in the distance is the Forum Appii. There we will to the inn and rest ourselves, and afterward take boat on the canal, and so down to Tarracina, on the coast. That far on thy way toward Capræ. My heart is torn between two wishes; one to go all the way with thee, the other to see the combat of gladiators at Fidenæ."

"At Fidenæ?" repeated Alexis. "When did I hear that name? Oh—Julia Silia is going thither."

"Surely, all the world will be there, unless I stay by thy side. I know not which to do. If thou canst give me excitement enough, I shall vote for thee. The combat will be over in a day, but it will take thee five at least to reach thy destination, if thou livest so long."

Alexis shivered. "But what shall we do when these slaves set upon me?" he faltered.

"By heaven! wouldst thou anticipate the sport? Nay, nay, nay! It is the unplanned, the unexpected, that thrills the core of the heart. Let us not so much as *think* what we shall do!"

"At least thou canst tell me what is to become of this carruca, since we are to take boat on the canal."

"Why, leave it for the slaves to ride home in!"

"And hast so many silver coaches thou canst afford to leave them for slaves?"

"My cousin, Marcus Silius, is a maker of coaches. They stand all about the place; they block up the gateways; one stumbles over them in the house. More than once I have waked up to find one in the bed with me."

Alexis laughed. "But saidst thou not that Marcus Silius is thy father? And now thou makest him thy cousin!"

"Hark thou, friend; believe only what thou hearest dripping from my tongue. As to what I have said in the past, they be lies in the main. My words are, for the most part, still-born; and if they be not quickly buried in oblivion, they will incontinently fill the air with the infection of falsehood."

"Thou speakest lightly of telling untruths. If

another charged thee of deception, wouldst be so calm?"

"As to that, make trial of me, if thou desirest. But here we be at the Forum Appii. We have at least come sixteen miles. There are a hundred and twenty-five to Capreæ. If something doesn't happen, thou and I part at Tarracina—mark that!"

Driving past the great market-place, Varro drew up his vehicle before the public inn. As he and Alexis sprang to the ground, the three slaves of Latinus Latiaris appeared. Two of them wheeled to one side and rode out of sight. The third alighted and approached the landlord. Varro stepped before him.

"I pray thee, landlord," he said, "give us two rooms, side by side. And let this Grecian architect have the better of the two, for he is sent for by Tiberius, and woe to thee if his bones ache in thy bed, or his stomach rebel against thy victuals! As for my carruca, take charge of it, for my wife will join me here, and we fare forth together. Bid thy slaves carry the bundles into my room. As to this slave of mine who hath just sprung from his horse, and who listeneth so greedily, give him food in the cellar, such as beseemeth slaves."

"Nay," cried the slave; "I am not thy servant, for I know thee not. I am the servant of the great Roman, Latin—"

“How?” cried Varro, in a pretended fury. “What? Whose ears are these projecting from either side of my head, catching such wondrous words of impudent falsehood?”

“I know not whose ears they be,” returned the slave, “but I tell thee, O landlord—”

“*Thou* tellest!” shouted Varro. “Next moment we shall have those very horses rearing upon their hind legs and neighing out that they be no horses of mine. Landlord, hale away this slave, and have him beaten, and charge it in the account.”

“Touch me at thy peril!” shrieked the slave, livid with rage.

“Peril?” cried Varro. “So there is peril in it, then? That gives a new face to the matter!” Saying which he ran the slave through with his sword.

“Good master!” cried the landlord. “What hast thou done? Behold, now I am encumbered with this dead body. And here is blood upon my coping!”

“Charge the body and the blood in the account. Say no more of the matter; show us to our rooms. Dost not see, dullhead, that this Greek is faint and weak, and hath a pair of rebellious legs?”

“Oh, what a rash act was that!” Alexis said, when they were alone in one of the rooms. “I shall never forget his cry—his face—and that wound—”

“Be content!” cried Varro, impatiently. “If he had not died of his wound, he would have gone wounded through life. I charge thee, fall upon that bed and take some rest. There is like to be enough wakefulness for thee presently!” Varro hastened out into the court, and found a group watching the removal of the dead slave. One of the dead man’s confederates had left his horse elsewhere, and now hovered near, with apparent unconcern.

“These slaves grow bolder and more insolent every day,” said Varro, stalking among them with his hand upon his sword. “If the law did not suffer us to kill the dogs, they would overrun Italy. But, friends, know ye whom we have in the inn?”

“A friend of Cæsar,” cried the spectators.

“Yea, Cæsar thinketh him so. But hear me, he loveth not the emperor!” There was a horrified chorus at these words. “He deserves to die,” said one.

“If thou hadst heard him, thou wouldst say so, indeed! Listen, friends, to what he told me. These be the words of Alexis the Greek: ‘Tiberius Cæsar is the greatest tyrant that ever sat upon a throne,’ he saith. ‘A man dare not speak his true sentiments,’ he saith. Fancy that! As if we were afraid to speak our thoughts. ‘The emperor had his stepson, Germanicus, put to death—his own adopted son,’

he saith; 'and now he meditateth the destruction of Agrippina, wife of that noble Germanicus,' he saith; yea, this Alexis did call Germanicus 'noble.' 'And Tiberius seeketh the murder of Drusus, son of that gallant Germanicus of whom Tiberius was so wretchedly envious,' he saith."

The audience stood spellbound. These words which Varro imputed to Alexis were so faithful an expression of the popular belief of Italy—suspicions, however, which few dared to utter—that they rejoiced at the words, while they pretended to be scandalized.

"I dare not harbor such a one in mine inn," exclaimed the landlord. "I pray thee beg him to depart in peace."

"What! in peace? Thou wilt let such a blasphemer escape? Thou dost not rush upon him to pluck out his tongue? Then hear more. 'This Sejanus is a corrupt abomination, causing our noblest knights to crawl like dogs at his feet; happy the man who is allowed to kiss the feet of Sejanus,' saith Alexis. Behold, I would myself seize upon him, but he is a powerful warrior; he is mighty. I have by craft wiled him hither. See to it that he doth not escape, or this inn and this people are doomed. More than this, there is a price upon his head. Who so slayeth him receiveth five hundred denarii from mine own purse."

"Ha!" cried the landlord, suddenly taking a

keener interest. "Sayest thou so? He must never escape! Advise us, good stranger."

"When he is asleep, fall upon him," saith Varro. "Wait, I will go up and see how he fareth." Varro went first to his own room, and seizing a bundle, ran with it to Alexis. The Greek sat disconsolately upon his bed, staring out of the window. "Quick, quick!" cried the Roman. "Not a moment is there for window-gazing. Off with thy clothes and on with these. The whole town will presently be upon thee. Some one hath proclaimed a reward for thy head."

"But what clothes are these? They be the robes of a woman."

"True. Haste! Thou shalt be my wife. Hurry, darling. Five hundred denarii upon thy head. Wast ever worth so much before? Off with the toga. Nay, I will unfasten that. Thy hands shake like leaves in a tempest! I am thy friend, thou poor babe! Now thou art mine own beautiful wife—yes, too beautiful by half. Let me paint thy brow and cheek with this composition. Shrink not; I am painted with the same. Now this plaster upon thy nose."

"Never!" cried the metamorphosed Alexis. "I will not so dishonor myself."

"Nay, thy nose will take no dishonor. Thou couldst smell as well were a camel's hump upon it—and for what other purpose be noses? Now

to my room. And bide there till I come for thee."

Again Varro appeared in the court. "How fareth he?" asked the landlord, eagerly.

"Thou dog of an innkeeper!" blustered Varro. "Is this the way thou conductest thy business, leaving my poor wife to seek her way to my room by the back of the house? Didst ever have a lady under thy roof before? By heaven, I have a mind to raze the house to the ground! If thou didst know who I am, thou wouldst tremble."

"Noble knight," faltered the landlord, "I knew not thy wife was coming. How got she in? Why came she not by the front way?"

"Dost thou question *me*? This instant I quit thy infamous abode. Have forth the carruca. Nay, not a word, or thou shalt be dragged to the Tarpeian rock. Thinkest thou a senator may not travel through Italy unless lictors march before him with rods and an ax? That he never dresseth save in the purple-striped tunic and black buskins marked by your letter C? Ah, if thou didst know my real name, my true dignity! Tremble and obey!"

The landlord hastened to order the carruca, while Varro, with a dignified tread, entered the house and directed his bundles to be carried forth. Then he opened the bedroom where Alexis was waiting. "Come, dear one," said

Varro. "We go straight through the rabble. Look as like a woman as thou canst. Why, how downhearted is thy brow!"

"Should I die in this woman's garb," exclaimed Alexis, passionately, "my soul would be ashamed to appear before the great judges!"

"Nay, be content. If thou art slain, I shall always swear thou wert a woman. Come, fair one. As for me, I am so merry I fear I shall break out into song! What an adventure! What a joy! Do not walk so fast. Let us taste this moment slowly; many a dull one will come after." They entered the court.

"Make way for the senator!" cried the men.

"Friends," said Varro, "this word to thee: Alexis is asleep in his chamber; five hundred denarii to his captor! Now let me and my lady pass."

"Long live the senator and his wife!"

"Fair Virginia," said Varro, "wilt thou not say a word to the people? At least kiss thy hand to them. What, wilt not? Never was there so disdainful and haughty a wife, good people! A word to you: she is a cousin of Sejanus. Enough!"

Alexis climbed into the coach, sick at heart. Varro gathered up the reins, cracked his whip, and they sped away. "I would I were dead!" said Alexis. "Life is not worth so much terror

and such vile disguises. The world is hateful to me since I cannot be seen as I am."

"Nay, sweeting, say not so. If thou couldst see thy womanly appearance, thou wouldst never again sigh to be a man. My fear is that some great knight will seize thee and tear thee from mine arms, being quite driven mad by thy charms."

The Greek covered back in the gloom of the rear seat and said nothing. Presently the coach stopped upon the side of the Decennovium canal. Here stone steps led down to a landing, where open boats were waiting to receive freight or passengers. Many were passing along the narrow street, and their shouts mingled with the cries of the watermen.

Varro sprang to the ground and came to the doorway of the carruca. "Alight, my love," he said. "Wouldst take a ride upon the waters?"

"What will thou do with the carruca?" demanded Alexis, sharply. The bantering tone of the Roman was more cruel to him than a wound. He knew it was foolish to be angry with his benefactor, and perhaps this consciousness increased his irritation.

Varro called a boat-master. "Fellow," he said, "have this carruca taken care of till Tiberius arriveth in the Forum."

“Tiberius!” echoed the astonished man. “What sayest thou? Is the emperor in Italy?”

“Not a word, upon thy life! Claudia, my wife, let us instantly take boat. Fellow, in half an hour a rider, in a yellow garb, upon a milk-white steed, will come hither. He will say to thee, ‘Tiberius.’ Then wilt thou deliver to him the carruca. Then will he place certain gold coins in thine outstretched palm. Now show us to a boat of thine, that we may depart for Tarracina at once.”

“This way, my lord.”

“Ah, if thou didst know my real name,” cried Varro, majestically, raising his arm, “thou wouldst shiver in thy sandals.”

Presently the adventurers were seated in an open canal-boat, which was propelled by four rowers. Varro pointed out with great gusto to Alexis that the two surviving spies of Latinus were watching from the bank. The Greek, extremely miserable in his feminine attire, had not the heart to hold up his head. He cowered among Varro’s bundles, pale and mute. Varro for a while amused himself by impressing the boat-master with his own august importance. By indirect hints he conveyed the impression that he was one of the two consuls who now presided over the senate. The abjection of the boat-master was painful to behold. The slaves bent to their oars with great devotion. An hour passed by, and the Roman

began to show signs of ennui. "Precious wife," he complained, "this is intolerably dull. If this continues, I shall leave thee at Tarracina, and go to see the combats at Fidenæ. Propose some plan of diversion, or I shall grow desperate!"

The Decennovium canal, running its course of nineteen miles to the sea, wound southward, practically in a parallel line with the Via Appia. The distance between them had been about a mile; but now the canal approached so near the road that one could shout to the pedestrians.

"Look, look!" cried Varro, suddenly pointing toward a throng that was hurrying along the road. "Soldiers of the first legion, as I live and am a consul! At their head are those two slaves of thine enemy. By heaven! They do carry the ghastly corpse of my own slave upon a horse! Hail to you, brave soldiers! Seek ye Alexis the Greek? Here he is. Come and take him. This is no woman, but a man unsexed. Command these rowers to cease!"

The soldiers, surprised by these exclamations, checked their horses. Varro turned to the rowers. "Now row for your lives!" he cried. "Every one of you shall die before this man-wife of mine is taken."

"Traitor!" cried Alexis, springing up and drawing his dagger. "Dost thou reward my confidence with perfidy?"

"Peace, fool! I will save thee; fear not."

“Stay!” cried the soldiers from the distant road. “In the name of Cæsar, we charge you!”

“We shall not pay the debt,” roared Varro. “Come and catch us!” The ground on either side of the road was as rough and as difficult to travel as the road was smooth. The soldiers sought some easy pass through the rocky stretch of country. The canal curved away from the direction of the Via Appia, and would soon be separated from it by a distance of two miles.

Arrows began to sing about their heads, splashing in the water ominously near the boat. “We surrender,” cried the boat-master. “Stay your oars, dogs! I swear by the deified Augustus, I knew not this woman was a man!”

“Thou shalt know nothing long,” cried Varro, striking him to the bottom of the boat. “Row, slaves; I am master now! They shall never overtake us. Nay, they have ridden on. They separate—one body returneth. As I am a senator, they will spread the news all over Italy! Cicero spake well when he said one could not escape from Rome anywhere in the world. But we will make a footnote to the saying of Cicero, and bring it up to date. *We* will escape. Put up thy dagger, Alexis; I am thy friend.”

“Are there men’s clothes in those bundles?” demanded the Greek, fiercely. “By Jupiter, I will have men’s clothes!”

“Trouble not the bundles. Here be men’s clothes upon this boat-master. Let us strip him and put upon him thy wife’s apparel. Lie still, thou dog waterman! Fear not; we shall leave thee thy skin upon thee, to keep off the rain. Be content!”

CHAPTER VII.

VARRO FINDS AN ADVENTURE.

The sun had set when Varro ordered the boat to land, some distance above the town that lay upon the seashore. Accordingly they were put off at the edge of the great swamp that extended nearly to Tarracina, three miles away.

“’Tis a most dismal-looking swamp,” exclaimed Alexis, peering about him. “How still and dark it lies, with its rank growth and glimmering pools! Should we not do better to proceed by boat to the town?”

“Nay, unsophisticated! The soldiers do there await us. Fear not the swamp; I know every foot of it as if I were one of its native lizards. Take a last glimpse of the Decennovium canal, upon which jovial Horace did ride on his way to the Sea Adriatic. It may be thy last look at open nature. Now, slaves, set free thy master; hasten to the town, and tell the soldiers that we be in the marshes waiting for them. But now that I bethink me, come, I will free one of you, and he shall be our slave, and carry for us our bundles.” So saying, Varro unchained one of the rowers from his bench, and made him fasten

upon his back the several packages which had traveled with so many adventures from Rome. Bidding this slave walk before, Varro and Alexis plunged into the gloom of the luxurious undergrowth.

The twilight died quickly in the vast swamp. The air, heavy at all times with strange, intense perfumes, producing a feeling of languor and satiety, quickly grew cool and damp. No footpath was perceptible, but Varro ordered the advance with confidence. They trod among rustling leaves and fungous growth, and green slimy denizens of the malarious world darted from under their footsteps. Long stretches of water were visible on either hand, for the most part shallow and covered with green foam, that revealed golden and vermilion streaks when the soft afterglow of day broke through the matted branches. In these lakes, islands were to be seen, bearing tropical trees, over which poisonous vines were clinging, and occasionally a snake in many coils would rear its head and look after the travelers.

“How soon it grows dark!” exclaimed the Greek at last. “And what dreadful spots there are in this bright world! I wonder if I shall ever be warm again and feel the sun shining overhead?”

“Not unless thou walkest with great care. We have now come to the most difficult spot in

the swamp. Bogs are everywhere except as I lead the way. Slave, let me before thee. Put thy feet in my footprints, or thou wilt be swallowed up bodily."

"It is so dark!" complained Alexis. "But what thing is that, darker than all? A house!"

"Thou art a wise Greek. Thou knowest a house when thou seest it, even in a strange land! We will enter this house, for it is mine. But tread with caution." He led the way circuitously to the door, and they entered a dark apartment. Varro groped along the wall and found a lamp, which he lit, having first closed the door. The house had but one room, a square chamber, with no other opening than the door, except little square holes cut in the walls. The air was cold and clammy. The walls were dripping with damp, the floor was slippery. Curious green festoons swung from the moldy rafters. There was a long table, formed of rude logs bound together by chains, which allowed it to sag in the middle. Upon this table were the only articles with which the house was furnished: a heap of arrows, some rusty javelins, the lamp, swords and pikes, and other warlike instruments.

"Put the bundles upon the table," said Varro. "And thou, Alexis, if tired, sit upon the same; for the table is not only table, but chair and bed; only thereon canst thou escape the wet. How woebegone art thou—a flower unsunned could not

so change and droop!" Varro made the door secure by dropping into place three huge logs that lay in iron-bound recesses at different heights across the doorway. By means of the apertures in the sides Alexis was enabled to learn that the walls were of unusual thickness. He perched despondently upon the table. Varro now climbed beside him, and addressed the slave.

"What name dost thou carry about with thee, slave?"

"Sylla."

"And wouldst have thy liberty, Sylla?"

"Above all!"

"Come, then, let us fight, thee and me. And this Greek shall be the *Populus Romanus*, looking on from the seats of the amphitheater. Ye gods, we shall call this place *Fidenæ*, and we shall have our combat! My blood dances at the thought. My blood sports along my veins like a group of Bacchanalian women trying to leap as high as their robes fly in the wind. By heaven, I shall have my excitement in spite of marsh and cramping blockhouse, and moping, springless Greek!"

"Mercy!" cried the slave, falling prone upon the slimy floor. "Slay me not!"

"Thou cursed coward! Thou boneless jelly-fish! Thou bog of a man, with no soundness!" cried Varro, in a great passion. "Fight with me, or I shall cleave thy head. Take this rusty

sword in thy hand; thy five fingers are not enough for grasping of weapons, on my soul! Wilt thou fight with me? Quick, answer, or I smite thy caitiff neck!"

"O Jupiter! O Juno! Yea, I will fight, good master."

"Better call upon Mars and Minerva. Stand till this ædile give the word of onslaught."

"If he stand till I give the word," cried Alexis, "he will have time to strike root and grow autumn hair on his aged head."

"In that case," exclaimed Varro, "I give the word. Begin!" They began to fight. Alexis looked on with a disturbed face. Varro exhibited practiced skill, but this was matched by the desperate fear of the slave. The rusty swords—for the Roman had laid aside his bright blade—flashed and struck sparks of fire.

"Overcome me!" shouted Varro. "Strike me down and thou shalt be free. That was a good stroke. Give us another. Prick me with thy blade. Let us have a show of blood. Glorious Sylla, glorious! Thou fightest as a bear might fight. For valor's sake, do not stumble, from thine own clumsiness!" The blades darted hissing through the air in mad lunges, in scientific parryings. Slowly the slave was forced backward.

"Nay, make a stand!" shouted Varro. "An I get thee up against the wall, thou wilt not back thyself farther; be content! Alexis, thou owest

me much for this entertainment. Oh, if I could sit with thee looking on, and at the same time be down here in the play—a shrewd blow, Sylla! Surely thou hast left a notch in my blade. But be content. Notched or notchless, it can find its keen way through thy soft body! It is worth coming all the way from Rome to find such sport. If I could die in such a game as this, I would never die of boredom. Oh, the agony of being bored by unhappening time! Fight, slave! 'Twas but a scratch—thou art still live enough to die—be content!”

“Stay!” cried Alexis. “Hold your hands and listen. What sounds are these from the swamp? Unhappy Varro! Out with the lamp—we are discovered!”

“Then call me not unhappy. Wait, slave. As I live, the soldiers are upon us. Hear their trumpets!”

“Blow out the lamp!” repeated Alexis.

“Nay, friend, for then might they pass us in the dark! Sylla, we must postpone our engagement for the time. Give me thy hand—a nerveless hand that needeth ten fingers to hold a sword; but thou art a slave, and as a slave thou hast done well. Try we these bows, to see if the strings be rotted.”

“What shall we do?” exclaimed the Greek. “Can we escape from a legion of soldiers?”

“We can kill some of them, at least. Get

thee a bow, and stand at one of the loopholes." At this moment dreadful screams were audible. Varro laughed. "They have found the bog! They sink, their horses perish—hearest those unearthly horse-screams?"

Alexis, through the loopholes, could see flaming torches dart hither and thither through the gloom. Occasionally a savage face was lit up, or the form of a shadowy horse was revealed. The lights began to circle about the bog. The men were seeking a path to the house. "They will never find the way," said Varro, "or if they do, they will lose again." A volley of javelins crashed against the door, making it tremble. "But shall they have all the sport?" he continued. "At thy post, slave! Hand me the arrows as I need them."

He bent his bow, took slow aim, and struck down a torch-bearer. "What art thou doing, Alexis? Why hang thine arms idle?"

"Alas, Varro, I cannot do this thing. The very thought of striking down so much life and energy—of making a pale corpse—the horror of the pain, the gush of blood—no, no! Sooner would I throw myself unarmed before them and give them mine own life!"

"Well, be thyself; I cannot put a Roman heart in a Greek breast. As for me, I shall be happy as I never thought to be. What adventure! What mad shouts! I fear all will be lost

in the bog before I can shoot down a dozen men. But nay, what vile trick is this? They shoot fire, the ungenerous villains! Fie upon them, to fight with fire! This house will soon be in a blaze, I promise you! Give me another arrow, slave; I do see a capering torch-bearer who hath found the solid path hither!"

Alexis remained at the loophole, staring at the wild scene. His handsome face was distorted with a shrinking horror, his hands quivered nervelessly. Maddening shouts came from the blackness of the night, mingled with commands and the glare of trumpets. Shriek after shriek from a miserable soldier who had leaped into the midst of the jelly-like bog, and who was being rapidly engulfed, caused Alexis to tingle with intense sympathy. "Help, help!" shouted the man, while torch-bearers darted here and there at the bidding of officers, paying no attention to the supplication. Ah, why did no one come to his relief? The tide of oozy blackness had reached his shoulders; only his head and outstretched arms were visible. But the gleaming lights now revealed a horse struggling in the bog, while his rider was seeking to extricate him from the soft embrace of death. It is useless; the rider leaps toward solid ground—he fails, and falls backward in the morass. One shriek, and his head is sucked under, quickly followed by his body; and only two boots project above the

treacherous quicksands. A warrior seeing these motionless caligæ, and thinking them the steadfast trunks of trees, makes a spring and alights upon them. At that moment an arrow from Varro's bow pierces him in the breast. Backward he falls, to be swallowed up. And beyond the bog mad forms circle like beasts of prey waiting to spring.

All this is illuminated in a manner most terrible, for the air is filled with a rain of fire. From all points of the blackness the hissing, blazing balls are directed, but they all meet at one point, the doomed besieged house. Those which fall short, burn out their brief lives in the bog; the others fasten themselves to the roof and walls. A crackling and spluttering is heard, which grows ever more audible. The sweeping curves of fire come faster; one arrow, with its burning ball attached, flies through a loophole and buries itself in the opposite wall. The rushing as of waves is heard overhead, and rising flames from the roof throw a clear, white, dancing light across the marsh. One becomes half conscious of smoke; quickly it grows—pungent, smarting, suffocating. In the mean time the Romans have felt out, with some cost of lives, the true path leading to the house. They are approaching the door with huge logs, meaning to beat in the door and make a quick end of the struggle.

“Now, by the major gods and goddesses, all twelve!” cried Varro, throwing down his bow; “here is no moment to delay!” He ran to the table and began to undo one of his precious bundles. “What is an arrow against fire? And what profiteth valor against smoke?” Drawing forth certain garments, he quickly divested himself of those he had previously worn. “Quick, slave,” he ordered, as he dressed; “bring hither that jar thou findest in the corner.” But the slave lay prostrate upon the floor, his face buried in his arms. Only low moans escaped him. “And thou, Alexis,” said the Roman, proceeding with his attire, “how dost thou feel? Art faint? Truly this smoke is vile!”

“Wherefore dost change thine apparel?” demanded Alexis, bitterly. “Recks it in what manner of garb we meet death?”

“Who spoke of death?” retorted Varro. “I reckon not of death, I tell thee truly. Behold my splendid appearance!” Varro paused for a brief moment to admire himself, and in truth he made a fine show, save for his beplastered face. His robe showed the royal purple, and there was a heavy fringe of gold to gladden the eye, while rich gems sparkled upon the shoulder where the toga was fastened. Suddenly the door shook from a mighty blow. The slave screamed in terror at the reverberating crash, and the Greek seized a sword. “Thou wilt fight at last, wilt

thou?" cried Varro, running to the corner, where stood a tall marble jar filled with water. The Roman poured half of it out upon the floor, for a noxious green scum had formed upon it; then he began to wash his face vigorously. "Faugh!" he spluttered, "this smells of death."

Another thundering blow made the door leap in its fastenings. "Stay!" shouted Varro. "Who knocks? What guests are these at my bedchamber? (Quick, Alexis! wash that composition off of thy face. Quick, and I will save thee yet!)"

"Yield, in the name of Cæsar!" cried a furious voice from without.

"I yield!" Varro roared back, for it was necessary to speak at one's utmost pitch in the terrible confusion. "I open the door to the soldiers of the First Italian Legion." He began to swing up the barricading logs by means of their rusty chains. Alexis, his mind now in a hopeless bewilderment at the metamorphosed Varro, and at the agreement to surrender, had hastily washed away his disguise. "Do up that bundle!" Varro cried, as he removed the second barrier. "Hide the garments! Patience, brave soldiers. Now enter."

Varro sprang back to the middle of the room, wisely anticipating a rush of the Romans. The soldiers with drawn swords poured through the

door. They paused and tried to brush the smoke from their eyes, not crediting their senses.

“Great Mars!” exclaimed the centurion.

“Soldiers of the First Italian Legion,” cried Varro, drawing himself to his full height, “do you recognize your prince?”

“Drusus!” “Drusus!” “The son of Germanicus!” “The grandson of Cæsar!” burst from the soldiers. Varro stood a moment rigidly, to enjoy his triumph. Alexis, staring at him with dazed eyes, perceived that the black plasters were gone from his face, and that the bold, reckless lineaments were those he had often seen in representations of the son of Agrippina. The smoke, hanging in the air in strata of varying blue hues, crowned the proud head and formed a girdle about the royal toga.

“Have me forth instantly!” cried Varro. “We are well met. Let us not suffocate in formalities. I desire an escort to Surrentum for this noble architect, who hath been sent for by my grandfather, your emperor.”

In the need of instant action, for the roof showed signs of giving way in one place, all crowded from the house. Suddenly Varro exclaimed: “My bundles! Return for them, slave, or I dispatch thee!” The centurion had the trumpet sounded to indicate a cessation of hostilities.

“Thou sayest,” he said, “that this be the

architect? It is for him we seek, O prince; there be a price set upon his head because he hath blasphemed against Cæsar. A courier hath reached us from Rome, from the powerful Latinus Latiaris, exposing his perfidy."

"All this is false," cried Varro. "Dost thou parley with Drusus? It is because popular rumor hath gone abroad that Tiberius meditateth a crime against me and against my mother. It is because the world saith Tiberius did have my father slain. But the army, the people, the senate, did love Germanicus, and would have made him king had he not been loyal to Tiberius. Now no Roman dare speak a word in my praise, thinking I am doomed to destruction. But not yet is the trial, not yet the execution. Until then I am the grandson of Cæsar, and I will be obeyed. Moreover, to show thee I am still in the royal favor, Tiberius did send me to Rome to bring to him this architect."

"Nay, prince, be not angry. Are not we thy servants? Do we not remember Germanicus, his heroism, his great victories, and the decrees passed in his honor? Latiaris is powerful, but thou art above men, being kin to a god."

"It is true, I am kin to a god, for is not Augustus a god as much as Jupiter? Do we not worship him and swear by his acts? Yea, I am kin to a god, but I do not ask you to burn incense before me. Only set me and this Greek

upon horses and conduct us to Tiberius. And see to it that this slave and his bundles do safely follow after us.”

The information that Drusus was in their midst electrified the soldiers. However, they dared not manifest their joy. As dear as the memory of Germanicus was to the army, and as much as they sympathized with the unfortunate Drusus, who spent every day in the apprehension of a tyrant's blow, their love of life was dearer still. Tiberius did not suffer his people to exhibit partiality for any one; he did not hesitate to sacrifice his closest relatives—always except his mother—to his jealousy. Therefore it was more dangerous to be popular than to be despised. For their very love of the prince, the soldiers received him in silence. Everywhere were traitors to the people and spies of Sejanus, eager to catch up any word of praise for Agrippina and her son. Since Tiberius had sent for Drusus, they would escort him; but perhaps this very show of royal favor was a trap for the soldiers and for Drusus.

As they passed in suspicious silence through the swamp toward Tarracina, Varro, in the darkness, rode beside Alexis, and whispered: “I am the happiest man in Rome! Thou hast brought me enough of adventure to last a week. I would I could carry thee about with me wherever I go. But be content; if thou livest to build one house

for Tiberius—there will be another house in the world!”

The rest of the journey was passed without incident. As they drew near Surrentum, where all must pause who would reach Capræ, Varro informed the centurion that he must leave the escort and return to Capua. “Thou wilt see to it that Alexis find a safe passage to mine august grandfather,” he said. “As for me, I did receive a message at the last inn bidding me bide in Capua. So farewell, brave centurion. Farewell, good and true soldiers—remember Drusus. And should you ever dare to speak a word for my mother, come to me, and I will put myself at your head, and I will lead you to Cæsar, your master, and I will say: ‘Here is a pledge of my loyalty. Thou accusest me of disaffection; but behold! I present you this company, which might have been a destructive weapon in my hand.’ As for thee, Alexis—poor Greek! Alas, for a man whose heart is in another land! Farewell. Thou hast brought me great joy. But since our glorious night, time has dragged hard upon the rope, refusing to so much as walk. I seek new adventures, new excitements.”

Varro rode away from the company, followed by the slave, from whom he had never been separated during the march. Thus Varro, his slave, and his bundles parted from Alexis.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHADOWS OF PASSIONS.

“Send hither Casca,” said Latiaris to his slave. When he was left alone in his magnificent apartment, Latinus Latiaris dropped his head upon his hand, and stared upon the floor. Intense silence reigned in the room. Lost in deep thought, and conscious that he was unobserved, the ex-prætor took no pains to conceal the passions that swept over his heart. Their shadows passed over his face. Rigid determination was written there. The lips were compressed in remorseless lines, the eyes glowed with a cruel purpose. His hands were clenched as if each held the hilt of a dagger. His form was tense and the muscles strained, as if he meditated a sudden spring. Every feature revealed a desperate resolution, which could be carried out only with disastrous effect upon some helpless being.

As he waited the coming of Casca, his countenance changed. The hard lines on the brow smoothed away, the mouth relaxed and trembled, as if in the memory of a smile. The fingers opened, and slowly rose as if he were feeling in

darkness. His massive head lifted and looked with unseeing eyes toward the window. He stretched out his arms, and a look passed over his face as if he were smelling the first rich perfume of a delayed spring; as if, after cheerless wandering in desert lands, he had suddenly come to a land of roses. Soft and tender grew his look, and gentle his face, as with the gentleness of a child who dreams.

Then he started, as if suddenly becoming conscious of his own thoughts; his arms dropped to his knees, and his cheeks grew gray with a wild fear. He looked quickly all about him, to make sure that no eye had witnessed his gesture or divined his foolish fancy. He bent his ear to listen, while his strong body quivered. He suddenly clasped his hands, and then seemed to wave away a specter, as if with the sweep of his arm he could banish the dark terror.

Fear had given rise to doubt. A haunting uncertainty appeared on his face. Would he do this thing? Was it too late to retreat? Could he be content to dream never again of innocent happiness? Was it worth while to tread upon the traditions of Roman virtue? What if he failed, and while sinning, fell! His arrow might not reach the mark. The sword might be seized from his hand and plunged into his own bosom. It was a desperate chance. Yes, but to leave it unattempted would be more dangerous. Be-

sides, there was another motive than personal safety.

His features grew calm again, his glance assured. The lines of his face settled once more into those of resolution. Determined ambition appeared upon his brow. A quick, feverish glow shone in his eyes. Hurry became legible there, a desire for quick success. He started up impatiently, and began to pace the apartment. The curtain at the entrance was pulled aside, and his freedman, Casca, entered.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONSPIRACY.

“Casca,” said Latiaris, turning suddenly upon him, “art thou with me?”

“Thou knowest, O my patron.”

“Yea, yea; but art with me through whatever may happen? Art with me through attempt, and even into failure?”

“Failure?” exclaimed the freedman, turning pale and starting back. “What has happened?”

“Shrink not, old comrade. Nothing has happened yet.”

“*Yet?* By all the divinities, nothing *shall* happen to produce failure!” exclaimed the other, still showing traces of agitated fear.

“But if I *do* fail, Casca—if all goes wrong—thou wilt still be my friend—is it not so?”

“Thou canst not fail, Latinius. Thou shalt not!”

“Ah, Casca, who can tell the time of storms and the effect of their coming? But thou, who wast my father’s slave from a babe, and who didst sport with me in mine infancy—thou whom I did set at liberty—thou hast passed through much with me. I have given thee much. Thou

a freedman, I a Roman; we are the two inseparables. What games we have shared together, and what dangers! The memory of my happiest days are memories of thee. Thou knowest how I have loved thee, Casca, and made thee mine only intimate."

"Latinus, do not speak of failure."

"And I know thou lovest me, Casca, in proportion as I love thee, and have loaded thee with favors. So what matter if failures do come? Have I not thine undying affection?"

"Latinus Latiaris, tell me what hath gone wrong."

"Nothing, nothing—how you tremble! This is not like my brave Casca. What! When I might have reared up a son to inherit my lands, to receive my affections—for a man must love something, Casca—what did I say to thee? 'Expose the babe upon the public highway,' I said; 'he shall not come betwixt me and my Casca.' So I said. Thou didst obey. Thus I have killed mine only relation in whom the Latinian blood flowed. And all for thee, old friend."

"What doth all this lead to?" inquired Casca.

"It leadeth to nothing. Has every word of affection an end in view? But thou art right to chide me. Such love should be hidden in the breast, even as thou hidest thy love for me. It doth not behoove a Roman to speak of love.

But I have been the victim of a strange mood. Now it is gone. Casca, where is Mary, the Jewess?"

"She hath just been put in thy dungeon."

"Bravely done. Tell me."

"Noble Latiaris, she did make a pitiful outcry, while her face—"

"Nay, nay, I will not hear it. Poor child! Unfortunate daughter of Zia! Ah, Casca, had I not spoken those heated words in her court! Art sure the soldiers heard?"

"We all heard thee, Latiaris."

"Canst repeat those fateful words?"

"They ran thus: 'She is a traitor; I will send her as a gift to Tiberius.' "

Latiaris groaned. "Never before shone such a face in Italy. Never before did soul speak to my soul, O Casca, in a language of wonderful strangeness, preaching of happiness I have not known. Mary, beautiful Mary—and yet not beautiful, but so gentle, so like a tender flower! Casca, I will not send her to Capreæ!"

"Then thou art doomed. Thou hast promised. Wouldst withhold from Cæsar his gift?"

"Alas! Say no more. See to her; let me never think of her again, nor see her again in my dreams. Speak, Casca; her tones ring in mine ears beseechingly. Speak and drown that voice."

"Latiaris, remember, for heaven's sake, remember thy position. Wouldst thou be sen-

ator? Wouldst thou live? Thou knowest not at what moment thou wilt be accused for thy former friendship to Germanicus. Thou knowest there is but one way to escape destruction. Art ready to die?"

"Faithful Casca! Thou makest of me a new man. It is true. Before I can be accused, I must accuse some other—some great Roman, yea, and some rich one. Once I am the proved friend of Sejanus, and I am safe—nay, I am senator! No one can enter the senate save through Sejanus; and no one can win the good will of Sejanus save by convicting a wealthy man of befriending Agrippina."

"Then why dost thou ever forget these things, O Latiaris?" returned Casca, reproachfully.

"I know not. When I think of Mary—I will think of her never again, mehercule! Casca, I have chosen the man to impeach—a wealthy knight."

"Whom? Whom?"

"Stay—that also hath turned mine heart to water. Casca, he thinketh me his friend!"

"So much the better."

"So much the worse! Ye gods, what is this within me that crieth out when I would tread the path that so clearly, so unmistakably, leadeth to greatness."

"Dare I speak, O Latiaris? It is cowardice!"

"What! I a coward? Thou shalt see how I

can destroy. I will tell thee of this knight anon. But what news dost thou bring me?"

"Alexis hath escaped."

"Escaped? Then let the three slaves be tortured and smothered to death!"

"They are already dead. One was killed by a friend of Alexis, the other two were killed in a charge upon a house where Alexis hid."

"A friend of Alexis? What friend hath the miserable Greek?"

"One who giveth himself out as Drusus, and looketh so like the prince that the very soldiers mistake him for the son of Agrippina."

"Ah! I have heard before of this spurious Drusus. He shall have my care. Here is a string to help bind the arms of Sejanus. Well, let Alexis go. A fly cannot harm me!"

"But who is this knight thou thinkest to accuse?" asked Casca.

"The one with whom I supped recently, Titius Sabinus. He is very bold—he did drink the death of the emperor."

"Good! But thy witnesses? For all things must be proved."

"True. Ah, if we live five years from now, we shall not be troubled to get witnesses, I think! Hear, then, my plan: Sabinus is so open in his friendship for Agrippina and her sons that a mere jolt will set him going. Now, his adopted daughter, Julia Silia—a curse upon her! She

hath ever thwarted me—but she goeth up to Fidenæ to see the combats in the new amphitheater. Phædrus will attend her. I will therefore invite Sabinus hither.”

“Will he come?”

“He will. He loveth me—miserable old man! Poor loyal friend of Germanicus—”

“Nay, call him a fool, and go on with a brave heart.”

“Good Casca! Well, then, in the hollow of the ceiling I will hide men who hope to be preferred by Sejanus to the senate, and who will stick at no villainy to become great—”

“Call it not villainy, Latiaris, but policy.”

“Yea, a good word. Upon my soul, Casca, nothing is too hideous when it beareth a proper name! I will hide here Porcius Cato, Marcus Opsius, and Petilius Rufus. Then when Sabinus hath been brought hither—for he will tire of the solitude of his home, for mark this strange thing, Casca: he loveth his wife!”

“Bah!” cried Casca. “Let him not deceive thee!”

“Nay, as Jupiter liveth, he doth. But she will be gone with Julia to Fidenæ; so I will bring Sabinus here, all softened by the separation, and I will pretend to sympathize with the fate of Germanicus, as indeed I do—”

“Hush! Now, O Latiaris, might *I* become a witness against *thee!*”

“The merry Casca would always have his jest!” cried Latinius, laughing. “Well, I shall lead him on—Sabinus will say anything—and my witnesses will overhear—and it is accomplished. Half of the property becomes mine, which I shall take care to give to Sejanus, and the other half will come to Julia Silia, and the children—curses upon them all! Thus Sejanus will love me—and I enter the senate.”

“And I, O Latiaris?” said Casca.

“Thou shalt ever be, as thou hast been, my true friend. As I rise I draw thee up; but if I fall—”

“And if thou fall,” said the freedman, quietly, “thou shalt not pull me down. So do not fall, my true friend!”

“Thou merry Casca! Such jests thou art father to, and yet thy countenance as grave as a funeral pyre!”

“It becometh not a father to be openly proud of his offspring,” said Casca. “I am content if my jests amuse thee for a time, O Latiaris.”

CHAPTER X.

JULIA FINDS EXCITEMENT.

A *carruca*, the sides richly ornamented with silver designs, was drawn up before the home of Titius Sabinus. It was the very coach which had transported Alexis and Varro from Rome to Forum Appii. In the driver's seat sat a slave, richly dressed. A company of slaves on horseback were waiting to accompany the large vehicle. Presently Flavia, the wife of Sabinus, issued from the court, accompanied by her two boys. Behind them came Julia Silia, and her guardian, Phædrus. All five entered the coach. Flavia took the front seat, and placed a boy on either hand. Phædrus and Julia were in the semi-darkness of the rear. The shadow did not obscure her rich beauty, but lent to it a softened charm. The red in her cheeks and the red of her lips was less bright in this corner, but more appealing. The burning of her eyes lost the effect of wild independence and reckless daring, and seemed to sue sweetly for sympathy, for comradeship. She was richly dressed, for all Rome was bent upon the holiday. Jewels sparkled in her hair and upon her robe. There

was thread of gold in her little red shoes. Circlets upon her arms revealed the luxurious rounded curves and the soft, satin gleam of the skin. She was enveloped in an indefinable, scarce perceptible perfume, which seemed to emanate from the voluptuous contour of her perfect form and from her very breath, as if she exhaled a delicate sweetness; it was a perfume that carried one back to one's youth, and reminded one of ambitious dreams. Ah, she was so young, this Julia Silia, and so charged with the magnetic, swift currents of youthful desires for excitement! Phædrus sat rigid and cold, like a nerveless statue.

The streets were thronged with a great multitude, bound for Fidenæ. The carruca carefully made its way out of the imperial city. Suddenly Julia gave a movement of impatience, so quick that the poet was almost startled. "Why didst thou not sit with the boys?" she demanded. "Thou talkest readily enough with them. I would surely forget that thou canst smile if I never saw thee with the children. Are thy smiles of so much worth that thou deignest not to lose one upon a simple girl?"

"Smiles are for children, and duty for those who are old," returned the poet, solemnly.

"Duty! duty! Ah, would to heaven I had an opportunity to flee from that word. Nay, if thou didst not guard me so jealously I would

some day even oppose duty and trample it underfoot, for the mad joy of proving myself greater than a word."

"Is duty, to thee, only a word?"

"Yea, and of all words the hatefulest. I care nothing for abstractions, for philosophies. What I crave with a mad thirst is life, and I am held behind the bars, with the glorious stream in plain sight—and daily I die of thirst!"

"Be content with this day, Julia. Thou art now in the midst of life, and will presently be in the amphitheater."

"But thou wilt be beside me, like a jailer, who, holding his prisoner firmly by the chain, letteth him walk in the sunshine. Every time I shall wish to laugh, I shall see thy frown; and every time I may forget my fate, thy severe face will recall realities. All the time I shall remember that thou didst not wish me to go to Fidenæ."

"Indeed, had not Caius given thee permission, never shouldst thou have gone to feed thy wild nature upon the sight of blood!" exclaimed Phædrus.

"So I have said. Every joy is begrudged me, but restraints are gladly placed about me. 'Thou canst' is spoken with a sour look; but 'Thou canst not' is proclaimed with a relish."

"The arena is not a sight for maidens," said Phædrus. "But Caius wished it, and he is before everything."

“Yea; I am nothing to thee but a parcel to be safely kept till the owner—that is, Caius Lepidus—cometh to claim me. But I cannot look upon myself as a parcel. I am a girl who liveth and breatheth, and, alas for me! who dreameth. So I am safely kept—that is thine only thought. Therefore thou makest not the least endeavor to be pleasant to me.”

“Can the jailer be pleasant to his prisoner?” returned Phædrus, bitterly. “At least I waste no time in the attempt.”

“Very true—most true; thou carest no more for me than the dust of the road. Thou thinkest no more of me than of a base-born slave. When thou art by my side, thy thoughts are far away, and when thine eyes do not behold me, I am dead to thee. Let it be so. Is there any reason why I should not hate thee?”

“No reason why thou shouldst not, Julia; yet no reason why thou shouldst.”

“Then without reason I shall hate thee, for thou deprivest me of the glory of my youth. Behold, the Roman ladies do as they list, go where they please, have wild and merry lives—”

“By all the gods, Julia, thou shalt never be as one of these!”

“Yet am not I a Roman? Why should not I be as my race? The noblest ladies of Italy do not hesitate from the most furious excesses. The daughters of princes dress as men and fight

in the arena. The best nobility spend their time in banquets and high carnivals—lives filled almost to suffocation with delights—not one dull, sluggard moment making the heart look back. Why should they think of their past when the present is crowded with feasting, plots, hate, love, ambition, music?’

“Foolish Julia Silia, little dost thou know of what thou speakest! If thou couldst see the lives of these Roman ladies, their real criminality, their abhorrent indelicacies, their unnamable deeds—nay, it is so far from thy fancy that thou canst long to be as one of them without a blush! But I tell thee, if there were not in Italy a few pure matrons such as Flavia, the gods would turn from the sickening sight forever. Yet thou wouldst be as the daughter of princes! Thou wouldst be corrupt, sensual, debased. Thou wouldst tarnish thy beauty and thy maiden sweetness for this mad whirl of immoral pleasures. Nay, thou knowest not what thou sayest! Thou knowest not for what thou longest! But of this be assured, shouldst thou ever become as one of these, my sword shall find thy heart!”

“Thou cruel Phædrus! Thou hateful freed-man! Thy sword? Nay, thy words are swords. Why dost thou wail so bitterly? I know not what thou meanest. But why should I be different from Romans? I am a Roman, and the present is the time in which I live. Thou sayest

I do not know for what I long. It is true, perhaps; but what I desire is escape, Phædrus—escape from thee and from restraint.”

“How excited thou art! Nay, let us talk of other matters. Hast thou heard of the escape of Alexis the Greek? He and a man who resembles the Prince Drusus did seize upon this very carruca as it stood hitched up near the temple. What became of the slave left to guard it—who knows? Perhaps he was cast into the Tiber. Manius Lepidus traced the carruca to Forum Appii—he was in the senate when it disappeared. Is not this architect a versatile hero?

“I care not to hear of Alexis.”

“That is passing strange. Just now thou didst long for love and music. Did not Alexis offer thee love? Why wast thou not happy *then*, O Julia?”

“Never can I forget that I was dishonored by his kiss.”

“His kiss!” exclaimed the other.

“Phædrus, let me watch the throng in peace. Thou drivest me to say mad things out of rebellion to thy tyranny.”

“But dost thou mean, Julia, that Alexis was allowed to kiss thee?”

“Allowed? Do I allow the sun to shine? How could I know his evil purpose?”

“Julia, Julia! If thy mother had lived to know of this! Thou and he alone in the gar-

den, and it was night. And he kissed thee—he, a base architect, a stranger, dared to kiss my little Julia Silia—nay, thou didst permit him, the wicked traitor, thou didst suffer his lips to meet thine—thou, with all thy beauty and perfection, didst grant this favor to a vile fugitive, to one who is not too proud to steal carriages and horses!”

It was well Flavia was being entertained by the ceaseless chatter of her boys, or she would have been startled by the low but furious tones of Julia. “It is false, all false! Thy words are as contemptible as his crime. Did I not run to thee for safety, did I not tell thee all?”

“Nay. Thou saidst he spake of love. Thou didst not speak of his kiss, unhappy Julia! Alas! Never again canst thou be to me what thou hast been.”

“It is for Caius Lepidus thou grievest.”

“As I live, not so. It is because my thought of thee is changed, since thou art changed, since thou hast granted this favor to Alexis. Thy halo is dissipated, thy nameless charm is brushed away, thou art as all Rome, merely a Roman, even as thou didst wish. So have the glory of thine excitement, of thy love and music, take joy in thy new experience. Thou wilt not miss my love and respect. No matter! They have vanished. Thou didst not care for them when they were thine.”

The voice of Julia Silia suddenly changed from the fury of an enraged tigress to the soft pleading of a child. "Thou dost not think this thing of me, Phædrus, that I am changed, that I was willing to be dishonored. I am not changed. O Phædrus, I am ever the same, reckless and heedless, but true to myself."

"How canst thou be the same? Thy very voice is changed since the kiss of the Greek is upon thy lips."

"Phædrus, thy heart is flint, thy bosom is as the Parian marble! Thou breakest my spirit by thy cruelty."

"I am not cruel. It is thou who, with thine own hand, uprootest from thy life all that is fair and fragrant. Ye gods, that ever I should think thus of thee!"

"Phædrus, dear Phædrus! Thou art always unkind, but thou hast been ever just. Answer me, did I ever speak to thee one false word?"

"Never."

"Phædrus, the insult of Alexis was unforeseen, and I could not have avoided it. When it came, I fled from him to thee. I felt polluted, undone. I was as miserable as thou couldst desire. Phædrus, I speak to thee the truth. Thou knowest I speak true. Phædrus, thou hast never doubted me, and thou darest not doubt me now. For if thou dost refuse belief when I declare mine innocence, thou wilt be more hateful

to me than Alexis. Give back to me, O Phædrus, this love and this respect which thou sayest have vanished. Give them back to me, and hold me unchanged, or take my hatred and contempt. Give me back thy love and respect, O Phædrus, for thou canst not withhold them—thou wilt not break my heart, although thine own heart hath ceased to feel joy or pain.”

“Julia, I have spoken bitter words. They were untrue words. Forgive me. Thou art the same child thou hast ever been—the same. Poor Julia!”

“Thou saidst thy respect for me was dead. Thou didst not mean that, Phædrus? Is it not living and strong? Dost thou not respect thy little girl, thy little pupil, thy little friend? I could not live without thy respect.”

“Respect thee, Julia? A thousand—yea, I do respect thee. Thou art a good child—nay, nay, thou art a child no longer.”

“But thou saidst, O Phædrus, that thy love for me has vanished. Oh, this is not true? Respect survives thy first mad suspicion. Is not thy love also alive, though perhaps for a time hidden? Give me back thy love, Phædrus, give me back the love which made happy my younger days. Love me, Phædrus, as thou didst love me then.”

“Yonder is Fidenæ,” said Phædrus, pointing. “What a throng! And what a huge amphithe-

ater, all built of wood! Julia, I fear, I fear—
thou wilt laugh at me—but I had a dream last
night.’

“Was I in thy dream, Phædrus?”

“Yea; and I thought—”

“How did I appear in thy dream, Phædrus?
Was I woman or a child? Was I beautiful? Was
I kind to thee?”

“And I thought,” said Phædrus, “that we
were sitting in yonder amphitheater, thousands
and thousands of Romans about us, and some-
thing—”

“But was I kind to thee in thy dream, Phæ-
drus?”

“Nay; thou wert just as thou hast been in
life, proud, scornful, maddening with thy re-
proaches.”

“Cruel dream! Sometimes I dream of *thee*, O
Phædrus, and thou art *not* the cold, stern, un-
feeling Phædrus of real life, but the Phædrus that
I loved many years ago.”

“As I was telling thee,” observed Phædrus,
somberly, “something dreadful happened, and
death seemed all about us.”

“But didst thou think me beautiful, Phædrus?”

“I shall tell no more of my dream,” said the
other, abruptly.

“Phædrus, we have almost quarreled this
morning. Here is my hand to show that we are
friends.”

“Let us alight,” said Phædrus. “The best places will be taken.”

Not for years had there been such a gathering in Italy. Tiberius, jealous of his people's pleasures, had forbidden games in the imperial city. More than a hundred thousand had come to Fidenæ to witness the much advertised shows. Senators and plebeians, freedmen and strangers, representatives of every class and condition, were here. The huge wooden amphitheater, built by a freedman named Atilius, stretched its elliptical form to an unheard-of length, while at a dizzy height rose the masts along the outer wall that supported the curtain of linen cloth. It was a beautiful day. The air hummed with thousands of glad voices. Eager faces, beaming with expectation which had long been denied, and rich costumes, reflecting every color, made the scene picturesque as well as grand. Hope, excitement, joy, passed like electric currents through so many hearts, thrilling the spectators as one is only thrilled by the presence of enormous throngs. An extensive scenery, made vital here and there by the moving form of a domestic animal, appeals quickly to the heart and speaks its message. But a scene crowded by countless human beings, each of the multitude throbbing with his own peculiar emotion, and seeking to express it in his individual tone and gesture, stirs strangely and powerfully the observer. Phædrus

felt a subtle sadness as he led the way toward an entrance; the clash of many laughs reminded him of hidden tears. Julia Silia was madly, wildly, one might almost say fiercely, happy. Her eyes glowed and gleamed like changing fires; the red in her cheeks had deepened till they appeared as scarlet-fever spots. "Ye gods!" thought Phædrus, taking one swift glance at her, "what a marvel of beauty!" And he turned away his head. Flavia was pale and timid—the rushing, storming, thundering streams of humanity filled her with alarm. Her little boys clung closely to her side; they also were afraid, but not forgetful that they were Romans.

Having paid the entrance fee, Phædrus led the ladies to the gallery set apart for feminine curiosity. Here he left them, and lost himself in the mass that was struggling for seats in the various wedge-shaped sets of benches. When at last he was secure, he looked back, and found he could easily see his little company. He waved his hand; little Lucius, the son of Flavia, discovered him, and laughing, drew his mother's arm and pointed. Flavia touched Julia. All stood up and waved to him. The gloomy Phædrus smiled up at the little group, and then quickly turned away, and his hand secretly glided to his eye. Was there a tear there? Below him were the seats for senators and ambassadors, and farther on, the top of the

arena walls, guarded with wooden rollers, that the wild beasts might not climb up to freedom. But this was to be no beast show. Behold, the arena was flooded with water, and on the lake rode four ships, two at either end, awaiting the signal to commence the naval battle.

The ships swarmed with gladiators, heavily armed and shielded, while at the rowers' benches slaves were chained, as in a real battle; and real indeed was this battle to the participants, though nothing was to be gained but applause—and death.

The walls of the arena, or the shores of the lake, as they may be considered, were twenty feet high. Water was still pouring into the arena from elevated pipes, and the deep bass music of the falling streams was in perfect harmony with turbulent waves of conversation that seemed to flow over the amphitheater in regular billows of sound. The two ships at the northern end of the vast pool were named the *Castor* and the *Pollux*. Those at the south end were the *Dolphin* and the *Swan*. Their names appeared upon their sides in golden letters. Moreover, they were distinguished by the gigantic and fantastic figureheads.

“As *Tiberius* liveth!” *Phædrus* heard a Roman exclaim, “look at the commander of the *Dolphin*.” *Phædrus*, finding himself addressed, looked, but saw nothing unusual. The com-

mander was slight of stature, and heavily armed with greaves, helmet, visor, lance, and shield.

“He is well protected,” said Phædrus.

“Nay, dost not know that commander?” said the Roman. “As Tiberius liveth, it is Claudia Emilia, the proud and wealthy lady of the Via Sacra! Her disguise is but thin. She hath deceived the master of the ceremonies, but she doth not care to deceive us.” Indeed, at this moment the news began to spread all over the audience. The high-born lady, finding herself known, kissed her hand to the multitude, who burst into a terrific applause.

“There is a lady after mine own heart!” cried the Roman. “She is a true woman of Rome. She dares all, tries all, and rather than be bored by a satiated life, is now ready to die in a furious hour of godlike ecstasy.”

“Is she not the wife of Latinius Latiaris?” asked Phædrus, examining the commander more attentively, while unconsciously his lip curled in scorn.

“Nay, nay, thou art far behind the times, O writer of fables! It is three weeks since she gave birth to Latiaris’s son, who was exposed. And it is at least two days since she was divorced. Since then she hath been married, I swear it, by Jupiter! By Saturn! we are a fast race; we live a score of lives in a few months, and it is well

enough, since no one knoweth when the end cometh—and we shall never live again.”

“Observe that slave at the end of the upper bank of rows,” said Phædrus. “Is he not a Jew?”

“A very Jew’s Jew. Nay, more, a runaway Jew! His name—Zia. He hath lately come into prominence, O Phædrus, because his daughter hath been sent by Lätiaris as a gift to Tiberius.”

“What!” exclaimed Phædrus, shuddering as with a sudden chill. “Is it indeed true?”

“True enough. I never saw the maid myself, but from what I hear, she will not be rejected by our national connoisseur in personal excellencies. But, mehercule, Phædrus, do not understand me to speak slightingly of the emperor. By heavens, I love him as my life! Nay, I would hold my breath and die of bursting if it would give him one breath of needed air!”

A sudden flourish of trumpets announced that the naval battle was about to begin. At the second signal the rowers, who had poised their oars, struck them into the water, and the waves boiled, seethed against the walls of the arena. The Dolphin, commanded by Claudia Emilia, was the first of the southern vessels to encounter the foe. It ran alongside the Pollux. A furious battle ensued. In the mean time the Swan

had run so hard against the side of the *Castor* that the figurehead was dismantled. The ring of iron, the shouts of the wounded rose from the arena. The audience sprang to their feet, and looked on with delighted eyes.

“Ah,” cried the companion of Phædrus, “if these games were in honor of some illustrious knight, if this battle did celebrate some funeral, all would be complete! But one cannot forget that all this is brought about by Atilius the freedman for the sake of gain only.”

“And on that account,” said Phædrus, “I fear this amphitheater is too hastily built. It doth seem to me most insufficiently pillared and supported.”

The Roman laughed. “I would I were built as secure as this building!” he exclaimed. “But do behold the boldness of *Claudia Emilia*!”

The *Dolphin* was fast proving superior to the *Pollux*. The noble lady, protected by her body-guard, directed the battle with splendid animation. Already her troops were pouring over the sides and springing upon the decks of the enemy. The ships were bound together by enormous bands of leather. It was war to the death. The commander of the enemy had been slain. The rivals were thrown into confusion. The decks were slippery with blood. The pool itself grew faintly red, and helpless warriors struggled upon the surface.

But while the Dolphin was succeeding, her consort was faring ill at the hands of the Castor. The deck of the Swan was heaped with corpses, behind which the few who survived discharged their arrows or cast their javelins. In vain they fought like savage beasts. In vain they leaped from behind their barricade of yet pulsating flesh and rushed in delirious valor upon their assailants. Their doom was written. The forces of the Castor inundated the deck, tore down the fluttering ensigns, massacred the survivors, and towed the dismantled vessel to the northern end of the lake. Here the rowers were unchained and landed, that they might be preserved for a second act.

But now the triumphant Castor turned again to battle. It found that its consort, the Pollux, was being destroyed, even more effectively than it had conquered the Swan. Claudia Emilia, flushed with triumph, had herself leaped upon the conquered Pollux. And before the Castor could come to the rescue, she had given orders for the ship to be scuttled. The wretched rowers, hearing the command, made the air hideous with wild shrieks. Claudia Emilia turned upon the wretches with an angry frown, and waved her sword, as if she would threaten; but their clamor increased.

“The dogs cannot die like men,” complained the companion of Phædrus. A great hole had

been torn in the side of the Pollux. Claudia Emilia and her marines had hardly reached their own vessel in safety, when the enemy went down, carrying the chained rowers below the surface. The water bubbled with smothered death-shrieks. The pool grew ever of a deeper crimson.

On rushed the Castor, eager to avenge the fate of her consort and flushed with her recent victory. The Dolphin turned her prow to receive the enemy. As she came near, a volley of arrows were exchanged, but for the most part they glanced harmlessly from gleaming shields of brass.

“Claudia Emilia!” shouted the vast concourse. The entire audience seemed to espouse her cause. The novelty of a high-born lady fighting for her life against an unknown gladiator stirred them into a frenzy of patriotic and chivalrous excitement. They waved their hands, their handkerchiefs, their mantles. The air quivered with the violence of the applauding storm. The screams of wounded men were drowned. One saw, as in a pantomime, the uplifted arms, the transfixing lances, the rush of blood, the falling of agonized bodies into the water, there to plunge for a time, then sink.

But Claudia Emilia, though the favorite of mankind, was not the favorite of the gods. Too clearly it became evident that she was not holding her own. Nay, she had ordered the grap-

pling-hooks to be thrown overboard, she was retreating toward the southern end of the pool, whence she had so proudly set forth. The *Castor* pursued relentlessly. The audience grew hushed with uneasy fear. The warriors of the retreating vessel fell before a rain of gleaming, hissing blades. The forces shrank to a pitiful remnant. But what now does Claudia Emilia? What new movement is this among her thinned ranks? By the gods, she hath set free her slaves! She hath put weapons in their hands, and ordered them to the front. They fight, these slaves, with terrible cruelty, remembering the fate of the drowned wretches whose death-tortures had been hidden by a watery grave.

The *Castor* has come alongside; again the grappling-irons fasten them together as one structure. The forces sway back and forth, a mass of infuriated, desperate humanity. Claudia Emilia falls, and a groan rises to the semi-transparent roof. Nay, she is up again, supported by a slave—by Zia himself! The high-born lady is sustained by a Jew! The blood stains her armor, her face grows ghastly white. But the orders issue from her pain-distorted mouth—orders which her trumpeters repeat in metallic notes, orders which may yet save the *Dolphin*. For the liberated slaves have swarmed upon the enemy's ship. The battle has swept from the *Dolphin* to the *Castor*. And still Zia upholds in

his arms the dying lady, the true Roman woman, whose life has been spent in unspeakable crimes and almost incredible excesses—whose career is a long history of murder, lust, and cruelty—yet who knows how to die. Such have the Romans of this time of Tiberius become—empresses, princesses, wives and daughters of knights, all, with a few exceptions, as that of the unpopular Agrippina. Unfortunate Agrippina, pure and chaste in the midst of national dissoluteness!

Claudia Emilia will not live to see her victory. Her proud face sinks forward. Zia places her prostrate upon the deck, and seizing the sword of the dead commander, springs to the combat.

Suddenly a low groan is heard all over the vast amphitheater, but it is not a groan of human voices. What then? Men start and turn to listen; women half rise from their benches in the encircling gallery. A second warning is not given. Instantly the crash as of thunder shakes the air. Terrific reports answer each other from opposite sides of the arena. The walls of the gigantic structure quiver and bend in, or bulge outward, as if they were formed of cardboard. Great sections of seats, with their living occupants, are cast forth into space, to fall upon other sections. Dreadful shrieks of women and horrid screams of desperate men mingle with the booming of falling timbers and the shock of precipitated bodies.

Phædrus, with an ashen face, exclaimed: "It is my dream!" He looked up toward the benches where he had left Julia Silia. But all was changed, and changing. Everything was falling, crashing to chaos. He felt himself thrown down and hurled forward. There was a mad rush toward entrances which had been blocked up by heaps of benches and torn bodies. The amphitheater of Fidenæ was nothing but a confused, heaving mass of stone, wood, and human bodies. The freedman Atilius had built too hastily upon a foundation not secure, as if he would typify the Roman empire itself.

And while this convulsive shock of horrible death was spreading over the enormous assembly, the naval battle continued in the arena. Men still fought with brothers in captivity, gladiators who held an enemy at bay drove home the poised weapon, as if death needed their agency. But a sudden rent in the arena wall let the water rush out into the ruins of the amphitheater, pouring over helpless ones who not long since had felt no pity for drowning slaves. The conflicting ships grounded and fell upon their sides. Great stone pillars fell, crushing them to splinters.

For many years that terrible day dwelt in the minds of men. "The theater being crowded so as to form a dense mass," wrote Tacitus, in his annals of these dark days, "and being then rent

asunder, some portions tumbling inward, others falling toward the outward parts, a countless number of human beings were either borne headlong to the ground or buried beneath the ruins. Fifty thousand souls were crushed or maimed by this sad disaster."

CHAPTER XI.

AMID THE RUINS.

Casca the freedman stood in the regal apartment of Latinus Latiaris with the air of one who expects guests. "It is true," he whispered to himself. "He is my friend, hath been for many years, did set me free, and now loads me with favors. He loveth me. Wherefore? What is this love that causeth him to prefer me before his own wife, his own child? Ah, I have built it up in his breast with infinite care; by the toil of innumerable small acts, glances, words, I have created this love in his heart. Give me a soul as barren of emotion as the desert is of moisture, and I can sow and nurture, sow and nurture, till the soil yields me fruit. And yet all the while this granite soul of mine— What is this love which I can produce yet cannot feel? Do I love Latiaris? Perhaps it is not given some men to love. If he fails in this desperate enterprise, will I cling to his declining body? Will I set with his sun? Nay, Latiaris, do not fail! He who fails, let him fail alone! But he who succeeds must drag up with him the companions of his misfortunes."

The three conspirators, all ex-prætors, now entered. They were Porcius Cato, Petilius Rufus, and Marcus Opsius.

“Are we too late?” Rufus inquired.

“Nay, Latiaris hath not yet brought the prey,” said Casca, in a low voice. “But be secret, make no sound! Who can trust slaves?”

“True, thou Casca. But where shall we hide?”

“What think ye of the door?” said Casca.

“Not *I*, behind the door,” muttered Cato. “What! shall we risk the danger of being discovered? What ignominy should we not feel to be found like base plebeians, listening so vilely!”

“Nay,” whispered Rufus, “dost thou call this listening vile? Remember, it is for the love of our godlike emperor.”

“It is not vile to listen,” returned Cato, “but it is vile to be discovered.”

“Good prætors,” whispered Casca, laughing noiselessly, “I did mention the door to see if ye were shrewd. Behold, there is a better place for you. There is a hollow place between ceiling and second floor, where ye may lie so comfortably ye are like to go to sleep from very ease. Come, follow Casca.” They left the room on tiptoe, holding their togas noiselessly about them, like draped specters.

Nearly an hour elapsed before two men entered the extensive chamber. One was old, yet bent rather from sorrows than from years.

This was Titius Sabinus, the husband of Flavia. He was preceded by Latinius Latiaris.

“Sit here, dear friend,” said Latiaris. “Rest well thine aged form before we take our prandium. I did say to myself, ‘Behold,’ I said, ‘behold, Flavia and her boys and Julia Silia will be going to the shows at Fidenæ. But the grave and austere Sabinus hath no heart for merriment. He will be left alone,’ I said, ‘all alone in that magnificent palace of his; he will be lonely. I will invite him hither and cheer him up.’”

“Thou art a dear friend, Latiaris, and I love thee well. Thou thinkest of Sabinus, and it is sweet to the old to be remembered. For when our old companions and those who used to love us are all passed away, if we cannot steal our way into some youthful heart, desolate are we! Yet this seems too great an honor to hope for—that we should be remembered by distant ones who have their own lives to live, and the faces of others ever before them, the voices of others ever in their ears. Shall the eyes that once delighted to behold me, see me in fancy, after a thousand other glowing eyes have burned into their consciousness? Nay, Latiaris, it is the equal fate of the aged and of the absent to be forgotten.”

“Nay, Sabinus, judge mankind by thyself. Hast thou forgotten the dead?”

“Alas!” sighed Sabinus.

“I could name one,” cried Latiaris, “who is dear to thee, though now no more; I say not in what manner he met his death—”

“He was poisoned!” cried Sabinus, his eyes sparkling. “But are we alone?”

“As much alone as is the man who dares to remember Germanicus,” returned Latiaris. “But thou hast not forgotten his greatness and his virtue. Shall I tell thee why I love thee, Sabinus? It is because thou hast been a friend to that family when in its glory, and thou hast not deserted it in affliction. All others have shrunk away from the devoted wife, the suspected princes. But I have seen thee walking with Agrippina; I have seen thee embrace Drusus.”

“But thou also art bold, Latiaris, or thou wouldst shun me as doth Manius Lepidus. Even my old friend Lepidus will no more of me! And why? Because I am faithful to Germanicus. But thou art a true and bold friend. Come hither, and let me lay mine arms about thee.”

“Nay, nay, Sabinus, thou art weary; this will make thee faint from thine emotions.”

“Come to me, Latiaris, and suffer me to embrace one true man of Rome, a last survivor of ancient Roman virtue.”

“Nay, nay, Sabinus; I am not worthy of these words. Look not so upon me—ye gods! Nay,

Sabinus, I blush for shame. Come, then, speak to me—look not thus!”

“Why should I hide my love for thee, Latiaris, and my admiration for thine unusual fidelity and bravery? Do not hide thy face from the loving glance of a friend. Dost thou deny that thou art a faithful friend to Agrippina?”

“No one can doubt *thy* loyalty to her, Sabinus. Yet is she not in danger?”

“Ah, Latiaris, in terrible danger, since she stands between Sejanus and his ambition. Sejanus will stand at no enormity to acquire greatness. What hath he done? His past deeds even an old man may not mention without blushes. Yet his crimes momentarily become more fiendish. Should the deeds of Sejanus ever be recorded in history, a new race will wonder that he was suffered of the gods, since men were craven. And now he layeth innumerable snares about Agrippina. At one time a message comes to her, advising her to clasp the statue of Augustus openly in the streets, and cry to the people for protection. Thus would Sejanus seek her ruin. At another time spies, pretending to be her friends, seek to extort from her one word against Tiberius Cæsar. But she is as wise as she is good—O wonderful woman! pure in the midst of wonderful temptations!”

“But is all this from Sejanus alone, Sabinus? Doth not the emperor himself devise her ruin?”

“Thou knowest. Unhappy Agrippina! Her husband was first poisoned by the order of Tiberius—”

“What! Was it even so?”

“Nay, Latiaris, thou knowest this as well as I. Why dost speak in a tone of astonishment?”

“Proceed, good Sabinus.”

“First, Tiberius slew Germanicus, though his adopted son, for no other reason than that Germanicus was more virtuous. For the same reason he now hateth Agrippina. Her doom is sealed. A little time, and all is over. Ah, if these tears could move a tyrant’s heart, a murderer’s heart—ah! the debauched and wicked old man, hiding there in the Isle of Capreæ with nigh seventy foul years upon his wrinkled shoulders! But he cannot hide from one enemy. Justice, mercy, revenge, fear, remorse, may be banished from his palaces, but he cannot bar out death. Soon it must come. And it reconciles me to the short tenure of human life when I remember that such a monster must be cut off in the course of nature!”

“Hush!” said Latiaris. “Footsteps approach.”

“I am betrayed!” exclaimed Sabinus, starting up wildly.

“Nay, old friend, think not thus of me. See, it is but my slave.”

“Latiaris, forgive me that suspicion. How

could I wrong thee thus! O Latiaris, I did not mean those words; thou *couldst* not betray me. Behold, I sue thy forgiveness, an old man upon his knees—”

“Sabinus, thou wilt drive me mad! Arise! I am not angry with thee. Of course thou didst not mean those idle words.”

“But to say them, to speak thus to thee, so faithful, so loving—ah! it breaks my heart to think I drove this dagger into thy heart. For did I not see thee start and turn as pale as death? Dear Latiaris, thou didst not think to receive such a wound from thy brother, thy father!”

“By heavens, Sabinus, no more! Forget it—nay, let us hear what the slave hath to say.”

The slave was indeed greatly excited, and his rolling eyes struck Latiaris with alarm. “Speak, dog; thou hast permission.”

“A message to Sabinus,” faltered the slave. “The great amphitheater at Fidenæ hath fallen down, burying a vast host beneath its ruins.”

Sabinus gave a loud scream of agony.

“All Rome who did not attend the show, now pours thither to learn who hath escaped,” pursued the slave. “Phædrus the poet sendeth thee this message. He is unharmed; but he hath not been able to find the bodies of thy family.”

Sabinus rushed as one distracted from the home of Latiaris. “Call Casca,” said Latiaris to the slave. When Casca arrived, the master

had recovered from the strong excitement which had distorted his features during the last moments of the visit of Sabinus. He sent for the ex-prætors.

“Ye heard!” said Latiaris, in a low voice.

“That did we!” cried Rufus. “By Mercury, here were enough words to accuse a dozen knights! Would they could be scattered among some of mine enemies! It did seem a pity for this Titius Sabinus to waste so many denunciations, after he had already condemned himself!”

“It is complete,” said Latiaris, impatiently. “Come, I will write the accusation, and dispatch it to Capreæ by my beloved and trusty Casca. Are ye ready to sign?”

“We are,” said Cato; “but shalt thou write down that we were hid like mice in the ceiling? It seemeth to me that will make strange reading! We shall be mocked.”

“Let men mock,” returned Rufus, scornfully. “Sejanus will praise; that is enough. Besides, how else can we convict Sabinus?”

“Of course, it must be recorded,” said Latiaris. “But if any one of you refuse this honor, ye need not sign.”

“Nay, we will sign—all three! And Casca shall sign.”

“I heard nothing,” said Casca, innocently. “I know not what it is all about!”

The senators laughed. “Here is a future

informer, by the gods!" they exclaimed. Casca smiled virtuously, and held his peace. The conspirators signed the accusation and departed. Latiaris and Casca were left alone.

"Latiaris," said the freedman, "I have a new thought."

"I will give thee this jewel for it," cried Latiaris, playfully, tearing a gem from his girdle.

"Nay," said Casca, drawing back, "it is worth more than that!"

"Then take this for my very love of thee. O Casca, I have spent terrible moments with that old man!"

"Why terrible? There was nothing to fear."

"Brave Casca! *thou* never hast a qualm! I reveal this to thee, beloved friend—sometimes I think I am a coward; for I do fear when there is not even a shadow to disturb me. If I did not have thee to make me strong again, I should not be Latinus Latiaris! Thou dost build up my resolution, even as I build up thy fortune. But this new thought?"

"Thou hast heard the news of the overthrown amphitheater? Many lives must be lost therein."

"Poor wretches!" said Latiaris. "We must receive some of the mangled ones in our home, and have them cared for. Bid the servants prepare bedrooms and be in readiness."

"But I thought nothing of this, Latiaris."

"Let us hear thy thought, then."

“Among the dead may there not be the sons of Sabinus? Or his wife? Or his adopted daughter?”

“Perhaps—poor unfortunates!”

“Latiaris, forgive an old friend if he say thou art dull to-day.”

“Well, well, perhaps the visit of Sabinus hath indeed made heavy my heart and mind.”

“Dost thou not see, Latiaris, that if these are dead, half of the fortune of Sabinus will go to the emperor, and thou wilt not have to give up thy half as a peace-offering to Sejanus?”

“Ah! What! Why, thou shrewd Casca!”

“Yea. If all are dead. But suppose Julia Silia escape—she only. Then there is but one life in the way. Or suppose Flavia alone escape; then wilt thou let this life be a hindrance to thy reward?”

“But what shall I do, Casca? What meanest?”

“Do not send this accusation against Sabinus till thou know if any of his family have escaped. If one hath, put her name in the accusation, and both shall be destroyed. The guilt of Sabinus is great enough to bear down his wife or his adopted daughter. If the sons escape—but mark these words, Latiaris, they have not escaped; nay, they shall not escape!”

While Casca was thus plotting the ruin of Sabinus, that aged knight was dashing toward Fidenæ, attended by his slaves. The streets

were crowded with illustrious Romans whom the horror of the catastrophe had drawn from their gloomy palaces. Every variety of Roman vehicle — carrus, carruca, pilentum, rheda — blockaded the road from Rome. The exclamations of anticipated despair from those whose loved ones had departed in the early morning to witness the naval combat mingled with the groans of mangled spectators who were being brought back from the chaotic ruin. As Sabinus urged his horse nearer Fidenæ, the returning stream of humanity became more ghastly with bloody forms. The old man scanned the livid faces as they were borne past, fearing to see the countenance of a loved one. Many, indeed, he knew, but his heart leaped as each time he failed to find one of his family among the wounded or dead.

The five miles were traversed slowly, on account of this impeding throng. At last he came to the outskirts of the multitude that surrounded the prostrate amphitheater. Pressing his way among wailing women and distracted men, he advanced on foot toward the hideous ruins, followed by his slaves. When his farther advance was checked by huge stone pillars now fallen across great wooden bulwarks, he commanded his men to assist the workmen in removing the débris. He himself assisted, as indeed did all men, of high or low condition, who retained

the faculties or the endurance to wield spade, shovel, or ax.

In the midst of a maddening turmoil, Sabinus worked steadily upon the barricade, trying not to think, lest his mind should give way to despair. Yet he could not shut out of his consciousness the sudden shriek as some form was drawn forth from the ruins to be recognized by a parent or child. Perhaps with this shriek would be mingled the tortured groans of the rescued one, crushed beyond hope of recovery. The bleeding forms were clasped in agonized arms, the white faces were covered with kisses. Those who had no relatives among the doomed, manifested a sympathy and tender compassion that recalled the departed virtues of Rome. Who would have supposed that in these cruel breasts lingered the flowers of disinterested charity? Yet eyes which a few hours before had shone with wild delight at the monstrous pleasures of the arena, now moistened with tears over the pains of fellow-citizens. Aristocratic knights who, under usual circumstances, would have disdained to set their feet upon the common earth, gladly, even eagerly, put their conveyances at the disposal of the humblest unfortunates. "The doors of the great were thrown open," says Tacitus; "medicines and physicians were furnished to all, and Rome, though under an aspect

of sorrow, presented an image of the public spirit of the ancient Romans."

As Sabinus leaned upon his spade, panting from his unwonted exertions, a hand suddenly fell upon his arm. Turning, he found beside him a Roman, covered with blood and dust, his forehead streaming with perspiration, his arms bared to the shoulders. "Oh, Phædrus!" cried the old man, throwing his arms about him, "where are they?"

"Come with me," said the poet, briefly. He drew Sabinus to another part of the confused mass of wood, stone, and human bodies.

"Are they alive?" Sabinus faltered.

Phædrus pointed to the ruins. "I have not reached them yet. They are somewhere within. Let thy slaves work in this place." The poet fell to work with herculean might, his face ever dark and set in rigid lines. "Dost thou think they may yet live?" Sabinus almost pleaded, as if he were beseeching for hope.

"Thou hearest those cries, those moans within," said Phædrus, briefly.

The moments dragged by. A physician sought to draw Phædrus from his labor. "Thou art sorely wounded," he said. "Fitter art thou for medicines than for work."

Phædrus waved him aside impatiently. "Alas, Phædrus!" exclaimed Sabinus, "I gave no

thought to thee. Is this blood from thine own wounds? Rest thee here; thou art but one among so many."

"That is true, Sabinus," said the other, with a strange, sweet smile; "I am but one among so many." He continued to work.

They reached the body of a woman, so disfigured it was unrecognizable. "Ah, horror!" cried Sabinus, shivering. "Oh, Phædrus, who knoweth but this is Julia Silia, for the hair is the same, the robe is the same, the shoes are alike."

"It is another's hand," said Phædrus.

"Art sure? It would be sad indeed to unearth one, yet not know we had found such a one. Are not the hands of maidens much alike?"

"Fear not, Sabinus. I know the hand of Julia Silia. Hold thine arm, slave; that is a human limb. Move gently. Nay, it is not one we seek. But listen, Sabinus; methinks I know that voice!"

"What meanest thou? Are there not ten thousand voices, shrieking, groaning, calling, shouting?"

"Ah, but there is one among so many—there is only one that I hear! Listen! It is Julia Silia! I am coming, Julia, I am coming! Keep a brave heart! keep a brave heart!"

"Poor Phædrus, thine hopes deceive thee "

"Think it not, O Sabinus. Wield thine arms, slaves! Let fire leap through thy blood and move thee to a Titan's energy! She is calling."

“I do indeed hear a familiar tone, Phædrus. Dost think it indeed she?”

“I am coming, Julia!” shouted Phædrus.

“Phædrus!” came in faint tones from the interior.

Phædrus dropped his implement, and for a moment covered his stern face with his hands.

“Nay, Phædrus, what is it? Art overcome?”

The poet again seized the ax and sent it crashing amidst the chaos. His eyes were wet with tears.

“Clearly now it comes, that voice of mine adopted child,” said Sabinus, anxiously. “But oh, Phædrus, why do I not hear the shouts of Flavia, or of my little ones?”

“Forward!” shouted Phædrus. They had suddenly burst through a wall, and found themselves at the entrance of a hollow space, dark and tortuous. They ran forward till a prostrate pillar checked them. But Phædrus was able to crawl under this barrier and drag himself along an aisle formed by banks of benches. They had opened up a space of considerable extent, in which perhaps fifty people had been confined. These fled to safety, or dragged themselves, according to their prostration or wounds. Among the last to issue forth was Julia Silia, who had been stunned by her fall, but was otherwise uninjured.

She ran into the trembling arms of Sabinus,

with a white face, over which the tears were coursing. Phædrus, leaning upon his ax, stood watching her as her breast heaved with tumultuous passion.

“Where are the others?” asked Sabinus, huskily.

“I know not, dear father. I have sought for them in vain. When the crash came, I sprang from the bench; they remained in the gallery, and were carried in a different direction. But let us be brave with hope. Since I am safe, why may not they, also, be waiting for thee?”

The gloomy Phædrus spoke, still looking upon that beautiful form, now stained with grime and blood. “Caius Lepidus will be glad that I saved his bride for him!”

“Ah,” said Sabinus, quickly, “thou hast forgotten Phædrus, daughter; and it is to him that thou owest thy freedom.”

Julia Silia darted from the embrace of Sabinus, and threw her arms about the poet. She drew him to her with a grasp of almost resistless power, she sought to bend down his face, that she might press a grateful kiss upon his lips. But if Phædrus had been turned suddenly to stone, he could not have stood more erect or more immovable. The perfume of her breath was in his face, and her wild heart was beating upon his bosom, yet no emotion was visible in this strange man, save in the eyes alone, which seemed to grow luminous in the gloom.

Suddenly Phædrus caught her arms and unwound them from about him. He pushed her body from him so quickly that she, all unprepared, stumbled and fell at his feet. An instant she lay there, then rose, with a burning flame in both her cheeks.

“Phædrus,” said Sabinus, “heed her not; is she not a child? Thou art unkind!”

“We have our duty to do,” said Phædrus, taking up his ax. “Forward, worthy men; forward into the ruins!”

“Hold!” cried a new voice. “Is this Sabinus?” The speaker was Casca, the freedman of Latinus Latiaris. “Alas, old man, I bring thee evil news indeed!”

“Is it of Flavia?”

“It is. She lieth without. I found her and her children.”

“Do they live?”

“Alas!” cried Casca.

“What meanest thou, Casca? Has not one escaped?”

“How can I speak the words!” said Casca.

“Nay, answer,” cried Phædrus, fiercely. “Is Flavia dead?”

“She is—crushed by a great spar, crushed until her form is a dreadful thing to see; only the face is preserved.” Sabinus sank upon the ground, and Julia Silia lifted his head upon her lap. He was unconscious.

“The boys?” said Phædrus, in a hollow voice.
“Are both dead?”

“Alas!” said Casca.

“Speak, speak!” cried Phædrus, “or I shall—
nay, heed me not. But the truth, the truth!”

“Both are dead. One was killed by the over-
throw of the amphitheater. The other—it is a
strange thing, O Phædrus!—the other showeth
no mark of violence, save for this, that there is a
dagger through his heart.”

“A dagger?”

“A dagger, O Phædrus.”

“Then he was slain, Casca!”

“Yea, it would so appear.”

“Dear father,” whispered Julia Silia; “poor
bereaved Sabinus! Nay, sleep on; for the world
will look very changed when thou seest it again!”

“It is true,” said Phædrus, in a slow voice.
“Sabinus is devoted to death. The hand that
struck down the son is reaching for the father’s
throat. Pray to the gods, Julia, that he may
never waken from this insensibility!”

“What dost thou say?” asked Casca, in appar-
ent surprise. “Hath this venerable friend of
Germanicus one enemy in the world?”

Sabinus shuddered, and opened his eyes.
“Who spake of Germanicus?” he whispered.
“Whoso speaketh that name hath the talisman to
my heart!”

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE EMPEROR'S POWER.

Rome was a constant prey to alarms and disasters. Scarcely had the tragedy of Fidenæ brought desolation and death to many illustrious families before a fire broke out in the royal city, and in a brief time swept from earth all the imposing buildings and beautiful gardens that had decorated Mount Cælius. At the same time disastrous news came from the legions in Germany. The war, on account of which Caius Lepidus had been summoned from his home and from the side of his betrothed, showed no signs of abating. The Frisians were developing unexpected strength. Having hanged upon gibbets the soldiers sent to extort tribute, they had driven the Roman general, Olennius, to his castle, where they kept him in a state of siege. To the terror of fire and insecure amphitheaters, and to rumors of unsuccessful war, were added the incessant intrigues of informers, seeking to gain the good will of Sejanus, and the executions of noble knights whose crimes were imaginary and whose fates did not depend upon trials. In this state of affairs, Tiberius was besought by many peti-

tions to leave his retreat in Capreæ and return to his capital, where, at least, one might fall at his feet and beg for life. But the aged Cæsar had resolved to escape forever from the cares of state, and to devote the few years that might remain to pleasures as horrible as they were secret.

He had not yet, however, forbidden Italy to come to him. It was permitted his terrified and servile subjects to assemble upon the shore of the mainland, and there wait until it pleased him to be rowed from Capreæ. Sometimes he would land, and suffer the most noble to kiss his hand; but oftener he contented himself with sitting in the boat and listening to petitions with averted face. The sight of a multitude filled him with disquiet, and every day he shrank more from the open sky. The unspeakable crimes in which he drew his daily breath, the hideous debaucheries that made night on his chosen island a black frame to lurid pictures—these had painted themselves upon his face. He seemed to be aware of his own repulsiveness, and to feel an instinct for hiding, as the most venomous snake loves best the malarious recesses of the swamp. To this consciousness of his loathsome personality was added the memory of former years, when he was a brave and heroic leader of brave Romans, when he walked proudly in the palace of Augustus, and was not unloved.

But Sejanus had never been other than he now

was, save as he had been circumscribed by poverty. As he rose higher in power, he had no pure childhood nor glorious youth to trample under foot. Therefore he felt no shame, and the possession of a life-purpose—that of becoming emperor when he should have destroyed Agrippina and her children—saved him from lassitude and from an enfeebled mind. It was he who gradually took the place of Tiberius in granting interviews to the throngs on the mainland.

When Alexis the Greek, accompanied by the centurion with his soldiers, reached this mainland—that is, Surrentum—he beheld a strange sight. The promontory thrust its tongue-shaped corner into the Mediterranean Sea, forming on one side half of the semicircle that is known to-day as the Bay of Naples. Neapolis adorned the center of the crescent, and Vesuvius, clad in luxurious vegetation, smiled treacherously down upon distant Pompeii. The Isle of Capræ, stretching its length parallel to Neapolis, was about three miles from the extremity of the promontory of Surrentum. The huge masses of rock that formed each end of this natural harbor-protection were effective shields against winter storms. Alexis gazed with curiosity, and perhaps with awe, at this formidable retreat of Tiberius. What would be his fate upon that island—what adventures would he encounter? Soon, however, he withdrew his eyes from the

island to consider the throng in which he found himself. The shores were lined with illustrious knights, waiting for the condescension of Sejanus. A boat lay anchored in a small bay of Capreæ, and toward this the eyes of most were directed. The Romans were disposed in groups or singly upon the velvety grass; some lying with weary faces, which indicated that they had lain there many hours. Some were partaking of refreshments which their slaves had procured from the neighboring town. There was very little conversation, since those who had not come for the sake of accusing others were afraid of being accused. Since it had become a law that he who spoke words derogatory to the majesty of the emperor was liable to capital punishment, silence had become golden in Italy.

As the boat weighed anchor and came toward them, all rose, believing Sejanus, if not the emperor, might be on board. At this moment a hand fell upon the arm of Alexis. The Greek turned, and found himself face to face with a Roman augur. He wore the robe of his priestly order, showing its purple stripe; his head was covered with a cap which was conical in shape, rising to a sharp apex. In his hand was the lituus, a staff which ended in concentric circles. His eyes were half closed, and his step suggested mystery. His beard was long and white, reaching to his girdle. His naked feet were set in

sandals. Upon his right breast was a badge indicating that he was one of the private augurs of the emperor. The soldiers who had accompanied Alexis made respectful obeisance before this diviner. The augur cast his staff upon the ground, and said, in a shrill voice:

“By this token thou art Alexis, the architect!”

“I am he,” said the Greek.

The augur lifted his staff, and with it divided the heavens into four imaginary quarters. Then he gazed upward with a rapt expression until a bird flew into sight. “Ha!” cried the augur. “Seest yonder bird? It flieth upon my left—good luck to thine enterprise! Now it circleth—thou shalt reach Capreæ. It turneth back—thou shalt escape from some danger. It wheeleth aloft—thou hast lately been with a prince. It darteth toward Rome—thou hast stood face to face with Drusus. It cometh to earth—thou hast been in the swamps. It fadeth from sight—thou seest Varro before thee!”

“Varro!” exclaimed Alexis.

“Yea, fool! Not so loud! Ha! Doth my divination cause thee to be astonished? By the flight of birds and the sacred chickens, by the four quarters of heaven, I say, I will tell thee more wonderful things than these—yet shall we two pass through sweet adventures!”

“I will not company with thee,” said Alexis, imitating the other's low tones.

“What! Was not I thy friend?”

“I like thee well, but not thy adventures. Let me leave thee in peace. Thou art like to bring me into displeasing dangers.”

“Unpleasing? Nay, be content; I will pull thee out by the hair each time thou thinkest to drown! But what cometh hither?”

Alexis, who had turned from Varro with the determination never to speak to him again, perceived four men approaching on foot, leading a cart in which sat a veiled woman, her arms bound by cords. The cart stopped, and she was commanded to descend. She obeyed, and although she was wrapped about by heavy robes, the Greek thought her form familiar. One of the men was left to guard the mules, while the others conducted the woman forward by means of a rope which was secured to her girdle.

When they had come near, the woman, looking through her veil, discovered Alexis, and uttered a passionate cry, “Save me!”

At the well-known tones of Mary, daughter of Zia, Alexis started forward, with a white face, his eyes burning with resentment against the captors. Her custodians looked keenly about to see who might be a friend to the maiden in this throng. Varro, realizing the danger of the Greek, quickly stepped in front of his acquaintance.

“Woman,” he cried, “why callest thou upon me? Why art thou bound as a common felon?”

“Nay, I called not upon thee,” cried Mary, “but—”

“Peace, woman!” cried her guards. “Peace; it were better for thee!”

“Unloose this maiden!” cried Alexis, pushing Varro aside. “Unloose her, or this sword will make one man the less in Italy!”

“By Bacchus!” whispered Varro to Alexis, “if thou beginnest at this pace, thy race is soon run! Nay, slaves, heed not the barbarian—he is a Greek. But tell me wherefore thou hast imprisoned this woman.”

“She is a Jewess, therefore outside the law. Our master sendeth her as a gift to Cæsar.”

Mary moaned. “Alexis,” she exclaimed, “deliver me or plunge that sword into mine own bosom.”

Alexis started forward with drawn sword, not for the purpose of slaying Mary, but with the mad thought that he could put the slaves to rout. Varro seized his arm. “Impious man!” cried the augur. “What! wouldst thou rob a god of his sacrifice? Is not Cæsar a god, or at least the step-son of a god? Hath not this maiden been promised to him? Wouldst thou deprive thine emperor of one moment of pleasure. By our new Egyptian goddess—what is her name? These numerous celestials do crowd themselves into my brain till I stand agape, seeking to fasten upon their titles—”

“Restrain me not!” stormed Alexis, white with fury. “Release mine arm, or though thou hast been my friend, I will make an end of thine adventures!”

“I have her name!” cried Varro, still clutching the Greek. “It is Isis. As I was saying: By our new Egyptian goddess, Isis! if thou seekest to snatch this morsel from our royal beast of prey—meaning no slight, nay, intending a compliment—”

“Long live Tiberius Cæsar!” rose in a mighty chorus from the seashore, as the boat from Capreæ drew near the mainland. “Long live the noble Sejanus!”

“Alexis, Alexis!” cried Mary; “dost thou hear that cry? It comes as a summons to execution. Oh, as thou didst promise to stead me in the time of danger—”

“I will save thee!” exclaimed Alexis, seeking to draw his sword upon Varro. The augur, however, who had been awaiting the pass, sprang behind the Greek, and clasping him firmly about the waist, both escaped the blow and held the Greek prisoner.

“Fool!” Varro whispered in his ear. “I will save this maiden, but here is no time to do it, nor place.” Suddenly he struck with his lituus, sending the sword flying to the ground. Varro pounced upon it triumphantly. In the mean time the slaves had dragged Mary, screaming, toward

the wharf. The throng, too accustomed to such scenes to be moved either to compassion or curiosity, jostled her, and hid her from the eyes of the enraged Alexis. Indeed, Mary was not the only maiden destined to be dragged on board the fateful boat.

“Thou hast made me a villain in the eyes of my friend,” cried Alexis, “and a shame to myself. But either I will rescue the Jewess or die. Give me back my sword, or I will rush upon its point.”

“Hearken, friend impetuosity. What good is all this froth and foam? Is this the *scena* of a theater, and am I the orchestra, tuning to thy passions? I swear by the deified Augustus—nay, hear me, for I speak treason—let none other hear. Why thinkest thou I am here as an augur, and as the emperor’s augur at that? I did learn of this poor Jewess, and I came expressly to save her, and thereby enwrap and enmesh myself in a delectable adventure. But would I rescue her here, on the mainland? Perish the thought! What! Set upon the ruffians by the way, dispatch them, and lead off Mary as to a banquet? Not so! There must be the lights of a palace for our background; a rush through the prætorian guard for a sweet savor; a flight in an open boat at midnight for a stimulating after-memory. Do not despair; she shall never fall to the clutches of this royal beast of prey. Come, let us upon

the boat. Be content. I will save her, though I have to cut her throat to do it."

"Is it true, false friend—was it possible, cruel Varro, to have saved her on the way hither?"

"Yea, half a dozen times. What are four slaves to me? I could have had her from their clutches as we passed by Virgil's farm, or as we went through that most notable tunnel, the grotto of Pausilipus. Didst pass through that wonderful excavation, O architect? A mile through the living rock, and thirty feet high, with the tomb of Virgil above the entrance—"

"What make I of Virgil at this time? Leave me to my despair."

Alexis strode toward the boat. Neither the emperor, nor his minister, Sejanus, had come from the island; but Macro, the prætorian who was second in rank in the kingdom, was upon the shore, receiving the kisses of the favored, or coldly repulsing those doomed to ruin. The knight who was not suffered to kiss his hand crept away, hoping to be forgotten in his retreat, or perhaps meditating self-destruction if his riches forbade the hope of oblivion. The Roman who was civilly received sent messages to Sejanus, and retired with a beaming face, but secretly suffering doubts and fears, not sure but this friendly reception was a cloak to a vindictive purpose. Many had various reasons to allege as an excuse for going upon the boat; but they

were repulsed, either with a smile or with a cold shake of the head. But the women, who had been gathered from different parts of the empire for the harem of the despot, were received on board, unattended by their escorts. Some had come voluntarily, having no moral scruples, but too dazzling dreams of splendor and luxury, to be overcome. Others, wives or daughters of the most distinguished of Rome, dissembled their anguish in the fear of their lives. Still others, as Mary, made no pretense to go willingly, but struggled at their bonds.

No difficulty was made in admitting Varro, for the emperor, as superstitious as he was vile, encouraged the presence of all kinds of diviners, and his private augurs were privileged characters.

Varro briefly explained that Alexis was the architect who had been sent for by Tiberius, and they went aboard together. But Alexis at once turned from the Roman, and sought to discover where the captives had been placed. In this he was unsuccessful. The three miles were soon traversed, and when he stepped upon the rocky soil of Capreæ he discovered neither Varro nor Mary. Macro ordered him to enter a closely covered carriage, and in this he was driven up a steep road, unable to catch one glimpse of the surrounding scenery. In truth his progress was so much like that of one taken prisoner that he was greatly ill at ease. The wheels slipped upon

ridges and jolted heavily upon stones, while the clatter of horses' hoofs told him that he was attended by mounted guards. After a weary journey, the changed position of the carriage indicated that level ground had been reached. The sounds of a villa were about him. Sometimes the vehicle halted, apparently to make way for passers-by. At last it stopped before one of the twelve palaces of Tiberius. The door was opened, and Alexis was ordered to alight.

As the Greek followed Macro through long and gloomy corridors—for the light of day was jealously excluded—he observed an air of newness which showed the recent erection of the pile. Aided by the mellow glow of shaded lamps, he made his way through several richly ornamented apartments, until at last Macro commanded him to wait. The prætorian then passed into an inner chamber, leaving some of his men with the Greek. The Romans stood like marble statues about Alexis, the dim light increasing the sinister appearance of their armor. Alexis turned to one with a sunny smile, and said: "This is my first visit to Capreæ." The Roman, looking stolidly before him, made no answer.

Macro returned. "Come," he said. Alexis prepared to follow. Macro whispered, "Hast ever seen the emperor?"

"Never."

"I take thee to him." They passed into the

next room, where the bodyguard of the emperor were drawn up in line before a door plated with gold. Evidently Macro and his companion were expected, for they made way in silence for them. The golden door swung open. Alexis entered the reception-room of Tiberius Cæsar.

The emperor was about seventy years old. Nature had bestowed upon him a form of commanding height, which would have distinguished him in the van of armies or upon the rostrum of the forum. Formed to look above the heads of ordinary men, and endowed with that sagacity which perceives beyond the present act its consequences, enriched, moreover, with all needed opportunities to develop his powers and grant them execution, what more could nature and fortune do?

They could do nothing more. Having exhausted their resources in bestowing upon him their treasures, they had long since folded their arms, leaving to him the writing of the sequel. Alexis saw before him the greatest man then living in the world, if greatness is measured by power; a man from whom no life was secure, to whom no virtue was sacred, to whom no crime was despicable. No wonder the people regarded their emperor as a god, when his frown was the death-warrant to the most distant man in his empire, and when the legions of his empire were the terror of the world.

But as if the consciousness of his moral degradation had not yet found his soul entirely callous to remorse, or at least to shame, that regal height of form was bent by stooping shoulders, as if he found himself unworthy to look at man from his natural elevation. His body was exceedingly emaciated, so much so that the yellow skin tightly drawn over the bones showed their hard outlines. The spectral-like appearance caused by this tall and meager form was intensified by the head, entirely bald. His nose was large, and formed in the convex curve characteristic of his race. The face was clean-shaven, showing a protruding chin, and an upper lip extending in a marked degree beyond the lower. His cheeks were covered with repulsive ulcers, which numerous plasters could not conceal. The luxurious richness of his apparel rather accented than disguised the horror of his appearance, loathsome in its splendor and imperial in its meanness.

Tiberius looked at Alexis with half-closed eyes, and received his salutations in silence. Alexis waited, ill at ease, for the other to speak.

“Who art thou?” asked Tiberius.

“Alexis the architect. Sejanus—”

“Why art thou here?”

“Sejanus—”

“Wast thou not told to abide with Manius Lepidus until Sejanus should send for thee?”

“I was. But my life was threatened. I have flown to thee as a bird to safety.”

“Who threatened thy life?”

“Latinus Latiaris.”

“Ah,” said Tiberius, thoughtfully. “Latiaris is my friend. Thou hast done well to come to me. I love my people, and I would ever save them from dangers. Ah, if I could throw mine arms about all Rome and press her to my bosom, it would make me happy!”

“They love thee as much as thou lovest them,” said Alexis.

“Sayest thou so?” cried the emperor, eagerly. “Do they indeed love me? How do they speak of me? Do they wish me to return to Rome?”

“Indeed, one hears that upon every hand. ‘Would to heaven Cæsar would deign to return to his capital!’ they say.”

“Ah! but is it from love they desire my return?”

“Why else, O sacred emperor!”

“Nay, call me not sacred. I am but a mortal as thou. When the senate would make me a god, did I not forbid it? For I am no god—I cannot create nor destroy. But thou sayest it is for love they wish me in Rome. Dost know how the informers are ever revealing conspiracies against me?”

“In truth, O Cæsar, some men would conspire

against the sun, if they thought there was any chance of plucking out the eye of heaven."

"Pitiful fools!" exclaimed Tiberius. "What! Would they not then be buried in darkness?"

"True. But it is the nature of some to desire a doubtful change to a monotonous safety."

"That is a characteristic of thine own race, Alexis. Perchance thou speakest thine own mind. Thou art a Greek. Is not change dear to thee?"

"Not when I am happy."

"Thou art happy, then?"

"Wherefore not, when the books of the great are my servants? I cannot be poor, for as Phædrus hath said, 'He who is devoted to learning always hath his riches within himself.'"

"So thou quotest the poets? Ah, Alexis, there was a time when I, also, loved art and letters. Why have all books grown dull to me?"

"Is it not, O Cæsar, because thou readest life? We of the common world can see only that page which fortune spreads before us. But the great can choose for themselves."

"Can choose—yea, alas! And because we can choose, fearful at times and terrible. . . . Thou didst speak of the poet Phædrus. Liveth he yet in the home of Manius Lepidus? Doth he still write fables?"

"He writeth as if it were the only pleasure."

"He hath already written too much," said

Tiberius, with a sudden frown. "I have heard some base men do point to me as the application of more than one of his poor pieces. But no more of that. Macro, sometime, I charge thee, remind me of that Phædrus, for he hath slipped my mind. Now, Alexis, as to why I sent for thee: There is underneath this palace a subterranean passage which I desire thee to adorn. All materials will be furnished thee, together with the most skilled workmen. Thou shalt be as an emperor to these workmen, and as thou buildest, at the same time stead thyself. For Sallust hath said, 'Every one is an architect of his own fortunes.' Much more true should this be of one who is by profession an architect. Macro, conduct this Greek to his apartment—but stay. See who it is that would enter."

Macro announced, "These be the new women."

"Ha! bring them forward."

A train of ten women, among them Mary, daughter of Zia, passed into the room, a few smiling and saluting, the others white and terror-stricken. They were accompanied by a guard. Tiberius passed his eyes indolently over them. "Who art thou?" he asked one.

"I am the wife of Lucullus Titus Novem."

"Comest thou willingly?"

"Yes, my lord."

Tiberius turned to another with the air of one slightly dissatisfied. "And thou?"

"The daughter of Cotta Messalinus, the senator."

"Didst not regret to leave thy father?"

"Not I, mine emperor."

"Tush!" said Tiberius to Macro, in an undertone; "where there is no resistance there is no victory."

"Then behold this Jewess," whispered the prætorian. Tiberius fastened his eyes upon the white, pure face of Mary.

"Who art thou, damsel?"

"Mercy, O Cæsar!" cried Mary, falling at his feet. The veins of Alexis tingled as with fire, and his breath came quick and hard as he saw her prostrate before that lank, sinister form.

"Mercy? Nay, thou shalt have our love, mehercule! Thy name?"

"It is Mary, daughter of Zia," she gasped.

"And who was so cruel as to tear thee from that Zia and send thee hither against thy will?"

"O Cæsar, it was Latinius Latiaris."

"What! Now, Latiaris, I owe thee much! Mary, arise."

The maiden, not understanding his deceitful tones, rose, trembling with sudden hope. As she faced him, he darted a look into her eyes that seemed to deprive her of speech and motion. Alexis, who, with characteristic impulsiveness, had forgotten all need for discretion, and had started forward as if to match his impotent

strength against the irresistible power of the sovereign, also saw that look. He had heard of the terrible look of Tiberius, but he had regarded it as an idle fable, such as cluster about all wicked and notorious men. Now he understood the reality which had been described in bated voices, and the memory of which was destined to be handed down in history. That swift glance struck terror and inertness into the beholder. All the villainy of the emperor's past debaucheries and all the hideous desires of his bestial nature became visible in the green, snaky flash of the eyes. It was a visible presentation of secret, unfathomable wickedness, such as it has entered the minds of few to fully conceive. The pure and innocent—nay, the most hardened—were appalled, and, as it were, turned to stone, at the sight of that foul light. It was such a look as a serpent darts upon its prey, and it showed this man so akin to serpents, so unlike a man, that it confused, fascinated, unarmed the most virtuous and the most heroic.

“Take them away,” said Tiberius, suddenly turning to Macro. “But have a special care of this Mary, daughter of Zia. Why should we not have a splendid wedding to-morrow?” Mary, white as death, followed the other women as in a trance.

“Come,” said Macro to Alexis. The Greek left the apartment sick at heart.

“Wilt rest in thy bedchamber, or go at once to work?” asked the prætorian captain.

“For the love of the gods, let me to work, O Macro. My mind is dazed—perhaps with long inactivity!”

“Nay, young Greek; it is from the fear of Tiberius. Then come this way.” They followed the women. “A word of warning to thee,” said the prætorian, in a low voice. “I know not why I have this liking for thee—”

“Hast thou indeed?” cried Alexis, eagerly.

“Yea, indeed. But listen attentively. The secret passage which thou art to decorate leadeth from the rooms of the women to a certain hidden grotto. Therefore, thou wilt begin thy work at the entrance, which is in the harem; therefore, thou wilt see a good deal of these women; therefore, thou wilt see somewhat of this Mary.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Alexis, quickly.

“Yea. But mark this: Since she is especially mentioned by Cæsar, she will be especially guarded. If thou so much as exchangest a word with her, it will be reported.”

“But why should I exchange a word?” returned the Greek, assuming indifference.

“Why, thou shallow Greek? Tell me why thou wouldst have flown to her aid, had not the look of Tiberius changed thee from lover to stone!”

“Nay, Macro, I love her not.”

“By the gods?”

“Yea, by them, every one!”

“I am glad. Yet thou art her friend?”

“That is true.”

“Then forget it. If she appeal to thee, heed her not. Woe to thee, Greek, if thou so much as stretchest toward her thy little finger!”

“Are the women prisoners in these rooms, Macro?”

“Prisoners is a hard word, Alexis. Nay, they be guests behind iron bars.”

“Are there not entrances and exits?”

“Two: one where the guard lies day and night.”

“And the other is the subterranean passage which I am to decorate?”

“Yea. Come, we are about to enter. I hope thou understandest?”

“I understand,” said Alexis, quietly.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARY DESPAIRS TOO SOON.

Alexis found himself in a vast room, which was unadorned by windows. Certain orifices near the ceiling afforded the only means of ventilation. The walls were richly adorned with pictures and bas-reliefs, which had for their themes the most immoral and degrading of the current myths. In this time, it is true, few believed in the national religion, but its fables were repeated by poet and artist as a means of pleasing the sensitive ear, or the sensual eye. The priestly ceremonies had never been more scrupulously observed or more keenly ridiculed. Seventy-five years before Cicero had declared that the prophets of the gods—they who read future events in the palpitating entrails of animals—could not meet each other upon the street without bursting into laughter. But as no nation can exist without some worship, even though it be but the worship of an abstract Reason, the Romans clung tenaciously to the hollow forms which in their hearts they despised. Moreover, they could justify many hideous crimes by ascribing them to the devotion felt for

a certain deity. Venus was the tutelary deity of Tiberius Cæsar, and these paintings upon the walls of the women's quarters were all in her honor. Thus the emperor, who scrupled at nothing except that of giving a true name to his deeds, professed himself a faithful servant of the celestials.

In this apartment many benches, divans, and couches of curious design were scattered. The bedrooms opened into this general reception-room, and they had no outlet. There were about one hundred women in the chamber, some of them more than content with their surroundings, but the greater part silent, pale, and terror-stricken. The eunuchs, heavily armed, patrolled the length of the room, with a keen lookout for any attempt at revolt. But, indeed, among the many different expressions which Alexis read upon the faces of the "guests" he saw no hope of deliverance.

Macro conducted the Greek toward the center of the room, where there was an iron network in the form of a square. It was perhaps fifteen feet high, the bars curiously interwoven, making a light but strong barrier. On one side of the square was a narrow gate. Alexis wondered what the purpose of this cage-like structure might be, which was open to the view of all, and yet contained no prisoner. Above all, if it were meant to imprison some one more violent than

the rest, why was there no roof to the inclosure? One might easily climb up the interwoven bars and descend down the other side. Before the gate a guard was stationed, who, at Macro's bidding, produced a key and unfastened the lock. Alexis was now near enough to observe that the fence inclosed a drop-door, the outlines of which were clearly marked in the shining floor. So this was the entrance to the subterranean passage.

Macro entered the cell and pressed upon a spring, which caused the door in the floor to fall upon its hinges, revealing a flight of wooden stairs. The prætorian began to descend. Alexis entered the cage, and gave a last look about him, hoping to discover Mary. This time he was successful. Her arms had been unbound. She reclined upon a couch not far away, holding upon her lap the head of a sobbing girl. Looking up, she encountered the eyes of the Greek. Her face rippled with sudden feeling, as waves respond to sudden light. Realizing the danger of betraying recognition, she made no outcry, though her form suddenly became tense with excitement. Alexis sought to express hope by his quick but intense glance. He forced his face to smile as if already he had devised her rescue. Then he turned quickly away, lest he should be observed.

Had he given her encouragement? Alas! what could he do? As he descended the steps, he

carried with him the memory of her face, so different from any he had ever seen elsewhere. The other women had been as white and terrified as she; anguish had also been written upon their brows and on their quivering lips. But Mary's countenance had added to this a subtle something which he could not understand. Had she been surpassingly beautiful, redolent of sweet perfumes, and flushed with generous health and passion, he could have accounted for his fascination. But she possessed none of these voluptuous charms. Her form, slight and delicate, was far from the ideal of either Greek or Roman. The eyes possessed neither the languishing, veiled fires of an Oriental, nor the burning intensity of a Julia Silia. They were clear and direct, looking straight into one's soul, and showing in their depths a nature as clear as an unclouded sky flooded with crystal light.

The underground passage was lighted by lamps at distant intervals. The sides and floor were of smooth stone, the ceiling of polished wood. Workmen were busy along its length at various crafts, some smoothing blocks of marble, others building uprights. "Thou wilt change the wooden staircase to one of marble," said Macro, as they progressed. "Thou wilt adorn this hall with all thy skill, that the eyes of the emperor may be delighted as he goeth through its length to his harem. Thou wilt touch these stone

walls and make them blossom into regal splendors, glittering mirrors of polished metal, sculptured work, fit for a Cæsar to gaze upon. Thou wilt devise curious niches and turns, crowded surprises and provocatives of mirth and admiration. Thou art free to exercise thy talents without rules or restraints. Only one condition thou must observe; thou must succeed in making thy work acceptable to Tiberius Cæsar."

"A difficult condition, I fear," said Alexis. "Wilt thou not tell me some general principles that delight him?"

"Nay, his likings follow no principles. He knoweth not himself what will please him till he be pleased. But be not discouraged. For he who doth his best need not be uneasy about pleasing others. The best that is in the most ignorant is good enough to please the wise."

"We go a great distance," observed Alexis, who, like most young men, was not really uneasy about succeeding.

"Yea, this passage runneth quite to the sea. We do even now draw near the coast. But didst mark the inclosure about the door that gave entrance hither?"

"I saw what mine eyes fell upon," said Alexis.

"It hath been just erected," said Macro. "There is as yet no roof to the network. See to it. Yea, that first of all. Let there be some beautiful dome set upon the iron vines—some-

thing pleasing, thou understandest. Indeed, Tiberius liveth but to be pleased."

"In this case," said Alexis, his heart bounding, "I must work in the reception-room of the harem."

"True enough. Will beautiful eyes make thy hands nervous from embarrassment?"

"Nay, but how may I fashion a roof to the square unless I have the key to the gate?"

"Here is the key, Alexis; keep it." There was a pause; then Macro said, in a low voice, "Young Greek, beware!"

"And of what, O prætorian guard?"

"Nay, I say no more, only I repeat, beware! Enough. It is from my strange liking of thee, or I would not even go so far. And why I like thee I cannot say. Thou art merely an architect, no mighty warrior. Nay, thou art not even a Roman!"

"That would, to thee, O Macro, be no reason at all," returned Alexis, quietly.

Macro started slightly, and said in quicker tones: "Why not to me? Thy meaning?"

"Nay, my meaning lay upon the surface," returned the Greek. "If thou dig for it, thou art like to bury it in its own ruins."

"Thou art a strange young man, Alexis!"

"I am glad I have thy love," said the Greek, suddenly clasping the astonished hand of Macro; "for I do love thee dearly, as some day I may

more clearly explain. But what curious moaning is this

“It is the sirens’ song. Thou knowest they did dwell off the coast of Surrentum. And since they have died, their song sings on of itself.”

“It seemeth to me,” said Alexis, “that this sirens’ song may be heard wherever there is a seacoast.”

“I know not, Alexis. I would swear to no god nor divinity, save Tiberius.”

They had reached the end of the tunnel. It opened upon one of the strange grottoes that may be seen at the present day under the giant cliffs of Capreæ. A flight of stone steps led down to a landing that was some distance above the surface of the water. Other steps descended from this platform to a boat that was fastened by a long rope, to allow it to rise and sink with the tide. The natural chamber was perhaps thirty feet high, the stone ceiling rising in the shape of a cone. The walls afforded no footing save where the landing-place had been built. A light of wonderful tints of blue and green seemed to emanate from the great depths of the water, painting resplendent hues upon the rough but glorified walls.

“What a very small boat!” Alexis exclaimed. “But how surpassingly gorgeous in its furnishings!”

“It is the emperor’s,” said Macro. “No one

hath ever sat in that craft but he and Sejanus, who roweth for him. Observe with what a long rope of silk it is fastened to this block. Although there is, as thou knowest, little or no tide in the Tyrrhenian Sea, yet in such grottoes as this the low and narrow openings suck in the water, and get a great mouthful, as it were."

"When, O Macro, is high tide to-day?"

"It will be about midnight."

Alexis made a new inquiry. "When the tide rises there is then no escape from this chamber of stone, with its ocean floor?"

"None, till the waters subside. It would doubtless be growing toward day before that boat could issue into the open, unless it departed before the rising tide."

"Let us return," said Alexis; "I would to work."

They bent their steps toward the harem. Macro called together all the workmen, and ordered them to follow the instructions of the celebrated Grecian architect. Then they reappeared in the iron cage that stood in the center of the women's general apartment, and Alexis himself unlocked the gate. Macro assembled the guards about him. "Ye will see that this Grecian architect hath all he desireth," he said; "ye will obey him as if he were Cæsar. Only two things he shall not do, look ye to it! He shall not leave this room, except to descend into

the passage. If he would go to his private apartment, I must be sent for to conduct him. Again, he must have no converse with any of these women."

"As to the first," spoke up Alexis, "I shall not desire to go to mine apartment to-night. I must wander all night in the passage, studying its possibilities and planning its adornment. Let food be brought me in the evening, and suffer that no one disturb me."

"It shall be so," said Macro. "But I thank the gods I am no genius such as thou; for I have no stomach to support such genius! I would rather sleep a solid sleep at night, dead to the world, than pace back and forth upon weary legs, considering my greatness."

"As to my holding converse with these women," said Alexis, virtuously, "are they not for Tiberius, to do him honor? But let writing materials be brought me, that I may specify, and give written orders to the masons and carpenters."

Alexis seated himself upon one of the divans, received the writing materials, and buried his fingers in his locks. With the trained instincts of an architect he already saw, rising before him in beautiful outlines, his accomplished work. As he drew plan after plan, rejecting and altering, his face glowed with enthusiastic delight. But his excitement was not all that of an artist. He

was in the midst of the women; he was near Mary. He pretended not to see the Jewess, but all the while he was conscious of her sitting upon the couch, holding the hand of the young girl. Between them the armed guards passed in patrolling the room. When Alexis lifted his head, at least one of these eunuchs was observing him. Assuming an interest in his work and an indifference to his surroundings which might almost have deceived the daughter of Zia, he drew, looked up, wrote, then raised again his head. Thus he alternated till the moment came when he was unobserved. In that instant he signified to Mary that what he had written upon a narrow slip of parchment was intended for her. How could he get it to her? Ah, there was a difficulty worthy of all his skill!

Alexis arose and walked to the side of the square inclosure closest to Mary. He called the guards, and began to give them orders in tones so rapid and in terms so complicated that they were confused. When they did not understand, he pretended to become angry. He handed one parchment to a guard, telling him to carry that at once to the master-carpenter. Another was sent to the master-mason. Let the iron bars intended for the roof of this cage be brought to him. And he must have purple and crimson dyes, and all other colors that could be obtained; and ladders; and, indeed, everything he could

think of, for which he could possibly have any use. He needed assistants at once, and he applied to them the Greek terms used in Athens. He was surrounded by anxious guards, eager not to offend this Cæsar of an architect, yet at the same time guarding him. Alexis backed from them, making angry gestures. His hands were full of papers. Some of them slipped from his grasp and fell upon the floor.

“Ah, my beautiful plans!” cried Alexis. “They will be spoiled with dust, they will be blotted. And all because I am given such dull guards—men whose heads are a labyrinth of ignorance, having no end to the coil!” They made haste to rescue his manuscripts from his stamping feet. Alexis put his clenched fist behind his back; then it opened, and from it Mary took the slip of parchment. She read it in the confusion, wisely foreseeing that she would have no better opportunity.

It ran thus: “Be near the inclosure when the lights are turned down. When I say, ‘Out with the last,’ run to the gate.” That was all. Mary slipped it into her bosom, wondering at the strange message. It was improbable that the lamps of this room were ever turned down. And how could Alexis hope to be obeyed if he gave the guards such an order? Here, however, was a hope, the only hope that had presented itself, and Mary seized upon it as if it were the last

breath of life. She dared not let her mind dwell upon the chance—the chance, alas! so probable—of the Greek's failure. He would save her; she must believe it. The evening wore dismally away. The girl, her companion in misery, with whom otherwise she was unacquainted, rose at last impatiently, and wandered about the room, till she encountered some women gay of demeanor. The child was attracted by their careless indifference. They sought to reconcile her with her fate. The girl listened. Mary, however, did not leave the couch. All her attention, which she successfully disguised, was bestowed upon Alexis.

Since delivering the note the Greek had shown no consciousness of her existence. Not once, even in the most casual manner, did he glance in her direction. But it was impossible that he could have forgotten her, when, in passing that note, he had risked his own life, perhaps hers as well. And yet she longed intensely for one assuring glance. And though her reason told her he did not give her other assurances lest they might be detected, yet her heart accused him. Day passed away, and her spirits had sunk with unutterable horror. She could no longer keep her mind from her probable fate. She could no longer feed upon the hope which the parchment had offered. The memory of the emperor's look, when forked tongues of venom-

ous reptiles seemed to dart from his eyes and pierce her bosom, drove all from her mind but this thought: she, by her own hand, must prevent her doom. But how? And when the way seemed clear, with horror at the thought, she whispered, "No, let me wait a little longer!" Then she would look toward Alexis; she saw not what she sought.

All this while Alexis had been intensely busy. This very activity, this engrossed attention, did much to discourage Mary. He appeared to have but one thought—that of quickly finishing the work. Evidently a furnace was under blast in the subterranean passage, for workmen ran up the steps with iron bars heated to whiteness, to be hammered into fantastic shapes. The air rang with the reverberation of blows. As by magic the roof of the fenced inclosure rose, dome-shaped and beautiful. An airy effect had been produced, which made the spheroid assume the thin, unsubstantial appearance of a giant eggshell. It was painted in complementary colors, such as charmed even the emotionless guards of the apartment. Their swart faces were not able to conceal their astonishment and admiration at the glittering effect. But Alexis, a true master of men, was able to keep his mind upon many different points at once. Often he vanished through the drop-door, to be gone for long journeys to remote parts of the hallway.

The stone walls were assuming the gracious smile that art can give to the sternest front of nature.

Huge marble blocks had been piled at the foot of the stairway, to replace the wooden steps. Massive iron rings were driven into the ceiling of the passage on each side of the drop-door. Heavy iron bars were stacked against the inner side of the cage.

Food was brought to Alexis in a basket. He disappeared with it in the tunnel, and after some time reappeared, apparently as fresh as ever. Night came on, and the small army of workmen were marched in single file from the apartment. Solitary now was the long tunnel; and Alexis was alone in its recesses. Many of the women had retired to their cell-like bedchambers, but others, as Mary, expressed the resolution to pass the night upon the couches. The thought of sleep was never farther from the mind of Mary. Was not this the opportunity for which Alexis had waited? Why did he hide below in the earth? It must be he had given up hope, and could not face her terror. Perhaps that was why he had long ago ceased to glance in her direction.

Suddenly Mary sprang to her feet with a scream. One of the prætorian guards had entered the apartment, and had marched directly to her. She anticipated no good news from such a source.

“Art thou Mary, daughter of Zia?” asked the warrior.

Speechless from terror, she could only stare upon him as upon a specter.

“Thine emperor hath sent thee a message,” continued the other, his eyes dropping. “To-morrow he will wed with thee, and to-night he will dream of thee.”

Mary sank back upon the seat as if she had received a reprieve from death. “Wilt send him one little word?” said the man.

She did not answer. The soldier departed. Mary looked up with searching eyes. Alexis was still in the tunnel. Mary drew her heavy veil over her face and walked to the iron inclosure, as though to admire its beauty. The odor of the fresh paint made her faint. Her hands trembled as she lifted her veil. The guards paid her no heed, knowing it was impossible for her to open the gate. She stooped, on dropping her veil, and picked it up, and with it something which had lain upon the floor. She returned quietly to her bench. Not long after, a guard in passing gave a sudden exclamation. The veil was stained with blood.

“What hast thou done?” he asked, roughly.

Mary held up her hand. “See, my finger is wounded,” she said, showing where the blood ran through the broken skin. “It struck against an iron point.”

“And why hast thou rubbed thy finger over thy veil?” he grumbled. “Thou hadst better go to thy cubiculum.”

“Speak not thus to the lady,” interposed the chief of eunuchs. “Knowest thou not she is the most favored of women? Some love the very smell of blood. If it be her taste to bedaub her veil with blood, let her veil be bedaubed with blood; it is her own!”

The other quickly withdrew. “Lady,” said the chief of eunuchs, “remember me, I pray, when all power is thine.” He bowed low and left her.

It was midnight, and the third watch had come to relieve the guard; still Alexis did not appear. Mary had now entirely abandoned the hope of his coming. As though in a restless mood, she began to pace the apartment, never, however, departing far from the iron square network. Once she stood with her back to the guard, and raising her veil, leaned toward the cage. What had she done? Her form shook convulsively. She dropped the blood-stained veil and returned to her couch. Here she sat with clasped hands, motionless save for her breathing. Those women who had not retired to their bedchambers were asleep, some rigidly erect, others drooping in a position half-reclining. All the guards were seated in a distant corner, conversing in sleepy, husky voices. At last this

conversation died away. One of them rose and began to walk slowly back and forth.

Then the drop-door in the center of the cage fell down upon its hinges. Mary started violently, then sought to compose herself. After all, had he been true to his purpose? After all, had her deed been useless? The head of Alexis appeared in the black space. Evidently the lamps in the tunnel had all been extinguished. The Greek came quickly up the steps, carrying under his arm a long box. Placing this upon the floor, he lifted the iron bars that had been leaning against the wall and carried them below. He reappeared. The soldier who was pacing the floor drew near and watched him silently. The other guards lifted their heads and stared toward the inclosure.

Alexis flashed a sunny smile upon the Roman. "We do not sleep, thou and I," he said, cheerily. "Thou knowest who I am?"

"I have been told all," said the guard, gazing stolidly at the architect, as if Alexis had presented his smile as a curiosity to be critically inspected.

"If any harm should befall me," observed the young man, kneeling beside the box, "I swear to thee that many a goodly plan and project would perish with me. All this night I have paced that subterranean passage in the dark—not one lamp ablaze, for the mind cannot concentrate itself

when the eyes are out on picket duty—and I have been thinking, or rather I have been trying to think. It did seem that my thoughts had all conspired to take a holiday, for away they went to Athens and Rome, and not a one of them would dwell here in Capreæ. Dost thou understand me?"

"Not I," said the guard, stolidly.

"Thou art right. Thou hast thy duty, which is not to understand, but to watch and obey. This is what occupied my mind: how to so adorn the interior of this fretted dome that the heart of Cæsar would leap with joy at the contemplation. At last I did bring home all my truant thoughts, and harnessed them to that one idea. With such a nimble team, that idea hath not stood still. Bring me a lamp, O faithful guard."

The soldier departed, and Alexis, who had opened his box, drew forth brushes and various colored paints. Descending into the passage, he drew up a ladder. Upon this he mounted till he was in a position to paint the ceiling of the cage. At his bidding, the lamp was placed upon the floor, just outside the gate; he had not unlocked the gate. Not once had he so much as glanced in Mary's direction. The guard stood beside the lamp, looking upward as Alexis worked.

"Colors, like thoughts, grow dim and confused in the night-time," observed the Greek, who appeared to be in an excellent humor, which an

acute observer might have credited to a great excitement. "However, a dash here and there will fix my idea in immovable shades upon this iron, and in the morning I can develop it—in the morning, ah, yes! In the morning! Now, faithful guard, tell me, is this green or blue?"

"It is green," said the man.

"Nay, I think it is not as green as thou. In truth, I cannot tell. There is such a blinding glare of lamps in the apartment. Now behold—what color is this?"

"Why, it seemeth no color at all, but as if thy brush were dipped into water."

"I thank Jupiter, O eunuch, that I am no picture, and thou my critic. Nay, this is a luminous fire, which in the absence of light doth glow in its own virtue, but in daylight or lamplight it is invisible. I pray thee, have the lamps turned down."

The guard called to his companions, "Turn down the lamps!" The soldiers rose sleepily, and separated to obey the command. Mary arose, and drawing near the cage, looked up at Alexis.

"Now, royal guard," said Alexis, "seest the visible invisible?"

"It is still as water," said the other.

"Why, so it is, even to me. I cannot see where I have spread its magic tints. I am hindered in this work mightily. For a brief space those lamps must be blown out."

“Master, I dare not.”

“Then call Macro. What!” cried Alexis, in a sudden fury. “Am I to be hampered by the fears of a eunuch? Did not Macro order you to obey me? But if thou hesitatest, bring the prætorian here. Only, it will be the worse for thee to rouse him from his slumber, and for nothing!”

“Nay, master; I will obey, indeed.”

“Do so at once. Some men are born to obey; but if they obey faithfully, do they not act their part as well as he who commands wisely? Leave one lamp burning, however; let us not have total darkness.”

As the lamps were extinguished one by one, Alexis continued to paint industriously. At last the vast chamber was lighted only by the lamp that sat beside the gate.

“Take that on the other side,” Alexis ordered, pointing to the side of the inclosure opposite the gate, “and then look up, and stare with all thine eyes, and see if thou dost not begin to discern the glitter of this invisible; for I am so close to mine own painting I see nothing but the pores. It is as if, O faithful guard, I did put mine hand close to mine eye to see it, and did but behold veins and hairs; whereas, thou at thy distance dost espy a beautiful member, fashioned into five fingers. Perceivest?”

“I see nothing.”

“Nor I. Truly one lamp is as much a hin-

drance as a noonday sun when darkness is desirable! But wait!"

Alexis came down the ladder, and unlocked the iron gate and started through the opening. "But no," he said, suddenly, leaving the gate half-open, as if he had changed his mind. "But no; I will—ah, guard! why, thou seest not that magic color? I can see it beginning to paint itself in the ceiling."

"I see nothing," repeated the other.

"In truth it is but as the twilight of a color," observed Alexis, staring upward. "Turn down that remaining lamp. Now it grows brighter. Lower still. It is a success! It is a success! Cæsar will load me with riches. How it glows and burns!"

"I cannot observe it," said the guard.

"Then thou art blinded by thy lamp. Quick, but for a moment—there is but a moment and all is lost. It will not come again—neither time nor eternity will bring thee another chance. Quick, but for a moment. The other lamps are put to sleep; *out with the last!*"

Mary ran through the open gate as complete darkness settled upon the apartment. "Down the stairs!" cried Alexis, locking the gate and withdrawing the key.

"Down the stairs?" repeated the guard, thinking himself addressed. "Wherefore? But what footsteps are these? Help, ho! Strike a light,

comrades! What has happened? What dost thou do, master?"

Mary had climbed, slipped, stumbled down the stairs into the intense darkness of the tunnel. Alexis, coming close behind her, pushed up the drop-gate and fastened it by slipping the long iron bars into the massive rings which he had that afternoon driven at each side of the threshold. Thus he left a strong barricade behind him. Those who pursued must first demolish the drop-door with axes, then remove the bars.

"Where art thou?" Alexis asked in an agitated voice.

"Here," said Mary.

He felt his way to her and caught her hand. "Flee, flee!" he cried. "I will lead thee; I know the passage by heart." They sped swiftly along the gloomy passage, not once encountering an obstacle. Alexis had thoroughly learned the way; he had studied every projecting beam and rock during those dreary hours in which Mary had surrendered herself to despair.

"Wait," he said at last, as he released her hand. "Do not move."

"What sound is this?" she faltered.

"It is the ocean. How thy breath faileth! But soon thou shalt rest. Now into the boat. How thou tremblest, poor one! Doth the rushing of the tide fill thee with terror? Indeed, it

maketh mine own heart shrink. Steady—care not for me!” He lifted her in his arms and placed her upon one of the two seats of the emperor’s boat. Then he lit a torch, and set it where its light might be concealed as much as possible. With swift strokes of the oars he sent the boat toward the outer opening of the grotto. “Bow thyself in the boat,” he said; “there is barely room for the boat to issue hence, for the tide has not ebbed.”

They came to the opening, and the prow of the boat grated against the rock. The boat stopped. Alexis rose to a sitting posture, for they had bent together, waiting the passage. An exclamation of dismay escaped him.

“What is it?” asked Mary, faintly. “May I rise?”

“Alas, we are too soon!” cried Alexis. “The water is not yet low enough to suffer us to escape.” He extinguished the torch. “At least let us not be discovered from without.”

“What can we do?” she asked, raising her head in the intense darkness which now enveloped them.

“Only wait—alas!”

“Let us do so with brave hearts,” said Mary; “for is not more courage needed to wait than to act?”

“An oceanful of courage will not do as much for us as this bow,” said Alexis, taking up a

weapon from the bottom of the boat. "Perhaps for a time I can hold them at bay. A little more and the boat can pass under the rock. But a little more is not granted us; for listen—they are coming!"

Shouts were to be heard from the subterranean passage. The drop-door had been destroyed. Presently the flickering lights from hastily carried torches shone across the water. Alexis had fitted an arrow to the bow, and he awaited the attack, every nerve tense. The guard at last appeared upon the landing. "There he is!" cried one. "And with him the maiden!" exclaimed a second. "If she escape, our lives are as breezes that have passed!"

"By Jupiter!" said one, "we must have at the architect—he who did paint the visible invisible. See, the tide holdeth them our prey. How now, master; strain thine eyes and see if thou canst discern 'Escape' painted upon the curtain of thy future!" So saying this soldier poised his javelin and sent it flying across the water.

At the same moment Alexis caught Mary and drew her to the bottom of the boat. "Lie here!" he said, in a voice of fluttering excitement; he could not steady his tones, therefore he said no more. But the javelin, which had struck into the figurehead of the boat, gave him an idea. He sprang up and began to hew at the projection with a sword. It was the top

of this dolphin-shaped figurehead which grated against the wall and held them prisoners. His purpose was instantly discerned, and a rain of arrows and javelins whirled about his head. But the trembling torchlights prevented a sure aim. Alexis made rapid progress at his work of destruction. Some of the soldiers sprang into the water, having cast aside their heavy armor. They began to swim toward the boat. At the same moment an arrow, aimed by the experienced hand of the guard whom Alexis had outwitted, buried itself in the Greek's right arm. He gave a quick cry of pain.

Mary sprang to her feet at the cry, and saw what had happened. "Down!" cried Alexis.

"Ah, you are wounded, my friend. See what I will do!" And she stood between him and the enemy.

"Thou shalt not die for me," exclaimed Alexis, passionately, seeking to push her down in the boat. She threw her arms about his waist, and held herself in the position of a shield.

"They dare not kill me," she said, hurriedly. "Behold, they cease to cast their weapons. Hurry, and thou canst save us both!"

"Though one arm is useless," said Alexis, "I am as strong as a god with the arms of my love about me. Let me have but one more blow—it is done! We are free."

As the boat started through the natural door,

three soldiers, who had been swimming desperately, seized upon the side. The delicate craft sank upon its side, almost on a level with the water. A quick blow of the oar caused one to drop back with a roar of pain. The second was not so quickly disposed of, and the boat was out in the open sea before his mad grasp was torn away. In the mean time, the third had succeeded in getting his arms over the edge, and after several wild struggles, during which Alexis was contending with his companion, he succeeded in rolling into the bottom of the boat. He lay there, panting desperately. The night was intensely dark.

“Now I am ready for thee,” cried Alexis, after disposing of the second assailant. He was panting as vehemently as his enemy. Reaching down, he stripped the Roman of the sword which was fastened in his girdle. “Now, dog, over the side of the boat; it is thine only chance for life.”

“That is no chance,” said the Roman, “for I cannot swim back so far; my strength is spent.”

“Wilt leap into the water, or receive this sword in thy neck?”

“Kill me as thou wilt, traitor!”

“Swim for thy life!” cried Alexis, angrily.

“I cannot. I am at thy mercy.”

“What mercy wouldst thou have shown me?”

“None.”

“If thou wert in my place, what wouldst thou?”

“I would cleave thy head from thy shoulders!”

“Then die!”

“I am ready.”

Bright bonfires burned along the coast of the promontory of Surrentum. Similar fires leaped and played upon the heights of Capreæ. “I cannot row thee so far,” said Alexis to Mary. “It is three miles, and my left arm is useless. After all our dangers, I see no chance for us. The island and the mainland are alike patrolled by watchmen. It is death for any one to leave Capreæ or come hither without the guard.”

“Perchance,” said Mary, “there are other grottoes in the cliffs; I have heard that there are many. Thus we might for a time escape.”

“Let us, then, look for some dark opening,” said the Greek. “For if the morning light find us thus, the evening light will not see us alive. But now I will bind this Roman’s arms and legs.”

“Why dost thou not kill me?” returned the exhausted man, in a defiant tone.

“For that I am not a Roman, perhaps.”

Soon after, Mary, who was watching the sheer precipices with straining eyes, exclaimed, “There is a grotto!”

“I see nothing,” said the Greek. “Thy fancy—nay, thou art right. Those starry eyes of thine shine through the blackest space.” He

directed the boat thither. "We know not into what perils we venture," he muttered. The boat passed through a narrow opening. "Now must I strike a light, or we have gained nothing. It must be but for a moment. When the torch flares up, look thou to the right and see all thou canst see. I will examine upon the left. And if our blaze is seen, right or left will be all one to us, poor child!"

A spark was produced, then others; the torch smoldered and leaped up in a blaze, glad in the freedom for which it had been made a torch. Then followed a hissing sound as Alexis thrust it under the water.

"I saw a low wall of rock," he said, "which runs lengthwise, dividing this grotto into two rooms. The wall is about eight feet high—I speak of the partition wall—and beyond it, between it and the far side of the grotto, is a wide space, doubtless carpeted with ocean waves. Behind that wall we might be safe."

"I saw the other half of this partition wall," said Mary, in an excited voice. "I saw what thou didst not see; there is a gap in it, near the end."

"Sayest thou so? Yet I am afraid to be glad. A gap for the fox is a gap for the dogs. But let us try for it. And thou shalt tell me the way."

"Then turn toward me," said Mary.

"My heart knoweth no other direction," said Alexis.

CHAPTER XIV.

LOVE IN THE NIGHT.

In the intense darkness Alexis guided the boat as best he might toward the gap in the partition wall. At last he found the opening by feeling with his long oar; they passed through, and the boat rested in the waters of the inner room. Now there was nothing to be done but to wait for the morning light.

Alexis groaned faintly.

“It is thy wound,” said Mary, quickly. “Let me bind it up. Strike a light, for the partition wall will conceal it; and, moreover, we should hear the rowers if they come hither. Does the wound pain thee?”

“It is scarce to be borne,” said Alexis. “What a horrible thing is pain! No matter how delicious a repast, if in one dish is found a little poison.” As he spoke he lit a small lamp which he had taken from the tunnel in making preparations for his flight.

“Nay,” spoke up the Roman soldier; “if there were no pain, how could man prove himself a hero?”

“Silence!” ordered the Greek, angrily. “Give

thy thoughts to thy condition, miserable slave. Why should I not slay thee instantly? Oh, for an executioner!" He placed the lamp in the bottom of the boat, where its tiny light cast hardly a glow upon his face.

"Heed him not," said Mary, gently. "But bare me thine arm, that I may see the wound. Alas! how the blood hath flowed. Draw back the linen."

"Nay, not so," said Alexis, hastily.

"Then suffer me—I will not hurt thee."

"Thou shalt not see the wound," said the Greek, drawing away; "ask it not. Nay, leave the arm to nature. But I pray thee draw up thy veil that I may see thy face. Then will the cure for mine arm enter through mine eyes."

"Alexis, suffer me to bare thine arm and wash the wound, and bandage it, that it may soon be well."

"Think not to do so. What! Why, this were to shame thee, dear maiden, and besides it cannot be."

"Where there is no sin there is no shame. Are my fingers so clumsy that thou fearest a hurt from them? They will touch thee as lightly as the rose-leaves flutter upon the grass. They will dress the wound so gently thou wilt think a breeze passed over thee whilst thou slept. Why dost thou draw back from me, O Alexis? Why dost thou shudder when my hand draws near

thine arm? What is there in the touch of Mary that brings paleness to thy cheek and fear in thine eyes?"

"Nothing, nothing. But I will myself dress the wound. I will not trouble thee."

"He is a miser who saves the trouble of his friend," cried Mary. "Nay, Alexis, use my friendship freely; the mine is deep."

"I would thou couldst say *love*, Mary, instead."

"If we change its name, the ore is the same."

"But perchance thou hast two separate passions in thy pure breast, one to answer to each name."

"I understand thee not," said Mary.

"Why, he talks Greek philosophy," spoke up the prisoner. "It is the Socratic method."

"Peace, base captive! Mary, I mean this: When I speak of friendship, doth not thy heart respond?"

"Thou knowest."

"And when I say love, is there no chord in thy soul that vibrates to the same note?"

"In other words, do I love thee?"

"Square to the mark!" exclaimed the Roman.

"I shall choke thee!" hissed the Greek.

"Nay, I am of service to you both," said the prisoner. "Without mine aid matters would not have come thus far."

"Mary, dost thou love me?"

“Ask me not; for on the morrow thou wilt not care to know.”

“Unkind maiden! Why should the morrow change my heart? Love knows no morrow. Love never yet saw the sun set. Tell me if thou lovest me.”

“I love thee.”

“And wilt thou love me forever?”

“Forever, O Alexis.”

“Even so will I love thee, Mary.”

“Alas!”

“And wherefore, Mary? Wouldst thou not have an eternal love.”

“I was thinking that on the morrow all would change. But it may not be. Surely it will not be. I know thy heart beats true. It cannot be!”

“Methinks it is the kissing time,” observed the soldier from his supine position.

“I draw thee to me, Mary, close to my heart—thou dear one—beautiful—”

“Nay, I am not beautiful, Alexis.”

“Since first I saw the haunting purity of thy face, the seal that set thee apart from thy race—since then—bear thine arm about my neck; it is a weight to my spirit, even as wings are weights to birds. The more thou leanest upon me, the heavier are my spirit wings to beat aloft.”

“Dear Alexis!”

“Say ‘blessed Alexis,’ since an angel hath spoken to him! But do angels speak again?”

“Beautiful Alexis—my beautiful one—since thou art mine for a few brief hours—mine, O Alexis—thou with thy bravery, and strong heart, and daring courage, and beautiful face, and eyes of fire—how can I tell thee what I would say? My words are nothing. God of Israel help me—our Father in heaven be with me upon the morrow!”

“What strange fears are these, Mary? Trust me. But lift this veil. The burning fever of my love can find a cure only upon thy lips.”

“Already he seeks a cure,” remarked the prisoner. Mary, with a sudden movement of her foot, overturned the lamp and extinguished it.

“One kiss,” she whispered; “only one, Alexis.”

“Nay, O Mary, seek not to set a limit to what in its very nature is infinite. Say not just one. This were to dream one’s self a god, then wake a common mortal.”

“Then two, perhaps; but no more.”

“Nay, a hundred more, and more besides! What can prevent me from kissing thee till I kiss the night from thy face, and see thy blushes in the morning light?”

“What can prevent thee? My wish. If thou lovest me, Alexis, thou art the master of my heart, but the servant of my wishes.”

“This must be the truth,” sighed Alexis, “since it is so unpleasant. But I would the lamp burned, that I might see this face. Yet

when my hand passes over these cheeks, and touches this perfect mouth—and where are thine eyes, little child? One, two—how strange the softness, the silken smoothness of thy skin! I brush this hair aside. But what is this?"

"A scar," said Mary.

"Indeed, it is a cruel scar. O Mary, how came it here? It zigzags across thy face; I almost see it in the dark, a jagged line of lightning transfixed upon the sky. Poor Mary—dear Mary! Feelest thou no pain?"

"Only in my heart."

"The first kiss shall be upon this scar," said the Greek. "But why dost thou weep?"

"I had an unkind thought."

"Think, then, of me alone, and all thy thoughts must be sweet. And now another kiss—the last. Upon thy lips, O tender child; and draw not away, neither breathe, for thy sweet breath will blow away my paradise."

"I thought myself a prisoner in a boat," remarked the Roman, "but methinks I be in a nest of turtle-doves!"

There was a long, deep silence, and after that a sigh. Mary drew away. He still held her hand. The hours of night crawled toward the dawn. They talked on in broken intervals, as children upon the seashore who pause to catch the message of the waves. He fell asleep at last, long after the Roman had announced his own

unconscious condition. And then Mary lit the little lamp and held it up that its light might caress his handsome face. He did not start or open his eyes. She wondered how he could sleep with such love burning upon him. She touched his hair; he did not move. She kissed him so softly that he dreamed the petals of fragrant geraniums were falling upon his face. How often the blessings for which we long in waking hours visit us in our sleep!

And then she gently took his wounded arm in her little hands. All about her were brooding shadows, and underneath, the unfathomed sea; but she felt no terror, for a word would be enough to waken a world of love. With careful fingers she drew back his robe till the beautiful arm was bared. She set the lamp beside it. Here was the cruel wound, yet not as serious as she had feared.

But what was this below the wound? Old scars? Yes, scars of a wound made long ago; but they were in the form of letters. The blood which had found rosy beds in her cheeks fled in an instant to her quivering heart. Her eyes grew wild and horror-stricken. She read the letters slowly. There were three, and they formed a Latin word:

“FUR.”

Alexis bore upon his arm the brand of a thief. She wondered dully why it had not been burned

in his forehead; that was the usual manner of branding thieves. Doubtless this had been put upon his arm as a special favor; it might be on account of his distinction as an architect. Then she remembered the brief account he had given of his childhood; how his protector had been executed as a thief.

So this was why Alexis had not suffered her to dress his wound. This was his horrible secret, which merely the fold of a robe had hidden from the world. A thief—"FUR" had no other meaning. A thief, and branded as a thief!

Mary softly replaced the linen. She extinguished the light. She sat staring into the darkness, her hands clasped about her knee. He lay so near, peacefully slumbering—but she did not reach out her hand to touch him. At the sound of his breathing she shuddered. She could no longer recall the image of his face, but she could not forget how the three letters had looked. Though she shut or opened her eyes, she saw a beautiful white arm branded with infamy.

In these awful moments all love for the Greek fled from her heart, and with it all hope and thought of happiness. Hate did not come to take its place, but instead shuddering dread and sickening aversion. The morning found her crouching in the same unchanged position, waiting, with unutterable dread, the awakening of Alexis.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN THE DAWN CAME.

The grotto faced the east. A crimson flood of light plowed its way across the sea as the sun looked out over the world, still blushing in the memory of his night-dreams. The light poured into the grotto and painted the walls in gorgeous hues. It shot over the partition wall and fell in a luminous halo upon the face of the sleeping Greek. He opened his eyes, and started up. A dazzling smile flashed over his face. He remembered that he was waking up to love. He turned to Mary. She sat like a cold, white statue of wide-eyed despair.

“Mary!” His voice rang with horror.

She shuddered.

“Who is this?” stammered Alexis. “Where did Mary go? How camest thou? Who art thou?”

She turned her face full upon him. “Gods of Olympus!” whispered Alexis, as white as she. The Roman soldier stirred and sought to sit up. The ropes restrained him.

“Is it a dream, a fantasy?” pursued Alexis, in quivering tones. “Speak to me. Thou art not Mary!”

“I am Mary—alas!”

“It is her voice; but this is not the face of my love. This is not the face of Mary. Oh, that the gods would wake me from this dream!”

“It is no dream,” said Mary. “The morrow has come—that is all; the morrow has come to both of us. Thou art wiser; so am I.”

“But I know thy face—did I not study it day after day? Is it not in my heart? This is not the face I loved. As I live, thou art not she!”

“That face thou wilt never see again, Alexis. But though I am changed, I am the same.”

“What has happened?” he whispered, in a tone of dread and awe.

“It was last night, when I waited in the great room of the harem. I thought thou wouldst never come—that thou hadst forgotten me. I thought my salvation lay in mine own hands. So I found a sharp instrument of iron, and I did cut my face; and if it pained, I know not. But I knew thus should I escape from Tiberius. And then I went to the iron inclosure, so freshly painted, and pressed the wound upon the bars, that the colors might stain my cheek and enter into the wound and make me horrible to look upon. The purple and the green mingled with my blood, and thou seest if I succeeded. Thou seest if Tiberius could look upon me with love.”

“It is terrible!” whispered Alexis.

“Should I not be in perfect safety from all the

world? Who could look upon me without terror?"

"My heart is broken!" said Alexis, his voice breaking with a sob. He buried his face in his hands and wept. Mary looked upon him with stony indifference. "I cannot fully seize upon the truth," he said, presently; "it eludes me, mocks me. That so much beauty should utterly vanish from the earth and be no more forever! Better to die, and lie cold and senseless, but fair as a marble statue, than to live disfigured, the face dishonored. I could take mine own life, but not destroy my features. Better to have died!"

"I knew thou wouldst think so. Thou art a Greek in thought and life."

Alexis exclaimed in an agony: "Oh, why do the gods suffer that which is ugly to exist in such a fair world?"

"And oh, why," exclaimed Mary, bitterly, "does evil seek a fair body for its home?"

"If thou hast pity upon me, Mary, look not thus. Where — may Jupiter preserve my senses! — where is thy veil?"

"Nay, look upon me, and look until thy love is dead."

"Love!" groaned the Greek. "Love! Mary, thou hast all the pity of my soul. But, oh, dost thou love me, Mary?"

"How differently thou didst ask that question a few hours ago! But rest content. I love

thee no more than thou lovest me. I pity thee as thou dost pity me."

"Love at night and pity in the dawn," said the Roman soldier. "The stars need the night to shine by."

"Peace!" cried Alexis, furiously. "Trifle not with me, base slave, for I am distraught—there are sparks in my brain."

"Fear them not," retorted the soldier; "they be but the lingering fires of thy love."

"Would I had killed thee at first! Oh, for an executioner! Stay thy vile tongue. I am going mad!"

"Nay," said Mary, "I will draw my veil; now forget both me and the wound."

"I would I were dead," said Alexis. "I would I were at the bottom of the sea. So would I cast myself from the boat, but for the horror of drowning."

"Why wouldst thou be dead?" said Mary, coldly. "Is my face more scarred than thy soul?"

"What meanest thou?"

"Is my cheek uglier than thine arm?"

"Mine arm? What dost thou know?"

"Thou couldst read no crime in the jagged lines upon my face; nay, what message did they speak but the purpose to be true to myself, to save myself from dishonor? But the three letters upon thine arm—"

"The three letters! Then thou—"

“I saw them while thou didst sleep. I read their story. I read thy shame. Thou sayest I am ugly. But nature never made a face so ugly as man makes his soul.”

“As I live—” began Alexis, vehemently.

“Had I not seen those letters,” interrupted the Jewess, “thy present changing of love to pity would have crushed me as a stone might crush a violet.”

“Ah!” said Alexis, quickly.

“Yea; but when I read that Latin word my love for thee vanished utterly. So, hadst thou continued to love me in spite of my deformity, sorrow would have been mingled with my contempt.”

“Then I am glad thou sawest the word,” said Alexis, thoughtfully. “It did thee a good service.”

“Yea; thine inconstancy hath saved thee a heartache.”

“Call me not inconstant. Thou art not the Mary I love. That star hath fallen to earth. As to the word upon mine arm, I could explain—”

She laughed.

“I would not have thought,” he said, “that the laughter of Mary could ring with such a note.”

“I would not have thought, Alexis, that I could love and despise in a day!”

“Despise? Nay, thou drivest me to speak the truth! Those three letters—but why undeceive thee? It is better for thee to think me base. Enough. I cannot love thee, and thinking as thou dost, thou canst not love me. So think the worst.”

There was a pause, at the end of which the prisoner thought it a good opportunity to deliver himself of a sentiment: “Behold, with how few words love is made, and with how many unmade!”

“Listen!” whispered Alexis; “are not those the sounds of oars? Do we not hear voices?”

“They search for us,” said Mary.

“Help! help!” shouted the Roman, in stentorian tones.

Alexis fell upon him and seized his throat. “Thou dog!” he muttered, “thou false traitor, after our kindness to thee! I shall strangle thee to death!”

Mary turned away her head. There was a sinister silence in the boat; then Alexis released the purple throat, while the perspiration dripped from his brow. “Ye gods!” he whispered, “I cannot do it. Oh, for an executioner!”

The prisoner was gasping for breath. His livid hue soon became a natural color. “But his mouth must be stopped!” said Alexis. “Give me thy veil.”

“Never!”

“Thy veil—quick! The rowers come.”

“Let them come. I care not. I will never raise my veil for thee, though destruction overcome thee!”

“I will examine this grotto,” said a man’s voice near the opening; “haste ye to the next.”

“No need to enter,” said another voice. “I can see the whole chamber; it is empty.”

“Yet will I examine,” said the first voice, “to see if they have been here. If I do but find a trace of them, I can divine the future course by the footsteps of the past.”

Alexis raised his head. “It is Varro,” he whispered. Seizing a cushion, he held it over the upturned face of the prisoner. A long galley shot past the opening of the grotto. A small boat, with a single occupant, entered the outer room, and the splash of the oars could be heard as they approached the partition wall. The Roman gave vent to a terrific yell, which the cushion could not entirely silence.

“By Isis!” exclaimed the rower, “methinks the stones do groan. Or is it Alexis?”

“Varro!” whispered Alexis.

Varro propelled his boat through the gap in the wall and drew alongside. “Didst groan?” demanded Varro. “A groan is a luxury to one who would hide. Deny thyself such pastime. Hush! Another boatload of soldiers draws near—here is adventure!”

The Roman prisoner uttered another smothered cry for help. "What have we there?" demanded Varro. "What strange fish is this gasping?"

"It is a Roman I did capture in an evil hour," said Alexis.

"Off with his head!" whispered Varro. "Hast thou no sword?"

"I have a sword, but not a heart to wield it."

"Then what thing is that which throbs in thy bosom? Better a heart full of courage with naked hands! But I will save thee, poor Greekling."

Varro rowed from the inner chamber just as another boat stopped before the opening. "I have explored all," he announced to the searchers. "This grotto is empty. But as I am a Roman augur, I perceive by the flight of yonder bird—dost see the bird?"

"We see," said the superstitious soldiers.

"What doth it tell thee?"

"Nay, we cannot read birds."

"Then I will read it you. The architect hath escaped with the Jewess to Surrentum, even as that bird wings its way thither."

"What now are we to believe?" cried one; "for another of Cæsar's augurs did say that the pair have not left the island."

"When prophets disagree, turn prophet," returned Varro. "Search where ye will. If ye

are wiser than a bird, fly to wisdom. I have spoken. But in this grotto ye find naught but water, stone, and a reader of birds. Delay not the search."

The soldiers rowed away, and the augur returned to his former position beside the emperor's boat. "A Greek, a Jewess, and a Roman," he observed. "Art, Religion, and Power, all in the same boat!"

"Advise us, good Varro," said Alexis. "How can we escape?"

"Take the cushion from the prisoner's face; I would converse with him. So. Now, prostrate warrior, meet my questions with answers endowed with speed and truth. Thy name?"

"I am a Roman; no matter what my name. I am as my race—in no wise different."

"Why, so am I a Roman," said Varro; "but I am not one of a herd. No matter. Why art thou alive?"

"Because my captor is a barbarian."

"Well said. But since he spared thee, why didst seek to make an outcry and betray him?"

"When my silence would betray my country, I would speak mine own destruction."

"Then is it thy purpose to make an outcry on all occasions?"

"Whenever it can stead Tiberius."

"A dead Roman will not call to his emperor!"

“True, augur. But neither can a living traitor call to his god.”

“In this case, Alexis,” observed Varro, “the first step toward thy freedom is to liberate the soul of this prisoner from his body.”

“I think the same,” replied the Greek, “but I cannot strike the blow.”

“I can,” said Varro, “and will do so with pleasure. Wait till I climb into thy boat.”

“Thou shalt never enter my boat on such an errand!” exclaimed Alexis. “He shall not be slain—this prisoner. He saw me when I was happy.”

“We will preserve him, then, as a witness,” returned Varro. “For I would never have believed thee happy. Adventures make thee to quake, and the shedding of blood whitens thy cheek. Roman Virtue—for thus I shall name thee—I put thee upon oath. Hath seen Alexis happy?”

“Yea; but it did not last.”

“So he wearied of his happiness?”

“Nay; he slept it off.”

“Foolish Greek, to sleep when happiness was singing for thee her song! Didst not know she would fly away when thou didst become unwatching? Nay, nay; sleep when in sorrow, but in happiness prop open thine eyes! But hath the Jewess become a statue?”

“Mary,” said Alexis, “this Varro hath once

saved my life; I doubt not he will seek to rescue thee. Speak him a kind word."

"Though I gave him all the kind words left in my bitter heart," said Mary, "they could not make one sigh of gratitude. Nay, I care not what becomes of me, or if I die. If he rescues me, he will not save a soul from captivity."

"Ha!" said Varro, turning to the prisoner. "Roman Virtue, didst also see this lady happy?"

"Yea; for it takes two to make one happy."

"And did she also fall asleep and let the bird escape?"

"Nay; she lit a lamp, and looked too closely upon her happiness, and found the scars."

"Unwise lady!" exclaimed Varro, "to hold a light to thy happiness! But raise thy veil, that I may know thee from another; and I will think myself Tiberius."

Mary raised her veil calmly.

"The gods of heaven!" cried the other. "As Jupiter is the father of all— But what do I say? Enough! Only—thou art changed since last I saw thee! And the emperor—but who can understand the tastes of a god? And all this search that is being made for— And even now Cæsar doth fume and rage, and cry thee the loveliest maiden that ever came to Capreæ. By Venus, he doth thee a great wrong!"

“I pray thee save thy tongue for wise advice,” cried Alexis, impatiently; “and let it not wag with every idle word that bubbles up in thy brain.”

“Here, then, is mine advice. Seest these cavities in the wall? The waves have washed out a room for Mary, and another that will hold thee and Virtue. Hide in these little cavities, and sink the emperor’s boat, and lie there till night, when I will come and bear all three to the mainland. I will roll these loose stones before the openings, with thine aid. But hast thou food?”

“A basketful; but I want none.”

“Nor I,” said Mary.

“Not a crumb shall be wasted, however,” cried the prisoner.

“Nay; all three must eat,” Varro declared. “I shall adventure nothing with a pair of empty stomachs. Come, let us set to work; and all this day I will guard the outer entrance, though I shall be most intolerably dull. But be content; if they find you, there will be excitement enough!”

Along the margin of the water ran a ledge of rock, strewn with loose stones, and upon this ledge the small caves opened. Mary entered one, and Alexis was left with his prisoner in another. The food was divided. Then Varro

cut a hole in the emperor's luxurious boat with his sword, and sent it to the bottom of the sea. A few farewell words were spoken, and then he rowed out of the grotto, while his oars shone like silver in the tinted water.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE OPEN BOAT.

As soon as it was dark the boat of Varro entered the grotto, passed around the partition wall, and paused before the cavity where Alexis and his prisoner lay concealed. "Is any one at home?" he inquired.

"We await thee," said the Greek, impatiently.

"Ah! thou canst only choose between death and Varro. But Varro is not one, but many. Sometimes he is Drusus, son of Germanicus; anon an augur; and now one of the prætorian guards. In the darkness thou canst not see my brave apparel. Man is known by his clothes, and he is as various as his wardrobe. Here is a soldier's uniform for thee."

"Where?" asked Alexis, straining his eyes.

"Why, upon this prisoner of thine. Take off his shell and crawl into it. Surely thou dost not think to carry Roman Virtue with thee? We shall leave him here, securely gagged, to mumble to bare walls."

It did not take long to exchange his garb for that of the Roman. Alexis did so in silence, irritated by the continual jests of Varro, but

resolutely silent. He shrank from ridicule as from a real danger, and the Roman, who had discovered this weakness, did not hesitate to take advantage of it. The prisoner was left to his solitude, in which his philosophy bore him company. The boat was propelled to the next cavity. Mary was disposed in one end of the boat, where a hiding-place had been prepared under the great seat fastened to the middle of the figurehead. Several bundles were heaped at the opening, and a carpet spread over these. To an observer the boat contained but two occupants—Roman soldiers.

“I have but one fear,” said Varro, as the boat left the grotto, “and that is, that our escape may be too easy. If I have prowled all this day in the glaring sun only to get thee away at night without an adventure, it is a day lost.”

“May heaven deny thee adventures for one night!” said Alexis, devoutly.

“May the gods be deaf to thy prayer!” returned Varro. “Thou art ungrateful and unkind. Why have I meddled in thine affairs but to suck pleasure from the sourness of thy circumstances—as one doth suck a lemon? Would I have the lemon sweet as sugar? By Isis, if we get away without a chase, I will never sacrifice to Neptune!”

“I must forewarn thee,” said Alexis, “that mine arm is useless, for an arrow did pierce my

shoulder; so I can help thee little in rowing. Therefore avoid a chase, since thou alone canst do little."

"That is indeed a consideration. Well, we shall see."

The night was very dark. The fires that always burned at night upon the heights of the island cast long, flickering bars of light upon the sea. Varro sought the darkest places. Other boats were upon the water; the search for the beautiful captive had not abated. It had required all the Roman's ingenuity to prevent parties of searchers from exploring the grotto. Now there would be no guard before its mouth to send credulous rowers away. Perhaps the prisoner would be found, and the whole truth learned.

"'Roman Virtue' should have been killed," observed Varro. "A prisoner preserved is an enemy cherished."

"It would have been prudent," said Alexis. "But when prudence and humanity oppose each other, may prudence fall! Ah, hither cometh a galley."

"Good!" said Varro. "Now for it. Hail, comrades!"

"Whither away?" demanded the master of the galley. "Ye are directed toward the sea!"

"Is not that the voice of my captain, the valiant Macro?" said Varro. "It is too dark to see

faces, but the trained ear doth not need the moonlight to catch the tones of greatness."

"Why are ye bound toward the sea?" demanded Macro, sternly.

"Nay, puissant Macro; we do search for the traitorous architect."

"Stay your oars. Heave to! What words are these?"

"Latin words, O Macro. Would my tongue cry for help to a foreign tongue?"

"Thou insolent fellow! how dost thou expect to find the runaways out on the open?"

"Hath not the island been carefully explored? It must be they drift about upon the sea, afraid to land; or they may have put in at Neapolis."

"Then thou seekest to escape to the mainland?" cried Macro, furiously. "Who is with thee?"

"All the gods and goddesses," said Varro. "There is not a cupid left out of my company."

"Is that Jupiter or Apollo sitting behind thee?" said Macro, in a voice which had suddenly grown pleasant.

"This is a faithful soldier," replied Varro. "If it were only a little darker, his virtue would make a light."

"Perhaps I can make it darker for him," observed the great Macro, in a quiet tone. As he spoke, chains were cast from the galley which bound the smaller boat to its side. Macro leaped

into the boat. "Do not follow me," he said, imperiously, to his soldiers. "I can take care of myself."

"Valiant Macro—" began Varro.

"Peace!" cried the other, threatening with his sword. "A serious moment hath come for thee; meet it seriously. Who is this silent companion? And why is this carpet spread? Quick—answer, or die!"

"I can do no more," said Varro, turning to Alexis.

"Macro," said Alexis, in a whisper, "I am the architect."

"Why dost thou whisper, false slave?" cried Macro. "Let all the world hear. Where is the—"

"Hush!" whispered the Greek. "Let no ear but thine hear these words."

"Well," said Macro, impressed by the other's manner; "speak—quick—where is the captive? And why should I not run this sword through thy heart? Indeed, thus shalt thou die."

"Let not thy men overhear."

"Then what is this mighty secret?"

"Father!" whispered Alexis.

"*Thou?*"

"Yea; thy son—exposed to die; rescued by a common thief, and reared by him some years; branded with the word "Fur" upon mine arm when he was executed, because the death of

him could not satisfy thy rage, for thou it was who hadst him crucified—thou, my father, who hadst me, an innocent boy, branded with shame.”

“But I did not know, at that time,” interposed Macro, in a husky whisper.

“Is it so? Indeed, I have long hoped thou didst not know. Yet I wear those three letters to-day. Wilt thou do me an injury, knowing I am thy son? Zia told me of thee. Only he and I know that thou art a Jew—”

“Hush!”

“I ask not for thy love—we are strangers; but I ask thy pity. Delay me not.”

“I shall harm thee no more,” said Macro. He returned to his galley, assured his men that he had found no cause for suspicion, and ordered the chains to be withdrawn. The boat was suffered to proceed upon its way.

“It was splendid!” cried Varro.

“There are times,” observed Alexis, thoughtfully, “when only the truth can save.”

“It may be,” said Varro; “I have never tried that expedient. I shall save it for my last resource.”

The boat glided on in the darkness, and it was no more challenged. Mary had heard the words spoken by Alexis to Macro. She understood that he was not guilty of the infamy which she had accused him of the night before. The truth came with a great shock, destroying the stony

indifference with which she had fortified herself. But what should she do? Why reveal to the Greek that she understood her mistake, while he still shuddered at her deformity? It would be impossible for him to ever think of her again save with dread, or at least commiseration. This love, which had revived at the vindication of his innocence, must be suppressed. Ah, it is easy to tell the heart to cease its loving! And in the mean time she wept.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DEATH-MARRIAGE.

The year which began under the consulship of Junius Silanus and Silius Nerva was destined to witness the outcome of the conspiracy against Sabinus. It has already been narrated how Latinius Latiaris concealed in the ceiling of his reception-room the ex-prætors Marcus Opsius, Porcius Cato, and Petilius Rufus; how the aged husband of Flavia was enticed to speak against the majesty of the emperor, and how a letter containing an account of the imprudent speeches had been dispatched to Caprææ.

On the calends of January the senate received a letter from Tiberius Cæsar, which began with the customary prayer at the beginning of a new year, and then passed directly to Titius Sabinus. His treasonable words were repeated; he was accused of seeking the life of the emperor and of seducing the minds of the freedmen. For once the old sovereign was led to cast aside his cloak of dissimulation and to forego the pleasure of vague hints. He plainly required vengeance. Sabinus must be executed.

The senate, always eager to obey the slightest

token of their master's mind, made no opposition, now that his will was clearly expressed. No one dared to speak a word for the friend of Germanicus. His recent bereavements, the death of his wife and sons in the amphitheater of Fidenæ, were passed over in silence. He was condemned, and denied all respite. His robe was drawn over his head, that the brave face might not excite commiseration. The halter was drawn about his neck to warn him to keep silence, and to choke him should he make an outcry. As he was driven along the streets, men fled in terror, fearing he would address them as friends, and they would thus become involved in his fall. Yet often those knights who had run from his approach timidly returned, fearing to appear to fear. Manius Lepidus, who had been his intimate friend until the imprudence of Sabinus caused the prudence of the senator to take fright, had not voted for the death of Sabinus. He had escaped the dilemma by being very ill that day. Yet he dared not remain at home. He had himself borne in a litter to the roadside, and he watched the aged Roman pass to his fate.

In spite of the halter about his neck, Sabinus more than once succeeded in being heard. "These are the solemnities with which the year begins!" he cried. "Such are the victims slain to the god Sejanus!" His brave protests met with no echo of approval. In Rome was the

reign of terror. Following the fate of Titius Sabinus, which is set forth in the elegant page of Tacitus, came a letter from Tiberius to the senate. "I thank you, O conscript fathers," he wrote, "for having punished an enemy to the commonwealth. And yet, though he and others like him have been removed by your devotion, still do I live a life of fear and solitude, in constant apprehensions of the snares of mine enemies." He had again fallen back upon his old resource of vague suggestions; yet it was well understood that he referred to Agrippina and her sons, and that Tiberius was thus gradually preparing the way for their downfall.

The day which saw Sabinus thrown from the Tarpeian Rock witnessed Latinus Latiaris the most popular man in Rome. He had been the accuser, and Tiberius had approved him. It was certain that he had the favor of Sejanus; knights flocked to his palace to offer their adulations. But one person stood between Latiaris and the property of Sabinus; this was the adopted daughter, Julia Silia. It was easy enough to interpret the letter of the emperor as a veiled reproach against the maiden. Latinus boldly declared her guilt in the senate. She was condemned to death. Indeed, it would not have been difficult for the ex-prætor to have secured the destruction of the most illustrious in the capital. The soldiers found the sorrow-

stricken girl in the home of Manius Lepidus. When the warrant for her execution was shown, the senator affected a stony indifference, which had often saved him when his friends, less wise, became victims to a useless sympathy. Julia Silia was marched from the residence toward the prison. In all Rome there was only one who dared to appear at her side as her friend. This was the freedman and poet, Phædrus.

“I pray thee to leave me,” said Julia, who had found a rare courage in the moment of her danger. “Why shouldst thou bring destruction upon thee? I am a Roman—I am not afraid to die alone.”

“Duty bids me stay beside thee,” he answered.

“Duty! duty!” she cried, in a great scorn. “Ah, am I destined to hear that word in my last moments? Wilt thou mock me in my death with thy *duty*?”

“Peace!” said her guards, roughly.

“If ye are Romans,” cried the prisoner, her eyes flashing, “be Romans still. I am condemned to death, but not to insult. But if ye are dogs, if ye are German mercenaries, if ye are Gauls, insult the daughter of Caius Silius!” The soldiers hung their heads, but marched doggedly toward the prison. Julia turned to Phædrus:

“What duty bids thee sacrifice thyself?”

“I will never leave thee in life,” said Phædrus; “and in death I will be with thee.”

“Was this thy promise to Caius Lepidus, my betrothed? Didst thou rashly promise to be guardian over me to the gate of the tomb? Caius hath much to thank thee for.”

“More than he will ever know,” said the poet, gloomily.

The prison was reached. The great gate closed upon the company. The executioner, a brutal man upon whose naked arms were the stains of the last victim’s blood, met them.

He read the order of execution. “Julia Silia?” he repeated. “Who is this Julia Silia? Did I not slay Silius with mine own good hands? This cannot be the wife of Caius Silius.”

“His daughter,” said Julia, proudly.

“Mehercule! as disdainful as the parent! Ha! And who, then, is thy husband?”

“Darest thou address me?” cried the maiden. “Thou infamous murderer of illustrious warriors—who slayest men and women whose arms are chained—pollute not mine ears with thy vile tongue! I am here to be slaughtered, not to listen to ruffians.”

The executioner laughed. “Comrades, I must ask you for information, since she scorneth me. Who is her husband?”

“She hath none.”

“But whom hath she had?”

“This is a maiden who hath never been married.”

“By the gods!” cried the man of blood, suddenly growing serious; “then this is no case for me. Such a thing as slaying a virgin hath never been heard of in the annals of Rome.”*

“It is enough for thee,” said the captain, “that thou hast the written order.”

“Nay, by Jupiter, not enough by half! How long will this Latiaris be in favor—how long Sejanus—how long will Tiberius live? May he live forever, of course—but if he should not, I am like to be terribly tortured for breaking precedents.”

“Thou mayest not slay her,” said Phædrus, “for a maiden cannot be executed by the laws.”

“Thou mayest not liberate her,” said the captain, “for in that case swift will be thy fate!”

“I have a thought!” cried the executioner, with a sudden boisterous laugh. “It is true I must kill this haughty maiden, and it is true I cannot kill her—true that she must die, and at the same time live. But I am not discouraged. He who would shed much blood must keep a cool head. All that be necessary is to marry her to some one, and upon the morrow have off her head. Is there in this company a willing bridegroom?”

“I,” said Phædrus, stepping forward.

*See the “Annals” of Tacitus.

“Call me a priest,” said the executioner. “Let all forms and sacrifices be attended to. I stand and fall by the law. We shall have a right royal death-marriage!”

“This is needless,” interposed the captain. “Dispatch her at once, and I will be responsible.”

“Not so, not so. Who liveth by the law should never be a law-breaker.”

When Julia Silia first heard the proposal to marry her that she might come under the provisions of the law, she whitened with terror. But at the word of Phædrus a relieved look had spread like magic over her face. In her excitement she had clutched his hand, and she still held it when a flamen was brought into the court. The ceremony was simple, and quickly ratified. In a few moments happened what neither she nor Phædrus had ever supposed possible; they were man and wife.

Immediately after the ceremony they were locked together in one of the damp cells of the prison. Phædrus was handed a lighted lamp. The massive door was of solid iron, set with spikes. There was no window, only a perforated plate of iron in the wall that admitted the air. The walls were of huge blocks of stone, cemented together. The floor was of the same material. In one corner was a mattress of moldy straw, spread with ragged covers. Otherwise the room

was bare. It was the evening of the day upon which the second letter of the emperor had been received by the senate, just one week after the execution of Titius Sabinus.

While Phædrus minutely examined the cell, seeking, without hope, some weak place that might open to liberty, Julia Silia stood watching him in silence. At last the poet set the lamp upon the floor, and turned to her with his grave face. "Escape is impossible," he said, quietly.

"I had not hoped to escape." Where the perforated sheet of iron admitted the air there was a ledge running along the wall. Julia leaned her arm upon this ledge. The light of the lamp was full upon her. Her beauty had never appeared so striking or her vitality so intense. Accustomed as he was to see her almost every day, there was now an unfamiliar charm in her very attitude. The slimy walls of the cell, discolored by the passing of years which had brought no light with their dawns, seemed to expand as he gazed upon her rounded form, her exquisitely shaped arms. The light gleamed upon her arms and face and neck, and he fancied he caught the perfume of open meadows dotted with wild flowers. The thought that in the morning she must be slain oppressed him almost to suffocation. His breath came with labor, for he was not one who could find relief in tears. Upon entering the prison his sword had been taken from him;

but though he faced destiny with naked hands, his heart was shielded by a will of iron.

What could he say to her? To speak of the future could give no pleasure; to refer to the past must recall memories which he ever sought to banish from his mind. But why, now, should he banish those memories? Here was one night of which he was the master. It is not given every one to be lord of a night.

Presently Julia spoke: "Phædrus?"

He answered with his eyes.

She smiled. "What dost thou think of thy wife?"

He made no reply.

"Thou lookest not overpleased," she continued. "Thou didst not think to marry so speedily! And not to make thine own choice—for thou wouldst never have taken one so young and gay, one who can smile on the night before her execution! For is this not my last night upon earth?"

Her smile died away. She pressed her cheek against the iron plate, and he looked gravely at the profile relieved by the grimy background. "But I am not afraid to die," she continued, not looking at him. "Am I not a Roman? Am I not the daughter of Caius Silius? He dared to take his own life. If I were armed, I would save the executioner. Thou heardst him declare that he slew my father. It was an idle boast.

The gods would suffer no hand but his own to take that noble life—nay, no hand but his own was worthy. Yet I am to die by this wretch. Well, better than I have fallen so. Let us not quarrel about our manner of dying; it matters not if we reach Rome by land or water. But what is the Rome of the second life? Phædrus, dost thou believe in the gods?"

"One must believe something," said Phædrus.

"Ah, yes. Let us believe what we can. Something may be true. Cursed be the man who destroys a belief and leaves in its place a doubt! Why not believe that the gods are watching me now—that they are waiting to receive my spirit?"

"Why not?" said Phædrus.

"I will believe it!" cried Julia. "I will believe that Juno pities me, that Proserpine will intercede with Pluto in my behalf, that Charon will safely guide me over the cold river of death, that Minos and his brother judges will pass a light sentence upon me—ah, Phædrus!" cried Julia, her tone suddenly changing to despair, "I believe nothing, nothing! They are all fables. Phædrus, it takes too many gods to make a heaven!"

"Poor child!" said Phædrus, with infinite tenderness.

"Yes, Phædrus, poor indeed. Who is so poor as one who hath no faith? I cannot believe

those strange impossibilities—I know thou dost not. Tell me thou doubttest; for my doubt would find company.”

“Indeed, I believe in nothing but what I have heard, seen, or felt,” said Phædrus.

“There thou art wrong, for thou must believe in love, though it is a thing that may neither be seen nor heard; nor hast thou felt it, Phædrus. But thy brave doubt hath given me heart. Come, we will declare there are no gods in Olympus; then there will be none, as far as we are concerned!”

“And is it better so?” asked the poet.

“Nay, it is not to be thought—I dare not doubt! Oh, Phædrus, if there are no gods in heaven, what mean these altars in my soul which nature’s instinct has reared to religion? I know not what I say. Reason drives belief from my heart, and fear sues it to return. Let me think only that I must die as becomes a Roman. And now will I put all these thoughts from me. But the lamp fails!”

“The oil will soon be exhausted,” said the poet.

“Then we will be in darkness,” whispered the girl, with a sudden shudder. “Come here, Phædrus!”

“Wherefore?”

Her eyes flashed. “The same, the same Phædrus! Behold how few requests I may ever

make of thee! Yet the very first thou meetest with a question! My guardian, is this not my last night?"

"Poor Julia Silia!"

"And wilt thou deny me upon my last night?"

"Duty knoweth no last night," said Phædrus.

"Duty! How doth duty make thee unkind? But I will come to duty!" She left the grating and walked before him. She placed a hand upon each of his shoulders. "Do not throw me to the ground as thou didst in Fidenæ," she said, looking up with a strange smile. "I told myself I would hate thee for that cruel act. Was it thy duty that bade thee throw me upon the ground? But sorrows have hidden the very scars of anger. Phædrus?"

He met her eyes as he would have faced death, without a tremor. "What wouldst thou have, Julia?"

"Phædrus, it will soon be dark in our little room—quite dark. I fear the dark!"

"Fear nothing, child."

"Phædrus, forget that thou art my husband and I am thy wife. Forget that I am a woman, and that I am beautiful. Forget that the years have carried me from the shallows into the depths of life."

"I could remember nothing to thy dishonor," said Phædrus, in a voice that sounded stern, almost rude.

“Think of me as of the little child that once was dear to thee, as of that Julia who ran bare-footed through the gardens and scattered rose-leaves in her path, fancying herself a breeze robbing the bushes. That little child thou didst love. That little child could have feared nothing if thou hadst taken her by the hand and promised to abide with her. Think of me as of that helpless little one, who looks to thy strong power to protect her from evil.”

He took her hands from his shoulders and pressed them to his heart. “Julia, I may not believe in the gods; but there is one thing worthy all adoration: the rare purity that is sometimes found in a woman.”

“The light dies,” murmured the girl.

“It is because I have known one maiden well,” pursued Phædrus, gravely, “that I respect all women. Have I not watched thee grow up from a child? I thought thou hadst by this time learned me better than to fear.” He released her hands.

“Time is not long enough for a woman to learn wisdom,” said Julia, with a sudden smile. Tears sprang to her eyes. “Thou art the truest man in Italy! Oh!” The light vanished. “But let the lamp go out. I need not fear the dark when love shines for me in the heart of a friend.”

She felt her way to the miserable mattress, and

seated herself. Phædrus walked back and forth in the gloom. She listened to the regular fall of his feet upon the cold stones. After a long silence she spoke: "What will become of *thee*?"

"It matters not," said Phædrus, stopping near her.

"But thou hast thy life-work," said the girl. "It will be as it was before thou ever heardst of me. Then thou wast happy in the friendship of the deified Augustus. So thou wilt write and write, until thou hast written me from thy memory."

"It can never be the same as it was before I knew thee," said Phædrus, quietly. He resumed his march.

"Phædrus, I pray thee cease thy weary tramp. I would forget that time is passing; but thy footsteps mark the moments. Come and sit beside me. I know thou needest rest."

"Not I; I shall walk all night."

"Say not so. The sound of thy feet are as hammers beating upon my heart. I cannot bear it!"

Then he came toward her, and seated himself not far away. "It is so dark," she murmured. "Where is thy hand, good friend?"

"Here—nay, thou hast missed it—now!"

"So strong and steady, Phædrus! It gives me courage just to feel mine own within it. For I confess I tremble when I think of to-mor-

row. Play I am a little girl, afraid of the dark, and tell me a story, as in those good old times."

"I cannot, child."

"O, there are a thousand stories in thy brain, waiting for a dress of proper words to appear before company. Tell me a new fable."

"Alas, Julia, I cannot."

"Then tell me an old tale—one that I loved years ago. What shall it be? Let it be gay and full of laughter."

"I was never asked to do so difficult a thing."

"But wait, Phædrus, and I will tell thee something. It is a secret. But the dying care not if their birds escape from the cages. It is about Caius Lepidus, my betrothed."

"What wouldst thou say? I will deliver the message."

"By no means! It is no message, but a revelation. It is meant for thee alone. The thought of marriage with Caius hath been hateful to me. It hath made me many unhappy days, that destined future. I can almost smile upon death as a rescuer."

"I am amazed, Julia. Dost thou speak in all seriousness?"

"Yea, in the seriousness of the dying."

"Thou didst not wish to marry Caius? He so young and brave and handsome, with such noble Roman blood in his veins?"

"I cared for his youth not at all; nor for his

beauty, nor for his bravery. As to his Roman blood, is it better than Thracian blood?"

"A Roman should think so."

"Nay; one may be wise although a Roman. And what are bravery, beauty, and noble blood if they are found in a man unloved?"

"Yet thou canst know nothing of love, Julia."

"Not so! I think I know all that any maiden ever knew!"

"Yet thou lovest not Caius?"

"Caius! His very name chills me! Nay; I love another."

"Another? Gods of Olympus! Whom hast thou had a chance to love? O blind Phædrus, who thought himself an excellent guard and guardian!"

"O blind Phædrus indeed!" cried Julia.

"Who is the base villain who steals a maiden's heart from her betrothed?" cried Phædrus, springing up. "Tell me his name! He shall not live to boast of his triumph!"

"Wouldst thou slay him, my guardian?"

"Wherever he may be found!"

"Cruel Phædrus!"

"Julia Silia, how long hath this secret gnawed in thy heart? How long hast thou felt this guilty love, while all the time I thought thee as thou didst appear—"

"Go on, Phædrus; how did I appear to thee?"

‘Thou hadst no right to love. Thou art betrothed!’

‘No right to love? Ah, love is born with its own rights. How long? Years must measure the time.’

‘Years! Julia, thou hast known no one for years. I cannot believe this story!’

‘That is not kind, my guardian. Did I ever doubt one of thine? But this story is true, as true as I live; as true as I love.’

‘I would I could see thy face!’ exclaimed the other.

‘I wonder thou dost not see the flames upon my cheeks,’ replied Julia, softly. ‘Fire doth not burn with more heat. Yet I do not see why I need blush.’

‘Not blush! Nay, shame hath no other apology.’

‘It is no blush of shame!’ returned Julia. ‘Why should I be ashamed to own that I love my husband?’

‘Thy husband!’

Julia answered, in a curious broken voice of tremulous excitement, ‘Thy wife!’

There was a dead silence in the prison-cell for several minutes. At last Phædrus spoke in startled tones: ‘What words are these?’

‘They were not words; thou heardest the beats of my heart.’

‘I heard amiss. Sorrow dulls the ear.’

“Thou heardst true,” said Julia, “if thou didst hear that I love thee!”

“Thou lovest *me*?”

“Thee, thee, my guardian: thee, Phædrus!”

“Thou saidst, ‘for years’?”

“And years!”

“What of those many times when thou didst say I had thy hate?”

“It was because I loved thee.”

“But I am growing old—thou art a child.”

“I should have caught up if death had not seized me by the throat.”

“I am ungainly, homely, ill-formed.”

“Thy heart is beautiful.”

“I am a Thracian—a freedman—a barbarian.”

“Thy blood is faithful.”

“I am the friend of Caius Lepidus.”

“Ah!” said Julia, catching her breath.

Phædrus walked rapidly from side to side. She wondered what look rested upon his face, and what emotion dwelt in his heart. At last he sat down beside her. “I will tell thee a story,” he said.

“Not now; I cannot bear it.”

“Nay, but listen. There were two friends, and one was young, the other old.”

“Very old?” asked Julia, suddenly.

“And the young friend one day found a beautiful jewel. He carried it to his comrade and said: ‘I must go unto a far country; wilt thou

keep this jewel for me till my return? I might be robbed of it upon my journey; but when I have come home, I will wear it upon my bosom.' And he who was older answered, and swore by the gods, saying: 'When thou returnest, thou wilt find this jewel as pure and sparkling and as untarnished as it is on this day of thy departure.' The younger departed. And would not the older one rather give his life than rob that trusting comrade, or suffer another to steal the jewel from his care? What wouldst thou think of the guardian of that gem if he proved false to his trust, and stole the jewel to add to his own splendor and happiness?"

"He would be unworthy of my love. I would hate him more than now I reverence."

"Now thou art Julia again; yet a new Julia, since I know thy wonderful secret."

"Wilt thou think less of me, Phædrus?"

"I would never have believed I could think more; but it hath come to pass. And now, little girl, the night wears away; remember, on the morrow thou wilt have need of all thy courage. Thou wilt be my brave heroine upon the morrow. And nothing will give thee the strength to play thy part—nothing but sleep."

"How can I sleep, Phædrus? Every vein and muscle is awake."

"Lie down, little one, and close thine eyes,

and I will watch beside thee, and keep dark fears away."

"The last watch," whispered Julia.

"Sleep, Julia; let thy tired mind sink to rest. Or if thou must think, let it be of objects far away—of the flowers in the gardens, the sunlight on the Tiber, soft breezes, the gentle moon—"

"And of thee," whispered Julia.

He did not answer.

"Then let me put my hand in thine," she said, as she drew the wretched coverings over her, "and I will dream that I am being lifted up above all trouble and unrest. Thou wilt not draw away thy hand?"

Again he made no answer. Perhaps he could not. In the morning, when the soldiers threw open the door, their light revealed the poet sitting motionless beside the sleeping maiden, her hand in his.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP.

The Adriatic on the northeast and the Tyrrhenian Sea on the southwest inclose the leg-shaped peninsula which Europe extends into the Mediterranean and calls Italy. The Gulf of Tarentum forms the high instep; Rhegium, where Paul landed from his exciting sea voyage, about thirty years after our story, is in the toe; Brundisium is in the heel. It is at Brundisium that one takes shipping for Greece or Judea. Here ends the Via Appia, "queen of Roman roads." The broad, smooth causeway stretches from this city, diagonally across Italy, to Rome. It reaches Beneventum with only one turn; thence to Capua, from which it rises in the form of an extensive figure "3," each half-inclosing a bay. And so it gains Tarracina, and leads straight to the imperial city, some twenty miles away.

On this celebrated road, and about two hours' distance from Rome, a carruca was speeding toward Tarracina. It was the private coach of the senator Manius Lepidus. It was closed, but the doors, undefended by glass, which had not come into extensive use, would have revealed

through their square upper openings that the coach was not empty. At least, this knowledge would have been gained had the observer been in a fortunate position, and had the speed of the horses been less. He would have discovered a man resting on one seat, and upon the other a maiden; and had he been acquainted with Phædrus and Julia Silia he would have recognized the travelers. However, such an acute observer had not yet been encountered; and many passers-by saw only a silver-embossed coach and a slave who acted as driver.

Phædrus sat in a gloomy corner of the coach, an impenetrable look upon his dark face. Beside him was a quantity of baggage, yet this did not prevent the conveyance from possessing an air of emptiness and coldness. Julia Silia was looking through the upper opening of the door, through which only the sky could be seen, or occasionally a lost cloud hurrying after its family. The vehicle throbbed and swayed with the hurry of the progress. One of the bundles was continually slipping from the seat to the floor, and Phædrus, in an abstracted manner, would stoop and place it in the same insecure place; then he would cast his eyes upon the floor and give himself up to meditation, as if he trusted the bundle, and expected it to give him no more trouble. Both wore the unmistakable air of people who have been deprived of sleep by anxiety.

To the beauty of the maiden it added a touch of pathos and tenderness, as if in compensation for the more positive charms which it had driven from her face; but nature, always more cruel to men, had taken revenge on Phædrus, and his somber weariness was not without a touch of the ludicrous. The fact that Julia did not laugh at him must be considered significant. On the contrary, she became irritated.

“Why dost thou continually place the bundle where thou must know—if thou knowest anything—that it will fall?” she demanded, with sudden sharpness.

The poet, evidently considering this subject unworthy of discussion, made no reply. Julia passed her hand wearily over her pale face. “I feel disembodied,” she said. “I do not seem to belong to this world. I know the color has left my face. Look, Phædrus; is there red in my cheeks?”

Phædrus was mute.

“Yea, I must be a ghost; though I speak, the ear of mortals is too dull to hear. I dwell in perpetual silence. No sound reacheth me. I was to die this morning. Perhaps it came to pass. See, Phædrus; do I feel alive?” She stretched out her hand toward him.

Phædrus did not lift his head.

“I would have died like a Silian,” pursued Julia, drawing in her hand quickly. “The exe-

cutioner would not have seen a tremor. After all, it is not difficult to die like a hero; the trouble is to live like one."

"True," said Phædrus, gravely.

"He speaks—I live," said the girl. "Phædrus, for the love of the gods, do not pick up that bundle again—I shall scream; leave it on the floor."

"Thou art weary," said the freedman.

"I would thou couldst see thyself," she exclaimed. "If thou canst laugh at a mortal's face, thou carriest the subject for a jest upon thy shoulders."

"Canst not sleep, Julia, as we ride along?"

"When sleep becomes the subject of a wish, it flies away. Nay, I cannot sleep; I can do nothing but gibe and taunt, and so wear away mine ill-humor."

"Methinks thou hast cause for joy, Julia."

"I will not be joyful for a cause. I will not be happy according to logic. The happiest moment of my life was when I fell asleep last night, my hand in thine, thinking to wake to mine execution. The happiest night of all my life was last night, with thee beside me, guardian of my honor and god of my waking thoughts."

"I thought thou didst sleep."

"Not in the night—ah, no! I feared to sleep, lest I should forget how happy I was. It was

only toward dawn that the cruel tyrant called me away and made my mind his slave.”

“Julia, thou art perverse. Well thou knowest that when we started up and found Manius Lepidus with the soldiers, and when we learned that at his solicitations the mother of Tiberius had granted thee thy pardon—well thou knowest *that* was thy happiest moment.”

“It was not, Phædrus.”

“Well thou knowest how thou didst fall into the arms of the senator, and call down blessings upon Julia Augusta, the only one in the world who dares to oppose Tiberius. That morning was happier than the fatal night which preceded it.”

“It was not, it was not, Phædrus!”

“Then thou desirest not to live?”

“To live is pleasant, Phædrus; but it is sweeter to be loved.”

His head dropped upon his breast, while his gloomy eyes sought the floor.

“Phædrus—”

“Say no more, Julia; I pray thee, no more.”

“Phædrus—”

“Julia, Julia, daughter of Caius Silius, one of the bravest of generals, and of Sosia Galla, one of the truest of wives and most devoted of mothers—”

“Have I ever forgotten that? Sweet to me is the memory of their virtues. The dearest pos-

session which I have inherited from my parents is their spotless honor. With the inheritance of a good name, I could not feel poor, were all other possessions stripped from me."

"Thou art a good child."

"But by the side of this honor I set my love, and I am not ashamed—nay, I am proud, proud that I had such a father and such a mother; and proud, Phædrus, proud of my love for thee."

"Thou canst not say so, in honor."

"I can, since thou lovest me."

"I have never said I—that I—I have never spoken those words."

"By thy looks, by thine actions, thou hast told me since I was a child. We two have always loved each other. But *then* there was a sword between us."

"And is to-day, Julia."

"There is nothing between us but thine indifference."

"Indifference! Nay; Caius Lepidus stands between thee and me; Caius Lepidus and his love for thee, and thy vow to him, and mine oath to him."

"He never loved me. He knoweth not how to love. When he went to the Frisian wars he did not even bid me good by! His father and mine adopted father wished the match. Already he hath forgotten me."

"Ye two are betrothed. Well thou knowest

that the marriage-tie can be easier broken, and with more honor, than the betrothal. I saw the marriage contract signed and sealed. It was I who brought to thee the betrothal ring—”

She held up her hand. “Thou seest, it is upon my hand no longer. I drew it from my finger last night and cast it upon the prison floor. For I am not betrothed now. Perchance some soldier will see it there, and win with it a fair maiden to his betrothal. Joy go with it; it ever gave me pain.”

“Julia, what hast thou done! Art in earnest?”

“So in earnest that I do not heed the warning fires that flame in my cheeks.”

“Thou didst part with that ring?”

“I threw it away, Phædrus, as if it had been a thing of naught!”

“Threw it away! Oh, Julia, what didst thou throw away, when thou didst cast that ring from thee!”

“Slavery, anguish—these I threw away.”

“And honor,” added Phædrus, bitterly.

“My honor is my shield; I will never throw it aside.”

“But when the ring was thrown aside—”

“Then, then,” cried Julia, “I gained my shield, my honor. For thou art my shield and my honor, for thou art my husband!”

“It was to save thee from another.”

“No matter. True, the horrible danger justified us both. But now it is done. The danger is past; but I am still thy wife.”

“Julia, thou knowest if I had not gone through the idle ceremony with thee—”

“*Idle, Phædrus!*”

“That empty form, those arbitrary words—”

“Speak on. Why dost thou pause? I am nothing—nothing but a woman. Thou hast thy friend Caius Lepidus to consider.”

“Hear me, Julia. Had I not married thee, another would have claimed thee, and thou wouldst have been in his power. If I can read the sequel to these days, the time will come when the executioner will claim for his bride the virgin doomed to destruction.”*

“I understand thee, Phædrus. I knew then. It was to save me for Caius Lepidus; it was to keep thy vow. But for whatever reason, this truth remains: we are married; this other truth: thou lovest me. We never thought to be brought thus into the divine partnership. The gods willed it. They gathered together all our dreams of happiness, Phædrus, and molded them into a golden reality. When I look upon thee, and consider that I am thy wife, I think I never had a wish for joy that went astray or a dream of happiness that was lost.”

“I cannot hear thee more, Julia; I cannot

*The fate of the daughter of Sejanus.

bear it. Believe that I suffer, also. But this happiness is not for me and thee."

"Wouldst thou, then, shatter this golden statue? Wouldst thou fling back to the gods the gift they gave so freely?"

"The marriage must be annulled," said Phædrus, in a voice that sounded cold and hard.

"How?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

"When we reach Tarracina we will be divorced."

"And so rid thyself of me?"

"And so preserve my honor."

"We will soon be in Tarracina," said Julia. "We will soon be divorced—it takes but a moment. It will be as sudden as our wedding. A few witnesses, and a parchment, and thou wilt speak the words, 'Tuas res tibi habeto.'* Since our marriage was not the *confarreatio*, it will not take long to sever the fragile thread; there will be no *diffarreatio*. Let me hear thee speak these fatal words, Phædrus. Look at me, eyes to eyes; and looking so, canst thou speak the renunciation?"

"'Tuas res tibi—' "

"No, no; not now, Phædrus, not till we must! How couldst thou, O man of stone and honor! But wilt thou remember in after years her who was wedded to thee? Wilt thou think, when dreaming upon thy past, 'She was my wife?'

* Thy property I restore to thee.

Wilt thou think when wandering forlorn and friendless in a foreign land, a prey to the miseries of banishment, 'I had happiness in my grasp; I cast it aside'?"

"Julia Silia," said Phædrus, roughly, "where is thy pride? Call it to thine aid."

"Phædrus, I am young—I am only sixteen. There are some things I have not learned. Once I was proud, but where now is my pride? It is in the shadow of a greater power. When Jupiter is present, he alone is seen, though lesser gods throng about his throne. And so my pride lies humbled at the feet of love, and dares not lift a cry. Thou shalt not renounce me. I will plead to thee as for my life. I will forget my station and my ancestry, and cast myself at thy feet and implore thee—for what? For what already is mine—thy love. For it is no dishonor for a wife to sue for the affection of her husband. If it must be, Phædrus, slay me, but let me die thy wife. I will adore the hand that strikes me. I am so young, Phædrus! I have not learned the art of moral suicide. I cannot slay my hopes by the silence of my lips. Nay, I must speak out; passion is born with a voice. I have been still so long! So long I have endeavored to teach my heart another way, but it would have its own. That was before marriage caught away the veil of convention and showed where hidden longings would blossom into flower. Before last night

thou didst not know. Before last night I had my pride; it was my garment. Didst ever suspect I loved thee?"

"Never."

"Then why should I longer hold the folds of pride about me? It hath served its purpose. But now I desire thee to know, in all the power of thy understanding, that I do love thee; and with all the energy of thy heart to grasp the truth of how I love thee—love thee with my life."

"I will forget these words."

"Thou shalt never forget them! They will ring in thine ears forever; and they will ring true."

"Here is Tarracina," said Phædrus, suddenly. "But what meaneth this?" The horses had been suddenly checked before one of the advance tenement-houses of the city. Phædrus called to the driver through the opening overhead to learn the cause of the delay. The driver, however, was so earnestly engaged in conversation with a pedestrian that he did not hear. Phædrus threw open a door and leaped to the ground. The dusk of early twilight was upon the Via Appia. A Roman stood holding the horses; it was he who had checked them. He was dressed as a knight.

"What meaneth this interference?" demanded Phædrus, angrily.

“If thou didst know who I am,” said the knight, drawing himself to his full height, “thou wouldst speak in a minor key!”

“I care not who thou art,” retorted Phædrus. “Unloose my horses! Is one dead man better than another?”

“Yea; methinks the world would give twice as much for a dead poet as for one who hath never plagued it with verses.”

“Since I am known to thee, tell me thy name, and give an excuse for thine impertinence.”

“My name is my own; ask it not. As to why I stopped the carruca—I have a love for it; it is an old friend. Did I not ride in it upon a time from Rome to Forum Appii? Meseems it is the same; and now hearken, Phædrus. In this tenement-house are a pair of fleeing pigeons; canst not find for them a nest in thy carruca?”

“Now I know thee,” exclaimed Phædrus. “Thou art that Varro who did steal this carruca from Manius Lepidus, and who did assist Alexis—”

“Not so loud. Yea, I am Varro. Phædrus, in that building is Alexis, and he is in imminent danger of his life. I have stolen him out from Capreæ—”

“He is naught to me,” interposed Phædrus.

“But with him is Mary, whose picture thou didst paint upon a time. She also is pursued.”

“Ah!” said Phædrus, quickly. “By whom?”

“The agents of Sejanus. I have heard how Julia Augusta hath banished thee and Julia Silia, rather than give up the maiden to death. Thou and Julia are on your way to Judea. It is well. Take Alexis and Mary with you; Mary for the sake of her innocence and purity and terrible danger, and Alexis because he is a helpless Greek, who hath been so long coddled upon the lap of ease that he shrieks, an unweaned babe, when adventures troop about him. And fear not to be discovered with them. I have so disguised them that they know not their own reflections in the mirrors. And they have much wealth. The garments of the architect have golden linings.”

“I will take Mary, the pure-faced Jewess; but as for this unstable Greek—”

“Wouldst thou separate the sun from its heaven? The two are lovers. As for me, I go not with them; I shall search for Zia, father of Mary, who fought at Fidenæ, but perchance escaped.”

“Art thou kin to Zia?”

“Yea; he is one of my brother mortals.”

“I know not what to say.”

“In that case let another speak for thee. Here is a carruca built for four. The gods hate waste. Fill up this emptiness with Alexis and Mary. Mary is worthy the trouble of a good knight. And Alexis has as great volume as a man. In his head there are brains, and in his

bosom a heart. True, the brains are without wisdom and the heart without courage; the shadow of a passing cloud makes him forget the sun can shine, but the glad sun makes him forget it can ever be hidden. If he is gloomy before supper, he will sing at night. If a frown locks his lips, a smile makes him burst into melody."

"Let us leave the matter to Julia Silia," said Phædrus.

CHAPTER XIX.

BEHIND FOUR MASKS.

They stayed all night in Tarracina. Julia and Mary were taken to a richly furnished inn, and Phædrus took lodgings in the same place; but Alexis remained in the tenement-house, the better to remain undiscovered. Varro left the city upon a horse—a Roman knight in quest of adventures. Where he obtained the horse could not be learned; he was ready enough in his explanations, but he lived under the continual disadvantage of not being believed; when he was most explicit, suspicion was most awake, for fiction luxuriates in details. The next morning the carruca set forth for Capua, containing Julia and Phædrus, who had been banished from Italy, and Alexis and Mary, who were fleeing for their lives.* Since the addition of Alexis to the party, Phædrus had not spoken a word about divorce; nor had Julia revealed to Mary the fact that she was married.

It is doubtful if four young people ever rode in a coach together who were so unhappy. Mary kept her veil lowered, that the ugly scar might not make her repulsive to the others. She re-

proached herself bitterly for inflicting the fatal wound, instead of trusting to the architect to save her; or if he was not to be trusted, why had she not confided herself to that God of Israel whom her ancestors had revered, and whom the Christ had taught her to love? Looking back upon the past days, she perceived how far she had strayed from the way which the new Teacher had pointed out. In what way had she been different from the children of the world? Had her life shown to others that its acts sprang from a divine prompting? No; she had been simply Mary, simply herself. The peace which she had experienced when relying upon the assurances of the great Physician, had flown when all her thoughts turned to love. And was not more than her peace destroyed? Where now was that love which she had felt for Alexis? Did she indeed love him? She could not tell. She knew that if the passion remained, it was subdued by stronger feelings. The fact that a scar upon her cheek could turn him from her caused her to feel for him a scorn that was almost contempt. Her love had wavered when she discovered the three letters upon his arm and thought him a thief; but *he* had turned away in horror because of a merely physical deformity. What was the nature of the love he had felt for her? she asked herself, bitterly. Was that love which rejoiced in beauty of features and form? Surely

it was not herself he loved, for that inner being had not changed. Yet, knowing his weakness, his shallow nature—so she told herself—she was glad he had ceased to care for her. Her respect for him was dissipated, and even if love remained, it was a love unworthy of her heart. What was to be hoped for her? Only that she might be reunited to her father, and that she might once more see the new King of the Jews, and from him learn better the lessons which she had neglected.

Alexis, of course, looked upon the past from an entirely different point of view. He did not know that Mary had discovered his innocence; he was glad she thought him a thief, since that gave him a splendid excuse to give up the rôle of lover. Mary might not know if she still loved him, but he had no doubts whatever as to his feelings for her. How could he love her with that repulsive scar marring the sweet face which had first won his heart? It is not in nature to love a deformity; it is not in man to cleave to the repulsive. Pity he felt for her; he would have done much for her sake; he would even have passed through horrible adventures to remove the cause of his aversion. But to love, that was impossible. Ah, why was not every woman made in a mold of beauty? What was the crime of man that the world must be overrun with homely sister-mortals? Earth, sea, and sky are so divine in their loveliness—the very ani-

mals are sleek and well proportioned; but man, the king of all, if he have not his nose set awry, his mouth twisted, or his brow cut short, must be cursed with legs too short, or long, or spare—no one is perfect. And Alexis worshiped perfect forms, perfect curves, and exact proportions; it was his art, his life. And he would as soon have taken a man in his arms with kisses of love as Mary with that scar. When he thought of her, his thought was scarred. If he were only back in Athens with his little maid! Perhaps *she* would grow up beautiful; it was his only hope. But, by the gods! this Julia Silia, sitting opposite to him, was all one might desire. To be sure, she hated him, on account of the sudden kiss in the gardens. But she might relent. The kiss was unjustifiable. But when he recalled it, the blood tingled in his fingers, and his eyes burned. Venus! Apollo! to have kissed such a maiden! Ah, why had he not died with that kiss warm upon his Grecian lips? Is it not the curse of mortality that one must outlive every ecstasy? Ye gods, how lovely she was, how much alive! She lived more in a minute than the placid Mary in an hour. Surely, it was Julia he had loved all the time. Mehercule, what a face, what an arm, what a foot! And here she was, by the kindness of the celestials, only a few feet from his enraptured heart!

Julia, unconscious of the adoration she had

aroused, was gloomily occupied with her own reflections. She told herself that never again would she speak to Phædrus of her love. She would be a true Silian, and sue no man for favors. If it must be, let her heart be broken; she would never marry Caius Lepidus, but she would not oppose the divorce. Let Phædrus cast her from him. She knew, in doing so, the poet would be destroying his own happiness. If he were foolish enough to do that for a man, let him suffer! Honor? She thought she understood honor as well as he. But if he chose to give that name to his blind fidelity to Caius, she would not deny him the poor satisfaction. Once she had spoken out; she had laid bare her heart, she had spoken when modesty and shame might have silenced a less passionate nature. She would never speak openly again on this subject. What then—lose him? How could she give up her sudden dream of happiness? She was his wife; she had a right to him, a stronger right than Lepidus. As soon as Julia Silia told herself that she would resist no longer, all her nature rose in revolt. She was not one to sacrifice herself tamely for a sentiment. No, she would not give him up! But what could she say that remained unsaid? Nothing. What could she do to arouse Phædrus, to bring him to her feet? She glanced at Alexis. The Greek caught the glance, and a wave of sunshine rippled over his face.

CHAPTER XX.

PLOTTING FOR LOVE.

“Phædrus,” said Julia Silia, “dost desire to make conversation with me?”

The poet looked at her in somber reproachfulness. He made no reply. Julia turned to Mary. “My friend, I desire to exchange places with thee, that thy silence may match that of my guardian. But as for me, I would sit beside Alexis; methinks we would say something, between us.”

The face of Alexis shone. Mary silently obeyed. Julia slipped into the place beside the architect, and glanced up at him with a strange look. He cared nothing for the sorrows through which he had passed; he thought not of the morrow. To have the beautiful maiden at his side was enough; he lived.

The rattle of the coach effectually prevented words spoken in a low tone from being overheard from the opposite seat. “Dost wonder why I desire to speak to thee?” said Julia.

“I do not,” said Alexis. “A pleasure is sweeter when I know not why it comes. I loved

the stars better before I was compelled to learn their names.”

“But I must tell thee why I speak, and in a voice so low. And I must ask thee to aid me in a difficult and dangerous matter.”

“If I can aid thee, fair maiden, all my faculties are thine. If it is to think for thee, act for thee—”

“Nay, it is to pretend love for me.”

“That were as easy as to pretend to be Alexis.”

“And remember all the time it is only a play.”

“That were to make the play a tragedy, Julia.”

“Listen, Alexis.”

“Mine ears are slaves to thy voice.”

“Alexis, thou seest my guardian?”

“Nay, I would not turn from thee to look at Cæsar.”

“This guardian, this poet Phædrus, who can make better verses than he can make love—”

“Right glad I am to hear that!” exclaimed the Greek.

“But not so loud! This Thracian, who hath no noble blood, who was a slave, but whom Augustus freed, not for valor, but for wisdom—”

“Yet,” said Alexis, “I feel sorry for the poor man. Could he help his brains being distorted by unkind nature, so that the prose of life looks to him like poetry?”

“Perhaps not. But I was saying, this old man—for he is thirty-five—old in comparison

with me, who am sixteen—this gloomy-faced, dark-browed, stern and hard freedman, loveth me.”

“Thou sayest so? The audacity—nay, he must be brave to let thee find it out!”

“But that is not all.”

“Proceed, Julia Silia. I would rather hear these precious confidences for an hour than have a year added to my life.”

“That is not all, Alexis; I love him.”

“Whom?”

“This Phædrus.”

“Thou dost *what?*”

“Love him—not as a guardian, not as a friend, but as a lover.”

“Oh! Ah! And he loveth thee?”

“With all his heart.”

“Then mine aid is not required. By heaven, if thou lovedst me as much as I love thee, I would not ask the advice of Jupiter!”

“Speak thus and I leave thee. Remember, this is not in earnest. But hear me! Phædrus thinketh himself bound by honor to restrain his love. And if he succeed, if he leave me, I die. Help me win him to me. If he thinks I care for another, it will tear his heart. And I would tear his heart till it be almost broken. I would make him almost die of jealousy. I would torment him till he came to me with a prayer for mercy. I would subdue his haughtiness, I would force

him to give up every other thought in the world but the thought of me. I am Julia Silia, and he knoweth that I love him, yet he can hold a false idea of more importance than he doth my love. I would teach him what it meaneth for Julia Silia to love, and what it meaneth to lose that love."

"He is unworthy, Julia. Give thy love to a soul that thirsteth for it as a traveler for a fountain. Canst thou bear to be scorned?"

"Alas! And while I love him, I hate him, and while I love him, I scorn myself. But my love is greater than all; so all must bend to it. Wilt thou assist me?"

"Willingly, gladly, with rapture! Only pretend to love me, and I will die a bachelor. I will remember all the time that it is not in earnest. And should I seem at any moment to grow too much in earnest, it will be for the benefit of our audience. Shall we begin now?"

"We have already begun. Our talking thus in low voices is all that is needful for the present. He hath already changed his position a score of times. As for Mary, methinks she hath darted toward thee a glance of contempt."

"Speak not of her; I see her face! Julia Silia, the last time I saw thee thou wert angered."

"Necessity hath forced me to forget a just indignation."

"Yea, it was just. Forgive me, Julia, for what I did that night."

“Thou art sorry?”

“Not I; but forgive, I pray thee.”

“Only repentance should be crowned with pardon.”

“Julia, can I be sorry that for one instant I was a god?”

“A god, Alexis?”

“Yea; and the other gods did envy me, a mortal, and struck from me my immortality. But they cannot rob me of my memory. May my lips grow cold in death, if I forget how thy lips burned with celestial flame!”

“This were shame to thee, base architect!”

“Nay, it were glory, it were a halo, a crown.”

“I will never forgive thee that traitorous act!”

“So be it. That makes it all the more precious. I would not have a kiss that could be picked up in the street. Let me confide in thee. I am to be thirty not many years hence, if I do not die in the twenties. But old as I am, thou art the first—thou, Julia Silia—the very first since I was a boy that I have—”

“Speak not of that; I burn with the blushes of shame.”

“That is well; they are for the benefit of Phædrus. It is not vanity that speaks when I say I am beautiful; it is the artist who speaks. Thou perceivest it; my features are perfect. Pick a flaw in them, and I will cut off my head. Had I been born ugly, I would have killed my-

self as soon as I became old enough to wield a dagger. What then? Many maidens have fallen in love with me. I have looked after many a pretty face. But when I came near, I always found some feature that smote upon me like a horror. It is my curse. If the features are perfect, the skin is coarse-grained, porous, freckled; or the hair is coarse, or the hands red. Perhaps a score of times I have been deceived into thinking that a maid was fair. Once I almost fell in love; she was so gentle and talented—but, ye gods! when I thought to kiss her, my heart arose and cast off its chains. Then I met thee, Julia; I sat by thy side; I heard thy voice; I noted thy face; I observed thy form. Ye gods! Julia, I cannot express what I felt, what I feel now. There is not a defect. This is the only nose and these the only ears I could have loved. The sight of thee affects me as the fragrance of a flower. It is a thing not to be analyzed; it is something to yield to without thought or will. Julia, if I could, I would not tell thee how, at various times, I have been harassed by knuckles; if I could, I would not shock thee by the knowledge of how many a golden dream hath been shattered by the condition of the maiden's fingernails. I shudder—to think of it sets all my moral nature on edge.”

“I understand thee, Alexis, but the understanding doth not increase my thought of thee.

Thine admiration must feed upon beauties. Is it because I am fair that thou hast a regard for me?"

"I cannot help it, Julia."

"If I should change, meet with an accident—then thou wouldst shudder at me, as just now thou didst at the mention of Mary's name?"

"At least, Julia, I am frank."

"Beauty, Alexis, is an accident, but virtue a merit."

"But when they go together, Julia, they are heaven on earth. It is well for thee to speak so. Those who are beautiful are spared a wish."

At this moment Phædrus, who had been looking gloomily across at Julia, now addressed that maiden: "Hast thou told Alexis that thou art my wife?"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SOLDIER RETURNS.

One afternoon, three or four weeks after the time of the preceding chapter, a pedestrian drew near the city of Brundisium. He carried his right arm in the new bandage which had just been made popular by the great physician Celsus. He was a wounded soldier, incapacitated for further campaigns. A slave followed him, leading two horses; evidently poverty had not set him afoot. As the seaport came in sight, the soldier was overtaken by a short, burly Roman dressed as a lictor. Upon his shoulder he bore the ax and bundle of rods which belonged to his office.

The soldier noted his equipment, and asked, "Hast lost thy senator?"

"Yea; he did escape me," said the lictor. "I was to bear the fasces before him into the city. Now he is gone. But if I have lost my senator, thou hast lost thy hand!"

"The use of it is indeed gone."

"Perchance," said the lictor, "thou comest from the Frisian wars?"

"I do. It was there I lost my hand. I can

be soldier no more. That which made life sweet is gone forever."

"Readjust thy palate," said the lictor. "What is sugar to a youth is tasteless to the aged. As for me, I was never in the legions, but I have not found Time squalling in mine arms like a discontented babe!"

"Perchance," observed the wounded soldier, "thou hast no stomach for the rush and daring of battle."

"Not so! I have a stomach for adventure, and I have filled it full a many time. Now I am a lictor, but a lictor was I not born. A fly may trifle with a sleeping lion, but no man will toy with him in his hours of wakefulness."

The soldier laughed scornfully. "Art thou, then, a sleeping lion?"

The lictor drew himself up. "If thou didst know my true name and station, thou wouldst quail before me!"

"*I* quail!" echoed the other. "By Mars, had I the use of this right arm, it would play upon thee! But who art thou, lictor? Thy name?"

"Call me Varro. I like the sound. And thou?"

"I am Caius Lepidus."

"Ho! I know of thee. I know of thine affairs. But no matter."

"Canst tell me of one Julia Silia?"

“Only this,” replied Varro; “that when I left her with Phædrus, they were bound for Brundisium, where they would wait for a ship to sail to Asia, and that such a ship sails in a few days. Whether they reached here, I know not; I have come to learn.”

“I know as much as thou,” said Caius. “I have traced them thus far. Two others are with them. I could not learn their names.”

“It was a question of life, should those names be learned,” said Varro. “But I know them. Come, Caius, tell me how thine arm was undone. The next best thing to an adventure is to hear of one.”

“I am a man of few words,” began Caius.

“So much the better,” interposed the lictor. “A good story is like a dog; you can see the head and tail at one glance.”

Caius resumed: “Thou knowest—”

“Nay; a story is spoiled when it is assumed that the listener knoweth any part of it.”

“Well, the brother of Tiberius did impose a tribute of hides upon the Frisians beyond the Rhine. But when the first centurion of a legion, Olennius, went thither, he picked out the hides of certain enormous wild bulls as the standards. To furnish such tribute was impossible, as the wild animals were few, and to be met and overcome only by the most strenuous exertions. The Germans first gave up their herds in lieu of

the requisition, then sold their wives and children into slavery, to pay the debt. But we had no mercy upon them. At last they rebelled, and hanged the soldiers who came to collect the tribute."

"The dogs!" thundered Varro.

"Olennius escaped from them, and shut himself up with his men in the castle of Flevum."

"He was a coward!" exclaimed the lictor. "What! He ran from naked barbarians?"

"When the pro-prætor heard of the blockade, he sailed with his forces down the Rhine, relieved the castle, had roads and bridges built out into the swamps, and sent forth the allied troops and legionary horse. The Frisians drove them back—"

"What! Germans routed Romans?"

"They did, and bravely. Three cohorts were sent to the front for auxiliary; they were beaten back—"

"Oh, for a Julius Cæsar!" cried Varro.

"Two more cohorts were advanced—"

"And that did the work?"

"Not so! The general was obliged to order the entire squadron to the front."

Tears sprang to the eyes of Varro. He wrung his hands. "Though young, I have lived to see the eagle of Rome disgraced!" he moaned.

The eyes of Caius Lepidus burned with humiliation. "It is true. Ye gods! But what wilt

thou say when I tell thee that the whole squadron was routed by these huge-limbed, white-haired Frisians, and driven back in a panic?"

"If this is a lie, I will kill thee!" hissed Varro.

"Dear Varro, I love thee! Alas, it is true! But why dwell upon this disgrace? Why enumerate the number of our tribunes, prefects, centurions, who fell in battle? We had enough men to crush the Frisians, but they were not massed—the cohorts were sent into action one at a time. It was no fault of the soldiers."

"Why does not Tiberius put a general at the head of his forces who knoweth how to wage war?" moaned Varro.

"Ah," said Caius, quietly, "why!"

"I am not afraid to say why," cried Varro. "Cæsar will have no one acquire greatness. He is jealous of those who uphold him. He would rather have his legions disgraced than see their leaders crowned with honor. There is only one man in Italy who dares to speak his mind concerning Cæsar; that man is Varro. I am not afraid of Cæsar."

"Hush! The very slave may betray thee. I have not done. Nine hundred Romans were surrounded in the woods of Bæduhenna. There they fought desperately till morning. No succor came. Every man was slain."*

"Oh, if I had been there!" cried Varro. "To

*See the "Annals" of Tacitus.

have died so would have paid well the price of life. Proceed."

"In the villa of Cruptorix four hundred defended themselves valiantly. At last, perceiving that a great horde of the savages were about to inundate them, what did they do?'"*

"They did not surrender, if they were Romans!" cried Varro. "Curses upon them if they surrendered!"

"Not they. They cut each other's throats; and when the Frisians poured over the fortifications only corpses were to be seen—not a slave was gained!"

"Glorious! If there is not room in Olympus for their souls, one of the minor gods will be obliged to move!"

"Having received my discharge, I arrived at Rome," added Caius. "What did I find? The senate was celebrating our victory over the Frisians! Instead of preparing for vengeance, they were decreeing altars to Friendship and Clemency, and statues to Tiberius and Sejanus! No one dared to say the Romans had been routed. Every one pretended to be gay over a victory, though shame was secretly consuming their vitals. Praises to Mars, my century stood its ground—did never waver—and at that point the savages were beaten! I vowed to the god a sacred oath that if he would help my division—

* See the "Annals" of Tacitus.

give strength and victory to me—I would sacrifice myself in return.”

“Sacrifice thyself? How?”

“By instantly returning and marrying a wife. Mars heard my prayer, my vow. He gave me victory, he wounded my arm so I could be honorably discharged. Marriage must follow.”

“Hast a maid in mind?”

“Yea, and in heart as well. Be it known to thee that Julia Silia was betrothed to me in her girlhood. She will become my wife. It is true Phædrus married her to save her honor. But it was a form—only a ceremony; no more. I would trust that man with my life, mine honor, my betrothed. He is my friend as few men are given friends. He is true, he is noble. I doubt not he was divorced the next day; doubtless in Tarracina. Or if they are not yet divorced, it is to preserve her for me. Varro, I have grown to love thee in a few moments. He who loves my country hath my love. I am free with thee. When I went to the wars I was about to fall in love with Julia. It was well a sudden command called me away! I have thought of her since, more than once, she is so beautiful. And now I am free to love her with all my heart.”

“And dost thou love her indeed?”

“Why not? I believe I do. I think so. Perhaps.”

“And she?”

“She is desperate about me! She showed it when I last visited her, and so plainly that it smote upon my pity. It unnerved her! At one moment she was upon her knees at my feet, the next standing erect and defying me like a furious Amazon. It was all I could do not to surrender at once. But the call of the camp rang in mine ears. I pretended to be unmoved when my heart was rushing to meet her own.”

“Hast thou been absent days?” asked Varro.

“Yea—months.”

“Months? Did the wind ever blow from the south a month without changing? A month, Caius? In a month Titius Sabinus hath exchanged a palace for a grave; Julia Silia hath given freedom for exile. Many a flower hath burst into bloom and fallen away. I would not give a denarius for a love that is a month old.”

Caius laughed. “Thou dost not know Phædrus. He will preserve this prize for me. Fear not. And now I am of an earnest will to marry. And here is Brundisium. But how shall we find them among so many?”

“Easy task. We will inquire for the two exiles—all Italy knoweth their story by this time; especially the soldiers have eyes upon them to see that they speedily depart from the country. I will try this fellow. Roman—but as I live!” broke off Varro, in a whisper, “it is Roman Virtue!”

“Who calls?” said the soldier, turning.

“If he recognizes me,” said Varro to Caius, “it will be an evil day for two fugitives I wot of! Do thou speak to him.”

Caius Lepidus made inquiries, and learned that the exiled Phædrus had rented a small dwelling not far from the seacoast; that he lived there with his two sisters and a certain porter, who was seldom seen in public. When the two had passed on, Varro said:

“Caius, dost note how weak and supple I wax?”

“Hast a sickness, comrade?”

“Yea, I am undone. That soldier was once a prisoner of ours. Alexis, Mary, and I had him trussed up in fowl-like guise. He hath escaped. Should he know me, he would give the alarm, and I might escape, but suspicion would arise that the obscure porter was Alexis; which would be a wise suspicion.”

“Ha! So Alexis and Mary are with Phædrus? But why art sick? The soldier did not recognize thee.”

“That is what sickeneth me. Behold, here is a notable adventure, thrust, as it were, into my very hands. How sweet it would be to rush upon the fellow and cry, ‘Hail, Roman Virtue, I am Varro!’ Then what a commotion, what a dash of sword-play, and plying of legs, and gushing of crimson vigor! By heaven, I will—

but nay; Alexis and Mary would have to pay the forfeit. Seize mine arm, Caius, and drag me away!"

"Who is this Mary, Varro?"

"A Jewess, daughter of a certain Zia who fought at Fidenæ and was slain."

"What! Can a Jew fight?"

"And fought well, Caius. And died like a Roman. I have lately been to learn if he indeed died. There is no doubt of it. The gods of Hesiod are not deader."

"Is she fair, Varro?"

"By my sword, I know not. Some people call the sky fair when the sun shines. But I have no eye for beauty. A cloudless sky is convenient, and a calm sea is safe, and when the grass is green, it feeds my horse. Beauty I know not; I am beauty-blind. But excitement I adore. I would rather wed with a maid of cavernous mouth and diminutive nose, if she could make my blood dance, than with the most beautiful insipidity that calls itself a woman."

"This is the house," said Caius.

"Yea; it answereth the description. I will leave thee for a time, Caius."

"Not so, comrade; come within."

"Not I. I would rather eat a pocketful of green apples, and have every tooth rise upon the edge of revolt, than witness the meeting of a pair of lovers. I will come to-morrow. But

now I bethink me: it may be Julia Silia hath ceased to care for thee; most like she loveth another. In that case there will doubtless be a scene. Yea, I will enter with thee."

"I am glad of thy company. But I swear to thee my friend Phædrus hath preserved her for me."

"Art sure, art very sure?"

"I could not swear by myself," said Caius, "for I change; but I can swear by Phædrus, for he is adamantine rock."

"Then I will depart. I do not go to a bird-show to hear billing and cooing of doves, but to see the fighting of cocks. Shall I knock for thee?"

"Nay; I will slip within and surprise them."

"Every man to his own foolish way," said Varro, "and mine advice locked in my bosom! But I will say this: I never knew the person surprised to be half as amused as the one who surprised him. Farewell, comrade. I hope thou hast not returned from the Frisian wars to be defeated on thy native soil!"

"Nay; I did pause because of a certain thought. Perchance I can marry this Mary to Phædrus. He is a Thracian, she a Jewess. But we shall see." He passed between the pillars before the door, and finding the door unfastened, entered the hall. It was deserted. He traversed the apartment, and looked into the recep-

tion-room. Julia Silia sat under a high window reading a colored parchment. The sound of footsteps caused the soldier to shrink back involuntarily. He concealed himself in the heavy folds of the curtain that fell across the doorway.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FRIEND.

Julia Silia looked up from her reading. Alexis entered from the doorway opposite that in which Caius Lepidus was concealed. The wounded soldier, being untroubled by a nice shade of delicacy that might have troubled a hero of more modern days, gave his whole attention to the scene within the reception-room. Julia rose, still holding the parchment. The Greek advanced lightly toward her.

“What now?” she asked, coldly.

“Thy lover,” he answered.

“Not so; we have no audience.”

“But let us play before the gods!” he exclaimed, passionately.

“I understand thee not.”

“No matter, beautiful one. Do not trouble thy mind to understand me, if thy heart knoweth my heart.”

“I would Phædrus had heard that!” she exclaimed, smiling. “But why should we practice? Thou dost always act well the lover.”

“With thee for an object, Julia, I need no more practice loving than practice breathing.

Both come by nature. To cease either would mean death. Thou knowest I love thee."

"Oh, where is Phædrus?" cried Julia. "If he could have heard that accent! It almost deceives *me*. No more, Alexis."

"Oh, if I could undeceive thee! If I could make thee think me in earnest—"

"Then I would hate thee!" cried Julia.

"Hate me!" echoed the Greek, looking as if he had received a blow in the face. "Hate me, Julia?"

"Yea; hate and despise. If thou art in earnest, thou hast taken advantage of my friendship. Thou hast deceived me, trifled with thine own honor. At the very first I made thee understand it was an artifice. Since then I have constantly reminded thee. I cannot reproach myself."

His face was white, and his eyes wore the look of a mournful child.

"But what do I say?" cried Julia, her tone changing from anger to lightness. "Thou art not in earnest."

"Nay," said the architect, miserably.

"It was just part of the play," she said, smiling at him brightly.

"That was all," he murmured, brokenly.

"Tell me thou lovest me not."

"I love thee not."

"By Venus and Cupid?"

“Torment me not, Julia. Let us speak of other matters.”

“That I like well. Begin, and I will follow.”

“Julia, the ship comes in three days.”

“Art thou resolved to abide in Greece?”

“I know not. I may go on with thee. I cannot bear to think of parting from thee.”

“And why, O learned architect?”

“I may never see such a face or form again.”

“I will have Phædrus give thee the picture he painted of me. *That* thou canst take with thee.”

“And to what end?” the Greek complained.

“Can I be happy in gazing upon a cold image?”

“At least the picture would belong to thee.”

“And thou, Julia?”

“And I? And I? Why such a melancholy tone and such strange questionings? Leave me to my book, Alexis.”

“Julia, if there was another woman like thee in the world, I would have two hopes of happiness. But perfection is not born twins.”

She laughed. “No one is less perfect than I.”

“Ah, it is a quality of perfection to think so. Is the picture which Phædrus hath painted a good likeness?”

“Yea; thou wouldst think the canvas a mirror that had caught my reflection.”

“Did Phædrus put in that picture the glory of thy raven hair, making each tiny lock as soft

as silk, as rippling as the grasses when the breeze sweeps low the meadows of Campania, and as dark and dreamy as a night that hath put out its stars that it may rest the deeper?"

"In truth, he painted my hair black."

"How did he paint thy face? Is it dark, like the twilight that follows a burning day in Syracuse, when, although the glorious sun hath ridden to repose, night dares not occupy the abandoned field? And did he make thy cheeks as soft as cobwebs floating in the still air, and as clear as the white sails of distant vessels that dimple to the wind, and surging with impetuous blood, like the crimson robe of a princess covered by transparent plates of pearl?"

"He painted me as I am, a brunette—dark, to be sure. I am no German, but a Roman."

"Painted thee as thou art? Ah, but I have seen thee a thousand different things. Do thine eyes burn with anger, or look unutterable love, or shrink with contempt? And are thy lips molded in the flower-curves of a smile, or drawn tense in fury, or turned in the angle of disdain, or grave and pensive, as if they had been kissed to melancholy?"

"Alexis, I will hear thee no more. I will leave thee."

"Forgive me. I know not what I say. When love finds a voice, reason should become deaf."

“Thou hast taken advantage of me. And after declaring thou hast no love for me!”

“I spoke false words. I love thee.”

Julia laughed cruelly. “As much as thou didst love Mary two weeks ago?”

“Unkind Julia! Nay, it is nearly four weeks ago.”

“But didst love her as much?”

“Not by half! Not by the amount she lacks of being so beautiful.”

“And when thou seest one more beautiful than I, wilt love her better?”

“There is none such to be found.”

“But if there is, wilt love her more?”

“How can I tell?”

“Then I can tell thee this, simple Greek—this is no love thou bearest for me!”

“I swear I love thee.”

“It is in vain! Truth laughs at oaths.”

“Then what is this I feel?”

“An artist’s passion, not a lover’s.”

“Teach me I do not love thee, Julia, and I will gladly go to school to thee. Give me a first lesson. Let me press my lips to thine, and if my heart doth not burn with fire and my veins tingle to an excess of exquisite bliss, I will declare my course finished.”

At this point a new voice sounded in the apartment: “Julia Silia, hast thou founded a new school of philosophy?” The speaker was Phæ-

drus, who had overheard the last words of the Greek.

Julia was not discomposed. "Art thou a new pupil?" she inquired, coldly.

"I will be thy pupil," said the poet, "if thou canst teach me to laugh at honor and mock at virtue."

"These were unworthy things to learn," said Julia.

"True. But what canst thou teach except those things that are known to thee?" he retorted, bitterly.

"By Hercules—" began Alexis.

"Leave us!" said Julia, sharply.

"School is dismissed," said Phædrus, in a voice of careful restraint. "Run to thy play, Alexis."

"What am I," cried the Greek, "that I should be treated as a child? By heaven, I am a man, a man, Phædrus!"

"I have oft observed it," replied Phædrus.

"I will not go at thy word!" exclaimed the architect, while tears sprang to his eyes. "Are not the emotions of a Greek as much to be respected as those of a Thracian? My heart is honest and true—"

"True!" echoed Julia, in disdain. "True, true! So is the south wind true to the north as long as it blows that way. But leave us."

"Never!" exclaimed Alexis, passionately.

“I will not be driven from thee though the heavens—”

The face of the maiden flamed. She stamped her foot, and cried vehemently, “Go!”

The young man shrank as from the hot breath of the sirocco. He turned about and left the apartment.

“Poor Alexis!” said Phædrus, bitterly. “He is well trained. Julia Silia, this must end.”

“What must end?”

“He has been with us nearly four weeks. I would not believe what I saw—”

“What hast thou seen?”

“I told myself that the Greek was a fool, but the maiden was the daughter of Silius.”

“Thou wert right in both respects,” said Julia.

Phædrus continued, in the same low, even voice: “I watched you two. I said: ‘Time hangs heavy upon them; why should they not be friends?’ I saw your smiles, your confidences. I trusted thee, I did not fear him. Why should I fear him?”

“Why shouldst thou not?” retorted Julia.

“Why should I not? What was there in this fellow to inspire passion?”

“Phædrus, sure thou art blind! He is the most beautiful man in Italy.”

“The most beautiful! Let beauty be the shield of the weak. He is base-born; an archi-

tect—a fellow who earneth his living with his fingers.”

“I think no less of him on that account. I do not think the highest use to which fingers can be put is in lifting food to the mouth.”

“Thou knowest a Roman lady will not wed a worker.”

“I am a Roman lady, and I have done what pleased me.”

“Besides, he is a Grecian—a barbarian.”

“It ill becometh thee to cast that at his defenseless head. What art thou?”

“What I am has nothing to do with the question. I am not to be considered.”

“Then why dost thou consider me? Leave me alone, and I will leave thee unconsidered.”

“Julia, Julia, if thou lovest this Alexis, thou art not the Julia I have known. Even if thy heart inclines toward him, thou canst not let it have its way.”

“And why not, my guardian?”

“Thou canst not think for an instant of listening to his soft pleadings.”

“One reason, my guardian; one, I pray thee.”

“I have given thee several that the daughter of Silius must recognize.”

“Nay, Phædrus; thou hast said he is a Greek, and an architect. If that is reason, I surely did not recognize it; for I thought it folly in disguise.”

“Julia, to what end is this trifling? Caius Lepidus—”

“Caius Lepidus!” she mocked.

“Thy betrothed, thy future husband—”

“He is like to be the future cause of my death before we have a chance to wed; for to hear the sound of his name is like listening to one tone that has been repeated so oft every nerve shrieks out in protest against another repetition.”

“So shrinks the guilty at the sound of a name to which innocent memories are attached.”

“Guilty? Thou darest to call me guilty? Of what am I guilty? Speak, and speak quickly, while I still deign to listen to thy cruel words. Speak, while I give thee this brief audience.”

“I will speak, for it is my duty.”

“Then do thy duty. Come, begin! Thou hast talked of it for years. Keep me not in suspense.”

“Thou art guilty in this: Thou art betrothed to Caius Lepidus; yet thou dost suffer Alexis to smile into thine eyes, to whisper fond words. Even as I entered, he was pleading for a kiss. Yet he is the one who kissed thee in thy gardens. Thou wert cruelly treated that night. Thine anger hath vanished rarely, that he dares speak of kisses to-day! Thou hast encouraged him in his addresses, thou has drawn him apart—true, not out of my sight, never alone with him until to-day; but yet alone with him in thoughts and

whispered speech. And to-day, being alone with thee, he speaks of kisses! Before that, he must have spoken of love, and before that thou must have smiled upon his hopes. Thou art guilty of all this, Julia Silia, but, by the gods! it shall go no further."

"If all thou sayest, and much more, were true, O guardian, in what am I guilty? Why have not I a right to love Alexis? Why hath he not a right to love me? I was betrothed to Caius Lepidus, but our marriage ceremony annulled the betrothal. Thou knowest I am no longer his betrothed. These are mere words. They do not deceive me. Lepidus hath no right upon me—none whatever, and there is not a lawyer in Rome who would say otherwise; and none knoweth this better than thou. If there is a reason why I should not love Alexis, and marry him, and go with him to his beloved Athens, thou hast not spoken it!"

"Julia, how canst thou marry him when thou art my wife?" he asked, hurriedly.

"Now, now, O Phædrus, thou speakest reason! And whenever thou wouldst touch me and make me understand thee better, appeal to me as thy wife. As my guardian, I have no thought, no impulse, which doth not rise in revolt against thee. As Phædrus the poet, the memory of many years during which I hid a dangerous secret, causeth me to still hide from

thee, and elude thee in whatever way I may. But as my husband, all my thoughts and passions, all my hopes and dreams, and laughter and tears, are thine, thine forever, O Phædrus, my husband—thine forever, my love, my devotion.”

“Be silent, Julia; I cannot bear it!”

“He who bids love be silent, would hush a divine voice. O Phædrus, consider well the ambitions and hopes of men, their forms of pleasure, and their strivings for happiness. What, except love, is worth the best service a life can yield? We must be slaves to some idea or to some emotion. We submit to the power that overrules the soul. Yield to love, my husband; its chains are ornaments, its manacles are bracelets of glory. See me at thy feet—I, the daughter of Silius—pleading for the love of my husband! Let thy heart plead with me and my cause is won. I am thy wife; thou lovest me; we will be happy, happy in this love that surges in my heart and thine, that leaps from thee to me and back again, in the broken words my lips cannot restrain, and in thine austere silence, more eloquent than speech. Nay, seek not to lift me up. I will not be raised from my knees till my prayer is granted. Speak to me, Phædrus—one word; I am thy wife! What has happened? Am I—”

Phædrus caught her as she was about to fall

to the floor. He lifted her gently and placed her upon a divan. She had not entirely fainted, and after he had fanned her for a time she opened her eyes and looked at him.

“Dost thou feel better, little one?” he said, in a half-whisper. Caius Lepidus, from his place of concealment, strained his ears to catch the words.

“Better? Better? Phædrus, speak to me!”

“I do speak to thee, Julia. Dost thou not know me?”

“Do I not know thee?” she repeated. “Foolish one! But speak to me! Tell me—”

“Let us wait till thou art stronger.”

“Nay, be it now, and be it final. Let me know all. Tell me, Phædrus. I could not live through such a scene again. My heart moved to keep the pace of my lips, as if every word of love it would enforce with its own faithful response. And suddenly my heart ceased beating, my breath failed; I thought I was about to die, my husband—to die, and never to hear thee say, ‘I love thee!’ ”

Phædrus sank upon his knees beside the divan, and took both of her hands in his. “Julia, not long since thou didst kneel to me, and ask me for my love. And now I kneel to thee, and pray thee to speak of love no more.”

“I listen, Phædrus. I cannot answer thee.”

“To speak of love no more, Julia; for I am

but a man, weak and loving. Call me not thy husband, for I cannot bear it. I have tried with all my power to silence my heart, and here upon my knees I implore thee to aid me in this battle. O Julia, the thought of love is very sweet, and the thought of thee is dearer than any other thought the earth can offer. Only with thee could I be happy, and only with memories of thee is life supportable. I know not what consolations the world would have afforded, if I had never known thee, for when I wonder what the years would have been without thy knowledge, fancy takes flight and leaves me in that vague wonder. But the night can never be so dark to the child after he has once seen it conquered by the moon. Yea, I love thee; I have loved thee long. When a little child thou didst creep into the inner chamber of my heart; and whenever I dare to unlock that chamber and peep within, there is Julia, a child no longer, alas, but even as thou art.

“But, Julia, there is something better than love, and something nobler than happiness; and if this is ignored, love becomes regret, and happiness dull ashes. I arranged the betrothal between thee and Caius Lepidus, the son of my benefactor. I made a vow that I would preserve thee for him. The last time he went away, he did not ask a renewal of the vow. He believes in me. And rather than prove false to

the faith of a friend I would take my life with mine own hand. He thinks of thee, in the wild forests and among the well-nigh impassable swamps of Lower Germany; beside his camp-fire, at the close of the day, he thinks of thee, and thinking of thee, thoughts of me, his friend, must come as well, and he knows I will be true. And I know I shall be true. And if thou hast respect for me as well as love, thou wilt make it easier for me to prove faithful. For it is not easy. For sometimes when thou speakest, and thy voice enters that inner chamber of my heart and speaks there for the purest ideal of my soul, a wild and fearful longing comes to throw honor, friendship, and vows to the earth, and live with thee in the palace dreams have wrought. But well I know that he who cannot be true to a friend, cannot be true to a wife. If I spurn friendship, I am unworthy of love. Now I have told thee, I have told thee all. Answer my prayer—tell me thou wilt tempt me no longer.”

“Phædrus, when I spoke just now, upon my knees—”

“Yea, Julia. Well! Thou didst not mean the words?”

“Alas! I meant them from my soul!”

“But thou hadst not considered?”

“How could I consider? I had but one thought—it was my despair. I was a prisoner,

“I am Mary. I will tell Phædrus. But where was the doorkeeper?”

“I know not. The door was unfastened. But do not go. I would speak with thee.”

“Art thou in pain, my lord?”

“In pain thou hast well said. But it is not from this arm—no, no! Thou also hast been wounded, I see.”

“Alas, sir! Had I known a stranger would be here, I would have worn my veil. For well I know how this scar leaps to the observer’s eyes, so that he sees naught besides. Well I know! I will call Phædrus.”

“Not yet, fair stranger. Let me tell thee the secret I have learned: Phædrus is the noblest man in Italy! I could not tell him this, but some one I must tell. There is not another such below the peaks of Olympus. He is such a man as teaches all men what they might be; his excellencies show forth the common deficiencies of humanity. His example points out how far we fail from being our best. Cold in demeanor, impassive, austere, he is like a rough, forbidding mountain, in whose depths is found gold enough to gild a hundred mountain-sides.”

“He is thy friend,” said Mary.”

“Most true. He is my friend. I have been proud of victories and trophies, and of honors decreed in my name; but I am prouder of this than of all else—he is my friend! It is better

to be served by one heart than by an army. But to describe such virtue, language is inadequate. How can speech, the necessary contrivance of men, do justice to those spiritual qualities which are so much above the ordinary experience? Only in profound silence and with deep meditation can we render justice to the best that is in us; in heaven they speak neither Latin nor Hebrew."

"Howsoever noble Phædrus may be," said Mary, "such appreciation is a rich reward."

"But, Mary," said Caius, suddenly, "how came the scar upon thy face? It is a cruel wound."

"I will leave thee till I have hidden my face," she said.

"Not till thou hast told me the cause."

"Let me veil my face, my lord."

"The cause, maiden! Who hath marred thy beauty?"

"I struck the blow, sir."

"Thou! What made thee jealous of the world that thou wouldst deny it thy beauty? It was most unkind! For he who wantonly crushes even a flower hath a misdeed to answer for."

"Do not reproach me, my lord, till thou knowest why the blow was struck. I was a prisoner of Tiberius."

"Unfortunate woman! From my soul I pity thee."

“Nay, I will tell thee all—every event. I was carried to Capreæ and inclosed in the harem of Cæsar. When we were led before him, helpless captives, it was my face that won his attention.”

“Unfortunate Mary!” exclaimed Caius. “Hapless the maiden who wins the admiration of an emperor.”

“Hear me, Lepidus. He bade his soldiers lead me to safe-keeping, and on the morrow to deck me out in splendor, and he would marry me with his impious ceremonies. I was taken to the harem again. Left alone in the still night, the thought of the morrow drove me to madness. What could I do? A sharp instrument of iron lay neglected upon the floor. It was not long enough to reach my heart—in my frenzy I would have been untrue to my religion; I would have taken my life. Then came the thought of disfiguring my face, so I would move Tiberius with horror and aversion. It was my only hope. I slowly cut my face as thou seest it. Some bars had been freshly painted. I rubbed the bright colors into the wound. The effect was ghastly. Since then the hues have faded away. Hadst thou seen me then—”

“And this is the cause of the scar?”

“I have told thee.”

“And after that, what happened?”

“Then Alexis came and stole me away, and I escaped to this city—safe, unharmed, unhappy!”

“Alexis loved thee, Mary; this scar cost thee his love; did he know the cause of the wound?”

“Did I not tell him?”

“And he could love thee less for the wound!” exclaimed Caius, in wonder. “I do not understand such a one. Surely he is not altogether a craven, else he would not have sought to rescue thee.”

“He is a Greek,” said Mary, calmly. “Now let me leave thee.”

“Tell me, Mary, if thou lovest this Greek.”

“Not I. I did think to love him, but when this scar cost me his love, it cost him my respect.”

“By the gods, Mary, I would rather that the maiden I loved wore that scar, for such a cause, than to have her ornamented with the most precious jewels. Julia Silia could never have done that brave deed.”

“Dost thou call it a brave deed, Lepidus?”

“As brave as I ever knew. With such a face as thine, and to sacrifice its loveliness in a moment, and forever, as if its beauty were of no value, because honor was so priceless—”

“And yet, my lord, now the danger is past; but the scar remaineth.”

“It is thine ornament. It adorns thee; it is the written proof of valor and virtue.”

“May I now leave thee for the veil?”

“Never, for that cause. Why shouldst thou

veil thy glory? I could love thee for that scar. Nay, shrink not as if I were a stranger. For every woman who does a brave deed, is a sister to all true men. In my wild soldier life in Germany I have had foolish dreams at times, and none of them were more foolish than the thought of pressing the beautiful Julia Silia to my heart and covering her face with kisses. But rather would I kiss that scar than have those dreams realized. For in pressing my lips to that honorable wound, I would drink heroic nectar, and my heart would burn in brotherhood with the gods."

"My lord, I am shamed by these words."

"Is it so, Mary? Virtue blooms sweetest in low places. But the leaves of the red rose are not as fair as the blush that comes when the good are praised."

"My lord, some one comes—God help us! It is he who sent me to Capreæ. He has found me!"

Latinius Latiaris entered from the front court, accompanied by some twenty armed soldiers. By his side was the hired watchman of the outer door, who had proved a traitor to Phædrus. The last to enter the room was Casca, the freedman and accomplice of Latiaris. The disguise of Mary might have saved her had her face been covered. But the scar was too well known to leave a doubt of her identity.

"There she is," cried Latiaris, in an excited voice, pointing toward the shrinking Jewess. "Seize her!"

"Stay!" exclaimed Caius, standing before Mary. "Answer to me, Latinus Latiaris, the cause of this intrusion."

"And is this the son of the cautious and discreet Manius Lepidus?" said Latiaris. "Imitate thy father. Be thoughtful of thy life. Thou canst do nothing against twenty soldiers; besides the which, there are many more outside. But one blow struck against me is a dozen against thine own happiness."

"Good master," spoke up a soldier—the very one who had been chained in the boat with Alexis and Mary as guards, and whom Varro had called Roman Virtue—"shall we delay for arguments, or take her at once?"

"At once!" stormed Latiaris, in a tumult of excitement. "Sayest thou not so, Casca?"

"It is not mine affair," said his accomplice, standing quietly apart.

"Not thine affair? Are not all mine affairs thine?"

"Yea, if they succeed."

"This is no place for jests," said Latiaris, impatiently. "Men, seize her!"

"He who advances," said Caius, "will fall the victim of this sword. I have but one arm against you all; but it shall do the work of two."

“Foolish Lepidus!” said Latiaris. “Bethink thee of the folly of this course. This woman is devoted to Cæsar. She shall be dragged to his sacred feet. Why shouldst thou, also, be his victim?”

“Soldiers, advance upon me,” cried Caius. “But consider that this wounded arm, now bandaged upon my bosom, fought for your Italy in Lower Germany. This sword was never lowered in the Frisian war. I made no retreat. Ye know me and the century I led. If it is such ye make war against, come and shed your brother’s blood!”

“Soldiers of the Prætorian Guard,” cried Latiaris, “if ye hesitate, ye are traitors. If ye hold back, every name shall be reported to Macro. If ye disobey, every one shall pay for his disobedience with his life!”

The soldiers, realizing the truth of these words, rushed forward. Mary had retreated to a corner of the apartment. Caius stood before her, holding his sword in his left hand. The attack was so sudden and violent that one soldier was pushed headlong upon the wounded soldier, his eyes shining with terror, his weapon helpless in his hand. Caius raised his blade to plunge it into the coward heart, when his arm was seized by the iron grasp of Roman Virtue. Disabled as he was, he struggled violently with

his antagonist. Presently he was thrown upon the floor, and a knee pressed upon his bosom.

“Thou art my prisoner!” cried his victor.

“Ah, if I had my right arm!” groaned Caius.

In the mean time Mary had been seized and bound. “Away!” cried Latiaris. “To horse!”

“What shall I do with my prisoner?” demanded the victorious warrior.

“Give him his freedom. He is a Lepidus.”

“Then rise, Lepidus of the one arm. Learn to strike for Cæsar, that honor may attend thy blows.”

“Come!” cried Latiaris. “Why do ye delay?”

“There is a madman in the doorway,” said the one who was dragging Mary forward. Latiaris turned, and discovered a man with drawn sword opposing their exit.

“Who is this?” he thundered. “Out of the way, vile porter! Fight with thine equals.”

“Death is equal to all!” shouted the newcomer. “Attack me who dares!”

Mary’s voice was now heard. “Go, go! Why sacrifice thyself? I forgive thee all. Heed him not, Latiaris.”

“I will not take refuge in my disguise,” cried the man. “I am not a porter; I am an architect. I am Alexis!”

At these words a shout was raised, and a rush made upon him. The keen blade flashed, and a

soldier fell lifeless at his feet. The others recoiled. "Come, valiant prætorians!" he cried, in a fury. "I can slay you all. One Greek arm is better than twenty Roman hearts."

As they still hesitated, for the appearance of Alexis was fearful, the Greek chanced to glance down. He saw the corpse at his feet, and the fire died from his eyes, his face became pallid. The sword trembled in his hand.

"He fears the dead," one whispered.

Alexis dropped his sword. "Have I slain him?" he asked, brokenly. Latiaris seized him by the arm. "Yea, dog; his life thou shalt pay for!"

"Cover it over!" said the Greek. "Merciful gods! How the eyes stare! I will never forget that gaping mouth, that ugly gush of blood. How shall I clear it from my memory!"

"We will see to that!" said Roman Virtue. "Good Latiaris, give this Alexis to me. For I was once his prisoner."

"Then I trust him to thee."

"I saved thy life," said Alexis to his new master.

"Yea, but more fool thou. It was not at my begging."

"Neither do I beg for my life."

"Thou art wise to save thyself the trouble."

"But I do implore thee, Roman, when I am slain, do not mangle me. Do not mar my face.

I showed thee kindness; do this for me; close mine eyes."

"Away!" cried Latiaris. "Our work is done. The Jewess and the Greek—Casca, have I not done well?"

"Very well, O prætor, unless there be a sequel to this story."

"Thou hast always an 'unless' or an 'if' at the roots of thy tongue, dear Casca; but I know thy fidelity. Who is this?"

"Another madman," said a soldier. A man stood in the entrance regarding them.

"By Mars," cried Roman Virtue, "if all these battalions had come at once, instead of being sent to the front one at a time, we might have had a skirmish!"

"What doest thou here?" demanded Latiaris.

"What doest thou?" retorted the stranger.

"This is the emperor's affair. Out of the way."

"This looketh like an adventure," said the man, calmly. "I thought I smelled sport. One dead man—only one! Caius, I thought not that left arm could do as much."

"Nay," said Lepidus, "it was the Greek."

"What! This pale-faced prisoner! I can scarce believe it. Thou wert unkind, Alexis, to hide thy talent from me in our wanderings!"

"Who art thou?" demanded Latiaris.

"If thou didst know who I am," said the man,

drawing himself up to his full height, "thou wouldst tremble!"

"He speaketh like a consul," said one; "yet he is dressed as a lictor."

"Thy name! Quick! In the name of Cæsar!"

"I myself am a Cæsar," said the other, stripping away his false hair and beard. "I am Drusus, the son of Agrippina and the son of Germanicus."

"My lord!" cried Latiaris, falling back, "I hail thee."

"What do ye here?" cried Varro, haughtily; for this was the man known to the reader as Varro. "Why do ye enter private houses and steal away defenseless maidens and milk-faced Greeks? Though, by the deified Augustus, I thought not, Alexis, this gift was in thee!"

Latiaris began, "This maiden was the destined bride of—"

Varro interrupted him. "And dost not know that when Tiberius heard of this scar upon her cheek he gave orders for the search to be suspended?"

"Indeed we knew it not."

"Ye would insult your emperor by taking to him this defaced—yea, this ugly damsel? Ye will face his wrath, after the order that Mary be allowed to escape?"

"Indeed, my lord—"

"Soldiers!" cried Varro. "Here I see some

of the brave veterans who fought under my father. Did ye love Germanicus?"

A shout rang in the apartment, for there had been no hero in Italy as popular as Germanicus since the death of Julius Cæsar.

"Hear me, then, the son of Germanicus. This false Latinius Latiaris hath played with you. He knew right well that Tiberius would scorn this Jewess. He was not going to take her to Capreæ! Nay; this ex-prætor hath himself a love for the virgin. He is haling her away to his own palace. He would make you accomplices. But I, Drusus, am here to protect her virtue, and to expose his villainy. Tiberius hath sent me hither to see that the exiles are safely placed aboard the ship for Asia. All who came with Latiaris are turned over to me as my bodyguard. Here is the order."

He drew a parchment from his bosom, and showed it to the chief captain. "Go tell the news to those outside, and bid them repair to the garrison and await my orders."

"Noble Drusus," said Latiaris, whose face was almost pitiable in its craven terror, "I swear to thee by the gods I knew nothing of all this. Have mercy upon me, my lord, for I am innocent."

"Innocent? A thousand crimes incrust thy soul. Art thou not the murderer of Titius Sabinus?"

“Nay, my lord; he was tried by the senate and his death legally decreed.”

“But thou wert the informer. Enough. I will not have thee slain, but beaten merely. Who among you will beat me this craven wretch?”

“I,” said Casca, standing forth.

Latinus uttered a wailing scream. “Thou, O Casca, my friend, my trusted companion?”

“How many lashes?” demanded Casca, coolly.

“Give him a hundred, fellow. But thou wert his friend?”

“Not I,” said Casca. “No one is my friend but Casca.”

“Wretch!” screamed Latinus, “did I not give thee thy freedom, make thee rich and happy, share with thee my secrets? What more could I give thee than liberty, wealth, and love?”

“Where shall I beat him?” inquired Casca.

“In the public streets. But I pray thee take him so far from here that we shall not be annoyed by his shrieking. If I misjudge not, this is the kind who scream when they are lashed.”

“O Casca, Casca!” wailed the ex-prætor; “and I did love thee well, only thee! For thy sake I divorced my wife, betrayed my friends!”

“Is it true, Casca,” Varro asked, “that he loved thee?”

Casca shrugged his shoulders. “I believe he loved me, noble prince.”

“Then I am glad I chose thee to scourge him. Our hardest blows are from those whom once we loved!”

When Mary was released, she fled to the inner chamber, where Julia Silia crouched, terrified by the clamor. They were together when Varro entered, accompanied by Alexis and Caius Lepidus. At the sight of him to whom she had been betrothed, Julia uttered a low cry and trembled with apprehension.

“Wilt thou not greet me, Julia?” Caius asked. She extended her hand.

“And where is Phædrus?” asked Varro.

“He went forth; he is unhappy.” Varro returned to the front hall. “Roman Virtue, hunt me out Phædrus, and fetch him hither.”

Returning, he said: “But, Alexis, why art thou so white? Methinks thy deed should make thy blood leap with joy!”

“I see his eyes,” muttered the Greek.

“Alexis,” said Mary, “I owe thee thanks for seeking to save me. I did not think thou wouldst have done that for me.”

“Alas, maiden,” said Alexis, “thou dost not understand me. No one understands me. But I know I have a true heart; I am not a villain, I am not weak. I do respect thee with all my soul. I would do very much for thee, and it would make me happy to give thee happiness. It is a curse upon me that thy scarred

face causes me to shrink. By the gods, I know thou art as worthy as before that scar, but I cannot, I cannot love thee, not if I died trying!"

"Why shouldst thou love her?" exclaimed Caius Lepidus, sharply, "seeing that she careth for thee not at all! Have no fear for Mary. She will not remain unloved."

"Sayest thou so?" cried Alexis, his face suddenly beaming. "O Caius, canst thou love her?"

Caius glanced at Mary. "I cannot keep from loving," he said, softly. "And more than her dark hair and satin cheek, I love that sacred wound."

"Now the gods be thanked!" cried Alexis. "Thou hast made me happy, so that I can sing once more without my heart aching to hear music in the world. And thou canst look upon her face, and note the scar, and feel for her a love complete?"

"As complete as my heart can hold."

"It is a marvelous thing! I cannot say what a load is rolled from my heart. And doth she love thee?"

"Not she," returned Caius, still glancing at the blushing maiden. "But by the time we reach Asia she shall love me—I swear it! For I also will go upon this voyage."

"And I," said Varro. "For if I am not gone

hence in a week's time, I shall never more play Drusus!"

"Art thou Drusus or Varro?" demanded Alexis.

"Here is Phædrus," said Varro.

The poet entered in haste, doubtless alarmed by the report he had heard of the invasion of his rented house. He stopped in confusion at the sight of so many acquaintances in the room where he had taken his mournful parting from Julia. It was not long before his eyes signaled out his old friend.

"Caius Lepidus!" he cried, white but composed. He advanced with a regular step, and seized the hand of his friend.

"Phædrus, I greet thee. Art thou glad to see me?"

"Caius Lepidus, I have been true!"

"Phædrus, here is thy reward!" He led him to the divan and joined his hand to that of Julia. "She is thy wife. If thou canst love her as well as I love this Mary, the gods are not rich enough to give thee happiness, for she will give thee all that can be endured."

"Alas!" cried Alexis. "Why do I stand here, an isolated Greek, a man too many? Who was the hero of this story, Varro? I thought it would be Alexis!"

"Phædrus is the hero," said Varro; "for he

was true. But I have yet a story to create, in which I shall be the hero. Remember me when thou redest the future."

"I shall not go with them to Asia," continued Alexis, as Phædrus and Julia whispered together, and Caius and Mary talked apart. "That Caius can love Mary with her scarred face is my admiration and my joy; but that Julia can love Phædrus maketh my heart to burn, for she is beautiful. And the thought that this summer-night's loveliness, this expanded rose of womanhood, this exquisite perfection of rich and warm beauty is his, and his forever—ah, Varro, what shall I do?"

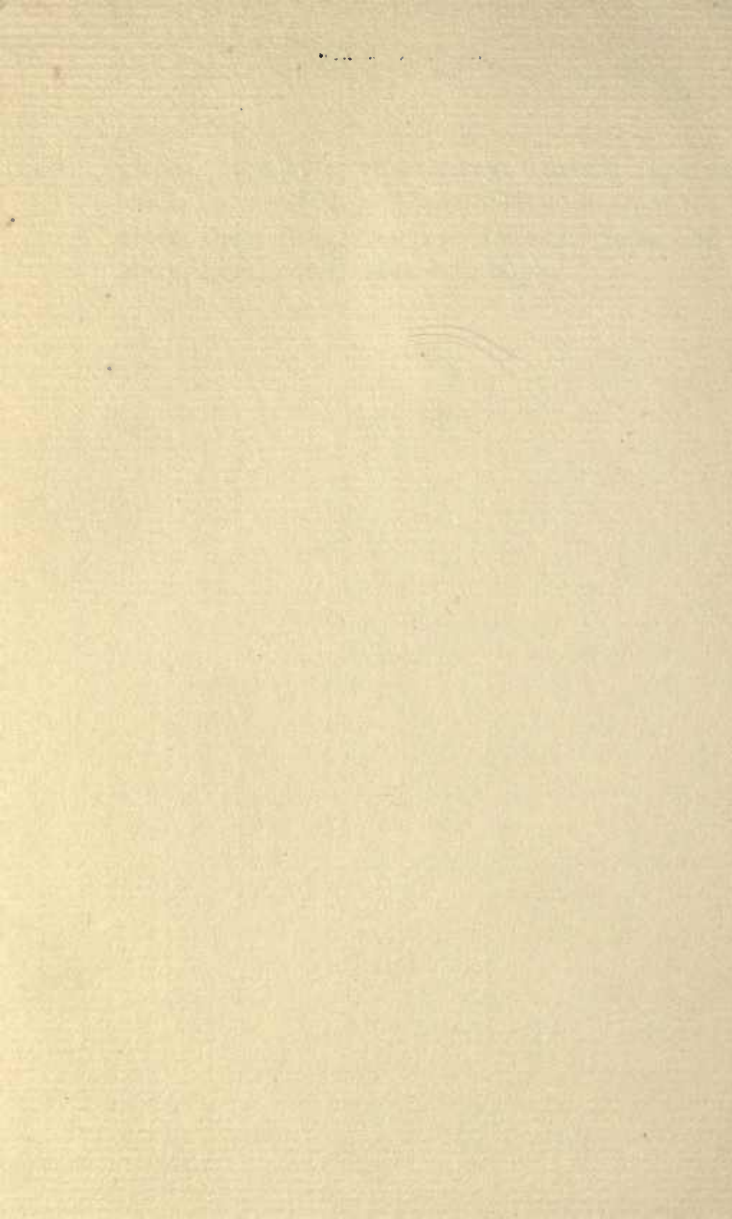
"Come with me, Alexis, and we will seek adventures in Asia. I will be Drusus, and thou shalt be my chief captain."

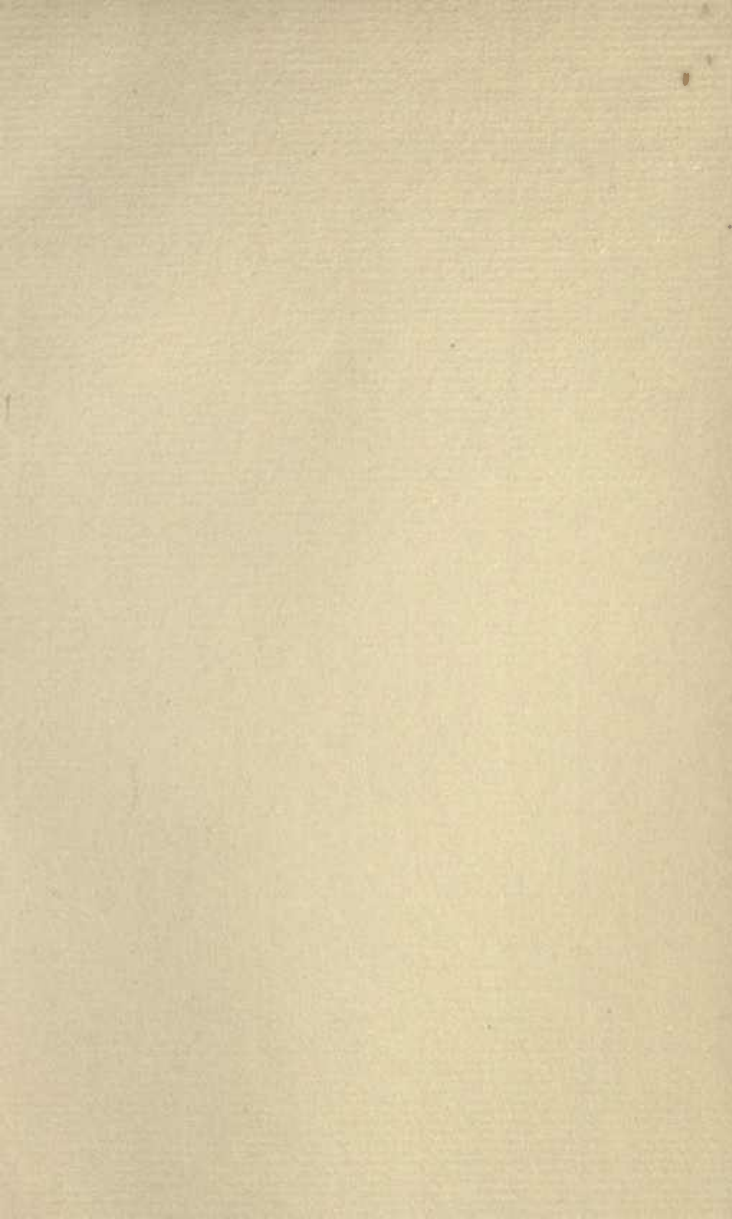
Alexis shuddered. "Adventures! Nay, go thy way; I will to Athens, and to my little maid. I will wait for her to grow up, for she is a perfect child. I will teach her to love me, and she shall make me happy. She will not be another Julia Silia, but she will do, Varro—yea, she must do."

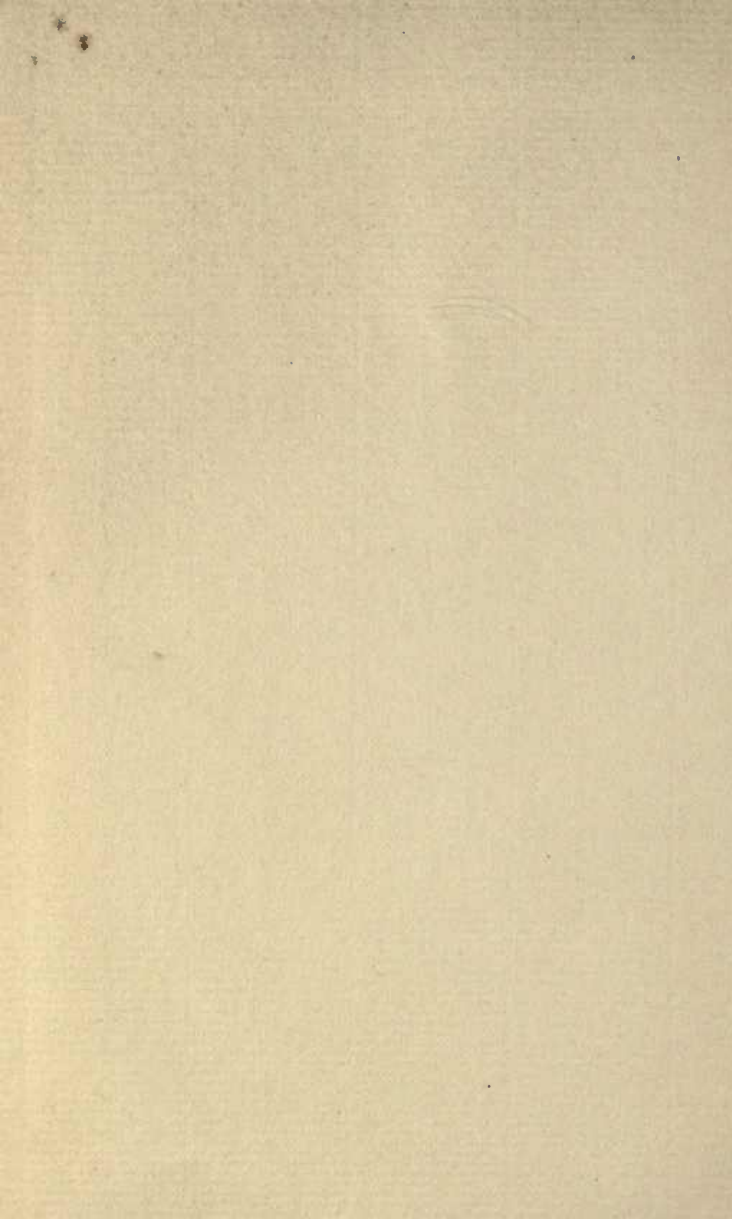
The pages of Tacitus relate how Varro, the son of Marcus Silanus (and not Silius, as he had told Alexis) stirred up all Asia and Greece a few years later by his successful impersonation of Prince Drusus. The remarkable similarity be-

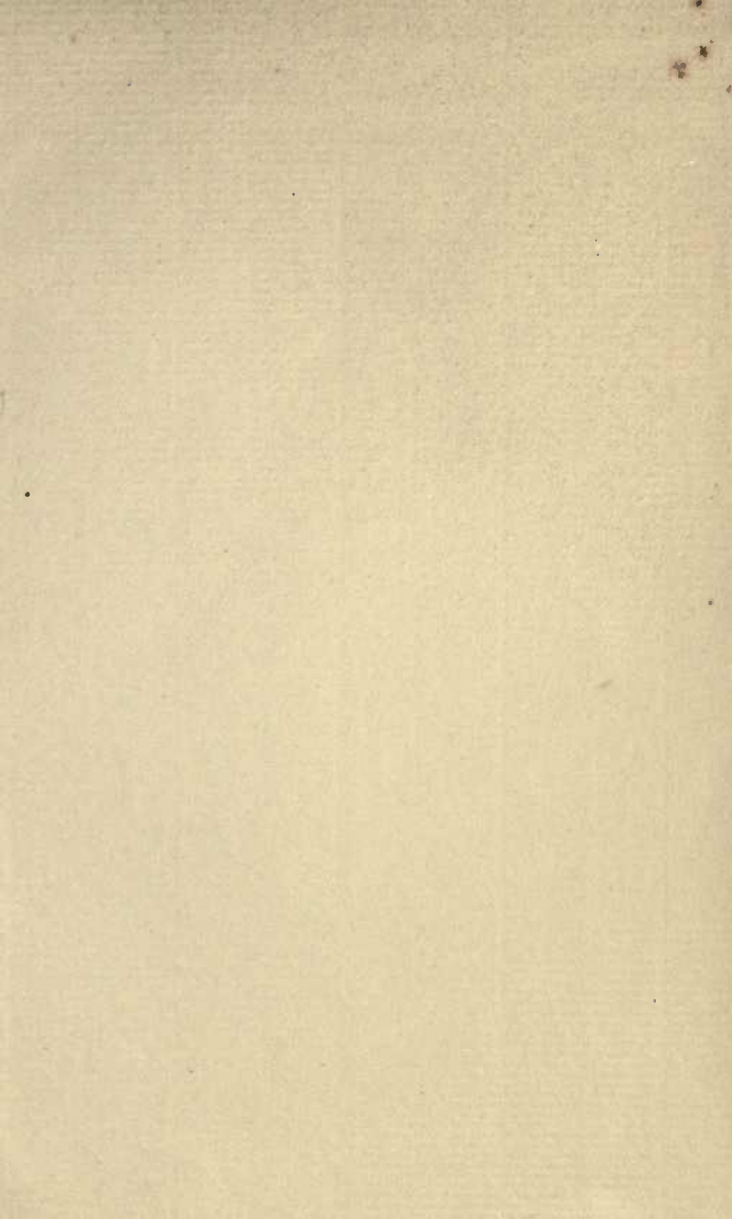
tween these two gained him many eager partisans, who perhaps were willing to be deceived. After many charming adventures, during which he held his court in various cities, and was surrounded by every luxury, he was detected by Poppæus Sabinus. He escaped punishment, however, and lived many years in that age of shortened lives. He was occasionally a guest at the Grecian home of Alexis, now the husband of his Athens maid, and the father of the two prettiest little girls in all the isles of Greece.

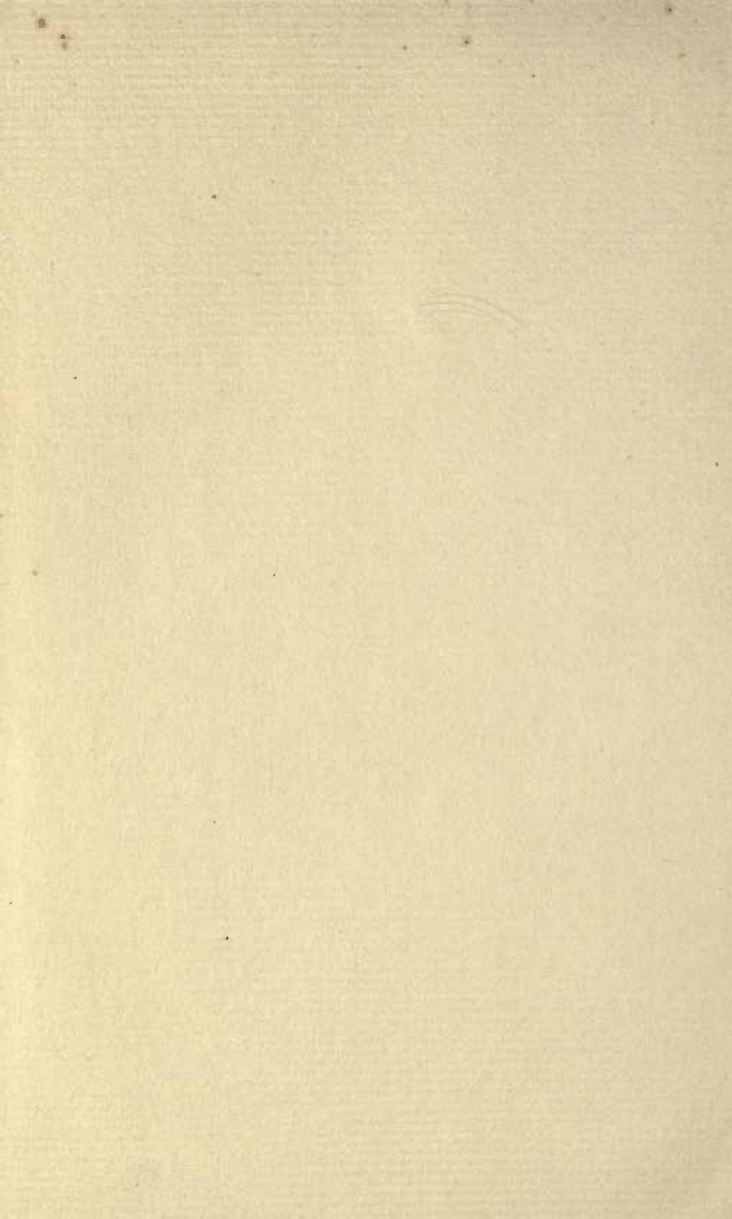
From the same historian we learn the fate of Latinus Latiaris. He who had brought about the death of Titius Sabinus, by acting as informer, was himself impeached by a new informer, Gallio. The fate he had brought to the adopted father of Julia Silia he himself suffered. Casca aided in his downfall, and in turn shared his master's doom. Phædrus, the poet, was content to live in exile, hence we search Roman history in vain for an account of his after life. His poetry belonged to the world, and is still its inheritance, but his life belonged to Julia Silia, and was none the less happy because it was lived far from the public eye. Even so lived Mary and Caius Lepidus. The reign of terror continued in Rome; the intrigues of the nobles and the immorality of the aristocracy increased; armies marched to war, and many of the greatest citizens committed suicide as an

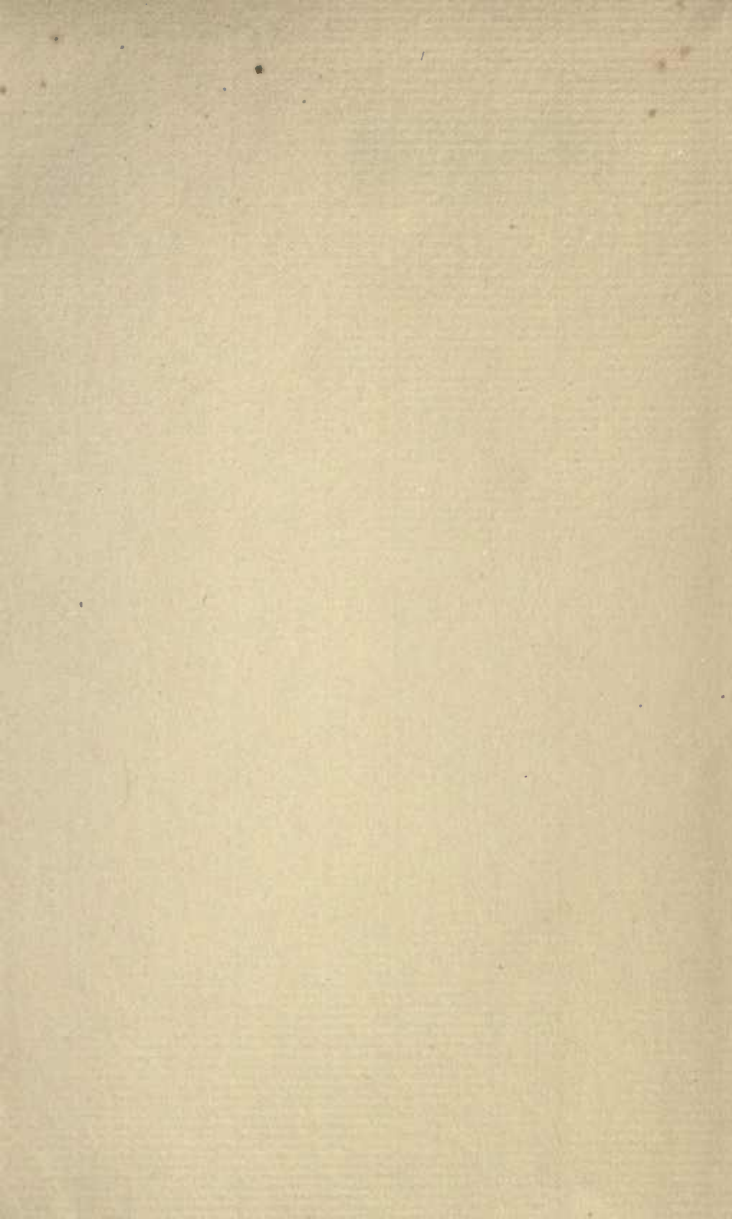


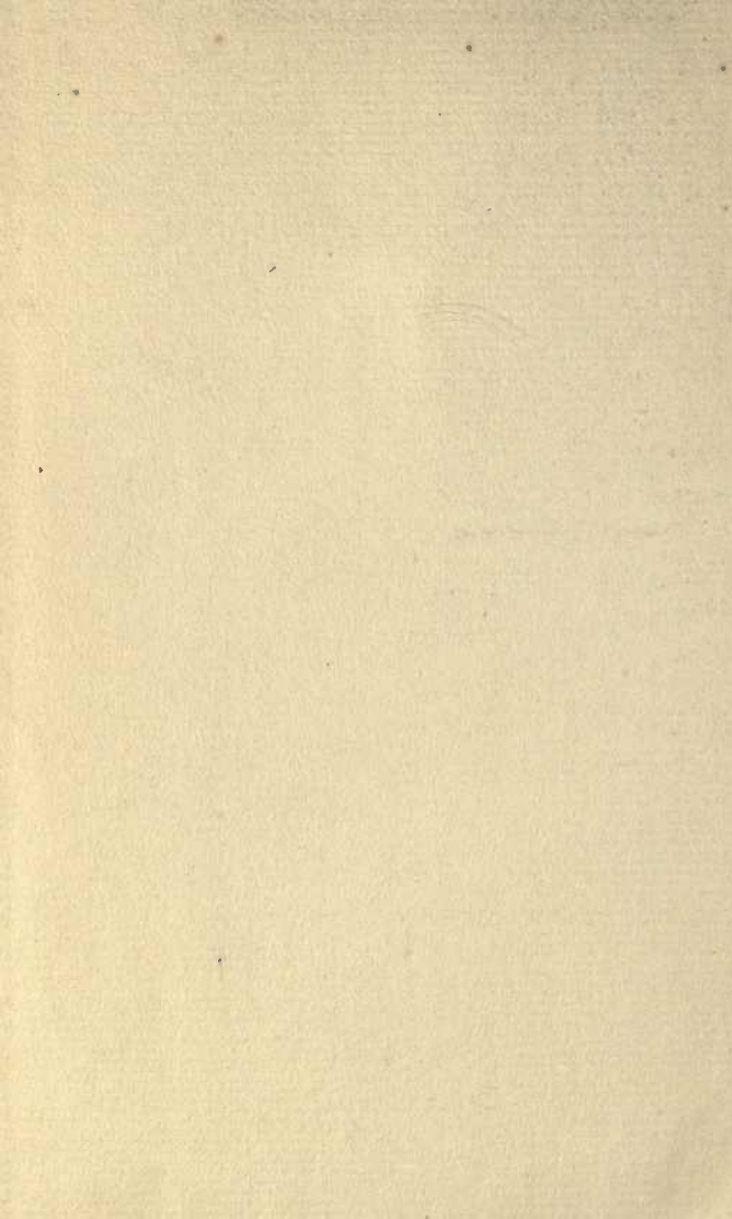












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