



HOW WE GOT THE GREATEST  
BOOK IN THE WORLD



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THE STORY  
OF  
DHAEDRUS

HOW WE GOT THE  
GREATEST BOOK  
IN THE WORLD --

NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS

*with Illustrations by*  
GEORGE WILLIS BARDWELL

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Originality is of two kinds, that which says a thing first, and that which says a thing best. Jesus discovered the four greatest truths ever set forth by the human intellect, and He not only said these four things first, but He said them best. He was unique through His discovery of the equality of woman and man, the equality of peasant and prince, the equality of the races, and the equality of two worlds, heaven and earth, bound together by the love of God to sinful man.

PHAEDRVS



IHS

“WHILE READING THEM I SAW THE HEAVENS OPENED”

To

THE MAYFLOWER AND HOME SCHOOL OF  
PLYMOUTH CHURCH



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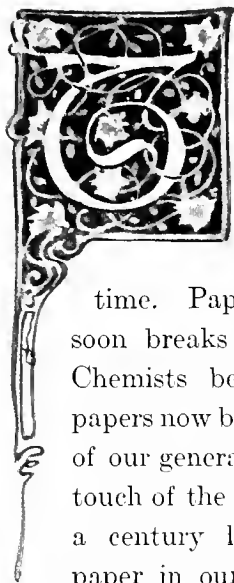




FOREWORD



## FOREWORD



THE experts tell us our modern paper is so brittle as to make it uncertain whether any book of the twentieth century will survive two hundred years of time. Paper made from wood fibre soon breaks and passes into dust. Chemists believe the daily newspapers now being preserved as records of our generation will crumble at the touch of the hand that turns the page a century hence. Even the linen paper in our most carefully printed books has been treated with acid, and in a damp climate will soon perish. Fortu-

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nately, the era of Paul and his Master was an era when scholars used good ink and stout papyrus, that their literary materials might endure. Fortunately, also, the climate of Egypt and the Orient is dry, and without extremes of heat and cold.

The skilful hands that sealed the tombs of kings and priests buried with their rolls and parchments. The story of Columbus' discovery of a new continent is not more fascinating and romantic than the story of the rediscovery of the old world of intellect now being told through the spade of the archæologist. Literally tons of papyri, that have been buried for centuries, have been taken from the tombs of Egypt. If no new discoveries are made, the work of translating the thousands of rolls now in existence will for years occupy the scholars of Europe and

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the United States. Old tombs, old bricks, old rolls are throwing a flood of light upon the story of Jesus and the founding of His church. Every morning scholars wake to expectancy, not knowing but the day may bring the translation of a roll of papyrus that will take us back to the lifetime of the Man of Galilee.

New literary and archæological discoveries have carried the date of the Memorabilia of Jesus back to about 65 A.D. Professor Harnack thinks that the Gospels of Mark and Luke were in existence during the year 62 A.D., and that the author who compiled these gospels must have been acquainted with Paul and his letters. Some experts in the same field date the Memorabilia of the Master a few years earlier, and some a little later. Only thirty-five summers and winters lie between the assassination of Abraham Lin-

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coln and the death of President McKinley ; and the new discoveries indicate that the death of Jesus and the first record of his career were separated by not more than thirty or forty years. We know how the two disciples, Xenophon and Plato, came to write the Memorabilia of their master, — the tragedy of the cup of poison, and the dying words of Socrates cast a spell upon these disciples. Plato and Xenophon went forth to search out reminiscences, that they might leave to later ages the full story of the noblest man that ever walked the streets of Athens. But Jesus' music was sweeter than Athenian music ; His epic was a world epic, and His song a universal melody for all races and all ages. Like Socrates, the Man of Galilee died, leaving no written page ; so bitter, also, was the persecution against His disciples, that in a little while the Twelve

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were mobbed to death. But when death had stilled the brave men who could speak of what their own eyes had seen and their own ears had heard, His friends began to realize the need of a written record of their Master's career. The graves of the Twelve were scattered over three continents ; in these towns, so widely separated, there dwelt those who had some record, now a parable, now a proverb, now a letter, now a longer roll. To bring together these memorabilia, some lover of his Master, like young Xenophon or Plato, went forth, within thirty years of Christ's death, to gather the reminiscences of that Saviour, whose music was sweeter than that of Orpheus, whose eloquence dimmed Apollo's speech.

No one knows at whose hands the world has received its most precious literary treasure. We must assume that some noble

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youth went everywhither, collecting the reminiscences of shepherds, soldiers, artisans, and fishermen, and later assembled in his priceless collection bits of leather, goat-skin, parchment, inscriptions on wood, and on metal, written by many hands, and in several languages, in many lands, until at last these records were brought together in a full story. The next generation may be more disturbed over New Testament criticism than were men twenty years ago over the literary analysis of the Pentateuch. The coming debate may bring a stormy discussion. But the storm that will rage through the boughs of the tree will soon die out; the tree, divinely planted, will live and grow, ever ripening new clusters for new pilgrims. One thing is certain, — recent discoveries in the East prove that Mark, Luke, and Matthew used a common source for many of their

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pages. What God inspired was the life, and not the record, of that divinely inspired life. Many scholars call the unknown but common source of the Gospels "Q." Who made that first common collection, no one knows. Perhaps we have the Memorabilia of Jesus at the hands of some young slave who stole a roll, or a piece of goatskin that held a rich and musical saying of the Master — a slave who was transformed by the reading of the roll, and who tried to right the wrong he had done by going up and down the world, risking life itself to bring together the broken papyri that, long afterwards, were found in a chest in the house of an old wheat merchant in Ephesus.

NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS.







I

A

Literary Slave  
and  
An Old Library

I

# THE STORY OF PHÆDRUS

## HOW WE GOT THE GREATEST BOOK IN THE WORLD

### CHAPTER I

#### A LITERARY SLAVE AND AN OLD LIBRARY



**P**HÆDRUS

was a literary slave. Of late he had become hard and bitter, and no boy ever had better reason for hate and rebellion. Within two years he had gone from the uttermost of good fortune to the uttermost of pain and sorrow. The son of a Greek merchant of Mitylene, he had spent all his life in

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a rich man's house, with slaves of his own to fetch and carry. But Phædrus, his father, had incurred the jealousy of Hermon, the governor. Avaricious and jealous of his subject's wealth, the Roman official had cast about for some means of bringing low this rich merchant. One afternoon the boy Phædrus had returned from his games to find soldiers standing before his father's home, and on the gate a notice with these words: —

“The Property of the Emperor.”

Then had come his father's arrest, his journey to Rome for trial, the news of his death, and the confiscation of his property. Worst of all, when the family slaves were sold at auction, the name of the boy Phædrus had headed the list. One thing only had saved the patrician youth from the drudgery of the fields: he had been well taught. He knew Latin

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as well as Greek; he could decorate, with a delicate and subtle imagery, the manuscripts which in those days took the place of books. And when his new master, the Roman governor, had been transferred to Ephesus, he had taken with him as his secretary the son of the Greek patrician he had hated.

Since early morning Phædrus had been in the library working on the speech his master was to deliver that evening. All about his feet lay the rolls and parchments from which he had taken the bright sayings and the wise proverbs that his master loved. It was a typical library of that far-off day. There were no shelves with books upon them, — the library was more like a modern post-office, with rolls thrust into the pigeonholes, instead of our letters and papers. Phædrus' duty was to put the rolls in place, to keep the covers

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new and bright, to see that the manuscripts with their initials of blue and crimson were not left in the sun, where the light could fade their rich colors.

Winter was upon the earth, December had come, and with it the games and sports of the Saturnalia. The feast always began on the 18th of December, and continued until the 25th, which was the last great day of the celebration. This year the feast had taken on a certain fierce note of joy that turned banquets into orgies. It so happened that at the beginning of December, Phædrus' master, Hermon, laden with rich spoil, had returned with his legion of soldiers from a campaign in the interior. Ostensibly, they had gone forth to put down a rebellion, but, in fact, they had brought back treasures which justified the suspicion that theirs had been merely a loot-

## A LITERARY SLAVE

ing expedition. The military field was several miles beyond the outskirts of the city, and for one full week the citizens had gone forth day by day to watch the caravans toiling slowly in; pack-horses, laden with wheat and rye and barley; oxen, drawing rude carts, filled with casks of oil and wine; mules, plodding wearily under bales of wool and linen, rugs and tapestries; herds of cattle and sheep and goats, with hundreds of Arabian horses.

To-night, in response to the old soldier's invitation, a few of the leading men of Ephesus were to come in, to celebrate the success of his expedition. Phædrus closed his eyes and saw the picture in advance. It would be his part to meet the litters as they arrived, to loop back the curtains and help the guests alight; then to lead the way into the large reception room, where Hermon would be standing,—

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sour and grim, like a scarred old lion among his spoils. There would be many guests, much laughter and drinking, and keen interest in the collection of curios which was the old soldier's pride. But no one would ask to see the library: the delicate rolls with their rich colors and marvellous lettering would lie all untouched and forgotten in the other room, where the intellect had its home.

Phædrus sighed, as he watched his fellow slaves moving swiftly about the room, alert and excited by the thought of the coming entertainment. The event brought gloom to the young Greek, and a bitter reminder of the light and laughter of a world to which he had once belonged, but from whose golden threshold he was now shut out forever.

Simonides, the oldest slave in Hermon's retinue, came and stood beside him. The



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old man had always been a slave, but he understood none the less the tragedy of Phædrus' broken life. He touched Phædrus' arm, as if half afraid to interrupt the boy's reflections.

"Can I help you?" he asked simply.

Nothing is as moving as compassion, and the old man's gentle offer choked the boy.

"Thank you," Phædrus answered. "There is no need. I have only to put away these rolls."

But as if stirred by an instinctive desire for sympathy, he lifted no finger upon the parchments lying about him.

"Will there be many guests here to-night?" asked Simonides, as he bent to raise two of the longer manuscripts from the floor.

"Not many. It is not a state affair."

A voice sounded in the doorway. "Phædrus!"

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The slave who kept the outer gate stood beckoning. It seemed that a Greek merchant wished to see the governor. Would Phædrus explain to the gentleman that the master was not in?

The boy gripped Simonides' arm affectionately.

"Do not bother," he whispered: "I will put the rolls back, myself." Then Phædrus left the library, and made his way to the reception hall.

The house was like most houses belonging to the patrician class of that day: built of brick, and lined with marble. It measured about one hundred feet across the front, with long wings that extended far into the rear. Between the two wings was an open court, and to the rear of this, surrounded by palms, was another, inner court, the very heart of the house. About these courts were distributed the curios

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and the treasures which the old soldier had brought home from his campaign, — fragments of altars, marbles, bronzes, strange carvings, shields taken from the temple of Mars, idols overlaid with precious metals and studded with gems. Through all this piled-up treasure, Phædrus passed hurriedly to the outer court, which opened upon a double row of box-alder trees leading down to the gate.

On the threshold stood an elderly man, whom Phædrus recognized at once. He was a wheat merchant, Nicias, a Greek by birth, and the owner of a line of ships. With his white hair, his ruddy cheeks, and his air of stately dignity, this old man made a striking figure. Success had set her stamp upon him; distinction was in his slightest gesture; and there was withal an indefinable graciousness about him, a kind of generous charity that

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seemed to warm the very atmosphere around him. It was as if gentle old Simonides, humble of birth and kind of heart, had been transformed by some wizard's touch into a wealthy nobleman. Here was a man heavy with the weight of years and honors, yet buoyed up by the sense of peace which comes from a kind heart.

Partly because both loved books, partly because both were Greek by birth, there was at once a bond of sympathy between the rich ship owner Nicias, and the literary slave. Phædrus smiled with pleasure as he asked the merchant to enter, and explained that Hermon was for the moment absent. Nicias, it seemed, had come upon a matter of importance; he would wait. So Phædrus led the guest into the library, and beckoned to a slave boy who brought a little tray with cakes and wine.

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The merchant glanced at the rolls and manuscripts upon the floor, and then up at Phædrus.

“I will have a look at your books,” he said kindly, “until your master comes.”

Phædrus was delighted. He selected one of the finest rolls, and spread it out upon a table which Simonides brought and set before the merchant. Nicias gazed at the manuscript in evident amazement.

“I knew,” he said, “that your master was widely known as a soldier; I did not know that he was a collector of rare books.” There was an undercurrent of humor in his voice. Phædrus caught it, and smiled.

“It used to be a saying of my father’s,” he answered, “that men always talk down their strongest gift, and overestimate their second talent. Hermon is a soldier; therefore, he wishes to be known as a speaker. If he were an orator, he would probably

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wish he were a merchant. Being a military governor, he regrets that he is not a writer."

Nicias looked up sharply. The little speech was as surprising as it was formal and precise.

"Who was your father?"

Phædrus colored.

"My father was the merchant Phædron, of Mitylene."

Nicias dropped his eyes. He had often heard the tale, and he was curious to know more of the boy whose fate all Mitylene had once mourned. He took up the roll again and fingered it idly.

"But where does Hermon find such literary treasure? I did not know there was so rare a copy in Ephesus."

Phædrus' expression hardened.

"Hermon has not owned this roll long. He — brought it back from his last campaign."

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“And he found it in what city?”

“In Iconium.”

Nicias turned a shrewd gaze upon the boy.

“Found it?”

Phædrus shrugged his shoulders.

“It was given him, then.”

The old man laughed softly.

“If you would have a library,” he continued, “become a soldier! And what was the particular reason why the owner of this copy made Hermon a present of it?” He paused an instant. “Of course, you do not know, — definitely; but has any rumor been spread — perhaps an ill-founded rumor —” here the old man’s eyes sparkled, “concerning the possible manner of its acquisition?”

Phædrus laughed aloud.

“I have not — as you say — heard definitely. But rumor has it — perhaps an

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ill-founded rumor — that the owner of this copy failed to pay his taxes without notice in advance.”

The old man nodded.

“Without notice,” he said. “Exactly.”

Simonides approached, bearing one of the tapestries Hermon had lately brought home from the war.

“Your master tells me,” Nicias continued, “he has acquired a new altar. He says there is a piece broken off one corner, and that the broken piece indicates —”

Phædrus smiled.

“I know. I will get it.” He waited for the merchant’s glance of permission; then turned to leave the room.

Simonides stopped him.

“Perhaps Nicias would like to see the marble from Persia that is in the outer court.”

Phædrus wondered, suddenly, at the old



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slave's audacity in suggesting anything to so great a man as Nicias. What astonished him even more was Nicias' eager assent to the suggestion. In perplexity, Phædrus hurried out of the room. He found the fragment, caught it up, and turned quickly back to the library. As he neared the door he thought he heard voices, — Simonides' voice, — and again he experienced a vague feeling of surprise. But it was not until he reached the door that he realized the meaning of the incident. Then he caught himself and stopped, on the very threshold.

Nicias was standing with his back to the door, one arm thrown over the shoulder of the old slave. Simonides was deeply interested in what the merchant was saying. Neither heard the boy's swift step.

In a flash Phædrus understood that it had all been planned ; the broken fragment,

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the errand in the distant room, the hour of Nicias' call. In a flash, also, he realized that he must not surprise the two men. He stepped softly back into the hallway; moved, tip-toe, a dozen paces from the door, and then executed a noisy stumble on the marble pavement. This time, as he entered, Nicias was standing looking at a copy of the Iliad, while Simonides, several paces distant, stood holding the tray with the wine and cakes.

Phædrus held out the marble fragment, but his fingers trembled as he unfastened the silk wrappings. The voice of suspicion clamored within him; a secret instinct warned him that something strange and ominous was taking place in his master's house. What! Nicias, arm in arm with a slave! The thing was unheard of. A rich man, the friend of a miserable old house servant! Phædrus

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could not grasp it. He himself was a rich man's son;—he was something of a scholar; he had been but a short time in the position of literary slave and he understood the wheat merchant, by breeding and by intuition. But what could rich Nicias have in common with old, scarred, ignorant Simonides, who had been a slave from his very childhood? It is difficult for the modern to realize the place of the slave in Phædrus' day. Between the master and the servant of that era a great gulf was dugged. Egypt had a million slaves, all treated like cattle. The master had his servant killed to settle a dispute between his guests; had him tortured for a mistake in serving at a banquet; crucified him for stepping upon some pet animal. Nothing was too cruel, nothing too terrible, for the slave to suffer. And while occasionally there

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was a master who was kind to his slaves, the very rarity of such an attitude made it dangerous. The slave body was always on the brink of revolt; the master dwelt ever above a volcano.

Phædrus knew this; he felt that Nicias knew it, and a hundred questions filled his mind. At that very moment, Ephesus was in a panic of terror over her slaves. The news of the successful revolt of the bondsmen of North Italy had sent a shudder over the Empire. From a town in Sicily had come the story of slaves who had slain their masters and possessed themselves of the shops and stores, of the fields and vineyards. The governor of Ephesus had taken precautions against a similar outbreak in his own city. All meetings of slaves for any purpose whatsoever were forbidden. Two slaves passing in the market-place might not even

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stop for conversation. Orders had gone out that the bondsmen were to begin work at daylight and end at dark, at which time each master was to call the roll within the walls of his house, and see that all the gates were locked. As there were five slaves to one master, the peril and public excitement were only natural. Even in modern times a man with iron nails in his shoes walks softly in a powder factory.

All this passed through Phædrus' mind, as he stood holding the marble fragment for Nicias' inspection.

Nicias was speaking quietly, without the least indication of excitement.

"A fine piece of work," he was saying, "a Parian marble, carved by an Athenian chisel!" He took the marble from Phædrus' hands, and examined it with the interest of a connoisseur. The action was so simple, and the interest so real and un-

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feigned, that for an instant it quite disarmed the boy. Then the old man Nicias spoke again.

“The hour is late. I must let my business with Hermon go until later.” He laid the fragment on the little table, and arose.

Simonides came forward, and gathered up the manuscripts. The slave boy took the tray with the wine and cakes. Phædrus led Nicias to the outer door, down through the garden, between the rows of box-alders to the gate. There, four slaves stood waiting with torches and a litter.

As he took his seat, Nicias smiled up at Phædrus, with the winning manner which had made him his many friends.

“Some other time,” he said quietly, “I will look at Hermon’s manuscripts more carefully.”

Phædrus understood that this was the

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rich man's only possible word of gratitude in the presence of the other slaves.

As he made his way up the path to the house, Phædrus' mind turned inevitably towards old Simonides. Plainly there was some mystery about this slave. He was lame, he was stooped, he was broken in strength. He was homely, and unattractive, yet he was easily the favorite of both master and mistress. There was something about Simonides that Phædrus could not understand. The other servants were stronger and younger, yet always they evaded their work; Simonides invariably asked for the heaviest burden. The other slaves were ever looking for a quarrel, and when the brawl became unbearable, it was old Simonides who was called in to settle the dispute.

As for Phædrus himself, he made a constant fight against bitterness and anger.

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His whole being was poisoned through and through with hate. Each day was to him a sepulchre full of ghastly memories. Suicide seemed the only good thing that life held. Yet here was Simonides, old, crippled, inferior in position, but who for some unaccountable reason was lovable, sunny, full of hope, carrying good cheer, sleeping in peace, and awakening to happiness !

Simonides was alone in the library when Phædrus returned. The old slave had replaced the last roll, but he seemed to Phædrus to be lingering, as if to make sure that the boy suspected nothing.

Phædrus flung himself down upon the couch near the window and watched the old man as he moved about the room. Mystery there was ; but what sort of mystery, what plot, Phædrus could not imagine. Somehow, he found it difficult



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to think of Simonides plotting any kind of treachery. Yet he could not but reflect that an outbreak against Hermon was only to be expected. After all, to hate such a man was only natural. With the thought came the desire to be in the plot himself. Hermon had ruined his father; had killed Phædrus with a shower of cowardly blows; revenge would be very sweet to the boy who had suffered many things of late at his master's hands.

Phædrus was young; for him, to think was to act, and he resolved, on the instant, to find out the secret of the old slave's friendship with the merchant.

"Simonides," he said suddenly, "you sent me for the marble in the outer court."

The old slave looked up sharply.

"Why," continued Phædrus, "did you want to get me out of the library? Per-

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haps —” Phædrus hesitated — “it did not take me as long to return as —”

Simonides’ face went white. He straightened suddenly, made as if to speak, then closed his lips again.

Phædrus continued, quietly, reflectively, almost as if talking to himself.

“Why should the richest man in Ephesus talk confidentially with the slave of the governor? Why should Nicias, the ship-owner, deal secretly with Simonides, the servant? Why —” Phædrus dropped his voice to a whisper — “should Nicias be found standing with his arm across Simonides’ shoulder —”

Simonides extended a trembling hand.

“Wait!” A strange note of authority was in his voice, something Phædrus had never heard there before. “Do you suppose —” he crossed the room swiftly — “do you suppose Hermon would

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believe your charge of conspiracy if I denied it? You do not understand."

He stood above Phædrus. The boy was surprised to see that there was no anger, no malignancy in his face.

"You saw nothing!" Simonides went on. "If you try to prove you did, you will fail. Your word against Nicias' and mine! Which" — Simonides almost seemed to smile — "do you think would be believed?"

Phædrus touched the old man's arm.

"You mistake me," he said, "I have no desire to betray you. You are the only friend" — Phædrus dwelt lovingly on the word — "the only real friend I have in the world. But some secret there is! I want to be with you. I am not a child. If there is to be a — if Hermon is to be — if —"

In his excitement Phædrus raised himself on the couch.

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“Simonides, let me help you! Let me work with you; let me strike a blow against the man we both hate. You can trust me. You can use me! I am young; I can do things you could not do! Give me —”

Simonides gripped the boy's shoulder. His eyes were suddenly full of light.

“You do not understand. I am guilty of no plot. There is to be no attack on Hermon. There is to be no bloodshed. There is —” His voice lost its intensity. “You are on the wrong track.”

But Phædrus was not to be put off.

“Very well, tell me your secret! I'll help you; I don't ask for anything; I don't want any part of the —” he hesitated for a word.

Simonides smiled somewhat bitterly. He stood silent for an instant; then, in a whisper he answered:—

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“Listen! this secret plan is not what you think it is. It is a revolution, but not the kind of a revolution you hope for. You may not want to join us when you understand Nicias. If it were discovered that you — or we — belong to this — movement, it would mean our death, yes, death by torture.”

Phædrus nodded.

“I know,” he whispered.

“If I should take you,” Simonides continued, “to a secret meeting at midnight” — he gazed piercingly into the boy’s eyes — “and you were to betray us, it would mean not only your death, but the death of every one at the meeting! For the soldiers would make you tell” — Simonides paused significantly — “before you died.”

He stopped, as if deliberating the matter in his own mind.

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“It is a risk, but everything is a risk — with us.” Suddenly he caught the boy’s arm — “You will not betray us?”

Phædrus winced under the pressure of the old man’s grasp.

“Upon my honor.”

“Very well. I am one of the followers” — Simonides spoke so low that Phædrus barely caught the words — “of the ‘Way.’ You want an uprising of the slaves. You believe in the knife, the sword, the club, poison. But there is a better plan. I am not educated; I cannot explain it, but Nicias can. Come with me to his house to-night. There is to be a meeting. Nicias will make all clear to you!” Simonides’ grasp loosened. “I have been planning to take you with me for a long while. It is better to know the ‘Way.’” — his voice took on a note of reverence — “than to have freedom and gold!”

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Phædrus' heart was pounding; nothing had so moved him since the news of his father's death. But he was still perplexed.

"I will come," he whispered, "but I don't understand. Why should Nicias invite you, a slave, unless it is a plot? Are you sure" — he glanced up sharply — "are you sure he is playing fair? What if he is spying upon you? Perhaps this is a scheme to betray you."

Simonides smiled as he shook his head.

"Do not fear! He will not betray us."

A step sounded in the court outside.

"If you play fair with us, and keep our secret —" Simonides stopped, as the little slave boy entered the room, and then moved away. A bell tinkled in the inner court. It was time to make the final arrangements for the evening's entertainment.

\* \* \* \* \*

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Hours later, after the last guest had gone, and the other slaves had climbed up the pegs set in the stone wall to the little cubby-hole where they slept, Phædrus lay on the couch in the library, staring into the darkness. His mind was all aglow with excitement. The thought of the torture that might follow discovery terrified him; pain and blows he could not endure. His thoughts went back over the last two years; he recalled a slave he had seen thrown into an artificial lake for spilling wine upon his master's garment. The very memory of the thing made him shiver. One thing was sure: Hermon would soon discover Nicias' plan, and the old wheat merchant would lose his gold, his silver, and his gems, as Phædrus' father had lost his. Simonides would pay the penalty with his life, and other victims would suffer a like punishment. And he — Phædrus —



## A LITERARY SLAVE

would he be among their number, or would he play the coward now, to-night, while there was yet time ?

The memory of his father's tragedy set the boy thinking. If Nicias was to lose his treasures, why should Hermon gain them ? Why not he — Phædrus ? Why not outwit the man who had once outwitted his father ? At daybreak a ship was to sail for Rome. His own hand but yesterday had carried a package down to the wharf. With gold to buy his passage, he could make his way to Rome and find the place of hiding in the crowded streets of the capital. Theft was bad, but better than slavery !

Then Memory waved her wand. Once again he was rich and free, and a boy in his father's garden. Once more he heard his father tell him why he had chosen the name of Phædrus. "It was because of all

## THE STORY OF PHÆDRUS

the books of Plato I loved best the one called 'Phædrus'; and that is why I want you to commit to memory these pages from the master Plato."

Lying there on the couch, Phædrus closed his eyes tightly and heard the voice of his father reciting the old story.

"One day Athens was crowded with strangers. When the sun was warm in the market-place, Socrates said to Plato and Phædrus, 'Shall we not go into the country, and find a quiet nook, and there talk about truth and justice and immortality?' And when they had agreed, all made their way out to the outskirts of the city, and came to the banks of the little river Illyssus. When they had found a grassy spot, and a plane tree that offered shelter from the sun, they sat themselves down, while all day

## A LITERARY SLAVE

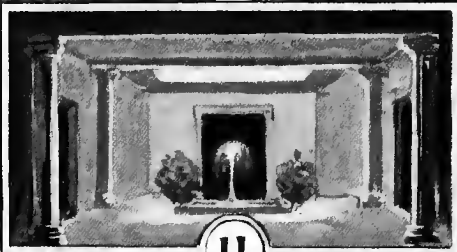
long Socrates made the hours travel on swift feet, until suddenly the sun stood like a ball of fire on the western horizon.

“Then they knew the time had come when they must return to the city, and the thought that this flood of golden talk must cease, made all silent. When a few minutes had passed by, suddenly Socrates said in a low voice, —

“Phædrus, would it not be well for us to say a prayer to the gods, before we return to the city ?”

“And when Phædrus had assented, Socrates lifted up his voice, and prayed after this manner : —

“Beloved Pan ! and all ye other gods who here abide, grant me to be beautiful within ; having made my life symmetrical without, make it harmonious within. Teach me that the wise man is also the rich man. Forbid that I should ever own



II

**T**he Secret Meeting  
in the  
House of Nicias

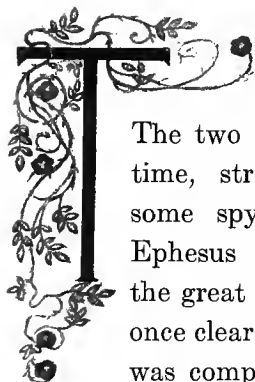
II

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## CHAPTER II

### THE HOUSE OF NICIAS



THE road was dark, silent and deserted. The two slaves stood for a long time, straining their ears lest some spy be following them. Ephesus was asleep; all life in the great city was dead, so that once clear of the house, their risk was comparatively small. With infinite care they traversed the first few yards away from the familiar gate; then, becoming accustomed to the darkness, they abandoned caution, and moved forward at a more rapid pace. There was a warm wind blowing; the air was fresh and sweet; Phædrus found his

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spirits mounting on wings of hope. As yet he scarcely realized his excitement.

The highway they were following was to Ephesus what the Appian Way was to Rome. For centuries it had been the artery of commerce for innumerable caravans coming from the rich interior. Phædrus thought of the heroes who had followed this road, and his heart beat faster, and the blood ran swifter in his veins. Along this way had gone Xenophon, with his Ten Thousand, to make the most thrilling march in history. Along this road had passed the boaster, Xerxes, publishing victory in advance, and returning in the van of a defeated army. Over this road also had gone young Alexander, to sow all the East with the good seed of Greek learning. Here, too, had passed, though Phædrus did not know it, a tent-maker, who was to prove himself more



## THE HOUSE OF NICIAS

powerful than armies and regiments of kings.

Nicias' villa was in the outskirts of the city, a good two miles' walk from Hermon's city house. Only once did the slaves hear footsteps; then they met a belated stranger, hastening with his servants to reach the shelter of the city. Simonides said little, and Phædrus did not attempt to question him. In silence the two came to the stone wall which enclosed Nicias' garden. Here Simonides left the high-road and entered a lane which followed the garden wall for some distance back from the street. There, half hidden among the vines and quite invisible to the younger man, was a small wicket gate. Simonides found the latch, as if familiar with the place from long acquaintance, and Phædrus, obeying the silent pressure of the old man's arm,

## THE STORY OF PHÆDRUS

bowed his head, and stepped through the narrow door into the garden.

A dark shape loomed beside him. A hand fell upon his arm. Fear — a horrible fear of betrayal — flashed through the boy's brain. Then Simonides whispered the password, and a moment later Phædrus found himself with the old slave at his elbow, feeling his way in the dark along the gravel path.

At the door of the house the same caution was repeated: servants, it appeared, were on guard at every entrance. Simonides entered first, whispering the watchword in advance; an instant later Phædrus stood beside him, in the court of the merchant's house.

Even here there were no lights. Phædrus had a sensation as of being surrounded by people; all about him he caught the quick breathing of other

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men ; instinctively he felt for Simonides' arm.

Suddenly a curtain was flung back from a door on the other side of the room, and Phædrus caught a glimpse of a lighted room beyond, with the figure of the merchant, Nicias, in the doorway. The group moved forward. Phædrus breathed more freely. Apparently everything was planned.

The room into which they were moving was the typical room of the rich man's house of that day. In the centre was a small fountain ; round about the falling water were palms and brilliant plants. The floor was of tessellated marble, the walls of terra cotta, and the frescoes on the ceiling represented Proserpine, scattering flowers, and Ceres, sitting amidst her shocks and sheaves. It all seemed strangely familiar to Phædrus, — it was

## THE STORY OF PHÆDRUS

so like the large court in the house where he had spent his childhood. But what stirred the note of wonder was the group of people there.

To his amazement, he saw two or three of the richest merchants of Ephesus; he saw a Hebrew money-lender, and a man of Damascus who dealt in silks and rugs. Here, too, were several slaves, with the brand upon the forehead, and the hole cut in the ear. Here also were several rich Greeks who had brought their wives with them, and — wonder of wonders! — the men were greeting these women as friends and equals. Phædrus looked upon the scene with ever increasing amazement. His experience of the afternoon had prepared him somewhat for the presence of the slaves; but to see women, among a company of men! Phædrus had the old idea that a woman should never be seen

## THE HOUSE OF NICIAS

in such a company: it was unseemly. Yet here were the wives of Greek merchants, and the daughter of a money-lender, all unveiled and talking, apparently, with the greatest freedom.

Before he had time to question Simonides about this, the others began to seat themselves. The meeting, it seemed, was about to begin. Nicias' servant had brought in long divans, and Simonides motioned Phædrus to a place beside him. Their host was arranging something behind the marble table,—making ready for the meeting.

The murmur of conversation filled the room. Plainly Nicias was waiting for some one to come, before beginning the meeting. Patrician and slave, all were talking freely together, and talking as if glad of the opportunity. Phædrus' eyes swept the little company. For twenty

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years he had lived in a rich man's house, and he knew how to meet men, yet realizing he was now a slave, Phædrus became conscious of embarrassment.

Suddenly he noticed a fresco on the opposite wall. It was a panel, beautifully painted, and one of a series extending around the room. Simonides followed the boy's glance, and spoke for the first time.

"Begin at the far corner," he said, "the panels tell a story."

Phædrus looked. The first fresco showed a house, set back from the road with the entrance half hidden by vines and flowers. In the open window stood an old man, looking down into the garden upon a girl, who was lifting an apron filled with flowers. Pride and love shone in the face of the father; purity and sweetness in the eyes of the girl. Underneath the panel was the word "Innocence."

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The second panel showed a different scene, — an open-air vista, across a marble terrace looking over a little river. Pleasure boats were rocking on the waters; on the terrace were men and women, eating and drinking, while in the distance groups of boys and maidens danced and sang among the trees. But the heart of the panel — the glowing centre of attraction — was the figure of a beautiful girl. Plainly, it was the same girl who but yesterday had been gathering roses in her father's garden. The white flowers were swaying and trembling now; a youth was kneeling to offer a cup of flattery and of flame. Will the bird be caught in the snare? Will the moth, with its brilliant wings, venture too near the burning candle? The theme was "The Hour of Temptation."

"This gives the next chapter," said

## THE STORY OF PHÆDRUS

Simonides, who clearly understood the series.

The third panel, to which he was pointing, showed the same pleasure-garden, but no longer were there signs of revelry. A stranger had appeared, a young carpenter, with a blue robe thrown over his shoulders. The eyes of the crowd had left the girl and were now turned toward the newcomer. He stood in the foreground, silently looking upon the girl, who made the most brilliant figure in the scene. Some strange fascination seemed to be his,—the players had dropped their dice; the slaves who had been carrying fruit and wine from guest to guest were standing motionless; the beautiful girl was leaning forward, gazing into the stranger's face. The teacher was plainly dressed, but he seemed to exhale power, like a compelling atmosphere. His face had a rare, sweet beauty.



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He was looking at the girl as if he was through and beyond her. He spoke no word. Pity and compassion stood in his eyes, like angels standing in an open window. Apprehension showed clearly in the girl's face. The theme of this panel was "The Coming of Fear."

The next panel was very different. It showed the same fair girl, now seated in a ruined hut. Gone the soft, silken couch! Gone the spiced wine and the rich foods! Gone the jewels and the splendor! The beautiful face was now hidden behind a black hood. The girl was alone, on her knees and sobbing.

The last panel pictured another banqueting room, this time in a merchant's house. Against the three sides of the room were couches, on which the guests were reclining. All about, leaning on the casements of the open windows, and filling

## THE STORY OF PHÆDRUS

the halls, stood a crowd that pressed and surged against the rich man's house. The central figure of the scene was that Teacher whose look had so strangely disconcerted the beautiful girl in the earlier panel. The people were now looking upon this man as upon their idol, their hero, and it was plain that he held the populace in the hollow of his hand. Near him, at the foot of his couch, was a young girl, a dark figure, with bowed head. Instantly Phædrus recognized her as the girl whose career the other panels had depicted. Her hands clasped the Master's feet, her hair fell like a veil about her. As she knelt, she seemed clothed with a dignity and sweetness that lent double allurements. Hers was a fascination that she had never had before, not even in that hour when she stood with her apron filled with flowers in her father's

## THE HOUSE OF NICIAS

garden. This time, the theme was "The Return of Hope."

Phædrus did not understand the picture. The story was not familiar to him, and the figures in the last scene touched no chord of association. Simonides, watching the boy, perceived his bewilderment.

"She was forgiven much," he said softly, "because she loved much."

Suddenly Phædrus realized that some one was speaking, and he saw that it was a woman, the sister of Nicias, his host. The conversation had ceased; but Phædrus could not believe the meeting had really begun. Filled with a sense of wonder, the Greek boy listened to the woman's words.

"Whether or not," she was saying, "the men of Greece follow the Master, all the women will. Too long we have had to work in silence, content to be neither seen nor heard when men were near. In my

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childhood I was always asking my father questions, and in my youth I was always being told to keep still and stay in my place. I remember that when first of all I heard that the great Pericles loved Aspasia because she was so wise in counsel, I said I wanted to be like her; but my father made me keep silent, urging that every woman that was educated was also evil.

“I was even told that Sappho wrote her poems that she might the more easily, through her genius, lead men astray. Without my father’s knowledge I learned how to read. One of the first things I read was that page of Aristophanes where he says that there are only three kinds of women: the gadding woman, who goes around gossiping about her neighbors; the spendthrift woman, who wastes her husband’s money; and the true woman,

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who is as busy and as silent as a bee, save when she uses her sting.

“As a girl I used to hate this night because it was the time of the Saturnalia; now, because our Master was born of woman on this night, it is become the night of nights for all the women of the world. For the Master taught that women have a bigger, better part to play in the world; He filled up the gulf between men and women, as He filled up that other gulf between master and slave. When I learned that, I knew that He would bring us the Golden Age. Bacchus and Venus spoil a woman and drag her down; the Master lifts her out of the depths, and whispers hope, even to the lowest flower-girl on the streets.”

The voice ceased, but Phædrus' mind raced on, busy with this strange new suggestion, that woman has the art of

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putting things and can make harsh laws gentle and humane.

He was awakened from his reflections by the voice of his own companion, Simonides, addressing the gathering in firm, confident tones. It was clear that the old slave was speaking in answer to some signal from Nicias.

“It is a year to-night,” Simonides began, “that one of Nicias’ servants first brought me here. For thirty years I have been a slave. You think I am a very old man, because my hair is white and my body stooped. Well, I am old, though hardly more than forty years of age. I came here that first night, sullen, bitter, and full of hate. Weeks before, I had decided to kill my master, and flee to the mountains. But on that night, I learned that I had been given a piece of work to do, and I found for the first time what that work was.

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“Some of you pity me because I am a bondsman, old and broken. But I tell you truly that if I were free, I would get myself sold back into slavery for the chance that I have to tell the story of the first Christmas night to my fellow slaves who endure the lash and are driven like dogs into the fields. I am only a slave, but I have found out that life is not for freedom nor for food nor for happiness; life is for pity, for sympathy, and for love. This year it has been given to me to light a torch and to put it into the hands of a score of bondsmen that have been out in the dark and lost in the black night. Henceforth you must not pity me. For a year one slave has been happy and free in his heart.”

So astounded was Phædrus that he could scarcely believe his own ears. He began to realize that all eloquence is born of sincerity.

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And now the spell was broken by a group reëntering the room. Nicias came first, carrying in his hands two golden cups. By his side walked a gray-haired man, carrying a plate of white bread. Behind, came two others, carrying an oaken chest which was placed upon the marble table. It was the stroke of midnight. Nicias took from the box a roll of manuscripts. Phædrus' eyes were quick; he saw that the rolls were yellow and broken, sadly stained by travel and much use. Nicias handled the rolls as if they were title deeds, ensuring nothing less than a throne to his heirs. When all eyes were fixed upon the chest and its treasures, the merchant held up his hand and began to speak.

“For reasons of safety we have long been separated. But this night is the Holy Night, on which we feel it right to



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take great peril upon ourselves. Tomorrow is December the twenty-fifth, and Ephesus will celebrate the Saturnalia. Other men will welcome the day with feasts and sports and orgies. We, too, will greet the morn, but we will welcome it upon our knees, and with tears of gratitude, for on this night of nights joy had its real birth. This night last year found some of you masters, while some of you were slaves. But he who was born on this holy night filled up that chasm, and made master and slave to be brothers and friends.

“You know that this meeting is illegal, that if it were known, we would all be punished by death. But in the hope of bringing happiness to others, you have taken your lives in your hands, and gladly do you run this risk. You wish to hear again the story of this night, and why it is

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that on the eve of His birth we have counted life itself not dear to us, that we might celebrate His coming to our earth.”

The old man lifted a little square piece of goatskin and holding a torch above his head began to read.

“And there were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not, for behold I bring you tidings of great joy, that shall be to all people. Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good-will toward men.’”

When the voice of the old merchant stayed, Phædrus saw that the little group seemed in a rapture, lifted, as it were, quite out of themselves. The two waxen tapers, standing in their iron sockets, shed a pale light upon the scene, but Nicias’ face seemed to glow, as he looked upward like one who saw the heavens opened.

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Then a servant entered, leading a little child. Nicias stooped, and taking the boy in his arms, turned toward the group and began once more to speak.

“This is also the night of joy for children, as it is the night of the Saturnalia for the men of Ephesus. Hitherto our philosophers have undervalued little children. Our Plato would have had us strangle the weak babe, and leave the sick child to be exposed in the public square for any one who cared to take it and rear it as a slave. Even the Roman, Cicero, criticised his friend for sorrow over the death of a child who was too young to work. But the Master told the little children to come unto Him, and we are trying to rear these children who have been deserted by their parents. This boy, taken out of the hands of the slave dealer, is like a lamb rescued from the eagle and the wolf.”

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The old man spread out his hands, and touched the little forehead with a drop of water. "My child," he said, "I dedicate you to the pure heart and the gentle spirit ! With this new name, I dedicate you to righteousness, joy, and peace ! I dedicate you to God your Father, to the Master and Saviour of men."

Phædrus had been growing more and more excited. He was utterly unable to make out what all these things might mean. He had never before heard of the teachings of this new Teacher, and the strangeness of His doctrines struck him like a blow. But it was plain that this slain leader had achieved a very miracle of influence over His followers. That influence seemed to him unexplainable ; Phædrus found it almost impossible to believe that these people could have loved their lost leader and yet linger so affectionately over

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his death. It was as if they fondled that awful tragedy, and loved to rehearse it over and over to themselves! But he knew right well that they had taken life itself into their hands; that one hint to his own master would mean their arrest, the confiscation of their property, and their certain death. Many a slave would have given anything to have had his chance to betray Nicias and the other rich men of this little gathering.

Singularly enough, the thought of playing false no longer seriously entered his mind.

But one thought did burn in his brain, and set his heart beating fast. To-morrow at daybreak the imperial ship would sail for Rome, and it was the last ship of the winter. And here, within the reach of his hand, was a table holding a cup of solid gold, two silver plates, a purse filled

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with offerings of gold and silver. Here, also, were rolls and a piece of goatskin for which Nicias must have given much treasure. The hour was midnight, — darkness was abroad, and escape would not be difficult. What could be easier than to slip into the shadows of the garden and, after the others had gone, return and take this treasure? The god of fortune might never offer another such door of escape.

It was at this very moment that one of Nicias' servants entered hurriedly, and whispered something in the merchant's ear. Nicias' son sprang up and left the room. Instinctively the group of people rose to their feet. Voices sounded in another room. The agitation spread. Nicias' son returned. He held up his hands for silence.

“My brothers,” he said, with a voice

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trembling with excitement, "there is some one at the front gate.

"It may be a belated acquaintance. But we cannot be too careful. Let all the lights be extinguished. Let no one speak. I will lead the way down the path to the gate in the rear of the garden. Our men will see that there is no one in the lane. Then, if there is no danger, at intervals of a few minutes each, let each one go softly into the street, and find his way to his own home."

The excitement was intense. Every follower knew his peril. A little child began to sob with fear. Phædrus heard a woman's voice quieting that fear.

A fierce joy rose in the heart of the literary slave. What incredible good fortune had suddenly come! Phædrus was the last to leave the room. Nicias had gone to the front gate, his son was already

## THE STORY OF PHÆDRUS

in the garden; both had forgotten the treasure on the table. The opportunity for which the youth had longed with exceeding longing had suddenly arrived.

He put out his hand in the dark and found, on a chair, the cloak that Nicias' son had left behind. As he slipped the garment over his shoulders, he discovered, on the inside, a great pocket. With a mind stimulated to sudden activity he recalled seeing a silk scarf lying on a divan in one corner. Quickly he felt his way across the room; with trembling fingers he caught up the scarf and stuffed it into the wide pocket of the cloak; then he felt his way back to the table with its treasure. Carefully he grasped the golden cup and silver plates, and dropped them, one by one, into the silken resting place. In the dark, his hand struck the rolls which Nicias had been reading;



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he remembered their probable value, and slipped them under his cloak.

A moment later he overtook the little company, now far down the garden path. Soon came the whispered news that the street was quiet. Hidden in the shadows, Phædrus waited until the little group had melted into the night. He went out last of all, and paused, with a sense of immeasurable relief, while the gate clicked to behind him. With scarcely a breath, much less a sound, he crept softly into the dark, that he might avoid the old slave Simonides. On the other side of the lane was an untilled field; he felt for the wall with his hands, and climbed carefully over, dropping down, breathless, upon the dead grass. There he lay, waiting until the high-road should be once more deserted, that he might make his way to the wharf and board the ship that was to sail for Rome.

III



**T**HE STRATEGY  
OF SIMONIDES.

III

## CHAPTER III

### THE STRATEGY OF SIMONIDES



WHEN Phædrus finally reached the wharf, it was still a great while before day. The night was dark, and the wind out of the mountains cut like a knife, but he shivered less with fear than with nervous excitement. The boy fully realized his danger.

Some of the sailors were standing about a fire which they had kindled upon the pavement, and Phædrus could see them stretching out their hands toward the flame. Other

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sailors were carrying the last of the cargo aboard the ship. Suddenly a chance word caught Phædrus' ear. The tide, said the voice, would be full at daybreak; they would sail shortly after sunrise.

Plainly, whatever Phædrus did must be done quickly. Fortunately he knew something about the shipping office. No ship left Ephesus for Rome without his master's sending some letters to be forwarded to the home office.

With quick resolve, he drew about his shoulders the cloak that he had taken from the chair in Nicias' house. The texture was soft to his fingers; he knew that this was a gentleman's cloak, and it made him feel rich and free again. In shaking off the garb of the slave, he had shaken off all feeling of subservience with it.

There were two or three men in the shipping-office, preparing their final papers

## THE STRATEGY OF SIMONIDES

for the city officials. In a socket against the wall stood a huge wax torch, and the waving flame threw a weak, flickering light into the corners of the little room. Standing at a table was a gray-haired man. Something in his appearance startled Phædrus. He seemed strangely familiar, and the boy waited in some anxiety for him to turn his face.

He did not have to wait long; the man turned, and Phædrus saw, with a great shock, that this was the gray-haired guest who had carried in the cups and plates, assisting Nicias in that ceremony in the house of the old wheat merchant a few hours before. For a single moment the boy lost all self-control. The blood pounded in his ears.

Did swifter vengeance ever overtake a crime? There were thousands of men

## THE STORY OF PHÆDRUS

in Ephesus; why was it that almost the only man who could do him damage stood here, between himself and the trip to Rome?

The voice of the man quickly brought him to his senses.

“And what can I do for you, this cold morning?”

The voice was pleasant; the agent had not recognized his customer. A wave of relief swept over the young slave. Hope was not yet gone.

Phædrus swallowed hard, and found his voice.

“I wish to obtain a passage to Rome.”

“This ship does not go directly to Rome. We put in at Crete to-morrow night, and from there we sail for Puteoli. From that city, you can take a carriage up to Rome, if you wish to journey by land.”

## THE STRATEGY OF SIMONIDES

Phædrus nodded, "I will take a passage to Puteoli."

He placed a piece of gold upon the counter, and while the man turned to prepare the receipt, tried to pull himself together. Never had a pendulum swung so swiftly from dark to light, from fear to hope. He had escaped, but only by a hair's breadth. And then the youth began to reflect:—

What if this gray-haired man knew that in this bundle at his feet were the rolls Nicias held so dear! What if he but dreamed that this very piece of gold with which he was paying his passage had been given as a thank-offering at that celebration, a few hours before? Why, this signet-ring might have once belonged to the gray-haired man himself! Surely if the cup and rolls and plate could ever speak, they must break into protest now.

## THE STORY OF PHÆDRUS

The man's voice startled him again.

"Your city?"

Phædrus caught his breath.

"I am of Mitylene."

"And your name?"

Phædrus had foreseen that question.

"You may register me as Phædron, a Greek merchant."

The man looked up swiftly.

"Phædron of Mitylene? Why, that is strange! For years we shipped goods for a man named Phædron from Mitylene. He had an agent in Ostia, and another in Rome. Are you of his family? I knew him well."

In his emotion, Phædrus almost forgot his peril. This man had known his father! Had talked with him, had known how true and just a man he was! The thought was like a stab in the heart. Now he must deceive his father's friend.



## THE STRATEGY OF SIMONIDES

The flash of lightning lasts but for a second, but it is long enough to show a traveller how near he stands to the precipice.

Phædrus recovered himself with an effort.

“Phædrus was my father,” he answered. “He suffered grievous wrong. He injured no man, least of all the Emperor. I am going to Rome to try and right his wrong, but I do not wish to be known upon the ship.” He paused. “I am in great trouble. I do not know what to do.”

He recalled, suddenly, the watchword old Simonides had used. With the inspiration of the desperate man, he lifted his hand and said with lowered voice, —

“I, too, belong to the ‘Way.’”

A look of fear, and then of pleasure, swept over the agent’s face. Impulsively he extended his hands.

“No follower of the Way, who is in

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danger," he said, "need ask twice for help. Come! I will see you on board the ship."

And after a few whispered words, he took Phædrus by the arm and led him past the group of sailors about the fire, out to the narrow gang-plank and aboard the boat.

Meanwhile, Simonides, the slave, knew nothing of the whereabouts of Phædrus. He was in great distress. When Nicias had warned his guests of their peril, Simonides had been among the last to pass through the garden gate into the street beyond. Once in the highway, the old slave had kept close to the wall, waiting anxiously for Phædrus to appear. The minutes passed but slowly, as he strained his eyes, searching for the dim form that did not come. Once he thought he heard the rustle of steps, but later he decided it must have been the going of the wind in the trees. The old man was thinly clad,

## THE STRATEGY OF SIMONIDES

and the night was cold and biting, but he scarcely realized his own suffering. He grew more and more fearful lest the soldiers had discovered the secret meeting and Phædrus had been found in Nicias' house. But there was nothing he could do, and at last, as there seemed to be no lights nor noise about the house, he concluded that there could have been no discovery and that on coming out he must have missed the boy. He started, therefore, to make his way back, alone, to his master's house.

From the first hour of Phædrus' entrance into Hermon's household, Simonides had set his heart on winning the gifted youth to the new faith. He knew that he himself was old, ugly, and ignorant. It was certain that he would die without seeing many things that he longed to see accomplished. But Phædrus was young, born in a rich man's house, a student, and

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something of an artist as well. What Simonides could never do, Phædrus could easily achieve. And long after the old slave had come to the end of his life, the boy would have years in which to toil.

It had been with infinite hope that Simonides had faced the thought of the secret meeting; and now his disappointment was the greater. Just at the beginning of the meeting had come the signal of danger and alarm. They might not meet again for weeks or even months, and no one knew what might happen meanwhile. At best the time had been all too short for winning the boy to the new faith. Simonides was a keen observer, and he knew that more skill is needed to convince the trained mind than to persuade an ignorant slave.

Stirred by these thoughts, the old slave hurried along the dark road and came to

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the gate of Hermon's garden. Even now, Phædrus might be there, waiting for him; that thought cheered him. But there was no Phædrus at the wall, nor did Simonides find any sign that the boy had been there. Feeling about under the leaves, he discovered the key to the gate, just where he had left it. For a long time he stood listening, hoping to catch some sound of Phædrus' approach; but at length, cherishing the faint hope that the boy had already arrived and gone to bed, he opened the gate, turned the huge latch and pushed the key back, where Phædrus, if he had not come in, would surely find it. Then he crept softly up the path to the slaves' quarters.

Again he was disappointed. Phædrus' pallet was undisturbed. With ever increasing anxiety the old man tried to prepare himself for sleep. An hour passed,

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and he assured himself that the boy had merely lost his way, and would appear at any moment. Another hour went by, and still no Phædrus came. Racked by fear, Simonides tossed on his hard bed, all kinds of dreadful possibilities looming before his mind. The dawn came, but with it no Phædrus; the little room began to grow light; Simonides lay staring with open eyes at the blank wall above his head. A cock crowed somewhere; a caravan, starting out upon the long journey into the interior, moved noisily through the misty street outside the house; Simonides rose unsteadily and crept down to the garden gate. The key was still where he had left it, half hidden among the leaves.

If he had only known it, the messenger who had disturbed the meeting had been neither spy nor soldier, but a sailor sent

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from the wharf to announce the arrival of one of Nicias' ships come from Alexandria. Within an hour, the household had quieted down, and not until at dawn, when the servants began their work, did one of them discover that a thief had entered the house.

The news was a terrible blow to Nicias. For years he had gone up and down the world, searching out one disciple after another, that by conversation he might feed the flame of faith and enthusiasm. Now, in one night, his treasures were gone. It took but a glance to see that the disappearance of the precious manuscripts was the result of theft and not of carelessness. Gone, the gold cup; gone, also, the sheet of goatskin with its story of the first Christmas! Gone the silver plates, but gone, too, the letters of that scarred hero, Paul. Weak and

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trembling, Nicias sought the nearest couch. The whole world, turned into one flashing diamond, would have seemed as nothing for value, over against the two little rolls that had been but yesterday in the old chest. For a moment the sun passed under a cloud whose blackness Nicias thought would never end.

And then the merchant remembered his associates. Perhaps some spy had obtained access to the meeting, and had carried away the rolls to be used against them. Perhaps this enemy had listened to their conversation, and taken the names of all the friends who belonged to the Way. Perhaps, even now, warrants might be prepared for their arrest and subsequent death. His associates must be warned immediately. Time there still might be for them to flee. As for the slaves, the very



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thought of what they might suffer blanched Nicias' face, and all but stopped his heart.

A little later Nicias' son was in the street, making his way toward the home of the other followers to give them warning. Meanwhile, Nicias recalled Simonides, and having made plans for the rest, sent a messenger to the governor's house, in the hope that the servant would find the old disciple was keeping the gate, or might be near the entrance to the governor's house. And so it fell out.

But scarcely had the messenger told of the disaster and departed, before old Simonides realized that there was a reason why Phædrus had not returned.

The youth whom he had tried to befriend had played him false. The boy from whom he felt he could not hope too much had become a thief, perhaps a spy

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and an informer. When he thought of Phædrus' stealing the rolls it seemed to old Simonides as if an enemy had tried to snatch from Michael's hand his golden spear and his robe of light.

He himself had led Phædrus to Nicias' house. Should the wheat merchant be arrested, and his family suffer death, he would always feel that having received the most of happiness from them, he had brought upon them the most of pain and anguish in return. Simonides forgot his own risk, in the thought of the fearful consequences Phædrus' deed might bring upon the others.

Then, as in a flash, the old slave realized what had taken place. Different sentences of Phædrus' came together and took their places, like the broken bits of glass that unite to make a portrait in a window. Simonides began to understand why Phæ-

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drus had spoken of the boat sailing at day-break. He remembered also Phædrus' suggestion about flight and the risk of recapture, his inquiry as to whether Simonides knew where his master Hermon kept his gold. He recalled how, the night before, when the beakers and the offerings were on the table, Phædrus had clutched his arm in excitement. It was all as simple as sunshine. Undoubtedly Phædrus, without realizing the enormity of his crime, had stolen the treasure and was about to escape by ship to Rome.

The more he thought of it, the more convinced was Simonides that this was the explanation of what had happened. He recalled a dozen little incidents that had occurred in the course of the preceding week ; incidents which had meant nothing to him at the time, but which now fitted marvellously into the completed picture.

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The boy's interest in Rome, his anxiety to do errands that took him to the wharves and the ships; questions dropped from time to time concerning the cost of sea-travel and the like. Only the day before, he had betrayed a knowledge of sea routes and harbors that had astounded the old man.

Well, and if this *was* the explanation? The idea was at once torture and relief. Torture, because it meant that the rolls were gone; relief, because it meant no great danger to the followers of the Way. Simonides clung to his love for the boy; Phædrus had said he would not betray them, and Simonides felt sure that he would keep his word.

The situation was a very delicate one. In all probability, the boy was already aboard the ship. If he was to be caught and induced to give up the precious rolls,

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he must be found and interviewed in secret. Public capture would mean discovery of the rolls; questioning might bring possible betrayal of part, if not all, of their great secret.

Simonides remembered with a start that he alone knew what had happened. He must act, and quickly. A few moments later he stood in the governor's presence. Hermon was furiously angry. He had letters that he wished to send to the boat for Rome, and he had decided to rewrite them. Twice a messenger had gone to the library for Phædrus, but had found the room empty. Slaves were running everywhither in search of the young Greek. Some of the women were wringing their hands in fear, for they knew what penalty might be visited upon the boy. Hitherto, because Phædrus was a Greek, and his father had been a rich man, Hermon had

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allowed his literary slave to go without the usual sign of indignity, the hole bored in the ear. But now the boy Phædrus might suffer every possible form of stigma and disgrace.

In their excitement, the slaves searched the garden, the granaries, the stable, the outbuildings, but all in vain. And then the thing happened that old Simonides had feared. On the day before, the governor had dictated his letters to the home government, and had directed Phædrus to see that they were sent to the ship that was to sail. The slave had fled, and was without doubt upon that very ship, — and in a fury of anger Hermon shouted for his litter. He bade a slave run quickly and hold the vessel until he could come.

Simonides saw his opportunity. He stepped forward, and in his gentle voice

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volunteered to take the message himself. Hermon glared at him an instant, while every slave in the room trembled at the thought of what might happen. Then, oddly enough, the soldier's mood changed. He grunted a rough assent; and, as Simonides turned to go, roared after him, in characteristic fashion: —

“Well — there's always one slave in this good-for-nothing pack of hounds who is willing to do something for his old master!”

\* \* \* \* \*

Down at the wharf, the captain of the ship was making ready to cast off. From his place by the cabin-window, Phædrus had watched the sun rise slowly in the morning sky, and the street begin to fill with people. There were a score of sailors aboard the little vessel, and a multitude of women and children had

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assembled on the wharf to wish them a good voyage. Venders of fruit and sweetmeats were there, shouting their wares. Merchants were there, to see that the ship that carried their little treasure had a good start. The Roman soldiers were there, looking wistfully toward the boat that soon would touch the shores of Italy.

Suddenly, Phædrus saw old Simonides pushing through the crowd on the wharf. Instantly the boy flung himself back from the little window. Hope died within him; his courage seemed to shrivel up; he began to tremble violently.

So it had all been in vain! The theft had been discovered; both Nicias and Simonides knew that he could not betray them without condemning himself as well, and now they were going to take advantage of the situation. For the sake



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of the golden cup, the two silver plates and the two little rolls, they were about to risk their own lives and the lives of their friends. All the bitterness of despair welled up in the boy's throat. They were persecuting him !

Steps rang on the deck above him ; he heard the sound of mingled voices, and then of some one climbing down the companion-way. A cold sweat broke out upon the boy's forehead. He was caught ! He must go back, — back to the shame, the drudgery and the humiliation ! Everything in him steeled at the thought. Well, it should not be without a struggle ! His enemies had him in the corner, now, with his back against the wall, and like the trapped wolf he would fight for his liberty.

The cabin door opened. Simonides stood on the threshold. He was very pale ;

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his whole frame shook as he gasped for breath. He looked strangely old and feeble. Phædrus stiffened to meet his denunciation.

Simonides said not a word. For the second time in twenty-four hours, Phædrus was surprised to see that there was neither hate nor anger in the old slave's eyes! Only reproach, — understanding and reproach. A sense of shame stole over the boy. For an instant he was back in his boyhood, meeting the same expression in the eyes of his own father. A weakness came over him; he understood, with a great rush of feeling, that the old man loved him! He dropped his eyes.

Then Simonides spoke.

“The governor's men are coming. They will search the ship. I have talked — with the captain and he will — put you — into one of the fishing boats and

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cover you with tarpaulin. The fishing boat — will be towed as far as — Samos — then you can return to the ship.”

Phædrus straightened. Then he was to escape! The theft was still undiscovered! A wave of joy and thankfulness ran through him. His heart leaped. Hope sang once more within him.

He looked at Simonides. Tears were running down the old man's cheeks. His lips were moving, his features working, his hands fumbling blindly against the door for support.

The old man knew! Knew, and was helping him to escape!

There was a long silence. Phædrus tried to speak, but could not. A lump was in his throat; try as he would, he could not command himself. Outside, the voice of the crowd rose discordantly from the wharf: fruit venders crying

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their wares ; friends calling shrilly to the sailors on the ship ; soldiers shouting rough jests at the men busy with the ropes. Phædrus heard nothing. He was thinking, suddenly, of what Simonides was doing for him. The old man was risking his life — Phædrus knew that — for the boy who had betrayed him. He was not doing it from necessity ; one glance showed the youth that no such motive had brought Simonides thither. Phædrus recalled the words the old slave had uttered the day before : “Suppose Nicias denied it all ! Which do you suppose Hermon would believe, — you or him ?” And he realized, for the first time, the difficulty of proving where he had obtained the rolls which lay at this moment in the pocket of his cloak.

No, Simonides could ruin him if he wished. He was in the old man's hands.

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And yet, for some strange reason, Simonides was risking his own life and helping the boy who had injured him to escape !

A figure appeared behind Simonides. The captain of the ship, finger on lips, pointed over the slave's shoulder at the opening at Phædrus' left. The man said nothing, but Phædrus understood. With eyes half blinded by tears, he turned and went to the window. It opened on the side of the ship away from the wharf; below it lay a rude fishing boat in which a farmer had brought his grain to market. A man was sitting in the stern; he stood up and smiled as he saw Phædrus' face at the window. The boy threw a last, quick look at Simonides. The old man nodded silently. Phædrus climbed down the rope and dropped down into the fisherman's heavy boat.

The boatman reached forward and drew

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impulses, and killed his courage. The die was cast. Simonides was deserted.

And well it was for the boy that he knew nothing about the scenes of that night when Hermon tried to force some information from old Simonides, who had decided to lose his life, if necessary, that Nicias might be safe and Phædrus have his freedom.





De beatis petro & paulo. ant



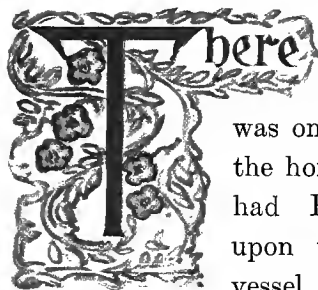
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## CHAPTER IV

### THE ROMAN LAWYER



here is torment in fear; Ephesus was only a tiny spot on the horizon, yet scarcely had Phædrus stepped upon the deck of the vessel than he began to wonder what Simonides had said to the captain. He felt sure that the officer must be himself a follower of the "Way," else he would never have given such ready answer to Simonides' request. Yet if he had been at the midnight meeting at Nicias' house, it was almost certain that soon or late he would recognize Phædrus and guess the secret of his flight. The very thought

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brought new terror. In his excited state, the mere flutter of a sail was enough to set the boy trembling.

But the crisis had to be met, and it was characteristic of Phædrus to meet it with instant decision. Wrapping his cloak into a bundle, the better to conceal the gold cup and the stolen plate and rolls, he began to look about for the captain. The officer, however, was busy; a strong breeze had come up out of the northeast, and the crew were working furiously in an attempt to reef the heavy sails. Phædrus watched the captain as he stood shouting orders, and decided that he had never seen the man before. Knowing the uselessness of interrupting at such a moment, Phædrus turned and made his way below.

The cabin was deserted; it was a small room, lit by the rays of a hanging lamp, and encircled by two tiers of rude, narrow

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bunks. Conveniences of travel there were none. The place was bare, dark, and stuffy; apparently it was shared by passengers and crew. But Phædrus had obtained no rest the previous night, and he felt suddenly exhausted. He moved about the room, examining the bunks, to make sure that none were in use, and then tiptoed to the door and listened. Hearing nothing, he returned to the bunk farthest from the door, and deep in the shadows cast by the flickering lamp, and there unrolled his precious bundle. He rearranged the two plates and the golden cup, wrapping them carefully in the silken scarf; rolled them once more together with the manuscripts into as small a bundle as possible, and pushed them into the corner of the bunk. The cloak he threw over them, and making a pillow out of the bundle, he lay down and tried to compose himself for sleep.

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At first he could not rest. His heart pounded loudly, and his brain seemed to be on fire. But gradually, Nature had her way with the tired boy; his eyelids began to grow heavy; little by little, he drifted into the sleep of utter weariness. Noon came, the sun set and night was falling before he was roused from his stupor. Then he felt a hand upon his arm, and opening his eyes, saw a kind face looking down into his. It was a sailor, who brought a little food and a cluster of sweet grapes, with a message from the captain. Phædrus sat up, taking care to keep the suspicious bundle behind him, and eagerly accepted the belated meal. There was that in the sailor's bearing that convinced the boy that this thoughtful act represented an overture on the part of the captain; and so it proved. Before Phædrus had time to finish eating, the officer himself appeared

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and dismissed the sailor. He was a big, hearty man, with a full, mellow voice, and as Phædrus discovered later, the abrupt manner of one who is accustomed to command; he began the conversation very quietly, with lowered voice, and a look that for an instant brought a rush of fear to Phædrus' heart.

"I understand," he said, and he threw a quick glance over his shoulder as he spoke, "that you are a follower of the Way."

Phædrus stiffened inwardly.

"My old friend," the captain continued, "told me that you were travelling to Rome on a matter of importance. You have means, I gather, and I am told that you have acted as secretary to a high official of the government." The captain threw a sudden, piercing glance to Phædrus. "You speak Latin, of course?"

Phædrus nodded.

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“And I suppose you know books. The reason I — I ask these questions is that I have another passenger, a man of wealth and position, of whom you will necessarily see something during the next two days.” The captain lowered his voice to a whisper. “The Roman is not, however, a follower of the Way; you must be very careful in your talk with him. He is an old lawyer; the owner of this line of vessels; he has been my employer for twenty years. But sometimes —” the captain rose suddenly, as if half afraid to continue, “sometimes I think he knows that I — that I believe.”

Phædrus breathed more freely. If this were all, he had little to fear.

“I will say nothing,” he answered, “I will avoid your friend entirely, if you wish.”

The captain smiled.



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“You cannot avoid him. You two are the only passengers aboard, unless you count his two slaves. He came to Ephesus with us for the sake of the sea air, which his physician prescribes for him about this time each year. He is a most peculiar man. He —” the captain’s eye softened a little. “Well, you may find him interesting, if you don’t mind being contradicted.”

Phædrus laughed.

“I am accustomed to that.”

The captain shook his head.

“To contradictions — yes. But not to the sort of man my employer is. Come on deck with me now, — you have finished eating, — and you will meet the patrician. His name is Ximines. You may have heard it; you are interested in books. He has long been a collector of rare manuscripts. But remember, whatever you do,” and the captain’s expression

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once more became serious, "you must be very careful as to what you say." And without giving the boy time to do anything more than push the rolled-up cloak into the farthest corner of the bunk, the captain led the way to the deck above.

Phædrus' heart was in his mouth, as he left the cabin. He realized that it was foolhardy to leave the bundle in the empty bunk; yet he did not dare confide in the captain, lest the stolen treasure betray him. He could only follow the officer against his will.

But he forgot his anxiety the instant he stepped on deck and drew in his first breath of the cool night air. The scene that met his eyes was one he never forgot. A single light burned in the prow of the boat; the rising moon cast a silvery sheen across the rippling waters, etching clearly every detail of the ship's rigging; and the

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rush of the vessel's prow threw out a great wave of gleaming phosphorus, which flashed and sparkled like a jewelled fan. Off to the right lay the rocky coast of an island; tiny points of red and yellow winked merrily from the streets of a little town on the shore; away in the distance rose and fell the ruby lantern in some fisherman's frail skiff.

Instinctively, Phædrus paused to drink in the wonderful beauty of the scene. A rush of emotion overwhelmed him; that strange longing which is the joy and the torment of the traveller filled his soul.

The captain had moved away, along the deck. A voice now startled Phædrus directly behind him.

"You appear," said the voice, "to have an eye for the beautiful."

Phædrus wheeled, and saw an old man, wrapped in a heavy cloak of fur, and sup-

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ported by two slaves. It was the other passenger, Ximines.

Phædrus bowed.

"It is a beautiful night," he said simply.

The old traveller grunted.

"It is a cold night," he said. He eyed Phædrus with disapproval. "You should be better protected against the wind, young man. Where is your cloak?"

Phædrus felt himself coloring in the darkness.

"I — It is below, in the cabin. I —"

"You should be wearing it. Nothing is more beneficial than sea air, if one is prepared for it. Nothing is more dangerous than sea air, if one neglects the necessary precautions as to warmth and exercise."

Ximines spoke with a slow, precise enunciation; the formal balance of his phrases gave his speech an odd dignity

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which impressed the boy immensely. Phædrus had heard the teachers of rhetoric speak thus in the old days at Mitylene.

“Allow me,” continued Ximines, “to send one of my servants to fetch it for you.”

Phædrus caught his breath.

“No, no! Thank you! I — I can get it myself. I left it purposely. I really do not need it; the night —” he found himself floundering.

Ximines waved his hand impatiently.

“Do not argue! No night is so warm that one can afford to stand about without a cloak. Here!” he dropped the arm of one of his slaves, and pushed the man forward. “Arbaces can get you one of mine. I have three of them on the deck here somewhere.”

The slave moved hurriedly away. Phædrus protested.

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“I assure you I am quite warm,” he said, but inwardly he trembled at the narrowness of his escape.

Ximines stretched out his hand.

“Give me your arm,” he said, “we will walk until my man brings the garment.” And as Phædrus took his place at the old man’s side, the latter continued, “Next in value to warmth is exercise. One should make it a point to walk regularly when aboard ship, no matter how small the opportunity.” He stopped, in unconscious denial of his own theory, and let go Phædrus’ arm, to gesture. “All the illnesses of travel are due to one thing: lack of will on the part of the traveller. There is no reason why a man should be any more susceptible to illness when travelling than when he is at home. No man would be, if he had the sense and the will power to do exactly what he does at home!

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Consider my own case." Ximines once more grasped Phædrus' arm, and moved forward. "I have made this trip from Puteoli to Ephesus and return, once each winter for twenty years. In all that time —" he broke off as the captain reappeared in front of them. "Hah! a fine night, captain! You see I have found a new support in my feebleness! A young man who comes on deck without a cloak. I have sent Arbaces for one of mine to lend him. You should warn your passengers, captain; I have told you a thousand times that this night air is dangerous."

The captain chuckled. Ximines waved his hand disparagingly.

"Do not laugh! Youth can afford to be reckless; middle age cannot! One of these days you will be offering a young lamb to Esculapius, in the hope of a cure for the ache in those big bones of yours!"

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The slave returned with a heavy cloak, and Phædrus put it on at the old man's peremptory bidding.

"Now," said Ximines, "we will walk a little more, before retiring." He dismissed the slaves, and waved an airy adieu to the captain, who was going below. "I always walk," he said to Phædrus, "at least half an hour before retiring. It settles the blood. My physician is a Greek; he —" Ximines paused. "You are a Greek, too, are you not?" And at Phædrus' assent, "that is good. You can help me with the words in some Greek manuscripts I have lately acquired. But what was I saying? My physician —? Ah, yes! My physician pronounces an hour's gentle exercise before retiring absolutely invaluable for the system. He is a very skilful man, too! He comes from — where did you say you came from?"



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The thought of the captain's warning flashed through Phædrus' brain. This old man was keen.

"I come from the provinces," said the boy. "I am going to Italy for the first time in my life."

Ximines nodded.

"So! Very interesting. A great experience; you will enjoy it, I am sure. You go on business, I suppose?"

Phædrus hesitated.

"I am considering," he said cautiously, "remaining in Italy permanently." An idea occurred to him. "What do you think of the opportunity in Rome for a young man of my country?"

Ximines frowned. "Have you money?"

"Very little. I used to have a great deal. But—" The boy could find no words to continue.

Ximines spoke for him.

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“But you have it no longer. Ah, well, — so it goes! We never really value money until it is gone. I suppose you lost it at play. We all do. I lost mine when I was your age. No matter. You will make money fast enough if you are the type that succeeds in Rome; and money will never buy you success if you are not of that type.” Ximines sighed. “We put too much emphasis on money nowadays. I wonder,” he stopped, and gazed shrewdly into the boy’s eyes. “I wonder whether it has ever occurred to you that you are living in a commonplace age?” Characteristically, he did not wait for an answer, but went on, as if addressing a small audience. “You are a Greek; have you forgotten that there was a time when the temples of Athens were all aflame with torches; when poets and philosophers daily supplied the sacred oil? If you have,

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it is because that time is gone. Pericles' eloquence has long been silent. Demosthenes' tongue has been stilled by a dagger. Plato and Aristotle no longer walk the streets of your capital. And the same cloud rests over Rome. Julius Cæsar, the greatest soldier Rome ever knew, is dead, murdered by his own friends. Cicero," and it seemed to Phædrus that Ximines' voice took on a strange softness as he pronounced this name, "Cicero is dead. Virgil has been dead for many years; Horace has left us; Lucretius and Livy are both gone. All the lofty spirits, all the tall candlesticks in the temple of fame, death has snuffed out! Our world is a desert, — a vast Sahara, drained dry of genius!"

Ximines took Phædrus' arm once more, and together they resumed their walk along the deck. For a time the boy could

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think of no answer; then he fell back on the old, familiar argument.

“I suppose it is true,” he said, “that at present there are no bright stars in the literary firmament. But is not that a matter of chance? Is it not because, in the case of Rome, certainly, men are devoting their energies, for the time being, to the great questions of imperial government, to the needs of the state, to —”

“Needs of the state!” Ximines fairly snorted. “Bosh! Needs of the Cæsars, you mean! Young man,” Ximines gripped Phædrus’ arm until he winced, “make it a practice to think straight while you are young! Don’t delude yourself with false dreams because they are pleasant dreams! You ask me if it is not pure chance that there are no bright stars in the literary firmament; and then

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you proceed to answer your own question by telling me it is not chance, but the logical outcome of our policy, which is one of —” Ximines chuckled “flimflam, robbery, murder, pride, — each man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost! Bah! Needs of the state! What *are* the needs of the state? Bread — bread and ideas. And what do we give the state? Bread, bread, and again bread! There is a saying of that heathen philosopher who has been causing us trouble lately, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone,’” Ximines glanced sharply at the boy, — “did you ever hear it?”

Phædrus shook his head. He wondered vaguely whether the old man’s tirade was all a trick to make him betray himself.

“Well, there is truth in it,” Ximines went on, “whatever the heathen meant

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by it. Bread — corn — corn for the populace, to buy their support, that is the sole thought of the Cæsars! Ideas — ?” Ximines laughed aloud. “We are long since bankrupt of them !”

He grew once more serious.

“Why, if we had only lived up to that miserable, starved philosophy you have just upheld, Rome would not have sunk to such a level. But have we done so? Look about you, when you arrive in Italy! You will find we are in daily peril. Nine out of ten of our people are slaves. Few can read or write. These slaves own no land, no house, no fuel. They lie down amidst blows, and wake to curses. The slave has too little, just as the patrician has too much. For the most part, our slaves are captives, brought in from conquered provinces. There, many were people of influence and property. Here,

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their life is drudgery, their food sorrow, their drink tears and blood. In hours of bitterness the peasant and the slave are forced to think. Thinking teaches them the difference between the wheaten loaf and a fog-bank, — between ambrosia and gall. I tell you we have not even shouldered the lesser responsibility, — that of feeding the people's bodies. It is hunger that makes the revolutionist's bread taste so sweet."

Phædrus listened in amazement. Ximines had dropped his arm again, and was standing facing him, his eyes blazing, his hands moving in quick, nervous gestures, his voice vibrant with sincerity.

"I am a patrician, I have pride. I have some feeling for class position. But I trust I am not so hopelessly blind as to think that our present civilization represents anything but a state of degradation.

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Look at us ! A handful of us own everything. But yesterday the fiery ash from Vesuvius ruined a score of farms not far from where I live. I tell you there are forces in slavery more powerful than Vesuvius ! The day will come when this whole land will be convulsed, when passions will flow like lurid lava over our country and bury the patrician and his palace forever !”

Ximines ceased as suddenly as he had begun.

“Come,” he said shortly, “I am forgetting myself. I am an old man, and I have my ideas. But it is bad for me to voice them. I exhaust myself to no purpose.” And he added, a little wistfully, it seemed to Phædrus, “No one ever agrees with me.”

There was something in his tone which touched the boy.



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"I don't know but I agree with you," he said quickly. "I have never heard the peril stated as you have put it."

Ximines made no answer. He turned and allowed the youth to help him back along the deck to the companion-way, where the two slaves were waiting.

There he prepared to say good-night.

"Age has its privileges," he said, as Phædrus returned the borrowed cloak, "I have a cabin to myself. Think over what I have said. I will see you in the morning. The gods give you a good rest!" And he took his place in a small swinging litter, which the two stalwart servants proceeded to lower to the deck below.

Phædrus remained above a little while, watching the waves break against the prow of the boat, and thinking of the strange events of the day that had just passed. For the moment, he had forgotten

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the cloak with its valuable contents, lying in his bunk in the cabin. Then he recalled it with a start, and hurried below, only to find the garment, to his great relief, exactly as he had left it.

Before retiring, he asked for the captain, and arranged to borrow for the journey a small bronze chest with a heavy lock. Into this he put the gold cup and the two silver plates. The rolls of manuscript, he did not dare leave even there, but hid them in the pocket of his cloak, which he realized he must now keep close to him until such time as he could find some means of selling Nicias' treasure.

As he lay waiting for sleep to come again, his mind revolved about the problem which the stolen articles presented; the thought of old Simonides, and of his own disloyalty lay like a weight upon him, and when at last he fell asleep, the con-

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sciousness of his treachery ran like a black thread through the figment of his dreams.

He slept fitfully, and he was up at dawn, but not before Ximines, the lawyer. The old man had breakfasted, and was sitting on deck, in the full glare of the sun, when Phædrus finally appeared. He was wrapped, as before, in a heavy cloak, and his slave had thrown a thick blanket of wool over his knees. He was looking at a manuscript as Phædrus approached, and the boy's heart leaped with pleasure as he saw that it was a specimen of the finest workmanship.

Ximines noticed his expression of delight, and held up the roll.

"You like books?" he asked languidly, without a trace of the intensity which had characterized his speech the previous evening.

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“I love them.” Phædrus took the manuscript and fingered it tenderly. “This is very beautiful.” His eye caught the title. “A letter of Cicero’s! Is — is it possible that this was written by — by Cicero’s secretary, at his dictation?”

Ximines smiled.

“It was written by the hand of Tiro, his literary slave.”

Phædrus showed his surprise.

“I never expected,” he said softly, “to come so near to the great Cicero.”

The words delighted the old man. He plunged at once into a discussion of Cicero’s writings. The Roman orator, it seemed, was his hero, his idol, his one great enthusiasm. He had been collecting Cicero’s letters for twenty years, and he now owned nearly seven hundred of them.

“Cicero!” he said, “why, Cicero was one of the few great men in history! His

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countrymen do not appreciate him. Greatness is seldom recognized. How can it be? It is not a thing to be measured; it is a mysterious effluence, and we, who are men of weights and measures, are always at a loss to value that which cannot be expressed in terms of the emperor's coin." The old man straightened in his chair, throwing out one arm in nervous gesture. "Our great authors — while they live — are looked upon as something less than ordinary mortals. Cicero — just a heavy man, with a fine hand and a taste for oratory! Your philosopher Socrates — only a fat, bandy-legged old gossip, with wall eyes and a clacking tongue!" Ximines clenched his fist indignantly. "We forget that beauty in literature is the product of one thing, and of one thing only, — adequate thinking. Thought intensified — that is literature! And the great thinkers

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haven't time to be great eaters and drinkers, great —”

He stopped suddenly. Leaning over, he pulled the rug once more across his knees, and sat back, breathing heavily.

“I forgot,” he said, “my physician made me promise not to excite myself. Stop me when you see me — when I do that.” Then his eyes twinkled. “Have the good sense, young man, to drink hemlock, or open your veins before you reach that disgraceful period in life when you begin to sacrifice your pleasures for the sake of dragging out your pains !”

Phædrus smiled.

“Have you reached that period ?”

Ximines' expression clouded.

“I reached it ten years ago.” He was silent, looking away across the blue Mediterranean, toward a white fleck of sail on the horizon. “Men,” he said finally, “are

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strange cowards. They struggle frantically to preserve that which they do not enjoy, and their sole motive is fear. Fear of they know not what." Then, with a quick change of expression, he shrugged his shoulders. "You do not believe this now, but you will when you are older." His voice deepened. "Life is made up of a sequence of experiences of varying intensity. It is possible to live more fully in twenty minutes than some men live in twenty years." His eyes began to twinkle again. "That is why some men become criminals. One moment of infinitely intense sensation, — what is a lifetime of imprisonment to that?" He stretched out an accusing finger. "Have you ever committed a real crime?"

Phædrus' heart all but stopped.

"A — a what?" he stammered weakly.

Ximines broke into laughter.

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“A crime! A legal crime! Come, come, I am not accusing you. Of course you haven't! Neither have I! Well, do you suppose we have lived as that man has lived who knows what it is to stand for an instant on the very pinnacle of legal offence, with the hounds of the law baying below, and the moment of punishment hard upon him? No! A thousand times no!” Ximines fell to clucking softly. “Sometimes I think I'd rather die a thief, with the memory of one supremely exciting moment, than a revered, respected member of a community, whose ideal is moderation and whose achievement mediocrity!”

He paused. “That statement denies, of course, what I have said about my age. It proves me young, and so long as I can cherish such immature ideas, I feel that I must live on, in justice to the gods. It



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would be immoral to die at seventy, still fondling such a childish theory of existence !”

He frowned suddenly.

“Do you feel ill?” he asked. “You look pale. Have you eaten ?”

Phædrus felt ill; Ximines’ unconscious thrust had all but unnerved him. But the fear of discovery drove him to a reply.

“It is nothing. I slept badly. I shall feel better presently.”

Ximines clapped his hands, and one of his slaves brought Phædrus a chair. The boy seated himself, and sought desperately for an excuse to change the subject. He threw out the first question that entered his mind.

“Are you fonder of Cicero’s letters than of his orations ?”

Ximines nodded.

“It is bad judgment, doubtless, but I

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prefer the letters. The orations are marvellous, of course; they have a wonderful rhythm, and a thrilling music; I never read them without thinking of the voice of pines heard in the darkness of a midnight gale. Many a dead political fly will be preserved in the amber of those polished speeches. But if I must choose, give me Cicero's letters. They are more intimate; letters are always more intimate; they represent the voice of the companion in the twilight hour, not the throaty eloquence of the lawyer on the forum! That is why the letter is the most sacred form of literature. In the letter the soul leaves its holy place, and stands on the threshold to greet the friend."

Ximines paused. "There is no false display in the good letter. Pride — love of decoration — that is the weakness of the other types of literature." His lips

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curved sarcastically. "Do you remember what Plato said to Diogenes?"

Phædrus shook his head.

"Diogenes went to see Plato, you know, intent upon humiliating him. With that inexcusable lack of humor, which is characteristic of all the followers of his philosophy, Diogenes strode up and down Plato's room, repeating, 'I tread upon the pride of Plato!' 'Yes,' returned Plato, 'but with greater pride!'"

Ximines paused. "That is the trouble with verse. Poetical simplicity is often more affected than poetical embellishment."

Phædrus listened eagerly. He was beginning to recover from his fright, and the old man's conversation thrilled him. His own knowledge of literature was by no means slight, and the discrimination which Ximines displayed awakened in

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him a real admiration. He felt strangely drawn to the old lawyer. Here was a man who could understand and appreciate the things that meant least to most men. He sat enthralled, as Ximines talked on, passing lightly from one topic to another, pouring forth a flood of witty reminiscences. The old man had known all the Romans of his own day worth knowing, and though he had retired years before to his villa near Puteoli, on the Bay of Naples, he had kept in touch with the life of the great capital. He seemed to like to talk; it was evident that he was hungry for companionship. Phædrus discovered in the course of the morning that the lawyer lived alone, except for the retinue of slaves whom he kept to care for his estate. He seemed to enjoy Phædrus' company, doubtless because the boy had tact, and was a good listener, and the morning

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passed, and noon came, before either of them realized how the time was flying.

Then Ximines asked the boy to share the meal which his slaves brought up to him, and together they dined on deck, seated at a little table which Arbaces laid for them. After this, Ximines announced in his abrupt fashion that he would sleep, and sleep he did, sitting in the same chair, with a silk scarf tied about his eyes to keep out the light, and his heavy cloak thrown over his shoulders. As for Phædrus, he, too, slept, but on the warm deck near the stern, where the morning sun had beaten steadily for hours, and where the force of the wind was broken by the great sweep of the sails. Later in the day, he sat again with Ximines; still later he dined with the captain, and in the evening he served once more as Ximines' support during the latter's evening exercise. The following day

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the programme was repeated, and as the days passed, it became the regular thing. Both Ximines and the captain were very kind to the boy; the former continued to regale him with a store of anecdotes and philosophy; the latter with tales of adventure on the sea. The captain was not a fluent talker, but like most uneducated men, he was a keen observer, and the odd details which impressed themselves on him, invariably added a quaint charm to his narratives.

Phædrus would have been happy during this time, but for the consciousness of his guilt. The theft was bad enough, but the thought of Simonides' generosity was what added the keen edge to the boy's suffering. He felt that he was worse than a thief; lower than the slaves whom he had been taught as a child to despise. For had he not been outdone in loyalty

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by a slave? The question never failed to torture him, and he asked it a hundred times a day. If Simonides had not forgiven him, — if the old slave had only striven to hinder or perhaps betray him, — then the consciousness of his own crime could have been swallowed up in bitter recrimination. But Simonides had been generous; he had not only said nothing to betray Phædrus, he had even assisted the youth to escape! Hour after hour, as he lay in the stuffy cabin at night, Phædrus would retrace the steps of that eventful night, trying to find some ease for his conscience, and failing always in the attempt.

The captain constantly tormented him by referring both to Simonides and to "The Way." He seemed to love to dwell, when they were alone, on the great questions of sin and punishment and forgive-

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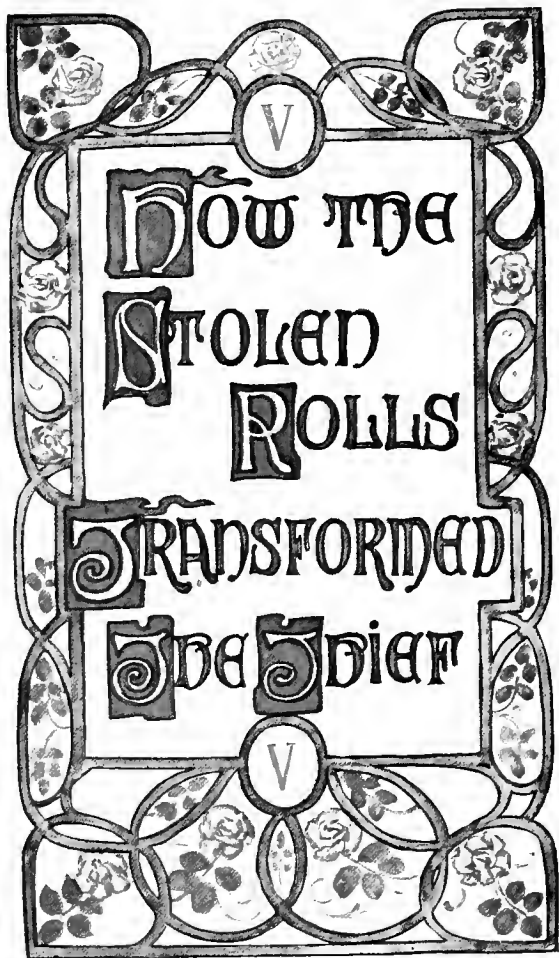
ness. He was always relating incidents which had to do with the followers of his Master. One of his tales made an especially deep impression on the boy. It concerned a man named Paul, of whom Phædrus had heard mention made at the meeting in Nicias' house. This teacher, the captain said, was a little man, thin, and worn, and unsightly. He must have been a brave man, because of the mobbings he had survived, and the scourgings he had received. Great scars were on his face and arms; his hands were thin as parchment; he had suffered enough to have slain him a thousand times. Yet he was quite free from fear, and the captain said he spoke like an angel of God. It was from him that the captain had first learned "The Way," and the latter never tired of repeating a sentence of this man's, a sentence that somehow irritated the boy, and



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made him feel guiltier than ever. The captain did not always quote the words exactly, but he invariably ended with one phrase, — “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith,” and the words became gall and wormwood to the tortured boy.

The stolen articles themselves no longer worried Phædrus; they were safe for the moment, and only after the landing at Puteoli would they again begin to be a source of anxiety. But the bitterness of his remorse never lessened; chance incidents, sentences dropped by Ximines, all sorts of harmless suggestions, became big with accusation under the lens of his fevered mind.



## CHAPTER V

### THE STOLEN ROLLS PROTECT THEMSELVES



days came and went; the ship rounded Sicily, and bore north, the morning of the landing dawned, and Phædrus was still unable to free himself from bondage to his own thoughts. During all the voyage he had carried Nicias' manuscripts in his bosom, never once caring to examine them; but now he realized that he must arrange at once to dispose of the rolls as well as of the gold cup and the silver plates.

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He was standing by the rail, revolving this problem in his mind, when Ximines approached and laid a hand affectionately on his shoulder.

“Well,” said the old man, “I suppose you are dreaming of Rome. There,” and he pointed to the south of the town, “there is what I am dreaming of, — my villa, and my own bed. I believe you can see the house now.” He paused. “No! No, I am mistaken. We are not near enough as yet. I live quite a distance,” he added, “from Puteoli.”

Phædrus heard him half-heartedly. His mind was full of his own plan — the thought of the landing, and the risk it would bring, of the journey to Rome, of the great capital of the empire.

“I have been thinking about you,” Ximines went on. “Are you planning to leave Puteoli to-night?”

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Phædrus collected himself with an effort.

“I have no definite plan. I intend to start for Rome as soon as possible.”

Ximines sighed.

“And in the meantime, enjoy yourself, undisturbed by the necessity of making plans! Quite right! Ah, youth, youth! What a wonderful thing it is to be young! *I* used to be able to drift; nowadays I must plan everything in advance. No sudden steps. No pleasant indecision. No dallyings by the wayside. Physician’s orders! I might catch cold! I might excite myself! I might —” he paused with a queer grimace. “But what does it matter? Physician or no physician, I’d plan in advance just the same! I am only deluding myself in denying it. It’s age, boy, old age. I can’t drift any more. I have lost the courage.” And with a sudden burst of regret he quoted, ““Would,

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would that I were as in the days when I led my army out into the valley of the Præneste !”

Phædrus was distressed. And to his surprise the old man did not attempt to summon his usual witty apology for sentimentality.

“You know Cicero’s essay on Old Age? The one where he says that when old age comes it brings its lamps with it, — friends, children, honors, a good wife? Well, Cicero forgot the old age that brings no lamps. What about me? My wife is dead, my children are dead, most of my friends are dead. Wealth, position, honors, — what are they, when one is —” Ximines’ voice hardened, — “when one is alone?” His voice fell almost to a whisper. “I am old, but all my lamps have gone out.”

A lump rose in the boy’s throat. He understood for the first time the real trag-

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edy of the old man's life. As if conscious of the effect his words had produced, Ximines caught the boy's shoulder, and swung him about.

"Listen," he said abruptly, "you are not starting for Rome to-night! You are coming to my villa to spend a few days with me! You are going to have your own apartment, and your own servants, and when you finally leave, you will take with you letters of introduction to some friends of mine who can help you. But in the meantime, you are going to make an old man happy by keeping him company, and listening to his worn-out stories, and —" Ximines seemed to lose his voice. His eyes glistened with something suspiciously like tears.

"You will come?" he asked simply.

Phædrus cleared his throat.

"Why, of course I'll come. It is better

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than any plan I can make. It is —”  
The old man raised a warning hand.

“It is a favor to me! I know what a bore an old person is. I know it will be dull for you. It is a favor I am asking of you, and my only excuse for asking it is that I may be able to help you later, at Rome.” He seemed to recover his good spirits. “Yes,” he added, “I can be of use to you.” And with the return of his characteristic manner he dropped Phædrus’ arm.

“Well, that is settled!” He clapped his hands as a summons for his slaves. “What about your baggage?” he asked, “have you much to carry?”

Phædrus had foreseen such a question early in the voyage.

“Almost nothing,” he answered readily, “I came away in great haste. My father suffered reverses before he died; of all



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that he owned I now possess nothing but a little gold and silver plate, which I have with me. And I hope," he added, "that I can soon get rid of that, in exchange for the coin it will bring."

Ximines nodded. Such a statement was by no means uncommon in that day. Fine plate was as safe a form of wealth as could be devised, and the boy's explanation was reasonable enough.

"Very well," said Ximines, "I will have the litters call at the shop of a Sicilian, who is the most reliable silversmith in Puteoli. The matter can be arranged in a moment." He dismissed Arbaces who had come forward at his bidding. "Have my baggage in readiness," he said, "the young man has already arranged for his." And he turned once more to watch the now rapidly nearing entrance to the harbor.

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“You must not think,” he explained to Phædrus, “that this is a sudden decision on my part. I hate sudden decisions. I have been turning this matter over in my mind for several days. As you have doubtless guessed, my one pleasure in life is my library, — my books and my collection of original letters. Of late, my eyes have been troubling me. Oh, I can see objects on the shore as clearly as ever, and I have this glass, made for me out of a piece of crystal, by a physician in Rome, — but if it magnifies the page, it also tires my eyes. The time has come when I must have some one to read to me. You read well, — I have heard you. You like good books, — and you know something about them. What more natural than that I should think of you as my salvation in my literary work?” Ximines paused. “You might even care to stay

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with me as my secretary. I am not so hard to get along with, after —” he broke off. “Well, we can discuss that later.”

Nothing surprises youth. Within an hour Phædrus had as fully accepted the new situation as if he had known the lawyer for a lifetime, and had never experienced agonies of apprehension at the thought of the landing.

Two hours later, he was helping Ximines down the gang-plank at Puteoli. The harbor of Puteoli was at this time the winter station for the Imperial fleet; its water presented a small forest of masts, and the streets of the town were full of sailors. The usual throng was assembled at the landing-stage, and it was with some difficulty that Ximines' slaves forced a passageway through the press around the gang-plank. Once out of the crowd, Arbaces led the way to Ximines' litter, a

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heavy vehicle with richly embroidered curtains, and the usual four slaves to carry it. Other slaves came running to attend to their master's baggage, and at Arbaces' bidding a second litter was brought up. Ximines took his place in the first litter, and motioned to Phædrus to enter the other.

"We will stop at the Sicilian's," he assured the boy, as the slaves lifted the litters, and moved forward.

Phædrus held in his lap the small bronze chest which he had borrowed from the captain, and in the pocket of his cloak he could feel the stolen rolls of manuscript. Ximines had arranged for the captain to dine at noon at the villa, and Phædrus was to send back the chest by one of the slaves, after getting rid of the gold cup and the silver plate at the silversmith's. The boy sat with one hand on

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the heavy box, looking out between the curtains at the idle throng which filled the narrow way. The town was filthy, the streets muddy, the passageway obstructed by innumerable market carts, so that the litters had to move at first slowly, and in single file. But gradually, as they left the centre of the town, the way broadened out, and the slaves who carried Phædrus pushed forward until the two litters moved side by side.

“A disgusting town,” said Ximines, “but the air is better once we leave it, and the road along the shore is really beautiful.”

They came to a small shop, where they stopped at Ximines' bidding, while Arbaces, who had kept pace beside his master's litter, went inside with a message to the shopkeeper. Presently the latter appeared, and with a low obeisance to the

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lawyer, approached Ximines' litter. Phædrus caught a glimpse of a small, gray-haired man, thin and wiry, with brilliant eyes and pleasing smile. There was little of the shopkeeper about him, — he looked more like a successful lawyer, and he displayed an ease of manner unusual in men of his class. His bearing was so dignified that it caught, and held, Phædrus' attention, and the boy watched the man closely throughout the short interview which followed.

The interview lasted only a few moments — both men speaking in tones so low that the boy could not overhear them. Then one of the slaves carried the bronze chest to the shop; the shopkeeper bowed again, and the slaves lifted the two litters. Phædrus had not said a word.

“That did not take long,” said Ximines, and he motioned to Arbaces to turn to the

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right, along a street leading back to the shore.

They came out of the narrow alley which they had been following, into a wide, sunny road along the bay. The fresh salt air from the Mediterranean blew once more in their faces; the water shone gloriously blue in the morning air, fishing boats with their red sails rode at anchor in the distance. The slaves hurried on at a faster pace. Phædrus felt suddenly exhilarated; now that he was rid of the gold cup and the silver plates, he felt relieved. Only the manuscripts now remained to remind him of his guilt. Ximines' voice broke in on his reflections.

"There is Vesuvius," he said, and he pointed to the south, "sending up the daily offering of smoke, not unto the gods of goodness, but unto the demons of disaster and destruction."

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Phædrus nodded. An eruption was a thing to thrill men's minds with awe and terror.

"Have you ever witnessed an eruption?" he asked Ximines.

The lawyer smiled.

"They occur constantly," he answered. "We who live here think nothing of them. Some men do say," he added, "that the old crater is going to make trouble one of these days. I do not know. One becomes hardened to danger, — if it can be called that."

They were in the country now, amid the sloping hills, with their terraced vineyards and their groves of figs and olives. Phædrus was almost too much interested to talk, but the lawyer spoke incessantly, pointing out now an old house, now a fine vineyard, now a particularly pleasing site, — and always explaining with the jealous



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pride of ownership, the relative advantages of his own estate.

It was well on in the morning before they climbed the low hill which led to the gate of Ximines' villa. Carved in the entrance was a little shrine; before it stood the gate-keeper, a tall young slave, with jet black hair, and brilliantly colored clothing. A huge dog came bounding down the hill to meet the litters, and the young man called and whistled in vain, as Ximines patted the excited animal, in evident delight at its affection. Arrived at the gate, the slaves put the litters down. Phædrus wondered vaguely if this meant that he was to alight. Through the open gate he caught a glimpse of a winding driveway, green shubbery, and a low white house, at the top of the rise. Servants were hurrying down the drive.

Ximines opened a little purse, filled

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with powdered sandalwood. Arbaces lifted the censer which swung smoking in front of the shrine, and brought it to him. Sprinkling the dust over the fire, Ximines closed his eyes. The slaves bowed their heads. There was an instant's silence.

"To your gods and mine," said Ximines reverently.

A moment later the slaves raised the litters, and the little company passed through the gate, along the gravel road, toward the lawyer's house. The villa entirely justified the pride which its owner displayed in it. As Phædrus helped the old man to alight at the door, he noted with astonishment, the two beautifully carved marble columns at either side of the entrance; and as they passed through the hall into the square court, he saw on every hand the evidences of Ximines' wealth and taste. There was none of the stiff,

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formal elegance, which had marred the interior of Hermon's villa; the atmosphere of this house was one of ease and restfulness; the chairs, the benches, the fountains, the very tiles themselves, seemed to reflect a cheerful hospitality.

Ximines led the way through the house, leaning on Phædrus' arm, and pointing with his stick to the various marbles and entablatures which covered the wall in remarkable profusion. In the library he stopped to give Phædrus a long, elaborate explanation of his system of filing manuscripts, and though the boy endeavored to persuade him to rest, he insisted upon making a personal visit to the apartment which Phædrus was to occupy.

These rooms were so large, so luxurious, and so like the rooms in his father's house at Mitylene, that Phædrus felt a lump rise in his throat as he looked upon them.

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And when Arbaces led them to the great, sunny, marble-lined baths, decorated in blue and white, and heated by braziers of polished bronze, he realized that this was the finest house he had ever entered.

Noon came, a slave announced that the captain had arrived, and they joined the officer in the library. The voyage from Ephesus had been a speedy one, the cargo valuable, and the captain was in good spirits. He displayed unusual vivacity during the noon meal, and afterwards, as they sat once more in the library, he actually told for Ximines' benefit a long and amusing story of a rival shipmaster who had just embarked for Ephesus after some difficulty with the harbor officials. Then, as the hour began to grow late, and Phædrus realized that the captain had some matters of business to discuss with his

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employer, the boy made his excuses and left the room.

He went outside, to the garden in front of the house, where he found the large black dog, which had met them at the gate. The dog rose lazily, and came forward, wagging a vigorous overture of friendship, and Phædrus seated himself on a marble bench, and began playing with the animal. The sun was warm, the air sweet, the view entrancing, — the boy gradually forgot the mastiff as he gazed across the rolling fields and vineyards toward the wonderful blue waters of the bay. To the east, Vesuvius towered black and ugly against the sky, a faint cloud of smoke twisting slowly up from the lofty crater. Nearer, the terraced slopes of lower hills broke the line of the horizon, and just below the wall of Ximines' estate the white tiles of another

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large villa gleamed through the thick branches of a heavy grove.

The view was not unlike that from a certain hill near Ephesus, and Phædrus' thoughts went back inevitably to the years of his slavery in Hermon's house. Only a few days had passed since the fateful morning of his escape, yet he felt as if years had come and gone. He remembered, for the hundredth time, Simonides, and wondered vaguely what the old man was doing now. The question was a futile one, yet it tormented him, and it recalled the problem of the rolls of manuscript still unsold. For the first time Phædrus realized that he dreaded the thought of getting rid of them. They were dangerous; they were of no use to him, yet to sell them meant to take the last step in his course of infamy. And something whispered in him that he must

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not take this step. He had done wrong in stealing the rolls in the beginning; he would only be increasing his guilt by selling them. There had been some excuse, — or if no excuse, then at least a powerful motive — for the theft of the gold and silver, but in his heart he knew that he had had no justifying motive for the theft of Nicias' manuscripts. What was the money they would bring him, over against the weight of meaning they carried for Nicias and old Simonides? Again and again, in his bitterness and regret, he asked himself what folly had led him to be guilty of such a crime.

A slave came up the driveway, carrying a bundle. Phædrus eyed him dully, as he turned off along a path which led toward the rear of the house. Presently he disappeared around an olive tree, and was lost to sight. The youth sat absently

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patting the black dog, his heart heavy with remorse, all the light and joy of the day for the moment gone.

He had been sitting thus for some time when the slave reappeared with the bundle and approached along the garden path. As he drew near, he made respectful obeisance, and extended the bundle. Fastened to it was a note which Phædrus took and opened. It was from the Sicilian silversmith.

“The cup and the plates,” he read, “conveyed their message. I send them back. The meeting will be held in my house to-morrow evening.”

Phædrus' hands trembled as he held the bundle. He did not need, or dare, to open it. He knew its contents. The stolen articles had returned.

He guessed instantly the meaning of the Sicilian's message. Plainly, there was



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something about the gold cup and the silver plates that had a secret meaning for the followers. The incident produced a strange feeling of uneasiness in the boy. There was something uncanny about it. It seemed like an omen, but whether it was an omen of good or bad, he knew not. He stood in perplexity while the slave moved away down the path. The bundle was heavy, and the boy put it down on the stone bench. He remembered that he must not allow Ximines to know that the articles had been returned.

And then came the question, where could he sell the rolls? He must find a silversmith who was not a follower of "The Way," — that would be easy, — but he must do it at once and secretly, lest Ximines become suspicious.

The captain appeared in the doorway of the house. Phædrus dropped the bundle

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into the grass, behind the marble seat, and hurried back to the house.

The officer stood talking to Ximines, who was behind him in the hall.

“One of the slaves is dying,” he explained to Phædrus. “He has sent for his master, but — ” the captain frowned, “Ximines wishes to send a physician instead. As I am the only physician in the neighborhood,” he shrugged his shoulders, “I shall have to go.”

He hesitated. “There is no need of your going, however.”

Ximines interrupted.

“Phædrus can read to me until you return.” And as the officer left them, he led Phædrus into the library. “The captain will not be back for some time,” he said, and Phædrus noticed that there was an unwonted air of constraint about him.

The boy took the roll which Ximines

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selected, and began to read, his heart set on pleasing the old man. He read easily and naturally, and several times he was rewarded by seeing Ximines nod his head in approval, after some particularly striking passage. An hour went by. At last the captain appeared in the doorway.

Ximines looked up, at his approach.

“Well?” he said. “The slave is — ?”

“Dead,” said the captain, and Phædrus saw the old lawyer start. “Your servants were right,” the captain continued, “the boy was dying when they sent for you.” He hesitated. “Why — how is it that you were not told of his condition when you first arrived?”

Ximines frowned.

“I do not know,” he answered. “I suppose it is because my servants know I hate the thought of death.” He passed his hand across his forehead. “It is a

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peculiarity of mine. The very thought of death is torture to me. It has always been so." He closed his eyes. "I suppose it is because I have come in contact with it so often."

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"I should have said one could become accustomed to it."

Ximines turned away. "On the battle-field, yes. Not when — not in your own family." It was with visible effort that he retained command of himself. "Where is Arbaces?" he asked Phædrus. "Have him tell the other slaves that they must make no disturbance this night." And as Phædrus moved to do his bidding, Ximines sank into the nearest chair and covered his face with his hands.

When Phædrus reëntered the room a moment later, the old man was once more himself. The color had returned to his face,

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he sat upright in the large chair, and he was deep in conversation with the captain.

“After all,” he was saying, “we know nothing more about the nature of death to-day than men did in the days of Romulus. You say you do not dread it; can you tell me what it is? Or what happens to a man when this thing you call Death lays hold upon him?”

He raised his cane, and pointed it, like an accusing finger, at the captain. “If you can answer, it means that you have discovered that which was hidden from Cicero, Virgil, Socrates, the heathen philosophers, our Cæsars, all the greatest men of history.” His voice dropped. “The riddle is not so easy, captain. The problem cannot be dismissed as you would dismiss it. You say you think that one should become accustomed to the sight of death. Ah, but that depends on what

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you think death is! Is it the prologue to a drama, or the next step up a ladder or the drop over a precipice, or —” Ximines paused, “or haven’t you decided in your own mind what it is? That is the easiest way out of the dilemma, and the one most men take. Not to decide. Just to drift.” Ximines’ lips curled. “Most men have no imagination.”

The captain flushed. Ximines saw the flush, and threw out his hand, in apology.

“Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean to imply that you belong to that type. I spoke harshly; but my irritation was from this, that Cicero, my favorite author and one of our greatest thinkers, could ask, ‘Is there a meeting place for the dead?’ and in the hour of his greatest loss could find no answer.”

Ximines turned toward Phædrus. “You are a Greek; do you remember

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Plato's lines?" And he began to quote, closing his eyes and falling unconsciously into the formal intonation of the schools. "“In respect to these great questions of immortality we must take the best of human arguments, and the reasoning that is most difficult to be answered, and build those arguments into a raft, that we may sail across the sea of life, until such time as we may be carried more safely in a surer conveyance furnished by a Divine Teacher.’”

Ximines opened his eyes and looked at the captain.

“Do you know who said that?”

The captain shook his head. Ximines turned again to Phædrus. “You should know,” he said; “You were named, I imagine, after one of his disciples.” He raised his voice suddenly. “Socrates! Socrates, teacher, moralist, philosopher!

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The greatest intellect of the Greeks ! And that was the best he could say to cheer himself along the road to death !”

The old lawyer’s eyes narrowed cynically.

“Poor consolation, that ! Not very encouraging, when a man loses those who are dearest to him ! Yet I would sooner trust the judgment of those two men, Cicero and Socrates, than that of all the other philosophers who have ever lived !”

Phædrus watched the captain, wondering whether he would try to find an answer to this attack. At first the officer sat silent ; evidently he did not care to broach the subject of the new faith. But finally he spoke.

“You and I,” he said quietly, “have long been at variance on this question, Ximines. All I can say is, the test of a man’s theory is the satisfaction it gives him.



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Which is preferable, — your fear of death, or the courage my belief gives me?" The captain dropped his eyes. "Indeed, it seems to me that your own Socrates was on my side. Did he not drink the hemlock cheerfully? Did he not do so voluntarily, when his friends had arranged for him to escape?" The speaker paused. "Socrates should encourage you, — he is an example to give you hope!"

Ximines closed his eyes again.

"Hope — yes, but Socrates could only hope. He was no greater than the rest of us in this, — he did not know. And I — who am I, to attain such a pinnacle of courage?" He sat suddenly upright, arms outstretched. "I tell you, I want something better than hope. I want a promise!" His eyes blazed. "Can you give me that?"

There was silence. The captain opened

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his lips to speak, and then closed them again. Phædrus recalled a saying he had often heard from old Simonides: "This life is but a dream. Some day, I shall awake in the summer-land of God." And he realized that for some reason the captain's lips were tied.

Soon the officer rose to go. Phædrus accompanied him to the door. On the threshold the captain repeated the warning which he had given the boy at the beginning of the voyage from Ephesus. "Be careful," he said, "Ximines is keen, and he is suspicious." Then he entered the litter in which Ximines' slaves were to carry him back to the town. Phædrus returned to the house.

For an hour he read aloud to Ximines, who still seemed nervous and ill at ease; then they dined together. Later, in accordance with the old man's wishes, they

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walked together in the garden. Ximines had little to say, and Phædrus gave himself to living over again the scene in the library that afternoon. He could not get it out of his mind. Ximines' words rang in his ears: "Give me a promise! I want a promise! Socrates was no greater than the rest of us in this, — he did not know!"

Suddenly the boy realized that this was the crux of the whole matter. Had the captain found such a promise? Had Nicias and Simonides any answer that could satisfy a man like Ximines?

He remembered the rolls which he had been carrying hidden all these days. Nicias had evidently treasured them; undoubtedly they contained some, if not all, of the teachings of this new philosopher who had won so many followers to the "Way." The thought awoke in him

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a sudden curiosity. For the first time, he experienced a strong desire to read the stolen manuscripts.

It was still early when the old lawyer announced that he would retire. Before Phædrus went to his own apartment, he made certain that he was not observed, and then went out into the darkness and recovered the bundle with the gold cup and the two silver plates. Then, taking care that his entrance should not be noticed, he returned to the house and sought his own room.

He drew the double curtains over the door, that he might have the most possible seclusion, put the heavy bundle upon a table, beside a bronze lamp, and drew Nicias' rolls from his bosom. Not once during all the days on the ship had he opened the stolen manuscripts; now at last he had courage to examine them,

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and he found himself trembling with a strange excitement. Always he had prided himself on what his father had called intellectual honesty, — always it had been his ambition to meet new ideas fairly and squarely, to hear the other side of the case, with open mind. But the step that he was about to take was a direct challenge to Fate, a blow in the face of his father's gods. He remembered the old story of Pandora and her box, and hesitated. Then he thought of old Simonides. He had wronged Simonides, — well, he could at least give the old man's faith a hearing.

He spread the first of the four rolls upon the table; it was yellow, broken with much use, stained here and there with sea water. At the top of the roll he saw these words, "From a Scholar in Cæsarea." At the bottom some one had

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written: "Selections from a letter to a friend, by a physician who had been a slave." With ever increasing excitement, Phædrus began to read. He read the story of the "Lost Son" — the story of a father, who saw his son, while he was yet a great way off, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. His lips trembled as he read on and on of a God who was abroad by day and by night to seek and save the lost.

Little did he think that hundreds of years afterwards, the myriad-minded poet was to read the story of the Prodigal Son, and drop his head upon the page, sobbing, "I would give the whole world if at twenty-one, never having heard a word of it in advance, I had chanced upon this story of the Beloved Physician, and as a full man, rather than as a little child, had heard it for the first time!" There were

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only two hundred words, and yet to Phædrus it was like the appearance of a new star in the sky.

What! God not hard like Jupiter? Nor harsh like Mars? Nor vindictive like Minerva? Did not his Socrates say that every sinner must go up marble stairs, heated red hot, before he comes to the throne of God? Did not his Plato say, "I do not know that God *can* forgive sins; I do not know that God has any right to forgive sins?" And here was One who sent His sun upon the evil and the good, His rain upon the just and the unjust, and whose heart was set upon His earthly child to redeem him. Plainly the writer could not describe in colors too rich the soul for whom his Master could die.

Gradually Phædrus began to understand the writer's conception of this

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Teacher, who believed in man, and loved man as naturally as his mother loved Him, loved as naturally as the sun gives warmth, as the fountain gives water, as the lark sings. The boy read the second roll, growing ever more and more aroused. He came to the story of the cruel trial, and that pitiless execution. Phædrus himself had seen a criminal crucified, had heard a revolutionist babble and mutter as he was dying on the cross, all bespattered with filth and mud.

When he came to the words, "Father, forgive them," he was torn with a strange emotion. And when at length he read the story of the rent tomb, and the evening meal at Emmaus, and the sudden recognition of the two disciples who had not been able to understand the good fortune that had overtaken them, it came to his comprehension that he had found the



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answer to Ximines' question. He heard again the cry, "Give me a promise! Can you give me that?" And he knew that all that the great Socrates had dreamed, and hoped for and tried in vain to prove, this new Orpheus had revealed as a personal experience. He recalled the words Ximines had quoted from Cicero: "Is there a meeting place of the dead?" And as if in answer, his eyes fell on these lines, "In my father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you."

He read on breathlessly, with a desperate questioning, one hand at his throat in a clutch of excitement. His lips became dry and parched, his limbs stiff with sitting motionless. He finished the second roll and the third, and came to the last. In an agony of despair he saw how short it was. If he could only know more, — now, this night, this very moment! He

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finished the last roll. It was as if a prisoner, confined in a dungeon, had caught, through the tiny opening in his cell, a whisper that help was near. But only a whisper. Oh, if he could only hear more of that Voice!

The night was far gone, when Phædrus finally put aside the rolls and lay down to sleep. A hundred questions besieged his mind, a hundred doubts assailed him; in a single moment, as it were, the faith of his fathers had lost its compelling power. But underneath the doubt, and the emotion, and the sense of confusion, Phædrus felt exalted, and a strange, sweet happiness filled his heart. It was as if a sunbeam had stolen into a dark room, to fall upon an open book; as if a fire was burning on the hearth, making the cheer the brighter because of the hail and snow without the window.

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He could not sleep. He rose, lit the bronze lamp once more, and walked back and forth in the dim, flickering light. He began to think of Ximines, and love for the old lawyer sprang up in his heart like a fountain in a garden. The old Stoic seemed brave and just, above other men. He had treated the boy like a second father, and now Phædrus realized how great was his admiration and affection for one of the best men he had ever known.

But suddenly Phædrus stopped and stood still. For the first time he saw what Ximines lacked. The great man was like a silver lamp that had not yet been lighted; like a splendid vine that was yet to bloom and fruit; like a glorious palace waiting for the family to cross the threshold; like the statue of a noble Stoic, with face chiselled in the finest marble, but awaiting the touch of love to

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grow warm and flush with life. Without perceiving the strangeness of the contrast, Phædrus thought of old Simonides, untaught, ignorant, a slave, yet beautiful in his goodness and ripened by his love. The comparison was illuminating. It brought home in a flash the real essence of the new teaching, and the lesson Phædrus drew from it shook him in every fibre of his being.



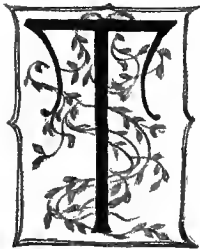


**THE**  
**NEW ORPHEUS**  
and  
**HIS WORLD MUSIC**



## CHAPTER VI

### THE NEW ORPHEUS, AND HIS WORLD MUSIC



HE sun had risen before the boy was able to quiet his thoughts and fall asleep. It was still early morning when Arbaces finally called him ; he had had only a few hours' rest, but he wakened to unexampled happiness. At last the sun had cleared itself of clouds. If winter was in the air, summer was in the boy's soul. As yet he had not analyzed his happiness ; he knew only that he loved these wonderful rolls, and that sometime, somehow, he must take the stolen treasure back to Nicias. How he was to do it, when, with

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what excuses to Ximines, and what effect upon his future, he did not know and he scarcely cared. The thought of the joy which the return of the manuscripts would bring to the two old friends in Ephesus was enough to set his mind at rest and his heart at peace.

From Arbaces he learned that Ximines was in the library, busy with a Roman officer. The visitor was the commander of the garrison at Puteoli. Ximines had not slept well, said the slave, and he hoped that the officer's call would be brief. But an hour passed, and the officer did not depart; a second hour went by, and a third; it was well toward noon before Arbaces finally brought word to the boy that Ximines wished to see him.

Phædrus found the old man seated in his favorite chair, his hand over his eyes, every line of his body expressing wear-



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ness. As Ximines looked up, Phædrus saw that his face was haggard.

“Well,” said the old lawyer gruffly, “I suppose you have been wondering what has kept me so long.” He motioned to a chair. “We do not seem to be leading the quiet life I described to you on the boat.”

Phædrus was shocked by the change in the old man’s appearance. Ximines seemed grayer, weaker, older by many years than he had seemed the day before.

“I hope,” Phædrus answered, “that you have had no bad news.”

Ximines smiled bitterly. “Bad news? That depends, as your friend the captain would say. I have had a warning, — a hint, a polite intimation from the government that —” he waved his hand, “that certain matters must be attended to.”

He sighed. “One grows lax as one grows old. I have lived easily the last few years ;

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I had all but forgotten what a struggle life is." He smiled grimly. "But I have been given a reminder, a brief notice that I must carry out—such and such orders." He laughed sadly, and the sound of his voice sent a shiver over the listening boy, "Carry them out, or lose my property. And one's property in such a case includes one's life." He glanced sidewise at Phædrus. "I suppose the captain would console me by telling me that this life is not desirable."

For an instant Phædrus thought Ximines was speaking in jest. Then he realized that behind his light manner the old man was in deadly earnest.

"What has happened?" the boy gasped, as he realized that peril was near.

Ximines looked away. "Many things. Things of which you and I know nothing. Events at Rome. Nero has lost his temper.

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He has drunk more than is good for him before breakfast. He has —” Ximines shrugged his shoulders. “What does it matter? Nero is only an animal, a beast of a singularly low order of intelligence. It is idle to try to trace his motives.”

The old man paused. “Nero has not always been a beast. I can remember when he was a different person. Twenty years ago he was a promising boy. But a generation has passed since then. Some men descend from the top of the palace by stairways, step by step. Nero leaped into the abyss as from his palace window.” Ximines seemed to lose himself in his thoughts.

“But the order?” Phædrus asked. “Is it an order you can easily carry out?”

Ximines straightened in his chair. His manner changed. He became once more the forceful mind, the vigorous thinker.

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“Easily? No. Not easily. But I can carry it out. For I must.” He raised his cane, and pointed it in characteristic fashion at the boy. “Learn while you are young that the prizes of life go to the fighter. Not to the most fortunate, or the most gifted, or the most deserving, but to the man who is willing to fight. Look at me! I am old, I am wealthy, you have put me down in your mind as the favorite of fortune,—I tell you I have had to fight for everything that I have! And the battle never ends.” His voice trembled. “I thought I was one of the exceptions. I thought to rest a little in my old age. I cannot. The challenge has come again. I must take up my arms and defend myself.” His eyes flashed. “Well, I’ll fight. They mean to finish me this time,—but I’ll fight.” An idea seemed to strike him. “Yes, and you can

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help me. I had counted on you to give me a little happiness in my old age; who knows, you may be the means of making that old age possible!" His voice dropped to the quiet deliberate tone of the lawyer. "I mean what I say; you may be able to save my life. And if you do—" he hesitated, "I have no other heirs."

Phædrus caught his breath.

"I do not understand."

Ximines looked up. "The story is a long one, — I will not go into it now. It is enough that last week Nero went one step too far in his career of debauchery and crime. Rome is aroused. Now he must justify himself, — quiet the populace."

Phædrus interrupted unconsciously.

"What has Nero done?"

Ximines frowned. "He has given a garden party, and conceived the idea of

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using human beings as candelabra. Nero is crazed over the idea of novelty. He wants to be called a creator, — a man of imagination. So, while his victims poured out their dying shrieks, he sat on a platform and played a dirge of his own composition.”

Ximines closed his eyes, as though to shut out the picture. “Enough of that! When I have a banquet, I like violets on the table. Nero likes the odor of burning flesh. When you and I eat, we like to hear soft music. Nero enjoys the groans and shrieks of the dying.”

“But what,” Phædrus asked, “has all this to do with you?”

“Everything. Having persecuted and tortured the followers of the new ‘Way,’ Nero must now prove that they deserve such treatment. He has discovered that Puteoli is the place where the new super-

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stition first appeared in Italy; and he intends to direct the attention of the public to the awful crimes of these Christians, as they are called. These people have not committed any atrocities. No matter! Nero has not lost all his cunning. The next move in the game is easy. When the citizens are aroused, turn their fury against other offenders! Nothing could be simpler. Nero has offended; these strangers to our gods must suffer." He hesitated. "Well, some one must find the Followers before they can be made to suffer. It is not easy; they are loyal to each other; they have good reason to be. The task of arresting them is not a grateful one." He glanced at Phædrus. "Do you begin to understand? I have never been a favorite of the Emperor. He dislikes me; his father before him hated mine. He has tried more than

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once to see that I was —” Ximines smiled, “put in the forefront of the battle. Now he sees his opportunity to rid the country of a tiresome old man. What could be better strategy than to give me the task of unearthing this superstition, root and branch, — of stamping it out once and for all, while there is yet time? Nero is cunning, I tell you, and he has played his hand. If I fail, or if I refuse to undertake the commission, — well, I will pay the usual penalty. I am like every other member of my class; I hold my estate subject to the Emperor. Unless I search out these folk, set spies upon them, arrest them, send them to Rome for execution, I will wake up one morning to find the messengers at my door, with an order for my execution. And a few days later, my villa will go to another favorite.”



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Ximines sank back in his chair, breathing deeply. Phædrus knew that every word he had uttered was true. There was a long silence. Finally the boy asked :

“But why does Nero think there are followers of the — of this superstition here in Puteoli ?”

Ximines did not answer at first. He sat motionless, eyes closed, his left hand drumming nervously on the arm of his chair. Then with a start he spoke.

“Here in Puteoli ? Well, it fell out after this fashion. Several years ago a boat was wrecked on a rocky point in Sicily. The captain lost his head. In every emergency the strongest man in the crowd is the natural king. There was a prisoner on board named Paul, who took charge of the sailors and the passengers. He succeeded in calming them enough to get them all safely ashore. One of the passen-

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gers saved was a Sicilian, — that silversmith at whose shop I left your gold and silver plates. He brought this man Paul as his guest to his house, and before the man went up to Rome for his trial he had induced a little group to become followers of the new superstition. Last year there was some trouble over this nest of hornets. I believe one slave was tortured by the government officials, but he would not betray the names of his associates. I think the company was broken up, and the movement quite stamped out. Save for these two incidents I have heard little of these people. It will be very difficult to lay hands on them.”

He sighed. “But it must be done. The unpleasant task is always the most pressing task. I hate especially to hound these people because I have always liked those of them that I have known. One of

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my slaves, I was once told, was a follower of the 'Way.' He was the best slave I have ever had; I could wish that all my slaves were of his faith if they could become like him." Ximines' voice became matter-of-fact. "However, he was born honest and faithful," and he added, "One thing is certain, — we must begin a secret investigation, and that immediately. For when the day comes that the Emperor has fixed for the victims to arrive in Rome, they will have to be there, whether innocent or guilty."

He planted his cane before him, and folded his hands firmly over the silver knob.

"Let us come to the point," he said. "I am a hard man, Phædrus, and I have a plain proposition to put before you. As you know, if I die without heirs, my villa will go to the Emperor. If I fail to carry

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out this order, it will go to him. But if I do not fail, the villa will go at my death" — Ximines gazed searchingly at the boy's face — "to the man or woman I make my heir. During the last few days I have begun to count upon you to make me happy; I have dreamed a dream, that I could persuade you to stay on with me here, perhaps as my secretary. My children are dead, my old friends are all dead; I am very lonely. It may be that this order of Nero's is a sign; it may be the portent of good fortune for you, and a warning from the gods to me, that I may not lose you, by undervaluing you." He paused. "Suppose I turn this whole investigation over to you? Suppose that with my assistance you succeed in destroying this nest of wasps? Suppose that you can deliver to the Emperor these followers of the new superstition? Nero will use

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them as a blind to hide his own guilt. You will have done him a valuable service. You will find that you have saved my life and all my property. The least that I could do," Ximines spoke slowly, "would be to make you my heir."

Phædrus found himself turning hot and cold at once. There arose before his mind's eye the faces of Nicias and his companions at that midnight meeting in Ephesus. He saw the face of old Simonides, who had risked life itself for his sake, and perhaps had lost it. Save his own father, they seemed to Phædrus the noblest men he had known. His whole attitude toward life had changed in the last twelve hours; he was suddenly conscious that his sympathies were with the followers of the "Way." But he understood Ximines, and his admiration for the lawyer had become reverence and, at last, affection.

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Ximines saw his confusion.

“I know that this is a strange offer I am making you.”

Phædrus stared at the floor with unseeing eyes. He felt that he must have time to think. In his heart he knew that he could never carry out the old man's wish; yet he could find no words in which to answer.

He threw out a question to hide his emotion.

“You say the Sicilian was a passenger on that boat, and has been suspected of being a follower of the — of this superstition?”

Ximines nodded. There was a smile on his face as he rose from his chair. He interpreted the boy's question as a sign of acquiescence, and his eyes shone with pleasure. “I have known the Sicilian for many years. I have bought marbles

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and bronzes of him: he is a man above reproach, — the soul of integrity. If he is a follower of this — this sect, then he must be allowed to escape.” Ximines’ eyes twinkled for the first time that morning. “I have never known but three honest art dealers. The first of them was the Sicilian about whom we have been talking, and the second one was this Sicilian, and the third one was this Sicilian, and there is no fourth.”

Phædrus was glad to see the return of Ximines’ good spirits, but his heart was heavy as he thought of the problem which confronted him. Whichever way he turned, it seemed as if he must injure some one!

He was silent throughout the noon meal, listening absently to Ximines’ talk of Rome and of the Emperor. He could not rid himself of the vision of that scene

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in Nicias' house, — of the noble men and women he had met there, of old Simonides, rising up to tell his story. Could it be that these people deserved death by torture, that he, Phædrus, was to be the instrument of their sufferings? The very thought of Ximines' words made him shudder: "Innocent or guilty, when the day comes, they must be in Rome!"

Was it possible that Ximines could have meant that?

He was relieved when Ximines retired to his room. He went out into the garden, and sat down on the bench where the Sicilian slave had found him the day before. The sun shone warm, the bay sparkled, in the distance Vesuvius sent up the same lazy column of smoke. Nothing seemed to have changed; yet how much had occurred since then!

He tried to weigh his problem calmly,



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judicially, and he discovered that he could not. The thought of hounding the followers as Ximines would have him, was out of the question; after what he had read last night, he could never do that! But he must do something; either he must tell Ximines of his unwillingness to betray the followers, or he must deceive Ximines himself. And at best, such a deception could only lead to ultimate disaster. Decide he must. Was he to take his place in the ranks of the followers, and see Ximines lose his estate and perhaps his life, or was he to see the friends of Simonides and the captain die in agony for the sake of Ximines, and his own advancement?

In despair, he rose and paced the garden path, striving to find a way out of the dilemma. Suddenly the thought came to him, — Ximines might already have advised the authorities to watch the Sicilian's

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house ! The followers were at this very moment in danger. He must act instantly, if he was to act at all.

Sheer inability to remain inactive became a compelling motive. He looked at the sun and saw that it was yet early in the afternoon. He looked across the vineyards to the distant roofs of the town, and calculated the time it would take him to come and go. Then he slipped quietly down the path, across the long, flat terraces, to a narrow gate in the garden wall.

The gate opened easily ; he looked once over his shoulder, to see that no one had observed his departure, and then passed through, through and out upon the broad highway that led to Puteoli. He had no definite plan. He did not know what he was going to do. He only knew that he must warn the followers.

The stolen rolls had begun their work.

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Slowly they had transformed the thief. Phædrus had begun to love what once he hated.

An hour later, he stood at the door of the Sicilian's shop. The silversmith himself answered his knock, and apparently recognized him, for he smiled, and held out both hands.

"I have been expecting you," he said eagerly. "Come in."

He led the way through the shop, across a narrow court, into a large room filled with sacks of grain and vegetables. The place was dimly lit; heavy bunches of grapes hung from poles suspended along the walls, and the air was fragrant with the odor of raisins and figs. The Sicilian crossed the room and fumbled at the lock of a heavy door. The lock gave; the door opened, and the little shopkeeper bowed to Phædrus.

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“To the public,” he said, “I live in a stable. Not to my friends.”

Phædrus entered another large room, lighted, like all the houses of that day, by a square opening in the ceiling. On the floors were the rarest old rugs; the walls were hung with the richest tapestries; it was as if Phædrus had entered the room of a prince or an emperor. He looked at the bronzes, the ivories, the rich glass, and unconsciously showed his amazement.

The Sicilian smiled at his surprise.

“A man must have one house for his work,” he said, “one for his home. You have seen where my mind lives: this is where my heart dwells.” And he motioned Phædrus to a chair.

His greeting still echoed in Phædrus' ears.

“You have been expecting me?” he asked, “I do not understand. I thought that the meeting was to be to-night.”

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The Sicilian nodded.

“It was to have been to-night,” he answered, “but word reached me an hour ago of your interview with Ximines.” He did not smile this time at Phædrus’ astonishment. “You know we must have friends at court, or we cannot live in safety. There are followers even in Cæsar’s household.” He paused significantly.

“Then you knew that —”

“That a message had come from Rome? Assuredly. I knew this morning that the commander of the garrison was with Ximines, and I heard this afternoon of the offer Ximines had made you.” The Sicilian smiled ingenuously. “But I knew we could trust you. I knew you would come, or send us warning.” He held out his hands in a gesture of sincerity. “For of course if you choose to betray us, we are already lost.”

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Phædrus was disturbed. The man was taking everything for granted.

“I have come,” he admitted, “to warn you that you are in grave danger, but —” he hesitated, still undecided in his own mind what to say.

The Sicilian did not wait for him to continue.

“I do not know,” he said rapidly, “whether you understand the conditions here in Puteoli. There are only half a dozen families that belong to the ‘Way.’ Most of them were taken across the bay this morning in a fishing boat, to an old farm belonging to my father; there they will hide until the storm has passed. The storm will not last long; already the people are outraged at Nero’s cruelty.” He paused. “If it were not that Ximines has been given the commission to prosecute us, I should say that there was little to fear.”

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Phædrus saw his opportunity.

“But that is it! Ximines has been given the commission! And that is what I want to talk to you about.” He hesitated. “I had hoped to become Ximines’ secretary, — to live with him as his friend and assistant, at least for some time to come. He has offered me that position. But now that this blow has fallen, it seems that I must give up my plans. I must either carry out Ximines’ wishes, or leave him.” Phædrus looked squarely up at the Sicilian. “Now I am going to be frank with you. I once wronged a man, — a man who was my best friend, and a follower of the ‘Way.’ At the time I wronged him, I was not a — I had scarcely heard of the ‘Way.’ I did not know of the Master’s life, nor understand His teachings. The wrong I did was a great one. I have repented of

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it bitterly. No sacrifice that I can now make for the 'Way' will be too great. But suppose I give up my intention of accepting Ximines' offer, — what about Ximines?" Phædrus hesitated. "I feel that I owe him a great debt. And I have a real affection for him. He is old, lonely, melancholy. Moreover, he says he is in danger of losing his life if he fails to carry out the Emperor's orders. What am I to do? What is he to do? What will happen to him?" Phædrus' voice rose, "I am in a horrible position! On either hand is an abyss, — death, perhaps torture, for my friends. And whatever I do, I am to feel that I am guilty of their sufferings." He stopped, panting. "Oh, I know what you will say. I must refuse Ximines' offer, and prepare to leave his house. I am going to do that. But what about Ximines? What will Nero say to



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his refusal to obey? Something must be done to save Ximines, too!"

The Sicilian nodded slowly.

"Yes," he said, "something should be done to save Ximines, too."

Voices sounded in the outer room; the little silversmith went to the door and opened it. Four men stood in the doorway.

The Sicilian's manner changed.

"Has anything happened?" he asked quickly.

The newcomers shook their heads.

"Nothing," said one of them, "but we remembered the—" He saw Phædrus and stopped.

"Go on," said the Sicilian, "he is one of us," and he ushered the men into the room.

"We remembered," went on the new arrival, "that the gold cross was left here at the last meeting, and has not been

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taken back to its hiding-place." He paused. "We thought it would be wise to —"

The Sicilian nodded.

"A good idea." He turned to Phædrus, who had risen from his chair. "This young man," he said, "is that friend of Ximines of whom the captain told us. He is a follower of the Master, and he has risked much to-day, in order to come and warn us." He laid his hand affectionately upon Phædrus' shoulder. "I had hoped to have him with us at our meeting to-night, but," he stopped, to draw up a chair for the crippled slave, "I fear we five are the only followers left in Puteoli since this morning's exodus."

The other smiled, but Phædrus did not join them. He could not help thinking of the risk these men were running by remaining in the city.

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One of the merchants noticed his sober expression.

“I trust,” he said, “you have heard nothing further to alarm us.” He threw a questioning look toward the Sicilian, who shook his head.

“No,” he answered for the boy, “but you have done the wise thing, in getting your families away so soon.” He glanced at Phædrus. “We have been discussing what may seem at this time a rather strange problem, — the possible fate of Ximines.”

The other man raised his eyebrows.

“Of Ximines?”

“His fate in case he fails to carry out his orders.” The Sicilian paused, “the question is a very pertinent one.”

Phædrus was astonished to see the other men nod agreement. That the Sicilian should feel thus was not strange, for

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Ximines had spoken of the long-standing friendship between the two, but that the others should entertain any thoughts but of hatred for the man who was about to hunt them down like wild animals, seemed unbelievable.

The crippled slave spoke suddenly, from the chair to which the Sicilian had led him.

“I have always pitied Ximines,” he said. His voice, rich and deep and resonant, carried a note of unaffected sincerity which left Phædrus dumfounded. A crippled slave, pitying a rich old lawyer!

The Sicilian took up the note.

“Life became bitter to Ximines, when his wife died, years ago. That was the end.” He paused, and then added reflectively, “I have sometimes thought that Ximines could have been won over to

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the 'Way,' if the right man could have gone to him at the right time. I tried, many times, but always in vain." His tone became one of regret. "It has been one of the great disappointments of my life that I have not been able to interest Ximines in the faith."

Phædrus heard him with amazement.

"Has Ximines then been told the Master's story?" he asked.

"In part. Not all of it. I could never get far with him. Ximines is intensely loyal; his one great ideal in life has been Cicero. And Cicero, of course, had much to say for the old religion."

The voice of the crippled slave rose again.

"Ximines will be one of us before he dies. I feel it. I know it. And I have seen it in my dreams. At this very moment Ximines is all but a follower!"

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“Impossible!” Phædrus’ voice rang out as he laughed aloud. “Why, I heard him say this very morning that —”

He stopped suddenly, the thought of Ximines’ words the day before ringing in his ears. “Give me a promise!” The sentence suddenly carried a new meaning.

“Nothing is impossible,” returned the cripple. His voice filled the room; there was a depth and sweetness in it that moved Phædrus strangely. Something — a certain detached, far-away note in the voice — impressed the boy. The words seemed to stir the others as well. There was a silence. Then the Sicilian spoke.

“You saw it in a —?”

“In a dream.” The slave’s voice was firm. “Have I been mistaken thus far?” He struggled out of the chair, and stood, his eyes on Phædrus, one hand thrown out prophetically. “To Joseph was given the

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power to unfold the meaning of dreams. For the Master's sake I suffered agony in these my limbs; I would not betray Him; and because I would not, He has given me the power to see what other men see not. I see Ximines," he pointed a trembling hand toward Phædrus, "your friend Ximines, borne home in a chariot of light. For he believes,—in his heart he believes! And before he dies, he will confess to you that he believes!"

In childhood, Phædrus had once been taken by his father to the famous oracle at Delphi. There, in the old and wonderful temple, before the sacred cleft in the rocks, out of which issued a veil of silvery smoke, Phædrus had heard the voice of the oracle, chanting the charmed verse. And now, as he listened to this slave's utterance,—to this voice, so weird, so vibrant, so compelling in the stillness of

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the room, he thought of that far-away hour in his youth and was strangely moved.

The spell was broken by the Sicilian.

"I pray God that you may be right," he said simply, and he turned to the others. "Do you wish to take the cross with you?"

They nodded. Phædrus remembered his purpose in coming.

"You have not told me," he said, "whether you have any suggestion as to the course I am to pursue."

The little silversmith paused, frowning.

"No," he answered, "no, I have no suggestion. It is a very difficult problem. Ximines —"

He never finished. Phædrus, watching, saw the man's face go suddenly white as death.

There was an instant's ghastly silence,



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— then the boy turned. In the doorway stood Ximines himself, on either side of him a soldier.

Phædrus' heart seemed to stop beating. He stood frozen. The others were as motionless as rock.

All but the crippled slave. He struggled once more out of his chair, and pointed a twisted hand at Ximines.

“There!” he cried, “There! The hour has come! The hour has come! Ximines has seen the light!” He turned and seized the arm of the man beside him. “He has chosen! Ximines has chosen! He too has seen the light!”

Ximines broke in, short and sharp.

“Silence!” He stepped forward into the room. To Phædrus, he looked twenty years younger than he had looked that morning. The light of action was in his eye; Phædrus realized suddenly how the

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old lawyer must have looked in the prime of life.

“Arrest these men!” Ximines called over his shoulder, “take their names, and iron them.”

He turned to Phædrus, and his voice was crisp:—

“You have done well. This is a good day’s work.”

His eyes fell on the Sicilian; without the slightest change of expression, he looked away and beyond: “That man by the table is innocent. Allow him to go free.”

He glanced once more around the room, then beckoned to Phædrus.

“Come,” he said, “the house will be searched.”

Phædrus grew cold. There could be no evasion. He looked at the Sicilian.

The little man was standing by the table, head up, eyes flashing, undaunted. There

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was no cowardice there ! The sight nerved Phædrus to his task.

“Ximines,” he said, and his voice was dry and hard, “I cannot go with you ! I belong with these men. I—”

Ximines turned like a flash.

“Silence ! Are you mad ? You are incriminating yourself !” He beckoned to his slaves. “Get the soldiers in here ! Arrest these men ! Take them to the garrison !” His voice broke with excitement. All his strength seemed suddenly to desert him. He was once more an old man.

Phædrus saw the change. The words of the crippled slave came back to him.

“Ximines !” he cried, “I cannot go with you ! I cannot be a party to such a crime as this. I cannot do it, because I, too, am a follower of the—”

“Ah !” Ximines swayed in the doorway. It was as if the boy had struck him.

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“I am a follower,” Phædrus went on, “and I am a follower through you! You made me one! Do you hear? You made me one!” His voice rang out. “You asked for a promise, and I sought a promise for you. I found it!”

Ximines closed his eyes.

“Will you come with me?” he asked, and his voice was a whisper.

Phædrus shook his head.

“Then you are under arrest!” Ximines turned to the officer who stood behind him. “Seize this man! And that man, also.” He pointed to the Sicilian. “Have them brought to my house under guard.” His voice seemed to fail him. “Have them —”

The color left his face. He raised one hand to his throat. His eyes opened wide. He swayed, and then, as a tall tower slowly collapses, fell, unconscious, into

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the arms of the slave who stood beside him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Darkness was falling as Phædrus and the Sicilian, accompanied by an armed guard, arrived at Ximines' villa. During the long march from Puteoli, Phædrus had been too excited to think clearly. His mind was filled with the horror of the probable fate of the Sicilian and his friends. Over and over again the little silversmith insisted that he would not desert his friends, and Phædrus knew that he would keep his word. The boy thought of Simonides, and felt a strange going out of his heart toward the old slave. He too had risked everything for his convictions. Physically, Phædrus was separated from him by hundreds of miles, but in spirit he stood beside Simonides and communed with him.

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The thought of his own danger did not move him. He found it impossible to believe that Ximines would deliver him to the Roman officers. Youth is always hopeful; Phædrus remembered the old man's generosity and felt secure. Deep in his heart he knew that Ximines would save him.

He wondered what was the meaning of the old man's collapse. He recalled the look on Ximines' face; it was as if he had been going through a part against his will. The words of the crippled slave returned to the boy: "Ximines believes!"

And looking back upon the scene, Phædrus realized that his own confession had broken through the mask, — had torn aside the veil, and transformed the actor into the man. The thought renewed his hope. There might be time yet to save the Sicilian.

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Arbaces stood at the door of the villa. His orders were that Phædrus be taken to his own apartment. The Sicilian, likewise, was to have an apartment of his own. The guard was to surround the house and see that no one left it.

The soldiers gathered in a little group about their leader. Arbaces led Phædrus and the Sicilian into the house. Phædrus asked for Ximines.

The old man had announced, said Arbaces, that he would see no one. He seemed exhausted by the afternoon's exertions. Arbaces thought his master would retire early.

Phædrus left the others and crossed the court to his own room. He drew the double curtains over the door, and looked about him. The same bronze lamp burned on the table, the same flickering light played about the corners of the

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room; it was as if he had never left it. He went over and caught up the cloak in the great pocket of which he kept the treasured rolls. He would read the words of that Master for whom he was risking so much.

To his horror, the rolls were gone. He looked wildly about him, — hurriedly searched the cloak a second time, tried the chest where he had put the gold and silver. They too were gone! Then it flashed over him.

Ximines had found them! One of the servants had discovered them and taken them to his master. From the gold cup and the two plates Ximines had had his hint to go to the silversmith's!

The discovery crushed the boy. Where he had hoped to warn, he had betrayed, — where he had meant to save, he had destroyed! Now he would be to blame



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for the Sicilian's death, and the death of the four others.

He thought suddenly of Arbaces. Could the slave have entered the room and searched the cloak?

Arbaces knocked at that very moment; he brought food for the boy. Phædrus could trace no sign of emotion in the man's face. He might have been a statue, for all the interest he displayed in Phædrus or the boy's affairs.

He went out and Phædrus tried in vain to eat. An hour went by. The boy began to pace the room in an agony of doubt. Fear is largely loneliness, and Phædrus began to feel that he was deserted in his extremity. His pace grew quicker, he walked with his teeth set, his hands clenched, his mind concentrated on the struggle to keep alive his courage.

He must not weaken! He must make a

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fight for the Sicilian, for the crippled slave and for the others. He must be true to the standard the little Sicilian had set him in the moment of their discovery.

Another hour went by. Suddenly, as he paced the room, Phædrus felt a strange peace begin to flood his soul. It was as if a black cloud had suddenly lifted from the sky, leaving a blaze of sunlight to flood in upon him, as if he had been carrying a heavy load, only to have it lifted by another, stronger arm. For some strange reason, he thought again of the crippled slave.

“Ximines believes! He will confess to you that he believes before he dies!”

A sort of premonition came over the boy. It was as if he had heard Ximines say, “I belong to the Way.”

He found himself standing still, his heart pounding violently. He listened.

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The house was quiet. Without knowing why, he went to the door and drew aside the curtains. There was no light in the court.

Moved by a strange impulse, he crossed the court, and stood in the door of the library.

The old lawyer was sitting at the table where he always did his writing. A bronze lamp stood on the table; Ximines sat facing it, his back toward Phædrus. His head was bent low, as if he could scarcely see.

The sight brought tears to the boy's eyes. He knew that Ximines could no longer read without pain. Half unconsciously he spoke.

"Ximines."

The old man did not move.

"Ximines!" A sudden panic seized Phædrus. He crossed the room.

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The old man's chin was resting on his hands; his hands were folded across the gold cup Phædrus had taken from Nicias' house. His eyes were closed, but in front of him, lying side by side where he had evidently placed them, were two sheets of manuscript. A small ivory portrait of a woman rested on one of the pages, and fastened to it, a handful of dried, withered flowers.

Phædrus touched Ximines' arm. Then he caught his breath. The old lawyer was dead.

Hardly knowing what he did, he glanced at the two sheets of manuscript. One was a page from Nicias' roll; the other was covered with Ximines' own handwriting.

Mechanically, the boy began to read. Across the top of the page he saw the now familiar words of Cicero: "Is there a

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meeting place for the dead?" And after them, copied carefully by the old man's trembling hand, those other words, which the captain had quoted to the dying slave-boy: "Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, I will return again, that where I am, there ye may be also."

But what moved Phædrus with awe, was what seemed to be an official order, stamped with Ximines' own seal. The words seemed to leap out of the page to meet his eyes; he grew faint as he read.

Ximines had written an order for the release of all the prisoners.

VII

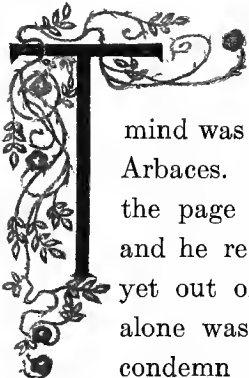
How We Got  
THE  
GREATEST  
BOOK  
IN THE  
WORLD

VII



## CHAPTER VII

### HOW WE GOT THE GREATEST BOOK IN THE WORLD

 HE first thought that entered the boy's mind was that he must summon Arbaces. Then his eyes fell on the page of Nicias' manuscript, and he realized that he was not yet out of danger. That page alone was evidence enough — to condemn the Sicilian and all the other followers.

He began to understand that from one view-point his position was far worse than it had been before. While Ximines had lived, he had had one friend at least who could protect him. Now, should the

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Roman officials disregard Ximines' order, there would be no hope of his escaping. He must hide, or destroy, every trace of the manuscript, which could still bring ruin upon him. And he must do so instantly.

As he caught up the page, he noticed the other rolls lying on a chair beside the table. With the same swiftness of thought which had come to him that night in Nicias' house, he gathered the loose sheets in his arms, and crossed the room. In a corner stood a tall bronze vase; he reached up and dropped the precious pages into it, one by one.

Then he tiptoed back to the table, raised the old man's head, and drew from beneath the folded hands the gold cup and the silver plates. Very gently he lowered Ximines' head again, until it rested on the ivory portrait.



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Suddenly he heard voices. A cold sweat broke out upon him. What if he be discovered here, by the side of the dead man? In a panic, he abandoned all thought of hiding the gold and silver. He stood motionless, listening. Fate was kind to him again. Gradually the voices died away in some distant part of the house; he awoke to the frenzied pounding of his heart, and the consciousness of the cold moisture on his brow.

With limbs that still trembled, he moved to the door, and looked out upon the court. Through the opening in the roof, he caught a glimpse of the sky, pricked, like black velvet, with tiny threads of gold. He drew in a deep breath, thrust the gold cup and the two plates into the folds of his tunic, and crossed the court.

Once inside his own room, he felt safer. If he could only hide the treasure

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for another twenty-four hours! He searched the room for a place to conceal the suspicious-looking bundle, but he could find nothing that satisfied him. At last, in despair, he realized that he must fall back on his original plan, and keep the treasure in the great pocket of his cloak.

He had no more than reached this decision before he heard Arbaces' voice, raised in alarm. There was a sudden rush of steps across the court. Ximines' death had been discovered.

He drew aside the curtains, and joined the Sicilian, who, he found, was already in the court.

"What is it?" The little man asked.

Phædrus was about to answer when Arbaces appeared in the door of the library.

"Ximines!" he cried, and his voice shook, "Ximines is dead!"

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He led the way back into the library. The officer in command of the guard was standing by the table; his entrance had occasioned the discovery of Ximines' death. He looked up as Phædrus and the Sicilian approached.

"There is something suspicious about this," he said. "Here is an order of release signed and sealed by Ximines." He glanced at the Sicilian. "Do you know anything about this?"

The little man shook his head; he could scarcely believe his good fortune.

The officer looked at Phædrus.

"I can find no signs of violence," he went on, "and there seems to be no good reason for doubting that this order is genuine, except —" He paused, while Phædrus' heart stood still, "except that Ximines was not a man to do things by impulse. Why he chose to arrest you this

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afternoon and to release you this evening, I do not know. However," — the officer shrugged his shoulders, — "he appears to have done so."

He began to fold up the manuscript.

"I shall send at once to the commander of the garrison. But as the hour is already late, it will be nearly morning before word will reach here in answer to my message. Until then, I can only say that you will still be under guard."

He bowed and withdrew. Ximines' slaves had gathered about the door; now they entered, and at Phædrus' bidding prepared to carry the body of their master into his own room. The thought struck the boy that on the morrow there would be no one to take charge of the household. He voiced it to the Sicilian.

"That is true," said the little man. "But I do not know that it matters now.

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The Emperor will receive the estate, and the slaves will be sold to other masters. For the present, Arbaces can take charge, as he has always done."

Phædrus forgot the slaves, in the thought of his own future.

"Well," he whispered, "what will happen to us? Shall we be released tomorrow, or shall we be held on the evidence against us?"

The Sicilian smiled. His old manner had returned to him.

"Evidence? What evidence? We have been careful, ever since the escape we had last year, to keep nothing that could betray us in Puteoli." He waved his hand. "There is no evidence."

Phædrus touched his arm. "What about the gold cross?" he asked, "the one your friends came to get?"

"It has not been found. I hid it my-

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self." He paused significantly. "When a man deals in precious metals, he must know how to hide his valuables. I have been doing it all my life."

"Then you think we will be allowed to go free?"

"For a few hours, yes. Fortunately the commander of the garrison left Puteoli this afternoon, not to return until tomorrow. He alone is to be feared. The moment he returns he will rearrest us in the hope of winning the reward Nero has offered. That is our real danger now." He saw the alarm in the boy's eyes. "But do not be afraid; this is not the first time I have been in this situation. We shall be freed early in the morning, and by noon we shall be out of their reach."

The Sicilian took the boy's arm, and led him to his own apartment.

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“Let us talk awhile,” he said, “before retiring. You will not sleep now, I am sure.” And he ushered Phædrus into the room, and drew the curtain behind him. “Of course there is one subject,” he added, “that we cannot discuss. Even the walls have ears.”

He seated himself near the boy and began to speak of Ximines and the old lawyer's career. He talked well, and talked with a purpose, for he appreciated Phædrus' anxiety; but with all his wealth of anecdote and charm of manner he failed to hold the boy's attention. Phædrus' mind strayed continually, — now to the scene at the Sicilian's house, now to Ephesus and the meeting of the followers there, now to that moment when he had found the old lawyer bowed over the wonderful words of the Master. Try as he would, he could not free himself from

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the thought of the morrow, and what it might bring. Would the day mean freedom, the release of the Sicilian's friends, or fresh disappointment, re-arrest, imprisonment?

Again and again he forced himself to listen to the Sicilian; again and again he found himself shuddering with the thought of the torture he might have to endure. It was long after midnight before he left the silversmith, and then it was not to sleep, but to pace his room as he had paced it the previous night, in a fever of excitement. Toward morning he forced himself to lie down, and for a few short hours he slept, fitfully, to be re-awakened by the Sicilian's knock at dawn.

He rose, haggard and heavy-lidded, and learned that the soldiers had departed. The Sicilian was all energy; he pointed



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to the sunlight falling on the floor of the court, and smiled encouragingly.

“Come,” he said, “we have no time to lose.”

He took the gold cup, which Phædrus gave him, and hid it in his own tunic. Then he showed the boy how to carry the cloak so that it would not betray the objects within it, and led the way out of the room.

Phædrus stopped him at the door of the library.

“Wait,” he said, and he swept aside the curtains, “I have something more.” He crossed the deserted room and drew the loose sheets of Nicias’ manuscript from the bronze vase.

The Sicilian was beside him instantly. Together they rolled the separate pages into one small cylinder.

A slave entered the room. He looked inquiringly at Phædrus.

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“There is a messenger outside. He says he must speak with the silversmith.”

Phædrus followed the Sicilian through the outer court to the door. A man was standing on the gravel walk, — a tall figure, in a white tunic. He raised both hands and made a sign, his voice ringing jubilantly on the morning air.

“Nero is dead !”

“You are free ! Word came from Rome last night. His persecution is over !

\* \* \* \* \*

So it came about that a few weeks later Phædrus’ dream was fulfilled, and he visited the great capital of the empire, not as a prisoner in chains, but as a free-man, travelling with his companions to the Eternal City.

True to the silversmith’s prediction, Ximines’ villa was appropriated by the Emperor, the slaves were sold at public

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auction, a new master came to the great house on the hill. For a few days Phædrus stayed with the Sicilian; then he accepted an invitation to accompany a party of merchants by boat around to Ostia, and thence by carriage to Rome.

Once in the capital, he left his new friends, and sought out a jeweller, a follower of the "Way," to whom the Sicilian had given him letters. This man was the leader of the little company in Rome, and one of the first things he did was to take Phædrus to a secret meeting in the Catacombs. These dark aisles of the dead had been used by the followers during the bitter persecution, and though the danger was over for the hour, these underground rooms were still used, and Phædrus was eager to attend a midnight meeting.

He found the city of the dead to be a

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city vaster than the metropolis of men in the blue air above. Situated just outside the walls of Rome, these dim aisles wound for miles ; some of them had been deserted for a full hundred years, and there the leaders of the "Way" assembled on nights of rain and storm, when all other men were in their own houses. It was with a feeling akin to awe, that Phædrus made his way through the deserted caverns where generations long since dead were sleeping, rank upon rank, tier upon tier, thousands upon thousands. And as he stood up in the flickering light of the torches, and looked into the faces of the little group which was there to meet him, he understood for the first time the strange charm and power of the Master's idea of death and immortality.

It was in the Catacombs, at a meeting held there some nights after his arrival in

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Rome, that Phædrus first told the story of his theft of Nicias' rolls, and how the reading of the Master's words had changed his outlook on life. Then it was that he first stated the decision made the day of Ximines' death, — that he would make his way back to Ephesus, and return to Nicias the golden cup, the two silver plates, and the stolen rolls.

He was in the midst of his story when he was interrupted by a voice from the rear of the little assembly. A Captain from Puteoli, said the voice, had spread the information that Phædrus knew how to prepare the papyrus which was used for manuscripts. Why, asked the speaker, could Phædrus not make a copy of Nicias' rolls, for the followers in Rome, before he took them back to Ephesus?

It seemed that it was their misfortune that they had no full story of the Master's

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life and work. At this time they possessed but a few scattered sayings, and Phædrus' small rolls represented wealth immeasurable. They joined in urging the boy to fulfil this request, and Phædrus found himself assenting gladly. In those days when life was uncertain, strong men acted with instant and decisive energy. Phædrus saw his life spread out before him like a rich map, and having decided what he was to do, delayed not a moment in the doing of it.

The sole treasure, he discovered, of the followers of the "Way" in the Catacombs was a collection of rude notes jotted down by a Roman centurion who had been stationed in Palestine. It seemed that this man had been a warm friend of one Mark, whose name Phædrus found on one of the sheets of papyrus. As a final gift, this man Mark had written out for the

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soldier his notes, made from the recollections of one of that inner circle that had once stood close to the Master. Unfortunately, the centurion's notes were disconnected, but Phædrus saw instantly that it would easily be possible to so bring the incidents together as to make a single story.

He decided to make the attempt. During the succeeding weeks, he lived with a lawyer's clerk on the outskirts of the city, often working, for fear of arousing suspicion, in the Catacombs themselves. His task proved a pleasant one, and as he toiled, the boy began to reflect upon the influence which these rolls were exerting on his life. Here were a few pages, torn, as it were, out of a career packed with thrilling events, and these few pages held only a few days in the life of the new Orpheus. Why should not full memoirs

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be written, and handed forward to other generations? In some way young Plato and Xenophon had collected their memorabilia for Socrates; but if the Greek teacher had had the greatness of intellect, Phædrus felt that his Master had the greatness of God. The boy determined that he would not only return the stolen manuscript to Nicias, he would first of all follow each disciple back to his home in Galilee, in the hope of gathering up every reminiscence of his Master, and transferring the thrilling story to an illuminated page. Here was an ambition really worth while.

There had been a time when he had cared little for his artistic gifts, when he had placed no value upon his skill with pen and brush. Now the very thought of papyri holding the Memorabilia of his Master, with all the pages made beautiful



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with gold and blue and crimson, set his heart beating fast. In that hour Phædrus envied no prince his palace. Come soon or late, if life held out, he would bring to that old chest in Nicias' house every unrecorded reminiscence that the world held. He was young, he was strong, he was free, he could wear rags, he could eat crusts, he could toil without tire, and at the end of his quest was, not the Golden Fleece of Jason, but the golden speech of God.

The more he worked over the stained rolls, the more they fascinated him; he was forever spreading out the pages, and re-reading the wonderful words. He lingered over the story as a miser lingers over his gold, as a prince lingers over his jewels; and the more he dwelt upon it, the more eager he was to have others share with him in his discovery.

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Every morning he was up with the sun, dampening the long, narrow strips of the papyrus, drying them in the wind, polishing the surface that it might hold the soft colors. Because he loved the task, his work grew swiftly under his hands, while his manhood also grew by leaps and bounds. The days came and went; he finished one copy, and at the request of the followers, began a second.

Then events began to conspire to forward the boy's plan. It seemed that the previous year word had gone forth to double the taxes of the people in the East; Damascus, Syria, and Egypt had been swept by the tax-gatherers, as by a plague of locusts. The publican, with his company of soldiers, had swept the peasant's hut for the last grain of wheat, and the land-owner's house for the last copper. The revolt that had long

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smouldered began to burst into flame. Men out of every province started to Rome to make their protest. All the caravans and ships converged toward the Imperial City. There were merchants from the towns of the Euphrates, and from the cities of Galilee; traders from Arabia and the Upper Nile; soldiers from Palestine; travellers from Smyrna in the East, and Hippo on the West; centurions, judges, rich land-owners, and sheiks from the desert; all had come to present their grievance before the court of last appeal.

Then it was that what seemed misfortune to some people, proved to be good fortune for all mankind. Among these strangers from the East were many who had become secret followers of "The Way." Soon they found out the story of the church in the Catacombs. Thanks to the secret signals, they were able to

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make their way into the hidden chambers beneath the great city that was sleeping in the darkness above. Some of the strangers were in Rome but for a single night, others were there for many weeks. Often, after the meeting was over, a stranger would wait to tell Phædrus the story of some roll he had read, or some parable he had heard from the lips of some follower, perhaps now dead, a parable which he had committed to memory, and which he now recited to Phædrus, that the young Greek might make a record of the event and preserve it among the treasured rolls.

From a citizen of Nazareth, he received the story of the rich young ruler, who made "The Great Refusal." This man also showed Phædrus a tiny bit of goat's-skin wrapped in soft white silk. On it was written the story of the Transfigura-

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tion of Jesus. From another traveller he obtained a small brick tablet, made by some man with the sculptor's gift. The tablet was terra-cotta, and the black lines had been burned into the clay. There were two holes in the top of the tablet, that had been suspended by a tiny chain, and hung upon a wall, that the sculptor might have it ever before him. In the centre was the profile of a teacher in the act of stretching out his hands to receive a little child, and beneath were these words, "Whoso receiveth one little child in my name receiveth Me."

But it was from the family of a dead soldier that Phædrus obtained his great treasure. This officer had been stationed in the region made famous by Xenophon's story of the march of the Ten Thousand. For years he had lived in the city of Lystra. There he had found little to oc-

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copy his mind. It was an interior town, far removed from the cities of the coast, with their sailing of ships, and movement of regiments, and the officer felt himself little better than an exile. He was well educated, a man of culture, travel, and position, but what was a thousand fold more important for Phædrus, he had also been a follower of "The Way," and the possessor of letters beyond compare for importance.

The letter which sent the blood to Phædrus' cheek and set his heart pounding, was one from a man named Luke to his friend Theophilus. This man Luke had been a physician and a slave. In those days the patrician, with his lands, his offices, and his gold, chose no profession save the law, that involved personal labor. The task of searching for herbs and roots, this tending of wounds received

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in battle, was a form of work, and therefore the master had his slave-doctor, just as he had his slave-farmer, his slave-builder, his slave-baker and his house-slave.

Now this Luke had written a private letter to his friend about the Master. He had not written as an historian, but simply as one friend writes to another friend; he probably never thought of a far-off century when men would long for a full story of a day in Jerusalem or Nazareth, with every detail given and no word or event omitted. But fortunately, this ex-slave and physician had given in detail the names of towns, taverns, ships, sea-currents, directions of the wind, with the portraits of men, and made faces to stand out so clearly that, once seen, these faces can never be forgotten. With the accuracy of a scientist, the physician

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had fixed the time of the Master's birth by a paragraph about the Roman census.

Just as Xenophon, in his *Memorabilia* of Socrates, forgot to mention how his master was dressed, and how he looked when he took the cup of poison in his hand, but rather touched upon a few dramatic events like his trial, and his address to his judges, so this man Luke presented only the striking events in the career of the Teacher who had captured his imagination.

When autumn came, it found the church in the Catacombs in possession of over fifty sheets of *Memorabilia*, each sheet ten by twelve inches, and every page made beautiful by the loving care of Phædrus. He had marked the beginnings of his paragraphs by an initial in colors of blue and gold, and into the lettering he had poured all his skill as an artist.



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By this time, the boy had begun to realize the immensity of the task he had set himself.

Nothing was more certain than that the reminiscences of Mark's friends contained the story of a few days among the many that made up the three golden years. After that visit to the Temple, when the Master was twelve years of age, had come eighteen years of silence. Nor had the Master Himself left a single written page. His followers, who knew Him face to face, had soon been mobbed out of life. Because they daily expected His return, they had told His story, but it had died upon the waves of the vibrating air.

After the Master's piteous tragedy on the little hill beyond Pilate's palace, persecution had fallen upon the little band of huddled sheep. Soon the followers scattered, even as the sparks fly under

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the stroke of the hammer on hot iron. Phædrus was told that James had been thrown from a window in Jerusalem; Simon and Jude were tortured in Persia; Philip was hanged in Hieropolis; Andrew was crucified at Patraca; and James the Less, in Asia; while John had been sent to the convent isle of Patmos. But surely the witnesses must have left behind records of their Master. The one need of the hour was for some one to start for Damascus, make his way to each city where an apostle had been martyred, and there search out the secret friends, write out their every recollection, and so collect the Memorabilia of Jesus.

It was late in November when Phædrus finished his second copy, but the news of his skill and his treasure had spread, and he found himself flooded with requests to continue his work in Rome. He found

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himself torn between two emotions, — the desire to further the Master's cause, and the wish to set himself right with Nicias and old Simonides. But as the days fled, and he saw the joy that his work brought to the followers in the Catacombs, he began to realize that his task was divinely appointed, and he put off the hour of his departure. Another winter came and went again, and another November drew near, and he awoke one day to hear that Hermon, his old master, was dead, and to find that almost two years had passed since that eventful night when he had fled from Ephesus. In retrospect it seemed only a few weeks since his landing in Puteoli and his arrival in Rome.

What men he had met! What wondrous scenes he had witnessed! To his surprise, Phædrus found it hard to tear himself away from the Catacombs. He

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had ceased to think of these chambers as the place of death; he had come to think rather of the martyrs' bodies lying in quiet and undisturbed peace, of their spirits in paradise, and of their faith triumphant in the city that massacred them.

But his work in the Catacombs was done. With joy and pride, he looked at the Memorabilia that he had named for Mark and at the copies he had made of the letter of Paul to the little band that met in the chambers of the dead. These were to be his gifts to the wheat merchant in Ephesus, whose rolls he had stolen.

It was on the last night of the Saturnalia, just two years from the night of the secret meeting in Nicias' house, that Phædrus again set foot in Ephesus. For a long time the boy had made his plans and timed his arrival so as to be present at Nicias'

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Christmas midnight meeting. Once more had come an interval of quiet, and for weeks there had been no sign of persecution in Ephesus. Because it was holiday time, the streets were filled with men and boys, returning from the games and feasts. Phædrus made his way through the familiar thoroughfares as one in a dream. At last he found himself on the road along which the Ten Thousand had gone to conquer Persia.

Again he felt his way slowly through the dark night, again he arrived at Nicias' gate, again he received a stranger's welcome at the hands of the merchant. Once more he looked upon a little company assembled at a secret meeting.

The room was dimly lighted by the smoking lamps. Phædrus took care to stand so that his face was in the shadow, and he had full opportunity to look at the

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faces of the followers as they came in. His search was instantly rewarded by the entrance of old Simonides. The boy saw that the old man bore himself like a brother beloved rather than as a slave in his master's house.

He saw the hazel eyes, as bright, as keen and kindly as ever; he heard once more the vibrant, musical, metallic voice, "fit for loud laughter, and piercing wail, and all that might lie between." But he perceived that the great shock of hair had become white; and he realized that time, labor, and sorrow had wrought havoc upon the old man's face. Simonides was like a tower, but the foundations were undermined, and at any moment it might fall.

Not until the room was silent and Phædrus saw the old chest brought in, did he lift his hand from his face. Then he felt

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that he could not let the meeting go on until first he had told his story.

He turned and asked a servant to hand Nicias the note he had brought from Rome. Standing under the bright torch the wheat merchant read the tiny roll. He looked up curiously, sought in vain for Phædrus' eyes, and addressed the company. "This young man has brought a message from our friends in Rome. He brings warm commendations. I will ask him to give us the greeting he bears."

Phædrus felt his heart beat fast as he rose. Looking straight toward old Simonides he began to speak.

"I have come all the way from Rome," he said, "to right a wrong I once did this company. Two years ago to-night old Simonides brought me here. Your meeting was interrupted by the sound of knocking at the gate. During the excitement and

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alarm I stole a gold cup, two silver plates, a cloak, and certain priceless rolls. All these treasures I have brought back. To explain my theft and my restitution, I ask you to hear my story.

“My father was the merchant Phædron, of Mitylene. He was a prosperous man, and had lands and ships and agents in many cities. He was the rich man of his province. But Hermon was jealous of my father; he brought charges before the Emperor, and soon my father died at Rome, in prison. Then all his property was confiscated, and when his slaves were sold, my own name headed the list. I was bought by Hermon, the governor, and placed in charge of his library.

“In Hermon’s house I came under the influence of old Simonides, whom now again I see here. Among all the slaves



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in the governor's house, Simonides, alone, was trusted. On that festive night, two years ago, Simonides brought me here.

“You will remember that just after this old chest had been brought in, after the cups had been filled with wine, and the bread placed upon the silver plate, a servant came to say there was a soldier at the gate. That seemed my opportunity. For weeks I had been meditating flight. I hated my master with a deadly hatred. Every day seemed blacker than the day before. I had even thought of killing Hermon, who had wrought me so great injury, and I had also thought of killing myself. But in that hour, when all went hurriedly into the garden, leaving this room empty, I could think of nothing but this gold cup, the parchments and the silver plates. Tempted, in a weak moment I became a thief. The

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next morning I tried to escape on the boat that was sailing for Rome.

“At the wharf, in my peril, I remembered Simonides’ watchword, ‘The Way.’ So I told the agent that I was one of the followers of ‘The Way.’ Little did he suspect that I was the thief who had robbed this chest of its treasures.

“In his pity, this man took me aboard the ship, and gave me into the hands of the captain, saying that as a follower of ‘The Way’ I was in peril. Then came old Simonides to warn me that Hermon was sending servants to have the ship searched. As the captain was on the wharf, Simonides told him of my peril. The captain put me in a farmer’s boat that was to be towed down to the Island of Samos, and thus I was saved.

“In Puteoli I read the rolls I had stolen.

“They ‘found me.’

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“The rolls had power to guard themselves. They built walls for their own protection.

“While reading them, I saw the heavens opened. Before that, I had cared little for my education, or my gift as an artist, but in the hour when I read the stolen rolls, I knew what my life-work was to be.

“Now I have brought back to Nicias the gold cup, the silver plates, and the rolls with the story of the Master’s life. A wrong, once done, cannot, perhaps, be righted; and the wrong I did Nicias was a great one. How great it was, I did not understand until I read the Master’s words. But in that hour I repented bitterly, and since that hour, I have striven to show my repentance by true service.

“Here, therefore, are the rolls I stole; here also is a new letter from Paul,

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written to the followers in Rome; here are the reminiscences of many men, soldiers, peasants, merchants, and travellers, who, visiting in Rome, told me what their own eyes had seen, and what their own ears had heard of our great teacher.

“And here am I, — to ask you to set me apart to the task of searching the world for the records of the Master’s story, that I may bring back to Nicias’ house, before I die, a full record of the life, the teachings, and the death of the Master and all who were transformed by Him.”

Nicias sat as in a spell, with transfigured face. Beside him sat old Simonides, with eyes that looked upon the boy through a mist of tears.

The whole room was glorified.

Simonides was the first to greet Phædrus, whispering broken words of welcome. Then, in silence, Nicias grasped Phædrus’

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hands. Afterwards, when all had recovered themselves, they looked upon the pages Phædrus spread out.

The sheets were beautiful with a scholar's patient skill, and an artist's loving touch. They were more beautiful with the words of life. One hour passed, another hour, and still a third; and then Nicias, with the older men, stood apart in low converse with Phædrus. The youth was to have his wish fulfilled.

Just before the dawn of Christmas morn, Nicias spread a white cloth upon the table. Upon this, he put the gold cup, the silver plates, and spread out the rolls of manuscript that had come home at last.

The boy Phædrus fell down upon his knees.

The older disciples stood in a circle round about him. Then the wheat mer-

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chant Nicias put his hands on Phædrus' head, and said : —

“Phædrus, believer in Jesus ! I dedicate thee to the Memorabilia of the Master !

“I dedicate thee to days of toil, to nights of sleeplessness !

“I dedicate thee to hunger and cold, to rags and nakedness !

“I set thee apart for pain and martyrdom ! To the end, that when the apostles' voices are stilled in death, the Master's voice, through thy rolls, may live on and live forever !”

Long the old merchant stood there. He lifted not his hands from Phædrus' head ; his lips were moving, but no voice was heard. In that moment men's eyes were opened, and they saw things invisible, not lawful to be told.

Then, as dawn drew near, one by one, the followers went out, each man unto

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his own house. When the sun stood upon the horizon, Phædrus and old Simonides stood at the western gate of Ephesus.

Now, indeed, the great task was begun.

Then began certain wonder deeds. The work Phædrus proposed demanded a heart of brass, a brain of steel, the strength of a young god.

No man ever knew at what expense of pain and peril Phædrus paid for the treasure-trove assembled in the Memorabilia of the Master. Nothing is so wonderful as heroism. During those years, Phædrus joined the noble company of martyrs who wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, with trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, of bonds and imprisonment. Following along the trackway of Paul, and of Luke, the Beloved Physician, following after Mark and the best-loved disciple, John, he came to many

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forms of anguish; he wore rags, he ate crusts, he slept in dens and caves of the earth; he shivered in the forest; he burned in the desert; he was mobbed in the city and robbed on a lonely country road; he was destitute, tormented, and afflicted, but never once did he flinch and turn back, and always his treasure increased.

He sailed first to Antioch, and went thence to Nazareth, where he arrived one day in the early spring. It was his ambition to explore the home country of Galilee, where all reminiscences tasted of the home soil, and where he hoped to bring together the full story of the recollections of the Hebrew peasants and fishermen. Wherever he went, he began to find the influence of a certain tax-gatherer, whose duties had lent him skill in writing. This tax-gatherer, a man named Matthew, had purchased



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from the Roman Government the right to farm out the taxes, and grind the people into dust. In those days there were three classes whom all men hated and despised, — the thief, the murderer, the publican. And this Matthew was a publican, — hard, cruel, unyielding, — a man of the people who lived at the expense of the people. But in some unaccountable way this cold personality had been transformed by the warmth of sympathy in Christ's teachings; this man had decided, apparently, that much of the hardness and bitterness of the people was due to his own hardness toward them; and in his remorse he had determined to do what he could to help those whom he had injured. And so he had begun to gather together the Master's Beatitudes for the poor. He knew the poor like a book; he could read every page in the life of the peasant and fisher-

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man; and for the most part, he had written in the poor man's tongue, the Hebrew.

Phædrus found a score of men, living in villages as widely separated as Nazareth and Jerusalem, each of whom had a little piece of papyrus holding some parable or proverb preserved by this publican. The story of the treasure hidden in the field; the story of the wheat and the tares; the story of the laborers waiting to be hired; the story of the selfish men who wore the mask of piety, and robbed the poor of their silver, — each was copied on its own little square of papyrus.

Up and down the land, from Bethlehem to Jericho, from Hebron in the south, to the Lake of Galilee in the north, went the young Greek. He talked with peasants shepherds, artisans, traders, priests, sheiks, — everywhere gleaning eagerly, like a

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harvester who cannot bear to lose a single handful of the golden grain. At last he brought all the scraps of parchment together, and named his book for that Hebrew tax-gatherer, Matthew. The portrait of the Master which this Hebrew material presented was very different from that brilliant portrait that Phædrus had made out of the recollections of men who had known Mark, the soldier. In contrast, too, his *Memorabilia* of Luke was the portrait by a Gentile artist, and differed from that of the Hebrew and Roman as a picture by Rembrandt differs from one by the Spaniard Velasquez.

That winter Phædrus retraced the steps of Paul on his journey into the cities north of Damascus. In almost every town he found a few who understood his signals, and after proving him, confessed that they were secret followers of "The Way."

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When night fell, he would meet a little company, now in the house of some friend, now in some distant garden, where in low tones they would talk together of the Master's wondrous works and deeds, of the new faith that had flooded their hearts with hope, — a faith that was now travelling, like a beautiful summer, from city to city, from continent to continent.

From Damascus, Phædrus made his way to the Greek towns on the banks of the Lake of Galilee. Thence he took the old road that led westward to the seaport, whence ships sailed to Rome. Along that road, during the life of the Master, had passed the weekly messenger from the Emperor's palace to the governor, Pilate. In that little city of Nazareth had dwelt the Roman legion, with its parasites, its outcasts, its gamblers, who spread the proverb, "Can any good thing come out

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of Nazareth?" There Phædrus marvelled upon the miracle of a lily secreting purity and whiteness though rooted in bog and slime.

A day's journey to the south, Phædrus met a group of shepherds. Day by day they led their flocks into the hills, and night after night they returned to water their sheep at an old well, dugged in the limestone. They were silent men, timid and suspicious, but little by little, Phædrus won their confidence. At last, one night, under the stars that shone with warm and mellow radiance, an old shepherd opened up his heart. Then they brought forth their treasure. It was a tiny roll wrapped in silk and thrust in a leather case. The roll held the story of a star that guided three wise men from the East to the little town of Bethlehem. It told also of the sudden appearance in the air of the

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heavenly host, singing of peace on earth and good-will toward men. For weeks Phædrus could scarcely sleep for joy over his copy of the story of the first Christmas night.

But the Carpenter's guild in Capernaum held a still richer treasure. These artisans gloried in the fact that the Master had belonged to their guild; that He, too, had made the bow and the ox yoke, that He had fitted doors and made beautiful the windows of poor men's houses. One of these workmen had a tablet hung above his carpenter's bench. Too poor to buy a goatskin, he had smoothed a board and carved its edges. Unable to write, a stranger whom he had entertained had written for him what he called "The Lord's Prayer." At the top of the board, Phædrus found a promise carved, "Ask and ye shall receive."

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Slowly, Phædrus went from village to village, and hamlet to hamlet. The long happy winter passed, summer came again, but his treasures were more and more. Most of the five hundred had gone, but here and there a fisherman, an artisan, an old peasant remained. Some of them were unable to read or write. They were rough without, but their memory within held great riches, just as the rough geode, when broken open, holds a thousand flashing crystals.

After his third trip into the hills of Galilee, Phædrus turned his steps toward Alexandria. Then it was that he learned that there was a reward out for a certain young Greek who was reproducing the "writings" that set forth the story of the new superstition. The Romans were beginning to call it a "book religion," and to say that there was more danger in "the writ-

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ings" than in the words of any teacher. From Rome came the news that one had been led away by the lust of gold, and had betrayed the secret hiding-place, where the leaders had stored the Memorabilia that Phædrus had brought together under the name of Mark. About this time these traitors to "the writings" began to be held in special fear as "traditores" who crucified the Master afresh.

Phædrus was in a village far up in the hill country, when the warning overtook him. He was not afraid for himself, but he feared for his beloved parchments. What if a poisoned arrow should strike him down! A score of times he had been delivered as if by a miracle out of the hands of enemies. But what if he should be captured and his treasure all destroyed? What if his papyri should be found and burned by the Roman soldiers? What



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about the generations to live in after years, — men who would go through life laughing and weeping and working and sinning, to suffer and love and die! Perhaps they, too, would be tormented by Cicero's question, "Is there a meeting place for the dead?"

If he could only preserve for them this story of the Master and His promise, then every dying statesman, every sweet mother, every little child might know that there is a meeting place in the Other Room.

And so Phædrus planned one supreme achievement. Now that a price was set upon his head, torture and death were certain. What he had to do must be done quickly. The Memorabilia of the Master must be placed beyond all possibility of destruction.

In Egypt, years before, Phædrus had

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witnessed the opening of a tomb that had been sealed for a thousand years. He had seen, with amazement, the colors of red and blue still fresh and undimmed, and now he determined to go into the desert of the Nile, and there make one more copy of his treasured rolls. He spent days in the selection of his papyrus, in the preparation of his colors; then he started for the desert and his great task. There, where the air is dry, and rain seldom falls, he went to live with the shepherds. From the heights where he worked, he could see, in the distance, the valley of the great river, and there, six months later, he sealed in a great stone jar more than sixty sheets; all of papyrus, holding the story of the Master's life, His teachings, His cross, and His victory over death. Soon or late, the time would come when these treasures would be found. He knew that they

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would last two thousand years as easily as two years.

There remained only one thing more to do. He must send one of the copies of his new rolls back to Nicias, for the followers who lived in Ephesus. A few months before, his task would have been easy; now it was all but impossible of accomplishment. Persecution had broken out again; his work was known, a price was upon his head. Roman spies were everywhere; in Egypt, in Palestine, in all the islands between the Greek coast and Ephesus. To return to the great city would be to court death, torture, and the destruction of his rolls. Yet he knew the risk must be run. One man there was, — a Greek whom he had known in Alexandria, — and this follower could be trusted to carry the treasure to Nicias' house.

To Alexandria Phædrus knew he must

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go himself. And go he did, in the guise of a wandering beggar, the precious rolls in a bundle upon his back, his features stained, his hair long and unkempt. Night after night he plodded on under the friendly stars; day after day he lay hidden in the straw in some rude stable, or upon the hard ground with his bundle for a pillow. The country he traversed was grimly desolate, the villages few and scattered; great stretches lay between, given up to drought and dust, colorless, sombre, oppressive. By day, living things wilted under the brazen sun; at night a cold wind sprang up to chill the weary youth as he left his hiding place to continue his march.

It was toward the end of the dry season when he finally drew near the mouth of the Nile and Alexandria. He came out in the morning upon a little sloping knoll,

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and saw, with a thrill of delight and astonishment, the white porches of the city gleaming in the sun before him. His task was all but finished. With a sigh of content he let his eyes wander over the gilded temple roofs, the tall columns of the old basilica, the broken lines of shops and houses. A few hours more, and the treasure would rest in safe hands.

Out of the white gate came suddenly a glittering column of armed men. Phædrus caught his breath as he recognized the shining eagles of a Roman cohort. Instinctively he stepped back from the road, and turning, made his way through a small grove, down the gently sloping hillside. Not till he was well away from the highway, and completely hidden by the thick shrubbery, did he stop and put down his bundle. Then, with matter-of-fact composure, he lay down to rest.

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He had walked all night; his limbs were tired and sore; but the vision of the city, the sudden glimpse of the Imperial colors, the occasional faint sounds which drifted to him, even now, from the distant walls, set his blood rioting, and banished all thought of sleep. Lying in the grass, as he had lain so many times during the long weeks just past, he closed his eyes, and retraced, as in the shifting glass of a kaleidoscope, the strange and varied course of his life. Odd snatches of conversation, faces seen but once and for a moment, the voices of men and women long since dead, — a flood of bitter, poignant reminiscence swept over the boy. The garden where he had played as a child, his mother's death, those bitter months in Hermon's house at Ephesus, — old Simonides, Nicias, the never-to-be-forgotten night of his escape, the Sicilian, Rome, — face after

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face, vision after vision, they drifted by before his eyes. What a broken, diffused existence it had been! He felt suddenly very old. In the distance, the regular beat of the marching troops began to be audible on the highway. Phædrus lay still, listening. Gradually he began to catch the jangle of harness; voices carried above the dull thud of feet; the line burst suddenly into a marching song. A lump rose in the boy's throat. These men had at least the companionship of their own kind. He had forgone even that!

A long time after the sounds had died away, Phædrus lay motionless; then he arose and took up the treasured bundle. For the city of Alexandria, day had scarcely begun; for Phædrus it would not end until he had fulfilled his mission.

He found the city full of life and movement, — the streets alive with bustle and

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excitement. Boys elbowing their way between stolid family groups; children, scurrying in and out like rabbits; mothers, shrieking warnings to their offspring; hawkers of fruit and wine, booksellers, fish-dealers, barbers, jewellers, bird-fanciers — Phædrus had never seen such an ill-assorted mob of people as seemed to fill the squares and market-places of Alexandria. Shouts, laughter, the noise of disputing, arose on every side. Money-changers sat at little tables, chattering raucously at their work; from the flat roofs of the houses, doves whirred and fluttered down to the stone-paved streets; out of open doorways drifted a fragrant odor of cooking, perfuming the morning air. In the largest square of the city a troupe of gypsies were performing circus tricks before an eager, gesticulating crowd; dark-eyed gypsy children moved about



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the edge of the circle, beseeching coins of the multitude; on a rug spread in the centre, a black-haired gypsy wife and mother stood straining under the weight of four muscular sons, who twined themselves in varying postures above her head.

Phædrus eyed the throng in amazement. The town seemed on a holiday. Plainly, some event of importance was taking place, to attract such an assembly of the pleasure-loving and the idle.

The puzzle was solved for him by a voice which he overheard behind him.

“Let us go to the Hippodrome, Gallio. The legate is to be there within the hour.”

Phædrus understood, in an instant, the meaning of the festivity. The Roman legate in Alexandria! No wonder there was a holiday!

He made his way down a narrow street

## THE STORY OF PHÆDRUS

to the house of the man he sought. It was in a lane, which turned off from an unfrequented side street, and Phædrus found the neighborhood apparently deserted. He knocked upon the door, and waited in vain for a reply. Knocked again, and waited again, — wondering, this time, with a vague feeling of uneasiness, whether the man could have moved away. The noise of his knocking echoed loudly in the narrows of the lane; it seemed impossible that the house could be occupied, and the sound not heard. Suddenly, as he was about to turn away, a woman appeared around a corner of the lane. Phædrus made the customary obeisance of the professional beggar.

“I am looking,” he said, “for the man who was formerly the keeper of the southern gate. Can you tell me where I can find him?”

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The woman nodded.

“At the Hippodrome,” she said curtly. “He is there to help with the crowd. Look for him at the entrance next to the statue of the Emperor.” And with a glance of contempt at his ragged clothes, she passed on down the street.

Phædrus hurried back toward the gate of the city. The Hippodrome he had seen from afar, towering just outside the walls. Presently he fell in with the multitude, all moving, like himself, toward the circus.

He found the space around the great structure banked solidly with people. Members of the Imperial cavalry rode here and there, endeavoring to maintain a semblance of order among the turbulent, good-natured throng. Phædrus found the statue of the Emperor, and sought the entrance nearest it. At the top of the

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steps, on the level of the first tier of seats, he found the Greek, whose courage could be trusted until death itself.

Phædrus elbowed his way forward, and touched his old friend on the arm. The man eyed him, but restrained all sign of recognition.

“Make way!” he cried roughly, “Stand aside, will you! Make way for those who have seats!” He turned, to thrust a muscular arm in front of a callow youth who was trying to brush past him. “Not so fast, young man! Not so fast!”

Phædrus gripped the official’s wrist, and whispered something in his ear. For an instant, the color left the man’s face. Then he recovered himself.

“Make way, there!” he went on loudly. “Keep the passage clear!” Then, in a whisper, “Stand near me till the crowd is seated.” And raising his voice once more,

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he continued to address the throng in accents of official authority.

It was some time before the crush began to grow less, and a much longer time before the entrance way was deserted. Then Phædrus approached the man, with a feeling of intense relief.

“You are the agent for Nicias,” he said quietly. “In this bundle, are the Memorabilia of the Master. They are to go to Nicias for safe-keeping. These new rolls are not safe with me. Already a price has been set on my head.”

The man betrayed no sign of interest or emotion.

“Drop them here beside me,” he answered. “Go in and find a seat. We may be watched. There are spies everywhere.” And as Phædrus moved away, he added in a low voice, “The rolls shall leave Alexandria to-night.”

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For the first time in months, Phædrus walked away empty handed. He felt lost without the bundle, yet at the same time strangely free and happy. Mechanically, he found his way to a place in the first tier of seats. Out of the corner of his eye, he tried to see the official he had just left. He found he could not, and gradually, as the minutes passed, and he recovered his composure, he found himself focussing his attention upon the scene before him.

Out upon the blazing sands of the arena, a line of slaves were being led, manacled and naked, by armed guards. From the pits at one side, the dull roar of a lion rose suddenly, above the buzz of talk and laughter in the galleries. Phædrus caught his breath. He had often heard of these sports, but he had never seen them. He looked down on the

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group of thin, wasted figures, now being released by the soldiers, and a shudder went over him.

“Ah! There’s the legate!”

At the words, Phædrus looked up, and saw the Roman official, entering the Imperial box, directly opposite him. The audience was on its feet; the great enclosure echoing a greeting. Phædrus had seen the man in Rome, — a fat, red-faced fellow, coarse of mind, and heavy of feature. A man with the marks of degeneracy upon him.

A woman spoke behind Phædrus.

“Oh, they’re giving them weapons!”

Phædrus’ eyes went back to the arena. The woman was right. To complete the farce, the poor wretches were being supplied with short swords!

Suddenly, as he watched, Phædrus’ heart seemed to stop beating. One of

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the slaves, the one at the head of the line, was a cripple. Something about him struck Phædrus as familiar. He looked again, and recognized the crippled slave whom he had met at the Sicilian's house in Puteoli.

A trumpet blew from somewhere down in the pits. One of the barred gates began to open. The hum of conversation ceased. The great assembly seemed to hold its breath. A man back of Phædrus cried "Sit down!" But Phædrus did not hear him.

He was on his feet. In his ears was the sound of another voice, — a voice he had heard in the goldsmith's at Puteoli. Down on the sands, his sword held like a shining cross before his breast, stood that brave crippled slave. In the sudden, deathly silence, he was speaking, and Phædrus thrilled to the music in the tones which



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floated, vibrant, weird, compelling, over the arena:—

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep among wolves! . . . He that loseth his life shall save it. . . .”

The words echoed in the porches of Phædrus' mind like the clear summons of a trumpet. The whole world seemed dumb, — save that crooked figure, calling to him from the sands. The voice went on, louder, sweeter, than before.

“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end.”

As though in a dream, Phædrus found himself on the steps leading down to the edge of the balcony. A soldier shouted something behind him; a babble of hoarse whispers rose about him: “Beggar! Madman! Put him out!” He heard nothing. He went down the steps, seeing only the cripple who was doing a

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brave man's work, being faithful unto death. For a single moment Phædrus stood with his hands on the marble railing; then he leaped down into the arena. The cripple turned toward Phædrus. Their eyes met. The strange, wonderful voice began to chant the familiar words:—

“Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in Me. I go to prepare a place for you.”

There was a pause. Out of the open pit leaped a thing of black and yellow. The voice of the crippled slave never wavered: “And if I go I will return again, . . . that where I am, there ye may be also.”

The crowd scarcely saw what followed. The gate of a second pit clanged open. A dozen yellow shapes bounded into the light. The youth who had leaped into the arena now stood between the wild beasts and the cripple. There was a streak of color across

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the sands. Then the youth went down. A choking gasp rose from the multitude. The voice of the cripple was drowned by a woman's scream.

Up in the balcony, at the entrance nearest the statue of the Emperor, a gate keeper, taking advantage of the excitement, hid a bundle under his cloak, and turning furtively, sped down the marble steps to the street.

\* \* \* \* \*

Another December came, and brought with it the feasts and sports of the Saturnalia. But Nicias knew that Phædrus would not be at this secret meeting. In the old chest, so long the merchant's treasure box, lay a bundle, delivered to him months before by a stranger from Alexandria. With tears Nicias had heard the man's story; he knew that the brave boy would come no more.

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Old Simonides was too weak, now, to carry word of the secret meeting, but he was no longer needed. As of old, the little company assembled at the hour of midnight. As on those other nights, the old chest was brought in by two of Nicias' slaves, and opened wide before the gathering of friends. But now, while all eyes were fixed on him in love and reverence, the old merchant spread out new treasure, pages smooth and fair, bright with glorious colors, and luminous with the wondrous story.

Here were three portraits of the Master, each by a skilled artist; here were the completed Memorabilia of the Master, named for Luke, the Beloved Physician and written in Greek for men of culture; here were the Memorabilia written in Rome and named for the soldier Mark, but now given in the order of the fascinating events! Here was a new addition to

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the biography taken from the lips of Galileans, who had known Matthew, — a biography for peasants and poor men!

Looking first upon the rolls, and then upon the little company, the old Greek merchant began to speak.

“We are here to celebrate a slave-boy at whose hands we have received a treasure beyond gold and gems. Lest all memory of the Master perish with the death of His witnesses, our Phædrus gave himself to searching out for future ages the Memorabilia of our Master.

“Phædrus stood in every city to which the first disciples fled. He journeyed from the Tiber to the Nile, from the Nile to the Jordan, from the Jordan to Ephesus. He was in peril in the city, in peril in the wilderness, in peril on the sea; but one thing he made certain, that though all the followers of ‘The Way’ were martyred,

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the Master's story could not be hurt by death.

“Now the singer of an undying song is himself dead. He hath been redeemed out of hunger and cold, out of torture and pain; he hath found a refuge from all who strike, and all who pursue.

“Bronzes rust and statues disappear; our Parthenon and Temple of Diana are of a day. Athens and Ephesus fade like leaves. One thing alone abides — God's eternal truth put in beautiful words. Here and now, therefore, we celebrate Phædrus, who hath sent out the music of the Master, music that will sound on, and sound forever.”

Then began the beautiful ceremony of the Greek for their noble dead. When Pericles died, the patricians of Athens put on their white robes, tied a violet girdle about the waist, and each, with a lamp of

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smoking incense, marched slowly past the bier, staying for one moment in love and reverence above the face of their hero. And now the followers of "The Way" began their commemoration of Phædrus. Nicias spread out the beautiful parchments on the table. He opened the Memorabilia of Luke to the story of the lost son, and on that page the wheat merchant laid the little roll that Phædrus had stolen and beside it placed the two gold cups. One by one the little company marched by, staying their steps for a moment to stoop and press their lips upon the page that held the story of their Master. Then the followers passed out into the night.

But each man knew that if the night was light about his feet, it was because he had received his torch from the hand of the slave-boy, Phædrus.



## THE STORY OF PHÆDRUS

The first century ended, and another century was ushered in. The good news began to make its way. First to go over to the new faith were slaves and gladiators. The peasants in the field followed. Then the soldiers fell into line; last of all the philosophers joined the Master's triumphal procession up the hills of time.

Then Constantine deserted the gods of Rome. One day the Emperor startled his people by announcing the new faith as the religion of the empire. Phædrus' Master was in the throne of the Cæsars.

Another century arrived. Julian the Emperor organized one last desperate assault upon the followers of "The Way." The brilliant youth failed. Weary of his impotent persecutions, one day the Emperor fell, leading the assault. As the arrow was drawn out, the blood gushed



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forth ; some say Julian whispered : "Thou Galilean ! Thou hast conquered !"

Suddenly, men became curious and eager. Everywhere, they began to ask for some one who could tell his full story. One day, a traveller in Constantinople said that in a rich man's house in Ephesus were parchments that held the full story of the Master. Good news cannot be hid. The rumor of the hidden rolls spread like the advancing sun. Wise men began to ask why their city could not have one copy of the Master's history. Without any pre-arranged plan, men out of distant towns started for Ephesus.

One morning a group of scholars stood in the great reception room of the house where the wheat merchant Nicias had once lived. A certain wistfulness was upon all faces, and a great expectancy filled all hearts. Hard by stood the

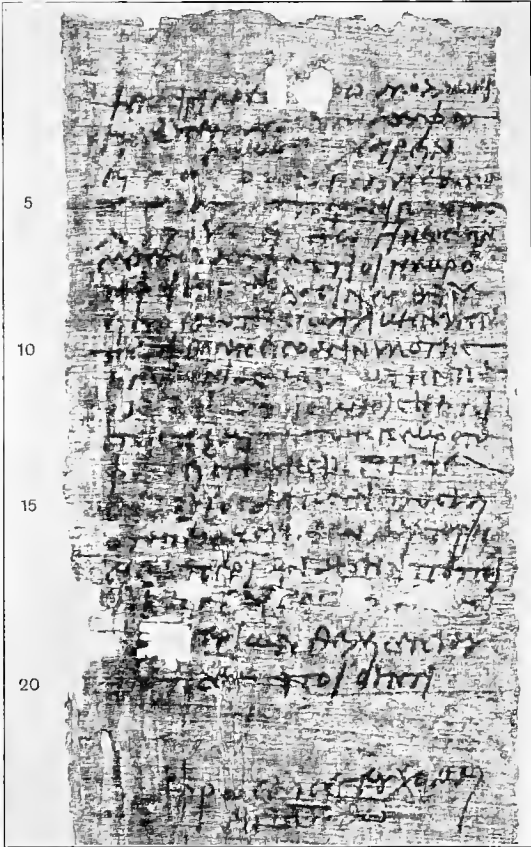
## THE STORY OF PHÆDRUS

Temple of Diana, one of the Seven Wonders of the world, but no man remembered that pile. At length the hour long waited for came. At a given signal the scholars rose, while two young men entered the room, carrying an old chest. Then, hands gentle and reverent lifted Phædrus' rolls from the chest — rolls that held the story of One who spake as never man spake, whose music was world music.

Gone the house of Hermon, the governor! Gone Herod's temple in Jerusalem! Black and peeled the Parthenon of Athens! Deserted now the Pantheon of Rome! One treasure remained to the world — THE MEMORABILIA OF JESUS.

Phædrus, the slave-boy, had built a ship in which his Master would sail across the seas of Time.





Letter from Psenosiris, a Christian Presbyter, to Apollo, a Christian Presbyter at Cysis (Great Oasis). Papyrus, beginning of the 4th century A.D. (Diocletian persecution). Now in the British Museum.

## NOTES

### NOTE I

Professor Schmeidel emphasizes the fact that of Jesus' words, not one proverb, parable, or sermon out of ten has survived the twenty centuries since His death. In weighing this statement, the thoughtful man must remember that other teachers of that far-off era have suffered losses not less heavy.

1. Æschylus wrote 90 plays. It is known that the library at Alexandria had 72 of these. To-day we have only seven.

2. Euripides wrote 92 dramas; the catalogue of the Alexandrian library included 78; we possess 19.

3. There were 17 of Pindar's books at Alexandria. We have 4, and they are not complete.

4. Nine of Sappho's books were listed at Alexandria; not a single one has come down to us.

5. Sophocles wrote 123 dramas; we possess only 7. These men were prolific authors, whose aim was to secure permanent influence through a medium which is enduring, — the written page. Jesus wrote no books, composed no dramas, left no written

## NOTES

page. He chose to make His appeal directly to His audiences, relying upon His voice, and the power of His personality.

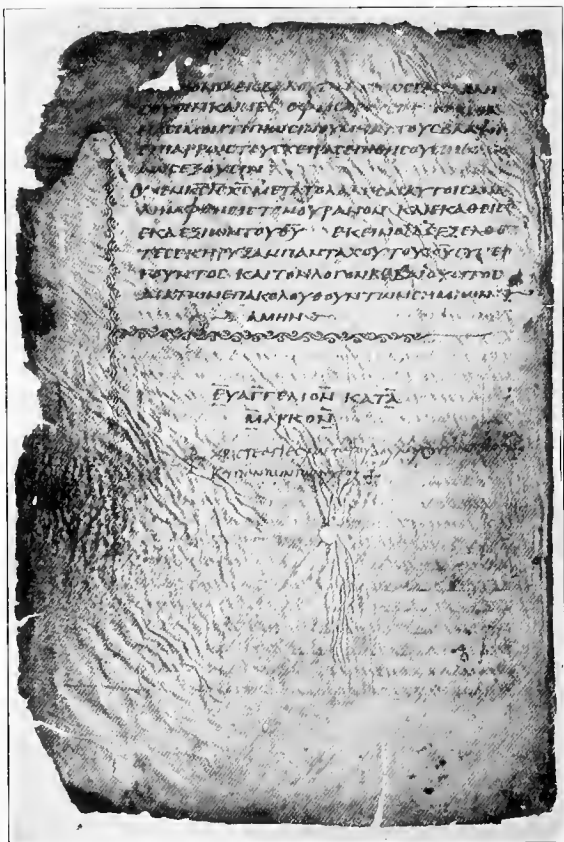
### NOTE II

The earliest manuscripts of Plato, Cicero, and Cæsar are about 900 years old. The oldest copy we have of Plato's Republic goes back to the tenth or eleventh century; that of Cicero's Orations to the ninth, that of Cæsar's Commentaries to the ninth or tenth. The exact dates of none of these are known, but roughly speaking, there is a gap of a thousand years between these manuscripts and the lives of the men whose thoughts they record.

This is not the case with the Memorabilia of Jesus. Three separate manuscripts go back to 320 A.D. England owns one of these treasures, — Codex A. Rome possesses another, a manuscript found in Alexandria, Codex B. The Czar of Russia owns the third, a collection of 343 pages on antelope skin, found by Tischendorf in a wastebasket in the Monastery of Mount Sinai, and now known by scholars as the Codex Sinaiticus.

Several years ago there was taken from a stone jar, found in a tomb in Egypt, a bundle of parchments, now owned by Mr. Charles Freer of Detroit, Michigan. Our scholars have recently discovered that this manuscript, containing 324 sheets of





Facsimile of Mark xvi, 17-20, of the Washington Manuscript in the Freer Collection.



## NOTES

vellum, is one of the most important manuscripts of the New Testament. It is remarkable because it gives the gospels in the western order, Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark, and it contains an interpolation within the ending of Saint Mark, for which no other Greek authority is known to be extant. A facsimile of one page from this manuscript is given on the opposite page.

### NOTE III

#### THE OLDEST AND MOST IMPORTANT BIBLICAL DOCUMENTS IN EXISTENCE

1. A sheet of rice paper, containing ten verses of the first chapter of John, found in Oxyrhynchus, Upper Egypt. Now in the British Museum. Date, about 275 A.D.

2. A papyrus fragment also found at Oxyrhynchus, containing part of the first chapter of Matthew. Now preserved in Philadelphia. Date, about 275 A.D.

3. A papyrus containing the Letter to the Hebrews. Only about 20 verses, from four different chapters, now legible. On the other side of the roll is an epitome of Livy's history of Rome. Date, about 325 A.D.

4. The oldest manuscript, and the world's greatest treasure, the Codex B, now in the Vatican Library,

## NOTES

Rome. Written on very fine vellum made of antelope skin; 142 leaves in the New Testament, 617 in the Old. Three columns to the page and about 40 lines to the column. Date, about 325 A.D.

5. Of equal value and importance, the Codex Sinaiticus, discovered by Tischendorf in the Monastery of St. Catherine. This Codex was once a complete Bible, but a part of the Old Testament is now missing. The New Testament is complete, as is the Epistle to Barnabas. About 40 leaves are now in the library of Leipsic, Germany. The remaining 343 leaves are in the library of the Czar at St. Petersburg. Many scholars believe that the Codex in the Vatican and the one in St. Petersburg are 2 of the 50 bibles ordered by Constantine for the churches of Constantinople.

6. England's greatest library treasure, the Codex given to Charles the First, about 1625, and now known by the symbol A. This manuscript is believed to have been written about 420 A.D. There were originally 822 sheets of vellum, of which 773 sheets survive. Each page contains 2 columns, and the writing is in a large, square, uncial hand.

## NOTE IV

This thin, tattered papyrus, now in the Berlin Museum, was found sealed up in a jar in a tomb on the banks of the Nile. It belongs to the second





## NOTES

century. The writers lived about as long after the death of Jesus as General Grant lived after the death of Washington. It is important because it shows that Luke's story of the Prodigal Son was the common everyday language of that era. This prodigal son, Antonius, had run away from home, had been drinking, had been arrested for debt, and was in jail. In his distress he writes, imploring his widowed mother's forgiveness.

### TRANSLATION

Antonius Longus to Nilus, his mother, greetings: Continuously do I pray that thou art in health. I was ashamed to come to Carinus, because I walk about in rags. I write now that I am naked. I beseech thee, mother, be reconciled unto me. I know that I have brought all these things upon myself; in every way I have been chastened. I know that I have sinned. I have heard that Posthumus, who met thee at Arsino, has secretly told thee all these sinful things. But thou knowest I would rather lost my hand than be in debt for an obul. Come and see for thyself. I have heard that — [here there is a break in the papyrus] I beseech thee, mother, I beseech thee, I beseech thee, be reconciled unto me.



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