

THE EMPEROR

BOOK I

By Georg Ebers

BOOK 1.

CHAPTER I.

The morning twilight had dawned into day, and the sun had risen on the first of December of the year of our Lord 129, but was still veiled by milk-white mists which rose from the sea, and it was cold.

Kasius, a mountain of moderate elevation, stands on a tongue of land that projects from the coast between the south of Palestine and Egypt. It is washed on the north by the sea which, on this day, is not gleaming, as is its wont, in translucent ultramarine; its more distant depths slowly surge in blue-black waves, while those nearer to shore are of quite a different hue, and meet their sisters that lie nearer to the horizon in a dull greenish-grey, as dusty plains join darker lava beds. The northeasterly wind, which had risen as the sun rose, now blew more keenly, wreaths of white foam rode on the crests of the waves, though these did not beat wildly and stormily on the mountain-foot, but rolled heavily to the shore in humped ridges, endlessly long, as if they were of molten lead. Still the clear bright spray splashed up when the gulls dipped their pinions in the water as they floated above it, hither and thither, restless and uttering shrill little cries, as though driven by terror.

Three men were walking slowly along the causeway which led from the top of the hill down into the valley, but it was only the eldest, who walked in front of the other two, who gave any heed to the sky, the sea, the gulls, and the barren plain that lay silent at his feet. He stopped, and as soon as he did so, the others followed his example. The landscape below him seemed to rivet his gaze, and it justified the disapproval with which he gently shook his head, which was somewhat sunk into his beard. A narrow strip of desert stretched westward before him as far as the eye could reach, dividing two levels of water. Along this natural dyke a caravan was passing, and the elastic feet of the camels fell noiselessly on the road they trod. The leader, wrapped in his white mantle, seemed asleep, and the camel-drivers to be dreaming; the dull-colored eagles by the road-side did not stir at their approach. To the right of the stretch of flat coast along which the road ran from Syria to Egypt, lay the gloomy sea, overhung by grey clouds; to the left lay the desert, a strange and mysterious feature in the landscape, of which the eye

could not see the end, either to the east or to the west, and which looked here like a stretch of snow, there like standing water, and again like a thicket of rushes.

The eldest of our travellers gazed constantly towards heaven or into the distance; the second, a slave who carried rugs and cloaks on his broad shoulders, never took his eyes off his master; and the third, a young, free-man, looked wearily and dreamily down the road.

A broad path, leading to a stately temple, crossed that which led from the summit of the mountain to the coast, and the bearded pedestrian turned up it; but he followed it only for a few steps, then he turned his head with a dissatisfied air, muttered a few unintelligible words into his beard, turned round and hastily retraced his steps to the narrow way, down which he went towards the valley. His young companion followed him without raising his head or interrupting his reverie, as if he were his shadow, but the slave lifted his cropped fair head and a stolen smile crossed his lips as on the left hand side of the Kasius road he caught sight of a black kid, and close beside it an old woman who, at the approach of the three men covered her wrinkled face in alarm with her dark blue veil.

"That is the reason then!" said the slave to himself with a nod, and blowing a kiss into the air to a black-haired girl who crouched at the old woman's feet. But she, for whom the greeting was intended, did not observe this mute courtship, for her eyes followed the travellers, and especially the young man, as if spellbound. As soon as the three were far enough off not to hear her, the girl asked with a shiver, as if some desert-spectre had passed by-and in a low voice "Grandmother, who was that?"

The old woman raised her veil, laid her hand on her grandchild's mouth, and whispered:

"It was he."

"The Emperor?"

The old woman answered with a significant nod, but the girl squeezed herself up, against her grandmother, with vehement curiosity stretching out her dusky head to see better, and asked softly: "The young one?"

"Silly child! the one in front with a grey beard."

"He? Oh, I wish the young one was the Emperor!"

It was in fact Hadrian, the Roman Emperor, who walked on in silence before his escort, and it seemed as though his advent had given life to the desert, for as he approached the reed-swamp, the kites flew up in the air, and from behind a sand-hill on the edge of the broader road which Hadrian had avoided, came two men in priestly robes. They both belonged to the temple of Baal of Kariotis, a small structure of solid stone, which faced the sea, and which the Emperor had yesterday visited.

"Do you think he has lost his way?" said one to the other, in the Phoenician tongue.

"Hardly," was the answer. "Master said that he could always find a road again by which he had once gone, even in the dark."

"And yet he is gazing more at the clouds than at the road."

"Still, he promised us yesterday."

"He promised nothing for certain," interrupted the other.

"Indeed he did; at parting he called out—and I heard him distinctly: 'Perhaps I shall return and consult your oracle.'"

"Perhaps."

"I think he said 'probably.'"

"Who knows whether some sign he has seen up in the sky may not have turned him back; he is going to the camp by the sea."

"But the banquet is standing ready for him in our great hall."

"He will find what he needs down there. Come, it is a wretched morning, and I am being frozen."

"Wait a little longer-look there."

"What?"

"He does not even wear a hat to cover his grey hair."

"He has never yet been seen to travel with anything on his head."

"And his grey cloak is not very imperial looking."

"He always wears the purple at a banquet."

"Do you know who his walk and appearance remind me of?"

"Who?"

"Of our late high-priest, Abibaal; he used to walk in that ponderous, meditative way, and wear a beard like the Emperor's."

"Yes, yes – and had the same piercing grey eye."

"He too used often to gaze up at the sky. They have both the same broad forehead, too; but Abibaal's nose was more aquiline, and his hair curled less closely."

"And our governor's mouth was grave and dignified, while Hadrian's lips twitch and curl at all he says and hears, as if he were laughing at it all."

"Look, he is speaking now to his favorite – Antonius I think they call the pretty boy."

"Antinous, not Antonius. He picked him up in Bithynia, they say."

"He is a beautiful youth."

"Incomparably beautiful! What a figure and what a face! Still, I cannot wish that he were my son."

"The Emperor's favorite!"

"For that very reason. Why, he looks already as if he had tried every pleasure, and could never know any farther enjoyment."

On a little level close to the sea-shore, and sheltered by crumbling cliffs from the east wind, stood a number of tents. Between them fires were burning, round which were gathered groups of Roman soldiers and imperial servants. Half-naked boys, the children of the fishermen and camel-drivers who dwelt in this wilderness, were running busily hither and thither, feeding the flames with dry stems of sea-grass and dead desert-shrubs; but though the blaze flew high, the smoke did not rise; but driven here and there by the squalls of wind, swirled about close to the ground in little clouds, like a flock of scattered sheep. It seemed as though it feared to rise in the grey, damp, uninviting atmosphere. The largest of the tents, in front of which Roman sentinels paced up and down, two and two, on guard, was wide open on the side towards the sea. The slaves who came out of the broad door-way with trays on their cropped heads-loaded with gold and silver vessels, plates, wine-jars, goblets, and the remains of a meal had to hold them tightly with both hands that they might not be blown over.

The inside of the tent was absolutely unadorned. The Emperor lay on a couch near the right wall, which was blown in and bulged by the wind; his bloodless lips were tightly set, his arms crossed over his breast, and his eyes half closed. But he was not asleep, for he often opened his mouth and smacked his lips, as if tasting the flavor of some viand. From time to time he raised his eyelids—long, finely wrinkled, and blue-veined—turning his eyes up to heaven or rolling them to one side and then downwards towards the middle of the tent. There, on the skin of a huge bear trimmed with blue cloth, lay Hadrian's favorite Antinous. His beautiful head rested on that of the beast, which had been slain by his sovereign, and its skull and skin skilfully preserved, his right leg, supported on his left knee, he flourished freely in the air, and his hands were caressing the Emperor's bloodhound, which had laid its sage-looking head on the boy's broad, bare breast, and now and then tried to lick his soft lips to show its affection. But this the youth would not allow; he playfully held the beast's muzzle close with his hands or wrapped its head in the end of his mantle, which had slipped back from his shoulders.

The dog seemed to enjoy the game, but once when Antinous had drawn the cloak more tightly round its head and it strove in vain to be free from the cloth that impeded its breathing, it set up a loud howl, and this doleful cry made the Emperor change his attitude and cast a glance of displeasure at the boy lying on the bear-skin, but only a glance, not a word of blame. And soon the expression, even of his eyes, changed, and he fixed them on the lad's figure with a gaze of loving contemplation, as though it were some noble work of art that he could never tire of admiring. And truly the Immortals had moulded this child of man to such a type; every muscle of that throat, that chest, those arms and legs was a marvel of softness and of power; no human countenance could be more regularly chiselled. Antinous observing that his master's attention had been attracted to his play with the dog, let the animal go and turned his large, but not very brilliant, eyes on the Emperor.

"What are you doing here?" asked Hadrian kindly.

"Nothing," said the boy.

"No one can do nothing. Even if we fancy we have succeeded in doing nothing we still continue to think that we are unoccupied, and to think is a good deal."

"But I cannot even think."

"Every one can think; besides you were not doing nothing, for you were playing."

"Yes, with the dog." With these words Antinous stretched out his legs on the ground, pushed away the dog, and raised his curly head on both hands.

"Are you tired?" asked the Emperor.

"Yes."

"We both kept watch for an equal portion of the night, and I, who am so much older, feel quite wide awake."

"It was only yesterday that you were saying that old soldiers were the best for night-watches."

The Emperor nodded, and then said:

"At your age while we are awake we live three times as fast as at mine, and so we need to sleep twice as long. You have every right to be tired. To be sure it was not till three hours after midnight that we climbed the mountain, and how often a supper party is not over before that."

"It was very cold and uncomfortable up there."

"Not till after the sun had risen."

"Ah! before that you did not notice it, for till then you were busy thinking of the stars."

"And you only of yourself – very true."

"I was thinking of your health too when that cold wind rose before Helios appeared."

"I was obliged to await his rising."

"And can you discern future events by the way and manner of the rising of the sun?"

Hadrian looked in surprise at the speaker, shook his head in negation, looked up at the top of the tent, and after a long pause said, in abrupt sentences, with frequent interruptions:

"Day is the present merely, and the future is evolved out of darkness; the corn grows from the clods of the field; the rain falls from the darkest clouds; a new generation is born of the mother's womb; the limbs recover their vigor in sleep. And what is begotten of the darkness of death – who can tell?"

When, after saying this, the Emperor had remained for some time silent, the youth asked him:

"But if the sunrise teaches you nothing concerning the future why should you so often break your night's rest and climb the mountain to see it?"

"Why? Why?" repeated Hadrian, slowly and meditatively, stroking his grizzled beard; then he went on as if speaking to himself:

"That is a question which reason fails to answer, before which my lips find no words; and, if I had them at my command, who among the rabble would understand me? Such questions can best be answered by means of parables. Those who take part in life are actors, and the world is their stage. He who wants to look tall on it wears the cothurnus, and is not a mountain the highest vantage ground that a man can find for the sole of his foot? Kasius there is but a hill, but I have stood on greater giants than he, and seen the clouds rise below me, like Jupiter on Olympus."

"But you need climb no mountains to feel yourself a god," cried Antinous; "the godlike is your title—you command and the world must obey. With a mountain beneath his feet a man is nearer to heaven no doubt than he is on the plain."

"Well?"

"I dare not say what came into my mind."

"Speak out."

"I knew a little girl who when I took her on my shoulder would stretch out her arms and exclaim, 'I am so tall!' She fancied that she was taller than I then, and yet was only little Panthea."

"But in her own conception of herself, it was she who was tall, and that decides the issue, for to each of us a thing is only that which it seems to us. It is true they call me godlike, but I feel every day, and a hundred times a day, the limitations of the power and nature of man, and I cannot get beyond them. On the top of a mountain I cease to feel them; there I feel as if I were great, for nothing is higher than my head, far or near. And when, as I stand there, the night vanishes before my eyes, when the splendor of the young sun brings the world into new life for me, by restoring to my consciousness all that just before had been engulfed in gloom, then a deeper breath swells my breast, and my lungs fill with the purer and lighter air of the heights. Up there, alone and in silence, no hint can reach me of

the turmoil below, and I feel myself one with the great aspect of nature spread before me. The surges of the sea come and go, the tree-tops in the forest bow and rise, fog and mist roll away and part asunder hither and thither, and up there I feel myself so merged with the creation that surrounds me that often it even seems as though it were my own breath that gives it life. Like the storks and the swallows, I yearn for the distant land, and where should the human eye be more likely to be permitted, at least in fancy, to discern the remote goal than from the summit of a mountain?

"The limitless distance which the spirit craves for seems there to assume a form tangible to the senses, and the eye detects its border line. My whole being feels not merely elevated, but expanded, and that vague longing which comes over me as soon as I mix once more in the turmoil of life, and when the cares of state demand my strength, vanishes. But you cannot understand it, boy. These are things which no other mortal can share with me."

"And it is only to me that you do not scorn to reveal them!" cried Antinous, who had turned round to face the Emperor, and who with wide eyes had not lost one word.

"You?" said Hadrian, and a smile, not absolutely free from mockery, parted his lips. "From you I should no more have a secret than from the Cupid by Praxiteles, in my study at Rome."

The blood mounted to the lad's cheeks and dyed them flaming crimson. The Emperor observed this and said kindly:

"You are more to me than the statue, for the marble cannot blush. In the time of the Athenians Beauty governed life, but in you I can see that the gods are pleased to give it a bodily existence, even in our own days, and to look at you reconciles me to the discords of existence. It does me good. But how should I expect to find that you understand me; your brow was never made to be furrowed by thought; or did you really understand one word of all I said?"

Antinous propped himself on his left arm, and lifting his right hand, he said emphatically:

"Yes."

"And which," asked Hadrian.

"I know what longing is."

"For what?"

"For many things."

"Tell me one."

"Some enjoyment that is not followed by depression. I do not know of one."

"That is a desire you share with all the youth of Rome, only they are apt to postpone the reaction. Well, and what next?"

"I cannot tell you."

"What prevents your speaking openly to me?"

"You, yourself did." "I?"

"Yes, you; for you forbid me to speak of my home, my mother, and my people."

The Emperor's brow darkened, and he answered sternly:

"I am your father and your whole soul should be given to me."

"It is all yours," answered the youth, falling back on to the bear-skin, and drawing the pallima closely over his shoulders, for a gust blew coldly in at the side of the tent, through which Phlegon, the Emperor's private secretary, now entered and approached his master. He was followed by a slave with several sealed rolls under his arms.

"Will it be agreeable to you, Caesar, to consider the despatches and letters that have just arrived?" asked the official, whose carefully-arranged hair had been tossed by the sea-breeze.

"Yes, and then we can make a note of what I was able to observe in the heavens last night. Have you the tablets ready?"

"I left them in the tent set up especially for the work, Caesar."

"The storm has become very violent."

"It seems to blow from the north and east both at once, and the sea is very rough. The Empress will have a bad voyage."

"When did she set out?"

"The anchor was weighed towards midnight. The vessel which is to fetch her to Alexandria is a fine ship, but rolls from side to side in a very unpleasant manner."

Hadrian laughed loudly and sharply at this, and said:

"That will turn her heart and her stomach upside down. I wish I were there to see—but no, by all the gods, no! for she will certainly forget to paint this morning; and who will construct that edifice of hair if all her ladies share her fate. We will stay here to-day, for if I meet her soon after she has reached Alexandria she will be undiluted gall and vinegar."

With these words Hadrian rose from his couch, and waving his hand to Antinous, went out of the tent with his secretary.

A third person standing at the back of the tent had heard the Emperor's conversation with his favorite; this was Mastor, a Sarmatian of the race of the Taryges. He was a slave, and no more worthy of heed than the dog which had followed Hadrian, or than the pillows on which the Emperor had been reclining. The man, who was handsome and well grown, stood for some time twisting the ends of his long red moustache, and stroking his round, closely-cropped head with his bands; then he drew the open chiton together over his broad breast, which seemed to gleam from the remarkable whiteness of the skin. He never took his eyes off Antinous, who had turned over, and covering his face with his hands had buried them in the bear's hairy mane.

Mastor had something he wanted to say to him, but he dared not address him for the young favorite's demeanor could not be reckoned on. Often he was ready to listen to him and talk with him as a friend, but often, too, he repulsed him more sharply than the

haughtiest upstart would repel the meanest of his servants. At last the slave took courage and called the lad by his name, for it seemed less hard to submit to a scolding than to smother the utterance of a strong, warm feeling, unimportant as it might be, which was formed in words in his mind. Antinous raised his head a little on his hands and asked:

"What is it?"

"I only wanted to tell you," replied the Sarmatian, "that I know who the little girl was that you so often took upon your shoulders. It was your little sister, was it not, of whom you were speaking to me lately?"

The lad nodded assent, and then once more buried his head in his hands, and his shoulders heaved so violently that it would seem that he was weeping. — Mastor remained silent for a few minutes, then he went up to Antinous and said:

"You know I have a son and a little daughter at home, and I am always glad to hear about little girls. We are alone and if it will relieve your heart."

"Let me alone, I have told you a dozen times already about my mother and little Parthea," replied Antinous, trying to look composed.

"Then do so confidently for the thirteenth," said the slave. "In the camp and in the kitchen I can talk about my people as much as I like. But you — tell me, what do you call the little dog that Panthea made a scarlet cloak for?"

"We called it Kallista," cried Antinous wiping his eyes with the back of his hand. "My father would not allow it but we persuaded my mother. I was her favorite, and when I put my arms round her and looked at her imploringly she always said 'yes' to anything I asked her."

A bright light shone in the boy's weary eyes; he had remembered a whole wealth of joys which left no depression behind them.

CHAPTER II.

One of the palaces built in Alexandria by the Ptolemaic kings stood on the peninsula called Lochias which stretched out into the blue sea like a finger pointing northwards; it formed the eastern boundary of the great harbor. Here there was never any lack of vessels but to-day they were particularly numerous, and the quay-road paved with smooth blocks of stone, which led from the palatial quarter of the town—the Bruchiom as it was called—which was bathed by the sea, to the spit of land was so crowded with curious citizens on foot and in vehicles, that all conveyances were obliged to stop in their progress before they had reached the private harbor reserved for the Emperor's vessels.

But there was something out of the common to be seen at the landing-place, for there lying under the shelter of the high mole were the splendid triremes, galleys, long boats and barges which had brought Hadrian's wife and the suite of the imperial couple to Alexandria. A very large vessel with a particularly high cabin on the after deck and having the head of a she-wolf on the lofty and boldly-carved prow excited the utmost attention. It was carved entirely in cedar wood, richly decorated with bronze and ivory, and named the Sabina. A young Alexandrian pointed to the name written in gold letters on the stern, nudging his companion and saying with a laugh:

"Sabina has a wolf's head then!"

"A peacock's would suit her better. Did you see her on her way to the Caesareum?" replied the other.

"Alas! I did," said the first speaker, but he said no more perceiving, close behind him, a Roman lictor who bore over his left shoulder his fasces, a bundle of elmrods skilfully tied together, and who, with a wand in his right-hand and the assistance of his comrades, was endeavoring to part the crowd and make room for the chariot of his master, Titianus, the imperial prefect, which came slowly in the rear. This high official had overheard the citizens' heedless words, and turning to the man who stood beside him, while with a light fling he threw the end of his toga into fresh folds, he said:

"An extraordinary people! I cannot feel annoyed with them, and yet I would rather walk from here to Canopus on the edge of a knife than on that of an Alexandrian's tongue."

"Did you hear what the stout man was saying about Verus?"

"The lictor wanted to take him up, but nothing is to be done with them by violence. If they had to pay only a sesterce for every venomous word, I tell you Pontius, the city would be impoverished and our treasury would soon be fuller than that of Gyges at Sardis."

"Let them keep their money," cried the other, the chief architect of the city, a man of about thirty years of age with highly-arched brows and eager piercing eyes; and grasping the roll he held in his hand with a strong grip, he continued:

"They know how to work, and sweat is bitter. While they are busy they help each other, in idleness they bite each other, like unbroken horses harnessed to the same pole. The wolf is a fine brute, but if you break out his teeth he becomes a mangy hound."

"You speak after my own heart," cried the prefect. "But here we are, eternal gods! I never imagined anything so bad as this. From a distance it always looked handsome enough!"

Titianus and the architect descended from the chariot, the former desired a lictor to call the steward of the palace, and then he and his companion inspected first the door which led into it. It looked fine enough with its double columns which supported a lofty pediment, but, all the same, it did not present a particularly pleasing aspect, for the stucco had, in several places, fallen from the walls, the capitals of the marble columns were lamentably injured and the tall doors, overlaid with metal, hung askew on their hinges. Pontius inspected every portion of the door-way with a keen eye and then, with the prefect, went into the first court of the palace, in which, in the time of the Ptolemies, the tents had stood for ambassadors, secretaries, and the officers in waiting on the king. There they met with an unexpected hindrance, for across the paved court-yard, where the grass grew in tufts, and tall thistles were in bloom, a number of ropes were stretched aslant from the little house in which dwelt the

gate-keeper; and on these ropes were hung newly-washed garments of every size and shape.

"A pretty residence for an Emperor," sighed Titianus, shrugging his shoulders, but stopping the lictor, who had raised his fasces to cut the ropes.

"It is not so bad as it looks," said the architect positively. "Gate-keeper! hi, gate-keeper! Where is the lazy fellow hiding himself?"

While he called out and the lictor hurried forward into the interior of the palace, Pontius went towards the gate-keeper's lodge, and having made his way in a stooping attitude through the damp clothes, there he stood still. Ever since he had come in at the gate annoyance and vexation had been stamped on his countenance, but now his large mouth spread into a smile, and he called to the prefect in an undertone:

"Titianus, just take the trouble to come here."

The elderly dignitary, whose tall figure exceeded that of the architect in height by a full head, did not find it quite so easy to pass under the ropes with his head bent down; but he did it with good humor, and while carefully avoiding pulling down the wet linen, he called out:

"I am beginning to feel some respect for children's shirts; one can at any rate get through them without breaking one's spine. Oh! this is delicious – quite delicious!"

This exclamation was caused by the sight which the architect had invited the prefect to come and enjoy, and which was certainly droll enough. The front of the gate-keeper's house was quite grown over with ivy which framed the door and window in its long runners. Amidst the greenery hung numbers of cages with starlings, blackbirds, and smaller singing-birds. The wide door of the little house stood open, giving a view into a tolerably spacious and gaily-painted room. In the background stood a clay model of an Apollo of admirable workmanship; above, and near this, the wall was hung with lutes and lyres of various size and form.

In the middle of the room, and near the open door, was a table, on which stood a large wicker cage containing several nests of young goldfinches, and with green food twined among the osiers. There were, too, a large wine-jar and an ivory goblet decorated with fine carving. Close to the drinking-vessels, on the stone top of the table, rested the arm of an elderly woman who had fallen asleep in the arm-chair in which she sat. Notwithstanding the faint grey moustache that marked her upper-lip and the pronounced ruddiness of her fore head and cheeks, she looked pleasant and kind. She must have been dreaming of something that pleased her, for the expression of her lips and of her eyes—one being half open and the other closely shut—gave her a look of contentment. In her lap slept a large grey cat, and by its side—as though discord never could enter this bright little abode which exhaled no savor of poverty, but, on the contrary, a peculiar and fragrant scent—lay a small shaggy dog, whose snowy whiteness of coat could only be due to the most constant care. Two other dogs, like this one, lay stretched on the floor at the old lady's feet, and seemed no less soundly asleep.

As the prefect came up, the architect pointed to this study of still-life, and said in a whisper:

"If we had a painter here it would make a lovely little picture."

"Incomparable," answered Titianus, "only the vivid scarlet on the dame's cheeks seems to me suspicious, considering the ample proportions of the wine-jar at her elbow."

"But did you ever see a calmer, kindlier, or more contented countenance?"

"Baucis must have slept like that when Philemon allowed himself leave of absence for once! or did that devoted spouse always remain at home?"

"Apparently he did. Now, peace is at an end." The approach of the two friends had waked one of the little dogs. He gave tongue, and his companion immediately jumped up and barked as if for a wager. The old woman's pet sprang out of her lap, but neither his mistress nor the cat let themselves be disturbed by the noise, and slept on.

"A watcher among a thousand!" said the architect, laughing.

"And this phalanx of dogs which guard the palace of a Caesar," added Titianus, "might be vanquished with a blow. Take heed, the worthy matron is about to wake."

The dame had in fact been disturbed by the barking. She sat up a little, lifted her hands, and then, half singing, half muttering a few words, she sank back again in her chair.

"This is delicious!" cried the prefect.

"Begone dull care" she sang in her sleep.

"How may this rare specimen of humanity look when she is awake?"

"I should be sorry to drive the old lady out of her nest!" said the architect unrolling his scroll.

"You shall touch nothing in the little house," cried the prefect eagerly. "I know Hadrian; he delights in such queer things and queer people, and I will wager he will make friends with the old woman in his own way. Here at last comes the steward of this palace."

The prefect was not mistaken; the hasty step he had heard was that of the official they awaited. At some little distance they could already hear the man, panting as he hurried up, and as he came, before Titianus could prevent him, he had snatched down the cords that were stretched across the court and flung all the washing on the ground. As soon as the curtain had thus dropped which had divided him from the Emperor's representative and his companion, he bowed to the former as low as the rotund dimensions of his person would allow; but his hasty arrival, the effort of strength he had made, and his astonishment at the appearance of the most powerful personage in the Nile Province in the building entrusted to his care, so utterly took away his breath—of which he at all times was but "scant"—that he was unable even to stammer out a suitable greeting. Titianus gave him a little time, and then, after expressing his regret at the sad plight of the washing, now strewn upon the

ground, and mentioning to the steward the name and position of his friend Pontius, he briefly explained to him that the Emperor wished to take up his abode in the palace now in his charge; that he—Titianus—was cognizant of the bad condition in which it then was, and had come to take council with him and the architect as to what could be done in the course of a few days to make the dilapidated residence habitable for Hadrian, and to repair, at any rate, the more conspicuous damage. He then desired the steward to lead him through the rooms.

"Directly—at once," answered the Greek, who had attained his present ponderous dimensions through many years of rest: "I will hasten to fetch the keys." And as he went, puffing and panting, he re-arranged with his short, fat fingers the still abundant hair on the right side of his head. Pontius looked after him.

"Call him back, Titianus," said he. "We disturbed him in the midst of curling his hair; only one side was done when the lictor called him away, and I will wager my own head that he will have the other side frizzled before he comes back. I know your true Greek!"

"Well, let him," answered Titianus. "If you have taken his measure rightly he will not be able to give his attention without reserve to our questions till the other half of his hair is curled. I know, too, how to deal with a Hellene."

"Better than I, I perceive," said the architect in a tone of conviction. "A statesman is used to deal with men as we do with lifeless materials. Did you see the fat fellow turn pale when you said that it would be but a few days before the Emperor would make his entry here? Things must look well in the old house there. Every hour is precious, and we have lingered here too long."

The prefect nodded agreement and followed the architect into the inner court of the palace. How grand and well-proportioned was the plan of this immense building through which the steward Keraunus, who returned with his fine curls complete all round, now led the Romans. It stood on an artificial hill in the midst of the peninsula of Lochias, and from many a window and many a balcony there were lovely prospects of the streets and open squares, the houses, palaces and public buildings of the metropolis, and of the harbor, swarming

with ships. The outlook from Lochias was rich, gay and varied to the south and west, but east and north from the platform of the palace of the Ptolemies, the gaze fell on the never-wearying prospect of the eternal sea, limited only by the vault of heaven. When Hadrian had sent a special messenger from Mount Kasius to desire his prefect Titianus to have this particular building prepared for his reception, he knew full well what advantages its position offered; it was the part of his officials to restore order in the interior of the palace, which had remained uninhabited from the time of Cleopatra's downfall. He gave them for the purpose eight, or perhaps nine, days—little more than a week. And in what a condition did Titianus and Pontius find this now dilapidated and plundered scene of former magnificence—the sweat pouring from their foreheads with their exertions as they inspected and sketched, questioned and made notes of it all.

The pillars and steps in the interior were tolerably well preserved, but the rain had poured in through the open roofs of the banqueting and reception-halls, the fine mosaic pavements had started here and there, and in other places a perfect little meadow had grown in the midst of a hall, or an arcade; for Octavianus Augustus, Tiberius, Vespasian, Titus and a whole series of prefects, had already carefully removed the finest of the mosaics from the famous palace of the Ptolemies, and carried them to Rome or to the provinces, to decorate their town houses or country villas. In the same way the best of the statues were gone, with which a few centuries previously the art-loving Lagides had decorated this residence—besides which they had another, still larger, on the Bruchiom.

In the midst of a vast marbled hall stood an elegantly-wrought fountain, connected with the fine aqueduct of the city. A draught of air rushed through this hall, and in stormy weather switched the water all over the floor, now robbed of its mosaics, and covered, wherever the foot could tread, with a thin, dark green, damp and slippery coating of mossy plants and slime. It was here that Keraunus leaned breathless against the wall, and, wiping his brow, panted rather than said: "At last, this is the end!"

The words sounded as if he meant his own end and not that of their excursion through the palace, and it seemed like a mockery of the man himself when Pontius unhesitatingly replied with decision:

"Good, then we can begin our re-examination here, at once."

Keraunus did not contradict him, but, as he remembered the number of stairs to be climbed over again, he looked as if sentence of death had been passed upon him.

"Is it necessary that I should remain with you during the rest of your labors, which must be principally directed to details?" asked the prefect of the architect.

"No," answered Pontius, "provided you will take the trouble to look at once at my plan, so as to inform yourself on the whole of what I propose, and to give me full powers to dispose of men and means in each case as it arises."

"That is granted," said Titianus. "I know that Pontius will not demand a man or a sesterce more or less than is needed for the purpose."

The architect bowed in silence and Titianus went on.

"But above all things, do you think you can accomplish your task in eight days and nine nights?"

"Possibly, at a pinch; and if I could only have four days more at my disposal, most probably."

"Then all that is needed is to delay Hadrian's arrival by four days and nights."

"Send some interesting people—say the astronomer Ptolemaeus, and Favorinus, the sophist, who await him here—to meet him at Pelusium. They will find some way of detaining him there."

"Not a bad idea! We will see. But who can reckon on the Empress's moods? At any rate, consider that you have only eight days to dispose of."

"Good."

"Where do you hope to be able to lodge Hadrian?"

"Well, a very small portion of the old building is, strictly speaking, fit to use."

"Of that, I regret to say, I have fully convinced myself," said the prefect emphatically, and turning to the steward, he went on in a tone less of stern reproof than of regret.

"It seems to me, Keraunus, that it would have been your duty to inform me earlier of the ruinous condition of the building."

"I have already lodged a complaint," replied the man, "but I was told in answer to my report that there were no means to apply to the purpose."

"I know nothing of these things," cried Titianus.

"When did you forward your petition to the prefect's office?"

"Under your predecessor, Haterius Nepos."

"Indeed," said the prefect with a drawl.

"So long ago. Then, in your place, I should have repeated my application every year, without any reference to the appointment of a new prefect. However, we have now no time for talking. During the Emperor's residence here, I shall very likely send one of my subordinates to assist you!"

Titianus turned his back on the steward, and asked the architect:

"Well, my good Pontius, what part of the palace have you your eye upon?"

"The inner halls and rooms are in the best repair."

"But they are the last that can be thought of," cried Titianus. "The Emperor is satisfied with everything in camp, but where fresh air and a distant prospect are to be had, he must have them."

"Then let us choose the western suite; hold the plan my worthy friend."

The steward slid as he was desired, the architect took his pencil and made a vigorous line in the air above the left side of the sketch, saying:

"This is the west front of the palace which you see from the harbor. From the south you first come into the lofty peristyle, which may be used as an antechamber; it is surrounded with rooms for the slaves and body-guard. The next smaller sitting-rooms by the side of the main corridor we may assign to the officers and scribes, in this spacious hypaethral hall—the one with the Muses—Hadrian may give audience and the guests may assemble there whom he may admit to eat at his table in this broad peristyle. The smaller and well-preserved rooms, along this long passage leading to the steward's house, will do for the pages, secretaries and other attendants on Caesar's person, and this long saloon, lined with fine porphyry and green marble, and adorned with the beautiful frieze in bronze will, I fancy, please Hadrian as a study and private sitting-room."

"Admirable!" cried Titianus, "I should like to show your plan to the Empress."

"In that case, instead of eight days I must have as many weeks," said Pontius coolly.

"That is true," answered the prefect laughing. "But tell me, Keraunus, how comes it that the doors are wanting to all the best rooms?"

"They were of fine thyra wood, and they were wanted in Rome."

"I must have seen one or another of them there," muttered the prefect.

"Your cabinet-workers will have a busy time, Pontius."

"Nay, the hanging-makers may be glad; wherever we can we will close the door-ways with heavy curtains."

"And what will you do with this damp abode of fogs, which, if I mistake not, must adjoin the dining-hall?"

"We will turn it into a garden filled with ornamental foliage."

"That is quite admissable – and the broken statues?"

"We will get rid of the worst."

"The Apollo and the nine Muses stand in the room you intend for an audience-hall – do they not?"

"Yes."

"They are in fairly good condition, I think."

"Urania is wanting entirely," said the steward, who was still holding the plan out in front of him.

"And what became of her?" asked Titianus, not without excitement.

"Your predecessor, the prefect Haterius Nepos, took a particular fancy to it and carried it with him to Rome."

"Why Urania of all others?" cried Titianus angrily. "She, above all, ought not to be missing from the hall of audience of Caesar the pontiff of heaven! What is to be done?"

"It will be difficult to find an Urania ready-made as tall as her sisters, and we have no time to search one out, a new one must be made."

"In eight days?"

"And eight nights."

"But my good friend, only to get the marble –"

"Who thinks of marble? Papias will make us one of straw, rags and gypsum – I know his magic hand – and in order that the others may not be too unlike their new-born sister they shall be whitewashed."

"Capital – but why choose Papias when we have Harmodius?"

"Harmodius takes art in earnest, and we should have the Emperor here before he had completed his sketches. Papias works with thirty assistants at anything that is ordered of him, so long as it brings him money. His last things certainly amaze me, particularly the Hygieia for Dositheus the Jew, and the bust of Plutarch put up in the Caesareum; they are full of grace and power. But who can distinguish what is his work and what that of his scholars? Enough, he knows how things should be done; and if a good sum is to be got by it he will hew you out a whole sea-fight in marble in five days."

"Then give Papias the commission but the hapless mutilated pavements-what will you do with them?"

"Gypsum and paint must mend them," said Pontius, "and where that will not do, we must lay carpets on the floor in the Eastern fashion. Merciful night! how dark it is growing; give me the plan Keraunus and provide us with torches and lamps for to-day, and the next following ones must have twenty-four hours apiece, full measure. I must ask you for half a dozen trustworthy slaves Titianus; I shall want them for messengers. What are you standing there for man? Lights, I said. You have had half a lifetime to rest in, and when Caesar is gone you will have as many more years for the same laudable purpose –"

As he spoke the steward had silently gone off, but the architect did not spare him the end of the sentence; he shouted after him:

"Unless by that time you are smothered in your own fat. Is it Nile-mud or blood that runs in that huge mortal's veins?"

"I am sure I do not care," said the prefect, "so long as the glorious fire that flows in yours only holds out till the work is done. Do not allow yourself to be overworked at first, nor require the impossible of your strength, for Rome and the world still expect great things of you. I can now write in perfect security to the Emperor that all will be ready for him in Lochias, and as a farewell speech, I can only say, it is folly to be discouraged if only Pontius is at hand to support and assist me."

CHAPTER III.

The prefect ordered the lictors, who were awaiting him with his chariot, to hasten to his house, and to conduct to Pontius several most worthy slaves, familiar with Alexandria—some of whom he named—and at the same time to send the architect a good couch with pillows and coverlets, and to despatch a good meal and fine wine to the old palace at Lochias. Then he mounted his chariot and drove through the Bruchiom along the shore to the great edifice known as the Caesareum. He got on but slowly, for the nearer he approached his destination the denser was the crowd of inquisitive citizens, who stood closely packed round the vast circumference of the building. Quite from a distance the prefect could see a bright light; it rose to heaven from the large pans of pitch which were placed on the towers on each side of the tall gate of the Caesareum which faced the sea. To the right and left of this gate stood a tall obelisk, and on each of these, men were lighting lamps which had been attached to the sides and placed on the top, on the previous day.

"In honor of Sabina," said the prefect to himself. "All that this Pontius does is thoroughly done, and there is no more complete sinecure than the supervision of his arrangements."

Fully persuaded of this he did not think it necessary to go up to the illuminated door-way which led into the temple erected by Octavian in honor of Julius Caesar; on the contrary, he directed the charioteer to stop at a door built in the Egyptian style, which faced the garden of the palace of the Ptolemies, and which led to the imperial residence that had been built by the Alexandrians for Tiberius, and had been greatly extended and beautified under the later Caesars. A sacred grove divided it from the temple of Caesar, with which it communicated by a covered colonnade. Before this door there were several chariots and horses, and a whole host of slaves, black and white, were in attendance with their masters' litters. Here lictors kept back the sight-seeking crowd, officers were lounging against the pillars, and the Roman guard were just assembling with a clatter of arms, to the sound of a trumpet within the door, to await their dismissal.

Everything gave way respectfully before the chariot of the prefect, and as Titianus walked through the illuminated arcades of the Caesareum, passing by the masterpieces of statuary placed there, and the rows of pictures – and reached the halls in which the library of the palace was kept, he could not help thinking of all the care and trouble which with the assistance of Pontius, he had for months devoted to rendering this palace which had not been used since Titus had set out for Judaea, fit quarters for Hadrian's reception. The Empress now lived in the rooms intended for her husband, and decorated with the choicest works of art, and Titianus reflected with regret that, after Sabina had once become aware of their presence there, it would be quite impossible to transfer them to Lochias. At the door of the splendid room which he had intended for Hadrian he was met by Sabina's chamberlain who undertook to conduct him at once into the presence of his mistress.

The roof of the hall in which the prefect found the Empress, in summer was open to the sky; but at this season was suitably covered in by a movable copper roof, partly to keep off the rain of the Alexandrian winter, and partly too because, even in the warmer season Sabina was wont to complain of cold; but beneath it a wide opening allowed the air free entrance and exit. As Titianus entered the room a comfortable warmth and subtle perfume met his senses; the warmth was produced by stoves of a peculiar form standing in the middle of the room; one of these represented Vulcan's forge. Brightly glowing charcoal lay in front of the bellows which were worked by an automaton, at short regular intervals, while the god and his assistants modelled in brass, stood round the genial fire with tongs and hammers. The other stove was a large silver bird's-nest, in which likewise charcoal was burning. Above the glowing fuel a phoenix, also in brass, and in the likeness of an eagle, seemed striving to soar heavenwards. Besides these a number of lamps lighted the saloon, which in truth looked too large for the number of people assembled in it, and which was lavishly furnished with gracefully-formed seats, couches, and tables, vases of flowers and statues.

The prefect and Pontius had intended a quite different room to serve for smaller assemblies, and had fitted it up suitably for the purpose, but the Empress had preferred the great hall to the smaller

room. The venerable and nobly-born statesman was filled with vexation, nay, with an embarrassment that made him feel estranged, when he had to glance round the room to find the persons in it, collected, as they were, into small knots. He could hear nothing but hushed voices; here an unintelligible murmur and there a suppressed laugh, but from no one a frank speech or full utterance. For a moment he felt as if he had found admittance to the abode of whispering calumny, and yet he knew why here no one dared to speak out or above a murmur. Loud voices hurt the Empress, and a clear voice was a misery to her, and yet few men possessed so loud and penetrating a chest voice as her husband, who was not wont to lay restraint upon himself for any human being, not even for his wife.

Sabina sat on a large divan, more like a couch than a chair; her feet were buried in the shaggy fell of a buffalo, and her knees and ankles wrapped round with down-cushions covered with silk. Her head she held very upright, and it was difficult to imagine how her slender throat could support it, loaded as it was with strings of pearls and precious stones which were braided in the tall structure of her reddish-gold hair, that was arranged in long cylindrical curls pinned closely side by side. The Empress's thin face looked particularly small under the mass of natural and artificial adornment which towered above her brow. Beautiful she could never have been, even in her youth, but her features were regular, and the prefect confessed to himself as he looked at Sabina's face, marked as it was with minute wrinkles and touched up with red and white, that the sculptor who a few years previously had been commissioned to represent her as 'Venus Victrix' might very well have given the goddess a certain amount of resemblance to the imperial model. If only her eyes, which were absolutely bereft of lashes, had not been quite so small and keen—in spite of the dark lines painted round them—and if only the sinews in her throat had not stood out quite so conspicuously from the flesh which formerly had covered them!

With a deep bow Titianus took the Empress's right hand, covered with rings; but she withdrew it quickly from that of her husband's friend and relative, as if she feared that the carefully-cherished limb—useless as it was for any practical purpose, a mere toy among

hands—might suffer some injury, and wrapped it and her arm in her upper-robe. But she returned the prefect's friendly greeting with all the warmth at her command. Though formerly at Rome she had been accustomed to see Titianus every day at her house, this was their first meeting in Alexandria; for the previous day, exhausted by the sufferings of her sea-voyage, she had been carried in a closed litter to the Caesareum, and this morning she had declined to receive his visit, as her whole time was given up to her physicians, bathing-women, and coiffeurs.

"How can you survive in this country?" she said in a low but harsh voice, which always made the hearer feel that it was that of a dull, fractious, childless woman. "At noon the sun burns you up, and in the evening it is so cold—so intolerably cold!" As she spoke she drew her robe closer round her, but Titianus, pointing to the stoves in the middle of the hall, said:

"I hoped we had succeeded in cutting the bowstrings of the Egyptian winter, and it is but a feeble weapon."

"Still young, still imaginative, still a poet!" said the Empress wearily. "I saw your wife a couple of hours since. Africa seems to suit her less well; I was shocked to see Julia, the handsome matron, so altered. She does not look well."

"Years are the foe of beauty."

"Frequently they are, but true beauty often resists their attacks."

"You are yourself the living proof of your assertion."

"That is as much as to say that I am growing old."

"Nay—only that you know the secret of remaining beautiful."

"You are a poet!" murmured the Empress with a twitch of her thin under-lip.

"Affairs of state do not favor the Muses."

"But I call any man a poet who sees things more beautiful than they are, or who gives them finer names than they deserve—a poet, a dreamer, a flatterer—for it comes to that."

"Ah! modesty can always find words to repel even well-merited admiration."

"Why this foolish bandying of words?" sighed Sabina, flinging herself back in her chair. "You have been to school under the hair-splitting logicians in the Museum here, and I have not. Over there sits Favorinus, the sophist; I dare say he is proving to Ptolemaeus that the stars are mere specks of blood in our eyes, which we choose to believe are in the sky. Florus, the historian, is taking note of this weighty discussion; Pancrates, the poet, is celebrating the great thoughts of the philosopher. As to what part the philologist there can find to take in this important event you know better than I. What is the man's name?"

"Apollonius."

"Hadrian has nick-named him 'the obscure.' The more difficult it is to understand the discourses of these gentlemen the more highly are they esteemed."

"One must dive to obtain what lies at the bottom of the water—all that floats on the surface is borne by the waves, a plaything for children. Apollonius is a very learned man."

"Then my husband ought to leave him among his disciples and his books. It was his wish that I should invite these people to my table. Florus and Pancrates I like—not the others."

"I can easily relieve you of the company of Favorinus and Ptolemaeus; send them to meet the Emperor."

"To what end?"

"To entertain him."

"He has his plaything with him," said Sabina, and her thin lips curled with an expression of bitter contempt.

"His artistic eye delights in the beauty of Antinous, which is celebrated, but which it has not yet been my privilege to see."

"And you are very anxious to see this marvel?"

"I cannot deny it."

"And yet you want to postpone your meeting with Caesar?" said Sabina, and a keen glance of inquiry and distrust twinkled in her little eyes.

"Why do you want to delay my husband's arrival?"

"Need I tell you," said Titianus eagerly, "how greatly I shall rejoice to see once more my sovereign, the companion of my youth, the greatest and wisest of men, after a separation of four years? What would I not give if he were here already! And yet I would rather that he should arrive in fourteen days than in eight."

"What reason can you have?"

"A mounted messenger brought me a letter to-day in which the Emperor tells me that he proposes to inhabit the old palace at Lochias, and not the Caesareum."

At these words Sabina's forehead clouded, her gaze, dark and blank, was fixed on her lap, and biting her under-lip, she muttered:

"Because I am here."

Titianus made as though he had not heard these words, and continued in an easy tone:

"There he has a wide outlook into the distance, which is what he has loved from his youth up. But the old building is much dilapidated, and though I have already begun to exert all the forces at my command, with the assistance of our admirable architect, Pontius, to restore a portion of it at any rate, and make it a habitable and not too uncomfortable residence, the time is too short to do anything thoroughly worthy —"

"I wish to see my husband here, and the sooner the better," interrupted the Empress with decision. Then she turned towards the row of pillars which stood by the right-hand wall of the hall, and which were at some distance from her couch, calling out "Verus." But her voice was so weak that it did not reach the person addressed, so turning to the prefect, she said: "I beg of you to call Verus to me, the praetor Lucius Aurelius Verus." Titianus immediately obeyed.

As he entered the hall he had already exchanged friendly greetings with the man to whom the Empress wished to speak. He now did not succeed in attracting his attention till he stood close at his elbow, for he formed the centre of a small group of men and women who were hanging on his words. What he was saying in a subdued voice must have been extraordinarily diverting, for it could be seen that his hearers were making the greatest efforts to keep their suppressed laughter from breaking out into a shout that would shake the very hall, a noise the Empress detested. When the prefect came up to Verus, a young girl, whose pretty head was crowned by a perfect thicket of little ringlets, was just laying her hand on his arm and saying:

"Nay-that is too much; if you go on like this, for the future whenever you speak I shall stop my ears with my hands, as sure as my name is Balbilla."

"And as sure as you are descended from King Antiochus," added Verus bowing.

"Always the same," laughed the prefect, nodding to the audacious jester.

"Sabina wants to speak to you."

"Directly, directly," said Verus. "My story is a true one, and you all ought to be grateful to me for having released you from that tedious philologer who has now button-holed my witty friend Favorinus. I like your Alexandria, Titianus; still it is not a great capital like Rome. The people have not yet learned not to be astonished; they are perpetually in amazement. When I go out driving —"

"Your runners ought to fly before you with roses in their hair and wings on their shoulders like Cupids."

"In honor of the Alexandrian ladies?"

"As if the Roman ladies in Rome, and the fair Greeks at Athens," interrupted Balbilla.

"The praetor's runners go faster than Parthian horses," cried the Empress's chamberlain. "He has named them after the winds."

"As they deserve," added Verus "Come, Titianus." He laid his hand in a confidential manner on the arm of the prefect, to whom he was related; and as they went towards Sabina he whispered in his ear:

"I can keep her waiting as if I were the Emperor."

Favorinus who had been engaged in talk with Ptolemaeus, the astronomer, Apollonius, and the philosopher and poet Pancrates in another part of the hall, looked after the two men and said:

"A handsome couple. One the personification of imperial and dignified Rome; the other with his Hermes-like figure."

"The other"—interrupted the philologist with stern displeasure, "the other is the very incarnation of the haughtiness, the luxury pushed to insanity, and the infamous depravity of the metropolis. That dissipated ladies-man."

"I will not defend his character," said Favorinus in his pleasant voice, and with an elegance in his pronunciation of Greek which delighted even the grammarian. "His ways and doings are disgraceful; still you must allow that his manners are tinged with the charm of Hellenic beauty, that the Charites kissed him at his birth, and though, by the stern laws of virtue we must condemn him, he deserves to be crowned with praise and garlands from the point of view of the feeling for beauty."

"Oh! for the artist who wants a model he is a choice morsel."

"The Athenian judges acquitted Phryne because she was beautiful."

"They did wrong."

"Hardly in the eyes of the gods, whose fairest works must deserve our respect."

"Still poison may be kept in the most beautiful vessels."

"And yet body and soul always to a certain extent correspond."

"And can you dare to call the handsome Verus the admirable Verus?"

"No, but the reckless Lucius Aurelius Verus is at the same time the gayest and pleasantest of all the Romans, free alike from spite or carefulness, he troubles himself with no doctrines of virtue, and as when a thing pleases him, he desires to possess it, he endeavors to give pleasure to every one else."

"He has wasted his pains so far as I am concerned."

"I do as he wishes."

The last words both of the philologer and the sophist were spoken somewhat louder than was usual in the presence of the Empress. Sabina, who had just told the praetor which residence her husband had decided on inhabiting, drew up her shoulders and pinched her lips as if in pain, while Verus turned a face of indignation—a face which was manly in spite of all the delicacy and regularity of the features—on the two speakers, and his fine bright eyes caught the hostile glance of Apollonius.

An intimation of aversion to his person was one of the things which to him were past endurance; he hastily passed his hand through his blue-black hair, which was only slightly grizzled at the temples and flowed uncurled, but in soft waving locks round his head, and said, not heeding Sabina's question as to his opinion of her husband's latest instructions:

"He is a repulsive fellow, that wrangling logician; he has an evil eye that threatens mischief to us all, and his trumpet voice cannot hurt you more than it does me. Must we endure him at table with us every day?"

"So Hadrian desires."

"Then I shall start for Rome," said Verus decidedly. "My wife wants to be back with her children, and as praetor, it is more fitting that I should stay by the Tiber than by the Nile."

The words were spoken as lightly as though they were nothing more than a proposition to go to supper, but they seemed to agitate the Empress deeply, for her head, which had seemed almost a fixture during her conversation with Titianus, now shook so violently that the pearls and jewels rattled in the erection of curls. There she sat for some seconds staring into her lap.

Verus stooped to pick up a gem that had fallen from her hair, and as he did so she said hastily:

"You are right. Apollonius is intolerable. Let us send him to meet my husband."

"Then I will remain," answered Verus, as pleased as a wilful boy who has got his own way.

"Fickle as the wind," murmured Sabina, threatening him with her finger. "Show me the stone—it is one of the largest and finest; you may keep it."

When an hour later, Verus quitted the hall with the prefect, Titianus said:

"You have done me a service cousin, without knowing it. Now can you contrive that Ptolemaeus and Favorinus shall go with Apollonius to meet the Emperor at Pelusium?"

"Nothing easier" was the answer.

And the same evening the prefect's steward conveyed to Pontius the information that he might count on having probably fourteen days for his work, instead of eight or nine only.

CHAPTER IV.

In the Caesareum, where the Empress dwelt, the lights were extinguished one after another; but in the palace of Lochias they grew more numerous and brighter. In festal illuminations of the harbor pitch cressets on the roof, and long rows of lamps that accumulated architectonic features of the noble structure, were always kindled; but inside it, no blaze so brilliant had ever lighted it within the memory of man. The harbor watchmen at first gazed anxiously up at Lochias, for they feared that a fire must have broken out in the old palace; they were soon reassured however, by one of the prefect's lictors, who brought them a command to keep open the harbor gates that night, and every night till the Emperor should have arrived, to all who might wish to proceed from Lochias to the city, or from the city to the peninsula, under the orders of Pontius the architect. And till long past midnight not a quarter of an hour passed in which the people whom the architect had summoned to his aid were not knocking at the harbor gates, which, though not locked were all guarded. The little house belonging to the gate-keeper was also brightly lighted up; the birds and cats belonging to the old woman whom the prefect and his companions had found slumbering by her wine-jar, were now fast asleep, but the little dogs still flew loudly yelping into the yard each time a new-comer entered by the open gate.

"Come, Aglaia, what will folks think of you? Thalia, my beauty, behave like a good dog; come here, Euphrosyne, and don't be so silly!" cried the old lady in a voice which was both pleasant and peremptory, as she stood-wide awake now-behind her table, folding together the dried clothes. The little barking beasts who were thus endowed with the names of the three Graces did not trouble themselves much about her affectionate admonitions; to their sorrow, for it happened more than once to each of them, when they had got under the feet of some new-comer, to creep, whining and howling, into the house again to seek consolation from their mistress, who would pick up the sufferer and soothe it with kisses and coaxing.

The old lady was no longer alone, for in the background, on a long and narrow couch which stood in front of the statue of Apollo, lay a

tall, lean man, wearing a red chiton. A little lamp hanging from the ceiling threw a dull light on him and on the lute he was playing. To the faint sound of the instrument, which was rather a large one, and which he had propped on the pillow by his side, he was singing, or rather murmuring a long ditty. Twice, thrice, four times he repeated it in the same way. Now and again he suddenly let his voice sound more loudly—and though his hair was quite grey his voice was not unpleasing—and sang a few phrases full of expression and with artistic delivery; and then, when the dogs barked too vehemently, he would spring up, and with his lute in his left-hand and a long pliable rattan in his right, he would rush into the court-yard, shout the names of the dogs, and raise his cane as if he would kill them; but he always took care not to hit them, only to beat on the pavement near them. When, returning from such an excursion, he stretched himself again on his couch, the old woman, pointing to the hanging-lamp which the impatient creature often knocked with his head, would call out, "Euphorion, mind the oil."

And he each time answered with the same threatening gesture and the same glare in his black eyes:

"The little brutes!"

The singer had been diligently practising his musical exercises for about an hour, when the dogs rushed into the court-yard, not barking this time, but yelping loudly with joy. The old woman laid aside the washing and listened, but the tall man said:

"As many birds come flying before the Emperor as gulls before a storm. If only they would leave us in peace —"

"Hark, that is Pollux; I know by the dogs," said the woman, hastening as fast as she could over the threshold and out to meet him. But the expected visitor was already at the door. He picked up the three four-footed Graces who leaped round him, one after the other by the skin of the neck, and gave each a tap on its nose. Then, seeing the old woman, he took her head between his hands, and kissed her forehead, saying, "Good-evening, little Mother," and shook hands with the singer, adding, "How are you, great, big Father?"

"You are as big as I am," replied the man thus addressed, and he drew the younger man towards him, and laid one of his broad hands on his own grey head and the other on that of his first-born, with its wealth of brown hair.

"As if we were cast in the same mould," cried the youth; and in fact he was very like his father—like, no doubt, as a noble hunter is like a worn-out hack—as marble is like limestone—as a cedar is like a fir-tree. Both were remarkably tall, had thick hair, dark eyes, and strongly aquiline noses, exactly of the same shape; but the cheerful brightness which irradiated the countenance of the youth had certainly not been inherited from the lute-player, but from the little woman who looked up into his face and patted his arm.

But whence did he derive the powerful, but indescribable something which gave nobility to his head, and of which it was impossible to say whether it lay in his eye, or in the lofty brow, arched so differently to that of either parent?

"I knew you would come," cried his mother. "This afternoon I dreamed it, and I can prove that I expected you, for there, on the brazier, stands the stewed cabbage and sausage waiting for you."

"I cannot stay now," replied Pollux. "Really, I cannot, though your kind looks would persuade me, and the sausage winks at me out of the cabbage-pan. My master, Papias, is gone on ahead, and in the palace there we are to work wonders in less time than it generally takes to consider which end the work should be begun at."

"Then I will carry the cabbage into the palace for you," said Doris, standing on tip-toe to hold a sausage to the lips of her tall son. Pollux bit off a large mouthful and said, as he munched it:

"Excellent! I only wish that the thing I am to construct up there may turn out as good a statue as this savory cylinder—now fast disappearing—was a superior and admirable sausage."

"Have another?" said Doris.

"No mother; and you must not bring the cabbage either. Up to midnight not a minute must be lost, and if I then leave off for a little

while you must by that time be dreaming of all sorts of pleasant things."

"I will carry you the cabbage then," said his father, "for I shall not be in bed so early at any rate. The hymn to Sabina, composed by Mesomedes, is to be performed with the chorus, as soon as the Empress visits the theatre, and I am to lead the upper part of the old men, who grow young again at the sight of her. The rehearsal is fixed for to-morrow, and I know nothing about it yet. Old music, note for note, is ready and safe in my throat, but new things—new things!"

"It is according to circumstances," said Pollux, laughing.

"If only they would perform your father's Satyr-play, or his Theseus!" cried Doris.

"Only wait a little, I will recommend him to Caesar as soon as he is proud to call me his friend, as the Phidias of the age. Then, when he asks me 'Who is the happy man who begot you?' I will answer: It is Euphorion, the divine poet and singer; and my mother, too, is a worthy matron, the gate-keeper of your palace, Doris, the enchantress, who turns dingy clothes into snow-white linen."

These last words the young artist sang in a fine and powerful voice to a mode invented by his father.

"If only you had been a singer!" exclaimed Euphorion.

"Then I should have enjoyed the prospect," retorted Pollux, "of spending the evening of my life as your successor in this little abode."

"And now for wretched pay, you plant the laurels with which Papias crowns himself!" answered the old man shrugging his shoulders.

"His hour is coming, too," cried Doris, "his merit will be recognized; I saw him in my dreams, with a great garland on his curly head!"

"Patience, father-patience," said the young man, grasping his father's hand. "I am young and strong, and do all I can. Here, behind this forehead, good ideas are seething; what I have succeeded in carrying out by myself, has at any rate brought credit and fame to others, although it is all far from resembling the ideal of beauty that here—here—I seem to see far away and behind a cloud; still I feel that if, in a moment of kindness, Fortune will but shed a few fresh drops of dew on it all I shall, at any rate, turn out something better than the mere ill-paid right-hand of Papias, who, without me does not know what he ought to do, or how to do it."

"Only keep your eyes open and work hard," cried Doris.

"It is of no use without luck," muttered the singer, shrugging his shoulders.

The young artist bid his parents good-night, and was about to leave, but his mother detained him to show him the young goldfinches, hatched only the day before. Pollux obeyed her wish, not merely to please her, but because he liked to watch the gay little bird that sat warming and sheltering her nestlings. Close to the cage stood the huge wine-jar and his mother's cup, decorated by his own hand. His eye fell on these, and he pushed them aside in silence. Then, taking courage, he said, laughing: "The Emperor will often pass by here, mother; give up celebrating your Dionysiac festival. How would it do if you filled the jar with one-fourth wine and three-fourths water? It does not taste badly."

"Spoiling good gifts," replied his mother.

"One-fourth wine-to please me," Pollux entreated, taking his mother by the shoulders and kissing her forehead.

"To please you, you great boy!" said Doris, as her eyes filled with tears. "Why for you, if I must, I would drink nothing but wretched water. Euphorion you may finish what is left in the jar presently."

Pontius had already begun his labors, at first with aid only of his assistants who had followed him on foot. Measuring, estimating, sending short notes and writing figures, names and suggestions on the plan, and on his folding wax-tablets, he was not idle for an

instant, though frequently interrupted by the appointed superintendents of the workshops and manufactures in Lochias, whose co-operation he required. They only came at this late hour because they were called upon by the prefect's orders.

Papias, the sculptor, introduced himself among the latest, though Pontius had written to him with his own hand that he had to communicate to him a very remunerative and particularly pressing commission for the Emperor, which might, perhaps, be taken in hand that very night. The matter in question was a statue of Urania, which must be completed in eight days by the same method which Papias had introduced at the last festival of Adonis, and to the scale which he, Pontius, indicated, in the palace of Lochias itself. With regard to several works of restoration which had to be carried out with equal rapidity, and as to the price to be paid, they could agree at the same time and place.

The sculptor was a man of foresight and did not appear on the scene alone but with his best assistant, Pollux, the son of the worthy couple at the gate, and several slaves who dragged after him sundry trunks and carts loaded with tools, boards, clay, gypsum and other raw materials of his art. On the road to Lochias he had informed the young sculptor of the business in hand, and had told him in a condescending tone that he would be permitted to try his skill in reconstructing the Urania. At the gate he had permitted Pollux to greet his parents, and had gone alone into the palace to open his bargain with the architect without the presence of witnesses.

The young artist perfectly understood his master. He knew that he would be expected to carry out the statue of Urania, while his task-master, after making some trifling alterations in the completed work, would declare that it was his own. Pollux had for two years been obliged, more than once, to put up with similar treatment; and now, as usual, he submitted to this dishonest manoeuvre because, under his master there was plenty to do, and the delight of work was to him the greatest he could have.

Papias, to whom he had gone early as an apprentice and to whom he owed the knowledge he possessed, was no miser, still Pollux needed money, not for himself alone but because he had taken on himself the charge of a widowed sister and her children as if they

were his own family. He was always glad to take some comfort into the narrow home of his parents, who were poor, and to maintain his younger brother Teuker—who had devoted himself to the same art—during the years of his apprenticeship. Again and again he had thought of telling his master that he should start on his own footing and earn laurels for himself, but what then would become of those who relied on his help, if he gave up his regular earnings and if he got no commissions when there were so many unknown beginners eager for them? Of what avail were all his ability and the most honest good-will if no opportunity offered for his executing his work in noble materials? With his own means he certainly was in no position to do so.

While he was talking to his parents Papias had opened his transactions with the architect. Pontius explained to the sculptor what was required and Papias listened attentively; he never interrupted the speaker, but only stroked his face from time to time, as if to make it smoother than it was already, though it was shaved with peculiar care and formed and colored like a warm mask; meanwhile draping the front of his rich blue toga, which he wore in the fashion of a Roman senator, into fresh folds.

But when Pontius showed him, at the end of the rooms destined for the Emperor, the last of the statues to be restored, and which needed a new grin, Papias said decisively:

"It cannot be done."

"That is a rash verdict," replied the architect. "Do you not know the proverb, which, being such a good one, is said to have been first uttered by more than one sage: 'That it shows more ill-judgment to pronounce a thing impossible than to boast that we can achieve a task however much it may seem to transcend our powers.'"

Papias smiled and looked down at his gold-embroidered shoes as he said:

"It is more difficult to us sculptors to imagine ourselves waging Titanic warfare against the impossible, than it is to you who work with enormous masses. I do not yet see the means which would give me courage to begin the attack."

"I will tell you," replied Pontius quickly and decidedly. "On your side good-will, plenty of assistants and night-watchers; on ours, the Caesar's approval and plenty of gold."

After this the transaction came to a prompt and favorable issue, and the architect could but express his entire approbation, in most cases, of the sculptor's judicious and well-considered suggestions.

"Now I must go home," concluded Papias. "My assistants will proceed at once with the necessary preparations. The work must be carried on behind screens, so that no one may disturb us or hinder us with remarks."

Half an hour later a scaffolding was already erected in the middle of the hall where the Urania was to stand.

It was concealed from; public gaze by thick linen stretched on tall wooden frames, and behind these screens Pollux was busied in framing a small model in wax, while his master had returned home to make arrangements for the labors of the following day.

It wanted only an hour of midnight, and still the supper sent to the palace for the architect by the prefect remained untouched. Pontius was hungry enough, but before attacking the meal that a slave had set out on a marble table—the roast meat which looked so inviting, the orange-red crayfish, the golden-brown pasty and the many-hued fruits—he conceived it his duty to inspect the rooms to be restored. It was needful to see whether the slaves who had been set, in the first place to clean out all the rooms, were being intelligently directed by the men set over them, whether they were doing their duty and had all that they required; they had got some hours to work, then they were to rest and to begin again at sunrise, reinforced by other laborers both slave and free.

More and better lighting was universally demanded, and when, in the hall of the Muses, the men who were cleaning the pavement and scraping the columns loudly clamored for torches and lamps, a young man's head peered over the screen which shut in the place reserved for the restoration of the Urania, and a lamentable voice cried out:

"My Muse, with her celestial sphere, is the guardian of star-gazers and is happiest in the dark—but not till she is finished. To form her we must have light and more light—and when it is lighter here the voice of the people down there, which does not sound very delightful up in this hollow space, will diminish somewhat also. Give light, then, O, men! Light for my goddess, and for your scrubbers and scourers."

Pontius looked up smiling at Pollux, who had uttered this appeal, and answered:

"Your cry of distress is fully justified, my friend. But do you really believe in the power of light to diminish noise?"

"At any rate," replied Pollux, "where it is absent, that is to say in the dark, every noise seems redoubled."

"That is true, but there are other reasons for that," answered the architect. "To-morrow in an interval of work we will discuss these matters. Now I will go to provide you with lamps and lights."

"Urania, the protectress of the fine arts, will be beholden to you," cried Pollux as the architect went away.

Pontius meanwhile sought his chief foreman to ask him whether he had delivered his orders to Keraunus, the palace-steward, to come to him, and to put the cressets and lamps commonly used for the external illuminations, at the service of his workmen.

"Three times," was the answer "have I been myself to the man, but each time he puffed himself out like a frog and answered me not a word, but only sent me into a little room with his daughter—whom you must see, for she is charming—and a miserable black slave, and there I found these few wretched lamps that are now burning."

"Did you order him to come to me?"

"Three hours ago, and again a second time, when you were talking with Papias."

The architect turned his back upon the foreman in angry haste, unrolled the plan of the palace, quickly found upon it the abode of

the recalcitrant steward, seized a small red-clay lamp that was standing near him, and being quite accustomed to guide himself by a plan, went straight through the rooms, which were not a few, and by a long corridor from the hall of the Muses, to the lodging of the negligent official. An unclosed door led him into a dark ante-chamber followed by another room, and finally into a large, well-furnished apartment. All these door-ways, into what seemed to be at once the dining and sitting-room of the steward, were bereft of doors, and could only be closed by stuff curtains, just now drawn wide open. Pontius could therefore look in, unhindered and unperceived, at the table on which a three-branched bronze lamp was standing between a dish and some plates. The stout man was sitting with his rubicund moon-face towards the architect, who, indignant as he was, would have gone straight up to him with swift decision, if, before entering the second room, a low but pitiful sob had not fallen on his ear.

The sob proceeded from a slight young girl who came forward from a door beyond the sitting-room, and who now placed a platter with a loaf on the table by the steward.

"Come, do not cry, Selene," said the steward, breaking the bread slowly and with an evident desire to soothe his child.

"How can I help crying," said the girl. "But tomorrow morning let me buy a piece of meat for you; the physician forbade you to eat bread."

"Man must be filled," replied the fat man, "and meat is dear. I have nine mouths to fill, not counting the slaves. And where am I to get the money to fill us all with meat?"

"We need none, but for you it is necessary."

"It is of no use, child. The butcher will not trust us any more, the other creditors press us, and at the end of the month we shall have just ten drachmae left us."

The girl turned pale, and asked in anxiety:

"But, father, it was only to-day that you showed me the three gold pieces which you said had been given you as a present out of the money distributed on the arrival of the Empress."

The steward absently rolled a piece of bread-crumble between his fingers and said:

"I spent that on this fibula with an incised onyx – and as cheap as dirt, I can tell you. If Caesar comes he must see who and what I am; and if I die any one will give you twice as much for it as I paid. I tell you the Empress's money was well laid out on the thing." Selene made no answer, but she sighed deeply, and her eye glanced at a quantity of useless things which her father had acquired and brought home because they were cheap, while she and her seven sisters wanted the most necessary things.

"Father," the girl began again after a short silence, "I ought not to go on about it, but even if it vexes you, I must – the architect, who is settling all the work out there, has sent for you twice already."

"Be silent!" shouted the fat man, striking his hand on the table. "Who is this Pontius, and who am I!"

"You are of a noble Macedonian family, related perhaps even to the Ptolemies; you have your seat in the Council of the Citizens – but do, this time, be condescending and kind. The man has his hands full, he is tired out."

"Nor have I been able to sit still the whole day, and what is fitting, is fitting. I am Keraunus the son of Ptolemy, whose father came into Egypt with Alexander the Great, and helped to found this city, and every one knows it. Our possessions were diminished; but it is for that very reason that I insist on our illustrious blood being recognized. Pontius sends to command the presence of Keraunus! If it were not infuriating it would be laughable – for who is this man, who? I have told you his father was a freedman of the former prefect Claudius Balbillus, and by the favor of the Roman his father rose and grew rich. He is the descendant of slaves, and you expect that I shall be his obedient humble servant, whenever he chooses to call me?"

"But father, my dear father, it is not the son of Ptolemy, but the palace-steward that he desires shall go to hire."

"Mere chop-logic! — you have nothing to say, not a step do I take to go to him."

The girl clasped her hands over her face, and sobbed loudly and pitifully. Keraunus started up and cried out, beside himself.

"By great Serapis. I can bear this no longer. What are you whimpering about?"

The girl plucked up courage and going up to the indignant man she said, though more than once interrupted by tears.

"You must go father—indeed you must. I spoke to the foreman, and he told me coolly and decidedly that the architect was placed here in Caesar's name, and that if you do not obey him you will at once be superseded in your office. And if that were to happen, if that—O father, father, only think of blind Helios and poor Berenice! Arsinoe and I could earn our bread, but the little ones—the little ones."

With these words the girl fell on her knees lifting her hands in entreaty to her obstinate parent. The blood had mounted to the man's face and eyes, and pressing his hand to his purple forehead he sank back in his chair as if stricken with apoplexy. His daughter sprang up and offered him the cup full of wine and water which was standing on the table; but Keraunus pushed it aside with his hands, and panted out, while he struggled for breath:

"Supersede me—in my place—turn me out of this palace! Why there, in that ebony trunk, lies the rescript of Euergetes which confers the stewardship of this residence on my ancestor Philip, and as a hereditary dignity in his family. Now Philip's wife had the honor of being the king's mistress—or, as some say, his daughter. There lies the document, drawn up in red and black ink on yellow papyrus and ratified with the seal and signature of Euergetes the Second. All the princes of the Lagides have confirmed it, all the Roman prefects have respected it, and now — now."

"But father" said the girl interrupting her father, and wringing her hands in despair, "you still hold the place and if you will only give in."

"Give in, give in," shrieked the corpulent steward shaking his fat hands above his blood-shot face. "I will give in—I will not bring you all to misery—for my children's sake I will allow myself to be ill-treated and down-trodden, I will go—I will go directly. Like the pelican I will feed my children with my heart's blood. But you ought to know what it costs me, to humiliate myself thus; it is intolerable to me, and my heart is breaking—for the architect, the architect has trampled upon me as if I were his servant; he wished—I heard him with these ears—he shrieked after me a villainous hope that I might be smothered in my own fat—and the physician has told me I may die of apoplexy! Leave me, leave me. I know those Romans are capable of anything. Well—here I am; fetch me my saffron-colored pallium, that I wear in the council, fetch me my gold fillet for my head. I will deck myself like a beast for sacrifice, and I will show him—"

Not a word of this harangue had escaped the ears of the architect who had been at first indignant and then moved to laughter, and withal it had touched his heart. A sluggish and torpid character was repugnant to his vigorous nature, and the deliberate and indifferent demeanor of the stout steward, on an occasion which had prompted him and all concerned to act as quickly and energetically as possible, had brought words to his lips which he now wished that he had never spoken. It is true that the steward's false pride had roused his indignation, and who can listen calmly to any comment on a stain on his birth? But the appeal of this miserable father's daughter had gone to his heart. He pitied the fatuous simpleton whom, with a turn of his hand, he could reduce to beggary, and who had evidently been far more deeply hurt by his words than Pontius had been by what he had overheard, and so he followed the kindly impulse of a noble nature to spare the unfortunate.

He rapped loudly with his knuckles on the inside of the door-post of the ante-room, coughed loudly, and then said, bowing deeply to the steward on the threshold of the sitting-room:

"Noble Keraunus—I have come, as beseems me, to pay you my respects. Excuse the lateness of the hour, but you can scarcely imagine how busy I have been since we parted."

Keraunus had at first started at the late visitor, then he stared at him in consternation. He now went towards him, stretched out both hands as if suddenly relieved of a nightmare, and a bright expression of such warm and sincere satisfaction overspread his countenance that Pontius wondered how he could have failed to observe what a well-cut face this fat original had.

"Take a seat at our humble table," said Keraunus. "Go Selene and call the slaves. Perhaps there is yet a pheasant in the house, a roast fowl or something of the kind—but the hour, it is true, is late."

"I am deeply obliged to you," replied the architect, smiling. "My supper is waiting for me in the hall of the Muses, and I must return to my work-people. I should be grateful to you if you would accompany me. We must consult together as to the lighting of the rooms, and such matters are best discussed over a succulent roast and a flask of wine."

"I am quite at your service," said Keraunus with a bow.

"I will go on ahead," said the architect, "but first will you have the goodness to give all that you have in the way of cressets, lights and lamps to the slaves, who, in a few minutes, shall await your orders at your door."

When Pontius had departed, Selene exclaimed with a deep sigh

"Oh! what a fright I have had! I will go now and find the lamps. How terribly it might have ended."

"It is well that he should have come," murmured Keraunus. "Considering his birth and origin, the architect is certainly a well-bred man."

CHAPTER V.

Pontius had gone to the steward's room, with a frowning brow, but it was with a smile on his strongly-marked lips, and a brisk step that he returned to his work-people. The foreman came to meet him with looks of enquiry as he said. "The steward was a little offended and with reason; but now we are capital friends and he will do what he can in the matter of lighting."

In the hall of the Muses he paused outside the screen, behind which Pollux was working, and called out:

"Friend sculptor, listen to me, it is high time to have supper."

"It is, indeed," replied Pollux, "else it will be breakfast."

"Then lay aside your tools for a quarter of an hour and help me and the palace-steward to demolish the food that has been sent me."

"You will need no second assistant if Keraunus is there. Food melts before him like ice before the sun."

"Then come and save him from an overloaded stomach."

"Impossible, for I am just now dealing most unmercifully with a bowl full of cabbage and sausages. My mother had cooked that food of the gods and my father has brought it in to his first-born son."

"Cabbage and sausages!" repeated the architect, and its tone betrayed that his hungry stomach would fain have made closer acquaintance with the savory mess.

"Come in here," continued Pollux, "and be my guest. The cabbage has experienced the process which is impending over this palace—it has been warmed up."

"Warmed-up cabbage is better than freshly-cooked, but the fire over which we must try to make this palace enjoyable again, burns too hotly and must be too vigorously stirred. The best things have been all taken out, and cannot be replaced."

"Like the sausages, I have fished out of my cabbages," laughed the sculptor. "After all I cannot invite you to be my guest, for it would be a compliment to this dish if I were now to call it cabbage with sausages. I have worked it like a mine, and now that the vein of sausages is nearly exhausted, little remains but the native soil in which two or three miserable fragments remain as memorials of past wealth. But my mother shall cook you a mess of it before long, and she prepares it with incomparable skill."

"A good idea, but you are my guest."

"I am replete."

"Then come and spice our meal with your good company."

"Excuse me, sir; leave me rather here behind my screen. In the first place, I am in a happy vein, and on the right track; I feel that something good will come of this night's work."

"And tomorrow – "

"Hear me out."

"Well."

"You would be doing your other guest an ill-service by inviting me."

"Do you know the steward then?"

"From my earliest youth, I am the son of the gatekeeper of the palace."

"Oh, ho! then you came from that pretty little lodge with the ivy and the birds, and the jolly old lady."

"She is my mother—and the first time the butcher kills she will concoct for you and me a dish of sausages and cabbage without an equal."

"A very pleasing prospect."

"Here comes a hippopotamus — on closer inspection Keraunus, the steward."

"Are you his enemy?"

"I, no; but he is mine—yes," replied Pollux. "It is a foolish story. When we sup together don't ask me about it if you care to have a jolly companion And do not tell Keraunus that I am here, it will lead to no good."

"As you wish, and here are our lamps too."

"Enough to light the nether world," exclaimed Pollux, and waving his hand to the architect in farewell he vanished behind the screens to devote himself entirely to his model.

It was long past midnight, and the slaves who had set to work with much zeal had finished their labors in the hall of the Muses. They were now allowed to rest for some hours on straw that had been spread for them in another wing of the building. The architect himself wished to take advantage of this time to refresh himself by a short sleep, for the exertions of the morrow, but between this intention and its fulfilment an obstacle was interposed, the preposterous dimensions namely of his guest. He had invited the steward on purpose to give him his fill of meat, and Keraunus had shown himself amenable to encouragement in this respect. But after the last dish had been removed the steward thought that good manners demanded that he should honor his entertainer by his illustrious presence, and at the same time the prefect's good wine loosened the tongue of the man, who was not usually communicative.

First he spoke of the manifold infirmities which tormented him and endangered his life, and when Pontius, to divert his talk into other channels, was so imprudent as to allude to the Council of Citizens, Keraunus gave full play to his eloquence, and, while he emptied cup after cup of wine, tried to lay down the reasons which had made him and his friends decide on staking everything in order to deprive the members of the extensive community of Jews in the city of their rights as citizens, and to expel them, if possible, from Alexandria. So warm was his zeal that he totally forgot the presence

of the architect, and his humble origin, and declared to be indispensable, that even the descendants of freed-slaves should be disenfranchised.

Pontius saw in the steward's inflamed eyes and cheeks that it was the wine which spoke within him, and he made no answer; and determined that the rest he needed should not be thus abridged, he rose from table and briefly excusing himself he retired to the room in which the couch had been prepared for him. After he had undressed he desired his slave to see what Keraunus was about, and soon received the reassuring information that the steward was fast asleep and snoring.

"Only listen," said the slave, to confirm his report. "You can hear him grunting and snuffing as far as this. I pushed a cushion under his head, for otherwise, so full as he is, the stout gentleman might come to some harm."

Love is a plant which springs up for many who have never sown it, and grows into a spreading tree for many who have neither fostered nor tended it. How little had Keraunus ever done to win the heart of his daughter, how much on the contrary which could not fail to overshadow and trouble her young life. And yet Selene, whose youth—for she was but nineteen—needed repose and to whom the evening with the reprieve of sleep brought more pleasure than the morning with its load of cares and labor, sat by the three-branched lamp and watched, and tormented herself more and more as it grew later and later, at her father's long absence. About a week before the strong man had suddenly lost consciousness; only, it is true, for a few minutes, and the physician had told her that though he appeared to be in superabundant health, the attack indicated that he must follow his prescriptions strictly and avoid all kinds of excess. A single indiscretion, he had declared, might swiftly and suddenly cut the thread of his existence. After her father had gone out in obedience to the architect's invitation, Selene had brought out her youngest brothers' and sisters' garments, in order to mend them. Her sister Arsinoe, who was her junior by two years, and whose fingers were as nimble as her own, might indeed have helped her, but she had gone to bed early and was sleeping by the children who could not be left untended at night. Her female slave, who had been

in her grandmother's service, ought to have assisted her; but the old half-blind negress saw even worse by lamp-light than by daylight, and after a few stitches could do no more. Selene sent her to bed and sat down alone to her work.

For the first hour she sewed away without looking up, considering, meanwhile, how she could best contrive to support the family till the end of the month on the few drachmae she could dispose of. As it got later she grew wearier and wearier, but still she sat at the work, though her pretty head often sank upon her breast. She must await her father's return, for a potion prepared by the physician stood waiting for him, and she feared he would forget it if she did not remind him.

By the end of the second hour sleep overcame her, and she felt as if the chair she was sitting on was giving way under her, and as if it was sinking at first slowly and then quicker and quicker, into a deep abyss that opened beneath her. Looking up for help in her dream, she could see nothing but her father's face, which looked aside with indifference. As her dream went on she called him and called him again, but for a long time he did not seem to hear her. At last he looked down at her and when he perceived her he smiled, but instead of helping her he picked up stones and clods from the edge of the gulf and threw them on her hands with which she had clutched the brambles and roots that grew out of the rift of the rocks. She entreated him to cease, implored him, shrieked to him to spare her, but not a muscle moved in the face above her; it seemed set in a vacant smile, and even his heart was dead too, for he ruthlessly flung down now a pebble, now a clod, one after the other, till her hands were losing their last feeble hold and she was on the point of falling into the fatal gulf below. Her own cry of terror aroused her, but during the brief process of returning from her dream to actuality, she saw through swiftly parting mists—only for an instant, and yet quite plainly—the tall grass of a meadow, spangled with ox-eye daisies, white and gold, with violet-hued blue bells and scarlet poppies, among which she was lying—as in a soft green bed, while near the sward lay a sparkling blue lake and behind it rose beautiful swelling hills, with red cliffs, and green groves, and meadows bright in the clear sunshine. A clear sky, across which a soft breeze gently blew light silvery flakes of cloud,

bent over the lovely but fleeting picture, which she could not compare with anything she had ever seen near her own home.

She had only slept for a short time, but when, once more thoroughly awake, she rubbed her eyes, she thought her dream must have lasted for hours.

One flame of the three-branched lamp had flickered into extinction and the wick of another was beginning to waste. She hastily put it out with a pair of tongs that hung by a chain, and then after pouring fresh oil into the lamp that was still burning she carried the light into her father's sleeping room.

He had not yet returned. She was seized with a mortal terror. Had the architect's wine bereft him of his senses? Had he on his way back to his rooms been seized with a fresh attack of giddiness? In spirit she saw the heavy man incapable of raising himself, dying perhaps where he had fallen.

No choice remained to her; she must go at once to the hall of the Muses and see what had happened to her father, pick him up, give him help or—if he still were feasting—endeavor to tempt him back by any excuse she could find. Everything was at stake; her father's life and with it maintenance and shelter for eight helpless creatures.

The December night was stormy, a keen and bitter wind blew through the ill-closed opening in the roof of the room as Selene, before she began her expedition, tied a handkerchief over her head and threw over her shoulders a white mantle which had been worn by her dead mother. In the long corridor which lay between her father's rooms and the front portion of the palace, she had to screen the flickering light of the little lamp with her left hand, carrying it in her right; the flame blown about by the draught and her own figure were mirrored here and there in the polished surface of the dark marble. The thick sandals she had tied on to her feet roused loud echoes in the empty rooms as they fell on the stone pavements, and terror possessed Selene's anxious soul. Her fingers trembled as they held the lamp and her heart beat audibly as, with bated breath, she went through the cupolaed hall in which Ptolemy Euergetes 'the fat' was said, some years ago, to have murdered his own son, and in which even a deep breath roused an echo.

But even in this room she did not forget to look to the right and left for her father. She breathed a sigh of relief when she perceived a streak of light which shone through the gaping rift of a cracked side-door of the hall of the Muses and fell in a broken reflection on the floor and the wall of the last room through which she had to pass. She now entered the large hall which was dimly lighted by the lamps behind the sculptor's screen, and by several tapers, now burnt down low. These were standing on a table knocked together out of blocks of wood and planks at the extreme end of the hall, and behind this her father was sound asleep.

The deep notes brought out of the sleeper's broad chest, were echoed in a very uncanny way from the bare walls of the vast empty room, and she was frightened by them and still more by the long black shadows of the pillars, that lay, like barriers, across her path. She stood listening in the middle of the hall and soon recognized in the alarming tones a sound that was only too familiar. Without a moment's hesitation she started to run, and hastened to the sleeper, shook him, pushed him, called him, sprinkled his forehead with water, and appealed to him by the tenderest names with which her sister Arsinoe was wont to coax him. When, in spite of all this, he neither spoke nor stirred, she flung the full light of the lamp on his face. Then she thought she perceived that a bluish tinge had overspread his bloated features, and she broke into the deep, agonized, weeping which, a few hours previously had touched the architect's heart.

There was a sudden stir behind the screens which enclosed the sculptor and the work in progress. Pollux had been working for a long time with zeal and pleasure, but at last the steward's snoring had begun to disturb him. The body of the Muse had already taken a definite form and he could begin to work out the head with the earliest dawn of day. He now dropped his arms wearily, for as soon as he ceased to create with his whole heart and mind he felt tired, and saw plainly that without a model he could do nothing satisfactory with the drapery of his Urania. So he pulled his stool up to a great chest full of gypsum to get a little repose by leaning against it.

But sleep avoided the artist who was too much excited by his rapid night's work, and as soon as Selene opened the door he sat upright and peeped through an opening between the frames of his place of retirement. When he saw the tall draped figure in whose hand a lamp was trembling, when he watched her cross the spacious hall, and then suddenly stand still, he was not a little startled, but this did not hinder him from noting every step of the nocturnal spectre with far more curiosity than alarm. Then, when Selene looked round her, and the lamp illuminated her face, he recognized the steward's daughter, and immediately knew what she must be seeking.

Her vain attempts to rouse the sleeper, though somewhat pathetic, had in them at the same time something irresistibly ludicrous, and Pollux felt sorely tempted to laugh. But as soon as Selene began to weep so bitterly he hastily pushed apart two of the laths of the screen, went up and called her name, at first softly not to frighten her, and then more loudly. When she turned her head he begged her warmly not to be alarmed for he was no ghost, only a very humble and ordinary mortal, in fact—as she might see—nothing more, alas! than the son of Euphorion, the gate-keeper, good for nothing as yet, but treading the path to something better.

"You, Pollux?" asked the girl with surprise.

"The very man. But you—can I help you?"

"My poor father," sobbed Selene. "He does not stir, he is immovable—and his face—oh! merciful gods."

"A man who snores is not dead," said the sculptor. "But the doctor told him—"

"He is not even ill! Pontius only gave him stronger wine to drink than he is used to. Let him be; he is sleeping with the pillow under his neck, as comfortably as a child. When he began just now to trumpet a little too loud I whistled as loud as a plover, for that often silences a snorer; but I could more easily have made those stone Muses dance than have roused him."

"If only we could get him to bed."

"Well, if you have four horses at hand."

"You are as bad as you ever were!"

"A little less so, Selene, only you must become accustomed again to my way of speaking. This time I only mean that we two together are not strong enough to carry him away."

"But what can I do, then? The doctor said —"

"Never mind the doctor. The complaint your father is suffering from is one I know well. It will be gone to-morrow, perhaps by sundown, and the only pain it will leave behind, he will feel under his wig. Only leave him to sleep."

"But it is so cold here."

"Take my cloak and cover him with that."

"Then you will be frozen."

"I am used to it. How long has Keraunus had dealings with the doctor?"

Selene related the accident that had befallen her father and how justified were her fears. The sculptor listened to her in silence and then said in a quite altered tone:

"I am truly sorry to hear it. Let us put some cold water on his forehead, and until the slaves come back again I will change the wet cloth every quarter of an hour. Here is a jar and a handkerchief — good, they might have been left on purpose. Perhaps, too, it will wake him, and if not the people shall carry him to his own rooms."

"Disgraceful, disgraceful!" sighed the girl.

"Not at all; the high-priest of Serapis even is sometimes unwell. Only let me see to it."

"It will excite him afresh if he sees you. He is so angry with you — so very angry."

"Omnipotent Zeus, what harm have I done you, fat father! The gods forgive the sins of the wise, and a man will not forgive the fault committed by a stupid lad in a moment of imprudence."

"You mocked at him."

"I set a clay head that was like him on the shoulders of the fat Silenus near the gate, that had lost its own head. It was my first piece of independent work."

"But you did it to vex my father."

"Certainly not, Selene; I was delighted with the joke and nothing more."

"But you knew how touchy he is."

"And does a wild boy of fifteen ever reflect on the consequences of his audacity? If he had but given me a thrashing his annoyance would have discharged itself like thunder and lightning, and the air would have been clear again. But, as it was, he cut the face off the work with a knife, and deliberately trod the pieces under foot as they lay on the ground. He gave me one single blow—with his thumb—which I still feel, it is true, and then he treated me and my parents with such scorn, so coldly and hardly, with such bitter contempt—"

"He never is really violent, but wrath seems to eat him inwardly, and I have rarely seen him so angry as he was that time."

"But if he had only settled the account with me on the spot! but my father was by, and hot words fell like rain, and my mother added her share, and from that time there has been utter hostility between our little house and you up here. What hurt me most was that you and your sister were forbidden to come to see us and to play with me."

"That has spoilt many pleasant hours for me, too."

"It was nice when we used to dress up in my father's theatrical finery and cloaks."

"And when you made us dolls out of clay."

"Or when we performed the Olympian games."

"I was always the teacher when we played at school with our little brothers and sisters."

"Arsinoe gave you most trouble."

"Oh! and what fun when we went fishing!"

"And when we brought home the fishes and mother gave us meal and raisins to cook them."

"Do you remember the festival of Adonis, and how I stopped the runaway horse of that Numidian officer?"

"The horse had knocked over Arsinoe, and when we got home mother gave you an almond-cake."

"And your ungrateful sister bit a great piece out of it and left me only a tiny morsel. Is Arsinoe as pretty as she promised to become? It is two years since I last saw her; at our place we never have time to leave work till it is dark. For eight months I had to work for the master at Ptolemais, and often saw the old folks but once in the month."

"We go out very little, too, and we are not allowed to go into your parents' house. My sister —"

"Is she pretty?"

"Yes, I think she is. Whenever she can get hold of a piece of ribbon she plaits it in her hair, and the men in the street turn round to look at her. She is sixteen now."

"Sixteen! What, little Arsinoe! Why, how long then is it since your mother died?"

"Four years and eight months."

"You remember the date very exactly; such a mother is not easily forgotten, indeed. She was a good woman and a kinder I never met. I know, too, that she tried to mollify your father's feeling, but she could not succeed, and then she need must die!"

"Yes," said Selene gloomily. "How could the gods decree it! They are often more cruel than the hardest hearted man."

"Your poor little brothers and sisters!"

The girl bowed her head sadly and Pollux stood for some time with his eyes fixed on the ground. Then he raised his head and exclaimed:

"I have something for you that will please you."

"Nothing ever pleases me now she is dead."

"Yes, yes indeed," replied the young sculptor eagerly. "I could not forget the good soul, and once in my idle moments I modelled her bust from memory. To-morrow I will bring it to you."

"Oh!" cried Selene, and her large heavy eyes brightened with a sunny gleam.

"Now, is not it true, you are pleased?"

"Yes indeed, very much. But when my father learns that it is you who have given me the portrait—"

"Is he capable of destroying it?"

"If he does not destroy it, he will not suffer it in the house as soon as he knows that you made it." Pollux took the handkerchief from the steward's head, moistened it afresh, and exclaimed as he rearranged it on the forehead of the sleeping man:

"I have an idea. All that matters is that my bust should serve to remind you often of your mother; the bust need not stand in your rooms. The busts of the women of the house of Ptolemy stand on the rotunda, which you can see from your balcony, and which you can pass whenever you please; some of them are badly mutilated and

must be got rid of. I will undertake to restore the Berenice and put your mother's head on her shoulders. Then you have only to go out and look at her. Will that do?"

"Yes, Pollux; you are a good man."

"So I told you just now. I am beginning to improve. But time—time! if I am to undertake to repair Berenice I must begin by saving the minutes."

"Go back to your work now; I know how to apply a wet compress only too well."

With these words Selene threw back her mantle over her shoulders so as to leave her hands free for use, and stood with her slender figure, her pale face, and the fine broadly-flowing folds of rich stuff, like a statue in the eyes of the young sculptor.

"Stop—stay so—just so," cried Pollux to the astonished girl, so loudly and eagerly that she was startled.

"Your cloak hangs with a wonderfully-free flow from your shoulders—in the name of all the gods do not touch it. If only I might model from it I should in a few minutes gain a whole day for our Berenice. I will wet the handkerchief at intervals in the pauses." Without waiting for Selene's answer the sculptor hastened into his nook and returned first with one of the lamps he worked by in each hand, and some small tools in his mouth, and then fetched his wax model which he placed on the outer side of the table, behind which the steward was sleeping. The tapers were put out, the lamps pushed aside, and raised or lowered, and when at last a tolerably suitable light was procured Pollux threw himself on a stool, straddled his legs, craned his head forward as far as his neck would allow, looking, with his hooked nose, like a vulture that strives to descry his distant prey—cast his eyes down, raised them again to take in something fresh, and after a long gaze looked down again while his fingers and nails moved over the surface of the wax-figure, sinking into the plastic material, applying new pieces to apparently complete portions, removing others with a decided nip and rounding them off with bewildering rapidity to use them for a fresh purpose.

He seemed to be seized with cramp in his hands, but still under his knotted brow his eye shone earnest, resolute and calm, and yet full of profound and speechless inspiration. Selene had said not a word that permitted his using her as a model; but, as if his enthusiasm was infectious, she remained motionless, and when, as he worked, his gaze met hers she could detect the stern earnestness which at this moment possessed her eager companion.

Neither of them opened their lips for some time. At last he stood back from his work, stooping low to look first at Selene and then at his statuette with keen examination from head to foot; and then, drawing a deep breath, and rubbing the wax over with his finger, he said:

"There, that is how it must go! Now I will wet your father's handkerchief and then we can go on again. If you are tired you can rest."

She availed herself but little of this permission and presently he began work again. As he proceeded carefully to replace some folds of her drapery which had fallen out of place, she moved her foot as if to draw back, but he begged her earnestly to stand still and she obeyed his request.

Pollux now used his fingers and modelling tools more calmly; his gaze was less wistful and he began to talk again.

"You are very pale," he said. "To be sure the lamp-light and a sleepless night have something to do with it."

"I look just the same by daylight, but I am not ill."

"I thought Arsinoe would have been like your mother, but now I see many features of her face in yours again. The oval of their form is the same and, in both, the line of the nose runs almost straight to the forehead; you have her eyes and the same bend of the brow, but your mouth is smaller and more sharply cut, and she could hardly have made such a heavy knot of her hair. I fancy, too, that yours is lighter than hers."

"As a girl she must have had still more hair, and perhaps she may have been as fair as I was — I am brown now."

"Another thing you inherit from her is that your hair, without being curly, lies upon your head in such soft waves."

"It is easy to keep in order."

"Are not you taller than she was?"

"I fancy so, but as she was stouter she looked shorter. Will you soon have done?"

"You are getting tired of standing?"

"Not very."

"Then have a little more patience. Your face reminds me more and more of our early years; I should be glad to see Arsinoe once more. I feel at this moment as if time had moved backwards a good piece. Have you the same feeling?"

Selene shook her head.

"You are not happy?"

"No."

"I know full well that you have very heavy duties to perform for your age."

"Things go as they may."

"Nay, nay. I know you do not let things go haphazard. You take care of your brothers and sisters like a mother."

"Like a mother!" repeated Selene, and she smiled a bitter negative.

"Of course a mother's love is a thing by itself, but your father and the little ones have every reason to be satisfied with yours."

"The little ones are perhaps, and Helios who is blind, but Arsinoe does what she can."

"You certainly are not content, I can hear it in your voice, and you used formerly to be as merry and happy as your sister, though perhaps not so saucy."

"Formerly — "

"How sadly that sounds! And yet you are handsome, you are young, and life lies before you."

"But what a life!"

"Well, what?" asked the sculptor, and taking his hands from his work he looked ardently at the fair pale girl before him and cried out fervently:

"A life which might be full of happiness and satisfied affection."

The girl shook her head in negation and answered coldly:

"'Love is joy,' says the Christian woman who superintends us at work in the papyrus factory, and since my mother died I have had no love. I enjoyed all my share of happiness once for all in my childhood, now I am content if only we are spared the worst misfortunes. Otherwise I take what each day brings, because I can not do otherwise. My heart is empty, and if I ever feel anything keenly, it is dread. I have long since ceased to expect any thing good of the future."

"Girl!" exclaimed Pollux. "Why, what has been happening to you? I do not understand half of what you are saying. How came you in the papyrus factory?"

"Do not betray me," begged Selene. "If my father were to hear of it."

"He is asleep, and what you confide to me no one will ever hear of again."

"Why should I conceal it? I go every day with Arsinoe for two hours to the manufactory, and we work there to earn a little money."

"Behind your father's back?"

"Yes, he would rather that we should starve than allow it. Every day I feel the same loathing for the deceit; but we could not get on without it, for Arsinoe thinks of nothing but herself, plays draughts with my father, curls his hair, plays with the children as if they were dolls, but it is my part to take care of them."

"And you, you say, have no share of love. Happily no one believes you, and I least of all. Only lately my mother was telling me about you, and I thought you were a girl who might turn out just such a wife as a woman ought to be."

"And now?"

"Now, I know it for certain."

"You may be mistaken."

"No, no! your name is Selene, and you are as gentle as the kindly moonlight; names, even, have their significance."

"And my blind brother who has never even seen the light is called Helios!" answered the girl.

Pollux had spoken with much warmth, but Selene's last words startled him and checked the effervescence of his feelings. Finding he did not answer her bitter exclamation, she said, at first coolly, but with increasing warmth:

"You are beginning to believe me, and you are right, for what I do for the children is not done out of love, or out of kindness, or because I set their welfare above my own. I have inherited my father's pride, and it would be odious to me if my brothers and sisters went about in rags, and people thought we were as poor and helpless as we really are. What is most horrible to me is sickness in the house, for that increases the anxiety I always feel and swallows up my last coin; the children must not perish for want of it. I do not want to make myself out worse than I am; it grieves me too to see them drooping. But nothing that I do brings me happiness – at most it moderates my fears. You ask what I am afraid of? – of everything, everything that can happen to me, for I have no reason to look forward to anything good. When there is a knock, it may be a

creditor; when people look at Arsinoe in the street, I seem to see dishonor lurking round her; when my father acts against the advice of the physician I feel as if we were standing already roofless in the open street. What is there that I can do with a happy mind? I certainly am not idle, still I envy the woman who can sit with her hands in her lap and be waited on by slaves, and if a golden treasure fell into my possession, I would never stir a finger again, and would sleep every day till the sun was high and make slaves look after my father and the children. My life is sheer misery. If ever we see better days I shall be astonished, and before I have got over my astonishment it will all be over."

The sculptor felt a cold chill, and his heart which had opened wide to his old playfellow shrank again within him. Before he could find the right words of encouragement which he sought, they heard in the hall, where the workmen and slaves were sleeping, the blast of a trumpet intended to awake them. Selene started, drew her mantle more closely round her, begged Pollux to take care of her father, and to hide the wine-jar which was standing near him from the work-people and then, forgetting her lamp, she went hastily toward the door by which she had entered. Pollux hurried after her to light the way and while he accompanied her as far as the door of her rooms, by his warm and urgent words which appealed wonderfully to her heart, he extracted from her a promise to stand once more in her mantle as his model.

A quarter of an hour later the steward was safe in bed and still sleeping soundly, while Pollux, who had stretched himself on a mattress behind his screen, could not for a long time cease to think of the pale girl with her benumbed soul. At last sleep overcame him too, and a sweet dream showed him pretty little Arsinoe, who but for him must infallibly have been killed by the Numidian's restive horse, taking away her sister Selene's almond-cake and giving it to him. The pale girl submitted quietly to the robbery and only smiled coldly and silently to herself.

CHAPTER VI.

Alexandria was in the greatest excitement.

The Emperor's visit now immediately impending had tempted the busy hive of citizens away from the common round of life in which, day after day,—swarming, hurrying, pushing each other on, or running each other down—they raced for bread and for the means of filling their hours of leisure with pleasures and amusements. The unceasing wheel of industry to-day had pause in the factories, workshops, storehouses and courts of justice, for all sorts and conditions of men were inspired by the same desire to celebrate Hadrian's visit with unheard-of splendor. All that the citizens could command of inventive skill, of wealth, and of beauty was called forth to be displayed in the games and processions which were to fill up a number of days. The richest of the heathen citizens had undertaken the management of the pieces to be performed in the Theatre, of the mock fight on the lake, and of the sanguinary games in the Amphitheatre; and so great was the number of opulent persons that many more were prepared to pay for smaller projects, for which there was no opening. Nevertheless the arrangements for certain portions of the procession, in which even the less wealthy were to take a share, the erection of the building in the Hippodrome, the decorations in the streets, and the preparations for entertaining the Roman visitors absorbed sums so large that they seemed extravagant even to the prefect Titianus, who was accustomed to see his fellow-officials in Rome squander millions.

As the Emperor's viceroy it behoved him to give his assent to all that was planned to feast his sovereign's eye and ear. On the whole, he left the citizens of the great town free to act as they would; but he had, more than once, to exert a decided opposition to their overdoing the thing; for though the Emperor might be able to endure a vast amount of pleasure, what the Alexandrians originally proposed to provide for him to see and hear would have exhausted the most indefatigable human energy.

That which gave the greatest trouble, not merely to him, but also to the masters of the revels chosen by the municipality, were the never-dormant hostility between the heathen and the Jewish sections of the inhabitants, and the processions, since no division

chose to come last, nor would any number be satisfied to be only the third or the fourth.

It was from a meeting, where his determined intervention had at last brought all these preliminaries to a decision beyond appeal, that Titianus proceeded to the Caesareum to pay the Empress the visit which she expected of him daily. He was glad to have come to some conclusion, at any rate provisionally, with regard to these matters, for six days had slipped away since the works had been begun in the palace of Lochias, and Hadrian's arrival was nearing rapidly.

He found Sabina, as usual, on her divan, but on this occasion the Empress was sitting upright on her cushions. She seemed quite to have got over the fatigues of the sea-voyage, and in token that she felt better she had applied more red to her cheeks and lips than three days ago, and because she was to receive a visit from the sculptors, Papias and Aristeas, she had had her hair arranged as it was worn in the statue of Venus Victrix, with whose attributes she had, five years previously—though not, it is true, without some resistance—been represented in marble. When a copy of this statue had been erected in Alexandria, an evil tongue had made a speech which was often repeated among the citizens.

"This Aphrodite is triumphant to be sure, for all who see her make haste to fly; she should be called Cypris the scatterer."

Titianus was still under the excitement of the embittered squabbles and unpleasing exhibitions of character at which he had just been present when he entered the presence of the Empress, whom he found in a small room with no one but the chamberlain and a few ladies-in-waiting. To the prefect's respectful inquiries after her health, she shrugged her shoulders and replied:

"How should I be? If I said well it would not be true; if I said ill, I should be surrounded with pitiful faces, which are not pleasant to look at. After all we must endure life. Still, the innumerable doors in these rooms will be the death of me if I am compelled to remain here long."

Titianus glanced at the two doors of the room in which the Empress was sitting, and began to express his regrets at their bad

condition, which had escaped his notice; but Sabina interrupted him, saying:

"You men never do observe what hurts us women. Our Verus is the only man who can feel and understand—who can divine it, as I might say. There are five and thirty doors in my rooms! I had them counted-five and thirty! If they were not old and made of valuable wood I should really believe they had been made as a practical joke on me."

"Some of them might be supplemented with curtains."

"Oh! never mind—a few miseries, more or less in any life do not matter. Are the Alexandrians ready at last with their preparations?"

"I am sure I hope so," said the prefect with a sigh. "They are bent on giving all that is their best; but in the endeavor to outvie each other every one is at war with his neighbor, and I still feel the effects of the odious wrangling which I have had to listen to for hours, and that I have been obliged to check again and again with threats of 'I shall be down upon you.'"

"Indeed," said the Empress with a pinched smile, as if she had heard some thing that pleased her.

"Tell me something about your meeting. I am bored to death, for Verus, Balbilla and the others have asked for leave of absence that they may go to inspect the work doing at Lochias; I am accustomed to find that people would rather be any where than with me. Can I wonder then that my presence is not enough to enable a friend of my husband's to forget a little annoyance—the impression left by some slight misunderstanding? But my fugitives are a long time away; there must be a great deal that is beautiful to be seen at Lochias."

The prefect suppressed his annoyance and did not express his anxiety lest the architect and his assistants should be disturbed, but began in the tone of the messenger in a tragedy:

"The first quarrel was fought over the order of the procession."

"Sit a little farther off," said Sabina pressing her jewelled right-hand on her ear, as if she were suffering a pain in it. The prefect colored slightly, but he obeyed the desire of Caesar's wife and went on with his story, pitching his voice in a somewhat lower key than before:

"Well, it was about the procession, that the first breach of the peace arose."

"I have heard that once already," replied the lady, yawning. "I like processions."

"But," said the prefect, a man in the beginning of the sixties – and he spoke with some irritation, "here as in Rome and every where else, where they are not controlled by the absolute will of a single individual, processions are the children of strife, and they bring forth strife, even when they are planned in honor of a festival of Peace."

"It seems to annoy you that they should be organized in honor of Hadrian?"

"You are in jest; it is precisely because I care particularly that they should be carried out with all possible splendor, that I am troubling myself about them in person, even as to details; and to my great satisfaction I have been able even to subdue the most obstinate; still it was scarcely my duty –"

"I fancied that you not only served the state but were my husband's friend."

"I am proud to call myself so."

"Aye – Hadrian has many, very many friends since he has worn the purple. Have you got over your ill temper Titianus? You must have become very touchy. Poor Julia has an irritable husband!"

"She is less to be pitied than you think," said Titianus with dignity, "for my official duties so entirely claim my time that she is not often likely to know what disturbs me. If I have forgotten to dissimulate my vexation before you, I beg you to pardon me, and to attribute it to my zeal in securing a worthy reception for Hadrian."

"As if I had scolded you! But to return to your wife—as I understand she shares the fate I endure. We poor women have nothing to expect from our husbands, but the stale leavings that remain after business has absorbed the rest! But your story—go on with your story."

"The worst moments I had at all were given me by the bad feeling of the Jews towards the other citizens."

"I hate all these infamous sects—Jews, Christians or whatever they are called! Do they dare to grudge their money for the reception of Caesar?"

"On the contrary Alabarchos, their wealthy chief, has offered to defray all the cost of the Naumachia and his co-religionist Artemion."

"Well, take their money, take their money."

"The Greek citizens feel that they are rich enough to pay all the expenses, which will amount to many millions of sesterces, and they wish to exclude the Jews, if possible, from all the processions and games."

"They are perfectly right."

"But allow me to ask you whether it is just to prohibit half the population of Alexandria doing honor to their Emperor!"

"Oh! Hadrian will, with pleasure, dispense with the honor. Our conquering heroes have thought it redounded to their glory to be called Africanus, Germanicus and Dacianus, but Titus refused to be called Judaicus when he had destroyed Jerusalem."

"That was because he dreaded the remembrance of the rivers of blood which had to be shed in order to break the fearfully obstinate resistance of that nation. The besieged had to be conquered limb by limb, and finger by finger, before they would make up their minds to yield."

"Again you are speaking half poetically, or have these people elected you as their advocate?"

"I know them and make every effort to secure them justice, just as much as any other citizen of this country which I govern in the name of the Empire and of Caesar. They pay taxes as well as the rest of the Alexandrians; nay more, for there are many wealthy men among them who are honorably prominent in trade, in professions, learning and art, and I therefore mete to them the same measure as to the other inhabitants of this city. Their superstition offends me no more than that of the Egyptians."

"But it really is above all measure. At Aelia Capitolina which Hadrian had decorated with several buildings, they refused to sacrifice to the statues of Zeus and Hera. That is to say they scorn to do homage to me and my husband!"

"They are forbidden to worship any other divinity than their own God. Aelia rose up on the very soil where their ruined Jerusalem had stood, and the statues of which you speak stand in their holy places."

"What has that to do with us?"

"You know that even Caius—[Caligula]—could not reduce them by placing his statue in the Holy of Holies of their temple; and Petronius, the governor, had to confess that to subdue them meant to exterminate them."

"Then let them meet with the fate they deserve, let them be exterminated!" cried Sabina.

"Exterminated?" asked the prefect. "In Alexandria they constitute nearly half of the citizens, that is to say several hundred thousand of obedient subjects, exterminated!"

"So many?" asked the Empress in alarm. "But that is frightful. Omnipotent Jove! supposing that mass were to revolt against us! No one ever told me of this danger. In Cyrenaica, and at Salamis in Cyprus, they killed their fellow-citizens by thousands."

"They had been provoked to extremities and they were superior to their oppressors in force."

"And in their own land one revolt after another is organized."

"By reason of the sacrifices of which we were speaking."

"Tinnius Rufus is at present the legate in Palestine. He has a horribly shrill voice—but he looks like a man who will stand no trifling, and will know how to quell the venomous brood."

"Possibly" replied Titianus. "But I fear that he will never attain his end by mere severity; and if he should he will have depopulated his province."

"There are already too many men in the empire."

"But never enough good and useful citizens."

"Outrageous contemners of the gods and useless citizens!"

"Here in Alexandria, where many have accommodated themselves to Greek habits of life and thought, and where all have adopted the Greek tongue, they are undoubtedly good citizens, and wholly devoted to Caesar."

"Do they take part in the rejoicings?"

"Yes, as far as the Greek citizens will allow them."

"And the arrangement of the water-fight?"

"That will not be given over to them, but Artemion will be permitted to supply the wild beasts for the games in the Amphitheatre."

"And he was not avaricious about it?"

"So far from it that you will be astonished. The man must know the secret of Midas, of turning stones into gold."

"And are there many like him among your Jews?"

"A good number."

"Then I wish that they would attempt a revolt, for if this led to the destruction of the rich ones, their gold, at any rate, would remain."

"Meanwhile I will try and keep them alive, as being good rate-payers."

"And does Hadrian share your wish?"

"Without doubt."

"Your successor may perhaps bring him to another mind."

"He always acts according to his own judgment, and for the present I am in office," answered Titianus haughtily.

"And may the God of the Jews long preserve you in it!" retorted Sabina scornfully.

CHAPTER VII.

Before Titianus could open his lips to reply, the principal door of the room was opened cautiously but widely, and the praetor Lucius Aurelius Verus, his wife Domitia Lucilla, the young Balbilla and, last of all, Annaeus Florus, the historian, entered. All four were in the best spirits, and immediately after the preliminary greetings, were eager to report what they had seen at Lochias; but Sabina waved silence with her hand, and breathed out:

"No, no; not at present. I feel quite exhausted. This long waiting, and then—my smelling-bottle, Verus. Leukippe, bring me a cup of water with some fruit-syrup—but not so sweet as usual."

The Greek slave-girl hastened to execute this command, and the Empress, as she waved an elegant bottle carved in onyx, under her nostrils, went on:

"It is a little eternity—is it not, Titianus, that we have been discussing state affairs? You all know how frank I am and that I cannot be silent when I meet with perverse opinions. While you have been away I have had much to hear and to say; it would have exhausted the strength of the strongest. I only wonder you don't find me more worn out, for what can be more excruciating for a woman, that to be obliged to enter the lists for manly decisiveness against a man who is defending a perfectly antagonistic view? Give me water, Leukippe."

While the Empress drank the syrup with tiny sips twitching her thin lips over it, Verus went up to the prefect and asked him in an under tone:

"You were a long while alone with Sabina, cousin?"

"Yes," replied Titianus, and he set his teeth as he spoke and clenched his fist so hard that the praetor could not misunderstand, and replied in a low voice:

"She is much to be pitied, and particularly just now she has hours—"

"What sort of hours?" asked Sabina taking the cup from her lips.

"These," replied Verus quickly, "in which I am not obliged to occupy myself in the senate or with the affairs of state. To whom do I owe them but to you?"

With these words he approached the mature beauty, and taking the goblet out of her hand with affectionate subservience, as a son might wait on his honored and suffering mother, he gave it to the Greek slave. The Empress bowed her thanks again and again to the praetor with much affability, and then said, with a slight infusion of cheerfulness in her tones:

"Well – and what is there to be seen at Lochias?"

"Wonderful things," answered Balbilla readily and clasping her little hands.

"A swarm of bees, a colony of ants, have taken possession of the palace. Hands black, white and brown – more than we could count, are busy there and of all the hundreds of workmen which are astir there, not one got in the way of another, for one little man orders and manages them all, just as the prescient wisdom of the gods guides the stars through the 'gracious and merciful night' so that they may never push or run against each other."

"I must put in a word on behalf of Pontius the architect," interposed Verus. "He is a man of at least average height."

"Let us admit it to satisfy your sense of justice," returned Balbilla. "Let us admit it – a man of average height, with a papyrus-roll in his right-hand and a stylus in the left, controls them. Now, does my way of stating it please you better?"

"It can never displease me," answered the praetor. "Let Balbilla go on with her story," commanded the Empress.

"What we saw was chaos," continued the girl, "still in the confusion we could divine the elements of an orderly creation in the future; nay, it was even visible to the eye."

"And not unfrequently stumbled over with the foot," laughed the praetor. "If it had been dark, and if the laborers had been worms, we

must have trodden half of them to death – they swarmed so all over the pavement."

"What were they doing?"

"Every thing," answered Balbilla quickly. "Some were polishing damaged pieces, others were laying new bits of mosaic in the empty places from which it had formerly been removed, and skilled artists were painting colored figures on smooth surfaces of plaster. Every pillar and every statue was built round with a scaffolding reaching to the ceiling on which men were climbing and crowding each other just as the sailors climb into the enemy's ships in the Naumachia."

The girl's pretty cheeks had flushed with her eager reminiscence of what she had seen, and, as she spoke, moving her hands with expressive gestures, the tall structure of curls which crowned her small head shook from side to side.

"Your description begins to be quite poetical," said the Empress, interrupting her young companion. "Perhaps the Muse may even inspire you with verse."

"All the Pierides," said the praetor, "are represented at Lochias. We saw eight of them, but the ninth, that patroness of the arts, who protects the stargazer, the lofty Urania, has at present, in place of a head – allow me to leave it to you to guess divine Sabina?"

"Well – what?"

"A wisp of straw."

"Alas," sighed the Empress. "What do you say, Florus? Are there not among your learned and verse spinning associates certain men who resemble this Urania?"

"At any rate," replied Florus, "we are more prudent than the goddess, for we conceal the contents of our heads in the hard nut of the skull, and under a more or less abundant thatch of hair. Urania displays her straw openly."

"That almost sounds," said Balbilla laughing and pointing to her abundant locks, "as if I especially needed to conceal what is covered by my hair."

"Even the Lesbian swan was called the fair-haired," replied Florus.

"And you are our Sappho," said the praetor's wife, drawing the girl's arm to her bosom.

"Really! and will you not write in verse all that you have seen to-day?" asked the Empress.

Balbilla looked down on the ground a minute and then said brightly: "It might inspire me, everything strange that I meet with prompts me to write verse."

"But follow the counsel of Apollonius the philologer," advised Florus. "You are the Sappho of our day, and therefore you should write in the ancient Aeolian dialect and not Attic Greek." Verus laughed, and the Empress, who never was strongly moved to laughter, gave a short sharp giggle, but Balbilla said eagerly:

"Do you think that I could not acquire it and do so? To-morrow morning I will begin to practise myself in the old Aeolian forms."

"Let it alone," said Domitia Lucilla; "your simplest songs are always the prettiest."

"No one shall laugh at me!" declared Balbilla pertinaciously. "In a few weeks I will know how to use the Aeolian dialect, for I can do anything I am determined to do – anything, anything."

"What a stubborn little head we have under our curls!" exclaimed the Empress, raising a graciously threatening finger.

"And what powers of apprehension," added Florus.

"Her master in language and metre told me his best pupil was a woman of noble family and a poetess besides – Balbilla in short."

The girl colored at the words, and said with pleased excitement:

"Are you flattering me or did Hephaestion really say that?"

"Woe is me!" cried the praetor, "for Hephaestion was my master too, and I am one of the masculine scholars beaten by Balbilla. But it is no news to me, for the Alexandrian himself told me the same thing as Florus."

"You follow Ovid and she Sappho," said Florus; "you write in Latin and she in Greek. Do you still always carry Ovid's love-poems about with you?"

"Always," replied Verus, "as Alexander did his Homer."

"And out of respect for his master your husband endeavors, by the grace of Venus, to live like him," added Sabina, addressing herself to Domitia Lucilla.

The tall and handsome Roman lady only shrugged her shoulders slightly in answer to this not very kindly-meant speech; but Verus said, while he picked up Sabina's silken coverlet, and carefully spread it over her knees:

"My happiest fortune consists in this: that Venus Victrix favors me. But we are not yet at the end of our story; our Lesbian swan met at Lochias with another rare bird, an artist in statuary."

"How long have the sculptors been reckoned among birds?" asked Sabina. "At the utmost can they be compared to woodpeckers."

"When they work in wood," laughed Verus. "Our artist, however, is an assistant of Papias, and handles noble materials in the grand style. On this occasion, however, he is building a statue out of a very queer mixture of materials."

"Verus may very well call our new acquaintance a bird," interrupted Balbilla, "for as we approached the screen behind which he is working he was whistling a tune with his lips, so pure and cheery, and loud, that it rang through the empty hall above all the noise of the workmen. A nightingale does not pipe more sweetly. We stood still to listen till the merry fellow, who had no idea that we were by, was silent again; and then hearing the architect's voice, he called to him over the screen. 'Now we must clap Urania's head on; I

saw it clearly in my mind and would have had it finished with a score of touches, but Papias said he had one in the workshop. I am curious to see what sort of a sugarplum face, turned out by the dozen, he will stick on my torso—which will please me, at any rate, for a couple of days. Find me a good model for the bust of the Sappho I am to restore. A thousand gadflies are buzzing in my brain—I am so tremendously excited! What I am planning now will come to something!"

Balbilla, as she spoke the last words, tried to mimic a man's deep voice, and seeing the Empress smile she went on eagerly.

"It all came out so fresh, from a heart full to bursting of happy vigorous creative joy, that it quite fired me, and we all went up to the screen and begged the sculptor to let us see his work."

"And you found?" asked Sabina.

"He positively refused to let us into his retreat," replied the praetor; "but Balbilla coaxed the permission out of him, and the tall young fellow seems to have really learnt something. The fall of the drapery that covers the Muse's figure is perfectly thought out with reference to possibility—rich, broadly handled, and at the same time of surprising delicacy. Urania has drawn her mantle closely round her, as if to protect herself from the keen night-air while gazing at the stars. When he has finished his Muse, he is to repair some mutilated busts of women; he was fixing the head of a finished Berenice to-day, and I proposed to him to take Balbilla as the model for his Sappho."

"A good idea" said the Empress. "If the bust is successful I will take him with me to Rome."

"I will sit to him with pleasure," said the girl. "The bright young fellow took my fancy."

"And Balbilla his," added the praetor's wife; "he gazed at her as a marvel, and she promised him that, with your permission, she would place her face at his disposal for three hours to-morrow."

"He begins with the head," interposed Verus. "What a happy man is an artist such as he! He may turn about her head, or lay her peplum in folds without reproof or repulse, and to-day when we had to get past bogs of plaster, and lakes of wet paint, she scarcely picked up the hem of her dress, and never once allowed me—who would so willingly have supported her—to lift her over the worst places."

Balbilla reddened and said angrily:

"Really Verus, in good earnest, I will not allow you to speak to me in that way, so now you know it once for all; I have so little liking for what is not clean that I find it quite easy to avoid it without assistance."

"You are too severe," interrupted the Empress with a hideous smile. "Do not you think Domitia Lucilla, that she ought to allow your husband to be of service to her?"

"If the Empress thinks it right and fitting," replied the lady raising her shoulders, and with an expressive movement of her hands. Sabina quite took her meaning, and suppressing another yawn she said angrily:

"In these days we must be indulgent toward a husband who has chosen Ovid's amatory poems as his faithful companion. What is the matter Titianus?"

While Balbilla had been relating her meeting with the sculptor Pollux, a chamberlain had brought in to the prefect an important letter, admitting of no delay. The state official had withdrawn to the farther side of the room with it, had broken the strong seal and had just finished reading it, when the Empress asked her question.

Nothing of what went on around her escaped Sabina's little eyes, and she had observed that while the governor was considering the document addressed to him he had moved uneasily. It must contain something of importance.

"An urgent letter," replied Titianus, "calls me home. I must take my leave, and I hope ere long to be able to communicate to you something agreeable."

"What does that letter contain?"

"Important news from the provinces," said Titianus.

"May I inquire what?"

"I grieve to say that I must answer in the negative. The Emperor expressly desired that this matter should be kept secret. Its settlement demands the promptest haste, and I am therefore unfortunately obliged to quit you immediately."

Sabina returned the prefect's parting salutations with icy coldness and immediately desired to be conducted to her private rooms to dress herself for supper.

Balbilla escorted her, and Florus betook himself to the "Olympian table," the famous eating-house kept by Lycortas, of whom he had been told wonders by the epicures at Rome.

When Verus was alone with his wife he went up in a friendly manner and said:

"May I drive you home again?"

Domitia Lucilla had thrown herself on a couch, and covered her face with her hands, and she made no reply. "May I?" repeated the praetor. As his wife persisted in her silence, he went nearer to her, laid his hand on her slender fingers that concealed her face, and said:

"I believe you are angry with me!" She pushed away his hand, with a slight movement, and said: "Leave me."

"Yes, unfortunately I must leave you. Business takes me into the city and I will —"

"You will let the young Alexandrians, with whom you revelled through the night, introduce you to new fair ones — I know it."

"There are in fact women here of incredible charm," replied Verus quite coolly. "White, brown, copper-colored, black—and all delightful in their way. I could never be tired of admiring them."

"And your wife?" asked Lucilla, facing him, sternly. "My wife? yes, my fairest. Wife is a solemn title of honor and has nothing to do with the joys of life. How could I mention your name in the same hour with those of the poor children who help me to beguile an idle hour."

Domitia Lucilla was used to such phrases, and yet on this occasion they gave her a pang. But she concealed it, and crossing her arms she said resolutely and with dignity:

"Go your way—through life with your Ovid, and your gods of love, but do not attempt to crush innocence under the wheels of your chariot."

"Balbilla do you mean," asked the praetor with a loud laugh. "She knows how to take care of herself and has too much spirit to let herself get entangled in erotics. The little son of Venus has nothing to say to two people who are such good friends as she and I are."

"May I believe you?"

"My word for it, I ask nothing of her but a kind word," cried he, frankly offering his hand to his wife. Lucilla only touched it lightly with her fingers and said:

"Send me back to Rome. I have an unutterable longing to see my children, particularly the boys."

"It cannot be," said Verus. "Not at present; but in a few weeks, I hope."

"Why not sooner?"

"Do not ask me."

"A mother may surely wish to know why she is separated from her baby in the cradle."

"That cradle is at present in your mother's house, and she is taking care of our little ones. Have patience, a little longer for that which I am striving after, for you, and for me, and not last, for our son, is so great, so stupendously great and difficult that it might well outweigh years of longing."

Verus spoke the last words in a low tone, but with a dignity which characterized him only in decisive moments, but his wife, even before he had done speaking, clasped his right-hand in both of hers and said in a low frightened voice:

"You aim at the purple?" He nodded assent.

"That is what it means then!"

"What?"

"Sabina and you —"

"Not on that account only; she is hard and sharp to others, but to me she has shown nothing but kindness, ever since I was a boy."

"She hates me."

"Patience, Lucilla; patience! The day is coming when the daughter of Nigrinus, the wife of Caesar, and the former Empress — but I will not finish. I am, as you know, warmly attached to Sabina, and sincerely wish the Emperor a long life."

"And he will adopt."

"Hush! — he is thinking of it, and his wife wishes It."

"Is it likely to happen soon?"

"Who can tell at this moment what Caesar may decide on in the very next hour. But probably his decision may be made on the thirtieth of December."

"Your birthday."

"He asked what day it was, and he is certainly casting my horoscope, for the night when my mother bore me —"

"The stars then are to seal our fate?"

"Not they alone. Hadrian must also be inclined to read them in my favor."

"How can I be of use to you?"

"Show yourself what you really are in your intercourse with the Emperor"

"I thank you for those words—and I beg you do not provoke me any more. If it might yet be something more than a mere post of honor to be the wife of Verus, I would not ask for the new dignity of becoming wife to Caesar."

"I will not go into the town to-day; I will stay with you. Now are you happy?"

"Yes, yes," cried she, and she raised her arm to throw it round her husband's neck, but he held her aside and whispered:

"That will do. The idyllic is out of place in the race for the purple."

CHAPTER VIII.

Titianus had ordered his charioteer to drive at once to Lochias. The road led past the prefect's palace, his residence on the Bruchiom, and he paused there; for the letter which lay hidden in the folds of his toga, contained news, which, within a few hours, might put him under the necessity of not returning home till the following morning. Without allowing himself to be detained by the officials, subalterns, or lictors, who were awaiting his return to make communications, or to receive his orders, he went straight through the ante-room and the large public rooms for men, to find his wife in the women's apartments which looked upon the garden. He met her at the door of her room, for she had heard his step approaching and came out to receive him.

"I was not mistaken," said the matron with sincere pleasure. "How pleasant that you have been released so early to-day. I did not expect you till supper was over."

"I have come only to go again," replied Titianus, entering his wife's room. "Have some bread brought to me and a cup of mixed wine; why—really! here stands all I want ready as if I had ordered it. You are right, I was with Sabina a shorter time than usual; but she exerted herself in that short time to utter as many sour words as if we had been talking for half a day. And in five minutes I must quit you again, till when?—the gods alone know when I shall return. It is hard even to speak the words, but all our trouble and care, and all poor Pontius' zeal and pains-taking labor are in vain."

As he spoke the prefect threw himself on a couch; his wife handed him the refreshment he had asked for, and said, as she passed her hand over his grey hair:

"Poor man! Has Hadrian then determined after all to inhabit the Caesareum?"

"No. Leave us, Syra—you shall see directly. Please read me Caesar's letter once more. Here it is." Julia unfolded the papyrus, which was of elegant quality, and began:

"Hadrian to his friend Titianus, the Governor of Egypt. The deepest secrecy—Hadrian greets Titianus, as he has so often done for years at the beginning of disagreeable business letters, and only with half his heart. But to-morrow he hopes to greet the dear friend of his youth, his prudent vicegerent, not merely with his whole soul, but with hand and tongue. And now to be more explicit, as follows: I come to-morrow morning, the fifteenth of December, towards evening, to Alexandria, with none but Antinous, the slave Mastor, and my private secretary, Phlegon. We land at Lochias, in the little harbor, and you will know my ship by a large silver star at the prow. If night should fall before I arrive there, three red lanterns at the end of the mast shall inform you of the friend that is approaching. I have sent home the learned and witty men whom you sent to meet me, in order to detain me, and gain time for the restoration of the old nest in which I had a fancy to roost with Minerva's birds—which have not, I hope, all been driven out of it—in order that Sabina and her following may not lack entertainment, nor the famous gentlemen themselves be unnecessarily disturbed in their labors. I need them not. If perchance it was not you who sent them, I ask your pardon. An error in this matter would certainly involve some humiliation, for it is easier to explain what has happened than to foresee what is to come. Or is the reverse the truth? I will indemnify the learned men for their useless journey by disputing this question with them and their associates in the Museum. The rapid movement to which the philologer was prompted on my account will prolong his existence; he bristles with learning at the tip of every hair, and he sits still more than is good for him.

"We shall arrive in modest disguise and will sleep at Lochias; you know that I have rested more than once on the bare earth, and, if need be, can sleep as well on a mat as on a couch. My pillow follows at my heels—my big dog, which you know; and some little room, where I can meditate undisturbed on my designs for next year, can no doubt be found.

"I entreat you to keep my secret strictly. To none—man nor woman—and I beseech you as urgently as friend or Caesar ever besought a favor—let the least suspicion of my arrival be known. Nor must the smallest preparation betray whom it is you receive. I

cannot command so dear a friend as Titianus, but I appeal to his heart to carry out my wishes.

"I rejoice to see you again; what delight I shall find in the whirl of confusion that I hope to find at Lochias. You shall take me to see the artists, who are, no doubt, swarming in the old castle, as the architect Claudius Venator from Rome, who is to assist Pontius with his advice. But this Pontius, who carried out such fine works for Herodes Atticus, the rich Sophist, met me at his house, and will certainly recognize me. Tell him, therefore, what I propose doing. He is a serious and trustworthy man, not a chatterbox or scatter-brained simpleton who loses his head. Thus you may take him into the secret, but not till my vessel is in sight. May all be well with you."

"Well, what do you say to that?" asked Titianus, taking the letter from his wife's hand. "Is it not more than vexatious – our work was going on so splendidly."

"But," said Julia thoughtfully and with a meaning smile. "Perhaps it might not have been finished in time. As matters now stand it need not be complete, and Hadrian will see the good intention all the same. I am glad about the letter, for it takes a great responsibility off your otherwise overloaded shoulders."

"You always see the right side," cried the prefect. "It is well that I came home, for I can await Caesar with a much lighter heart. Let me lock up the letter, and then farewell. This parting is for some hours from you, and from all peace for many days."

Titianus gave her his hand. She held it firmly and said:

"Before you go I must confess to you that I am very proud."

"You have every right to be."

"But you have not said a word to me about keeping silence."

"Because you have kept other tests – still, to be sure, you are a woman, and a very handsome one besides."

"An old grandmother, with grey hair!"

"And still more upright and more charming than a thousand of the most admired younger beauties."

"You are trying to convert my pride into vanity, in my old age."

"No, no! I was only looking at you with an examining eye, as our talk led me to do, and I remembered that Sabina had lamented that handsome Julia was not looking well. But where is there another woman of your age with such a carriage, such unwrinkled features, so clear a brow, such deep kind eyes, such beautifully-polished arms —"

"Be quiet," exclaimed his wife. "You make me blush."

"And may I not be proud that a grandmother, who is a Roman, as my wife is, can find it so easy to blush? You are quite different from other women."

"Because you are different from other men."

"You are a flatterer; since all our children have left us, it is as if we were newly married again."

"Ah! the apple of discord is removed."

"It is always over what he loves best that man is most prompt to be jealous. But now, once more, farewell."

Titianus kissed his wife's forehead and hurried towards the door; Julia called him back and said:

"One thing at any rate we can do for Caesar. I send food every day down to the architect at Lochias, and to-day there shall be three times the quantity."

"Good; do so."

"Farewell, then."

"And we shall meet again, when it shall please the gods and the Emperor."

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When the prefect reached the appointed spot, no vessel with a silver star was to be seen.

The sun went down and no ship with three red lanterns was visible.

The harbor-master, into whose house Titianus went, was told that he expected a great architect from Rome, who was to assist Pontius with his counsel in the works at Lochias, and he thought it quite intelligible that the governor should do a strange artist the honor of coming to meet him; for the whole city was well aware of the incredible haste and the lavish outlay of means that were being given to the restoration of the ancient palace of the Ptolemies as a residence for the Emperor.

While he was waiting, Titianus remembered the young sculptor Pollux, whose acquaintance he had made, and his mother in the pretty little gate-house. Well disposed towards them as he felt, he sent at once to old Doris, desiring her not to retire to rest early that evening, since he, the prefect, would be going late to Lochias.

"Tell her, too, as from yourself and not from me," Titianus instructed the messenger, "that I may very likely look in upon her. She may light up her little room and keep it in order."

No one at Lochias had the slightest suspicion of the honor which awaited the old palace.

After Verus had quitted it with his wife and Balbilla, and when he had again been at work for about an hour the sculptor Pollux came out of his nook, stretching himself, and called out to Pontius, who was standing on a scaffold:

"I must either rest or begin upon something new. One cures me of fatigue as much as the other. Do you find it so?"

"Yes, just as you do," replied the architect, as he continued to direct the work of the slave-masons, who were fixing a new Corinthian capital in the place of an old one which had been broken.

"Do not disturb yourself," Pollux cried up to him. "I only request you to tell my master Papias when he comes here with Gabinius, the

dealer in antiquities, that he will find me at the rotunda that you inspected with me yesterday. I am going to put the head on to the Berenice; my apprentice must long since have completed his preparations; but the rascal came into the world with two left-hands, and as he squints with one eye everything that is straight looks crooked to him, and—according to the law of optics—the oblique looks straight. At any rate, he drove the peg which is to support the new head askew into the neck, and as no historian has recorded that Berenice ever had her neck on one side, like the old color-grinder there, I must see to its being straight myself. In about half an hour, as I calculate, the worthy Queen will no longer be one of the headless women."

"Where did you get the new head?" asked Pontius. "From the secret archives of my memory," replied Pollux. "Have you seen it?"

"Yes."

"And do you like it?"

"Very much."

"Then it is worthy to live," sang the sculptor, and, as he quitted the hall, he waved his left-hand to the architect, and with his right-hand stuck a pink, which he had picked in the morning, behind his ear.

At the rotunda his pupil had done his business better than his master could have expected, but Pollux was by no means satisfied with his own arrangements. His work, like several others standing on the same side of the platform, turned its back on the steward's balcony, and the only reason why he had parted with the portrait of Selene's mother, of which he was so fond, was that his playfellow might gaze at the face whenever she chose. He found, however, to his satisfaction, that the busts were held in their places on their tall pedestals only by their own weight, and he then resolved to alter the historical order of the portrait-heads by changing their places, and to let the famous Cleopatra turn her back upon the palace, so that his favorite bust might look towards it.

In order to carry out this purpose then and there, he called some slaves up to help him in the alteration. This gave rise, more than

once, to a warning cry, and the loud talking and ordering on this spot, for so many years left solitary and silent, attracted an inquirer, who, soon after the apprentice had begun his work, had shown herself on the balcony, but who had soon retreated after casting a glance at the dirty lad, splashed from head to foot with plaster. This time, however, she remained to watch, following every movement of Pollux as he directed the slaves; though, all the time and whatever he was doing, he turned his back upon her.

At last the portrait-head had found its right position, shrouded still in a cloth to preserve it from the marks of workmen's hands. With a deep breath the artist turned full on the steward's house, and immediately a clear merry voice called out:

"What, tall Pollux! It really is tall Pollux; how glad I am!"

With these words the girl on the balcony loudly clapped her hands; and as the sculptor hailed her in return, and shouted:

"And you are little Arsinoe, eternal gods! What the little thing has come to!" She stood on tip-toe to seem taller, nodded at him pleasantly, and laughed out: "I have not done growing yet; but as for you, you look quite dignified with the beard on your chin, and your eagle's nose. Selene did not tell me till to-day that you were living down there with the others."

The artist's eyes were fixed on the girl, as if spellbound. There are poetic natures in which the imagination immediately transmutes every new thing that strikes the eyes or the intelligence, into a romance, or rapidly embodies it in verse; and Pollux, like many of his calling, could never set his eyes on a fine human form and face, without instantly associating them with his art.

"A Galatea — a Galatea without an equal!" thought he, as he stood with his eyes fixed on Arsinoe's face and figure. "Just as if she had this instant risen from the sea — that form is just as fresh, and joyous, and healthy; and her little curls wave back from her brow as if they were still floating on the water; and now as she stoops, how full and supple in every movement. It is like a daughter of Nereus following the line of the waves as they rise into crests and dip again into watery valleys. She is like Selene and her mother in the shape of her

head and the Greek cut of her face, but the elder sister is like the statue of Prometheus before it had a soul, and Arsinoe is like the Master's work after the celestial fire coursed through her veins."

The artist had felt and thought all this out in a few seconds, but the girl found her speechless admirer's silence too long, and exclaimed impatiently:

"You have not yet offered me any proper greeting. What are you doing down there?"

"Look here," he replied, lifting the cloth from the portrait, which was a striking likeness.

Arsinoe leaned far over the parapet of the balcony, shaded her eyes with her hand and was silent for more than a minute. Then she suddenly cried out loudly and exclaiming:

"Mother — it is my mother!" She flew into the room behind her.

"Now she will call her father and destroy all poor Selene's comfort," thought Pollux, as he pushed the heavy marble bust on which his gypsum head was fixed, into its right place.

"Well, let him come. We are the masters here now, and Keraunus dare not touch the Emperor's property." He crossed his arms and stood gazing at the bust, muttering to himself:

"Patchwork — miserable patchwork. We are cobbling up a robe for the Emperor out of mere rags; we are upholsterers and not artists. If it were only for Hadrian, and not for Diotima and her children, not another finger would I stir in the place."

The path from the steward's residence led through some passages and up a few steps to the rotunda, on which the sculptor was standing, but in little more than a minute from Arsinoe's disappearance from the balcony she was by his side. With a heightened color she pushed the sculptor away from his work and put herself in the place where he had been standing, to be able to gaze at her leisure at the beloved features. Then she exclaimed again:

"It is mother – mother!" and the bright tears ran over her cheeks, without restraint from the presence of the artist, or the laborers and slaves whom she had flown past on her way, and who stared at her with as much alarm as if she were possessed.

Pollux did not disturb her. His heart was softened as he watched the tears running down the cheeks of this light-hearted child, and he could not help reflecting that goodness was indeed well rewarded when it could win such tender and enduring love as was cherished for the poor dead mother on the pedestal before him.

After looking for some time at the sculptor's work Arsinoe grew calmer, and turning to Pollux she asked:

"Did you make it?"

"Yes," he replied, looking down.

"And entirely from memory?"

"To be sure."

"Do you know what?"

"Well."

"This shows that the Sibyl at the festival of Adonis was right when she sang in the Jalemus that the gods did half the work of the artist."

"Arsinoe!" cried Pollux, for her words made him feel as if a hot spring were seething in his heart, and he gratefully seized her hand; but she drew it away, for her sister Selene had come out on the balcony and was calling her.

It was for his elder playfellow and not for Arsinoe that Pollux had set his work in this place, but, just now, her gaze fell like a disturbing chill on his excited mood.

"There stands your mother's portrait," he called up to the balcony in an explanatory tone, pointing to the bust.

"I see it," she replied coldly. "I will look at it presently more closely. Come up Arsinoe, father wants to speak to you."

Again Pollux stood alone.

As Selene withdrew into the room, she gently shook her pale head, and said to herself:

"'It was to be for me,' Pollux said; something for me, for once — and even this pleasure is spoilt."

CHAPTER IX.

The palace-steward, to whom Selene had called up his younger daughter, had just returned from the meeting of the citizens; and his old black slave, who always accompanied him when he went out, took the saffron-colored pallium from his shoulders, and from his head the golden circlet, with which he loved to crown his curled hair when he quitted the house. Keraunus still looked heated, his eyes seemed more prominent than usual and large drops of sweat stood upon his brow, when his daughter entered the room where he was. He absently responded to Arsinoe's affectionate greeting with a few unmeaning words, and before making the important communication he had to disclose to his daughters, he walked up and down before them for some time, puffing out his fat cheeks and crossing his arms. Selene was alarmed, and Arsinoe had long been out of patience, when at last he began:

"Have you heard of the festivals which are to be held in Caesar's honor?"

Selene nodded and her sister exclaimed:

"Of course we have! Have you secured places for us on the seats kept for the town council?"

"Do not interrupt me," the steward crossly ordered his daughter. "There is no question of staring at them. All the citizens are required to allow their daughters to take part in the grand things that are to be carried out, and we all were asked how many girls we had."

"And how are we to take part in the show?" cried Arsinoe, joyfully clapping her hands.

"I wanted to withdraw before the summons was proclaimed, but Tryphon, the shipwright, who has a workshop down by the King's Harbor, held me back and called out to the assembly that his sons said that I had two pretty young daughters. Pray how did he know that?"

With these words the steward lifted his grey brows and his face grew red to the roots of his hair. Selene shrugged her shoulders, but Arsinoe said:

"Tryphon's shipyard lies just below and we often pass it; but we do not know him or his sons. Have you ever seen them Selene? At any rate it is polite of him to speak of us as pretty."

"Nobody need trouble themselves about your appearance unless they want to ask my permission to marry you," replied the steward with a growl.

"And what did you say to Tryphon?" asked Selene.

"I did as I was obliged. Your father is steward of a palace which at present belongs to Rome and the Emperor; hence I must receive Hadrian as a guest in this, the dwelling of my fathers, and therefore I, less than any other citizen—cannot withhold my share in the honors which the city council has decreed shall be paid to him."

"Then we really may," said Arsinoe, and she went up to her father to give him a coaxing pat. But Keraunus was not in the humor to accept caresses; he pushed her aside with an angry: "Leave me alone," and then went on:

"If Hadrian were to ask me 'Where are your daughters on the occasion of the festival?' and if I had to reply, 'They were not among the daughters of the noble citizens,' it would be an insult to Caesar, to whom in fact I feel very well disposed. All this I had to consider, and I gave your names and promised to send you to the great Theatre to the assembly of young girls. There you will be met by the noblest matrons and maidens of the city, and the first painters and sculptors will decide to what part of the performance your air and appearance are best fitted."

"But, father," cried Selene, "we cannot show ourselves in such an assembly in our common garments, and where are we to find the money to buy new ones?"

"We can quite well show ourselves by any other girls, in clean, white woollen dresses, prettily smartened with fresh ribbons," declared Arsinoe, interposing between her father and her sister.

"It is not that which troubles me," replied the steward; "it is the costumes, the costumes! It is only the daughters of the poorer citizens who will be paid by the council, and it would be a disgrace to be numbered among the poor — you understand me, children."

"I will not take part in the procession," said Selene resolutely, but Arsinoe interrupted her.

"It is inconvenient and horrible to be poor, but it certainly is no disgrace! The most powerful Romans of ancient times, regarded it as honorable to die poor. Our Macedonian descent remains to us even if the state should pay for our costumes."

"Silence," cried the steward. "This is not the first time that I have detected this low vein of feeling in you. Even the noble may submit to the misfortunes entailed by poverty, but the advantages it brings with it he can never enjoy unless he resigns himself to being so no longer."

It had cost the steward much trouble to give due expression to this idea, which he did not recollect to have heard from another, which seemed new to him, and which nevertheless fully represented what he felt; and he slowly sank, with all the signs of exhaustion, into a couch which formed a divan round a side recess in the spacious sitting-room.

In this room Cleopatra might have held with Antony those banquets of which the unequalled elegance and refinement had been enhanced by every grace of art and wit. On the very spot where Keraunus now reclined the dining-couch of the famous lovers had probably stood; for, though the whole hall had a carefully-laid pavement, in this recess there was a mosaic of stones of various colors of such beauty and delicacy of finish that Keraunus had always forbidden his children to step upon it. This, it is true, was less out of regard for the fine work of art than because his father had always prohibited his doing so, and his father again before him. The picture represented the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, and the divan

only covered the outer border of the picture, which was decorated with graceful little Cupids.

Keraunus desired his daughter to fetch him a cup of wine, but she mixed the juice of the grape with a judicious measure of water. After he had half drunk the diluted contents of the goblet, with many faces of disgust, he said:

"Would you like to know what each of your dresses will cost if it is to be in no respect inferior to those of the others?"

"Well," said Arsinoe anxiously.

"About seven hundred drachmae;—[\$115 in 1880]—Philinus, the tailor, who is working for the theatre, tells me it will be impossible to do anything well for less."

"And you are really thinking of such insane extravagance," cried Selene. "We have no money, and I should like to know the man who would lend us any more."

The steward's younger daughter looked doubtfully at the tips of her fingers and was silent, but her eyes swimming in tears betrayed what she felt. Keraunus was rejoiced at the silent consent which Arsinoe seemed to accord to his desire to let her take part in the display at whatever cost. He forgot that he had just reproached her for her low sentiments, and said:

"The little one always feels what is right. As for you, Selene, I beg you to reflect seriously that I am your father, and that I forbid you to use this admonishing tone to me; you have accustomed yourself to it with the children and to them you may continue to use it. Fourteen hundred drachmae certainly, at the first thought of it, seems a very large sum, but if the material and the trimming required are bought with judgment, after the festival we may very likely sell it back to the man with profit."

"With profit!" cried Selene bitterly, "not half is to be got for old things—not a quarter! And even if you turn me out of the house—I will not help to drag us into deeper wretchedness; I will take no part in the performances."

The steward did not redden this time, he was not even violent; on the contrary, he simply raised his head and compared his daughters as they stood—not without an infusion of satisfaction. He was accustomed to love his daughters in his own way, Selene as the useful one, and Arsinoe as the beauty; and as on this occasion all he cared for was to satisfy his vanity, and as this end could be attained through his younger daughter alone, he said:

"Stay with the children then, for all I care. We will excuse you on the score of weak health, and certainly, child, you do look extremely pale. I would far rather find the means for the little one only."

Two sweet dimples again began to show in Arsinoe's cheeks, but Selene's lips were as white as her bloodless cheeks as she exclaimed:

"But, father—father! neither the baker nor the butcher has had a coin paid him for the last two months, and you will squander seven hundred drachmae!"

"Squander!" cried Keraunus indignantly, but still in a tone of disgust rather than anger. "I have already forbidden you to speak to me in that way. The richest of our noble youths will take part in the games; Arsinoe is handsome and perhaps one of them may choose her for his wife. And do you call it squandering, when a father does his utmost to find a suitable husband for his daughter. After all, what do you know of what I may possess?"

"We have nothing, so I cannot know of it," cried the girl beside herself.

"Indeed!" drawled Keraunus with an embarrassed smile. "And is that nothing which lies in the cup board there, and stands on the cornice shelf? For your sakes I will part with these—the onyx fibula, the rings, the golden chaplet, and the girdle of course."

"They are of mere silver-gilt!" Selene interrupted, ruthlessly. "All my grandfather's real gold you parted with when my mother died."

"She had to be cremated and buried as was due to our rank," answered Keraunus; "but I will not think now of those melancholy days."

"Nay, do think of them, father."

"Silence! All that belongs to my own adornment of course I cannot do without, for I must be prepared to meet Caesar in a dress befitting my rank; but the little bronze Eros there must be worth something, Plutarch's ivory cup, which is beautifully carved, and above all, that picture; its former possessor was convinced that it had been painted by Apelles himself herein Alexandria. You shall know at once what these little things are worth, for, as the gods vouchsafed, on my way home I met, here in the palace, Gabinius of Nicaea, the dealer in such objects. He promised me that when he had done his business with the architect he would come to me to inspect my treasures, and to pay money down for anything that might suit him. If my Apelles pleases him, he will give ten talents for that alone, and if he buys it for only the half or even the tenth of that sum, I will make you enjoy yourself for once, Selene."

"We will see," said the pale girl, shrugging her shoulders, and her sister exclaimed:

"Show him the sword too, that you always declared belonged to Caesar, and if he gives you a good sum for it you will buy me a gold bracelet."

"And Selene shall have one, too. But I have the very slenderest hopes of the sword, for a connoisseur would hardly pronounce it genuine. But I have other things, many others. Hark! that is Gabinius, no doubt. Quick, Selene, throw the chiton round me again. My chaplet, Arsinoe. A well-to-do man always gets a higher price than a poor one. I have ordered the slave to await him in the ante-room; it is always done in the best houses."

The curiosity dealer was a small, lean man, who, by prudence and good luck, had raised himself to be one of the most esteemed of his class and a rich man. Having matured his knowledge by industry, and experience, he knew better than any man how to distinguish what was good from what was indifferent or bad, what was genuine from what was spurious. No one had a keener eye; but he was abrupt in his dealings with those from whom he had nothing to gain. In circumstances where there was profit in view, he could, to be sure, be polite even to subservience and show inexhaustible

patience. He commanded himself so far as to listen with an air of conviction to the steward as he told him in a condescending tone that he was tired of his little possessions, that he could just as well keep them as part with them; he merely wanted to show them to him as a connoisseur and would only part with them if a good round sum were offered for what was in fact idle capital. One piece after another passed through the dealer's slender fingers, or was placed before him that he might contemplate it; but the man spoke not, and only shook his head as he examined every fresh object. And when Keraunus told him whence this or that specimen of his treasures had been obtained, he only murmured—"Indeed" or "Really."

"Do you think so?" After the last piece of property had passed through his hands, the steward asked:

"Well, what do you think of them?"

The beginning of the sentence was spoken confidently, the end almost in fear, for the dealer only smiled and shook his head again before he said:

"There are some genuine little things among them, but nothing worth speaking of. I advise you to keep them, because you have an affection for them, while I could get very little by them."

Keraunus avoided looking towards Selene, whose large eyes, full of dread, had been fixed on the dealer's lips; but Arsinoe, who had followed his movements with no less attention, was less easily discouraged, and pointing to her father's Apelles, she said: "And that picture, is that worth nothing?"

"It grieves me that I cannot tell so fair a damsel that it is inestimably valuable," said the dealer, stroking his gray whiskers. "But we have here only a very feeble copy. The original is in the Villa belonging to Phinius on the Lake of Larius, and which he calls Cothurnus. I have no use whatever for this piece."

"And this carved cup?" asked Keraunus. "It came from among the possessions of Plutarch, as I can prove, and it is said to have been the gift of the Emperor Trajan."

"It is the prettiest thing in your collection," replied Gabinius; "but it is amply paid for with four hundred drachmae."

"And this cylinder from Cyprus, with the elegant incised work?" The steward was about to take up the polished crystal, but his hand was trembling with agitation and pushed instead of lifting it from the table. It rolled away on the floor and across the smooth mosaic picture as far as the couches. Keraunus was about to stoop to pick it up, but his daughters both held him back, and Selene cried out:

"Father, you must not; the physician strictly forbade it."

While the steward pushed the girls away grumbling, the dealer had gone down on his knees to pick up the cylinder, but it seemed to cost the slightly-built man much less effort to stoop than to get up again, for some minutes had elapsed before he once more stood on his feet, in front of Keraunus. His countenance had put on an expression of eager attention, and he once more took up the painting attributed to Apelles, sat down with it on the couch, and appeared wholly absorbed in the contemplation of the picture, which hid his face from the bystanders.

But his eye was not resting on the work before him, but on the marriage-scene at his feet, in which he detected each moment some fresh and unique beauty. As the dealer sat there for some minutes with the little picture on his knee, the steward's face brightened, Selene drew a deep breath, and Arsinoe went up to her father to cling to his arm and whisper in his ear:

"Do not let him have the Apelles cheap – remember my bracelet."

Gabinius now rose, glanced at the various objects lying on the table and said in a much shorter and more business-like tone than before:

"For all these things I can give you—wait a minute—twenty-seventy-four hundred—four hundred and fifty—I can give you six hundred and fifty drachmae, not a sesterce more!"

"You are joking," cried Keraunus.

"Not a sesterce more," answered the other coldly. "I do not want to make anything, but you as a business man will understand that I do not wish to buy with a certain prospect of loss. As regards the Apelles —"

"Well?"

"It may be of some value to me, but only under certain conditions. The case is quite different as regards buying pictures. Your two young damsels know of course that my line of business leads me to admire and value all that is beautiful, but still I must request you to leave me alone with your father for a little while. I want to speak with him about this curious painting." Keraunus signed to his daughters, who immediately left the room. Before the door was closed upon them the dealer called after them:

"It is already growing dark, might I ask you to send me as bright a light as possible by one of your slaves."

"What about the picture?" asked Keraunus.

"Till the light is brought let us talk of something else," said Gabinius.

"Then take a seat on the couch," said Keraunus. "You will be doing me a pleasure and perhaps yourself as well."

As soon as the two men were seated on the divan, Gabinius began:

"Those little things which we have collected with particular liking, we do not readily part with — that I know by long experience. Many a man who has come into some property after he has sold all his little antiquities has offered me ten times the price I have paid him to get them back again, generally in vain, unfortunately. Now, what is true of others is true of you, and if you had not been in immediate need of money you would hardly have offered me these things."

"I must entreat you," began the steward, but the dealer interrupted him, saying:

"Even the richest are sometimes in want of ready money; no one knows that better than I, for I — I must confess — have large means at

my command. Just at present it would be particularly easy for me to free you from all embarrassment."

"There stands my Apelles," exclaimed the steward. "It is yours if you make a bid that suits me."

"The light—here comes the light!" exclaimed Gabinius, taking from the slave's hand the three-branched lamp which Selene had hastily supplied with a fresh wick, and he placed it, while he murmured to Keraunus, "By your leave," down on the centre of the mosaic. The steward looked at the man on his left hand, with puzzled inquiry, but Gabinius heeded him not but went down on his knees again, felt the mosaic over with his hand, and devoured the picture of the marriage of Peleus with his eyes.

"Have you lost anything?" asked Keraunus.

"No-nothing whatever. There in the corner—now I am satisfied. Shall I place the lamp there, on the table? So—and now to return to business."

"I beg to do so, but I may as well begin by telling you that in my case it is a question not of drachmae but of Attic talents."—[The Attic talent was worth about L200, or \$1000 dollars in the 1880 exchange rate.]

"That is a matter of course, and I will offer you five; that is to say a sum for which you could buy a handsome roomy house."

Once more the blood mounted to the steward's head; for a few minutes he could not utter a word, for his heart thumped violently; but presently he so far controlled himself as to be able to answer. This time at any rate, he was determined to seize Fortune by the forelock and not to be taken advantage of, so he said:

"Five talents will not do; bid higher."

"Then let us say six."

"If you say double that we are agreed."

"I cannot put it beyond ten talents; why, for that sum you might build a small palace."

"I stand out for twelve."

"Well, be it so, but not a sesterce more."

"I cannot bear to part with my splendid work of art," sighed Keraunus. "But I will take your offer, and give you my Apelles."

"It is not that picture I am dealing for," replied Gabinius. "It is of trifling value, and you may continue to enjoy the possession of it. It is another work of art in this room that I wish to have, and which has hitherto seemed to you scarcely worth notice. I have discovered it, and one of my rich customers has asked me to find him just such a thing."

"I do not know what it is."

"Does everything in this room belong to you?"

"Whom else should it belong to?"

"Then you may dispose of it as you please?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Very well, then—the twelve Attic talents which I offer you are to be paid for the picture that is under our feet."

"The mosaic! that? It belongs to the palace."

"It belongs to your residence, and that, I heard you say yourself, has been inhabited for more than a century by your forefathers. I know the law; it pronounces that everything which has remained in undisputed possession in one family, for a hundred years, becomes their property."

"This mosaic belongs to the palace."

"I assert the contrary. It is an integral portion of your family dwelling, and you may freely dispose of it."

"It belongs to the palace."

"No, and again no; you are the owner. Tomorrow morning early you shall receive twelve Attic talents in gold, and, with the help of my son, later in the day I will take up the picture, pack it, and when it grows dark, carry it away. Procure a carpet to cover the empty place for the present. As to the secrecy of the transaction—I must of course insist on it as strongly—and more so—than yourself."

"The mosaic belongs to the palace," cried the steward, this time in a louder voice, "Do you hear? it belongs to the palace, and whoever dares touch it, I will break his bones."

As he spoke Keraunus stood up, his huge chest panting, his cheeks and forehead dyed purple, and his fist, which he held in the dealer's face, was trembling. Gabinius drew back startled, and said:

"Then you will not have the twelve talents!"

"I will—I will!" gasped Keraunus, "I will show you how I beat those who take me for a rogue. Out of my sight, villain, and let me hear not another word about the picture, and the robbery in the dark, or I will send the prefect's lictors after you and have you thrown into irons, you rascally thief!"

Gabinius hurried to the door, but he there turned round once more to the groaning and gasping colossus, and cried out, as he stood on the threshold:

"Keep your rubbish! we shall have more to say to each other yet."

When Selene and Arsinoe returned to the sitting-room they found their father breathing hard and sitting on the couch, with his head drooping forward. Much alarmed, they went close up to him, but he exclaimed quite coherently:

"Water—a drink of water!—the thief!—the scoundrel!"

Though hardly pressed, it had not cost him a struggle or a pang to refuse what would have placed him and his children in a position of ease; and yet he would not have hesitated to borrow it, aye, or twice the sum, from rich or poor, though he knew full certainly that he

would never be in a position to restore it. Nor was he even proud of what he had done; it seemed to him quite natural in a Macedonian noble. It was to him altogether out of the pale of possibility that he should entertain the dealer's proposition for an instant.

But where was he to get the money for Arsinoe's outfit? how could he keep the promise given at the meeting?

He lay meditating on the divan for an hour; then he took a wax tablet out of a chest and began to write a letter on it to the prefect. He intended to offer the precious mosaic picture which had been discovered in his abode, to Titianus for the Emperor, but he did not bring his composition to an end, for he became involved in high-flown phrases. At last he doubted whether it would do at all, flung the unfinished letter back into the chest, and disposed himself to sleep.

CHAPTER X.

While anxiety and trouble were brooding over the steward's dwelling, while dismay and disappointment were clouding the souls of its inhabitants, the hall of the Muses was merry with feasting and laughter.

Julia, the prefect's wife, had supplied the architect at Lochias with a carefully-prepared meal,—sufficient to fill six hungry maws, and Pontius' slave—who had received it on its arrival and had unpacked it dish after dish, and set them out on the humblest possible table had then hastened to fetch his master to inspect all these marvels of the cook's art. The architect shook his head as he contemplated the superabundant blessing, and muttered to himself:

"Titianus must take me for a crocodile, or rather for two crocodiles," and he went to the sculptor's little tabernacle, where Papias the master was also, to invite the two men to share his supper.

Besides them he asked two painters, and the chief mosaic worker of the city, who all day long had been busied in restoring the old and faded pictures on the ceilings and pavements, and under the influence of good wine and cheerful chat they soon emptied the dishes and bowls and trenchers. A man who for several hours has been using his hands or his mind, or both together, waxes hungry, and all the artists whom Pontius had brought together at Lochias had now been working for several days almost to the verge of exhaustion. Each had done his best, in the first place, no doubt, to give satisfaction to Pontius, whom all esteemed, and to himself; but also in the hope of giving proof of his powers to the Emperor and of showing him how things could be done in Alexandria. When the dishes had been removed and the replete feasters had washed and dried their hands, they filled their cups out of a jar of mixed wine, of which the dimensions answered worthily to the meal they had eaten. One of the painters then proposed that they should hold a regular drinking-bout, and elect Papias, who was as well known as a good table orator as he was as an artist, to be the leader of the feast. However, the master declared that he could not accept the honor, for that it was due to the worthiest of their company; to the man namely, who, only a few days since, had entered this empty

palace and like a second Deucalion had raised up illustrious artists, such as he then saw around him in great numbers, and skilled workmen by hundreds, not out of plastic stone but out of nothing. And then—while declaring that he understood the use of the hammer and chisel better than that of the tongue, and that he had never studied the art of making speeches—he expressed his wish that Pontius would lead the revel, in the most approved form.

But he was not allowed to get to the end of this evidence of his skill, for Euphorion the door-keeper of the palace, Euphorion the father of Pollux, ran hastily into the hall of the Muses with a letter in his hand which he gave to the architect.

"To be read without an instant's delay," he added, bowing with theatrical dignity to the assembled artists. "One of the prefect's lictors brought this letter, which, if my wishes be granted, brings nothing that is unwelcome. Hold your noise you little blackguards or I will be the death of you."

These words, which so far as the tone was concerned, formed a somewhat inharmonious termination to a speech intended for the ears of great artists, were addressed to his wife's four-footed Graces who had followed him against his wish, and were leaping round the table barking for the slender remains of the consumed food.

Pontius was fond of animals and had made friends with the old woman's pets, so, as he opened the prefect's letter, he said:

"I invite the three little guests to the remains of our feast. Give them anything that is fit for them, Euphorion, and whatever seems to you most suitable to your own stomach you may put into it."

While the architect first rapidly glanced through the letter and then read it carefully, the singer had collected a variety of good morsels for his wife's favorites on a plate, and finally carried the last remaining pasty, with the dish on which it reposed, to the vicinity of his own hooked nose.

"For men or for dogs?" he asked his son, as he pointed to it with a rigid finger.

"For the gods!" replied Pollux. "Take it to mother; she will like to eat ambrosia for once."

"A jolly evening to you!" cried the singer, bowing to the artists who were emptying their cups, and he quitted the hall with his pasty and his dogs. Before he had fairly left the hall with his long strides, Papias, whose speech had been interrupted, once more raised his wine-cup and began again:

"Our Deucalion, our more than Deucalion — "

"Pardon me," interrupted Pontius. "If I once more stop your discourse which began so promisingly; this letter contains important news and our revels must be over for the night. We must postpone our symposium and your drinking-speech."

"It was not a drinking-speech, for if ever there was a moderate man — " Papias began. But Pontius stopped him again, saying:

"Titianus writes me word that he proposes coming to Lochias this evening. He may arrive at any moment; and not alone, but with my fellow-artist, Claudius Venator from Rome, who is to assist me with his advice."

"I never even heard his name," said Papias, who was wont to trouble himself as little about the persons as about the works of other artists.

"I wonder at that," said Pontius, closing the double tablets which announced the Emperor's advent.

"Can he do anything?" asked Pollux.

"More than any one of us," replied Pontius. "He is a mighty man."

"That is splendid!" exclaimed Pollux. "I like to see great men. When one looks me in the eye I always feel as if some of his superabundance overflowed into me, and irresistibly I draw myself up and think how fine it would be if one day I might reach as high as that man's chin."

"Beware of morbid ambition," said Papias to his pupil in a warning voice. "It is not the man who stands on tiptoe, but he who does his duty diligently, that can attain anything great."

"He honestly does his," said the architect rising, and he laid his hand on the young sculptor's shoulder. "We all do; to-morrow by sunrise each must be at his post again. For my colleague's sake it will be well that you should all be there in good time."

The artists rose, expressing their thanks and regrets. "You will not escape the continuation of this evening's entertainment," cried one of the painters, and Papias, as he parted from Pontius, said:

"When we next meet I will show you what I understand by a drinking-speech. It will do perhaps for your Roman guest. I am curious to hear what he will say about our Urania. Pollux has done his share of the work very well, and I have already devoted an hour's work to it, which has improved it. The more humble our material, the better I shall be pleased if the work satisfies Caesar; he himself has tried his hand at sculpture."

"If only Hadrian could hear that!" cried one of the painters. "He likes to think himself a great artist—one of the foremost of our time. It is said that he caused the life of the great architect, Apollodorus—who carried out such noble works for Trajan—to be extinguished—and why? because formerly that illustrious man had treated the imperial bungler as a mere dabbler, and would not accept his plan for the temple of Venus at Rome."

"Mere talk!" answered Pontius to this accusation. "Apollodorus died in prison, but his incarceration had little enough to do with the Emperor's productions—excuse me, gentlemen, I must once more look through the sketches and plans."

The architect went away, but Pollux continued the conversation that had been begun by saying:

"Only I cannot understand how a man who practises so many arts at once as Hadrian does, and at the same time looks after the state and its government, who is a passionate huntsman and who dabbles in every kind of miscellaneous learning, contrives, when he wants to

practise one particular form of art, to recall all his five senses into the nest from which he has let them fly, here, there, and everywhere. The inside of his head must be like that salad-bowl – which we have reduced to emptiness – in which Papias discovered three sorts of fish, brown and white meat, oysters and five other substances."

"And who can deny," added Papias, "that if talent is the father, and meat the mother of all productiveness, practice must be the artist's teacher! Since Hadrian took to sculpture and painting it has become the universal fashion here to practise these arts, and among the wealthier youth who come to my workroom, many have very good abilities; but not one of them brings anything to any good issue, because so much of their time is taken up by the gymnasium, the bath, the quail-fights, the suppers, and I know not what besides, so that they do nothing by way of practice."

"True," said a painter. "Without the restraint and worry of apprenticeship no one can ever rise to happy and independent creativeness; and in the schools of rhetoric or in hunting or fighting no one can study drawing. It is not till a pupil has learned to sit steady and worry himself over his work for six hours on end that I begin to believe he will ever do any good work. Have you any of you seen the Emperor's work?"

"I have," answered a mosaic worker. "Many years ago Hadrian sent a picture to me that he had painted; I was to make a mosaic from it. It was a fruit piece. Melons, gourds, apples, and green leaves. The drawing was but so-so, and the color impossibly vivid, still the composition was pleasing from its solidity and richness. And after all, when one sees it, one cannot but feel that such superfluity is better than meagreness and feebleness. The larger fruits, especially under the exuberant sappy foliage, were so huge that they might have been grown in the garden of luxury itself, still the whole had a look of reality. I mitigated the colors somewhat in my transcript; you may still see a copy of the picture at my house, it hangs in the studio where my men draw. Nealkes, the rich hanging-maker, has had a tapestry woven from it which Pontius proposes to use as a hanging for a wall of the work-room, but I have made a fine frame on purpose for it."

"Say rather for its designer."

"Or yet rather," added the most loquacious of the painters, "for the visit he may possibly pay your workshops."

"I only wish the Emperor may come to ours too! I should like to sell him my picture of Alexander saluted by the priests in the temple of Jupiter Ammon."

"I hope that when you agree about the price you will remember we are partners," said his fellow-artist smugly.

"I will follow your example strictly," replied the other.

"Then you will certainly not be a loser," cried Papias, "for Eustorgius is fully aware of the worth of his works. And if Hadrian is to order works from every master whose art he dabbles in, he will require a fleet on purpose to carry his purchases to Rome."

"It is said," continued Eustorgius, laughing, "that he is a painter among poets, a sculptor among painters, an astronomer among musicians, and a sophist among artists—that is to say, that he pursues every art and science with some success as his secondary occupation."

As he spoke the last words Pontius returned to the table where the artists were standing round the winejar; he had heard the painter's last remark and interrupted him by saying:

"But my friend you forget that he is a monarch among monarchs — and not merely among those of today — in the fullest meaning of the word. Each of us separately can produce something better and more perfect in his own line; but how great is the man who by earnestness and skill can even apprehend everything that the mind has ever been able to conceive of, or the creative spirit of the artist to embody! I know him, and I know that he loves a really thorough master, and tries to encourage him with princely liberality. But his ears are everywhere, and he promptly becomes the implacable enemy of those who provoke his resentment. So bridle your restive Alexandrian tongues, and let me tell you that my colleague from Rome is in the closest intimacy with Hadrian. He is of the same age, resembles him greatly, and repeats to him everything that he hears said about him. So cease talking about Caesar and pass no severer

judgments on dilettanti in the purple than on your wealthy pupils, who paint and chisel for the mere love of it, and for whom you find it so easy to lisp out 'charming,' or 'wonderfully pretty,' or 'remarkably nice.' Take my warning in good part, you know I mean it well."

He spoke the last words with a cordial, manly feeling, of which his voice was peculiarly capable, and which was always certain to secure him the confidence even of the recalcitrant.

The artists exchanged greetings and hand-shakings and left the hall; a slave carried away the wine-jar and wiped the table, on which Pontius proceeded to lay out his sketches and plans. But he was not alone, for Pollux was soon at his side, and with a comical expression of pathos and laying his finger on his nose, he said:

"I have come out of my cage to say something more to you."

"Well?"

"The hour is approaching when I may hope to repay the beneficent deeds, which, at various times, you have done to my interior. My mother will to-morrow morning, set before you that dish of cabbage. It could not be done sooner, because the only perfect sausage-maker, the very king of his trade, prepares these savory cylinders only once a week. A few hours ago he completed the making of the sausages, and to-morrow morning my mother will warm up for our breakfasts the noble mess, which she is preparing for us this evening—for, as I have told you, it is in its warmed-up state that it is the ideal of its kind. What will follow by way of sweets we shall owe again to my mother's art; but the cheering and invigorating element—I mean the wine that I drives dull care away, we owe to my sister."

"I will come," said Pontius, "if my guest leaves me an hour free, and I shall enjoy the excellent dish. But what does a gay bird like you know of dull care?"

"The words fit into the metre," replied Pollux. "I inherit from my father—who, when he is not gate-keeping, sings and recites—a

troublesome tendency whenever anything incites me to drift into rhythm."

"But to-day you have been more silent than usual, and yet you seemed to me to be extraordinarily content. Not your face only, but your whole length—a good measure—from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head was like a brimming cask of satisfaction."

"Well, there is much that is lovely in this world!" cried Pollux, stretching himself comfortably and lifting his arms with his hands clasped far above his head towards heaven.

"Has anything specially pleasant happened to you?"

"There is no need for that! Here I live in excellent company, the work progresses, and—well, why should I deny it? There was something specially to mark to-day; I met an old acquaintance again."

"An old one?"

"I have already known her sixteen years; but when I first saw her she was in swaddling clothes."

"Then this venerable damsel friend is more than sixteen, perhaps seventeen! Is Eros the friend of the happy, or does happiness only follow in his train?" As the architect thoughtfully said these words to himself, Pollux listened attentively to a noise outside, and said:

"Who can be passing out there at this hour? Do you not hear the bark of a big dog mingle with the snapping of the three Graces?"

"It is Titianus conducting the architect from Rome," replied Pontius excitedly.

"I will go to meet him. But one thing more my friend, you too have an Alexandrian tongue. Beware of laughing at the Emperor's artistic efforts in the presence of this Roman. I repeat it: the man who is now coming is superior to us all, and there is nothing more repellant to me than when a small man assumes a strutting air of importance because he fancies he has discovered in some great man a weak spot where his own little body happens to be sound. The artist I am

expecting is a grand man, but the Emperor Hadrian is a grander. Now retire behind your screens, and tomorrow morning I will be your guest."

CHAPTER XI.

Pontius threw his pallium over the chiton he commonly wore at his work and went forward to meet the sovereign of the world, whose arrival had been announced to him in the prefect's letter. He was perfectly calm, and if his heart beat a little faster than usual, it was only because he was pleased once more to meet the wonderful man whose personality had made a deep impression on him before.

In the happy consciousness of having done all that lay in his power and of deserving no blame, he went through the ante-chambers and chief entrance of the palace into the fore-court, where a crowd of slaves were busied by torch-light in laying new marble slabs. Neither these workmen nor their overseers had paid any heed to the barking of the dogs and the loud talking which had for some little time been audible in the vicinity of the gate-keeper's lodge; for a special rate of payment had been promised to the laborers and their foremen if they should have finished a set piece of the new pavement by a certain hour, to the satisfaction of the architect. No one who heard the deep man's-voice ring through the court from the doorway guessed to whom it belonged.

The Emperor had been delayed by adverse winds and had not run into the harbor till a little before midnight.

Titianus, who was watching for him, he greeted as an old friend with heartfelt warmth, and with him and Antinous he stepped into the prefect's chariot, while Phlegon the secretary, Hermogenes his physician, and Mastor with the luggage, among which were their campbeds, were to follow in another vehicle. The harbor watchmen hastened to array themselves indignantly to oppose the chariot, as it rolled noisily along the street, and the huge dog that destroyed the peace of the night with its baying; but as soon as they recognized Titianus they respectfully made way. The gate-keeper and his wife, obedient to the prefect's warning, had remained up, and as soon as the singer heard the chariot approaching which bore the Emperor, he hastened to open the palace-gates. The broken-up pavement and the swarms of men engaged in repairing it, obliged Titianus and his companions to quit the chariot here and to pass close to the little gate-house. Hadrian, whose observation nothing ever escaped which came in his way and seemed worth noticing, stood still before

Euphorion's door and looked into the comfortable little room, with its decoration of flowers and birds and the statue of Apollo; while dame Doris in her newest garments, stood on the threshold to watch for the prefect. And Titianus greeted her warmly, for he was wont whenever he came to Lochias to exchange a few merry or wise words with her. The little dogs had already crept into their basket, but as soon as they caught sight of a strange dog they rushed past their mistress into the open air, and dame Doris found herself obliged, while she returned the kindly greeting of her patron, to shout at Euphrosyne, Thalia and Aglaia more than once by their pretty names.

"Splendid, splendid!" cried Hadrian, pointing into the little house. "An idyl, a perfect idyl. Who would have expected to find such a smiling nook of peace in the most restless and busy town in the empire."

"I and Pontius were equally surprised at this little nest, and we therefore left it untouched," said the prefect.

"Intelligent people understand each other, and I owe you thanks for preserving this little home," answered the Emperor. "What an omen, what a favorable, in every way favorable augury, it offers me. The Graces receive me here into these old walls, Aglaia, Thalia and Euphrosyne!"

"Good luck to you, Master," old Doris called out to the prefect.

"We come late," said Hadrian.

"That does not matter," said the old woman. "Here at Lochias for the last week we have quite forgotten to distinguish day from night, and a blessing can never come too late."

"I have brought with me to-day an illustrious guest," said Titianus. "The great Roman architect Claudius Venator. He only disembarked a few minutes since."

"Then a draught of wine will do him good. We have in the house some good white Mareotic from my daughter's garden by the lake. If your friend will do us humble folks so much honor, I beg he will

step into our room; it is clean, is it not sir? and the cup I will give him to drink it out of would not disgrace the Emperor himself. Who knows what you will find up in the midst of all the muddle yonder?"

"I will accept your invitation with pleasure," answered Hadrian. "I can see by your face that you have a pleasure in entertaining us, and any one might envy you your little house."

"When the climbing-rose and the honey-suckle are out it is much prettier," said Doris, as she filled the cup. "Here is some water for mixing."

The Emperor took the cup carved by Pollux, looked at it with admiration, and before putting it to his lips said:

"A masterpiece, dame; what would Caesar find to drink out of here where the gate-keeper uses such a treasure? Who executed this admirable work, pray?"

"My son carved it for me in his spare time."

"He is a highly-skilled sculptor," Titianus explained.

When the Emperor had half emptied the cup with much satisfaction he set it on the table, and said:

"A very noble drink! I thank you, mother."

"And I you, for styling me mother: there is no better title a woman can have who has brought up good children; and I have three who need never be ashamed to be seen."

"I wish you all luck with them, good little mother," replied the Emperor.

"We shall meet again, for I am going to spend some days at Lochias."

"Now, in all this bustle?" asked Doris.

"This great architect," said Titianus, in explanation, "is to advise and help our Pontius."

"He needs no help!" cried the old woman. "He is a man of the best stamp. His foresight and energy, my son says, are incomparable. I have seen him giving his orders myself, and I know a man when I see him!"

"And what particularly pleased you in him?" asked Hadrian, who was much amused with the shrewd old woman's freedom.

"He never for a moment loses his temper in all the hurry, never speaks a word too much or too little; he can be stern when it is necessary, but he is kind to his inferiors. What his merits are as an artist I am not capable of judging, but I am quite certain that he is a just and able man."

"I know him myself," replied Caesar, "and you describe him rightly; but he seemed to me sterner than he has shown himself to you."

"Being a man he must be able to be severe; but he is so only when it is necessary, and how kind he can be he shows himself every day. A man grows to the mould of his own mind when he is a great deal alone; and this I have noticed, that a man who is repellant and sharp to those beneath him is not in himself anything really great; for it shows that he considers it necessary to guard against the danger of being looked upon as of no more consequence than the poorer folks he deals with. Now, a man of real worth knows that it can be seen in his bearing, even when he treats one of us as an equal. Pontius does so, and Titianus, and you who are his friend, no less. It is a good thing that you should have come—but, as I said before, the architect up there can do very well without you."

"You do not seem to rate my capacity very highly, and I regret it, for you have lived with your eyes open and have learned to judge men keenly."

Doris looked shrewdly at the Emperor with her kindly glance, as if taking his mental measure, and then answered confidently:

"You — you are a great man too — it is quite possible that you might see things that would escape Pontius. There are a few choice souls whom the Muses particularly love and you are one of them."

"What leads you to suppose so?"

"I see it in your gaze — in your brow."

"You have the gift of divination, then?"

"No, I am not one of that sort; but I am the mother of two sons on whom also the Immortals have bestowed the special gift, which I cannot exactly describe. It was in them I first saw it, and wherever I have met with it since in other men and artists — they have been the elect of their circle. And you too — I could swear to it, that you are foremost of the men among whom you live."

"Do not swear lightly," laughed the Emperor. "We will meet and talk together again little mother, and when I depart I will ask you again whether you have not been deceived in me. Come now, Telemachus, the dame's birds seem to delight you very much."

These words were addressed to Antinous, who had been going from cage to cage contemplating the feathered pets, all sleeping snugly, with much curiosity and pleasure.

"Is that your son?" asked Doris.

"No, dame, he is only my pupil; but I feel as if he were my son."

"He is a beautiful lad!"

"Why, the old lady still looks after the young men!"

"We do not give that up till we are a hundred or till the Parcae cut the thread of life."

"What a confession!"

"Let me finish my speech. — We never cease to take pleasure in seeing a handsome young fellow, but so long as we are young we ask ourselves what he may have in store for us, and as we grow old

we are perfectly satisfied to be able to show him kindness. Listen young master. You will always find me here if you want anything in which I can serve you. I am like a snail and very rarely leave my shell."

"Till our next meeting," cried Hadrian, and he and his companions went out into the court.

There the difficulty was to find a footing on the disjointed pavement. Titianus went on in front of the Emperor and Antinous, and so but few words of friendly pleasure could be exchanged by the monarch and his vicegerent on the occasion of their meeting again. Hadrian stepped cautiously forward, his face wearing meanwhile a satisfied smile. The verdict passed by the simple shrewd woman of the people had given him far greater pleasure than the turgid verse in which Mesomedes and his compeers were wont to sing his praises, or the flattering speeches with which he was loaded by the sophists and rhetoricians.

The old woman had taken him for no more than an artist; she could not know who he was, and yet she had recognized—or had Titianus been indiscreet? Did she know or suspect whom she was talking to? Hadrian's deeply suspicious nature was more and more roused; he began to fancy that the gate-keeper's wife had learnt her speech by heart, and that her welcome had been preconcerted; he suddenly paused and desired the prefect to wait for him, and Antinous to remain behind with the clog. He turned round, retraced his steps to the gatehouse and slipped close up to it in a very unprincely way. He stood still by the door of the little house which was still open, and listened to the conversation between Doris and her husband.

"A fine tall man," said Euphorion, "he is a little like the Emperor."

"Not a bit," replied Doris. "Only think of the full-length statue of Hadrian in the garden of the Paneum; it has a dissatisfied satirical expression, and the architect has a grave brow, it is true, but pure friendly kindness lights up his features. It is only the beard that reminds you of the one when you look at the other. Hadrian might be very glad if he were like the prefect's guest."

"Yes, he is handsomer—how shall I say it—more like the gods than that cold marble figure," Euphorion declared. "A grand noble, he is no doubt, but still an artist too; I wonder whether he could be induced by Pontius or Papias or Aristeas or one of the great painters to take the part of Calchas the soothsayer in our group at the festival? He would perform it in quite another way than that dry stick Philemon the ivory carver. Hand me my lute; I have already forgotten again the beginning of the last verse. Oh! my wretched memory! Thank you."

Euphorion loudly struck the strings and sang in a voice that was still tolerably sweet and very well trained:

"Sabina hail! Oh Sabina!—Hail; victorious hail to the conquering goddess Sabina!' If only Pollux were here he would remind me of the right words. 'Hail; victorious hail, to the thousand-fold Sabina!'—That is nonsense. 'Hail, hail! divine hail to thee O all-conquering Sabina.' No it was not that either. If a crocodile would only swallow this Sabina I would give him that hot cake in yonder dish with pleasure, for his pudding. But stay—I have it. 'Hail, a thousand-fold hail to the conquering goddess Sabina!'"

Hadrian had heard all he wanted; while Euphorion went on repeating his line a score or more of times to impress it on his recalcitrant memory. Caesar turned his back on the gate-house, and while he and his companions picked their way not without difficulty through the workmen who squatted here and there and everywhere on the ground, he clapped Titianus more than once on his shoulder, and after he had been received and welcomed by Pontius, he exclaimed:

"I bless my decision to come here now! I have had a good evening, a quite delightful evening."

The Emperor had not felt so cheerful and free from care for years as on this occasion, and when in spite of the late hour he found the workmen still busy everywhere, and saw all that had already been restored in the old palace and what was being done for its renovation, the restless man could not resist expressing his satisfaction, and exclaimed to Antinous:

"Here we may see that even in our sordid times miracles may be wrought by good-will, industry, and skill. Explain to me my good Pontius how you were able to construct that enormous scaffold."

CHAPTER XII.

More pleasant hours were to follow on the amusing arrival of the Emperor at his half-finished residence at Lochias that night. Pontius proposed to him to inspect several well-preserved rooms, which had in the first instance been reserved for the gentlemen of his suite; and one of these with an open outlook on the harbor, the town, and the island of Antirrhodus he suggested should be provisionally furnished for the Emperor's reception. Thanks to the architect's foresight, to Mastor's practised hand, and to the numbers of men employed in the palace who were accustomed to all kinds of service — provision was soon made for the night, for Hadrian and his companions. The comfortable couch which the prefect had sent to Lochias for Pontius was carried into the Emperor's sleeping-room, and the camp-beds for Antinous and the suite were soon set up in the other rooms. Tables, pillows, and various household vessels which had already been sent in from the manufactories of Alexandria, and which stood packed in bales and cases in the large central court of the palace were soon taken out, and so far as they were applicable for use were carried into the hastily-arranged rooms. Even before Hadrian, under the prefect's guidance, had reached the last room in which restorations were being carried out, Pontius was ready with his arrangements, and could assure the Emperor that to-night he would find a good bed and very tolerable quarters, and that by to-morrow he should have a really elegantly-furnished room.

"Charming, quite delightful," cried the Emperor, as he entered his room. "One might fancy you had some industrious demons at your command. Pour some water over my hands, Mastor, and then to supper! I am as hungry as a beggar's clog."

"I think we shall find all you need," replied Titianus, while Hadrian washed his hands and his bearded face.

"Have you eaten all that I sent down to Lochias to-day, my dear Pontius?"

"Alas! we have," sighed Pontius.

"But I gave orders that a supper for five should be sent."

"It sufficed for six hungry artists," answered the architect, "if only I could have guessed for whom the food was intended! And now what is to be done? There are wine and bread still in the hall of the Muses, meanwhile."

"That must satisfy us," said the Emperor, as he wiped his face. "In the Dacian war, in Numidia, and often when out hunting, I have been glad if only one or the other was to be obtained."

Antinous, who was very hungry and tired, made a melancholy face at these words of his master, and Hadrian perceiving it, added with a smile:

"But youth needs something more to live upon than bread and wine. You pointed out to me just now the residence of the palace-steward. Might we not find there a morsel of meat or cheese, or something of the kind?"

"Hardly," replied Pontius. "For the man stuffs his fat stomach and his eight children with bread and porridge. But an attempt will at any rate be worth making."

"Then send to him; but conduct us at once to the hall where the Muses have preserved some bread and wine for me and these good fellows, though they do not always provide them for their disciples."

Pontius at once conducted the Emperor into the hall. On the way thither, Hadrian asked:

"Is the steward so miserably paid that he is forced to content himself with such meagre fare?"

"He has a residence rent free, and two hundred drachmae a month."

"That is not so very little. What is the man's name, and of what kith and kin is he?"

"He is called Keraunus, and is of ancient Macedonian descent. His ancestors from time immemorial have held the office he now fills, and he even supposes himself to be related to the extinct royal

dynasty through the mistress of some one of the Lagides. Keraunus sits in the town council and never stirs out in the streets without his slave, who is one of the sort which the merchants in the slave market throw into the bargain with the buyer. He is as fat as a stuffed pig, dresses like a senator, loves antiquities and curiosities, for which he will let himself be cheated of his last coin, and bears his poverty with more of pride than of dignity; and still he is an honorable man, and can be made useful, if he is taken on the right side."

"Altogether a queer fellow. And you say he is fat, is he jolly?"

"As far from it as possible."

"Ah, people who are fat and cross are my aversion. What is this by way of an erection?"

"Behind that screen works Papias' best scholar. His name is Pollux, and he is the son of the couple who keep the gate-house. You will be pleased with him."

"Call him here," said the Emperor.

But before the architect could comply with his desire the sculptor's head had appeared above the screen. The young man had heard the approaching voices and steps; he greeted the prefect respectfully from his elevated position, and after satisfying his curiosity was about to spring down from the stool on which he had climbed when Pontius called to him that Claudius Venator, the architect from Rome, wished to make his acquaintance.

"That is very kind in him, and still more kind in you," Pollux answered from above, "since it is only from you that he can know that I exist beneath the moon, and use the hammer and chisel. Allow me to descend from my four-legged cothurnus, for at present you are forced to look up to me, and from all I have heard of your talents from Pontius, nothing can be more absolutely the reverse of what it ought to be."

"Nay, stop where you are," answered Hadrian. "We, as fellow-artists, may waive ceremony. — What are you doing in there?"

"I will push the screen back in a moment and show you our Urania. It is very good for an artist to hear the opinion of a man who thoroughly understands the thing."

"Presently, friend-presently; first let me enjoy a scrap of bread, for the severity of my hunger might very possibly influence my judgment."

As he was speaking the architect offered the Emperor a salver with bread, salt, and a cup of wine, which his own slave had carried to him. When Pollux observed this modest meal, he called out:

"That is prisoners' fare, Pontius; have we nothing better in the house than that?"

"Possibly you yourself assisted in demolishing the dainty dishes I had sent down for the architect," cried Titianus, pretending to threaten him.

"You are defacing a fair memory," sighed the sculptor, with mock melancholy. "But, by Hercules, I did my fair share of the work of destruction. If only now—but stay! I have an idea worthy of Aristotle himself! that breakfast, to which I invited you to-morrow morning, most noble Pontius, is all ready at my mother's, and can be warmed up in a few minutes. Do not be alarmed, worthy sir, but the dish in question is cabbage with sausages—a mess which, like the soul of an Egyptian, possesses at the instant of resurrection, nobler qualities than when it first sees the light."

"Excellent," cried Hadrian. "Cabbage and sausages!" He wiped his full lips with his hand, smiling with gratification, and he broke into a hearty laugh of amusement as he heard a loud "Ah!" of satisfaction from Antinous, who drew nearer to the canvas screen. "There is another whose mouth waters and whose imagination revels in a happy future," said the Emperor to the prefect, pointing to his favorite.

But he had misinterpreted the lad's exclamation, for it was the mere name of the dish—which his mother had often set on the table of his humble home in Bithynia—which reminded him of his native country and his childhood, and transplanted him in thought back

into their midst. It was a swift leap at his heart, and not merely the pleasant watering of his gums, that had forced the "Ah" to his lips. Still, he was glad to see his native dish again, and would not have exchanged it against the richest banquet. Pollux had meanwhile come out of his nook, and said:

"In a quarter of an hour I shall set before you the breakfast which has been turned into a supper. Mitigate your worst hunger with some bread and salt, and then my mother's cabbage-stew will not only satisfy you, but will be enjoyed with calm appreciation."

"Greet dame Doris from me," Hadrian called after the sculptor; and when Pollux had quitted the hall he turned to Titianus and Pontius and said:

"What a splendid young fellow. I am curious to see what he can do as an artist."

"Then follow me," replied Pontius, leading the way.

"What do you say to this Urania? Papias made the head of the Muse, but the figure and the drapery Pollux formed with his own hand in a few days."

The imperial artist stood in front of the statue, with his arms crossed, and remained there for some time in silence. Then he nodded his bearded head approvingly, and said gravely:

"A well-considered work, and carried out with remarkable freedom; this mantle drawn over the bosom would not disgrace a Phidias. All is broad, characteristic and true. Did the young artist work from the model here at Lochias?"

"I have seen no model, and I believe that he evolved the whole figure out of his head," replied Pontius.

"Impossible, perfectly impossible," cried the Emperor, in the tone of a man who knows well what he is talking about. "Such lines, such forms not Praxiteles himself could have invented. He must have seen them, have formed them as he stood face to face with the living copy. We will ask him. What is to be made out of that newly-set-up mass of clay?"

"Possibly the bust of some princess of the house of the Lagides. To-morrow you shall see a head of Berenice by our young friend, which seems to me to be one of the best things ever done in Alexandria."

"And is the lad a proficient in magic?" asked Hadrian. "It seems to me simply impossible that he should have completed this statue and a woman's bust in these few days."

Pontius explained to the Emperor that Pollux had mounted the head on a bust already to hand, and as he answered his questions without reserve, he revealed to him what stupendous exertions of the arts had been called into requisition to give the dilapidated palace a suitable and, in its kind, even brilliant appearance. He frankly confessed that here he was working only for effect, and talked to Hadrian exactly as he would have discussed the same subject with any other fellow-artist.

While the Emperor and the architect were thus eagerly conversing, and the prefect was hearing from Phlegon, the secretary, all the experience of their journey, Pollux reappeared in the hall of the Muses accompanied by his father. The singer carried before him a steaming mess, fresh cakes of bread, and the pasty which a few hours previously he had carried home to his wife from the architect's table. Pollux held to his breast a tolerably large two-handled jar full of Mareotic wine, which he had hastily wreathed with branches of ivy.

A few minutes later the Emperor was reclining on a mattress that had been laid for him, and was making his way valiantly through the savory mess. He was in the happiest humor; he called Antinous and his secretary, heaped abundant portions with his own hand on their plates, which he bade them hold out to him, declaring as he did so that it was to prevent their fishing the best of the sausages out of the cabbage for themselves. He also spoke highly of the Mareotic wine. When they came to opening the pasty the expression of his face changed; he frowned and asked the prefect in a suspicious tone, severely and sternly:

"How came these people by such a pasty as this?"

"Where did you get it from?" asked the prefect of the singer.

"From the banquet which the architect gave to the artists here," answered Euphorion. "The bones were given to the Graces and this dish, which had not been touched, to me and my wife. She devoted it with pleasure to Pontius' guest."

Titianus laughed and exclaimed:

"This then accounts for the total disappearance of the handsome supper which we sent down to the architect. This pasty—allow me to look at it—this pasty was prepared by a recipe obtained from Verus. He invited us to breakfast yesterday and instructed my cook how to prepare it."

"No Platonist ever propagated his master's doctrines with greater zeal than Verus does the merits of this dish," said the Emperor, who had recovered his good humor as soon as he perceived that no artful preparation for his arrival was to be suspected in this matter. "What follies that spoilt child of fortune can commit! Does he still insist on cooking with his own hands?"

"No, not quite that," replied the prefect. "But he had a couch placed for him in the kitchen on which he stretched himself at full length and told my cook exactly how to prepare the pasty, of which you are—I should say, of which the Emperor is particularly fond. It consists of pheasant, ham, cow's udder and a baked crust."

"I am quite of Hadrian's opinion," laughed the Emperor; doing all justice to the excellent pie. "You entertain me splendidly my friend, and I am very much your debtor. What did you say your name is young man?"

"Pollux."

"Your Urania, Pollux, is a fine piece of work, and Pontius says you executed the drapery without a model. I said, and I repeat, that it is simply impossible."

"You judge rightly, a young girl stood for it."

The Emperor glanced at the architect, as much as to say, I knew it!

Pontius asked in astonishment:

"When? I have never seen a female form within these walls."

"Recently."

"But I have never quitted Lochias for a minute. I have never gone to rest before midnight, and have been on my legs again long before sunrise."

"But still there were several hours between your going to sleep, and waking up again," replied Pollux. "Ah, youth—youth!" exclaimed the Emperor, and a satirical smile played upon his lips.

"Part Damon and Phyllis by iron doors, and they will find their way to each other through the key-hole."

Euphorion looked seriously at his son, the architect shook his head and refrained from further questions, but Hadrian rose from his couch, dismissed Antinous and his secretary to bed, requested Titianus to go home and to give his wife his kindly greetings, and then desired Pollux to conduct him within this screen, since he himself was not tired and was accustomed to do with only a few hours sleep.

The young sculptor was strongly attracted by this commanding personage. It had not escaped him that the gray-bearded stranger greatly resembled the Emperor; but Pontius had prepared him for the likeness, and in fact there was much in the eyes and mouth of the Roman architect that he had never traced in any portrait of Hadrian 'Imperator.' And as they stood before his scarcely-finished statue his respect increased for the new visitor to Lochias; for, with earnest frankness, he pointed out to him certain faults, and while praising the merits of the rapidly-executed figure he explained in a few brief and pithy phrases his own conception of the ideal Urania. Then shortly but clearly, he stated his views as to how the plastic artist must deal with the problems of his art.

The young man's heart beat faster, and more than once he turned hot and cold by turns as he heard things uttered by the bearded lips of this imposing man, in a rich voice and in lucid phrases, which he

had often divined or vaguely felt, but for which, while learning, observing, and working, he had never sought expression in words. And how kindly the great master took up his timid observations, how convincingly he answered them. Such a man as this he had never met, never had he bowed with such full consent before the superiority and sovereign power of another mind.

The second hour after midnight had begun, when Hadrian, standing before the rough-cast clay bust, asked Pollux:

"What is this to be?"

"A portrait of a girl."

"Probably of the complaisant model who ventures into Lochias at night?"

"No; a lady of rank will sit to me."

"An Alexandrian?"

"Oh, no. A beauty in the train of the Empress."

"What is her name? I know all the Roman ladies."

"Balbilla."

"Balbilla? There are many of that name. What is she like, the lady you mean?" asked Hadrian, with a cunning glance of amusement.

"That is easier to ask than to answer," replied the artist, who, seeing his gray-bearded companion smile, recovered his gay vivacity, "But stay—you have seen a peacock spread its tail—now only imagine that every eye in the train of Hera's bird was a graceful round curl, and that in the middle of the circle there was a charming, intelligent girl's face, with a merry little nose, and a rather too high forehead, and you will have the portrait of the young damsel who has graciously permitted me to model from her person."

Hadrian laughed heartily, threw off his cloak, and exclaimed:

"Stand aside—I know your maiden—and if I mean a different one you shall tell me."

While he was still speaking he had plunged his powerful hands into the yielding clay, and kneading and pinching like a practised modeller, wiping off and pressing on, he formed a woman's face with a towering structure of curls, which resembled Balbilla, but which reproduced every conspicuous peculiarity with such whimsical exaggeration that Pollux could not contain his delight. When at last Hadrian stepped back from the happy caricature and called upon him to say whether that were not indeed the Roman lady, Pollux exclaimed:

"It is as surely she, as you are not merely a great architect, but an admirable sculptor. The thing is coarse, but unmistakably characteristic."

The Emperor himself seemed to enjoy his artistic joke hugely, for he looked at it, and laughed again and again. Pontius, however, seemed to view it differently; he had listened with eager sympathy to the conversation between Hadrian and the sculptor, and had watched the former as he began his work; but as it went on he turned away, for he hated that distortion of fine forms, which he often found that the Egyptians took a special delight in. It was positively painful to him to see a graceful, highly-gifted and defenceless creature, to whom, too, he felt himself bound by ties of gratitude, mocked at in this way by such a man as Hadrian. He had only to-day met Balbilla for the first time, but he had heard from Titianus that she was staying at the Caesareum with the Empress, and the prefect had also told him that she was the granddaughter of that same governor, Claudius Balbillus, who had granted freedom to his own grandfather, a learned Greek slave.

He had met her with grateful sympathy and devotion; her bright and lively nature had delighted him, and at each thoughtless word she uttered he would have liked to give her some warning sign, as though she were near to him through some tie of blood, or some old established friendship that might warrant his right to do so. The defiant, half gallant way in which Verus, the dissipated lady-killer, had spoken to her had enraged him and filled him with anxiety, and long after the illustrious visitors had left Lochias he had thought of

her again and again, and had resolved, if it were possible, to keep a watchful eye on the descendant of the benefactor of his family. He felt it as a sacred duty to shelter and protect her, seeming to him as she did, an airy, pretty, defenceless song-bird.

The Emperor's caricature had the same effect on his feelings as though some one had insulted and scorned, before his eyes, something that ought to be regarded as sacred. And there stood the monarch, a man no longer young, gazing at his performance and never weary of the amusement it afforded him. It pained Pontius keenly, for like all noble natures, he could not bear to discover anything mean or vulgar in a man to whom he had always looked up as to a strong exceptional character. As an artist Hadrian ought not to have vilified beauty, as a man he ought not to have insulted unprotected innocence.

In the soul of the architect, who had hitherto been one of the Emperor's warmest admirers, a slight aversion began to dawn, and he was glad, when, at last, Hadrian decided to withdraw to rest.

The Emperor found in his room every requisite he was accustomed to use, and while his slave undressed him, lighted his night-lamp and adjusted his pillows, he said:

"This is the best evening I have enjoyed for years. Is Antinous comfortably in bed?"

"As much so as in Rome."

"And the big dog?"

"I will lay his rug in the passage at your door."

"Has he had any food?"

"Bones, bread and water."

"I hope you have had something to eat this evening."

"I was not hungry, and there was plenty of bread and wine."

"To-morrow we shall be better supplied. Now, good-night. Weigh your words for fear you should betray me. A few days here undisturbed would be delightful!"

With these words the Emperor turned over on his couch and was soon asleep.

Mastor, too, lay down to rest after he had spread a rug for the dog in the corridor outside the Emperor's sleeping-room. His head rested on a curved shield of stout cowhide under which lay his short sword; the bed was but a hard one, but Mastor had for years been used to rest on nothing better, and still had enjoyed the dreamless slumbers of a child; but to-night sleep avoided him, and from time to time he pressed his hand on his wearily open eyes to wipe away the salt dew which rose to them again and again. For a long time he had restrained these tears bravely enough, for the Emperor liked to see none but cheerful faces among his servants; nay, he had once said that it was in consequence of his bright eyes that he had entrusted to him the care of his person. Poor, cheerful Mastor! He was nothing but a slave, still he had a heart which lay open to joy and suffering, to pleasure and trouble, to hatred and to love.

In his childhood his native village had fallen into the hands of the foes of his race. He and his brother had been carried away as slaves, first into Asia Minor, and then as they were both particularly pretty fair-haired boys, to Rome. There they had been bought for the Emperor; Mastor had been chosen to wait on Hadrian's person, his brother had been put to work in the gardens. Nothing was lacking to either except his liberty; nothing tormented them but their longing for their native home, and even this altogether faded away after he had married the pretty little daughter of a superintendent of the gardens, a slave like himself. She was a lively little woman with sparkling eyes, whom no one could pass by without noticing.

The slave's duties left him but little time to enjoy the society of his pretty partner and of the two children she bore him, but the consciousness of possessing them made him happy when he followed his master to the chase, or in the journeys through the empire. Now, for seven months he had heard nothing of his family; but a short letter had reached him at Pelusium, which had been sent with the despatches for the Emperor from Ostia to Egypt. He could

not read, and in consequence of the Emperor's rapid travelling, it was not till he reached Lochias, that he was put in possession of its contents.

Before going to rest Antinous had read him the letter, which had been written for his brother by a public scribe, and its contents were enough to wreck the heart even of a slave. His pretty little wife had fled from her home and from the Emperor's service to follow a Greek ship's captain across the world; his eldest child, a boy, the darling of his heart, was dead; and his fair-haired tender little Tullia, with her pearly teeth, her round little arms, and her pretty tiny fingers that had often tried to pull his close-cropped hair, and had fondly stroked and patted it, had been carried off to the miserable refuge, under whose squalid roof the children of deceased slaves were reared. Only two hours since, and in fancy he had possessed a home, and a group of human beings, whom he could love. Now, this was all over and with however hard a hand the deepest woes might fall on him, he might not sob or groan aloud, or even roll from side to side as again and again he was violently prompted to do, for his lord slept lightly and the least noise might wake him. At sunrise he must appear before the Emperor as cheerful as usual, and yet he felt as if he must himself perish miserably as his happiness had done. His heart was bursting with anguish, still he neither groaned nor stirred.

CHAPTER XIII.

The night had been almost as sleepless to Keraunus' daughter Selene as it had been to the hapless slave. Her father's vain wish to let Arsinoe take a part with the daughters of the wealthier citizens had filled the girl's heart with fresh terrors. It was the final blow which would demolish the structure of their social existence, standing as it did on quaking ground, and which must fling her family and herself into disgrace and want. When their last treasure of any value was sold, and the creditors could no longer be put off, particularly during the Emperor's presence in the city, when they should try to sell up all her father's little property, or to carry him off to a debtor's prison, was it not then as good as certain that some one else would be appointed to fill his place, and that she and the other children would fall into misery? And there lay Arsinoe by her side, and slept with as calm and deep a breath as blind Helios and the other little ones.

Before going to bed she had tried with all the fervency and eloquence of which she was mistress, to persuade, entreat, and implore the heedless girl to refuse as positively as she herself had refused to take any part in the processions; but Arsinoe had at first repulsed her crossly, and finally had defiantly declared that means might yet very likely be found, and that what her father permitted, Selene had no right to interfere in, still less to forbid. And when afterwards she saw Arsinoe sleeping so calmly by her side, she felt as if she would like to shake her; but she was so accustomed to bear all the troubles of the family alone, and to be unkindly repelled by her sister whenever she attempted to admonish her, that she forbore.

Arsinoe had a good and tender heart, but she was young, pretty, and vain. With affectionate persuasion she might be won over to anything, but Selene, when ever she remonstrated with her, made her feel her superiority over herself, acquired from her care of the family and her maternal character. Thus, not a day passed without some quarrelling and tears between these two sisters who were so dissimilar, and yet, both so well disposed. Arsinoe was always the first to offer her hand for a reconciliation, but Selene would rarely have a kinder answer ready to her affectionate advances than, "Let

be," or "Oh yes, I know!" and their outward intercourse bore an aspect of coolness, which was easily worked up to an outbreak of hostile speeches. Hundreds of times they would go to bed without wishing each other 'good-night,' and still more often would they avoid any morning greeting when they first met in the day.

Arsinoe liked talking, but in Selene's presence she was taciturn; there were few things in which Selene took pleasure, while her sister delighted in every thing which can charm youth. It was the steward's eldest daughter who attended to the daily needs of the children, their food and clothes; it was the second who superintended their games, and their dolls. The eldest watched and taught them with anxious care, detecting in every little fault the germ of some evil tendency in the future, while the other enticed them into follies, it is true, but opened their minds to joyous impressions, and attained more by kisses and kind words than Selene could by fault-finding. The children would call Selene when they wanted her, but would fly to Arsinoe as soon as they saw her. Their hearts were hers, and Selene felt this bitterly; it seemed to her to be unjust, for she saw clearly that her sister could reap, from mere frivolous play in her idle hours, a sweeter reward than she could earn by the anxiety, trouble and exhausting toil, in which she often spent her nights.

But children are not unjust in this way. It is true that they keep an account in their heart and not in their head. Those who give them the warmth of affection they pay back most honestly.

On this particular night it was not, it is certain, with very sisterly feelings that Selene looked at the sleeping Arsinoe, and the words on the girl's lips as she had dropped asleep, had sounded very unkind; but, nevertheless, they felt warmly towards each other, and any one who should have attempted to say a word against the one in the presence of the other would soon have found out how close a bond held together these two hearts, dissimilar as they were. But no girl of nineteen can pass a night altogether without sleeping, however sadly she may turn and turn over and over again in her bed. So slumber overmastered Selene every now and then for a quarter of an hour, and each time she dreamed of her sister.

Once she saw Arsinoe dressed out like a queen, followed by beggar children and pelted with bad words—then she saw her on the rotunda below the balcony romping with Pollux, and in their bold sport they broke her mother's bust. At last she dreamed that she herself was playing—as in the days of her childhood—in the gate-keeper's garden with the sculptor. They were making cakes of sand together, and Arsinoe jumped on the cakes as soon as they were made, and trod them all into dust.

The pretty pale girl had for a long time ceased to know the refreshing, dreamless, sound sleep of youth, for the sweetest slumbers are more apt to seek out those who by day have some rest, than those who are worn out by fatigue, and evening after evening Selene was one of these. Every night she had dreams, but tonight they were almost exclusively sad in character, and so terrifying that she woke herself repeatedly with her own groaning, or disturbed Arsinoe's peaceful sleep by loud cries.

These cries did not disturb her father, he—to-night, as every night—had begun to snore soon after he had gone to rest, never to cease till it was time to rise again.

Selene was always busy in the house before any one, even before the slaves; and the approach of day this time seemed to the sleepless girl a real release. When she rose it was still perfectly dark, but she knew that the rising of the December sun could not be long to wait for.

Without paying any heed to the sleepers, or making any special effort to tread noiselessly, or to do what she had to do without disturbing them, she lighted her little lamp, at the night-lamp, washed herself, arranged her hair, and then knocked at the doors of the old slaves.

As soon as they had yawned out "directly," or a sleepy "very well," she went into her father's room and took his jug to fetch him fresh water in it. The best well in the palace was on a small terrace on the west side; it was supplied by the city aqueducts, and was constructed of five marble monsters, bearing up on twisted fishtails a huge shell, in which sat a bearded river-god. Their horse-shaped

heads poured water into a vast basin, which, in the lapse of centuries, had grown full of a green and filmy vegetation.

In order to reach this fountain, Selene had to go along the corridor where lay the rooms occupied by the Emperor and his followers. She only knew that an architect from Rome had taken up his quarters at Lochias, for, some time after midnight, she had been to get out meat and salt for him, but in what rooms the strangers had been lodged no one had told her. But this morning as she followed the path she was accustomed to tread day by day at the same hour, she felt an anxious shiver. She felt as if everything were not quite the same as usual, and just as she had set her foot on the cop step of the flight leading to the corridor, she raised her lamp to discover whence came the sound she thought she could hear, she perceived in the gloom a fearful something which as she approached it resembled a dog, and which was larger – much larger – than a dog should be.

Her blood ran cold with terror; for a few moments she stood as if spellbound, and was only conscious that the growling and snarling that she heard meant mischief and threatening to herself. At last she found strength to turn to fly, but at the same instant a loud and furious bark echoed behind her and she heard the monster's quick leaps as he flew after her along the stone pavement.

She felt a violent shock, the pitcher flew out of her hand and was shattered into a thousand fragments, and she sank to the ground under the weight of a warm, rough, heavy mass. Her loud cries of alarm resounded from the hard bare walls, and roused the sleepers and brought them to her side.

"See what it is," cried Hadrian to his slave, who had immediately sprung up and seized his shield and sword.

"The dog has attacked a woman who wanted to come this way," replied Mastor.

"Hold him off, but do not beat him," the Emperor shouted after him. "Argus has only done his duty." The slave hastened down the passage as fast as possible, loudly calling the dog by his name. But another had been beforehand and had dragged him off his victim,

and this was Antinous, whose room was close to the scene of action, and who, as soon as he had heard the dog's bark and Selene's scream, had hurried to hold back the brute which was really dangerous when on guard and in the dark.

When Mastor appeared the lad had just succeeded in dragging the dog away from Selene, who was lying on the stairs leading to the corridor. Before Antinous could reach her Argus was standing over her gnashing his teeth and growling. Argus, who was quickly quieted by his friends' tone of kindly admonition, stood aside silent and with his head down while Antinous knelt by the senseless girl on whom the pale light of early dawn fell through—wide window. The boy looked with alarm on her pale face, lifted her helpless arm, and sought on her light-colored dress for any trace of blood that might have been drawn, but in vain. After he had assured himself that she still breathed, and that her lips moved, he called to Mastor:

"Argus seems only to have pulled her down, not to have wounded her; she has lost consciousness however. Go quickly into my room and bring me the blue phial out of my medicine-case and a cup of water."

The slave whistled to the hound and obeyed the order as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile Antinous remained on his knees by the senseless girl, and ventured to raise her head with its long soft weight of hair. How beautiful were those marble-white, and nobly-cut features! How touching did the silent accent of pain that lay on her lips seem to him, and how happy was the spoilt darling of the Emperor, who was loved by all who saw him, to be able to be tender and helpful, unasked!

"Wake up, oh! wake up!" he cried to Selene—and when still she did not move, he repeated more urgently and tenderly, "Pray, pray wake up."

But she did not hear him, and remained motionless even when, with a slight blush, he drew over her shoulder her peplum, which the dog had torn away. Now Mastor returned with the water and the blue phial, and gave them to the Bithynian. While Antinous laid

the girl's head in his lap, the slave was hurrying away, saying: "Caesar called me."

The lad moistened Selene's forehead with the reviving fluid, made her inhale the strong essence which the phial contained, and cried again loud and earnestly, "Wake, wake." — And presently her lips parted, showing her small, white teeth, and then she slowly raised the lids which had veiled her eyes. With a deep sigh of relief he set the cup and the phial on the ground so as to support her when she slowly began to raise herself; but, scarcely had he turned his face towards her, when she sprang up suddenly and violently, and flinging both her arms round his neck, cried out:

"Save me, Pollux, save me! The monster is devouring me." Antinous much startled, seized the girl's arms to release himself from their embrace, but, she had already freed him and sunk back on to the ground. The next moment she was shivering violently as if from an attack of fever; again she threw up her hands, pressed them to her temples, and gazed with terror and bewilderment into the face that bent above her.

"What is it? Who are you?" she asked, in a low voice.

He rose quickly, and while he supported her as she attempted to rise and stand upon her feet, he said:

"The gods be praised that you are still alive. Our big hound threw you down-and he has terrible teeth." Selene was now standing up, and face to face with the boy at whose last words she shuddered again.

"Do, you feel any pain?" asked Antinous, anxiously.

"Yes," she said, dully.

"Did he bite you?"

"I think not — pick up that pin, it has fallen out of my dress."

The Bithynian obeyed her behest, and while the girl re-fastened her peplum over her shoulders she asked him again:

"Who are you? How came the dog in our palace?"

"He belongs—he belongs to us. We arrived late last night, and Pontius put us —"

"Then you are with the architect from Rome?"

"Yes, but who are you?"

"Selene is my name, I am the daughter of the palace-steward."

"And who is Pollux, whom you were calling to help you when you recovered your senses?"

"What does that matter to you?"

Antinous colored, and answered in confusion:

"I was startled when you suddenly roused up, with his name so loudly on your lips, when I brought you back to life with water and this essence."

"Well, I was roused—and now I can walk again. People who bring furious dogs into a strange place, should know how to take better care of them. Tie the dog up safely, for the children—my little brothers and sisters—come this way when they want to go out. Thank you for your help—and my pitcher?"

As she spoke she looked down on the remains of the pretty jar, which was one her mother had particularly valued. When she saw the fragments lying on the ground, she gave a deep sob, but she shed no tears. Then she exclaimed angrily: "It is infamous!"

With these words she turned her back on Antinous and returned to her father's room, using her left foot, however, with caution, for it was very painful.

The young Bithynian gazed in silence at Selene's tall, slight form, he felt prompted to follow her, to say to her how very sorry he was for the mischance that had befallen her, and that the hound belonged not to him but to another man; but he dared not. Long after she had disappeared from sight he stood on the same spot. At

last he collected his senses, and slowly went back to his room, where he sat on his couch with his eyes fixed dreamily on the ground, till the Emperor's call roused him from his reverie.

Selene had hardly vouchsafed Antinous a glance. She was in pain not merely in her left foot, but also in the back of her head where she found there was a deep cut; but her thick hair had staunched the blood that flowed from the wound. She felt very tired, and the loss of her pretty jug, which must also be replaced by another, vexed her far more than the beauty of the favorite had charmed her.

She slowly and wearily entered the sitting-room, where her father was by this time waiting for her and his water. He was accustomed to have it regularly at the same hour, and as Selene was absent longer than usual, he could think of no better way of filling up the time than by grumbling and scolding to himself; when, at last, his daughter appeared on the threshold, he at once perceived that she had no jug, and said crossly:

"And am I to have no water to-day?"

Selene shook her head, sank into a seat, and began to cry softly.

"What is the matter?" asked her father.

"The pitcher is broken," she said sadly.

"You should take better care of such expensive things," scolded her father. "You are always complaining of want of money, and at the same time you break half our belongings."

"I was thrown down," answered Selene, drying her eyes.

"Thrown down! by whom?" asked the steward, slowly rising.

"By the architect's big dog – the architect who came last night from Rome, and to whom we gave that meat and salt in the middle of the night. He slept here, at Lochias."

"And he set his clog on my child!" shouted Keraunus, with an angry glare.

"The hound was alone in the passage when I went there."

"Did it bite you?"

"No, but it pulled me down, and stood over me, and gnashed its teeth—oh! it was horrible."

"The cursed, vagabond scoundrel!" growled the steward, "I will teach him how to behave in a strange house!"

"Let him be," said Selene, as she saw her father about to don the saffron cloak.

"What is done cannot be undone, and if quarrels and dissensions come of it, it will make you ill."

"Vagabonds! impudent rascals! who fill my palace with quarrelsome curs," muttered Keraunus without listening to his daughter, and as he settled the folds of his pallium he growled "Arsinoe! why is it that girl never hears me."

When she appeared he desired her to heat the irons to curl his hair.

"They are ready by the fire," answered Arsinoe. "Come into the kitchen with me."

Keraunus followed her, and had his locks curled and scented, while his younger children stood round him waiting for the porridge which Selene usually prepared for them at this hour.

Keraunus responded to their morning greetings with nods as friendly as Arsinoe's tongs, which held his head tightly by the hair, would allow. It was only the blind Helios, a pretty boy of six, that he drew to his side and gave a kiss on his cheek. He loved this child, who, though deprived of the noblest of the senses, was always merry and contented, with peculiar tenderness. Once he even laughed aloud when the child clung to his sister, as she brandished the tongs, and said:

"Father, do you know why I am sorry I cannot see?"

"Well?" said his father.

"Because I should so like to see you for once with the beautiful curls which Arsinoe makes with the irons." But the steward's mirth was checked when his daughter, pausing in her labors, said half in jest, but half in earnest:

"Have you thought any more about the Emperor's arrival, father? I smarten and dress you so fine every day – but to-day you ought to think of dressing me."

"We will see about it," said Keraunus evasively. "Do you know," said Arsinoe, after a short pause, as she twisted the last lock in the freshly-heated tongs, "I thought it all over last night again. If we cannot succeed any way in scraping together the money for my dress, we can still –"

"Well?"

"Even Selene can say nothing against it."

"Against what?"

"But, you will be angry!"

"Speak out."

"You pay taxes like the rest of the citizens."

"What has that to do with it?"

"Well then, we are justified in expecting something from the city."

"What for?"

"To pay for my dress for the festival which is got up for the Emperor, not by an individual, but by the citizens as a body. We could not accept alone, but it is folly to refuse what a rich municipality offers. That is neither more nor less than making them a present."

"You be silent," cried Keraunus, really furious, and trying in vain to remember the argument with which, only yesterday, he had refused the same suggestion. "Be silent, and wait till I begin to talk about such matters."

Arsinoe flung the tongs on the hearth with so much annoyance that they fell on the stone with a loud clatter; but her father quitted the kitchen and returned to the sitting-room. There he found Selene lying on a couch, and the old slave-woman, who had tied a wet handkerchief round the girl's head, pressing another to her bare left foot.

"Wounded!" cried Keraunus, and his eyes rolled slowly from right to left and from left to right.

"Look at the swelling!" cried the old woman in broken Greek, raising Selene's snow-white foot in her black hands for her father to see. "Thousands of fine ladies have hands that are not so small. Poor, poor little foot," and as she spoke the old woman pressed it to her lips.

Selene pushed her aside, and said, turning to her father:

"The cut on my head is nothing to speak of, but the muscles and veins here at the ankle are swelled and my leg hurts me rather when I tread. When the dog threw me down I must have hit it against the stone step."

"It is outrageous!" cried Keraunus, the blood again mounting to his head, "only wait and I will show them what I think of their goings on."

"No, no," entreated Selene, "only beg them politely to shut up the dog, or to chain it, so that it may not hurt the children."

Her voice trembled with anxiety as she spoke the words, for the dread, which, she knew not why, had so long been tormenting her lest her father should lose his place, seemed to affect her more than ever to-day.

"What! civil words after what has now happened?" cried Keraunus indignantly, and as if something quite unheard of had been suggested to him.

"Nay, nay, say what you mean," shrieked the old woman. "If such a thing had occurred to your father he would have fallen on the strange builder with a good thrashing."

"And his son Keraunus will not let him off," declared the steward, quitting the room without heeding Selene's entreaty not to let himself be provoked.

In the ante-chamber he found his old slave whom he ordered to take a stick and go before him to announce him to Pontius' guest, the architect, who was lodging in the rooms in the wing near the fountain. This was the elegant thing to do, and by this means the black slave would meet the big dog before his master who held him and all dogs in the utmost abhorrence. As he approached his destination he found himself quite in the humor to speak his mind to the stranger who had come here with a ferocious hound to tear the members of his family.

CHAPTER XIV.

Hadrian had slept most comfortably; only a few hours it is true, but they had sufficed to refresh his spirit. He was now in his sitting-room and had gone to the window, which took up more than half the extent of the long west wall of the room, and opened on the sea. The wide opening, which extended downwards to within a few spans of the floor, was finished at either side by a tall pillar of fine reddish-brown porphyry, flecked with white, and crowned with gilt Corinthian capitals.

Against one of these the Emperor was leaning stroking the blood-hound, whose prompt and vigorous watchfulness had pleased him greatly. What did he care for the terrors the dog might have caused a mere girl?

By the other pillar stood Antinous; he had placed his right foot on the low window-sill, and with his chin resting on his hand and his elbow on his knee, his figure was well within the room.

"This, Pontius, is really a first-rate man," said Hadrian, pointing to a tapestry hanging across the narrow end of the room. "This hanging was copied from a fruit-piece that I painted some time since, and had executed here in mosaic. Yesterday this room was not even intended for my use, thus the hanging must have been put up between our arrival and this morning. And how many other beautiful things I see around me! The whole place looks habitable, and the eye finds an abundance of objects on which it can rest with pleasure."

"Have you examined that magnificent cushion?" asked Antinous; "and the bronze figures, there in the corner, look to me far from bad."

"They are admirable works," said Hadrian. "Still, I would do without them with pleasure rather than miss this window. Which is the bluer, the sky or the sea? And what a delicious spring breeze fans us here, in the middle of December. Which are the more delightful to contemplate, the innumerable ships in the harbor, which communicate between this flowery land and other countries, and bless it with wealth, or the buildings which attract the eye in

whichever direction it turns. It is difficult to know whether most to admire their stately dimensions or the beauty of their forms."

"And what is that long, huge dyke, which connects the island with the mainland? Only look! There is a huge trireme passing under one of the wide arches, on which it is supported—and there comes another."

"That is the great viaduct, called by the Alexandrians the Heptastadion, because it is said to be seven stadia in length; and in the upper portion it carries a stone water-course—as an elder tree has in it a vein of pith—which supplies water to the island of Pharos."

"What a pity it is," said Antinous, "that we cannot overlook from here the whole of the structure with the men and the vehicles that swarm upon it like busy ants. That little island and the narrow tongue of land that runs out into the harbor with the tall slender building at the end of it, half hide it."

"But they serve to vary the picture," replied the Emperor. "Cleopatra often dwelt in the little castle on the island with its harbor, and in that tall tower on the northern side of the peninsula, round which, just now, the blue waves are playing, while the gulls and pigeons fly happily over it—there Antony retreated after the fight of Actium."

"To forget his disgrace!" exclaimed Antinous.

"He named it his Timonareum, because he hoped there to remain unmolested by other human beings, like the wise misanthrope of Athens. How would it be if I called Lochias my Timonareum?"

"No man need try to hide fame and greatness."

"Who told you that it was shame that led Antony to hide himself in that place?" asked the imperial sophist; "he proved often enough, at the head of his cavalry, that he was a brave soldier; and though at Actium, when all was still going well, he let his ship be turned, it was out of no fear of swords and spears, but because Fate compelled him to subjugate his strong will to the wishes of a woman with whose destiny his was linked."

"Then do you excuse his conduct?"

"I only seek to account for it, and never, for a moment, could allow myself to believe that shame ever prompted a single act in Antony. I—do you suppose I could ever blush? Nay, we cease to feel shame when we have lived to feel such profound contempt for the world."

"But why then should Marc Antony have shut himself up, in yonder sea-washed prison?"

"Because, to every true man, who has dissipated whole years of his life with women, jesters and flatterers, a moment comes of satiety and loathing. In such an hour he feels that of all the men under the lights of heaven, he, himself, is the only one with whom it is worth his while to commune. After Actium, this was what Antony felt, and he quitted the society of men in order to find himself for once in good company."

"It is that, no doubt, which drives you now and again into solitude."

"No doubt-but you are always allowed to follow me."

"Then you regard me as better than others," exclaimed Antinous joyfully.

"As more beautiful at any rate," replied Hadrian kindly. "Ask me some more questions."

But Antinous needed a few minutes pause before he could comply with this desire. At last he recollected himself and proceeded to inquire why most of the vessels were moored in the harbor beyond the Heptastadion, known as Eunostus. The entrance there was less dangerous than that between the Pharos and the point of Lochias which led into the eastern landing-places. And then Hadrian could give him information as to every building in the city about which his companion evinced any curiosity. But when the Emperor had pointed out the Soma, under which rested the remains of Alexander the Great, he became thoughtful, and said, as if to himself:

"The Great—We may well envy the young Macedonian; not the mere name of Great, for many of small worth have had it bestowed on them, but because he really earned it!"

There was not a question put by the handsome Bithynian that Hadrian could not answer; Antinous followed all his explanations with growing astonishment, exclaiming at last:

"How perfectly well you know this place—and yet you never were here before."

"It is one of the greatest pleasures of travelling," replied Hadrian, "that on our journeys we come to know many things in their actuality of which we have formed an idea from books and narratives. This requires us to compare the reality with the pictures in our own minds, seen with the inward eye, before we saw the reality. It is to me a far smaller pleasure to be surprised by something new and unexpected than to make myself more closely acquainted with something I know already sufficiently to deem it worthy to be known better. Do you understand what I mean?"

"To be sure I do. We hear of a thing, and when we afterwards see it we ask ourselves whether we have conceived of it rightly. But I always picture people or places which I hear much praised, as much more beautiful than I ever find the reality."

"The balance of difference, which is to the disadvantage of reality," answered Hadrian, "stands not so much to its discredit, as to the credit of the eager and beautifying power of your youthful imagination. I—I—" and the Emperor stroked his beard and gazed out into the distance. "I learn by experience that the older I grow, the more often I find it possible so to imagine men, places, and things that I have not seen as that when I meet them in real life for the first time, I feel justified in fancying that I have known them long since, visited them, and beheld them with my bodily eyes. Here, for instance, I feel as if I saw nothing new, but only gazed once more at what has long been familiar. But that is no wonder, for I know my Strabo, and have heard and read a hundred accounts of this city. Still there are many things which are quite strange to me, and yet as they come before me make me feel as if I had seen or known them long ago."

"I have felt something like that," said Antinous. "Can our souls have ever lived in other bodies, and sometimes recall the impressions made in that former existence?"

"Favorinus once told me that some great philosopher, Plato, I think, asserts that before we are born our souls are wafted about in the firmament that they may contemplate the earth on which they are destined subsequently to dwell. Favorinus says too —"

"Favorinus!" cried Hadrian, evasively. "That graceful elocutionist has plenty of skill in giving new and captivating forms to the thoughts of the great philosophers; but he has not been able to surprise the secret of his own soul—besides, he talks too much, and he cannot dispense with the excitement of life."

"Still you have recognized the phenomenon, but you disapprove of Favorinus' explanation of it?"

"Yes, for I have met men and things as old acquaintances which never saw the light till long after I was born. Possibly my own interpretation may not adapt itself to the consciousness of all—but in myself, I know for certain, there dwells a mysterious something which stirs and works in me independently of myself, which enters into me, and takes its departure at its will. Call it as you will, my Daimon, or even my Genius—the name matters not. Nor will this 'something' always come at my bidding, while it often possesses me when I least expect it. In those moments when it stirs within me, I am master of much which is peculiar to the experience and potentiality of that hour. What is known to that Daimon always appears to me the very same when I actually meet it. Thus Alexandria is not unknown to me, because my Genius has seen it in his flights. It has learnt and done much, both in me and for me; a hundred times, face to face with my own finished works I have asked myself: 'Is it possible that you—Hadrian—your mother's son—can have achieved this? What then is the mysterious power that aided you to do it?' Now I also recognize it, and can see it work in others. The man in whom it dwells soon excels his fellows, and it is most manifest in artists. Or is it that mere common men become great artists simply because the Genius selects them as his temple to dwell in? Do you follow me, boy?"

"Not altogether," replied Antinous, and his large eyes which had sparkled brightly so long as he gazed with the Emperor on the city, were now cast down and fixed wearily on the ground. "Do not be angry with me, my Lord, but I shall never understand such things as these, for there is no man with whom your Genius, as you term it, has less concern than with me. Thoughts of my own have I none, and it is difficult to me to follow the thoughts of others; indeed I should like to know how I am ever to do anything right. When I want to work, to work something out, no Daimon helps my soul; no—it feels quite helpless, and drifts into dreaminess. And if I ever do complete anything, I am obliged to own to myself that I certainly might have been able to do it better."

"Self-knowledge," laughed Hadrian, "is the climax of wisdom. A man has done something if he has only added a 'thing of beauty' to the joys of a friend's imagination; what others do by hard work you do by mere existence. Be quiet, Argus!" For, while he was speaking, the hound had risen, and had gone snarling to the door. In spite of his master's orders he broke into a loud bark when he heard a steady knock at the door. Hadrian looked round in bewilderment, and asked: "Where is Mastor?"

Antinous shouted the slave's name into the Emperor's bedroom, which was next to the living-room, but in vain. "He generally is always at hand, and as brisk as a lark, but to-day he looked as if in a dream, and while he was dressing me he first let my shoe fall out of his hand and then my brooch."

"I read him yesterday a letter from Rome. His young wife has gone away with a ship's captain."

"We may wish him joy of being free again."

"It does not seem to afford him any satisfaction."

"Oh! a handsome lad like my body-slave can find as many substitutes as he likes."

"But he has not done so. For the present he is still smarting under his loss."

"How wise! There, some one is knocking again. Just see who ventures – but to be sure any one has a right to knock, for at Lochias I am not the Emperor, but a simple private gentleman. Lie down Argus, are you crazy, old fellow? Why the dog maintains my dignity better than I do, and he does not seem altogether to like the architect's part I am playing."

Antinous had already raised his hand to lift the handle, when the door was gently opened from outside, and the steward's slave stood on the threshold. The old negro presented a lamentable spectacle. The Emperor's dignified and awe-compelling figure, and his favorite's rich garments made him feel embarrassed, and the hound's threatening growl filled him with such terror that he huddled his lean negro-legs together, and, as far as its length would allow, tried to cover them for protection with his threadbare tunic.

Hadrian gazed in astonishment at this image of fear, and then asked:

"Well! what do you want, fellow?"

The slave attempted to advance a step or two, but at a loud command from Hadrian he stood still, and as he looked down at his flat feet, he ruefully scratched his short-cropped grey hair, some of which had fallen off and left a bald patch.

"Well," repeated Hadrian, in a tone which was anything rather than encouraging, as he relaxed his hold on the hound's collar in a somewhat suspicious manner. The slave's bent knees began to quake, and holding out his broad palm to the grey-bearded gentleman, who seemed to him hardly less alarming than the dog, he began to stammer out in fearfully-mutilated Greek the speech which his master had repeated to him several times, and which set forth that he had come "into the presence of the architect, Claudius Venator, of Rome, to announce the visit of his master, a member of the town-council, a Macedonian, and a Roman citizen, Keraunus, the son of Ptolemy, steward of the once royal but now imperial palace at Lochias."

Hadrian unrelentingly allowed the poor wretch to finish his speech, rubbing his hands with amusement, while the sweat of

anguish stood on the old slave's face, and to prolong the delightful joke, he took good care not to help the miserable old man when his unaccustomed tongue came to some insuperable difficulty. When, at length, the negro had finished the pompous announcement, Hadrian said, kindly:

"Tell your master he may come in."

Scarcely had the slave left the room, when the sovereign, turning to his favorite, exclaimed:

"This is a delicious joke! What will the Jupiter be like, when the eagle is such a bird as this!"

Keraunus was not long to wait for. While pacing up and down the passage outside the Emperor's room, his bad humor had risen considerably, for he took it as a slight on the part of the architect, that he should allow him — whose birth and dignities he would have learnt from his slave — to wait several minutes, each of which seemed to him a quarter of an hour. His expectation too, that the Roman would come to conduct him in person into his apartment was by no means fulfilled, for the slave's message was briefly — "He may come in."

"Did he say may? Did he not say 'please to come in, or have the goodness to come in?'" asked the steward.

"He may come in — was what he said," replied the slave.

Keraunus grunted out, "Well!" set his gold circlet straight on his head which he held very upright, crossed his arms over his broad chest with a sigh, and ordered the black man:

"Open the door."

The steward crossed the threshold with much dignity: then, not to commit any breach of courtesy, he bowed low, and was about to begin to utter his reprimand in cutting terms, when a glance at the Emperor and at the splendid decoration which the room had undergone since the day previous, not to mention the very unpleasant growling of the big dog, prompted him to strike a milder string. His slave had followed him and had sought a safe corner

near the door, between the wall of the room and a couch, but he himself, conquering his alarm at the dog, went forward some distance into the room. The Emperor had seated himself on the window-sill; he pressed his foot lightly on the head of the dog, and gazed at Keraunus as at some remarkable curiosity. His eye thus met that of the steward and made him clearly understand that he had to do with a greater personage than he had expected. There was something imposing in the person of the man who sat before him; for this very reason, however, his pride stood on tiptoe, and he asked in a tone of swaggering dignity, though not so sharply and abruptly as he had intended.

"Am I standing before the new visitor to Lochias, the architect Claudius Venator of Rome?"

"You are—standing—" replied the Emperor, with a roguish side glance at Antinous.

"You have met with a friendly reception to this palace. Like my fathers, who have enjoyed the stewardship of it for centuries, I know how to exercise the sacred duties of hospitality."

"I am surprised to hear of the high antiquity of your family and bow to your pious sentiments," answered Hadrian, in the same tone as the steward. "What farther may I learn from you?"

"I did not come here to relate history," said Keraunus, whose gall rose as he thought he detected a mocking smile on the stranger's lips. "I did not come here to tell stories, but to complain that you, as a warmly-welcomed guest, show so little anxiety to protect your host from injury."

"How is that?" asked Hadrian, rising from his seat and signing to Antinous to hold back the hound, which manifested a peculiar aversion to the steward. It no doubt detected that he had come to show no special friendliness to his owner.

"Is that dangerous dog, gnashing its teeth there, your property?" asked Keraunus.

"Yes."

"This morning it threw down my daughter and smashed a costly pitcher, which she is fond of carrying to fetch water in the dawn."

"I heard of that misadventure," said Hadrian, "and I would give much if I could undo it. The vessel shall be amply made good to you."

"I beg you not to add insult to the injury, we have suffered by your fault. A father whose daughter has been knocked down and hurt — "

"Then, Argus actually bit her?" cried Antinous, horrified.

"No," Keraunus replied. "But as she fell her head and foot have been injured, and she is suffering much pain."

"That is very sad," said Hadrian, "and as I am not ignorant of the healing art, I will gladly try to help the poor girl."

"I pay a professional leech, who attends me and mine," replied the steward, in a repellant tone, "and I came hither to request — or, to be frank with you — to require — "

"What?"

"First, that my pardon shall be asked."

"That, the artist, Claudius Venator, is always ready to do when any one has suffered damage by his fault. What has happened — I repeat it — grieves me sincerely, and I beg you tell the maiden to whom the accident happened, that her pain is mine. What more do you desire?"

The steward's features had calmed down at these last words, and he answered with less excitement than before:

"I must request you to chain up your dog, or to shut it up, or in some way to keep it from mischief."

"That is pretty strong!" cried the Emperor.

"It is only a reasonable demand, and I must stand by it," replied Keraunus decidedly. "Neither I—nor my children's lives are safe, so long as this wild beast is prowling about at pleasure."

Hadrian had, ere now, erected monuments to deceased favorites, both dogs and horses, and his faithful Argus was no less dear to him, than other four-footed companions have been to other childless men; hence the queer fat man's demand seemed to him so audacious and monstrous, that he indignantly exclaimed:

"Folly!—the dog shall be watched, but nothing farther."

"You will chain him up," replied Keraunus, with an angry, glare, "or someone will be found who will make him harmless forever."

"That will be an evil attempt for the cowardly murderer!" cried Hadrian. "Eh! Argus, what do you think?"

At these words the dog drew himself up, and would have sprung at the steward's throat if his master and Antinous had not held him back.

Keraunus felt that the dog had threatened him, but at this instant he would have let himself be torn by him without wincing, so completely was he overmastered by the fury born of his injured pride.

"And am I—I too, to be hunted down by a dog, in this house?" he cried defiantly, setting his left fist on his hip. "Every thing has its limits, and so has my patience with a guest who, in spite of his ripe age forgets due consideration. I will inform the prefect Titianus of your proceedings here, and when the Emperor arrives he shall know—"

"What?" laughed Hadrian.

"The way you behave to me."

"Till then the dog shall stay where it is, and really under due restraint. But I can tell you man, that Hadrian is as much a friend of dogs as I am—and fonder of me than even of dogs."

"We will see," growled Keraunus, "I or the dog!"

"I am afraid it will be the dog then."

"And Rome will see a fresh revolt," cried Keraunus, rolling his eyes. "You took Egypt from the Ptolemies."

"And with very good reason—besides that is a stale old story."

"Justice is never stale, like a bad debt."

"At any rate it perishes with persons it concerns; there have been no Lagides left here—how many years?"

"So you believe, because it suits your ends to believe it," replied the steward. "In the man who stands before you flows the blood of the Macedonian rulers of this country. My eldest son bears the name of Ptolemaeus Helios—that borne by the last of the Lagides, who perished as you pretend."

"Dear, good, blind Helios!" interrupted the black slave; for he was accustomed to avail himself of the hapless child's name as a protection, when Keraunus was in a doubtful humor.

"Then the last descendant of the Ptolemies is blind!" laughed the Emperor. "Rome may ignore his claims. But I will inform the Emperor how dangerous a pretender this roof yet harbors."

"Denounce me, accuse me, calumniate me!" cried the steward, contemptuously. "But I will not let myself be trodden on. Patience—patience! you will live to know me yet."

"And you, the blood-hound," replied Hadrian, "if you do not this instant quit the room with your mouthing crow—"

Keraunus signed to his slave and without greeting his foe in any way, turned his back upon him. He paused for a moment at the door of the room and cried out to Hadrian:

"Rely upon this, I shall complain to the Council and write to Caesar how you presume to behave to a Macedonian citizen."

As soon as the steward had quitted the room, Hadrian freed the dog, which flew raging at the door which was closed between him and the object of his aversion. Hadrian ordered him to be quiet, and then turning to his companion, he exclaimed:

"A perfect monster of a man! to the last degree ridiculous, and at the same time repulsive. How his rage seethed in him, and yet could not break out fairly and thoroughly. I am always on my guard with such obstinate fools. Pay attention to my Argus, and remember, we are in Egypt, the land of poison, as Homer long since said. Mastor must keep his eyes open — Here he is at last."

CHAPTER XV.

After the Emperor's body-slave had started up to go to the aid of Selene, who was attacked by his sovereign's dog, something had happened to him which he could not forget; he had received an impression which he could not wipe out, and words and tones had stirred his mind and soul which incessantly echoed in them, so that it was in a preoccupied and half-dreamy way that he had done his master those little services which he was accustomed to perform every morning, briskly and with complete attention.

Summer and winter Mastor was accustomed to leave his master's bedroom before sunrise to prepare everything that Hadrian could need when he rose from his slumbers. There was the gold plating to clean on the narrow greaves and the leather straps which belonged to his master's military boots, his clothes to air and to perfume with the slight, hardly perceptible scent that he liked, but the preparations for Hadrian's bath were what took up most of his time. At Lochias there were not as yet—as there were in the imperial palace at Rome—properly-filled baths; still his servant knew that here, as there, his master would use a due abundance of water. He had been told that if he required anything for his master he was to apply to Pontius. Him he found, without seeking him, outside the room meant for Hadrian's sitting-room, to which, while the Emperor still slept, he was endeavoring, with the help of his assistants, to give a comfortable and pleasing aspect. The architect referred the slave to the workmen who were busy laying the pavement in the forecourt of the palace; these men would carry in for him as much water as ever he could need. The body-servant's position relieved him of such humble duties, still, when on the chase, when travelling, or as need arose, he was accustomed to perform them unasked, and very willingly.

The sun had not yet risen when he went out into the court, a number of slaves were lying on their mats asleep, others had camped round a fire and were waiting for their early broth, which was being stirred with wooden sticks by an old man and a boy. Mastor would not disturb either group; he went up to a party of workmen, who seemed to be talking together, and yet remained

attentive to the speech of an old man who was evidently telling them a story.

The poor fellow's heart was heavy and his mind was little bent on tales and amusements. All life was embittered. The services required of him usually seemed to him of paramount importance, beyond everything else; but to-day it was different. He had an obscure feeling as though fate herself had released him from all his duties, as if misfortune had cut the bonds which bound him to his service to the Emperor, and had made him an isolated and lonely being. It even came into his head whether he should not take in his hand all the gold pieces given him sometimes by Hadrian, or which the wealthy folks who wished to be the foremost of those introduced into the Emperor's presence, after waiting in the antechamber, had flung to him or slipped into his hand — make his escape and carouse away all that he possessed in the taverns of the great city, in wine and the gay company of women. It was all the same to him what might happen to him.

If he were caught he would probably be flogged to death; but he had had kicks and blows in plenty before he had got into the Emperor's service, nay; when he was brought to Rome he had once even been hunted with dogs. If he lost his life, after all what would it matter? He would have done with it then, once for all, and the future offered him no prospect but perpetual fatigue in the service of a restless master, anxiety and contempt. He was a thoroughly good-hearted being who could not bear to hurt any one, and who found it equally hard to disturb a fellow-man in his pleasures or amusement. He felt particularly disinclined to do so just now, for a wounded soul is keenly alive to the moods and feelings of others; so, as he approached the group of workmen, from among whom he proposed to choose his water-carrier, he determined that he would not interrupt the story-teller, on whose lips the gaze of his audience was riveted with interest.

The glare of the blaze under the soup-kettle fell full on the speaker's face. He was an old laborer, but his long hair proclaimed him a freeman. His abundant white beard induced Mastor to suppose that he must be a Jew or a Phoenician, but there was nothing remarkable in the old man, who was dressed in a poor and

scanty tunic, excepting his peculiarly brilliant eyes, which were immovably fixed on the heavens, and the oblique position in which he held his head, supporting it on the left side with his raised hands.

"And now," said the speaker, dropping his arms, "let us go back to our labors, my brethren. 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,' it is written. It is often hard to us old men to heave stones and bend our stiff backs for so long together, but we are nearer than you younger ones to the happy future. Life is not easy to all of us, but it is we who labor and are heavy laden—we above all others—that the Lord has bidden to be his guests, and not last among us the slaves."

"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you," interrupted one of the younger men repeating the words of Christ.

"Yea, thus saith the Saviour," said the old man approvingly, "and he surely then was thinking of us. I said just now our load is not light, but how much heavier was the burden he took upon him of his own free will to release us from woe. Every one must work, nay even Caesar himself, but he who could dwell in the glory of his Father let himself be mocked and scorned and spit in the face, let the crown of thorns be pressed on his suffering head, bore his heavy cross, sinking under its weight, and endured a death of torment, and all for our sakes, without a murmur. But he suffered not in vain, for God accepted the sacrifice of his Son, and did his will and said, 'All that believe on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And though a new and weary day is now beginning, and though it should be followed by a thousand wearier still, though death is the end of life—still we believe in our Redeemer, we have God's word bidding us out of sorrows and sufferings into his Heaven, promising us for a brief time of misery in this world, endless ages of joy.—Now go to work. Our sturdy friend Krates will work for you dear Knakias until your finger is healed. When the bread is distributed remember, each of you, the children of our poor deceased brother Philammon. You, poor Gibbus, will find your labors bitter to-day. This man's master, my dear brethren, sold both his daughters yesterday to a dealer from Smyrna; but if you never see them again in Egypt, or in any other country, my friend, you will meet them in

the home of your Heavenly Father—of that you may rest assured. Our life on earth is but a pilgrimage, and Heaven is the goal, and the Guide who teaches us never to miss the way, is our Saviour. Weariness and toil, sorrow and suffering are easy to bear, to him who knows that when the solemn hour is near, the King of Kings shall throw open his dwelling-place, and invite him to enter as a favored guest to inhabit there, where all we have loved have found joy and rest."

"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you," said a man's loud voice again from the circle that sat round the old man. The old man stood up, signed to a boy who distributed the bread in equal shares to the workmen, and took up a jar with handles, out of which he filled a large wooden cup with wine.

Not a word of this discourse had escaped Mastor, and the often repeated verse, "Come unto me all ye that labor," dwelt in his mind like the invitation of a hospitable friend bidding him to happy days of freedom and enjoyment. A distant gleam shone through the weight of his troubles, seeming to promise the dawn of a new day, and he reverently went up to the old man, in the first place to ask him if he was the overseer of the workmen who stood round him.

"I am," replied the old man, and as soon as he learnt what Mastor required as a commission from the controlling architect, he pointed out some young slaves who quickly brought the water that he needed.

Pontius met the Emperor's servant and his water-carriers and remarked, loudly enough for Mastor to understand him, to Pollux who was with him:

"The architect's servant is getting Christians to wait upon his master to-day. They are regular and sober workmen who do their duty silently and well."

While Mastor was giving his master towels, and helping to dry and dress him, he was far less attentive than usual, for he could not get the words he had heard from the overseer's lips out of his mind. He had not understood them all, but he had fully comprehended

that there was a kind and loving God who had suffered in his own person the utmost torments, who was especially gracious to the poor, the miserable, and the bondsman, and who promised to refresh them and comfort them, and to re-unite them to those who had once been dear to them. "Come unto me," sounded again and again in his ears, and struck so warmly to his heart that he could not help thinking first of his mother, who, so many a time, when he was a child, had called to him only to clasp him in her arms as he ran towards her, and to press him to her heart. Just so had he often called his poor little dead son, and the feeling that there could be any one who might still call to him – the forsaken lonely man – with loving words to release him from his griefs, to reunite him to his mother, his father, and all the dear ones left behind in his lost and distant home, took half the bitterness from his pain.

He was accustomed to listen to all that was said in the Emperor's presence, and year by year he had learnt to understand more of what he heard. He had often heard the Christians discussed, and usually as deluded but dangerous fools. Many of his fellow-slaves, too, he had heard called Christian idiots, but still not unfrequently very reasonable men, and sometimes even Hadrian himself, had taken the part of the Christians.

This was the first time that Mastor had heard from their own lips what they believed and hoped, and now, while fulfilling his duties he could hardly bear the delay before he could once more seek out the old pavement-worker, to enquire of him, and to have the hopes confirmed which his words had aroused in his soul.

No sooner had Hadrian and Antinous gone into the living-room than Mastor had hastened off across the court to find the Christians. There he tried to open a conversation with the overseer concerning his faith, but the old man answered that there was a season for everything; just now he could not interrupt the work, but that he might come again after sundown, and that he then would tell him of Him who had promised to refresh the sorrow-laden.

Mastor thought no more of making his escape. When he appeared again in his master's presence there was such a sunny light in his blue eyes that Hadrian left the angry words he had prepared for him

unspoken, and cried to Antinous, laughing and pointing to the slave:

"I really believe the rascal has consoled himself already, and found a new mate. Let us, too, follow the precept of Horace, so far as we may, and enjoy the present day. The poet may let the future go as it will, but I cannot, for, unfortunately, I am the Emperor."

"And Rome may thank the gods that you are," replied Antinous.

"What happy phrases the boy hits upon sometimes," said Hadrian with a laugh, and he stroked the lad's brown curls. "Now till noon I must work with Phlegon and Titianus, whom I am expecting, and then perhaps we may find something to laugh at. Ask the tall sculptor there behind the screens, at what hour Balbilla is to sit to him for her bust. We must also inspect the architect's work, and that of the Alexandrian artists by daylight; that, their zeal has well deserved."

Hadrian retired to the room where his private secretary had ready for him the despatches and papers for Rome and the provinces, which the Emperor was required to read and to sign. Antinous remained alone in the sitting-room, and for an hour he continued to gaze at the ships which came to anchor in the harbor, or sailed out of the roads, and amused himself with watching the swift boats which swarmed round the larger vessels, like wasps round ripe fruit. He listened to the songs of the sailors, and the music of the flute-players, to the measured beat of the oars, which came up from the triremes in the private harbor of the Emperor as they went out to sea. Even the pure blue of the sky and the warmth of the delicious morning were a pleasure to him, and he asked himself whether the smell of tar, which pervaded the seaport, were agreeable or not.

Presently as the sun mounted in the sky, its bright sphere dazzled him; he left the window with a yawn, stretched himself on a couch, and stared absently up at the ceiling of the room without thinking of the subject which the faded picture on it was intended to represent.

Idleness had long since grown to be the occupation of his life; but accustomed to it as he was, he was sometimes conscious of its dark attendant shadow ennui—as of a disagreeable and intrusive

interruption to the enjoyment of life. Generally in such lonely hours of idle reverie his thoughts reverted to his belongings in Bithynia, of whom he never dared to speak before the Emperor, or perhaps of the hunting excursions he had made with Hadrian, of the slaughtered game, of the fish he—an experienced angler—had caught, or such like. What the future might bring him troubled him not, for to the love of creativeness, to ambition—to all, in short, that bore any resemblance to a passionate excitement his soul had, so far, remained a stranger. The admiration which was universally excited by his beauty gave him no pleasure, and many a time he felt as though it was not worth while to stir a limb or draw a breath. Almost everything he saw was indifferent to him excepting a kind word from the lips of the Emperor, whom he regarded as great above all other men, whom he feared as Destiny incarnate, and to whom he felt himself bound as intimately as the flower to the tree, the blossom that must die when the stem is broken, on which it flaunts as an ornament and a grace.

But, to-day, as he flung himself on the divan his visions took a new direction. He could not help thinking of the pale girl whom he had saved from the jaws of the blood-hound—of the white cold hand which for an instant had clung to his neck—of the cold words with which she had afterwards repelled him.

Antinous began to long violently to see Selene. That same Antinous, to whom in all the cities he had visited with the Emperor, and in Rome particularly, the noble fair ones had sent branches of flowers and tender letters, and who nevertheless, since the day when he left his home, had never felt for any woman or girl half so tender a sentiment, as for the hunter the Emperor had given him, or for the big dog. This girl stood before his memory like breathing marble. Perchance the man might be doomed to death who should rest on her cold breast, but such a death must be full of ecstasy, and it seemed to him that it would be far more blissful to die with the blood frozen in his veins, than of the too rapid throbbing of his heart.

"Selene," he murmured, now and again, with soft hesitation; a strange unrest foreign to his calm nature seemed to propagate itself through all his limbs, and he who commonly would be stretched on

a couch for hours without stirring, lost in dreams, now sprang up and paced the room, sighing deeply, and with long strides.

It was a passionate longing for Selene that drove him up and down, and his wish to see her again crystallized into resolve, and prompted him to contrive the ways and means of meeting her once more before the Emperor's return.

Simply to invade her father's lodging without farther ceremony, seemed to him out of the question, and yet he was certain of finding her there, since her injured foot would of course keep her at home. Should he once more go to the steward with a request for bread and salt? But he dared not ask anything of Keraunus in Hadrian's name after the scene which had so recently taken place. Should he go there to carry her a new pitcher in the place of the broken one? But that would only freshly enrage the arrogant official.

Should he—should he—should he not? But no, it was quite impossible—still, that no doubt—that was the right idea. In his medicine-chest there were a few extracts which had been given to him by the Emperor; he would offer her one of these to dilute with water and apply to her bruised foot. And this act of sympathy could not displease even his master, who liked to prove his healing art on the sick or suffering. He at once called Mastor, and desired him to take charge of the hound which had followed his steps as he paced the room, then he went into his sleeping-room, took out a phial of a most costly essence, which Hadrian had given him on his last birthday, and which had formerly belonged to Trajan's wife, Kotina, and then proceeded to the steward's rooms. On the steps where he had found Selene, he found the black slave with some children. The old man had sat down them and got no farther for fear of the Roman's dog. Antinous went up to him and begged him to guide him to his master's quarters, and the negro immediately showed him the way, opened the door of the antechamber, and pointing to the living-room said:

"There—but Keraunus is absent."

Without troubling himself any further about Antinous the slave went back to the children, but the Bithyman stood irresolute, with his flask in his hand, for besides Selene's voice he heard that of

another girl and the deeper tones of a man. He was still hesitating when Arsinoe's loud exclamation of "Who's there?" obliged him to advance.

In the sitting-room Selene was standing dressed in a long light-colored robe with a veil over her head, as if prepared to go out, but Arsinoe was perched on the edge of a table, in such a way as that the tips of her toes only touched the ground, and on the table lay a quantity of old-fashioned things. Before her stood a Phoenician, of middle age, holding in his hand a finely-carved cup; apparently he was in treaty for it with the young girl.

Keraunus had been again to-day to a dealer in curiosities, but he had not found him at home, so he had left word at his shop that Hiram might call upon him in his rooms at Lochias, where he could show him several valuable rarities. The Phoenician had arrived before the return of the steward himself, who had been detained at a meeting of the town council, and Arsinoe was displaying her father's treasures, whose beauties she was extolling with much eloquence. Hiram unfortunately offered a no higher price than Gabinus, whom the steward had sent off so indignantly the previous evening.

Selene had been convinced from the first of the bootlessness of the attempt, and was now anxious to bring the transaction to a speedy conclusion, as the hour was approaching when she and Arsinoe had to go to the papyrus factory. To her sister's refusal to accompany her, and to the old slave-woman's entreaty that she would rest her foot, at any rate for to-day, she had responded only with a resolute, "I am going."

The appearance of the youth on the scene occasioned the girls some embarrassment. Selene recognized him at once, Arsinoe thought him handsome but awkward, while the curiosity-dealer gazed at him in perfect admiration, and was the first to offer him a greeting. Antinous returned it, bowed to the sisters, and then said turning to Selene:

"We heard that your head was cut, and your foot hurt, and as we were guilty of your mishap, we venture to offer you this phial which contains a good remedy for such injuries."

"Thank you," replied the girl. "But I feel already so well that I shall try to go out."

"That you certainly ought not to do," said Antinous, beseechingly.

"I must," replied Selene, gravely.

"Then, at any rate, take the phial to use for a lotion when you return. Ten drops in such a cup as that, full of water."

"I can try it when I come in."

"Do so, and you will see how healing it is. You are not vexed with us any longer?"

"No."

"I am glad of that!" cried the boy, fixing his large dreamy eyes on Selene with silent passion. This gaze displeased her, and she said more coldly than before to the Bithyman.

"To whom shall I give the phial when I have used the stuff in it?"

"Keep it, pray keep it," begged Antinous. "It is pretty, and will be twice as precious in my eyes when it belongs to you."

"It is pretty-but I do not wish for presents."

"Then destroy it when you have done with it. You have not forgiven us our dog's bad behavior, and we are sincerely sorry that our dog—"

"I am not vexed with you. Arsinoe pour the medicine into a saucer."

The steward's younger daughter immediately obeyed, and noticing as she did so, how pretty the phial was, sparkling with various colors, she said frankly enough:

"If my sister will not have it, give it to me. How can you make such a pother about nothing, Selene?"

"Take it," said Antinous, looking anxiously at the ground, for it had now just occurred to him how highly the Emperor had valued this little bottle, and that he might possibly ask him some time what had become of it. Selene shrugged her shoulders, and drawing her veil round her head, she exclaimed, with a glance of annoyance at her sister:

"It is high time!"

"I am not going to-day," replied Arsinoe, defiantly, "and it is folly for you to walk a quarter of a mile with your swollen foot."

"It would be wiser to take some care of it," observed the dealer, politely, and Antinous anxiously added:

"If you increase your own suffering you will add to our self-reproach."

"I must go," Selene repeated resolutely, "and you with me, sister."

It was not out of mere wilfulness that she spoke, it was bitter necessity, that forced her to utter the words. To-day, at any rate, she must not miss going to the papyrus factory, for the week's wages for her work and Arsinoe's were to be paid. Besides, the next day, and for four days after, the workshops and counting-house would be closed, for the Emperor had announced to the wealthy proprietor his intention of visiting them, and in his honor various dilapidations in the old rooms were to be repaired, and various decorations added to the bare-looking building. Hence, to remain away from the works to-day meant, not merely the loss of a week's pay, but the sacrifice of twelve days, since it had been announced to the work-people, that as a token of rejoicing, and in honor of the imperial visit, full pay would be given for the unemployed days; and Selene needed money to maintain the family, and must therefore persist in her intention.

When she saw that Arsinoe showed no sign of accompanying her, she once more asked with stern determination:

"Are you coming? — Yes, or no."

"No," cried Arsinoe, defiantly, and sitting farther on the table.

"Then I am to go alone?"

"You are to stay here."

Selene went close up to her sister and looked at her enquiringly and reproachfully; but Arsinoe adhered to her refusal. She pouted like a sulky child, and slapping the hand on which she was leaning three times on the table, she repeated, "No — no — no."

Selene called to the old slave-woman, and desired her to remain in the sitting-room till her father should return, greeted the dealer politely, and Antinous with a careless nod, and then left the room. The lad had followed her, and they both met the children. Selene pulled their dresses straight, and strictly enjoined them not to go near the corridor on account of the strange dog. Antinous stroked the blind boy's pretty curly head, and then, as Selene was about to descend the stairs, he asked her:

"May I help you?"

"Yes," said the girl, for at the very first step an acute pain in the ankle checked her, and she put out her arm to the young man that he might support her elbow on his hand. But her answer would assuredly have been "no," if she had had the smallest feeling of liking for the Emperor's favorite; but she bore the image of another in her heart, and did not even perceive that Antinous was beautiful. The Bithynian's heart, on the other hand, had never beaten so violently as during the brief moments when he was permitted to hold Selene's arm. He felt intoxicated, while he was alive to the fact that during the descent of the few steps she was suffering great pain.

"Stay at home, and spare yourself!" he begged her once more in a trembling voice.

"You worry me!" she said, in a tone of vexation. "I must go, and it is not far."

"May I accompany you?"

She laughed aloud and answered somewhat scornfully:

"Certainly not. Only conduct me through the corridor that the dog may not attack me again, then go where you will – but not with me."

He obeyed when at the end of the passage where it opened into a large hall, he bid her farewell, and she thanked him with a few friendly words.

There were two ways out from her father's rooms into the road, one led through the rotunda where the Ptolemaic Queens were placed, and across several terraces up and down steps through the forecourt; the other, on a level all the way, through the rooms and halls of the palace. She was forced to choose the latter, for it would have been impossible for her with her aching foot to clamber up a number of steps without help and down them again, but she came to this conclusion much against her will, for she knew what numbers of men were engaged in the works of restoration; and to get through them safely it struck her that she might ask her old playfellow to escort her through the crowd of workmen and rough slaves as far as his parent's gatehouse. But she did not easily decide on this course, for, since the afternoon when Pollux had shown her mother's bust to Arsinoe before showing it to her, she had felt a grudge towards the sculptor, who so lately before had touched and opened her weary and loveless soul; and this sore feeling had not diminished, but had rather increased with time. At every hour of the day, and whatever she was occupied in, she could not help repeating to herself, that she had every reason to be vexed with him.

She had stood to him a second time as a model for his work, had spoken to him many times, and when last they parted had promised to allow him this very evening to study once more the folds of her mantle. With what pleasure she had looked forward to each meeting with Pollux, how truly lovable she had thought him on every fresh occasion; how frankly he too, expressed his pleasure as often as they met! They had talked of all sorts of things, even of love, and how eager he had been when he told her that the only thing she needed to make her happy was a good husband who would succor and comfort her as she deserved, and as he spoke he had looked at his own strong hands while she had turned red, and had thought to herself that if he liked it she would willingly make the experiment of enjoying life heartily by his side.

It seemed to her as though they belonged to each other, as if she had been born for him alone, and he for her. Why then yesterday had he shown Arsinoe her mother's bust before her?

Well, now she would ask him plainly whether he had placed it on the rotunda for her or for her sister, and let him see she was not pleased. She must tell him, too, that she could not stand as his model that evening; if only on account of her foot that would be impossible.

With increasing pain and effort she crossed the threshold of the hall of the Muses, and went up to the screen behind which her friend was concealed. He was not alone, for she heard voices within—and it was not a man but a woman who was with him; she could hear her clear laugh at some distance. When she came close up to the screen to call Pollux, the woman, who was certainly sitting to him as a model, spoke louder than before, and called out merrily:

"But this is delicious! I am to let you fulfil the office of my maid, what audacity these artists have!"

"Say yes," begged the artist, in the gay and cordial tone which more than once had helped to ensnare Selene's heart. "You are beautiful, Balbilla, but if you would allow me, you might be far handsomer than you are even."

And again there was a merry laugh behind the screen. The pleasant voice must have hurt poor Selene acutely for she drew up her shoulders, and her fair features were stamped with an expression of keen suffering, and she pressed both hands over her heart as she went on past the screen and her handsome flirting playfellow, limping across the courtyard and into the road.

What tortured the poor child so cruelly? The poverty of her house, and her bodily pain, which increased at every step, or her numbed and sore heart, betrayed of her newly-blossoming, last, and fairest hope?

CHAPTER XVI.

Usually when Selene went out walking, many people looked at her with admiration, but to-day a couple of street-boys composed her escort. They ran after her calling out impudently, 'dot, and go one,' and tried ruthlessly to snatch at the loosely-tied sandal on her injured foot, which tapped the pavement at every step. While Selene was thus making her way with cruel pain, satisfaction and happiness had visited Arsinoe; for hardly had Selene and Antinous quitted her father's apartments, when Hiram begged her to show him the little bottle which the handsome youth had just given her. The dealer turned it over and over in the sunlight, tested its ring, tried to scratch it with the stone in his ring, and then muttered, "Vasa Murrhma."

The words did not escape the girl's sharp ears, and she had heard her father say that the costliest of all the ornamental vessels with which the wealthy Romans were wont to decorate their reception-rooms, were those called Vasa Murrhina; so she explained to him at once, that she knew what high prices were paid for such vases, and that she had no mind to sell it cheaply. He began to bid, she laughingly demanded ten times the price, and after a long battle between the dealer and the owner, fought now half in jest, and now in grave earnest, the Phoenician said:

"Two thousand drachmae; not a sesterce more. That is not enough by a long way, but then it is yours."

"I would hardly have given half to a less fair customer."

"And I only let you have it because you are such a polite man."

"I will send you the money before sundown."

At these words the girl, who had been radiant with surprise and delight, and who would have liked to throw her arms round the bald-headed merchant's neck, or round that of her old slave, who was even less attractive, or for that matter, would have embraced the world—the triumphant girl became thoughtful; her father would certainly come home ere long, and she could not conceal from herself that he would disapprove of the whole proceeding, and

would probably send the phial back to the young man, and the money to the dealer. She herself would never have asked the stranger for the bottle if she had had the slightest suspicion of its value; but now it certainly belonged to her, and if she had given it back again she would have given no one any pleasure; on the contrary, she would have offended the stranger, and probably have lost the greatest pleasure that she had ever enjoyed.

What was to be done now? She was still perched on the table; she had taken her left foot in her right hand, and sitting in this quaint position, she looked down on the ground as gravely as if she were trying to find an idea, or a way out of the difficulty, in the pattern on the floor.

The dealer for a moment amused himself in studying her bewilderment, which he thought charming—only wishing that his son, a young painter, were standing in his place. At last he broke the silence however, saying:

"Your father, perhaps, will not agree to our bargain; and yet it is for him you want the money?"

"Who says so?"

"Would he have offered me his own treasures if he had not wanted money?"

"It is only—I can—only—" stammered Arsinoe, who was unaccustomed to falsehood. "—I would merely not confess to him"

"I myself saw how innocently you came by the phial," said the dealer, "and Keraunus never need know anything about such a trifle. Fancy yourself, that you have broken it, and that the pieces are lying at the bottom of the sea. Which of all these things does your father value least?"

"This old sword of Antony," answered the child, her face brightening once more. "He says it is much too long, and too slender to be what it pretends to be. For my part I do not believe that it is a sword at all, but a roasting-spit."

"I shall apply it to that very purpose to-morrow morning in my kitchen," said the dealer, "but I offer you two thousand drachmae for it, and will take it with me and send you the amount in a few hours. Will that do?"

Arsinoe dropped her foot, glided from the table, and instead of answering, clapped her hands with glee.

"Only tell him," continued Hiram, "that I am able just now to pay so much for this kind of thing, because Caesar is certain to look about him for the things that belonged to Julius Caesar, Marc Antony, Octavianus, Augustus, and other great Romans who have lived in Egypt. The old woman there may bring the spit after me. My slave is waiting outside, and can hide it under his chiton as far as my kitchen door, for if he carried it openly the connoisseurs passing by might covet the priceless treasure, and we must protect ourselves from the evil eye."

The dealer laughed, took the little bottle into his own keeping, gave the sword to the old woman, and then took a friendly leave of the young girl.

As soon as Arsinoe was alone, she flew into the bedroom to put on her sandals, threw her veil over her head, and hastened to the papyrus manufactory. Selene must know of the unexpected good fortune that had befallen her, and all of them, and then she would have the poor girl carried home in a litter, for there were always plenty for hire on the quay.

Things did not always go smoothly – very often very unsmoothly and stormily between the sisters, but still anything of importance that happened to Arsinoe, whether it were good or evil, she must at once tell Selene.

Ye gods! what happiness! She could take her place among the daughters of the great citizens in the processions, no less richly appavelled than they, and still there would remain a nice little sum for her father and sister; and the work in the factory, the nasty dirty work, which she hated and loathed, would be at an end, it was to be hoped, for ever.

The old slave was still sitting on the steps with the children; Arsinoe tossed them up one after the other, and whispered in each child's ear:

"Cakes this evening!" and she kissed the blind child's eyes, and said:

"You may come with me, dear little man. I will find a litter for Selene and put you in, and you will be carried home like a little prince."

The little blind boy threw his arms up with delight, exclaiming: "Through the air, and without falling." While she was still holding him in her arms, her father came up the steps that led from the rotunda to the passage, his face streaming with heat and excitement; and after wiping his brow and panting to regain his breath, he said:

"Hiram, the curiosity-dealer, met me just outside, with the sword that belonged to Antony; and you sold it to him for two thousand drachmae! you little fool!"

"But, father, you would have given the old spit for a pasty and a draught of wine," laughed Arsinoe.

"I?" cried Keraunus. "I would have had three times the sum for that venerable relic, for which Caesar will give its weight in silver; however, sold is sold. And yet-and yet, the thought that I no longer possess the sword of Antony, will give me many sleepless nights."

"If this evening we set you down to a good dish of meat, sleep will soon follow," answered Arsinoe, and she took the handkerchief out of her father's hand, and coaxingly wiped his temples, going on vivaciously: "We are quite rich folks, father, and will show the other citizens' daughters what we can do."

"Now you shall both take part in the festival," said Keraunus, decidedly. "Caesar shall see that I shun no sacrifice in his honor, and if he notices you, and I bring my complaint against that insolent architect before him —"

"You must let that pass," begged Arsinoe, "if only poor Selene's foot is well by that time."

"Where is she?"

"Gone out."

"Then her foot cannot be so very bad. She will soon come in, it is to be hoped."

"Probably — I mean to fetch her with a litter."

"A litter?" said Keraunus, in surprise.

"The two thousand drachmae have turned the girl's head."

"Only on account of her foot. It was hurting her so much when she went out."

"Then why did she not stay at home? As usual she has wasted an hour to save a sesterce, and you, neither of you have any time to spare."

"I will go after her at once."

"No — no, you at any rate, must remain here, for in two hours the matrons and maidens are to meet at the theatre."

"In two hours! but mighty Serapis, what are we to put on?"

"It is your business to see to that," replied Keraunus, "I myself will have the litter you spoke of, and be carried down to Tryphon, the ship-builder. Is there any money left in Selene's box?"

Arsinoe went into her sleeping-room, and said, as she returned:

"This is all — six pieces of two drachmae."

"Four will be enough for me," replied the steward, but after a moment's reflection he took the whole half-dozen.

"What do you want with the ship-builder?" asked Arsinoe.

"In the Council," replied Keraunus, "I was worried again about you girls. I said one of my daughters was ill, and the other must attend upon her; but this would not do, and I was asked to send the

one who was well. Then I explained that you had no mother, that we lived a retired life for each other, and that I could not bear the idea of sending my daughter alone, and without any protectress to the meeting. So then Tryphon said that it would give his wife pleasure to take you to the theatre with her own daughter. This I half accepted, but I declared at once that you would not go, if your elder sister were not better. I could not give any positive consent—you know why."

"Oh, blessings on Antony and his noble spit!" cried Arsinoe. "Now everything is settled, and you can tell the ship-builder we shall go. Our white dresses are still quite good, but a few ells of new light blue ribbon for my hair, and of red for Selene's, you must buy on the way, at Abibaal, the Phoenician's."

"Very good."

"I will see at once to both the dresses—but, to be sure, when are we to be ready?"

"In two hours."

"Then, do you know what, dear old father?"

"Well?"

"Our old woman is half blind, and does everything wrong. Do let me go down to dame Doris at the gate-house, and ask her to help me. She is so clever and kind, and no one irons so well as she does."

"Silence!" cried the steward, angrily, interrupting his daughter. "Those people shall never again cross my threshold."

"But look at my hair; only look at the state it is in," cried Arsinoe, excitedly, and thrusting her fingers into her thick tresses which she pulled into disorder. "To do that up again, plait it with new ribbons, iron our dresses, and sew on the brooches—why the Empress' ladies-maid could not do all that in two hours."

"Doris shall never cross this threshold," repeated Keraunus, for all his answer.

"Then tell the tailor Hippias to send me an assistant; but that will cost money."

"We have it, and can pay," replied Keraunus, proudly, and in order not to forget his commissions he muttered to himself while he went to get a litter:

"Hippias the tailor, blue ribbon, red ribbon, and Tryphon the ship-builder."

The tailor's nimble apprentice helped Arsinoe to arrange her dress and Selene's, and was never weary of praising the sheen and silkiness of Arsinoe's hair, while she twisted it with ribbons, built it up and twisted it at the back so gracefully with a comb, that it fell in a thick mass of artfully-curled locks down her neck and back. When Keraunus came back, he gazed with justifiable pride at his beautiful child; he was immensely pleased, and even chuckled softly to himself as he laid out the gold pieces which were brought to him by the curiosity-dealer's servant, and set them in a row and counted them. While he was thus occupied, Arsinoe went up to him and asked laughing: "Hiram has not cheated me then?" Keraunus desired her not to disturb him, and added:

"Think of that sword, the weapon of the great Antony, perhaps the very one with which he pierced his own breast. — Where can Selene be?"

An hour, an hour and a half had slipped by, and when the fourth half-hour was well begun, and still his eldest daughter did not return, the steward announced that they must set out, for that it would not do to keep the ship-builder's wife waiting. It was a sincere grief to Arsinoe to be obliged to go without Selene. She had made her sister's dress look as nice as her own, and had laid it carefully on the divan near the mosaic pavement. She had taken a great deal of trouble. Never before had she been out in the streets alone, and it seemed impossible to enjoy anything without the companionship and supervision of her absent sister. But her father's assertion, that Selene would have a place gladly found for her, even later, among the maidens, reassured the girl who was overflowing with joyful expectation.

Finally she perfumed herself a little with the fragrant extract which Keraunus was accustomed to use before going to the council, and begged her father to order the old slave-woman to go and buy the promised cakes for the little ones during her absence. The children had all gathered round her, admiring her with loud ohs! and ahs! as if she were some wondrous incarnation, not to be too nearly approached, and on no account to be touched. The elaborate dressing of her hair would not allow of her stooping over them as usual. She could only stroke little Helios' curls, saying: "Tomorrow you shall have a ride in the air, and perhaps Selene will tell you a pretty story by-and-bye."

Her heart beat faster than usual as she stepped into the litter, which was waiting for her just in front of the gate-house. Old Doris looked at her from a distance with pleasure, and while Keraunus stepped out into the street to call a litter for himself, the old woman hastily cut the two finest roses from her bush, and pressing her fingers to her lips with a sly smile, put them into the girl's hand.

Arsinoe felt as if it were in a dream that she went to the ship-builder's house, and from thence to the theatre, and on her way she fully understood, for the first time, that alarm and delight may find room side by side in a girl's mind, and that one by no means hinders the existence of the other.

Fear and expectation so completely overmastered her, that she neither saw nor heard what was going on around her; only once she noticed a young man with a garland on his head, who, as he passed her, arm in arm with another, called out to her gaily: "Long live beauty!"

From that moment she kept her eyes fixed on her lap and on the roses dame Doris had given her. The flowers reminded her of the kind old woman's son, and she wondered whether tall Pollux had perhaps seen her in her finery. That, she would have liked very much; and after all, it was not at all impossible, for, of course, since Pollux had been working at Lochias he must often have gone to his parents. Perhaps even he had himself picked the roses for her, but had not dared to give them to her as her father was so near.

CHAPTER XVII.

But the young sculptor had not been at the gatehouse when Arsinoe went by. He had thought of her often enough since meeting her again by the bust of her mother; but on this particular afternoon his time and thoughts were fully claimed by another fair damsel. Balbilla had arrived at Lochias about noon, accompanied, as was fitting, by the worthy Claudia, the not wealthy widow of a senator, who for many years had filled the place of lady-in-attendance and protecting companion to the rich fatherless and motherless girl. At Rome, she conducted Balbilla's household affairs with as much sense and skill as satisfaction in the task. Still she was not perfectly content with her lot, for her ward's love of travelling, often compelled her to leave the metropolis, and in her estimation, there was no place but Rome where life was worth living. A visit to Baiae for bathing, or in the winter months a flight to the Ligurian coast, to escape the cold of January and February — these she could endure; for she was certain there to find, if not Rome, at any rate Romans; but Balbilla's wish to venture in a tossing ship, to visit the torrid shores of Africa, which she pictured to herself as a burning oven, she had opposed to the utmost. At last, however, she was obliged to put a good face on the matter, for the Empress herself expressed so decidedly her wish to take Balbilla with her to the Nile, that any resistance would have been unduteous. Still; in her secret heart, she could not but confess to herself that her high-spirited and wilful foster-child — for so she loved to call Balbilla — would undoubtedly have carried out her purpose without the Empress' intervention.

Balbilla had come to the palace, as the reader knows, to sit for her bust.

When Selene was passing by the screen which concealed her playfellow and his work from her gaze, the worthy matron had fallen gently asleep on a couch, and the sculptor was exerting all his zeal to convince the noble damsel that the size to which her hair was dressed was an exaggeration, and that the super-encumbrance of such a mass must disfigure the effect of the delicate features of her face. He implored her to remember in how simple a style the great Athenian masters, at the best period of the plastic arts, had taught their beautiful models to dress their hair, and requested her to do

her own hair in that manner next day, and to come to him before she allowed her maid to put a single lock through the curling-tongs; for to-day, as he said, the pretty little ringlets would fly back into shape, like the spring of a fibula when the pin was bent back. Balbilla contradicted him with gay vivacity, protested against his desire to play the part of lady's maid, and defended her style of hair-dressing on the score of fashion.

"But the fashion is ugly, monstrous, a pain to one's eyes!" cried Pollux. "Some vain Roman lady must have invented it, not to make herself beautiful, but to be conspicuous."

"I hate the idea of being conspicuous by my appearance," answered Balbilla. "It is precisely by following the fashion, however conspicuous it may be, that we are less remarkable than when we carefully dress far more simply and plainly—in short, differently to what it prescribes. Which do you regard as the vainer, the fashionably-dressed young gentleman on the Canopic way, or the cynical philosopher with his unkempt hair, his carefully-ragged cloak over his shoulders, and a heavy cudgel in his dirty hands?"

"The latter, certainly," replied Pollux. "Still he is sinning against the laws of beauty which I desire to win you over to, and which will survive every whim of fashion, as certainly as Homer's Iliad will survive the ballad of a street-singer, who celebrates the last murder that excited the mob of this town.—Am I the first artist who has attempted to represent your face?"

"No," said Balbilla, with a laugh. "Five Roman artists have already experimented on my head."

"And did any one of their busts satisfy you?"

"Not one seemed to me better than utterly bad."

"And your pretty face is to be handed down to posterity in five-fold deformity?"

"Ah! no—I had them all destroyed."

"That was very good of them!" cried Pollux, eagerly. Then turning with a very simple gesture to the bust before him he said: "Hapless

clay, if the lovely lady whom thou art destined to resemble will not sacrifice the chaos of her curls, thy fate will undoubtedly be that of thy predecessors."

The sleeping matron was roused by this speech. "You were speaking," she said, "of the broken busts of Balbilla?"

"Yes," replied the poetess.

"And perhaps this one may follow them," sighed Claudia. "Do you know what lies before you in that case?"

"No, what?"

"This young lady knows something of your art."

"I learnt to knead clay a little of Aristaeus," interrupted Balbilla.

"Aha! because Caesar set the fashion, and in Rome it would have been conspicuous not to dabble in sculpture."

"Perhaps."

"And she tried to improve in every bust all that particularly displeased her," continued Claudia.

"I only began the work for the slaves to finish," Balbilla threw in, interrupting her companion. "Indeed, my people became quite expert in the work of destruction."

"Then my work may, at any rate, hope for a short agony and speedy death," sighed Pollux. "And it is true—all that lives comes into the world with its end already preordained."

"Would an early demise of your work pain you much?" asked Balbilla.

"Yes, if I thought it successful; not if I felt it to be a failure."

"Any one who keeps a bad bust," said Balbilla, "must feel fearful lest an undeservedly bad reputation is handed down to future generations."

"Certainly! but how then can you find courage to expose yourself for the sixth time to a form of calumny that it is difficult to counteract?"

"Because I can have anything destroyed that I choose," laughed the spoilt girl. "Otherwise sitting still is not much to my taste."

"That is very true," sighed Claudia. "But from you I expect something strikingly good."

"Thank you," said Pollux, "and I will take the utmost pains to complete something that may correspond to my own expectations of what a marble portrait ought to be, that deserves to be preserved to posterity."

"And those expectations require —?"

Pollux considered for a moment, and then he replied:

"I have not always the right words at my command, for all that I feel as an artist. A plastic presentiment, to satisfy its creator, must fulfil two conditions; first it must record for posterity in forms of eternal resemblance all that lay in the nature of the person it represents; secondly, it must also show to posterity what the art of the time when it was executed, was capable of."

"That is a matter of course—but you are forgetting your own share."

"My own fame you mean?"

"Certainly."

"I work for Papias and serve my art, and that is enough; meanwhile Fame does not trouble herself about me, nor do I trouble myself about her."

"Still, you will put your name on my bust?"

"Why not?"

"You are as prudent as Cicero."

"Cicero?"

"Perhaps you would hardly know old Tullius' wise remark that the philosophers who wrote of the vanity of writers put their names to their books all the same."

"Oh! I have no contempt for laurels, but I will not run after a thing which could have no value for me, unless it came unsought, and because it was my due."

"Well and good; but your first condition could only be fulfilled in its widest sense if you could succeed in making yourself acquainted with my thoughts and feelings, with the whole of my inmost mind."

"I see you and talk to you," replied Pollux. Claudia laughed aloud, and said:

"If instead of two sittings of two hours you were to talk to her for twice as many years you would always find something new in her. Not a week passes in which Rome does not find in her something to talk about. That restless brain is never quiet, but her heart is as good as gold, and always and everywhere the same."

"And did you suppose that that was new to me?" asked Pollux. "I can see the restless spirit of my model in her brow and in her mouth, and her nature is revealed in her eyes."

"And in my snub-nose?" asked Balbilla.

"It bears witness to your wonderful and whimsical notions, which astonish Rome so much."

"Perhaps you are one more that works for the hammer of the slaves," laughed Balbilla.

"And even if it were so," said Pollux, "I should always retain the memory of this delightful hour." Pontius the architect here interrupted the sculptor, begging Balbilla to excuse him for disturbing the sitting; Pollux must immediately attend to some business of importance, but in ten minutes he would return to his work. No sooner were the two ladies alone, than Balbilla rose and

looked inquisitively round and about the sculptor's enclosed work-room; but her companion said:

"A very polite young man, this Pollux, but rather too much at his ease, and too enthusiastic."

"An artist," replied Balbilla, and she proceeded to turn over every picture and tablet with the sculptor's studies in drawing, raised the cloth from the wax model of the Urania, tried the clang of the lute which hung against one of the canvas walls, was here, there, and everywhere, and at last stood still in front of a large clay model, placed in a corner of the studio, and closely wrapped in cloths.

"What may that be?" asked Claudia.

"No doubt a half-finished new model."

Balbilla felt the object in front of her with the tips of her fingers, and said: "It seems to me to be a head. Something remarkable at any rate. In these close covered dishes we sometimes find the best meat. Let its unveil this shrouded portrait."

"Who knows what it may be?" said Claudia, as she loosened a twist in the cloths which enveloped the bust. There are often very remarkable things to be seen in such workshops.

"Hey, what, it is only a woman's head! I can feel it," cried Balbilla.

"But you can never tell," the older lady went on, untying a knot. "These artists are such unfettered, unaccountable beings."

"Do you lift the top, I will pull here," and a moment later the young Roman stood face to face with the caricature which Hadrian had moulded on the previous evening, in all its grimacing ugliness. She recognized herself in it at once, and at the first moment, laughed loudly, but the longer she looked at the disfigured likeness, the more vexed, annoyed and angry she became. She knew her own face, feature for feature, all that was pretty in it, and all that was plain, but this likeness ignored everything in her face that was not unpleasing, and this it emphasized ruthlessly, and exaggerated with a refinement of spitefulness. The head was hideous, horrible, and yet it was hers. As she studied it in profile, she remembered what

Pollux had declared he could read in her features, and deep indignation rose up in her soul.

Her great inexhaustible riches, which allowed her the reckless gratification of every whim, and secured consideration, even for her follies, had not availed to preserve her from many disappointments which other girls, in more modest circumstances, would have been spared. Her kind heart and open hand had often been abused, even by artists, and it was self-evident to her, that the man who could make this caricature, who had so enjoyed exaggerating all that was unlovely in her face, had wished to exercise his art on her features, not for her own sake, but for that of the high price she might be inclined to pay for a flattering likeness. She had found much to please her in the young sculptor's fresh and happy artist nature, in his frank demeanor and his honest way of speech. She felt convinced that Pollux, more readily than anybody else, would understand what it was that lent a charm to her face, which was in no way strictly beautiful, a charm which could not be disputed in spite of the coarse caricature which stood before her.

She felt herself the richer by a painful experience, indignant, and offended. Accustomed as she was to give prompt utterance even to her displeasure, she exclaimed hotly, and with tears in her eyes:

"It is shameful, it is base. Give me my wraps Claudia. I will not stay an instant longer to be the butt of this man's coarse and spiteful jesting."

"It is unworthy," cried the matron, "so to insult a person of your position. It is to be hoped our litters are waiting outside."

Pontius had overheard Balbilla's last words. He had come into the work-place without Pollux, who was still speaking to the prefect, and he said gravely as he approached Balbilla:

"You have every reason to be angry, noble lady. This thing is an insult in clay, malicious, and at the same time coarse in every detail; but it was not Pollux who did it, and it is not right to condemn without a trial."

"You take your friend's part!" exclaimed Balbilla. "I would not tell a lie for my own brother."

"You know how to give your words the aspect of an honorable meaning in serious matters, as he does in jest."

"You are angry and unaccustomed to bridle your tongue," replied the architect. "Pollux, I repeat it, did not perpetrate the caricature, but a sculptor from Rome."

"Which of them? I know them all."

"I may not name him."

"There—you see.—Come away Claudia."

"Stay," said Pontius, decisively. "If you were any one but yourself, I would let you go at once in your anger, and with the double charge on your conscience of doing an injustice to two well-meaning men. But as you are the granddaughter of Claudius Balbillus, I feel it to be due to myself to say, that if Pollux had really made this monstrous bust he would not be in this palace now, for I should have turned him out and thrown the horrid object after him. You look surprised—you do not know who I am that can address you so."

"Yes, yes," cried Balbilla, much mollified, for she felt assured that the man who stood before her, as unflinching as if he were cast in bronze, and with an earnest frown, was speaking the truth, and that he must have some right to speak to her with such unwonted decision. "Yes indeed, you are the principal architect of the city; Titianus, from whom we have heard of you, has told us great things of you; but how am I to account for your special interest in me?"

"It is my duty to serve you—if necessary, even with my life."

"You," said Balbilla, puzzled. "But I never saw you till yesterday."

"And yet you may freely dispose of all that I have and am, for my grandfather was your grandfather's slave."

"I did not know"—said Balbilla, with increasing confusion.

"Is it possible that your noble grandfather's instructor, the venerable Sophinus, is altogether forgotten. Sophinus, whom your grandfather freed, and who continued to teach your father also."

"Certainly not—of course not," cried Balbilla. "He must have been a splendid man, and very learned besides."

"He was my father's father," said Pontius.

"Then you belong to our family," exclaimed Balbilla, offering him a friendly hand.

"I thank you for those words," answered Pontius. "Now, once more, Pollux had nothing to do with that image."

"Take my cloak, Claudia," said the girl. "I will sit again to the young man."

"Not to-day—it would spoil his work," replied Pontius. "I beg of you to go, and let the annoyance you so vehemently expressed die out some where else. The young sculptor must not know that you have seen this caricature, it would occasion him much embarrassment. But if you can return to-morrow in a calmer and more happy humor, with your lively spirit tuned to a softer key, then Pollux will be able to make a likeness which may satisfy the granddaughter of Claudius Balbillus."

"And, let us hope, the grandson of his learned teacher also," answered Balbilla, with a kindly farewell greeting, as she went with her companion towards the door of the hall of the Muses, where her slaves were waiting. Pontius escorted her so far in silence, then he returned to the work-place, and safely wrapped the caricature up again in its cloths.

As he went out into the hall again, Pollux hurried up to meet him, exclaiming:

"The Roman architect wants to speak to you, he is a grand man!"

"Balbilla was called away, and bid me greet you," replied Pontius. "Take that thing away for fear she should see it. It is coarse and hideous."

A few moments later he stood in the presence of the Emperor, who expressed the wish to play the part of listener while Balbilla was sitting. When the architect, after begging him not to let Pollux know of the incident, told him of what had occurred in the screened-off studio, and how angry the young Roman lady had been at the caricature, which was certainly very offensive, Hadrian rubbed his hands and laughed aloud with delight. Pontius ground his teeth, and then said very earnestly:

"Balbilla seems to me a merry-hearted girl, but of a noble nature. I see no reason to laugh at her." Hadrian looked keenly into the daring architect's eyes, laid his hand on his shoulder, and replied with a certain threatening accent in his deep voice:

"It would be an evil moment for you, or for any one, who should do so in my presence. But age may venture to play with edged tools, which children may not even touch."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Selene entered the gate-way in the endlessly-long walk of sun-dried bricks which enclosed the wide space where stood the court-yards, water-tanks and huts, belonging to the great papyrus manufactory of Plutarch, where she and her sister were accustomed to work. She could generally reach it in a quarter of an hour, but to-day it had taken more than four times as long and she herself did not know how she had managed to hold herself up, and to walk-limp-stumble along, in spite of the acute pain she was suffering. She would willingly have clung to every passer-by, have held on to every slow passing vehicle, to every beast of burden that overtook her—but man and beast mercilessly went on their way, without paying any heed to her. She got many a push from those who were hurrying by and who scarcely turned round to look at her, when from time to time she stopped to sink for a moment on to the nearest door-step, or some low cornice or bale of goods; to dry her eyes, or press her hand to her foot, which was now swollen to a great size, hoping, as she did so, to be able to forget, under the sense of a new form of pain, the other unceasing and unendurable torment, at least for a few minutes.

The street boys who had run after her, and laughed at her, ceased pursuing her when they found that she constantly stopped to rest. A woman with a child in her arms once asked her, as she stopped to rest a minute on a threshold, whether she wanted anything, but walked on when Selene shook her head and made no other answer.

Once she thought she must give up altogether, when suddenly the street was filled with jeering boys and inquisitive men and women—for Verus, the superb Verus, came by in his chariot, and what a chariot! The Alexandrian populace were accustomed to see much that was strange in the busy streets of their crowded city; but this vehicle attracted every eye, and excited astonishment, admiration and mirth, wherever it appeared, and not unfrequently the bitterest ridicule. The handsome Roman stood in the middle of his gilt chariot, and himself drove the four white horses, harnessed abreast; on his head he wore a wreath, and across his breast, from one shoulder, a garland of roses. On the foot-board of the quadriga sat two children, dressed as Cupids; their little legs dangled in the

air, and they each held, attached by a long gilt wire, a white dove which fluttered in front of Verus.

The dense and hurrying crowd, crushed Selene remorselessly against the wall; instead of looking at the wonderful sight she covered her face with her hands to hide the distortion of pain in her features; still she just saw the splendid chariot, the gold harness on the horses, and the figure of the insolent owner glide past her, as if in a dream that was blurred by pain, and the sight infused into her soul, that was already harassed by pain and anxiety, a feeling of bitter aversion, and the envious thought that the mere trappings of the horses of this extravagant prodigal would suffice to keep her and her family above misery for a whole year.

By the time the chariot had turned the next corner, and the crowd had followed it, she had almost fallen to the ground. She could not take another step, and looked round for a litter, but, while generally there was no lack of them, in this spot, to-day there was not one to be seen. The factory was only a few hundred steps farther, but in her fancy they seemed like so many stadia. Presently some of the workmen and women from the factory came by, laughing and showing each other their wages, so the payment must be now going on. A glance at the sun showed her how long she had already been on her way, and remind her of the purpose of her walk.

With the exertion of all her strength, she dragged herself a few steps farther; then, just as her courage was again beginning to fail, a little girl came running towards her who was accustomed to wait upon the workers at the table where Selene and Arsinoe were employed, and who held in her hand a pitcher. She called the dusky little Egyptian, and said:

"Hathor, pray come back to the factory with me. I cannot walk any farther, my foot is so dreadfully painful; but if I lean a little on your shoulder, I shall get on better."

"I cannot," said the child. "If I make haste home I shall have some dates," and she ran on.

Selene looked after her, and an inward voice, against which she had had to rebel before to-day, asked her why she of all people must

be a sufferer for others, when they thought only of themselves, and with a heavy sigh, she made a fresh attempt to proceed on her way.

When she had gone a few steps, neither seeing nor hearing anything that passed her, a girl came up to her, and asked her timidly, but kindly, what was the matter. It was a leaf-joiner who sat opposite to her at the works, a poor, deformed creature, who, nevertheless, plied her nimble fingers contentedly and silently, and who at first had taught Selene and Arsinoe many useful tricks of working. The girl offered her crooked shoulder unasked as a support to Selene, and measured her step; to those of the sufferer with as much nicety as if she felt everything that Selene herself did; thus, without speaking, they reached the door of the factory; there, in the first court-yard the little hunchback made Selene sit down on one of the bundles of papyrus-stems which lay all about the place, by the side of the tanks in which the plants were dipped to freshen them, and arranged in order, built up into high heaps, according to the localities whence they were brought. After a short rest, they went on through the hall in which the triangular green stems were sorted, according to the quality of the white pith they contained. The next rooms, in which men stripped the green sheath from the pith, and the long galleries where the more skilled hands split the pith with sharp knives into long moist strips about a finger wide, and of different degrees of fineness, seemed to Selene to grow longer the farther she went, and to be absolutely interminable.

Generally the pith-splitters sat here in long rows, each at his own little table, on each side of a gangway left for the slaves, who carried the prepared material to the drying-house; but, to-day, most of them had left their places and stood chatting together and packing up their wooden clips, knives, and sharpening-stones. Half way down this room Selene's hand fell from her companion's shoulder, she turned giddy, and said in a low tone:

"I can go no farther —"

The little hunchback held her up as well as she could, and though she herself was far from strong, she succeeded in dragging, rather than carrying, Selene to an empty couch and in laying her upon it. A few workmen gathered around the senseless girl, and brought some water, then when she opened her eyes again, and they found that

she belonged to the rooms where the prepared papyrus-leaves were gummed together, some of them offered to carry her thither, and before Selene could consent they had taken up the bench and lifted it with its light burden. Her damaged foot hung down, and gave the poor girl such pain that she cried out, and tried to raise the injured limb and hold her ankle in her band; her comrade helped by taking the poor little foot in her own hand, and supporting it with tender and cautious care.

As she thus went by, carried, as it were, in triumph by the men, and borne high in the air, everyone turned to look at her, and the suffering girl felt this rather as if she were some criminal being carried through the streets to exhibit her disgrace to the citizens. But when she found herself in the large rooms where, in one place men, and in another the most skilled of the women and girls were employed in laying the narrow strips of papyrus crosswise over each other, and gumming them together, she had recovered strength enough to pull her veil over her face which she held down. Arsinoe, and she herself, in order to remain unrecognized had always been accustomed to walk through these rooms closely veiled, and not to lay their wraps aside till they reached the little room where they sat with about twenty other women to glue the sheets together.

Every one looked at her with curious enquiry. Her foot certainly hurt her, the cut in her head was burning, and she felt altogether intensely miserable; still there was room and to spare in her soul for the false pride that she inherited from her father, and for the humiliating consciousness that she was regarded by these people as one of themselves.

In the room in which she worked, none but free women were employed, but more than a thousand slaves worked in the factory and she would as soon have eaten with beasts without plate or spoon, as have shared a meal with them. At one time, when every thing in their house seemed going to ruin, it was her own father who had suggested the papyrus factory to her attention, by telling her, with indignation, that the daughter of an impoverished citizen had degraded herself and her whole class by devoting herself to working in the papyrus factory to earn money. She was pretty well paid, to be sure, and in answer to Selene's enquiry, he had stated the

amount she earned and mentioned the name of the rich manufacturer to whom she had sold her social standing for gold.

Soon after this Selene had gone alone to the factory, had discussed all that was necessary with the manager, and had then begun, with Arsinoe, to work regularly in the factory where they now for two years had spent some hours of every day in gumming the papyrus-leaves together.

How many a time at the beginning of a new week, or when under the influence of a special fit of aversion to her work, had Arsinoe refused to go with her ever again to the factory; how much persuasive eloquence had she expended, how many new ribbons had she bought, how often had she consented to allow her to go to some spectacle, which consumed half a week's wages, to induce Arsinoe to persist in her work, or to avert the fulfilment of her threat to tell her father, whither her daily walk—as she called it—tended.

When Selene, who had been carried as far as the door of her own work-room, was sitting once more in her usual place in front of the long table on which she worked, and where hundreds of prepared papyrus strips were to be joined together, she felt scarcely able to raise the veil from her face. She drew the uppermost sheets towards her, dipped the brush in the gum-jar, and began to touch the margin of the leaf with it—but in the very act, her strength forsook her, the brush fell from her fingers, she dropped her hands on the table and her face in her hands, and began to cry softly.

While she sat thus, her tears slowly flowing, her shoulders heaving, and her whole body shaken with shuddering sobs, a woman who sat opposite to her, beckoned to the deformed girl, and after whispering to her a few words grasped her hand firmly and warmly and looked straight into her eyes with her own, which though lustreless were clear and steady; then the little hunchback silently took Arsinoe's vacant place by Selene, and pushed the smaller half of the papyrus leaves over to the woman, and both set diligently to work on the gumming.

They had been thus occupied for some time when Selene at last raised her head and was about to take up her brush again. She looked round for it and perceived her companion, whom she had

not even thanked for her helpfulness, busily at work in Arsinoe's seat. She looked at her neighbor with eyes still full of tears, and as the girl, who was wholly absorbed in her task, did not notice her gaze, Selene said in a tone of surprise rather than kindness.

"This is my sister's place; you may sit here to-day, but when the factory opens again she must sit by me again."

"I know, I know," said the workwoman shyly. "I am only finishing your sheets because I have no more of my own to do, and I can see how badly your foot is hurting you."

The whole transaction was so strange and novel to Selene that she did not even understand her neighbor's meaning, and she only said, with a shrug:

"You may earn all you can, for aught I can do; I cannot do anything to-day."

Her deformed companion colored and looked up doubtfully at her opposite neighbor, who at once laid aside her brush and said, turning to Selene:

"That is not what Mary means, my child. She is doing one-half of your day's task and I am doing the other, so that your suffering foot may not deprive you of your day's pay."

"Do I look so very poor then?" exclaimed Keraunus' daughter, and a faint crimson tinged her pale cheeks.

"By no means, my child," replied the woman. "You and your sister are evidently of good family – but pray let us have the pleasure of being of some help to you."

"I do not know –" Selene stammered.

"If you saw that it hurt me to stoop when the wind blows the strips of papyrus on to the floor, would you not willingly pick them up for me?" continued the woman. "What we are doing for you is neither less nor yet much more than that. In a few minutes we shall have finished and then we can follow the others, for every one else

has left. I am the overseer of the room, as you know, and must in any case remain here till the last work-woman has gone."

Selene felt full well that she ought to be grateful for the kindness shown her by these two women, and yet she had a sense of having a deed of almsgiving forced upon her acceptance, and she answered quickly, still with the blood mounting to her cheeks. "I am very grateful for your good intentions, of course, very grateful; but here each one must work for herself, and it would ill-become me to allow you to give me the money you have earned."

The girl spoke these words with a decisiveness which was not free from arrogance, but this did not disturb the woman's gentle equanimity—"widow Hannah," as she was called by the workwoman—and fixing the calm gaze of her large eyes on Selene, she answered kindly:

"We have been very happy to work for you, dear daughter, and a divine Sage has said that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Do you understand all that that means? In our case it is as much as to say that it makes kind-hearted folks much happier to do others a pleasure than to receive good gifts. You said just now that you were grateful; do you want now to spoil our pleasure?"

"I do not quite understand—" answered Selene. "No?" interrupted widow Hannah. "Then only try for once to do some one a pleasure with sincere and heartfelt love, and you will see how much good it does one, how it opens the heart and turns every trouble to a pleasure. Is it not true Mary, we shall be sincerely obliged to Selene if only she will not spoil the pleasure we have had in working for her?"

"I have been so glad to do it," said the deformed girl, "and there—now I have finished."

"And I too," said the widow, pressing the last leaf on to its fellow with a cloth, and then adding her pile of finished sheets to Mary's.

"Thank you very much," murmured Selene, with downcast eyes, and rising from her seat, but she tried to support herself on her lame foot and this caused her such pain, that with a low cry, she sank

back on the stool. The widow hastened to her side, knelt down by her, took the injured foot with tender care in her delicate and slender hands, examined it attentively, felt it gently, and then exclaimed with horror:

"Good Lord! and did you walk through the streets with a foot in this state?" and looking up at Selene she said affectionately. "Poor child, poor child! it must have hurt you! Why the swelling has risen above your sandal-straps. It is frightful! and yet—do you live far from this?"

"I can get home in half an hour."

"Impossible! First let me see on my tablets how much the paymaster owes you that I may go and fetch it, and then we will soon see what can be done with you. Meanwhile you sit still daughter dear, and you Mary rest her foot on a stool and undo the straps very gently from her ankle. Do not be afraid my child, she has soft, careful hands." As she spoke she rose and kissed Selene on her forehead and eyes, and Selene clung to her and could only say with swimming eyes, and a voice trembling with feeling:

"Dame Hannah, dear widow Hannah."

As the warm sunshine of an October day reminds the traveller of the summer that is over, so the widow's words and ways brought back to Selene the long lost love and care of her good mother; and something soothing mingled in the bitterness of the pain she was suffering. She looked gratefully at the kind woman and obediently sat still; it was such a comfort once more to obey an order, and to obey willingly—to feel herself a child again and to be grateful for loving care.

Hannah went away, and Mary knelt down in front of Selene to loosen and remove the straps which were half buried in the swelled muscles. She did it with the greatest caution, but her fingers had hardly touched her, when Selene shrank back with a groan, and before she could undo the sandal, the patient had fainted away. Mary fetched some water and bathed her brow, and the burning wound in her head, and by the time Selene had once more opened her eyes, dame Hannah had returned. When the widow stroked her

thick soft hair, Selene looked up with a smile and asked: "Have I been to sleep?"

"You shut your eyes my child," replied the widow. "Here are your wages and your sister's, for twelve days; do not move, I will put it in your little bag. Mary has not succeeded in loosening your sandal, but the physician who is paid to attend on the factory people will be here directly, and will order what is proper for your poor foot. The manager is having a litter fetched for you. — Where do you live?"

"We?" cried Selene, alarmed. "No, no, I must go home."

"But my child you cannot walk farther than the court-yard even if we both help you."

"Then let me get a litter out in the street. My father — no one must know — I cannot."

Hannah signed to Mary to leave them, and when she had shut the door on the deformed girl, she brought a stool, sat down opposite to Selene, laid a hand on the knee that was not hurt, and said:

"Now, dear girl, we are alone. I am no chatterbox, and will certainly not betray your confidence. Tell me quietly who you belong to. Tell me — you believe that I mean well by you?"

"Yes," replied Selene, looking the widow full in the face — a regularly-cut face, set in abundant smooth brown hair, and with the stamp of genuine and heart-felt goodness. "Yes — you remind me of my mother."

"Well, I might be your mother."

"I am nineteen years old already."

"Already," replied Hannah, with a smile. "Why my life has been twice as long as yours. I had a child, too, a boy; and he was taken from me when he was quite little. He would be a year older than you now, my child — is your mother still alive?"

"No," said Selene, with her old dry manner, that had become a habit. "The gods have taken her from us. She would have been, like

you, not quite forty now, and she was as pretty and as kind as you are. When she died she left seven children besides me, all little, and one of them blind. I am the eldest, and do what I can for them, that they may not be starved."

"God will help you in the loving task."

"The gods!" exclaimed Selene, bitterly. "They let them grow up, the rest I have to see to — oh! my foot, my foot!"

"Yes, we will think of that before anything else. Your father is alive?"

"Yes."

"And he is not to know that you work here?"

Selene shook her head.

"He is in moderate circumstances, but of good family?"

"Yes."

"Here, I think, is the doctor. Well? May I know your father's name? I must if I am to get you safe home."

"I am the daughter of Keraunus, the steward of the palace, and we have rooms there, at Lochias," Selene answered, with rapid decision, but in a low whisper, so that the physician, who just then opened the room door, might not hear her. "No one, and least of all, my father, must know that I work here."

The widow made a sign to her to be easy, greeted the grey-haired leech who came in with his assistant; and then, while the old man examined the injured limb, and cut the straps with a sharp pair of scissors, she bathed the girl's face and cut head with a wet handkerchief, supported the poor child in her arms, and, when the pain seemed too much for her, kissed her pale cheeks.

Many sighs from the bottom of her heart, and many shrill little cries betrayed how intense was the pain Selene was enduring. When at length, her delicate and graceful foot-distorted just now by the

extensive swelling,—was freed from the bands and straps, and the ankle had been felt and pressed in every direction by the leech, he exclaimed, turning to the assistant who stood ready to lend a helping hand:

"Look here, Hippolytus, the girl came along the streets with her ankle in this state. If any one else had told me of such a thing, I should have desired him to keep his lies to himself. The fibula is broken at the joint, and with this injured limb the child has walked farther than I could trust myself at all—without my litter. By Sirius! child, if you are not crippled for life it will be a miracle."

Selene had listened with closed eyes, and exhausted almost to unconsciousness; but at his last words she slightly shrugged her shoulders with a faint smile of scorn on her lips.

"You think nothing of being lame!" said the old man, who let no gesture of his patient escape him. "That, of course, is your affair, but it is mine to see that you do not become a cripple in my hands. The opportunity for working a miracle is not given to one of us every day, and happily for me, you yourself bring a powerful coadjutor to help me. I do not mean a lover or anything of that kind, though you are much too pretty, but your lovely, vigorous, healthy youth. The hole in your head is hotter than it need be—keep it properly cool with fresh water. Where do you live, child?"

"Almost half an hour from here," said Hannah, answering for Selene.

"She cannot be taken so far as that, even in a litter, at present," said the old man.

"I must go home!" cried Selene, resolutely, and trying to sit up.

"Nonsense," exclaimed the physician. "I must forbid your moving at all. Be still, and be patient and obedient, or your foolish joke will come to a bad end; fever has already set in, and it will increase by the evening. It has nothing much to do with the leg, but all the more with the inflamed scalp-wound. Do you think," he added, turning to the widow, "that perhaps a bed could be made here on which she might lie, and remain here till the factory reopens?"

"I would rather die," shrieked Selene, trying to draw away her foot from the leech.

"Be still—be still, my dear child," said the good woman, soothingly. "I know where I can take you. My house is in a garden belonging to Paulina, the widow of Pudeus, near this and close to the sea; it is not above a thousand paces off, and there you will have a soft couch and tender care. A good litter is waiting, and I should think—"

"Even that is a good distance," said the old man. "However, she cannot possibly be better cared for than by you, dame Hannah. Let us try it then, and I will accompany you to lash those accursed bearers' skins if they do not keep in step."

Selene made no attempt to resist these orders, and willingly drank a potion which the old man gave her; but she cried to herself as she was lifted into the litter and her foot was carefully propped on pillows. In the street, which they soon reached through a side door, she again almost lost consciousness, and half awake but half as in a dream, she heard the leech's voice as he cautioned the bearers to walk carefully, and saw the people, and vehicles, and horsemen pass her on their way. Then she saw that she was being carried through a large garden, and at last she dimly perceived that she was being laid on a bed. From that moment every thing was merged in a dream, though the frequent convulsions of pain that passed over her features and now and then a rapid movement of her hand to the cut in her head, showed that she was not altogether oblivious to the reality of her sufferings.

Dame Hannah sat by the bed, and carried out the physician's instructions with exactness; he himself did not leave his patient till he was perfectly satisfied with her bed and her position. Mary stayed with the widow helping her to wet handkerchiefs and to make bandages out of old linen.

When Selene began to breathe more calmly Hannah beckoned her assistant to come close to her and asked in a low voice.

"Can you stay here till early to-morrow, we must take it in turns to watch her, most likely for several nights – how hot this wound on her head is!"

"Yes, I can stay, only I must tell my mother that she may not be frightened."

"Quite right, and then you may undertake another commission for I cannot leave the poor child just now."

"Her people will be anxious about her."

"That is just where you must go; but no one besides us two must know who she is. Ask for Selene's sister and tell her what has happened; if you see her father tell him that I am taking care of his daughter, and that the physician strictly forbids her moving or being moved. But he must not know that Selene is one of us workers, so do not say a word about the factory before him. If you find neither Arsinoe nor her father at home, tell any one that opens the door to you that I have taken the sick child in, and did it gladly. But about the workshop, do your hear, not a word. One thing more, the poor girl would never have come down to the factory in spite of such pain, unless her family had been very much in need of her wages; so just give these drachmae to some one and say, as is perfectly true, that we found them about her person."

CHAPTER XIX.

Plutarch was one of the richest citizens of Alexandria, and the owner of the papyrus manufactory where Selene and Arsinoe worked; and he had of his own free will offered to provide for the "suitable" entertainment of the wives and daughters of his fellow-citizens, who were, this very day, to assemble in one of the smaller theatres of the city. Every one that knew him, knew too that "suitable" with him meant as much as to say imperial splendor.

The ship-builder's daughter had prepared Arsinoe for grand doings, but by the time she had reached the entrance only of the theatre her expectations were exceeded, for as soon as she gave her father's name and her own, a boy, who looked out from an arbor of flowers gave her a magnificent bunch of flowers, and another, who sat perched on a dolphin, handed her, as a ticket of admission, a finely-cut ornament of ivory mounted in gold, with a pin, by which the invited owner was intended to fix it like a brooch in her peplum; and at each entrance to the theatre, the ladies, as they came in, had a similar present made them.

The passage leading to the auditorium was full of perfume, and Arsinoe, who had already visited this theatre two or three times, hardly recognized it, it was so gaily decorated with colored scarfs. And who had ever seen ladies and young girls filling the best places instead of men, as was the case to-day? Indeed the citizens' daughters were in general not permitted to see a theatrical performance at all, unless on very special and exceptional occasions. She looked up with a smile at the empty topmost rows of the cheapest seats of the semicircular auditorium, as one looks at an old playfellow one had outgrown by a head, for it was there — when she had occasionally been permitted to dip into their scanty common purse — that she had almost fainted many a time, with pleasure, fear, or sympathy, though the draught so high up and under the open heaven which was the only roof, was incessantly blowing; and in summer the discomforts were even greater from the awning which shaded the amphitheatre on the sunny side. The wide breadths of canvas were managed by means of stout ropes, and when these were pulled through the rings they rode in, they made a screech which compelled the bearer to stop his ears; and often it was

necessary to duck his head not to be hit by the heavy ropes or by the awning itself. But Arsinoe only remembered these things to-day as a butterfly sporting in the sun may remember the hideous pupa-case that it has burst and left behind it.

Radiant with happy excitement, she was led to her seat with her young companion, the black-haired daughter of the shipwright. She perceived indeed that numerous eyes turned upon her, but that only added to her pleasure, for she knew that she could well bear looking at, and there could be no greater pleasure, as she thought, than to give pleasure to a multitude.

To-day at any rate! For those who were looking at her were the chief citizens of Alexandria; they stood on the stage, and among them stood kind tall Pollux, waving his hand to her. She could not keep her feet quiet, but she did contrive to keep her arms still by crossing them in front of her, so that they might not betray how excited she was.

This distribution of parts had already begun, for, by waiting for Selene, she had come in almost half an hour too late. As soon as she saw that the eyes that had been attracted to herself as she entered the theatre had turned to other objects she herself looked round her. She was sitting on a bench at the lowest and narrowest end of one of the wedge-shaped sections of seats, which grew wider at the upper end, and which were divided from each other by gangways for those who came and went, thus forming the semicircular area of the auditorium.

Here she was surrounded only by young girls and women who were to have a part or place in the performances. The places for these interested persons were divided from the stage by a space for the orchestra, whence the stage was easily reached by steps up which the chorus were wont to mount to it.

Behind Arsinoe, in the larger circular rows, sat the parents and husbands of the performers, among whom Keraunus, in his saffron robe, had taken a place, besides a considerable number of sight-loving matrons and older citizens who had accepted Plutarch's invitation.

Among the young women and girls Arsinoe saw several whose beauty struck her, but she admired them ungrudgingly, and it never came into her head to compare herself with them, for she knew very accurately that she was pretty, and that even here she had nothing to conceal, and this was enough for her.

The many-voiced hum which incessantly buzzed in her ears, and the perfume which rose from the attar in the orchestra had something intoxicating in them. Her gaze round the assembled multitude could not disturb any one, and her companion had found some friends with whom she was chattering and laughing. Other ladies and young girls sat staring silently in front of them, or studying the appearance of the rest of the audience, male and female; while others again concentrated their whole attention on the stage. Arsinoe soon followed this example, nor was this solely on account of Pollux who, by the prefect's orders, had been enlisted among the artists to whom the arrangement of the display was entrusted, in spite of the objections of his master Papias. More than once before had she seen the afternoon sun shine as brightly into the theatre as it did to-day, and the blue sky overarching it without a cloud, but with what different feelings did she now direct her gaze to the raised level behind the orchestra. The background, it is true, was the same as usual, the pillared front of a palace built entirely of colored marbles, and ornamented with gold; but on this occasion fresh garlands of fragrant flowers hung gracefully between the pilasters and across from column to column. Several artists, the first of the city, with tablets and styla in their hands were moving about among fifty girls and ladies, and Plutarch himself, and the gentlemen with him, composed, as it were a grand chorus which sometimes divided, and sometimes stood all together.

On the right side of the stage were three purple-covered couches. On one of them sat Titianus, the prefect, who, like the artists, used his pencil; with him was his wife Julia. On another reclined Verus, at full length, and as usual, crowned with roses; the third was for Plutarch, but was unoccupied. The praetor did not hesitate to interrupt any speaker, as though he were the host of the entertainment, and many of his remarks were followed by loud applause, or approving laughter.

The face and figure of the wealthy Plutarch, which could never be forgotten, were not altogether strange to Arsinoe, for, a few days previously he had shown himself for the first time in many years in his papyrus factory, with an architect to settle with him how the courts and rooms could best be cleaned and decorated for the reception of the Emperor; and on this occasion he had gone into the room where she worked and had pinched her cheek with a few roguish and flattering words.

There he was, walking across the stage. He was an old man, said to be about seventy years of age, his legs were half-paralyzed, and they nevertheless moved with a series of incessant and rapid but unvoluntary jerks under his heavy bowed body, and he was supported on either hand by a tall young fellow. His nobly-formed head, must have been in his youth, of extraordinary beauty. Now his head was covered by a wig of long brown hair, his eyebrows and lashes were darkly dyed, his cheeks daubed with red and white paint, which gave his countenance a fixed expression, as if he had been stricken in the very act of smiling. On his curls he wore a wreath of rare flowers in long racemes. An abundance of red and white roses stuck out from the front folds of his ample toga, and were held in their place by gold brooches, sparkling with precious stones of large size. The hems of his mantle were all edged with rose-buds, and each was fastened in with an emerald that shone like some bright insect. The young men who supported him seemed like a portion of himself; he took no more heed of them than if they had been crutches, and they needed not command to tell them where he wished to go, where to stand still, and where to rest.

At a distance his face was like that of a youth, but seen close it looked like a painted plaster mask, with regular features and large movable eyes.

Favorinus, the sophist, had said of him that one might cry over his handsome locomotive corpse, if one were not obliged to laugh at it, and it was said that he had himself declared that he would force his faithless youth to remain with him. The Alexandrians called him the Adonis with six legs, on account of the lads who supported him, and without whom no one ever saw him and who always accompanied him when he went out. The first time he heard this

nickname he remarked: "They had better have called me sixhanded;" and in fact he had a thoroughly good heart, he was liberal and benevolent, took fatherly care of his work-people, treated his slaves well, enriched those whom he set free, and from time to time distributed large sums among the people in money and in grain.

Arsinoe looked compassionately on the poor old man who could not buy back his youth with all his money and all his art.

In the supercilious man who at once came up to Plutarch she recognized the art-dealer Gabinius to whom her father had shown the door, on account of the mosaic picture in their sitting-room, but their conversation was interrupted, for the distribution of the women's part for the group of Alexander's entry into Babylon, was now about to take place; about fifty girls and young women were sent away from the stage and went down into the orchestra. The Exegetes, the highest official in the town, now came forward and took a new list out of the hand of Papias the sculptor. After rapidly casting an eye on this, he handed it to a herald who followed him, who proclaimed to all the assembly:

"In the name of the most noble Exegetes I request your attention, all you ladies here assembled, the wives and daughters of Macedonians and of Roman citizens. We now come to a distribution of the characters in our representation of the life and history of the great Macedonian, of the 'Marriage of Alexander and Roxana,' and I hereby request those among you to come upon the stage whom our artists have selected to take part in this scene in the procession." After this exordium he shouted in a deep and resonant voice a long list of names, and while this was going on every other sound was hushed in the wide amphitheatre.

Even on the stage all was still; only Verus whispered a few remarks to Titianus, and the curiosity-dealer spoke into Plutarch's ear, long sentences with the stringent emphasis which was peculiar to him; and the old man answered sometimes with an assenting nod, and sometimes with a deprecatory motion of his hands.

Arsinoe listened with suspended breath to the herald's proclamation; she started and colored all over, with her eyes fixed

on the bunch of flowers in her hand, when she heard from the stage loudly uttered and plain to be heard by all present:

"Arsinoe, the second daughter of Keraunus, the Macedonian and a Roman citizen."

The ship-builder's daughter had already been called before her, and had immediately left her seat, but Arsinoe waited modestly till some older ladies rose. She then joined them and went among the last members of the little procession which went down to the orchestra and from thence up the steps for the chorus, on to the stage.

There the ladies and young girls were placed in two ranks, and looked at with amiable consideration by the artists. Arsinoe was not long in perceiving that these gentlemen looked at her longer and more often than at the others; and then, after the masters of the festival had gone aside in groups to discuss the matter they looked at her constantly and were talking, she felt sure, about her. Nor did it escape her that she had become the centre of many glances from the lookers-on who were sitting in the theatre, and it occurred to her that on several sides people were pointing at her with their fingers. She did not know which way she should look and began to feel bashful; still she was pleased at being remarked by so many people, and as she stood looking at the ground out of sheer embarrassment to hide the delight she felt, Verus, who had gone up to the group of artists, called out, putting his hand on the prefect's arm.

"Charming-charming! a Roxana that might have sprung straight out of the picture."

Arsinoe heard these words, and guessing that they referred to her she became more confused than ever, while her awkward smile gradually changed to an expression of joyful but anxious expectation of a delight which was almost painful in its magnitude.

Now one of the artists pronounced her name, and as she ventured to raise her eyes to see if it were not Pollux who had spoken, she observed the wealthy Plutarch who, with his two living crutches and Gabinius, the lean curiosity-dealer, was inspecting the ranks of her companions. Presently he had come quite close to her, and as he

was helped towards her with tottering steps, he dug the dealer in the ribs and said, kissing the back of his hand, and winking his great eyes: "I know—I know! It is not easily forgotten. Ivory and red coral!"

Arsinoe started, the blood left her cheeks, and all satisfaction fled from her heart when the old man came to a stand-still in front of her, and said kindly:

"Ah! ah! a bud out of the papyrus factory among all these proud roses and lilies. Ah! ah! out of my work-rooms to join my assembly! Never mind—never mind, beauty is everywhere welcome. I do not ask how you got here. I am only glad that you are here."

Arsinoe covered part of her face with her hand, but he tapped her white arm three times with his middle finger, and then tottered on laughing to himself. The dealer had caught Plutarch's words, and asked him, when they had gone a few steps from Arsinoe, with eager indignation:

"Did I hear you rightly? a work-woman in your factory, and here among our daughters?"

"So it is—two busy hands among so many idle ones," said the old man, gaily.

"Then she must have forced her way in, and must be turned out."

"Certainly she shall not—Why, she is charming."

"It is revolting! here, in this assembly!"

"Revolting?" interrupted Plutarch. "Oh dear, no! we must not be too particular. And how are we to obtain mere children from you antiquity-mongers?" Then he added pleasantly:

"This lovely creature must I should think, delight your fine sense of beauty; or are you afraid that she may seem better suited to the part of Roxana than your own charming daughter? Only listen to the men up there! Let us see what is going on."

These words referred to a loud discussion which had arisen close by the couches of the prefect and Verus, the praetor. They, and with them most of the painters and sculptors present, were of opinion that Arsinoe would be a wonderfully effective Roxana; they maintained that her face and figure answered perfectly to those of the Bactrian princes as they were represented by Action, whose picture was, to a certain extent, to serve as the basis of the living group. Only Papias and two of his fellow-artists, declared against this choice, and eagerly asserted that among all the damsels present one, and one alone, was worthy to appear before the Emperor as Alexander's bride, and that one was Praxilla, the daughter of Gabinius. All three were in close business relations with the father of the young girl, who was tall, and slim, and certainly very lovely, and they wanted to do a pleasure to the rich and knowing purchaser. Their zeal even assumed a tone of vehemence, when the dealer, following in the wake of Plutarch, joined the group of disputants, and they were certain of being heard by him.

"And who is this girl yonder?" asked Papias, pointing to Arsinoe, as the two came up. "Nothing can be said against her beauty, but she is dressed less than simply, and wears no kind of ornament worth speaking of—it is a thousand to one against her parents being in a position to provide her with such a rich dress, and such costly jewels as Roxana certainly ought to display when about to be married to Alexander. The Asiatic princess must appear in silk, gold and precious stones. Now my friend here will be able so to dress his Praxilla that the splendor of her attire might have astonished the great Macedonian himself, but who is the father of that pretty child who is satisfied with the blue ribbon in her hair, her two roses, and her little white frock?"

"Your reflections are just, Papias," interrupted the dealer, with dry incisiveness. "The girl you are speaking of is quite out of the question. I do not say so for my daughter's sake, but because everything in bad taste is odious to me; it is hardly conceivable how such a young thing could have had the audacity to force herself in here. A pretty face, to be sure, opens locks and bars. She is—do not be too much startled—she is nothing more than a work-girl in the papyrus factory of our excellent host, Plutarch."

"That is not the truth," Pollux interrupted, indignantly, as he heard this assertion.

"Moderate your tongue, young man," replied the dealer. "I can call you to witness, noble Plutarch."

"Let her be whom she may," answered the old man, with annoyance. "She is very one of my workwomen, but even if she had come straight here from the gumming-table with such a face and such a figure, she is perfectly in place here and everywhere. That is my opinion."

"Bravo! my fine friend!" cried Verus, nodding to the old man. "Caesar will be far better pleased with such a paragon of charmers as that sweet creature, than with all your old writs of citizenship and heavy purses."

"That is true," the prefect said, confirming this statement. "And I dare swear she is a free maiden, and not a slave. But you stood up for her friend Pollux – what do you know about her?"

"That she is the daughter of Keraunus, the palace-steward, and that I have known her from her childhood," answered the youthful artist emphatically. "He is a Roman citizen, and of an old Macedonian house as well."

"Perhaps even of royal descent," added Titianus, laughing.

"I know the man," answered the dealer hastily. "He is an impecunious insolent old fool."

"I should think," interrupted Verus with lofty composure, but rather as being bored, than as reproving the irritated speaker, "it seems to me that this is hardly the place to conduct a discussion as to the nature and disposition of the fathers of all those ladies and young girls."

"But he is poor," cried the dealer angrily. "A few days since he offered to sell me his few miserable curiosities, but really I could not –"

"We are sorry for your sake if the transaction was unsuccessful," Verus again interposed, this time with excessive politeness. "Now, first let us decide on the persons and afterwards on the costumes. The father of the girl is a Roman citizen then?"

"A member of the council, and in his way a man of position," replied Titianus.

"And I," added his wife Julia, "have taken a great fancy to the sweet little maid, and if the principal part is given to her, and her noble father is without adequate means, as you assert my friend, I will undertake to provide for her costume. Caesar will be charmed with such a Roxana."

The dealer's clients were silent, he himself was trembling with disappointment and vexation, and his fury rose to the utmost when Plutarch, whom till then he thought he had won over to his daughter's side, tried to bow his bent old body before dame Julia, and said with a graceful gesture of regret:

"My old eyes have deceived me again on this occasion. The little girl is very like one of my workwomen; very like—but I see now that there is a certain something which the other lacks. I have done her an injustice and remain her debtor. Permit, me, noble lady to add the ornaments to the dress you provide for our Roxana. I may be lucky enough to find something pretty for her. A sweet child! I shall go at once and beg her forgiveness and tell her what we propose. May I do so noble Julia? Have I your permission gentlemen?"

In a very few minutes it was known all over the stage, and soon after all through the amphitheatre, that Arsinoe, the daughter of Keraunus, had been selected to represent the character of Roxana.

"But who was Keraunus?"

"How was it that the children of the most illustrious and wealthy citizens had been overlooked in assigning this most prominent part?"

"This was just what might be expected when every thing was left to those reckless artists!"

"And where was a poor little girl like that to find the talents which it would cost to procure the costume of an Asiatic princess, Alexander's bride?"

"Plutarch, and the prefect's wife had undertaken that."

"A mere beggar."

"How well the family jewels would have suited our daughters!"

"Do we want to show Caesar nothing but a few silly pretty faces? — and not something of our wealth and taste?"

"Supposing Hadrian asks who this Roxana is, and had to be told that a collection had to be made to get her a proper costume."

"Such things never could happen anywhere but in Alexandria."

"Every one wants to know whether she worked in Plutarch's factory. They say it is not true — but the painted old villain still loves a pretty face. He smuggled her in, you may be sure; where there is smoke there is fire, and it is beyond a doubt that she gets money from the old man."

"What for?"

"Ah! you had better enquire of a priest of Aphrodite. It is nothing to laugh at, it is scandalous, audacious!"

Thus and on this wise ran the comments with which the announcement of Arsinoe's preferment to the part of Roxana was received, and hatred and bitter animosity had grown up in the souls of the dealer and his daughter. Praxilla was selected as a companion to Alexander's bride, and she yielded without objecting, but on her way homewards she nodded assent when her father said:

"Let things go on now as they may, but a few hours before the performance begins, I will send them word that you are ill."

The selection of Arsinoe had however, on the other hand, given pleasure as well as pain. Up in the middle places in the amphitheatre sat Keraunus, his legs far apart, his face glowing, panting and choking with sheer delight, and too haughty to draw in his feet even when the brother of the archidikastes tried to squeeze by his bulky person which filled two seats at once. Arsinoe, whose sharp ears had not failed to catch the dealer's remonstrances, and the words in which brave Pollux had taken her part, had, at first, felt dying of shame and terror, but now she felt as though she could fly on the wings of her delight. She had never been so happy in her life, and when she got out with her father, in the first dark street she threw her arms round his neck, kissed both his cheeks, and then told him how kind the lady Julia, the prefect's wife had been to her, and that she had undertaken, with the warmest friendliness, to have her costly dress made for her.

Keraunus had no objection to offer, and, strange to say, he did not consider it beneath his dignity to allow Arsinoe to be supplied with jewels by the wealthy manufacturer.

"People have seen," he said, pathetically, "that we need not shrink from doing as much as other citizens do, but to dress a Roxana as befits a bride would cost millions, and I am very willing to confess to my friends that I have not millions. Where the costume comes from is all the same, be that as it may you will still stand the first of all the maidens in the city, and I am pleased with you for that, my child. To-morrow will be the last meeting, and then perhaps Selene too, may have a prominent part given to her. Happily we are able to dress her as befits. When will the prefect's wife fetch you?"

"To-morrow about noon."

"Then early to-morrow buy a nice new dress."

"Will there not be enough for a new bracelet too?" asked Arsinoe, coaxingly. "This one of mine is too narrow and trumpery."

"You shall have one, for you have deserved it," replied Keraunus, with dignity. "But you must have patience till the day after to-morrow; to-morrow the goldsmiths will be closed on account of the festival."

Arsinoe had never seen her father so cheerful and talkative as he was to-day, and yet the walk from the theatre to Lochias was not a very short one, and it was long past the early hour at which he was accustomed to retire to bed.

By the time the father and daughter reached the palace it was already tolerably late, for, after Arsinoe had quitted the stage, suitable representatives of parts had been selected for three other scenes from the life of Alexander, by the light of torches, lamps and tapers; and before the assemblage broke up, Plutarch's guests were entertained with wine, fruit, syrups, sweet cakes, oyster pasties, and other delicacies. The steward had fallen with good will on the noble drink and excellent food, and when he was replete, he was wont to be in a better humor, and after a modicum of wine, in a more cheerful mood than usual. Just now he was content and kind, for although he had done all that lay in his power, the entertainment had not lasted long enough, for him to arrive at a state of intoxication which could make him surly, or to overload his digestion. Towards the end of their walk, he turned thoughtful and said:

"To-morrow the council does not sit on account of the festival, and that is well; all the world will congratulate me, question me, and notice me, and the gilding on my circlet is quite shabby; and in some places the silver shines through. Your outfit will now cost nothing, and it is quite necessary that before the next meeting I should go to a goldsmith and exchange that wretched thing for one of real gold. A man should show what he is."

He spoke the words pompously, and Arsinoe eagerly acquiesced, and only begged him, as they went in at the open door, to leave enough for Selene's costume; he laughed quietly to himself, and said:

"We need no longer be so very cautious. I should like to know who the Alexander will be who will be the first to ask for my Roxana as his wife. Rich old Plutarch's only son already has a seat in the council, and has not yet taken a wife. He is no longer very young, but he is a fine man still."

The radiant father's dream of the future was interrupted by Doris, who came out of the gate-house and called him by his name. Keraunus stood still. When the old woman went on:

"I must speak with you."

He answered, repellently: "But I shall not listen to you – neither now nor at any time."

"It was certainly not for my pleasure," retorted Doris, "that I called to you; I have only to tell you that you will not find your daughter Selene at home."

"What do you say?" cried Keraunus.

"I say that the poor girl with her damaged foot could at last walk no farther, and that she had to be carried into a strange house where she is being taken care of."

"Selene!" cried Arsinoe, falling from all her clouds of happiness, startled and grieved – "do you know where she is?"

Before Doris could reply, Keraunus stormed out:

"It is all the fault of the Roman architect and his raging beast of a dog. Very good! very good! now Caesar will certainly help me to my rights. He will give a lesson to those who throw Roxana's sister into a sick-bed, and hinder her from taking any part in the processions. Very good! very good indeed!"

"It is sad enough to cry over!" said the gatekeeper's wife, indignantly. "Is this the thanks she gets for all her care of her little brothers and sisters! Only to think that a father can speak so, when his best child is lying with a broken leg, helpless among strangers!"

"With a broken leg," whimpered Arsinoe.

"Broken!" repeated Keraunus slowly, and now sincerely anxious. "Where can I find her?"

"At dame Hannah's little house at the bottom of the garden belonging to the widow of Pudeus."

"Why did they not bring her here?"

"Because the physician forbade it. She is in a fever, but she is well cared for. Hannah is one of the Christians. I cannot bear the people, but they know how to nurse the sick better than any one."

"With Christians! my child is with Christians!" shrieked Keraunus, beside himself. "At once Arsinoe, at once come with me; Selene shall not stay a moment longer among that accursed rabble. Eternal gods! besides all our other troubles this disgrace too!"

"Nay, it is not so bad as that," said Doris soothingly. "There are very estimable folks even among the Christians. At any rate they are certainly honorable, for the poor hunch-backed creature who first brought the bad news gave me this little bag of money which dame Hannah had found in Selene's pocket."

Keraunus took his daughter's hard-won wages as contemptuously as though he was quite accustomed to gold, and thought nothing of more wretched silver; but Arsinoe began to cry at the sight of the drachmae, for she knew it was for the sake of that money that Selene had left her home, and could divine what frightful pain she must have suffered on the way.

"Honorable this, and honorable that!" cried Keraunus, as he tied up his money-bag. "I know well enough how shameless are the goings on in assemblies of that stamp; kissing and hugging slaves! quite the right sort of thing for my daughter! Come Arsinoe, let us find a litter at once!"

"No, no!" exclaimed Doris eagerly. "For the present you must leave her in peace. I should be glad to conceal it from you as a father — but the physician declared it might cost her her life if she were not left just now in perfect quiet. No one goes to any kind of assembly with a burning wound in the head, a high fever and a broken leg. — Poor dear child!"

Keraunus stood silent in grave consternation, while Arsinoe exclaimed through her tears:

"But I must go to her, I must see her Doris."

"That I cannot blame you for, my pretty one," said the old woman. "I have already been to the house of the Christians, but they would not let me in to see the patient. With you it is rather different as you are her sister."

"Come father," begged Arsinoe, "first let us see to the children, and then you shall come with me to see Selene. Oh! why did I not go with her. Oh! if she should die."

CHAPTER XX.

Keraunus and his daughter reached their rooms less quickly than usual, for the steward dreaded a fresh attack from the blood-hound, which, to-night however, was sharing Antinous' room. They found the old slavewoman up, and in great excitement, for she loved Selene, she was frightened at her absence, and in the children's sleeping-room all was not as it should be.

Arsinoe went without delay to see the little ones, but the black woman remained with her master, and told him with many tears, while he exchanged his saffron-colored pallium for an old cloak, that the joy of her heart, little blind Helios had been ill, and could not sleep, even after she had given him some of the drops which Keraunus himself was accustomed to take.

"Idiotic animal!" exclaimed Keraunus, "to give my medicine to the child," and he kicked off his new shoes to replace them with shabbier ones. "If you were younger I would have you flogged."

"But you did say the drops were good," stammered the old woman.

"For me," shouted the steward, and without fastening his shoe-straps round his ankles, so that they flapped and pattered on the ground, he hurried off into the children's room. There sat his darling blind child, his 'neir' as he liked to call him, with his pretty, fair, curly head resting on Arsinoe's breast. The child recognized his step, and began his little lament:

"Selene was away, and I was frightened, and I feel so sick, so sick."

The steward laid his hand on the child's forehead, and feeling how hot it was he began to walk restlessly up and down by the little bed.

"That is just how it always happens," he said. "When one misfortune comes another always follows. Look at him Arsinoe. Do you remember how the fever took poor Berenice? Sickness, uneasiness, and a burning head.—Have you any pain in your head my boy?"

"No," answered Helios, "but I feel so sick."

The steward opened the child's little shirt to see if he had any spots on his breast, but Arsinoe said, as she bent over him:

"It is nothing much, he has only overloaded his stomach. The stupid old woman gives him every thing he asks for, and she let him have half of the currant cake, which we sent her to fetch before we went out."

"But his head is burning," repeated Keraunus.

"He will be quite well again by to-morrow morning," replied Arsinoe. "Our poor Selene needs us far more than he does. Come father. The old woman can stay with him."

"I want Selene to come," whimpered the child. "Pray, pray, do not leave me alone again."

"Your old father will stay with you my pet," said Keraunus tenderly, for it cut him to the soul to see this child suffer. "You none of you know what this boy is to us all."

"He will soon go to sleep," Arsinoe asserted. "Do let us go, or it will be too late."

"And leave the old woman to commit some other stupid blunder?" cried Keraunus. "It is my duty to stay with the poor little boy. You can go to your sister and take the old woman with you."

"Very good, and to-morrow early I will come back."

"To-morrow morning?" said Keraunus surprised. "No, no, that will not do. Doris said just now that Selene will be well nursed by the Christians. Only see how she is, give her my love, and then come back."

"But father —"

"Besides you must remember that the prefect's wife expects you to-morrow at noon to choose the stuff for your dress, and you must not look as if you had been sitting up all night."

"I will rest a little while in the morning."

"In the morning? And how about curling my hair? And your new frock? And poor little Helios?—No child, you are only just to see Selene and then come back again. Early in the morning too the holiday will have begun, and you know what goes on then; the old woman would be of no use to you in the throng. Go and see how Selene is, you are not to stay."

"I will see —"

"Not a word about seeing—you come home again. I desire it; in two hours you are to be in bed."

Arsinoe shrugged her shoulders, and two minutes after she was standing with the old slave-woman in front of the gate-house.

A broad beam of light still fell through the half-open door of the bowery little room, so Euphorion and Doris had not retired to rest and could at once open the palace-gate for her. The Graces set up a bark as Arsinoe crossed the threshold of her old friends' house, but they did not leave their cushion for they soon recognized her.

It was several years since Arsinoe, in obedience to her father's strict prohibition had set foot in the snug the house, and her heart was deeply touched as she saw again all the surroundings she had loved as a child, and had not forgotten as she grew into girlhood. There were the birds, the little dogs, and the lutes on the wall near the Apollo. On worthy dame Doris' table there had always been something to eat, and there, now, good a lovely, golden-brown cake, by the side of the wine-jar. How often as a child had she sneaked in to beg a sweet morsel, how often to see whether tall Pollux were not there, Pollux, whose bold devices and original suggestions, gave his work and his play alike, the stamp of genius, and lent them a peculiar charm. And there sat her saucy playfellow in person, his legs stretched at full length in front of him, and talking, eagerly. Arsinoe heard him relating the end of the history of her being chosen for Roxana, and caught her own name, graced with such epithets as brought the blushes to her cheeks, and gave her double pleasure because he could not guess that she could overhear them. From a boy he had grown to a man, and a fine man, and a great artist—but he was still the old kind and audacious Pollux.

The sudden leap with which he sprang from his seat to welcome her, the frank laughter with which he several times interrupted her speech, the childlike loving way in which he held his arm round his little mother while he greeted her, and asked why she was going out so late, the winning, touching tone of his voice as he expressed his regret at Selene's mishaps—all went home to Arsinoe as a thing known and loved, of which she had long been deprived, and she clung to the two strong hands he held out to her. If at that moment he had taken her up, and clasped her to his heart before the very eyes of Euphiorion and his mother she really would have been incapable of resisting him.

It was with a heavy heart that Arsinoe had gone into dame Doris, but in the gate-keeper's house there reigned an atmosphere in which care and anxiety could not breathe, and the light-hearted girl's vision of her sister as tormented with pain and threatened with danger was changed in a wonderfully short time to that of a sufferer comfortably in bed, with only a severely-injured foot. In the place of consuming anxiety she felt only hearty sympathy, and this sounded in her voice as she begged the singer Euphorion to open the gate for her, because she wanted to go out with her slave-woman to ascertain how Selene was.

Doris soothed her, repeating her assurance that the patient would be nursed with the utmost care in dame Hannah's hands; still, she thought her wish to see her sister very justifiable, and eagerly seconded Pollux when he entreated Arsinoe to accept his escort; for the festival would be beginning soon after midnight, the streets would be full of rough and impudent people, and a bunch of feathers would be about as much use against the drunken slaves as her black scarecrow, who had been falling into decrepitude even before she had done the stupidest deed of her life and roused the steward's anger against herself.

So they went along the dark streets which grew full of people the farther they went, side by side in silence. Presently Pollux said:

"Put your arm through mine; you ought to feel that I am protecting you, and I—I should like to feel at every step that I have found you once more, and am allowed to be near you—so sweet a creature."

The words did not sound impertinent, on the contrary, they sounded very much in earnest, and the sculptor's deep voice trembled with emotion as he spoke them with deep tenderness. They knocked at the door of the girl's heart with the urgent hand of love; she unhesitatingly put her hand through his arm and answered softly:

"You will take care of me now."

"Yes," said he, and he took her little hand, which rested on his right arm, in his left hand. She did not draw it away, and after they had gone on thus for a few paces he sighed and said:

"Do you know how I feel?"

"Well!"

"Nay, I myself cannot put it into words. Rather as if I had triumphed in the Olympian games, or as if Caesar had invested me with the purple!—But who cares for the wealth or the purple! You are hanging on my arm, and I have hold of your hand; compared with this, all is as nought. If it were not for the people about I—I do not know what I could do."

She looked up at him with happy content, but he lifted her hand to his lips and pressed it to them long and fervently. Then he let it go again and said, with a sigh that came up from the bottom of his heart:

"Oh Arsinoe, my sweet Arsinoe, how I love you!"

As the words came softly yet hotly from his lips the girl clasped his arm closely to her bosom, leaned her head on his shoulder, looked up at him with a wide-eyed, tender gaze, and said softly:

"Oh Pollux, I am so happy, the world is so good!"

"Nay, I could hate it!" cried the sculptor. "To hear this—and to have an old mother wide awake at home, and to be obliged to walk steadily on in a street crowded with men—it is unendurable! I shall not hold out much longer—sweetest of girls—here it is quiet and dark."

Yes, in a little nook made by two contiguous houses, and into which Pollux drew Arsinoe, it was pitch dark, as he hastily pressed his first kiss on her innocent lips; but in their hearts it was light-radiant sunshine.

She had thrown her arms round his neck and would willingly have clung to him till day should end; but they heard the approach of a noisy procession of slaves. These unfortunate creatures began soon after midnight singing and shouting so as to avail themselves to the extremist limit of the holiday, which released them for a short time from their tasks and duties; Pollux knew well how unbounded the license of their pleasures could be, and as he walked on with Arsinoe he enjoined her to keep with him as close as possible to the houses.

"How jolly they are!" he said pointing to the merry-makers. "Their masters will wait on themselves a little to-day, and the best day in the year is just beginning for them, but for us the best day in all our lives."

"Yes, yes," cried Arsinoe, and she clasped his strong arm with both her hands.

Then they both laughed merrily, for Pollux had noticed that the old slave-woman had gone on past them with her head sunk on her breast, and was following another pair.

"I will call her," Arsinoe said.

"No, no, let her be," said the artist. "The couple in front certainly require her protection more than we do."

"But how could she possibly mistake that little man for you?" laughed Arsinoe.

"I wish I were a little smaller," replied Pollux with a sigh. "Only picture to yourself the vast amount of burning love and tormenting longing that can be contained in so large a body as mine!" She slapped him on the arm, and to punish her he hastily pressed his lips on her forehead.

"Don't—think of the people," she said reprovingly, but he gaily answered:

"It is not a misfortune to be envied."

Here the streets came to an end, and they found themselves in front of the garden belonging to Pudeus' widow; Pollux knew it, for Paulina who owned it was the sister of Pontius, the architect, who himself owned a magnificent house in the city. But could it be possible? Had invisible hands brought them here already? The gate of the enclosure was locked. Pollux roused a porter, told him what he wanted, and was conducted by him with Arsinoe to a part of the grounds where a bright light shone out from dame Hannah's little abode, for he had had instructions to admit the sick girl's friends even during the night.

A crescent moon lighted the paths, which were strewn with shells; the shrubs and trees in the garden threw sharply-defined shadows on their gleaming whiteness, the sea sparkled brightly, and as soon as the porter had left the happy young pair together, and they found themselves in a shadowy alley, Pollux said, opening his arms to the girl:

"Now—one more kiss, just for a remembrance, while I wait."

"Not now," begged Arsinoe.

"I am no longer happy since we came in here. I cannot help thinking of poor Selene."

"I have not a word to say against that," replied Pollux submissively. "Then when waiting is over may I have my reward?"

"No, no, now, at once," cried Arsinoe throwing herself on his breast, and then she hurried towards the house.

He followed her, and when she paused in front of a brightly-lighted window on the ground floor, he stopped also. They both looked in on a lofty and spacious room, kept in the most perfect order and cleanliness; it had one door only opening on the roofless forecourt of the house; the walls of the room were plainly painted of

a light green color, and the only ornament it contained was one piece of carved work over the door.

On the farther side stood the bed on which Selene was lying; a few paces from it sat the deformed girl asleep, while dame Hannah softly went up to the patient with a wet compress in her hand which she carefully laid on her head.

Pollux touched Arsinoe and whispered to her:

"Your sister lies there in her sleep like an Ariadne deserted by Dionysus. How wretched she will feel when she comes to herself."

"She looks to me less pale than usual."

"Look now, how she bends her arm, and what a lovely attitude as she puts her hand to her head!"

"Go—" said Arsinoe. "You ought not to be spying here."

"Directly, directly—but if you were lying there no power should stir me from the spot. How carefully Hannah lifts the wet wrapper from her poor broken ankle. You could not touch your eye more gently than the good woman handles Selene's foot."

"Go back, she is looking straight this way."

"What a wonderful face! It would do for a Penelope, but there is something singular in her eyes. Now if I had to make another star-gazing Urania, or a Sappho full of the deity, and with eyes fixed on the heavens in poetic rapture, that is what I would put into her! She is no longer young, but how pure her face is! It is like a sky when the wind has swept it clear of clouds."

"Seriously you must go now," said Arsinoe drawing away her hand, which he had again taken. Pollux saw that his praise of another woman's beauty annoyed her, and he said soothingly:

"Be easy child. You have not your match here in Alexandria, no, nor so far as Greek is spoken. A perfectly clear sky is certainly not the most beautiful to my taste. Pure light, and pure blue, give no satisfaction to the artist, it is only behind a few moving clouds,

lighted up by changing gleams of gold and silver, that the firmament has any true charm, and though your face too is like heaven to me it does not lack sweet movement, never twice alike. Now this matron—"

"Only look," interrupted Arsinoe, "how tenderly dame Hannah bends over Selene, and now she is gently kissing her brow. No mother could tend her own daughter more lovingly. I have known her for a long time; she is good, very good; it is hardly credible for she is a Christian."

"The cross up there over the door," said Pollux "is the token by which these extraordinary people recognize each other."

"And what is signified by the dove and fish and anchor round it?" asked Arsinoe.

"They are emblems of the mysteries of the Christians," replied Pollux. "I do not understand them; the things are wretchedly painted; the adherents of the crucified God condemn all art, and particularly my branch of it, for they hate all images of the gods."

"And yet among such blasphemers we find such good men; I will go in at once; Hannah is wetting another handkerchief."

"And how unwearied and kind she looks as she does it; still there is something strange, deserted, and graceless in this large bare room. I should not like to live there."

"Have you noticed the faint scent of lavender that comes through the window?"

"Long since—there your sister is moving and has opened her eyes—now she has shut them again."

"Go back into the garden and wait till I come," Arsinoe commanded him decidedly. "I will only see how Selene is going on; I will not stop long for my father wishes me to return soon, and no one can nurse her better than Hannah!"

The girl drew her hand out of her lover's and knocked at the door of the little house; it was opened and the widow herself led Arsinoe

to the bedside of her sister. Pollux at first sat a while on a bench in the garden, but soon sprang up and paced with long steps the path he had previously trodden with Arsinoe. A stone table across the path, brought him to a stand-still, and he took a fancy for leaping it. The third time he came up to it he sprang over it with a long jump. But no sooner had he done the frolicsome deed than he paused, shook his head at himself and muttered to himself: "Like a boy!" — He felt indeed like a happy child. But as he waited he became calmer and graver. He acknowledged to himself, with sincere thankfulness, that he had now found the ideal woman, of whom he had dreamed in his hours of best inspiration, and that she was his, wholly and alone. And after all, what was he? A poor rascal who had many mouths to fill, and was no more than two fingers of his master's hand. This must be altered. He would not reduce his sister's comforts in any way but he must break with Papias, and stand henceforth on his own feet. His courage mounted fast, and when at last, Arsinoe returned from her sister, he had resolved that he must first finish Balbilla's bust with all diligence in his own workshop, and that then he would model his beloved; these two female heads he could not fail in. Caesar must see them, they must be exhibited, and already in his mind's eye, he saw himself refusing order after order, and accepting only the most splendid where all were good.

Arsinoe went home comforted. Selene's sufferings were certainly less than she had pictured them; she did not wish to be nursed by any one besides dame Hannah. She might perhaps have a little fever, but any one who was capable of discussing every little question of house-keeping, and all that related to the children could not be—as Arsinoe thought while she walked back through the garden, leaning on the artist's arm—really and properly ill.

"It must revive and delight her to have Roxana for a sister!" cried Pollux; but his pretty companion shook her head and said: "She is always so odd; what most delights me is averse to her."

"Well Selene is of course the moon, and you are the sun."

"And what are you?" asked Arsinoe.

"I am tall Pollux, and to-night I feel as if I might some day be great Pollux."

"If you succeed I shall grow with you."

"That will be your right, since it is only through you that I can ever succeed in that which I propose to do.

"And how should a simple little thing, such as I am, be able to help an artist?"

"By living, and by loving him," cried the sculptor, lifting her up in his arms before she could prevent him.

Outside the garden-gate the old slave-woman was sitting asleep. She had learnt from the porter that her young mistress had been admitted with her companion, but she herself had been forbidden to enter the grounds. A curbstone had served her for a seat, and as she waited her eyes had closed, in spite of the increasing noise in the street. Arsinoe did not waken her, but asked Pollux, with a roguish laugh:

"We shall find our way alone, shall we not?"

"If Eros does not lead us astray," answered the artist. And so, as they went on their way, they jested and exchanged little tender speeches.

The nearer they got to Lochias and to the main lines of traffic which intersected at right angles the Canopic way—the widest and longest road in the city—the fuller was the stream of people that flowed onwards in the direction in which they were going; but this circumstance favored them, for those who wish to be unobserved, when they cannot be absolutely alone, have only to mix with the crowd. As they were borne towards the focus and centre of the festive doings, they clung closely together, she to him, and he to her, so that they might not be torn apart by any of the rushing and tumultuous processions of excited Thracian women who, faithful to their native usages, came storming by with a young bull, on this particular night of the year, that following the shortest day. They had hardly gone a hundred paces beyond the Moon-street when they heard proceeding from it a wild roving song of tipsy jollity, and loud above it the sound of drums and pipes, cymbals and noisy shouting, and at the same time in the King's street, a road which

crossed the Bruchiom and opened on Lochias, a merry troupe came towards them.

At their head, among other acquaintances, came Teuker, the gem-cutter, the younger brother of Pollux. Crowned with ivy, and flourishing a thyrsus he came dancing on, and behind him, leaping and shouting, a train of men and women, all excited to the verge of folly, singing, hollooming, and dancing.

Garlands of vine, ivy and asphodel fluttered from a hundred heads; poplar, lotus, and laurel wreaths overhung their heated brows; panther-skins, deer and goatskins hung from their bare shoulders and waved in the wind as their bearers hurried onwards. This procession had been first formed by some artists and rich youths returning with some women from a banquet, with a band of music; every one who met this festal party had joined it or had been forced to enlist with it. Respectable citizens and their wives, laborers, maid-servants, slaves, soldiers and sailors, officers, women flute-players, artisans, ship-captains, the whole chorus of a theatre invited by a friend of art, excited women who dragged with them a goat that was to be slaughtered to Dionysus—none had been able to resist the temptation to join the procession. It turned down the Moon-street, keeping to the middle of the road which was planted with elms, and had on each side of it a raised foot-way, which at this time of night no one used. How clear was the sound of the double-pipes, how bravely the girls hit the calf-skin of the tambourines with their soft fists, how saucily the wind tossed and tangled the dishevelled hair of the riotous women and played with the smoke of the torches which were wielded in the air by audacious youths, disguised as Pan or as Satyrs, and shouting as they went.

Here a girl, holding her tambourine high in the air, rattled the little bells on its hoop, as she flew along, as violently as though she wanted to shake the hollow metal balls out of their frame, and send them whistling through the air on their own account—there, side by side with his comrades, who were excited almost to madness, a handsome lad came skipping along in elaborately graceful leaps, but carrying over his arm, with comic care, a long bull's-tail that he had tied on, and blowing alternately up and down the short scale from the shortest to the longest of the reeds composing his panpipes.

Through the noisy crowd as they rushed by, sounded, now and again, a loud roar, that might as easily have been caused by pain as joy; but it was each time hastily drowned in mad laughter, extravagant singing and jubilant music.

Old and young, great and small, all in short that came near this rabble train, were carried off with irresistible force to follow it with shouts of triumph. Even Pollux and Arsinoe had for some time ceased to walk soberly side by side, but moved their feet, laughingly in time to the merry measure.

"How nice it sounds," cried the artist. "I could dance and be merry too Arsinoe, dance and make merry with you like a madman!"

Before she could find time to say 'yes' or 'no,' he shouted a loud "To, To, Dionysus," and flung her up in the air. She too was caught by the spirit of the thing, and waving her hand above her head she joined in his shout of triumph, and let him drag her along to a corner of the Moon-street where a seller of garlands offered her wares for sale. There she let him wreath her with ivy, she stuck a laurel wreath on his head, twisted a streamer of ivy round his neck and breast, and laughed loudly as she flung a large silver coin into the flower-woman's lap and clung tightly to his arm. It was all done in swift haste without reflection, as if in a fit of intoxication, and with trembling hands.

The procession was drawing to an end. Six women and girls in wreaths closed it, walking arm in arm with loud singing. Pollux drew his sweetheart behind this jovial crew, threw his arm around Arsinoe once more, while she put hers round him, and then both of them stepped out in a brisk dance-step flinging their arms left free, throwing back their heads, shouting and singing loudly, and forgetting all that surrounded them; they felt as though they were bound to each other by a glory of sunbeams, while some god lifted them above the earth and bore them up through a realm of delight and joy beyond the myriad stars and through the translucent ether; thus they let themselves be led away through the Moon-street into the Canopic way and so back to the sea, and as far as the temple of Dionysus.

There they paused breathless and it suddenly struck them that he was Pollux and she Arsinoe, and that she must get back again to her father and the children.

"Come home," she said softly, and as she spoke she dropped her arm and began to gather up her loosened hair.

"Yes, yes," he said as if in a dream. He released her, struck his hand against his brow, and turning to the open cella of the temple he said:

"Long have I known that thou art mighty O Dionysus, and that thou O Aphrodite art lovely, and that thou art sweet O Eros! but how inestimable your gifts, that I have learnt to-day for the first time."

"We were indeed full of the deity," said Arsinoe. "But here comes another procession and I must go home."

"Then let us go by the Little Harbor," answered Pollux.

"Yes—I must pick the leaves out of my hair and no one will see us there."

"I will help you —"

"No, you are not to touch me," said Arsinoe decidedly. She grasped her abundant soft and shiny hair, and cleared it of the leaves that had got entangled in it, as tiny beetles do in a double flower. Finally she hid her hair under her veil, which had slipped off her head long since, but, almost by a miracle, had caught and remained hanging on the brooch of her peplum. Pollux stood looking at her, and overmastered by the passion that possessed him, he exclaimed:

"Eternal gods! how I love you! Till now my soul has been like a careless child, to-day it is grown to heroic stature.—Wait—only wait, it will soon learn to use its weapons."

"And I will help it in the fight," she said happily, as she put her hand through his arm again, and they hurried back to the old palace, dancing rather than walking.

The late December sun was already giving warning of his approaching rising by cold yellowish-grey streaks in the sky as Pollux and his companion entered the gate, which had long since been opened for the workmen. In the hall of the Muses they took a first farewell, in the passage leading to the steward's room, a second—sad and yet most happy; but this was but a short one for the gleam of a lamp made them start apart, and Arsinoe instantly fled.

The disturber was Antinous who was waiting here for the Emperor who was still gazing at the stars from the watch-tower Pontius had erected for him. As she vanished he turned to Pollux and said gaily:

"I need your forgiveness for I have disturbed you in an interview with your sweetheart."

"She will be my wife," said the sculptor proudly.

"So much the better!" replied the favorite, and he drew a deep breath, as though the artist's words had relieved his mind of a burden.

"Ah! so much the better. Can you tell me where to find the fair Arsinoe's sister?"

"To be sure," replied the artist, and he felt pleased that the young Bithynian should cling to his arm. Within the next hour, Pollux, from whose lips there flowed a stream of eager and enthusiastic words, like water from a spring, had completely won the heart of the Emperor's favorite.

The girl found both her father and Helios, who no longer looked like a sick patient—fast asleep. The old slave-woman came in a few minutes after her, and when at last, after unbinding her hair, Arsinoe threw herself on her bed she fell asleep instantly, and in her dreams found herself once more by the side of her Pollux, while they both were flying to the sound of drums, flutes, and cymbals high above the dusty ways of earth, like leaves swept on by the wind.

CHAPTER XXI.

The steward awoke soon after sunrise. He had slept no less soundly, it is true, in his arm-chair than in his bed, but he did not feel refreshed, and his limbs ached.

In the living-room everything was in the same disorder as on the previous evening, and this annoyed him, for he was accustomed to find his room in order when he entered it in the morning. On the table, surrounded by flies, stood the remains of the children's supper, and among the bread crusts and plates lay his own ornaments and his daughter's! Wherever he turned he saw articles of dress and other things out of their place. The old slave-woman came in yawning, her woolly grey hair hung in disorder about her face, and her eyes seemed fixed, her feet carried her unsteadily here and there.

"You are drunk," cried Keraunus; nor was he mistaken, for when the old woman had waked up, sitting by the house of Pudeus, and had learned from the gate keeper that Arsinoe had quitted the garden, she had gone into a tavern with other slave-women. When her master seized her arm and shook her, she exclaimed with a stupid grin on her wet lips:

"It is the feast-day. Every one is free, to-day is the feast."

"Roman nonsense!" interrupted the steward. "Is my breakfast ready?"

While the old woman stood muttering some inaudible words, the slave came into the room and said:

"To-day is a general holiday, may I go out too?"

"Oh that would suit me admirably!" cried the steward.

"This monster drunk, Selene sick, and you running about the streets."

"But no one stops at home to-day," replied the slave timidly.

"Be off then!" cried Keraunus. "Walk about from now till midnight! Do as you please, only do not expect me to keep you any longer. You are still fit to turn the hand-mill, and I dare say I can find a fool to give me a few drachmae for you."

"No, no, do not sell me," groaned the old man, raising his hands in entreaty; Keraunus however would not hear him, but went on angrily:

"A dog at least remains faithful to his master, but you slaves eat him out of house and home, and when he most needs you, you want to run about the streets."

"But I will stay," howled the old man.

"Nay, do as you please. You have long been like a lame horse which makes its rider a butt for the laughter of children. When, you go out with me everyone looks round as if I had a stain on my pallium. And then the mangy dog wants to keep holiday, and stick himself up among the citizens!"

"I will stay here, only do not sell me!" whimpered the miserable old man, and he tried to take his master's hand; but the steward shoved him off, and desired him to go into the kitchen and light a fire, and throw some water on the old woman's head to sober her. The slave pushed his companion out of the room, while Keraunus went into his daughter's bedroom to rouse her.

There was no light in Arsinoe's room but that which could creep in through a narrow opening just below the ceiling; the slanting rays fell directly on the bed up to which Keraunus went. There lay his daughter in sound sleep; her pretty head rested on her uplifted right arm, her unbound brown hair flowed like a stream over her soft round shoulders and over the edge of the little bed. He had never seen the child look so pretty, and the sight of her really touched his heart, for Arsinoe reminded him of his lost wife, and it was not vain pride merely, but a movement of true paternal love, which involuntarily transformed his earnest wish that the gods might leave him this child and let her be happy, into an unspoken but fervent prayer.

He was not accustomed to waking his daughter who was always up and busy before he was, and he could hardly bear to disturb his darling's sweet sleep; but it had to be done, so he called Arsinoe by her name, shook her arm and said, as at last she sat up and looked at him enquiringly:

"It is I, get up, remember what has to be done today."

"Yes — yes," she said yawning, "but it is so early yet!"

"Early," said Keraunus, smiling. "My stomach says the contrary. The sun is already high, and I have not yet had my porridge."

"Make the old woman cook it."

"No, no, my child — you must get up. Have you forgotten whom you are to represent? And my hair is to be curled, and the prefect's wife, and then your dress."

"Very well — go; I do not care the least bit about Roxana and all the dressing-up."

"Because you are not yet quite awake," laughed the steward. "How did this ivy-leaf get into your hair?" Arsinoe colored, put her hand to the spot indicated by her father, and said reluctantly:

"Out of some bough or another, but now go that I may get up."

"In a minute — tell me how did you find Selene?"

"Not so very bad — but I will tell you all about that afterwards. Now I want to be alone."

When, half an hour later, Arsinoe brought her father his porridge he gazed at the child in astonishment. Some extraordinary change seemed to have come over his daughter. Something shone in her eyes that he had never observed before, and that gave her childlike features an importance and significance that almost startled him. While she was making the porridge, Keraunus, with the slave's help, had taken the children up and dressed them; now they were all sitting at breakfast; Helios among them fresh and blooming. Now, while Arsinoe told her father all about Selene, and the nursing she

was having at dame Hannah's hands, Keraunus kept his eyes fixed on her, and when she noticed this and asked impatiently what there was peculiar in her appearance to-day, he shook his head and answered:

"What strange things are girls! A great honor has been done you. You are to represent the bride of Alexander, and pride and delight have changed you wonder fully in a single night—but I think to your disadvantage."

"Folly," said Arsinoe reddening, and stretching herself with fatigue she threw herself back on a couch. She did not feel weary exactly, for the lassitude she felt in every limb had a peculiar pleasure in it. She felt as if she had come out of a hot bath, and since her father had roused her she seemed to hear, again and again, the sound of the inspiring music which she had followed arm in arm with Pollux. Now and again she smiled, now and again she gazed straight before her, and at the same time she said to herself that if at this very moment her lover were to ask her, she would not lack strength to fling herself at once, with him, once more into the mad whirl. Yes—she felt perfectly fresh! only her eyes burned a little; and if Keraunus fancied he saw anything new in his daughter it must be the glowing light which now lurked in them along with the playful sparkle he had always seen there.

When breakfast was over the slave took the children out, and Arsinoe had begun to curl her father's hair, when Keraunus put on his most dignified attitude and said ponderously.

"My child."

The girl dropped the heated tongs and calmly asked. "Well"—fully prepared to hear one of the wonderful propositions which Selene was wont to oppose.

"Listen to me attentively."

Now, what Keraunus was about to say had only occurred to him an hour since when he had spoiled his slave's desire to go out; but as he said it he pressed his hand to his forehead assuming the expression of a meditative philosopher.

"For a long time I have been considering a very important matter. Now I have come to a decision and I will confide it to you. We must buy a new manslave."

"But father!" cried Arsinoe, "think what it will cost you. If we have another man to feed —"

"There is no question of that," replied Keraunus. "I will exchange the old one for a younger one that I need not be ashamed to be seen with. Yesterday I told you that henceforth we shall attract greater attention than hitherto, and really if we appear with that black scarecrow at our heels in the streets or elsewhere —"

"Certainly we cannot make much show Sebek," interrupted Arsinoe, "but we can leave him at home for the future."

"Child, child!" exclaimed Keraunus reproachfully, "will you never remember who and what we are. How would it beseem us to appear in the streets without a slave?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders, and put it to her father that Sebek was an old piece of family property, that the little ones were fond of him because he cared for them like a nurse, that a new slave would cost a great deal and would only be driven by force to many services which the old one was always ready and willing to fulfil.

But Arsinoe preached to deaf ears. Selene was not there; secure from her reproaches and as anxious as a spoiled boy for the thing that was denied him, Keraunus adhered to his determination to exchange the faithful old fellow for a new and more showy slave. Not for a moment did he think of the miserable fate that threatened the decrepit creature, who had grown old in his house, if he were to sell him; but he still had a feeling that it was not quite right to spend the last money that had chanced to come into the house, on a thing that really and truly was not in any way necessary. The more justifiable Arsinoe's doubts seemed to be and the more loudly did an inward voice warn him not to offer this fresh sacrifice to his vain-gloriousness, the more firmly and desperately did he defend his wish to do so; and as he fought for the thing he desired, it acquired in his eyes a semblance of necessity and a number of reasons

suggested themselves which made it appear both justifiable and easy of attainment.

There was money in hand; after Arsinoe's being chosen for the part of Roxana he might expect to be able to borrow more; it was his duty to appear with due dignity that he might not scare off the illustrious son-in-law of whom he dreamed, and in the extremity of need he could still fall back on his collection of rarities. The only thing was to find the right purchaser; for, if the sword of Antony had brought him so much, what would not some amateur give him for the other, far more valuable, objects.

Arsinoe turned red and white as her father referred again and again to the bargain she had made; but she dared not confess the truth, and she rued her falsehood all the more bitterly the more clearly she saw with her own sound sense, that the Honor which had fallen upon her yesterday, threatened to develop all her father's weaknesses in an absolutely fatal manner.

To-day she would have been amply satisfied with pleasing Pollux, and she would, without a regret have transferred to another her part with all the applause and admiration it would procure her, and which, only yesterday, had seemed to her so inestimably precious. This she said; but Keraunus would not take the assertion in earnest, laughed in her face, went off into mysterious allusions to the wealth which could not fail to come into the house and—since an obscure consciousness told him that it would be becoming him to prove that it was not solely personal vanity and self-esteem that influenced all his proceedings—he explained that he had made up his mind to a great sacrifice and would be content on the coming occasion to wear his gilt fillet and not buy a pure gold one. By this act of self-denial he fancied he had acquired a full right to devote a very pretty little sum to the acquisition of a fine-looking slave. Arsinoe's entreaties were unheeded, and when she began to cry with grief at the prospect of losing her old house-mate he forbid her crossly to shed a tear for such a cause, for it was very childish, and he would not be pleased to conduct her with red eyes to meet the prefect's wife.

During the course of this argument his hair had got itself duly curled, and he now desired Arsinoe to arrange her own hair nicely and then to accompany him.

They would buy a new dress and peplum, go to see Selene, and then be carried to the prefect's.

Only yesterday he had thought it too bold a step to use a litter, and to-day he was already considering the propriety of hiring a chariot.

No sooner was he alone than a new idea occurred to him. The insolent architect should be taught that he was not the man to be insulted and injured with impunity. So he cut a clean strip of papyrus off a letter that lay in his chest, and wrote upon it the following words:

"Keraunus, the Macedonian, to Claudius Venator, the architect, of Rome:"

"My eldest daughter, Selene, is by your fault, so severely hurt that she is in great danger, is kept to her bed and suffers frightful pain. My other children are no longer safe in their father's house, and I therefore require you, once more, to chain up your dog. If you refuse to accede to this reasonable demand I will lay the matter before Caesar. I can tell you that circumstances have occurred which will determine Hadrian to punish any insolent person who may choose to neglect the respect due to me and to my daughters."

When Keraunus had closed this letter with his seal he called the slave and said coldly:

"Take this to the Roman architect, and then fetch two litters; make haste, and while we are out take good care of the children. Tomorrow or next day you will be sold. To whom? That must depend on how you behave during the last hours that you belong to us." The negro gave a loud cry of grief that came from the depth of his heart, and flung himself on the ground at the steward's feet. His cry did indeed pierce his master's soul—but Keraunus had made up his mind not to let himself be moved nor to yield. But the negro clung more closely to his knees, and when the children, attracted to the spot by their poor old friend's lamentation, cried loudly in unison, and little Helios began to pat and stroke the little remains of the negro's woolly hair, the vain man felt uneasy about the heart, and to

protect himself against his own weakness he cried out loudly and violently:

"Now, away with you, and do as you are ordered or I will find the whip."

With these words he tore himself loose from the miserable—old man who left the room with his head hanging down, and who soon was standing at the door of the Emperor's rooms with the letter in his hand. Hadrian's appearance and manner had filled him with terror and respect, and he dared not knock at the door. After he had waited for some time, still with tears in his eyes, Mastor came into the passage with the remains of his master's breakfast. The negro called to him and held out the steward's letter, stammering out lamentably:

"From Keraunus, for you master."

"Lay it here on the tray," said the Sarmatian. "But what has happened to you, my old friend? you are wailing most pitifully and look miserable. Have you been beaten?"

The negro shook his head and answered, whimpering: "Keraunus is going to sell me."

"There are better masters than he."

"But Sebek is old, Sebek is weak—he can no longer lift and pull, and with hard work he will certainly die."

"Has life been so easy and comfortable then at the steward's?"

"Very little wine, very little meat, very much hunger," said the old man.

"Then you must be glad to leave him."

"No, no," groaned Sebek.

"You foolish old owl," said Mastor. "Why do you care then for that grumpy niggard?"

The negro did not answer for some time, then his lean breast heaved and fell, and, as if the dam were broken through that had choked his utterance, he burst out with a mixture of loud sobs:

"The children, the little ones, our little ones. They are so sweet; and our little blind Helios stroked my hair because I was to go away, here—just here he stroked it"—and he put his hand on a perfectly bald place—"and now Sebek must go and never see them all again, just as if they were all dead."

And the words rolled out and with difficulty, as if carried on in the flood of his tears. They went to Mastor's heart, rousing the memory of his own lost children and a strong desire to comfort his unhappy comrade.

"Poor fellow!" he said, compassionately. "Aye, the children! they are so small, and the door into one's heart is so narrow—and they dance in at it a thousand times better and more easily than grown-up folks. I, too, have lost dear children, and they were my own, too. I can teach any one what is meant by sorrow—but I know too now where comfort is to be found." With these words Mastor held the tray he was carrying on his hip with his right hand, while he put the left on the negro's shoulder and whispered to him:

"Have you ever heard of the Christians?"

Sebek nodded eagerly as if Mastor were speaking of a matter of which he had heard great things and expected much, and Mastor went on in a low voice "Come early to-morrow before sunrise to the pavement-workers in the 'court, and there you will hear of One who comforts the weary and heavy-laden."

The Emperor's servant once more took his tray in both hands and hurried away, but a faint gleam of hope had lighted up in the old slave's eyes. He expected no happiness, but perhaps there might be some way of bearing the sorrows of life more easily.

Mastor as soon he had given his tray to the kitchen slaves—who were now busy again in the palace at Lochias—returned to his lord and gave him the steward's letter. It was an ill-chosen hour for Keraunus, for the Emperor was in a gloomy mood. He had sat up

till morning, had rested scarcely three hours, and now, with knitted brows, was comparing the results of his night's observation of the starry sky with certain astronomical tables which lay spread out before him. Over this work he frequently shook his head which was covered with crisp waves of hair; nay—he once flung the pencil, with which he was working his calculations, down on the table, leaned back in his seat and covered his eyes with both hands. Then again he began to write fresh numbers, but his new results seemed to be no more satisfactory than the former one.

The steward's letter had been for a long time lying before him when at last it again caught his attention as he put out his hand for another document. Needing some change of ideas he tore it open, read it and flung it from him with annoyance. At any other time he would have expressed some sympathy with the suffering girl, have laughed at the ridiculous man, and have thought out some trick to tease or to terrify; but just now the steward's threats made him angry and increased his dislike for him.

Tired of the silence around him he called to Antinous, who sat gazing dreamily down on the harbor; the youth immediately approached his master. Hadrian looked at him and said, shaking his head:

"Why you too look as if some danger were threatening you. Is the sky altogether overcast?"

"No my lord, it is blue over the sea, but towards the south the black clouds are gathering."

"Towards the south?" said Hadrian thoughtfully. "Any thing serious can hardly threaten us from that quarter. — But it comes, it is near, it is upon us before we suspect it."

"You sat up too long, and that has put you out of tune."

"Out of tune?" muttered Hadrian to himself. "And what is tune? That subtle harmony or discord is a condition which masters all the emotions of the soul at once; and not without reason—to-day my heart is paralyzed with anxiety."

"Then you have seen evil signs in the heavens?"

"Direful signs!"

"You wise men believe in the stars," replied Antinous. "No doubt you are right, but my weak head cannot understand what their regular courses have to do with my inconstant wanderings."

"Grow gray," replied the Emperor, "learn to comprehend the universe with your intellect, and not till then speak of these things for not till then will you discern that every atom of things created, and the greatest as well as the least, is in the closest bonds with every other; that all work together, and each depends on all. All that is or ever will be in nature, all that we men feel, think or do, all is dependent on eternal and immutable causes; and these causes have each their Daimon who interposes between us and the divinity and is symbolized in golden characters on the vault of heaven. The letters are the stars, whose orbits are as unchanging and everlasting as are the first causes of all that exists or happens."

"And are you quite sure that you never read wrongly in this great record?" asked Antinous.

"Even I may err," replied Hadrian. "But this time I have not deceived myself. A heavy misfortune threatens me. It is a strange, terrible and extraordinary coincidence!"

"What?"

"From that accursed Antioch—whence nothing good has ever come to me—I have received the saying of an oracle which foretells that, that—why should I hide it from you—in the middle of the year now about to begin some dreadful misfortune shall fall upon me, as lightning strikes the traveller to the earth; and tonight—look here. Here is the house of Death, here are the planets—but what do you know of such things? Last night—the night in which once before such terrors were wrought, the stars confirmed the fatal oracle with as much naked plainness, as much unmistakable certainty as if they had tongues to shout the evil forecast in my ear. It is hard to walk on with such a goal in prospect. What may not the new year bring in its course?"

Hadrian sighed deeply, but Antinous went close up to him, fell on his knees before him and asked in a tone of childlike humility:

"May I, a poor foolish lad, teach a great and wise man how to enrich his life with six happy months?" The Emperor smiled, as though he knew what was coming, but his favorite felt encouraged to proceed.

"Leave the future to the future," he said. "What must come will come, for the gods themselves have no power against Fate. When evil is approaching it casts its black shadow before it; you fix your gaze on it and let it darken the light of day. I saunter dreamily on my way and never see misfortune till it runs up against me and falls upon me unawares —"

"And so you are spared many a gloomy day," interrupted Hadrian.

"That is just what I would have said."

"And your advice is excellent, for you and for every other loiterer through the gay fair-time of an idle life," replied the Emperor, "but the man whose task it is to bear millions in safety and over abysses, must watch the signs around him, look out far and near, and never dare close his eyes, even when such terrors loom as it was my fate to see during the past night."

As he spoke, Phlegon, the Emperor's private secretary, came in with letters just received from Rome, and approached his master. He bowed low, and taking up Hadrian's last words he said:

"The stars disquiet you, Caesar?"

"Well, they warn me to be on my guard," replied Hadrian.

"Let us hope that they be," cried the Greek, with cheerful vivacity. "Cicero was not altogether wrong when he doubted the arts of Astrology."

"He was a mere talker!" said the Emperor, with a frown.

"But," asked Phlegon, "would it not be fair that if the horoscopes cast for Cneius or Caius, let us say, were alike, to expect that Cneius or Caius must have the same temperament and the same destiny through life if they had happened to be born in the same hour?"

"Always the old commonplaces, the old silly objections!" interrupted Hadrian, vexed to the verge of rage. "Speak when you are spoken to, and do not trouble yourself about things you do not understand and which do not concern you. Is there anything of importance among these papers?"

Antinous gazed at his sovereign in astonishment; why should Phlegon's objections make him so furious when he had answered his so kindly?

Hadrian paid no farther heed to him, but read the despatches one after another, hastily but attentively, wrote brief notes on the margins, signed a decree with a firm hand, and, when his work was finished desired the Greek to leave him. Hardly was he alone with Antinous when the loud cries and jovial shouting of a large multitude came to their ears through the open window.

"What does this mean?" he asked Mastor, and as soon as he had been informed that the workmen and slaves had just been let out to give themselves up to the pleasures of their holiday, he muttered to himself:

"These creatures can riot, shout, dress themselves with garlands, forget themselves in a debauch—and I, I whom all envy—I spoil my brief span of life with vain labors, let myself be tormented with consuming cares—I—" here he broke off and cried in quite an altered tone:

"Ha! ha! Antinous, you are wiser than I. Let us leave the future to the future. The feast-day is ours too; let us take advantage of this day of freedom. We too will throw ourselves into the holiday whirlpool disguised, I as a satyr, and you as a young faun or something of the kind; we will drain cups, wander round the city and enjoy all that is enjoyable."

"Oh!" exclaimed Antinous, joyfully clapping his hands.

"Evoe Bacche!" cried Hadrian, tossing up his cup that stood on his table. "You are free till this evening, Mastor, and you my boy, go and talk to Pollux, the sculptor. He shall be our guide and he will provide us with wreaths and some mad disguise. I must see drunken men, I must laugh with the jolliest before I am Caesar again. Make haste, my friend, or new cares will come to spoil my holiday mood."

CHAPTER XXII.

Antinous and Mastor at once quitted the Emperor's room; in the corridor the lad beckoned the slave to him and said in a low voice:

"You can hold your tongue I know, will you do me a favor?"

"Three sooner than one," replied the Sarmatian.

"You are free to-day — are you going into the city?"

"I think so."

"You are not known here, but that does not matter. Take these gold pieces and in the flower-market buy with one of them the most beautiful bunch of flowers you can find, with another you may make merry, and out of the remainder spend a drachma in hiring an ass. The driver will conduct you to the garden of Pudeus' widow where stands the house of dame Hannah; you remember the name?"

"Dame Hannah and the widow of Pudeus."

"And at the little house, not the big one, leave the flowers for the sick Selene."

"The daughter of the fat steward, who was attacked by our big dog?" asked Mastor, curiously.

"She or another," said Antinous, impatiently, "and when they ask you who sent the flowers, say 'the friend at Lochias,' nothing more. You understand."

The slave nodded and said to himself: "What! you too-oh! these women."

Antinous signed to him to be silent, impressed on him in a few hasty words that he was to be discreet and to pick out the very choicest flowers, and then betook himself into the hall of the Muses to seek Pollux. From him he had learnt where to find the suffering Selene, of whom he could not help thinking incessantly and wherever he might be. He did not find the sculptor in his screened-off nook; prompted by a wish to speak to his mother, Pollux had

gone down to the gatehouse where he was now standing before her and frankly narrating, with many eager gestures of his long arms, all that had occurred on the previous night. His story flowed on like a song of triumph, and when he described how the holiday procession had carried away Arsinoe and himself, the old woman jumped up from her chair and clapping her fat little hands, she exclaimed:

"Ah! that is pleasure, that is happiness! I remember flying along with your father in just the same way thirty years ago."

"And since thirty years," Pollux interposed. "I can still remember very well how at one of the great Dionysiac festivals, fired by the power of the god, you rushed through the streets with a deer-skin over your shoulders."

"That was delightful—lovely!" cried Doris with sparkling eyes. "But thirty years since it was all different, very different. I have told you before now how I went with our maid-servant into the Canopic way to the house of my aunt Archidike to look on at the great procession. I had not far to go for we lived near the Theatre, my father was stage-manager and yours was one of the chief singers in the chorus. We hurried along, but all sorts of people stopped us, and drunken men wanted to joke with me."

"Ah, you were as sweet as a rose-bud then," her son interrupted.

"As a rose-bud, yes, but not like your lovely rose," said the old woman. "At any rate I looked nice enough for the men in disguise—fauns and satyrs and were the cynic hypocrites in their ragged cloaks, to think it worth while to look at me and to take a rap on the knuckles when they tried to put an arm round me or to steal a kiss, I did not care for the handsomest of them, for Euphorion had done for me with his fiery glances—not with words for I was very strictly kept and he had never been able to get a chance to speak to me. At the corner of the Canopic way and the Market street we could get no farther, for the crowd had blocked the way and were howling and storming as they stared at a party of Klodones and other Maenads, who in their sacred fury were tearing a goat to pieces with their teeth. I shuddered at the spectacle, but I must need stare with the rest and shout and halloo as they did. My maid, who I held on to

tightly, was seized with the frenzy and dragged me into the middle of the circle close up to the bleeding sacrifice. Two of the possessed women sprang upon us, and I felt one clasping me tightly and trying to throw me down. It was a horrible moment but I defended myself bravely and had succeeded in keeping on my feet when your father sprang forward, set me free and led me away. What happened after I could not tell you now; it was one of those wild happy dreams in which you must hold your heart with both hands for fear it should crack with joy, or fly out and away up to the sky and in the very eye of the sun. Late in the evening I got home and a week after I was Euphorion's wife."

"We have exactly followed your example," said Pollux, "and if Arsinoe grows to be like my dear old woman I shall be quite satisfied."

"Happy and contented," replied Doris. "Keep you health, snap your fingers at care and sorrow, do your duty on work-days and drink till you are jolly in honor of the god on holidays, and then all will be well. Those who do all they are able and enjoy as much as they can get, make good use of their lives and need feel no remorse in their last hours. What is past is done for, and when Atropos cuts our thread some one else will stand in our place and joys will begin all over again. May the gods bless you!"

"You are right," said Pollux embracing his mother, "and two together can turn the work out of hand more lightly and enjoy the pleasures of existence better than each alone — can they not?"

"I am sure of it; and you have chosen the right mate," cried the old woman. "You are a sculptor and used to simple things; you need no riches, only a sweet face which may every day rejoice your heart, and that you have found."

"There is nowhere a sweeter or a lovelier," said Pollux.

"No, that there is not," continued Doris. "First I cast my eyes on Selene. She need not be ashamed to show herself either, and she is a pattern for girls; but then as Arsinoe grew older, whenever she passed this way I thought to myself: 'that girl is growing up for my boy,' and now that you have won her I feel as if I were once more as

young as your sweetheart herself. My old heart beats as happily as if the little Loves were touching it with their wings and rosy fingers. If my feet had not grown so heavy with constantly standing over the hearth and at washing—really and truly I could take Euphorion by the arm and dance through the streets with him to-day."

"Where is father?"

"Out singing."

"In the morning! where?"

"There is some sect that are celebrating their mysteries. They pay well and he had to sing dismal hymns for them behind a curtain; the wildest stuff, in which he does not follow a word, and that I do not understand a half of."

"It is a pity for I wanted to speak to him."

"He will not be back till late."

"There is plenty of time."

"So much the better, otherwise I might have told him what you had to say."

"Your advice is as good as his. I think of giving up working under Papias and standing on my own feet."

"You are quite right; the Roman architect told me yesterday that a great future was open to you."

"There are only my poor sister and the children to be considered. If, during the first few months I should find myself falling short—"

"We will manage to pull through. It is high time that you yourself should reap from what you sow."

"So it seems to me, for my own sake and Arsinoe's; if only Keraunos—"

"Aye—there will be a battle to fight with him."

"A hard one, a hard one," sighed Pollux.

"The thought of the old man troubles my happiness."

"Folly!" cried Doris. "Avoid all useless anxiety. It is almost as injurious as remorse gnawing at your heart. Take a workshop of your own, do some great work in a joyful spirit, something to astonish the world, and I will wager anything that the old fool of a steward will only be vexed to think that he destroyed the first work of the celebrated Pollux, instead of treasuring it in his cabinet of curiosities. Just imagine that no such person exists in the world and enjoy your happiness."

"I will stick to that."

"One thing more my lad: take good care of Arsinoe. She is young and inexperienced and you must not persuade her to do anything you would advise her not to do if she were betrothed to your brother instead of to yourself."

Doris had not done speaking when Antinous came into the gatehouse and delivered the commands of the architect Claudius Venator, to escort him through the city. Pollux hesitated with his answer, for he had still much to do in the palace, and he hoped to see Arsinoe again in the course of the day. After such a morning what could noon and evening be to him without her? Dame Doris noticed his indecision and cried:

"Yes, go; the festival is for pleasure, besides, the architect can perhaps advise you on many points, and recommend you to his friends."

"Your mother is right," said Antinous. "Claudius Venator can be very touchy, but he can also be grateful, and I wish you sincerely well—"

"Good then, I will come," Pollux interposed while the Bithynian was still speaking, for he felt himself strongly attracted by Hadrian's imposing personality and considered that under the circumstances, it might be very desirable to revel with him for a while.

"I will come, but first I must let Pontius know that I am going to fly from the heat of the fray for a few hours to-day."

"Leave that to Venator," replied the favorite, "and you must find some amusing disguise and procure masks for him and for me and, if you like, for yourself too. He wants to join the revel as a satyr and I in some other disguise."

"Good," replied the sculptor. "I will go at once and order what is requisite. A quantity of dresses for the Dionysiac processions are lying in our workshop and in half an hour I will be back with the things."

"But pray make haste," Antinous begged him. "My master cannot bear to be kept waiting, and besides — one thing —"

At these words Antinous had grown embarrassed and had gone quite close up to the artist. He laid his hand on his shoulder and said in a low voice but impressively:

"Venator stands very near to Caesar. Beware of saying anything before him that is not in Hadrian's favor."

"Is your master Caesar's spy?" asked Pollux, looking suspiciously at Antinous. "Pontius has already, given me a similar warning, and if that is the case —"

"No, no," interrupted the lad hastily.

"Anything but that; but the two have no secrets from each other and Venator talks a good deal — cannot hold his tongue —"

"I thank you and will be on my guard."

"Aye do so — I mean it honestly." The Bithynian held out his hand to the artist with an expression of warm regard on his handsome features and with an indescribably graceful gesture. Pollux took it heartily, but dame Doris, whose old eyes had been fixed as if spellbound on Antinous, seized her son's arm and quite excited by the sight of his beauty cried out:

"Oh! what a splendid creature! moulded by the gods! sacred to the gods! Pollux, boy! you might almost think one of the immortals had come down to earth."

"Look at my old woman!" exclaimed Pollux laughing, "but in truth friend, she has good reasons for her ecstasies, I could follow her example."

"Hold him fast, hold him fast!" cried Doris. "If he only will let you take his likeness you can show the world a thing worth seeing."

"Will you?" interrupted Pollux turning to Hadrian's favorite.

"I have never yet been able to keep still for any artist," said Antinous. "But I will do any thing you wish to please you. It only vexes me that you too should join in the chorus with the rest of the world. Farewell for the present, I must go back to my master."

As soon as the youth had left the house Doris exclaimed:

"Whether a work of art is good for any thing or not I can only guess at, but as to what is beautiful that I know as well as any other woman in Alexandria. If that boy will stand as your model you will produce something that will delight men and turn the heads of the women, and you will be sought after even in a workshop of your own. Eternal gods! such beauty as that is sublime. Why are there no means of preserving such a face and such a form from old age and wrinkles?"

"I know the means, mother," said Pollux, as he went to the door. "It is called Art: to her it is given to bestow eternal youth on this mortal Adonis."

The old woman glanced at her son with pardonable pride, and confirmed his words by an assenting nod. While she fed her birds, with many coaxing words, and made one which was a special favorite pick crumbs from her lips, the young sculptor was hurrying through the streets with long steps.

He was greeted as he went with many a cross word, and many exclamations rose from the crowd he left behind him, for he pushed his way by the weight of his tall person and his powerful arms, and

saw and heard, as he went, little enough of what was going around him. He thought of Arsinoe, and between whiles of Antinous and of the attitude in which he best might represent him – whether as hero or god.

In the flower-market, near the Gymnasium, he was for a moment roused from his reverie by a picture which struck him as being unusual and which riveted his gaze, as did every thing exceptional that came under his eyes. On a very small dark-colored donkey sat a tall, well-dressed slave, who held in his right hand a nosegay of extraordinary size and beauty. By his side walked a smartly dressed-up man with a splendid wreath, and a comic mask over his face followed by two garden-gods of gigantic stature, and four graceful boys. In the slave, Pollux at once recognized the servant of Claudius Venator, and he fancied he must have seen the masked gentlemen too before now, but he could not remember where, and did not trouble himself to retrace him in his mind. At any rate, the rider of the donkey had just heard something he did not like, for he was looking anxiously at his bunch of flowers.

After Pollux had hurried past this strange party his thoughts reverted to other, and to him far nearer and dearer subjects. But Mastor's anxious looks were not without a cause, for the gentleman who was talking to him was no less a person than Verus, the praetor, who was called by the Alexandrians the sham Eros. He had seen the Emperor's body-slave a hundred times about his person; he therefore recognized him at once, and his presence here in Alexandria led him directly to the simple and correct inference that his master too must be in the city. The praetor's curiosity was roused, and he at once proceeded to ply the poor fellow with bewildering cross-questions. When the donkey-rider shortly and sharply refused to answer, Verus thought it well to reveal himself to him, and the slave lost his confident demeanor when he recognized the grand gentleman, the Emperor's particular friend.

He lost himself in contradictory statements, and although he did not directly admit it, he left his interrogator in the certainty that Hadrian was in Alexandria.

It was perfectly evident that the beautiful nosegay, which had attracted the praetor's attention to Mastor could not belong to

himself. What could be its destination? Verus recommenced his questioning, but the Sarmatian would betray nothing, till Verus tapped him lightly first on one cheek and then on the other, and said gaily:

"Mastor, my worthy friend Mastor, listen to me. I will make you certain proposals, and you shall nod your head, towards that of the estimable beast with two pairs of legs on which you are mounted, as soon as one of them takes your fancy."

"Let me go on my way," the slave implored, with growing anxiety.

"Go, by all means, but I go with you," retorted Verus, "until I have hit on the thing that suits you. A great many plans dwell in my head, as you will see. First I must ask you, shall I go to your master and tell him that you have betrayed his presence in Alexandria?"

"Sir, you will never do that!" cried Mastor.

"To proceed then. Shall I and my following hang on to your skirts and stay with you till nightfall, when you and your steed must return home? You decline—with thanks! and very wisely, for the execution of this project would be equally unpleasant to you and to me, and would probably get you punished. Whisper to me then, softly, in my ear, where your master is lodging, and from whom and to whom you are carrying those flowers; as soon as you have agreed to that proposal I will let you go on alone, and will show you that I care no more for my gold pieces here, in Alexandria, than I do in Italy."

"Not gold—certainly I will not take gold!" cried Mastor.

"You are an honest fellow," replied Verus in an altered tone, "and you know of me that I treat my servants well and would rather be kind to folks than hard upon them. So satisfy my curiosity without any fear, and I will promise you in return, that not a soul, your master least of all, shall ever know from me what you tell me." Mastor hesitated a little, but as he could not but own to himself that he would be obliged at last to yield to the stronger will of this imperious man, and as moreover he knew that the haughty and

extravagant praetor was in fact one of the kindest of masters, he sighed deeply and whispered:

"You will not be the ruin of a poor wretch like me, that I know, so I will tell you, we are living at Lochias."

"There," exclaimed Verus clapping his hands. "And now as to the flowers?"

"Mere trifling."

"Is Hadrian then in a merry mood?"

"Till to-day he was very gay – but since last night –"

"Well?"

"You know yourself what he is when he has seen lead signs in the sky."

"Bad signs," said Verus gravely.

"And yet he sends flowers?"

"Not he, can you not guess?"

"Antinous?"

Mastor nodded assent.

"Only think," laughed Verus. "Then he too is beginning to think it better worth while to admire than to be admired. And who is the fair one who has succeeded in waking up his slumbering heart?"

"Nay – I promised him not to chatter."

"And I promise you the same. My powers of reserve are far greater than my curiosity even."

"Be content, I beseech you with what you already know."

"But to know half is less endurable than to know nothing."

"Nay – I cannot tell you."

"Then am I to begin with fresh suggestions, and all over again?"

"Oh! my lord. I beg you, entreat you – "

"Out with the word, and I go on my way, but if you persist in refusing – "

"Really and truly it only concerns a white-faced girl whom you would not even look at."

"A girl-indeed!"

"Our big dog threw the poor thing down."

"In the street?"

"No, at Lochias. Her father is Keraunus the palace-steward."

"And her name is Arsinoe?" asked Verus with undisguised concern, for he had a pleasant recollection of the beautiful child who had been selected to fill the part of Roxana.

"No, her name is Selene, Arsinoe indeed is her younger sister."

"Then you bring these flowers from Lochias?"

"She went out, and she could not get back home again, she is now lying in the house of a stranger."

"Where?"

"That must be quite indifferent to you – "

"By no means, quite the contrary. I beg you to tell me the whole truth."

"Eternal gods! what can you care about the poor sick creature?"

"Nothing whatever; but I must know whither you are riding."

"Down by the sea. I do not know the house, but the donkey driver —"

"Is it far from here?"

"About half an hour yet," said the lad.

"A good way then," replied Verus. "And Hadrian is particularly anxious to remain unknown."

"Certainly."

"And you his body-servant, who are known to numbers of others here from Rome, like myself, you propose to ride half a mile through the streets where every creature that can stand or walk is swarming, with a large nosegay in your hand which attracts every body's attention. Oh Mastor that is not wise!"

The slave started, and seeing at once that Verus was right, he asked in alarm:

"What then can I do?"

"Get off your donkey," said the praetor. "Disguise yourself and make merry to your heart's content with these gold pieces."

"And the flowers?"

"I will see to that."

"You will? I may trust you; and never betray to Antinous what you compelled me to do?"

"Positively not."

"There — there are the flowers, but I cannot take the gold."

"Then I shall fling it among the crowd. Buy yourself a garland, a mask and some wine, as much as you can carry. Where is the girl to be found?"

"At dame Hannah's. She lives in a little house in a garden belonging to the widow of Pudeus. And whoever gives it to her is to say that it is sent by the friend at Lochias."

"Good. Now go, and take care that no one recognizes you. Your secret is mine, and the friend at Lochias shall be duly mentioned."

Mastor disappeared in the crowd. Verus put the nosegay into the hands of one of the garden-gods that followed in his train, sprang laughing on to the ass, and desired the driver to show him the way. At the corner of the next street, he met two litters, carried with difficulty through the crowd by their bearers. In the first sat Keraunus, whose saffron-colored cloak was conspicuous from afar, as fat as Silenus the companion of Dionysus, but looking very sullen. In the second sat Arsinoe, looking gaily about her, and so fresh and pretty that the Roman's easily-stirred pulses beat more rapidly.

Without reflecting, he took the flowers from the hand of the garden-god—the flowers intended for Selene—laid them on the girl's litter, and said:

"Alexander greets Roxana, the fairest of the fair." Arsinoe colored, and Verus, after watching her for some time as she was carried onwards, desired one of his boys to follow her litter, and to join him again in the flower-market, where he would wait, to inform him whither she had gone.

The messenger hurried off, and Verus, turning his ass's head soon reached a semicircular pillared hall on the shady side of a large open space, under which the better sort of gardeners and flower dealers of the city exposed their gay and fragrant wares to be sold by pretty girls. To-day every stall had been particularly well supplied, but the demand for wreaths and flowers had steadily increased from an early hour, and although Verus had all that he could find of fresh flowers arranged and tied together, still the nosegay, though much larger, was not half so beautiful as that intended for Selene, and for which he substituted it.

Now this annoyed the Roman. His sense of justice prompted him to make good the loss he had inflicted on the sick girl. Gay ribbons

were wound round the stalks of the flowers, and the long ends floated in the air, so Verus took a brooch from his dress and stuck it into the bow which ornamented the stem of the nosegay; then he was satisfied, and as he looked at the stone set in a gold border—an onyx on which was engraved Eros sharpening his arrows—he pictured to himself the pleasure, the delight of the girl that the handsome Bithynian loved, as she received the beautiful gift.

His slaves, natives of Britain, who were dressed as garden-gods, were charged with the commission to proceed to dame Hannah's under the guidance of the donkey-driver to deliver the nosegay to Selene from 'the friend at Lochias,' and then to wait for him outside the house of Titianus, the prefect; for thither, as he had ascertained from his swift-footed messenger, had Keraunus and his daughter been carried.

Verus needed a longer time than the boy, to make his way through the crowd. At the door of the prefect's residence he laid aside his mask, and in an anteroom where the steward was sitting on a couch waiting for his daughter, he arranged his hair and the folds of his toga, and was then conducted to the lady Julia with whom he hoped, once more, to see the charming Arsinoe.

But in the reception-room, instead of Arsinoe he found his own wife and the poetess Balbilla and her companion. He greeted the ladies gaily, amiably and gracefully, as usual, and then, as he looked enquiringly round the large room without concealing his disappointment, Balbilla came up to him and asked him in a low voice:

"Can you be honest, Verus?"

"When circumstances allow it, yes."

"And will they allow it here?"

"I should suppose so."

"Then answer me truly. Did you come here for Julia's sake, or did you come —"

"Well?"

"Or did you expect to find the fair Roxana with the prefect's wife?"

"Roxana?" asked Verus, with a cunning smile. "Roxana! Why she was the wife of Alexander the Great, and is long since dead, but I care only for the living, and when I left the merry tumult in the streets it was simply and solely —"

"You excite my curiosity."

"Because my prophetic heart promised me, fairest Balbilla, that I should find you here."

"And that you call honest!" cried the poetess, hitting the praetor a blow with the stick of the ostrich-feather fan she held in her hand. "Only listen, Lucilla, your husband declares he came here for my sake." The praetor looked reproachfully at the speaker, but she whispered:

"Due punishment for a dishonest man." Then, raising her voice, she said:

"Do you know, Lucilla, that if I remain unmarried, your husband is not wholly innocent in the matter."

"Alas! yes, I was born too late for you," interrupted Verus, who knew very well what the poetess was about to say.

"Nay—no misunderstanding!" cried Balbilla. "For how can a woman venture upon wedlock when she cannot but fear the possibility of getting such a husband as Verus."

"And what man," retorted the praetor, "would ever be so bold as to court Balbilla, could he hear how cruelly she judges an innocent admirer of beauty?"

"A husband ought not to admire beauty—only the one beauty who is his wife."

"Ah Vestal maiden," laughed Verus. "I am meanwhile punishing you by withholding from you a great secret which interests us all. No, no, I am not going to tell—but I beg you my lady wife to take

her to task, and teach her to exercise some indulgence so that her future husband may not have too hard a time of it."

"No woman can learn to be indulgent," replied Lucilla. "Still we practise indulgence when we have no alternative, and the criminal requires us to make allowance for him in this thing or the other."

Verus made his wife a bow and pressed his lips on her arm, then he asked. "And where is dame Julia?"

"She is saving the sheep from the wolf," replied Balbilla.

"Which means — ?"

"That as soon as you were announced she carried off little Roxana to a place of safety."

"No, no," interrupted Lucilla. "The tailor was waiting in an inner room to arrange the charming child's costume. Only look at the lovely nosegay she brought to Julia. And do you deny my right to share your secret?"

"How could I?" replied Verus.

"He is very much in need of your making allowances!" laughed Balbilla, while the praetor went up to, his wife and told her in a whisper what he had learnt from Mastor. Lucilla clasped her hands in astonishment, and Verus cried to the poetess:

"Now you see what a satisfaction your cruel tongue has deprived you of?"

"How can you be so revengeful most estimable Verus," said the lady coaxingly. "I am dying of curiosity."

"Live but a few days longer fair Balbilla, for my sake," replied the Roman, "and the cause of your early death will be removed."

"Only wait, I will be revenged!" cried the girl threatening him with her finger, but Lucilla led her away saying:

"Come now, it is time we should give Julia the benefit of our advice."

"Do so," said Verus. "Otherwise I am afraid my visit to-day would seem opportune to no one. — Greet Julia from me."

As he went away he cast a glance at the nosegay which Arsinoe had given away as soon as she had received it from him, and he sighed: "As we grow old we have to learn wisdom."

Freeditorial 